The image features a light blue background with two hands reaching towards each other. One hand is positioned higher and further to the right, while the other is lower and further to the left. The hands are open, with fingers slightly spread, creating a sense of reaching or offering. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the skin.

The
Good Teacher
and the
Good Pupil

Sri Aurobindo International Institute
of Educational Research · Auroville

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**The Good Teacher
and the Good Pupil**

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Auroville, 1988

The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil

PREFACE

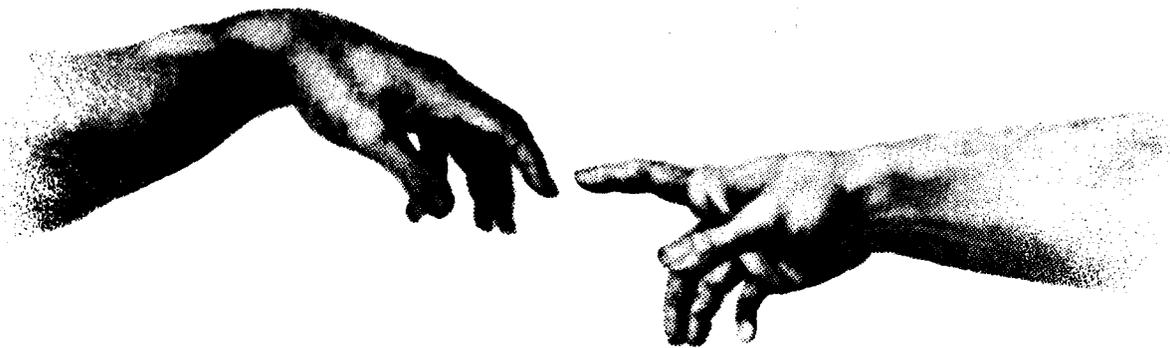
At one time it was thought that the child was a plastic material that could be moulded mechanically according to the designs of the parents or the educator. This gave rise to teacher-oriented education. This situation, however, is rapidly changing. With the advent of progressive movements, such as those pioneered by Montessori and others, education is now tending to be child-oriented. This has also led to a re-thinking of the role of the teacher, and some of the ancient and medieval teachers who practised child-centred or learner-oriented education are being increasingly appreciated. The wisdom of the past and contemporary thinking seem to be converging on several common points that underline the characteristics of good teachers and good pupils.

We felt it would be interesting to bring together certain passages relevant to this topic. On such an important and controversial subject as the relationship between teacher and pupil, there cannot be identical viewpoints, even among those who advocate learner-oriented education, particularly when we try to study ideas and accounts from different epochs and different cultural backgrounds. No particular pattern or method was followed in making the selection, and in a sense it is rather random. Considering the limitations of time and space, the compilation suffers from various deficiencies. It is neither representative of the full span of the theme, nor devoted exclusively to it. Some

passages are brief, others very long. The selections are in a variety of forms: some are stories and parables, some are accounts of experiences, some are essays, a few are autobiographical, one or two are poems, and one or two are in the form of epistles or dialogues.

The compilation, we hope, is a colourful and interesting bouquet. And it might turn out to be instructive to teachers and pupils – and parents. Indeed, it was not our aim to address this book to intellectuals or philosophers of education, although they, too, may find here some material to further stimulate their thought. Furthermore, at a time when value-oriented education is being widely promoted, it is worthwhile to consider the question of the value-oriented teacher and the value-oriented pupil. In this context, too, this book may be found to be relevant. Each text is preceded by an introduction and, when needed, is followed by explanatory notes and comments. Drawings, sketches, paintings, diagrams and photographs have been added to help the reader understand the texts with a greater ease and joy. At the beginning of the book is an overview which attempts to bring together the prominent ideas contained in the different texts.

We are sure many readers will know of other passages that could have been included. We shall be happy to receive their suggestions for a future compilation.



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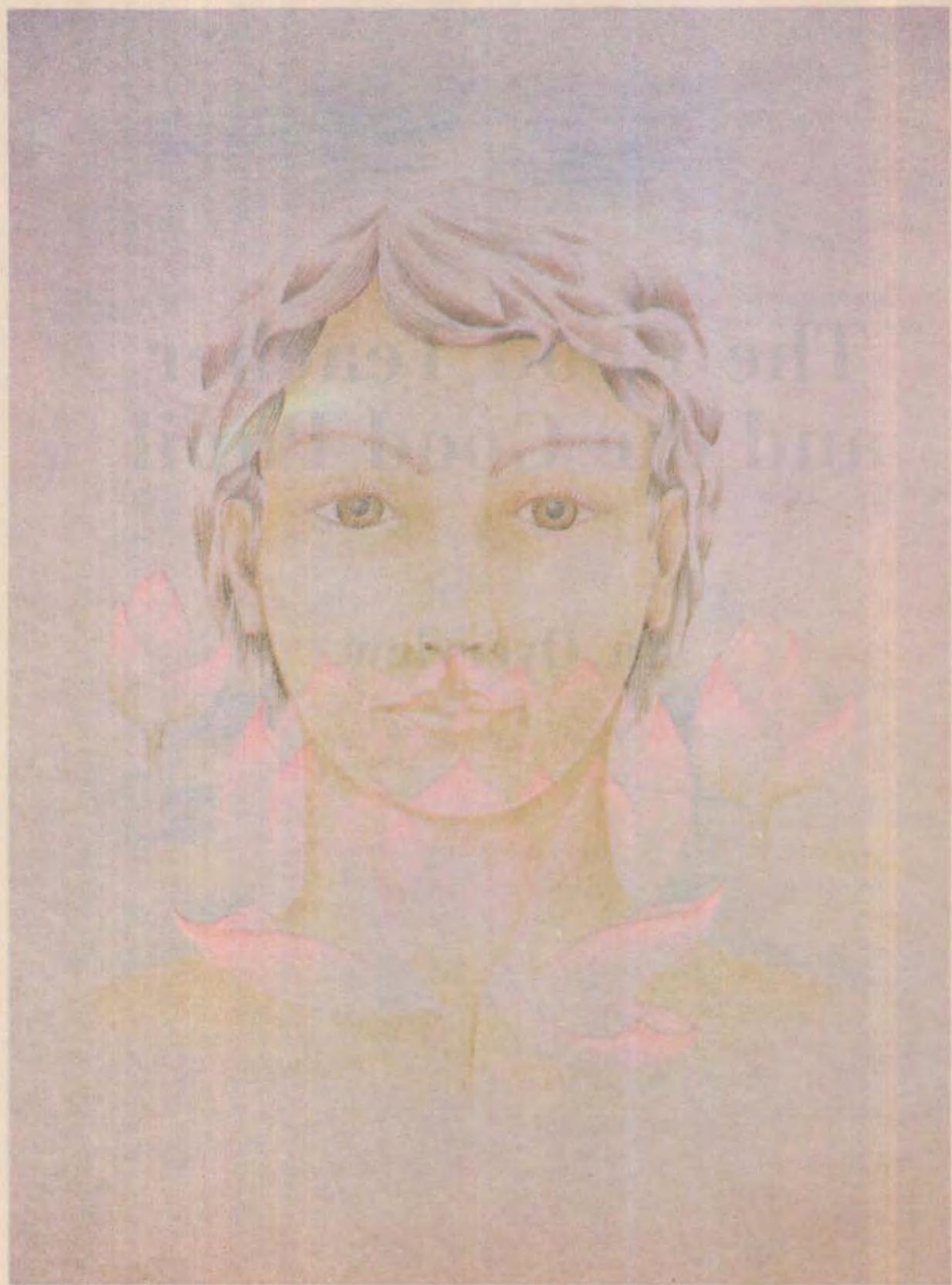
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The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil

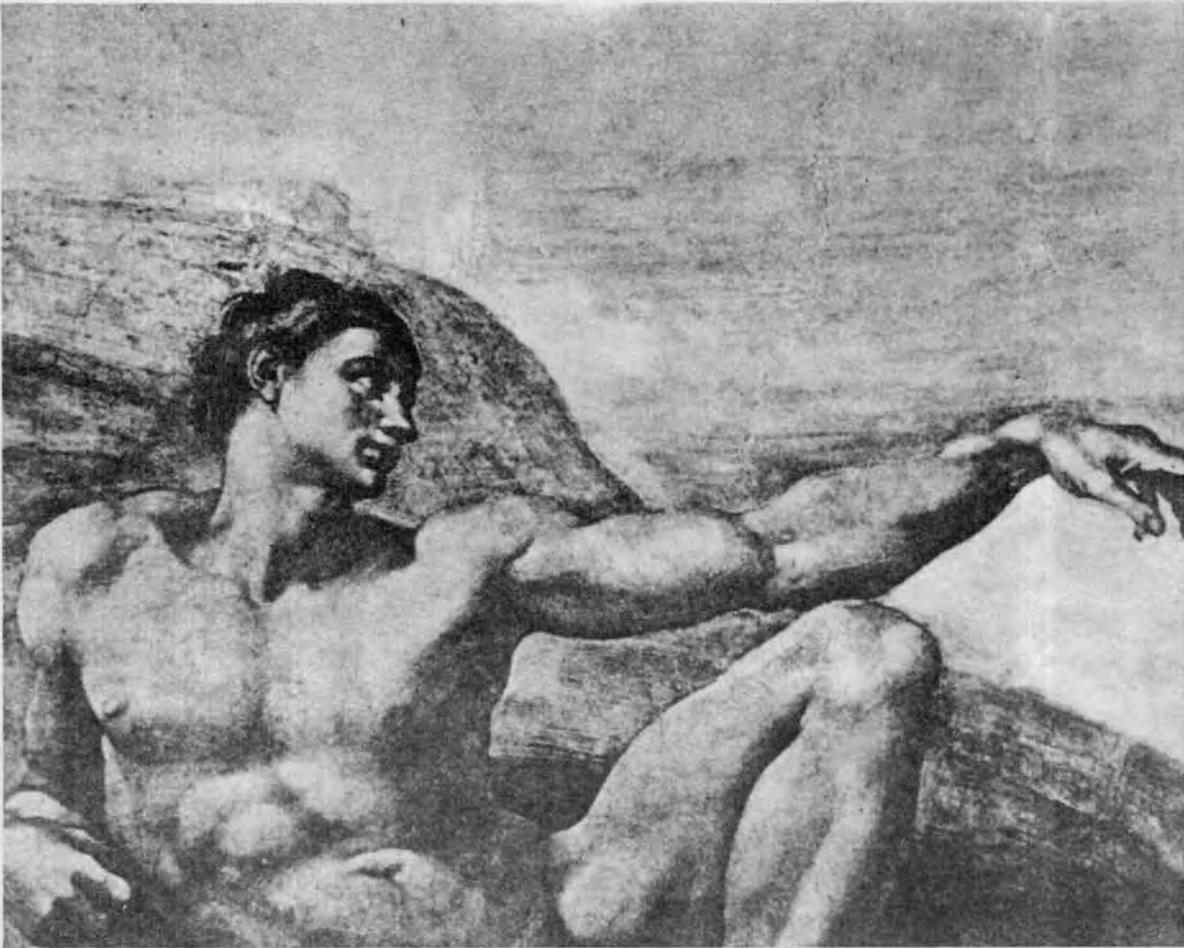
An Overview



For the last two hundred years or more there has been a growing realization that the teacher should be child-centred and should help the child's innate potential to blossom fully. Learner-centred teaching is being advanced in progressive schools all over the world.

Indeed, if we examine the examples of good teachers of the past or of the present, we shall find that they have always been learner-oriented: and good pupils have blossomed like lovely flowers when tended with care, love and understanding or even when left to themselves with interventions from teachers when necessary.

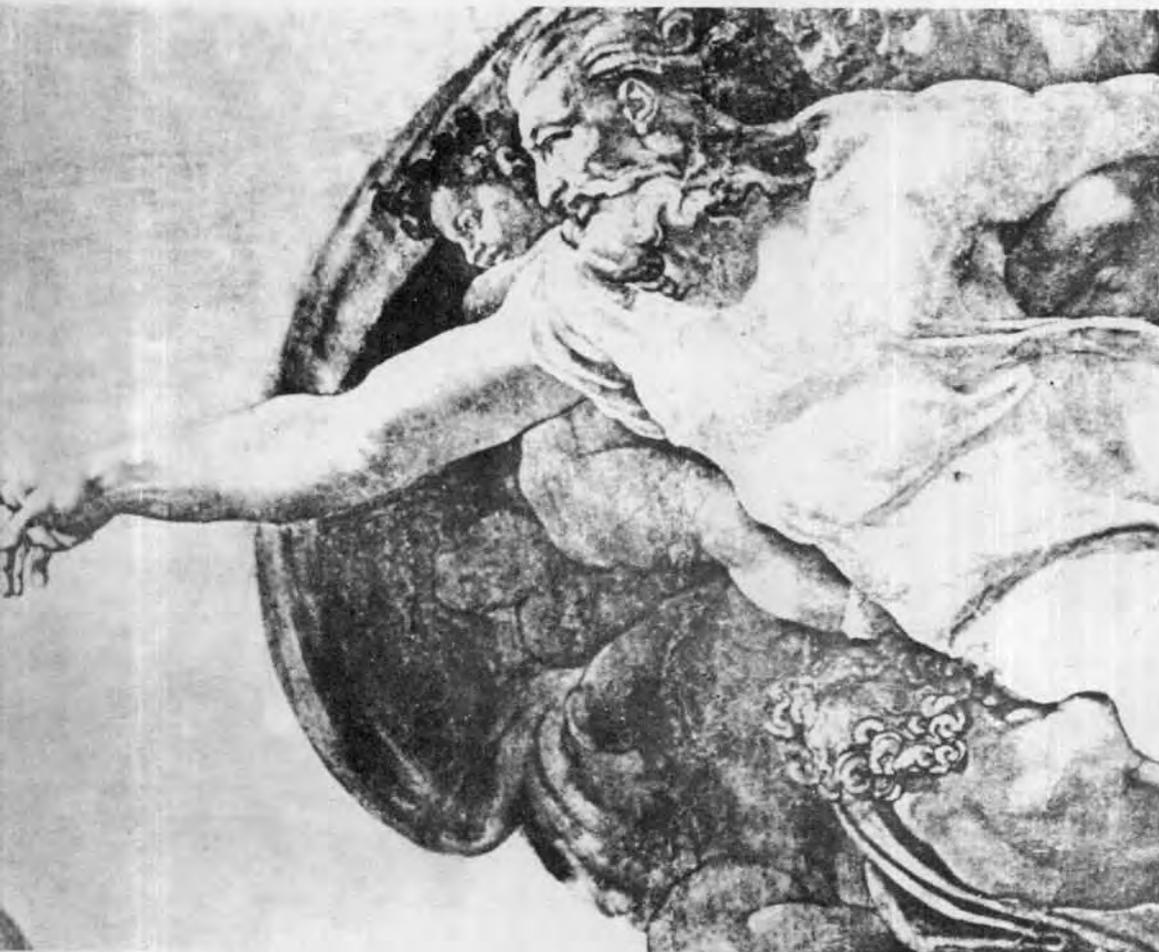
A good teacher is always a help in the pupil's pursuit of accomplishment and perfection. For the pupil, the important things are his own enthusiasm and personal effort that can sustain patient and persistent work towards growth and progress. The teacher comes in to *uplift* the pupil's effort, his growing knowledge, his skills, his orientation. When a good teacher and a good pupil come together, astonishing results follow for both of them – and under ideal conditions incredible transmutations of the personality and its power take place, as we can witness in some of the selections in this book.



MICHELANGELO, The Creation of Adam, Sistine Chapel, Rome.

Instruction, example and influence are the three instruments of a good teacher. A good teacher does not instruct merely by words. In fact, he makes a sparing use of them. He utilizes his communicative skills to invent illuminating phrases and expressions, to initiate meaningful devices and projects, and to create a stimulating atmosphere and environment.

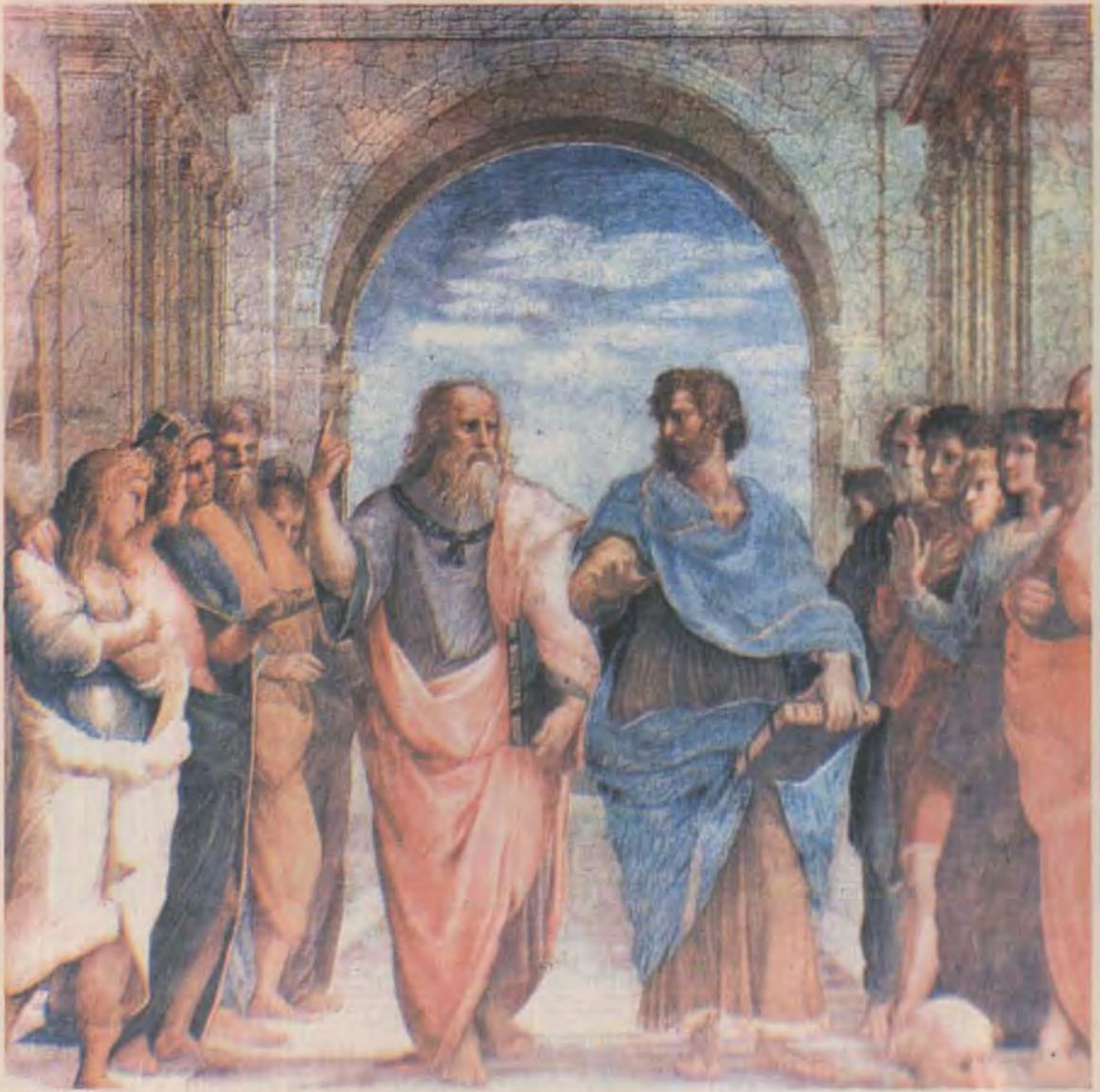
The art of instruction is extremely subtle and delicate, but a good teacher practises this art effortlessly. He harmoniously blends formal with informal instruction. He varies his methods according to circumstances and organizes his teaching to suit the varying demands and needs of his pupils. A good teacher is a keen observer and tries to understand each of his pupils by a kind of identity. He strives untiringly to make his programmes or lessons interesting and to awaken in his pupils a power of concentration and an irresistible will for progress. Finally, he instructs even without instructing, and allows his inner mastery of his own knowledge to shine out through actions rather than through words.



A good teacher knows that example is more important than instruction, and he strives not only to keep his ideals in front of him, but also to progressively embody them. He is scrupulously scientific in detecting his own errors and defects, knowing very well that he cannot demand from his students what he himself cannot practise. The example expected from the teacher is not merely his outward behaviour, but his inner life, his aims and the sincerity with which he pursues those aims.

It is sometimes argued that what should be expected from the teacher is professional competence and a power of communication, and nothing more. But this contention ignores the fact that the example set by the teacher's inner and outer life is automatically communicated to the pupils, whether this is intended or not. Giving a good example is an inherent part of the teacher's task.

But this is not all. Even more powerful than example is the direct influence the teacher exercises upon his students. Influence is the power of contact and the nearness of the teacher's presence. Knowingly or unknowingly, teachers tend



RAPHAËL, The School of Athens, (detail of Plato and Aristotle), Vatikan, Rome

to exercise authority over their students, and sometimes this authority smacks of arrogance. Not infrequently, the act of teaching itself becomes a battery of suggestions of more or less hypnotic intensity. A good teacher must be intent upon cultivating healthy attitudes and traits which have salutary effects on students.

A good teacher accepts his work as a trust given to him by his station and its duties. He recognizes his own importance while acknowledging its relativity. He suggests but does not impose, he is a friend and a philosopher and guide; he does not arrogate to himself vain masterhood. Inspired by humility, he looks upon himself as a child leading children.

A good teacher is a constant learner. He not only renews his knowledge in the field of his specialization, but he also continues to enrich his personality and strives to achieve deeper and higher realizations. Even as he rises higher and higher, he feels a greater and greater need to share his knowledge, skill, experience and illumination with others, particularly with younger generations. In doing so, he may encounter resistance and conflict.

Let us now turn to the pupil. Every child has an inner desire to learn and to grow, but the most important characteristic of the good pupil is his zeal or enthusiasm. This zeal is what determines the persistence of his effort, and such persistence is indispensable to achieve higher and higher levels of excellence. A good pupil is a seeker of knowledge and, motivated by curiosity and a growing sense of wonder, seeks knowledge for its own sake. He travels from the known to the unknown, and in this travel does not limit himself to thought and imagination alone, but sets out to come in direct contact with Nature and Man, in order to gain access to wider, deeper and higher realms of experience.

A good pupil tends to organize his life and to find time for as many activities as possible. In due course, he discovers that concentration holds the key to development, and that he can compress a long programme of work into a much shorter period by applying the art and science of concentration to it. In his natural process of flowering, he comes to combine work and play, and whether in his more formal studies or in the fine arts and crafts, he aims at cultivating and refining his actual and potential faculties.

A good pupil realizes that both body and mind should be developed vigorously and rigorously. He discovers that the qualities needed in physical education contribute a great deal to the development of an integrated personality. For example, the sporting spirit, valued most in physical education, includes good humour and tolerance and consideration for all, a right attitude and friendliness to both teammates and rivals, self-control and a scrupulous observance of the laws of the game, fair play, an equal acceptance of victory or defeat without bad humour, resentment or ill-will towards successful competitors, and the loyal acceptance of the decisions of the appointed judge, umpire or referee. These qualities have their value for life in general and the help that sports can give to an integral development is direct and invaluable.

One of the best lessons of the sporting spirit is that one should strive not to stand first but to do one's best. And a good pupil should put this lesson into practice in every domain of activity.

In the realm of studies, a good pupil tries to develop different aspects of his mind. The search for truth in a scientific and philosophic spirit is his basic

motivation, and he seeks to develop a right discrimination between appearance and reality. He loves books but is not a bookworm. He may or may not read voraciously – his main concern is to cultivate subtlety of intelligence and the capacity to develop complex systems of thought. He learns the skills of analysis and strives to master the dialectic of thesis, antithesis and synthesis.

A harmonious development of the rational mind, the ethical sense and the aesthetic sensibility is the highest aim of normal manhood, and a good pupil strives to integrate the triple powers of reason, will and imagination in harmony with his own unique turn of temperament and the natural law of his inner growth. Indeed, he avoids a hotch-potch of activities but rather seeks to organize them into a kind of unity emerging from the inner core of his soul's integral aspiration.

At an important stage of the pupil's life there comes a choice, and the quality of the pupil will be judged by and will depend upon the choice he makes. This is the choice between the good and the pleasant, *shréyas* and *préyas*, to use the terms of the Katha Upanishad. Not that pleasure or enjoyment has no place in an ideal life, but there is a distinction between seeking pleasure for the sake of pleasure and taking pleasure in whatever worthwhile action one does or undertakes to do. A good pupil makes this distinction and finds that, not in seeking pleasure, but in seeking good and finding pleasure in it, lies the secret of self-discipline. Indeed this is also the secret of the integrated personality. The choice between the good and the pleasant is not merely a matter of ethical life; it is, in a sense, a matter that pervades all aspects of life and in all circumstances the pupil is confronted with this choice. He can sustain this continuous encounter with choice only if he has in him that sublimest of qualities, *sincerity*. Indeed, it can be said that sincerity is the golden key to continuous and integral learning. And no pupil can continue to remain a good pupil unless he has an ever-fresh sincerity which grows continuously and so becomes a burning fire of integral sincerity, that is, sincerity in all parts of the being.

It is this burning fire of sincerity that imparts to the pupil the right thrust and direction, as well as that concentrated and tranquil state of consciousness required to *experience* the reality which is the object of all knowledge. And it is this burning fire that breaks the limitations of the human mind and leads the seeker into higher domains of psychic and spiritual experience. A good pupil does not refuse to transgress the normal limitations of consciousness, but has the requisite courage to take the staff in his hands and set out on a new journey. For a good pupil is not deterred by dogmatism. He is free to test on the anvil of reason and experience all affirmations and all negations. Henceforth, he is no



ROLF, Contemplation, Auroville, 1985

more a seeker of shadows, appearances, names or forms, but a seeker of the real, the boundless, the infinite.

The journey of the good pupil is difficult and there are tests on the way that he must pass in order to enter new gates of progress. In this journey, sooner rather than later, he comes to learn how to learn, and he employs the principles of learning to educate himself. Sooner rather than later, he comes to learn how to control himself, and he employs the principles of discipline to achieve self-possession and self-mastery. Sooner rather than later, he comes to know his own nature, his psychological make-up, his inclinations, his own strengths and weaknesses, and he employs the principles of self-enlargement to discover his wider self, and ultimately his highest unegoistic psychic and spiritual self, and the means by which the light and power of the self can be made manifest in the physical world.

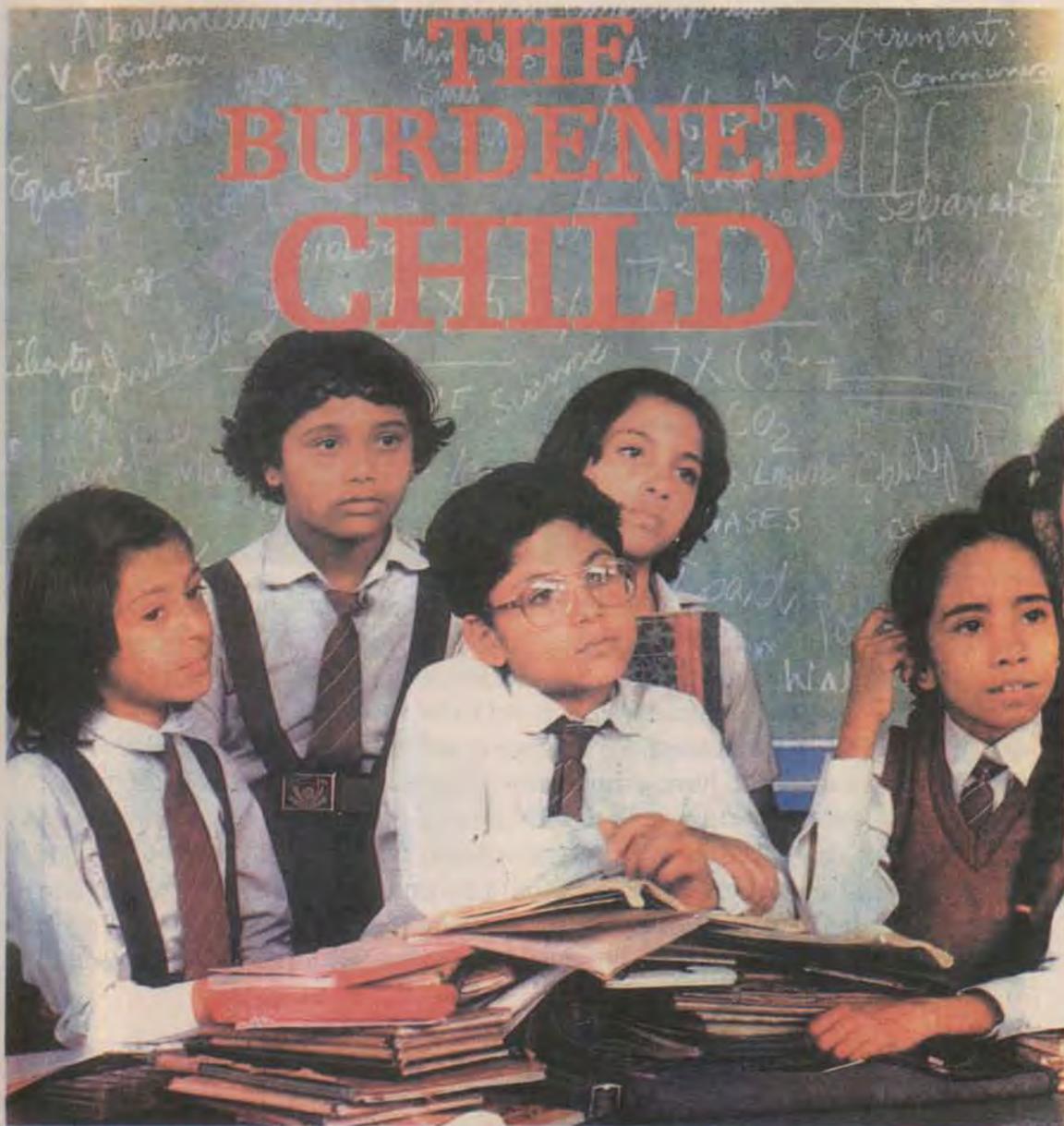
But, like any pupil, the good pupil too needs help and guidance from the teacher. The distinguishing mark of a good pupil is the attitude with which he seeks help and the degree and quality of the help he seeks. Since he puts in a good deal of personal effort, he does not demand much of the teacher's time. Yet, since his eagerness to learn is great, he learns faster, and this demands greater attention and time from the teacher. There are seasons of learning when a pupil can need and demand almost exclusive attention. There are instances when a good pupil needs very little help from the teacher and at a certain stage can dispense with it. Frequently this happens when the pupil has found within himself the teacher's living guidance or when he has learned the art of discovering the inner teacher in every circumstance and in every encounter. It may be said that the need for external help diminishes as the pupil advances in the discovery of the inner teacher, or when the inner relationship between the pupil and the teacher is so intimate and intense that the pupil constantly feels an ever increasing and more joyful inner contact with him.

In a sense, the relationship between a good pupil and a good teacher is indescribable. It tends to be profound and irrevocable, and the pupil feels a natural urge to emulate and obey his teacher. The tradition in which the pupil is enjoined to obey the teacher unquestioningly is rooted in the natural sacredness of the living relationship between the good pupil and the good teacher, and this tradition has its uses. But we find that a good teacher appreciates repeated questioning by the pupil, and he even allows a mutual testing.

To foster an increasing number of good teachers and good pupils is a special responsibility of any educational system and of those in charge of designing that

system. It is true that good teachers and good pupils have flourished even in the most deficient circumstances, but it is certain that they would have proved to be better teachers and better pupils had the system of education itself been better; and it is also certain that a good system of education tends to promote the rapid multiplication of good teachers and good pupils.

Today, educational systems almost everywhere are utilitarian in character, promoting an examination-oriented education that imprisons teachers and students alike. Their goals are limited and have no intrinsic relationship with the ideal processes and ends of genuine teaching-learning. This point is very well illustrated in some of the passages included here.



from INDIA TODAY, November 30, 1987



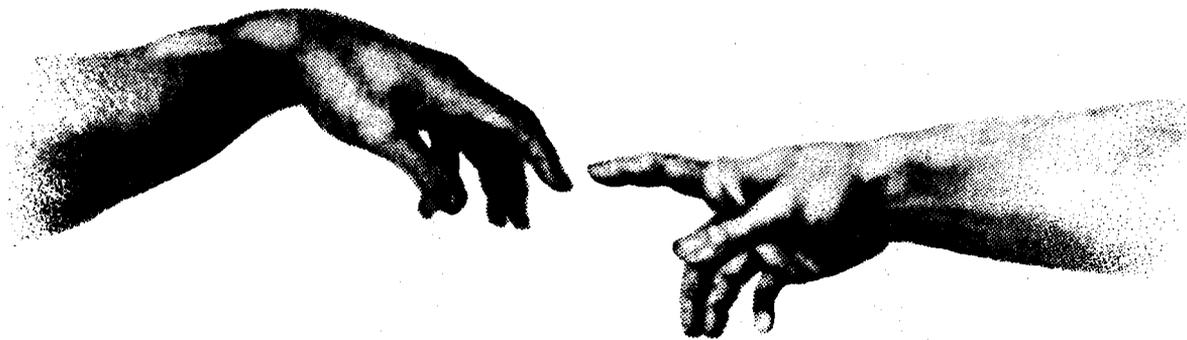
in an Auroville School, 1983

Do we have any idea as to what system of education would encourage the flowering of good teachers and good pupils? This is a difficult question to answer. But if we study various innovative experiments conducted in this context, it seems that an ideal system is yet to be invented and can come about only if three things are assured. First, there must be a great change in the lecture system. Lectures should have a much more modest place than they have today. A greater role should be assigned to self-learning and to work on individual and collective projects. Second, the present syllabus system must undergo a major modification. Programmes of study should be much more flexible. Pupils and teachers should have the possibility of changing the programmes according to the pupils' evolving needs. In fact, syllabi should be evolutionary in character,

developing and emerging out of the interests of the pupils and their goals. Finally, the examination system must be thoroughly revised. Tests should be designed to stimulate the pupils to make further progress. They should be impromptu and should vary according to the varying situations of individuals and groups.

An ideal system of education would provide an environment and a framework that facilitates a harmonious blending of freedom and discipline. This harmonious blending presupposes, mainly on the part of teachers and educational administrators, the fulfillment of two conditions: the pursuit of truth and the pursuit of harmony. Neither of these pursuits can be meaningful or fruitful unless they are voluntary. The spirit of liberty is a necessary condition for the search for truth and for securing cooperation, mutual goodwill and fellow feeling. In brief, it may be said that Truth, Harmony and Liberty will be the underlying principles of an ideal system of education.

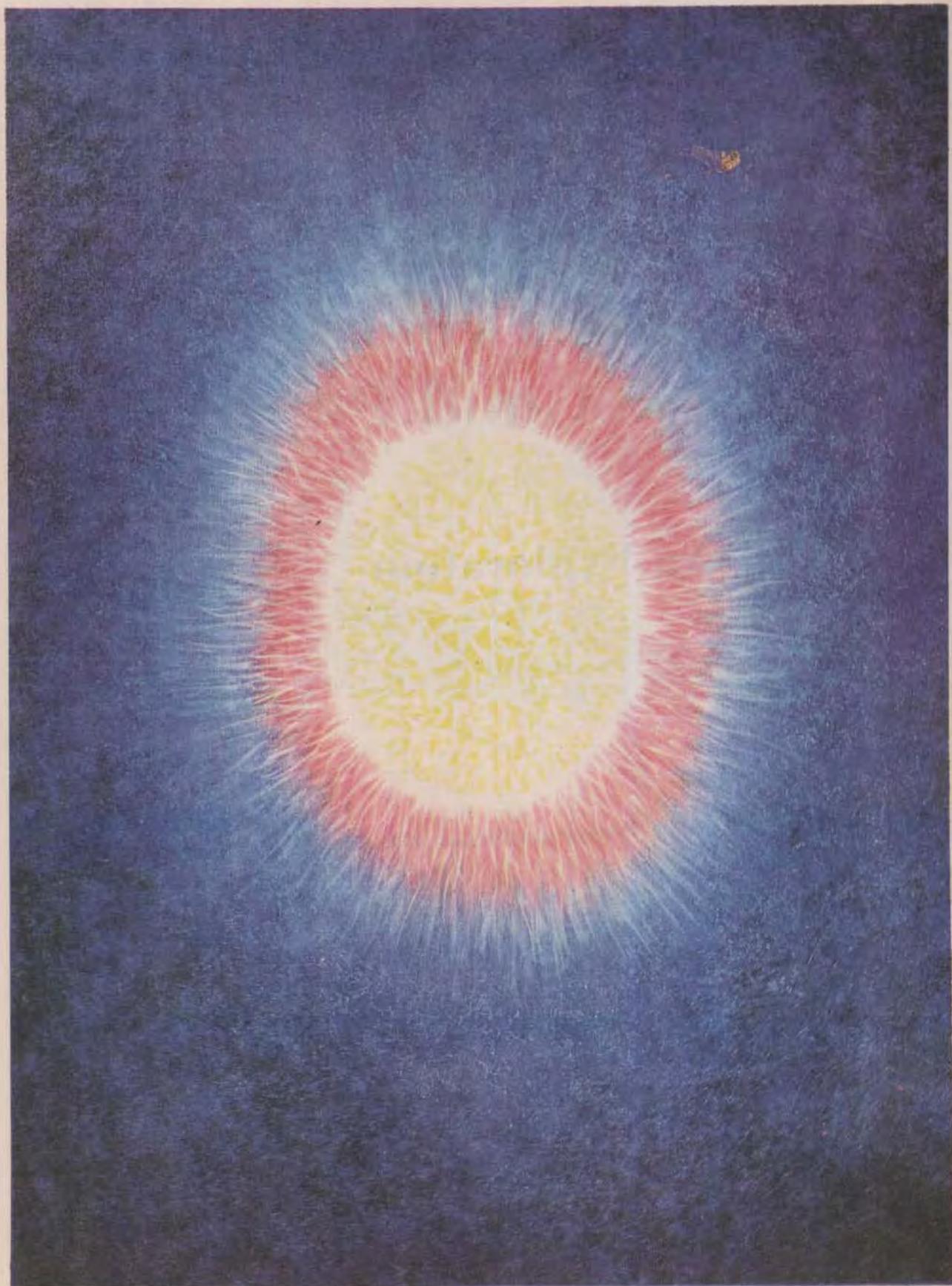
At the same time, it must be admitted that without good teachers and good pupils there can be no good educational system. Today's educators, therefore, need to work on all three fronts simultaneously: the teacher, the pupil and the system. But where should we begin? This, again, is not an easy question to answer. Probably we should begin from where we are – that is, if we are teachers, we should strive to become good teachers; if we are pupils, we should strive to become good pupils; and if we are in charge of the educational system, we should set about creating new conditions in the system so as to encourage and foster good teachers and good pupils.





The Good Teacher and the Good Pupil

An Exploration



ROLF, Purity, Auroville 1986

THE RISHI AND THE BRAHMACHARIN

Introduction

Ancient India conceived an intimate relationship between education and life. It looked upon education as a preparation for life and considered life a process of continuing education. It studied life in all its aspects and attempted to apply psychological principles and truths of life to education. One important consequence was to fix for education certain life-long objectives that require life-long effort to achieve and realize. These objectives were summarized in a triple formula which gave a wide and lofty framework to the ancient system of education.

*Lead me from falsehood to truth
Lead me from darkness to light
Lead me from death to immortality*

असतो मा सद्गमय ।
तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय ।
मृत्योर्मांसृतं गमय ॥

This formula proved to be so potent that it governed the Indian system of education for ages. Even today, remote as we are from that ancient ethos, we refer to it constantly for fresh inspiration.

To the ancient thinkers and sages, the ideals of truth, light and immortality constituted a triune unity, each subsisting in the other. Truth meant to them not an isolated fact, but one vast unity of the Objective Fact in which the multiplicity of facts and phenomena finds its essential oneness. Light meant to them a state of plenary consciousness in which essence and multiplicity is comprehended in a vast, undivided, unified and integral concentration. That state of consciousness in which the reality of unity and oneness is comprehended was found by them to be an imperturbable and imperishable state of immortality, a state in which one can permanently dwell and through which one can effectuate extraordinary transmutations of the processes of the mind, life and body.

That Objective Fact, self-luminous and imperishable, which comprehends multiplicity in oneness, was named variously in the early records of Indian knowledge. The Veda, the earliest record, described it as the "One Existent, which the Wise call by various names" (ekam sad, vipra bahudha vadanti).¹ The Upanishads, the later records, describe it sometimes as sat, the Pure Existent, and sometimes as asat, the Non-Existent or the ineffable that transcends any particular description. The Upanishads also describe it as the Unknowable, an indefinable "x", the Brahman, That (tat), the other which can be seized only by a process that dismisses every description by pronouncing "not that, not that" (néti néti). The largest positive description the Upanishads gives of that "x", that Something Else, is Sachchidānanda (the conscious and delightful Existent).

The Upanishads admit clearly and unambiguously that the knowledge of the Sat or the Brahman is neither intellectual nor anti-intellectual. Indeed, it is beyond the grasp of the senses, antindriyam but it is still buddhigrāhyam,² seizable by the intellect. Pure Reason, it may be said, has the idea of essence, and by developing this idea can arrive at some concept of the Brahman, even though Brahman is more than essence. However, according to strict criteria, knowledge is determined both through idea and through direct, abiding and undeniable experience. The strength of the Vedic and Upanishadic assertions is that they were arrived at by centuries of experiment in discovering and practising certain profound methods by which the Objective Fact, the Substance, that Multiple One, the simple-complex, the mysterious "x", the Sat or the Brahman can be seized and known in direct experience.

It is said that existence is what we knock into; it is something we cannot

1. Rig Veda, Mandala I, Sukta 164, Hymn 46.

2. Gita, VI, 21.

think away, it stands and cannot be obliterated. But in normal experience, our subjective apparatus imposes its own categories on the object of experience, and we are thus prevented from experiencing the truly existent object – if, indeed, there is such a thing. We experience, to use Kant's terminology, quantity, quality, relation and modality, in addition to two forms of intuition, Space and Time. But we fail to experience the Object-in-itself, the Existence-in-itself. The question is whether we can remove the blinders of our subjective mental consciousness, look freely at truth, and experience in a state of total objectivity the reality as it is.

The ancient Indian educational theory affirms that it is possible to transcend the limitations of sense-bound experience and reason-bound consciousness, and that the most fundamental object of education is to prepare the pupil to free himself from those limitations and attain that level of knowledge where he can dwell permanently in existent reality, in light and in immortality.

The early Indian educators made a distinction between Vidyā and Avidyā, between the knowledge of Existence-in-itself, in its totality and multiple manifestation, and the knowledge of multiplicity alone, without the comprehension of the underlying unity. And it was laid down that the aim of education, of life-long education, was to lead the individual to Sā vidyā yā vimuktayé, the knowledge which liberates from the limitations of Avidyā.

If we study the Veda and the Upanishads in a truly scientific spirit, unprejudiced by any a priori dogma that the human limitations of consciousness cannot be transcended, we shall find that the authors of these ancient records were themselves true scientists and experimenters. Those thinkers and seers devoted all their energies to the study of human psychology so as to discover the methods by which we can attain freedom from our ordinary limitations. This discovery was the most significant achievement of ancient India. As Sri Aurobindo pointed out, ". . . the seers of ancient India had, in their experiments and efforts at spiritual training and the conquest of the body, perfected a discovery which in its importance to the future of human knowledge dwarfs the divinations of Newton and Galileo, even the discovery of the inductive and experimental method in Science was not more momentous . . ."¹

This discovery was the discovery of Yoga. The ancient seers made a distinction between religion and Yoga. Religion is a matter of belief, rituals and ceremonies, even though it may involve an inner practice of moral and

1. Sri Aurobindo, *The Upanishads*, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, vol. 12, p. 6.

spiritual discipline. Yoga, on the other hand, focuses on psychology and on developing the psychological faculties and powers by which the highest Object of Knowledge can be experienced. To the Yogin, what matters is that direct experience, attained by psychological enlargement, psychological purification and psychological revolution. Just as physical science starts with the natural phenomenon of lightning and utilizes various means to generate, control and distribute electricity on an increasing scale, even so Yoga takes up the ordinary psychological functioning of body, life and mind and discovers methods by which these psychological functionings can be brought to their highest pitch and then generated, controlled and used at will for the objects in view.

There were, indeed, specializations. Hatha Yoga, for example, concentrated on the subtle workings of the body, and by means of controlling and purifying these workings achieved astonishing results, not only of physical health and vigour but even of preparing the individual for deeper spiritual realizations. Raja Yoga specialized in dealing with mental vibrations and discovered methods by which the stuff of consciousness can be controlled and brought to a state of cessation, resulting in a complete stillness in which the Object of Knowledge stands out clearly and luminously. The Yoga of Knowledge, the Yoga of Divine Love and the Yoga of Action took up, respectively, the workings of cognition, affection and conation, and arrived at extraordinary experiences of higher levels of consciousness and their corresponding objects of knowledge.

Those ancient seers also made a distinction between Yoga and philosophy. Philosophy was restricted to mean intellectual reasoning about the ultimate source of things or intellectual transcription of spiritual experience. It was recognized that Yoga transcended intellectual methods of thought and attempted to revolutionize the ego-bound operations of thinking, feeling and action so as to arrive at a new and heightened functioning of the higher self, the Atman or the Brahman.¹

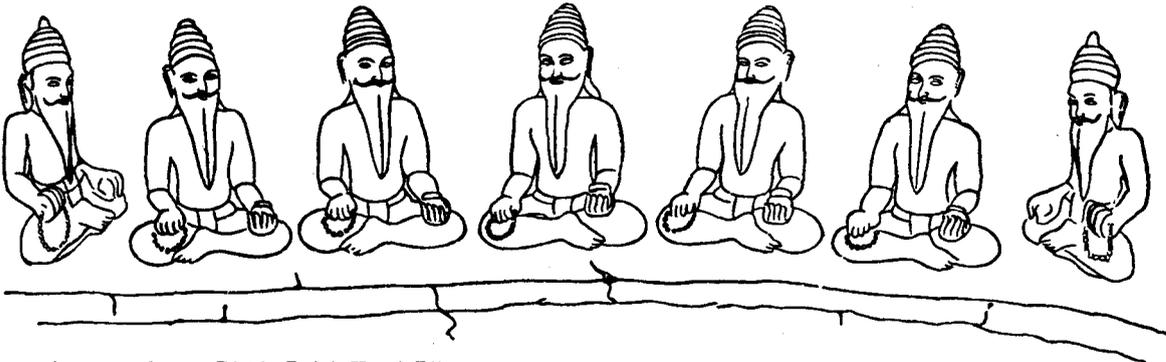
In spite of its specialized domains and crowning realizations, yogic research constantly strove to combine various systems of Yoga for purposes of arriving at synthetic and composite results. The Veda itself represented a certain kind of synthesis. Upanishadic seers made further research, recovered the Vedic Yoga, and brought about a fresh synthesis. Yoga, like science, was never looked

1. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, it is said: "Therefore let the seeker, after he has done with learning, wish to stand by real strength (knowledge of the Self) which enables us to dispense with all other knowledge" (iii,5,1). In the same Upanishad, it is said again, "He should not seek after the knowledge of the books, for that is mere weariness of the tongue" (iv,4,21). Describing the higher Self, the Taaittiriya Upanishad says: "Before whom words and thought recoil, not finding him" (ii,4). The Katha Upanishad declares: "Not by the Veda is the Atman attained, nor by intellect, nor by much knowledge of books" (i,2,23).

upon as a closed book; like science, Yoga encouraged fresh quest and fresh realizations. Yoga came thus to be recognized as a science par excellence.

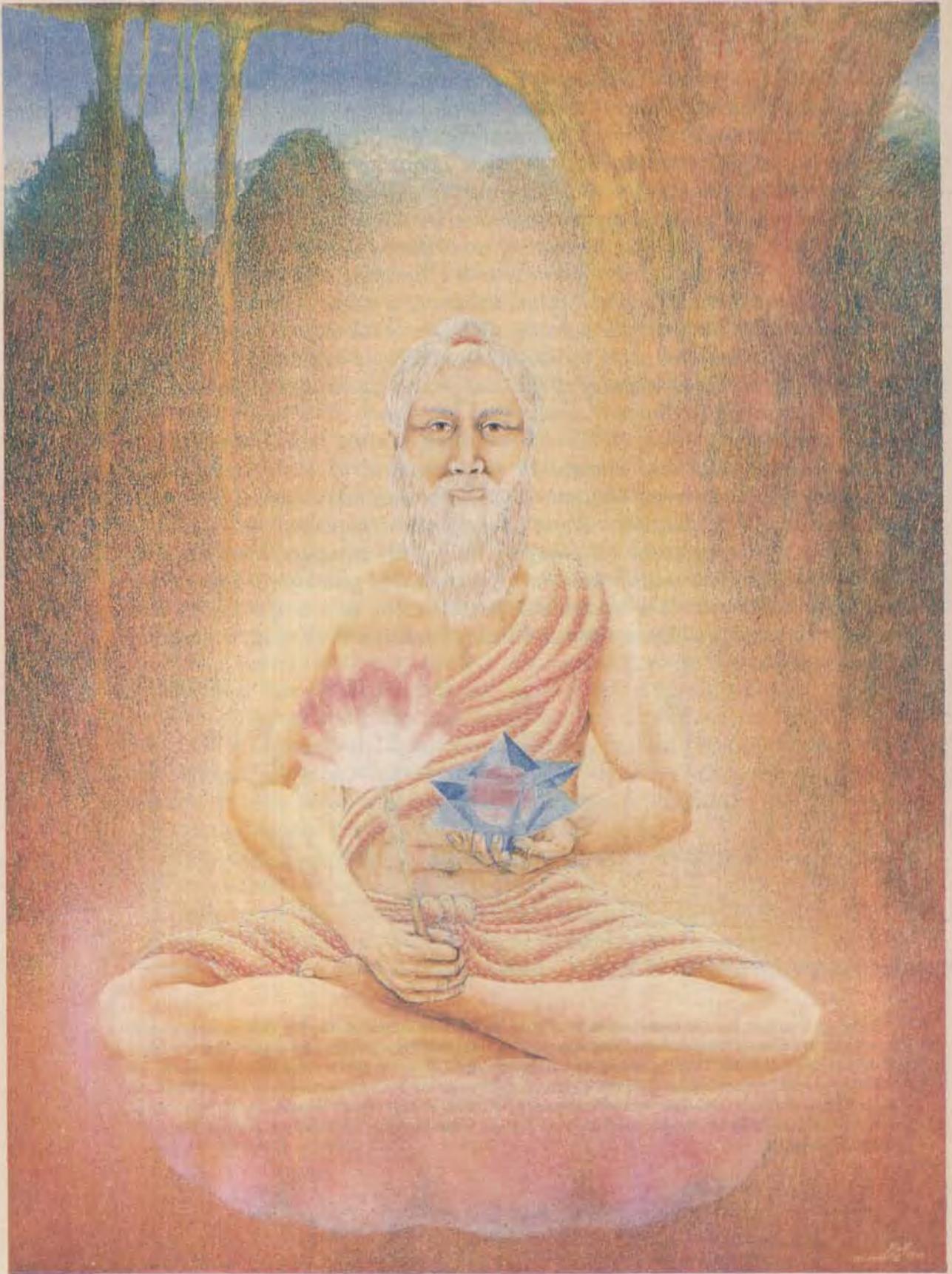
We have in the records of the Vedas and the Upanishads the names of those who developed this great science of Yoga. The generic name is Rishi, the illumined seer, standing above the world and yet uplifting it by his upward gaze, unruffled concentration and compassionate wisdom. It was the Rishi who came to be acknowledged as the teacher and revered as Guru or Acharya. It is to the Rishi that the pupils went in search of training and knowledge, and the ancient Indian teacher-pupil relationship came to be determined by the profound and even inscrutable ways by which the teachers and pupils, Gurus and Shishyas, developed their modes and methods of exploring knowledge, discovering the aim and meaning of life, and practising disciplines for arriving at psychological perfection.

The names of the Vedic Rishis still reverberate in the Indian atmosphere, inspiring veneration and obeisance – the names of Vishwamitra and Vashishtha, Vamadeva and Bhāradwāja, Madhuchhandas and Dirghatamas, Gritsamada and Medhatithi.¹ Some of the prose Upanishads have a vivid narrative which restores for us, though only in brief glimpses, the picture of that extraordinary stir and movement of enquiry and passion for the highest knowledge which made the Upanishads possible. The scenes of the old world live before us in a few pages: the sages sitting in their groves ready to test and



Images in stone of seven Rishis, Rajgir Kund, Bihar

1. These great names are those to whom various parts of the Rig Veda are attributed. The Rig Veda, as we possess it, is arranged in ten books. They are called Mandalas. Six of the Mandalas are attributed each to the hymns of a single Rishi or a family of Rishis. Thus the second Mandala is devoted chiefly to the Suktas of the Rishi Gritsamada, the third Mandala and the Seventh Mandala to Vishwamitra and Vashishtha, respectively, the fourth to Vamadeva, the sixth to Bhāradwāja, The fifth is occupied by the hymns of the house of Atri. Other Mandalas contain the hymns of several Rishis and Rishikās. The prominent names of Rishikās in the Rig Veda are: Romashā, Lopāmudrā, Apālā, Kadrū, Vishwavārā.



ROLF, The Rishi, Auroville 1988

teach the pupils; princes and learned Brahmins and great landed nobles; the king's son in his chariot and the illegitimate son of the servant-girl. We have here Janaka, the subtle mind of Ajātashatru, Raikwa of the cart. There is Yajnavalkya, militant for truth, calm and ironic, taking to himself, without attachment, worldly possessions and spiritual riches and casting at last all his wealth behind to wander forth as a houseless ascetic. And there is Krishna, son of Devaki, who heard a single word of the Rishi Ghora and knew at once the eternal.¹ We have the Ashrams, the courts of kings who were also spiritual discoverers and thinkers, the great sacrificial assemblies where the sages met and compared their knowledge. We see here how the soul of India was born, and we come to recognize the Vedas and Upanishads as not only the fountain-head of Indian philosophy and spirituality, of Indian art, poetry and literature, but also of Indian education and of the Indian tradition of teacher-pupil relationship.

The most important idea governing the ancient system of education was that of perfection, for developing the mind and soul of man. Indian education aimed at helping the individual to grow in the power and force of certain large universal qualities which in their harmony build a higher type of manhood. In Indian thought and life, this was the ideal of the best, the law of the good or noble man, the discipline laid down for the self-perfecting individual. This ideal was not a purely moral or ethical conception, although that element predominated; it was also intellectual, social, aesthetic, the flowering of the whole ideal man, the perfection of the total human nature. We meet in the Indian conception of best, shreshtha, the most varied qualities. In the heart benevolence, beneficence, love, compassion, altruism, long-suffering, liberality, kindness, patience; in the character courage, heroism, energy, loyalty, continence, truth, honour, justice, faith, obedience and reverence where these were due, but power too to govern and direct, a fine modesty and yet a strong independence and noble pride; in the mind wisdom and intelligence and love of learning, knowledge of all the best thought, openness to poetry, art and beauty, an educated capacity and skill in works; in the inner being pity, love of God, seeking after the highest, the spiritual turn; in social relations and conduct a strict observance of all social obligations as father, son, husband, brother, kinsman, friend, ruler or subject, master or servant, prince or warrior or worker, king or sage. This ideal is clearly portrayed in the written records of ancient India. It was the creation of an ideal and rational

1. The great names that we find in the Upanishads include: Uddālaka Āruni, Gārgi Vāchaknavi, Janaka, Nārada, Pippalāda, Prevāhana Jairali, Mahidāsa Aitareya, Maitreyi, Yajnavalkya, Raikwa, Saunaka, Satyakāma Jābāla, Sukeshin Bhāradvāja.

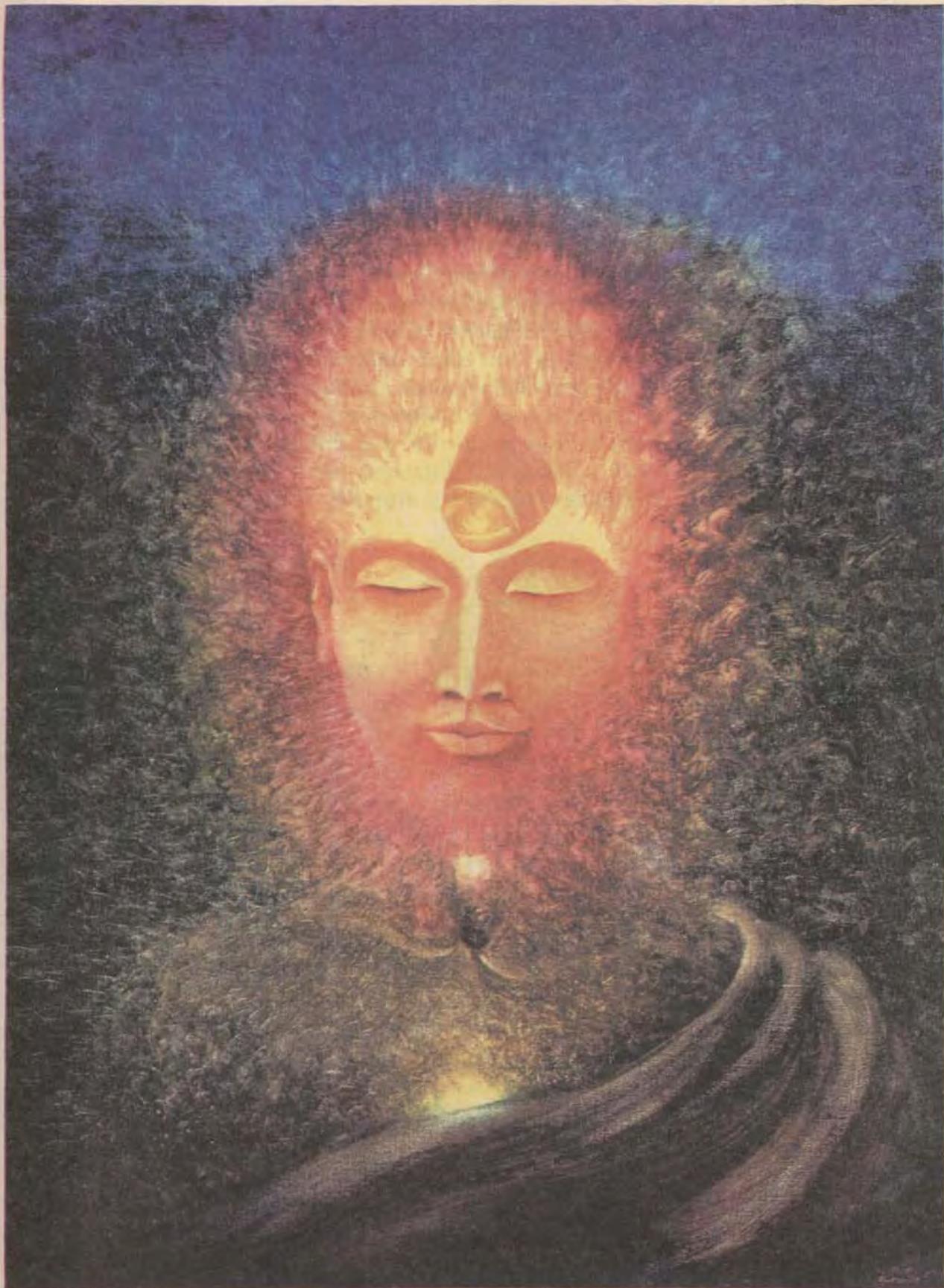
mind, both spirit-wise and worldly-wise, deeply spiritual, nobly ethical, firmly yet flexibly intellectual, scientific and aesthetic, patient and tolerant of life's difficulties and human weakness, but arduous in self-discipline.

The ancient Indian system of education developed as a part of the general system of Indian culture. This system at once indulged and controlled man's nature; it fitted him for his social role; it stamped on his mind the generous ideal of an accomplished humanity, refined, harmonious in all its capacities, ennobled in all its members; but it placed before him too the theory and practice of Yoga, the theory and practice of a higher change, familiarized him with the concept of a spiritual existence and sowed in him a hunger for the divine and the infinite. The pupil was not allowed to forget that he had within him a higher self beyond his little personal ego, and that numerous ways and disciplines were provided by which he could realize this higher self or at least turn and follow at a distance this higher aim according to his capacity and nature, adhikara. Around him he saw and revered the powerful teachers who practised and were mighty masters of these disciplines.

In the Indian system of education, there was a great deal of emphasis on discipline. The life of the pupil began with a resolve to impose upon himself the ideal and practice of Brahmacharya, which meant not only physical continence, but a constant burning aspiration for the knowledge of the Brahman. This one ideal uplifted the physical, vital and mental energies in unified concentration to achieve self-knowledge and self-mastery. For this reason, the pupil came to be called the Brahmacharin, one who has resolved to follow the discipline of Brahmacharya. Vratam charishyami – I shall resolutely follow my vow, is what the pupil resolves when he embarks upon his journey of discipleship.

Pursuit of truth was a part of the discipline of Brahmacharya; so also was the pursuit of kindness, harmony and love, ahimsā. Practice of renunciation of the sense of personal possession of things and relations, renunciation of covetousness that leads to theft and collection of personal possessions, were also part of a pupil's self-discipline. In addition, the pupil was expected to develop purity – purity of the body, purity of emotions and purity of thought.

Swadhyāya (self-study) was the corner-stone of the pupil's discipline and method of learning. The pupil was expected to develop extraordinary powers of memory, imagination and thought. The predominance of oral tradition necessitated the cultivation of the power of memory; the high content of philosophical and spiritual knowledge necessitated the cultivation of subtlety and complexity of thought; the natural setting of the Ashrams and Gurukulas in the open forest, where nature could be an intimate friend and companion,



ROLF, The Brahmacharin, Auroville 1987

necessitated the cultivation of the powers of inner communion, imagination and natural delight.

That the life of the pupil was vigorous and rigorous cannot be doubted. But it must not be supposed that there was any absence of mirth and joy. In some of the accounts of life in the Ashrams there is ample evidence to show that the system of education was flexible, free from the rigidities found in the lecture and examination-oriented system in which our present system of education is imprisoned. A good deal of individual attention was paid to every pupil. The teacher was not expected to demand from the pupil more than the highest effort of which he was capable. The teacher varied his method with each pupil, and education was devised to suit each individual's need of growth and development. In *Abhijnāna Shakuntalam*, Kalidasa gives a beautiful portrayal of the Ashram of Kanva, a great Rishi revered by common people and kings alike. In this Ashram there were both boys and girls, and while the atmosphere was surcharged with tapasyā, self-discipline, there was also fun and frolic among friends. No feeling of rigidity is portrayed in this beautiful drama. There



Hermitages in Bharhut Sculptures (c. second century B C)

is, rather, restrained charm, joy and beauty. Other accounts, too, such as those in the Ramayana and the Mahabharata, describe the colour and warmth of the interplay of the forces of human nature, and give examples of how the teacher dealt with this interplay with gentle firmness guided by mature experience and wisdom.¹

The teacher, the Rishi, was the seer who had lived the fullness of life and had often led the life of a householder. In some accounts the Rishi's wife was also a Rishi in her own right and lived in the Ashram along with her husband, providing material care for the pupils. The Ashram was a veritable Gurukula, where the pupils were loved and cared for as members of the Guru's family.



Rishi Atri and his Wife (Anasuya),
from a Mahayana Manuscript

1. In the Mahabharata (i.70), there is a description of Kanva's hermitage. It was situated on the banks of the Malini, a tributary of the Sarayu river. Numerous hermitages stretched round the central hermitage. At this Ashram, there were specialists in each of the four Vedas; in Phonetics, Metrics, Grammar, and Niyukta. There were also philosophers well-versed in the science of the Absolute. There were logicians. There were also specialists in the physical sciences and arts. In this forest university, the study of every available branch of learning was cultivated. In the Ramayana (vi, 126; ii,90-2), we have an interesting description of the hermitage of Rishi Bhāradwāja at Prayaga. This hermitage was one of the biggest of the times. The Ashram was equipped with stalls to accommodate the royal elephants and horses; there were mansions and palaces and gateways. A separate royal guest house was furnished with beds, seats, vehicles, coverlets and carpets, stores of food. The Ashram also entertained its royal guests with performances by musicians and dancing girls.

In those times the task of the teacher was to awaken more than to instruct. It was understood that true knowledge depended on the cultivation of powers of concentration, which in turn depended upon great quietude of the mind and absence of demands of impatient and hurried work. It was also acknowledged that some of the greatest truths needed to be practised by voluntary choice and persistent, dedicated discipline. The system of education provided ample opportunities for the pupil to experience the significance of free choice, particularly the choice between the good and the pleasant, shréyas, and préyas. What was discouraged was personal indulgence or undisciplined preference; but the very object of education implied free choice at every important stage of a pupil's growth. In other words, freedom of choice and an increasing experience of spiritual freedom blended together in that system of education.

It is sometimes argued that the ancient Indian tradition gave too much importance to reverence to the teacher.¹ It is contended that the teacher was unduly placed on the highest pedestal and that this developed authoritarianism in the teacher and slavishness in the pupil. How shall we meet this criticism? What truth lies behind it? In the course of history, when the Rishi came to be replaced by the Pandit, the illumined seer by the erudite scholar, there was quite often a tendency on the part of the Pandit to arrogate to himself the natural power, authority and influence of the Rishi, and this did injure the tradition. Further degeneration came about when the Pandit was replaced by ordinary sophists, debaters and bookish teachers. At the same time, it must be said that the good Pandits and ordinary teachers refrained from arrogating to themselves the authority of the Rishi. Indeed, the ideal we find in the ancient Indian system is that it is not only by obediently serving the teacher but also by repeated and full questioning that the pupil can gain the right knowledge, pari prashnena, pari sevayā.

Actually, reverence for the teacher was enjoined upon the pupil for three main reasons. In the first place, Indian culture and consequently the Indian system of education strove to subordinate the demands of the ego to the demands of society, of the world and of the higher self. An attempt was made to create systems and practices – through rule, tradition or other means – by which the demands of the higher self were given a predominant position. In fact, not only the teacher, but the mother and the father and even the guest were given a place of high reverence. As the Taittiriya Upanishad says:

1. One well-known verse speaks of Guru as Brahma, as Vishnu and as Maheshwara. He is equated with the Supreme Absolute Being. गुरुर्ब्रह्मा गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः ।
गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म तस्मै श्री गुरुवे नमः ॥

Matri devo bhava, pitri devo bhava, acharya devo bhava, atithi devo bhava. (*"Let thy father be unto thee as thy God, And thy mother as thy Goddess whom thou adorest, Serve the master as a God, and as a God the stranger within thy dwelling."*)

The second reason was that the Rishi represented not only a mature worldly and scholarly wisdom but also a high spiritual realization, and thus was to be doubly revered. In modern days, where knowledge is easily available through books and other means of communication, our full appreciation of knowledge is likely to be considerably diminished. Thus we may not be able to understand why the Guru was assigned high and exceptional reverence. But we must note that the Vedic and Upanishadic periods were marked by an intense quest for new knowledge. There was, as it were, an unquenchable thirst, and only the thirsty know what gratitude is due to the one who quenches the thirst. In that context, then, reverence for the teacher was not something imposed upon the pupil; the real seeker became psychologically impelled to revere anyone who had knowledge and could transmit it effectively to him. This was particularly true when the knowledge sought after was not only pragmatic and intellectual but spiritual. For among all human endeavours, spiritual endeavour is the most difficult, beset with the greatest difficulties. In certain circumstances, the pursuit of spiritual knowledge requires vigilant direction and guidance. Spiritual search is like a search in a virgin forest, and the law of that search exacts from the seeker the highest price of self-sacrifice and consecration. The guide and teacher on the spiritual path, therefore, deserves the highest reverence. The intricacies and hazards of the spiritual endeavour are known to the teacher, and it is often unwise to reveal them to the seeker in advance. Spiritual discoveries and realizations imply major psychological surgery. These operations the pupil cannot perform by himself; a teacher is needed. And just as a doctor demands from the patient a high degree of trust and obedience, so does the teacher of the spiritual path.

But there is a third reason for the reverence demanded of the pupil for the teacher. The Indian educational and yogic system recognized that the real teacher is the supreme Brahman seated within oneself, and sooner rather than later, the seeker must discover the inner teacher and the inner guide.

The necessity for the pupil to have the external word or the external guidance of a teacher is then seen to be a concession to human limitations. We require external aids until we realize the true inner Aid. This being the case, the external teacher comes to represent to the seeker the Supreme Brahman. Therefore, the reverence due to the Supreme is offered by the seeker to the external teacher. On his part, the external teacher, if he knows his true position,

looks upon his task as a trust given to him from above. He realizes the relativity of his importance. Knowing that the real teacher is seated within the pupil, he hands over the task of guidance to that inner guide as soon as possible. Until then, he devotes all his energies to one single aim, the flowering of the pupil's faculties and the awakening of the inner guide seated within the pupil's heart. It is to such a teacher that the ancient tradition of India assigned highest reverence.

The good teacher is not content with his own self-knowledge. He constantly seeks fresh knowledge and attempts to share it with other seekers. His prayer is that of the Rishi in the Taittiriya Upanishad, who says:

*May the Brahmacharins come unto me. Swaha!
From here and there may the Brahmacharins come unto me. Swaha!
May the Brahmacharins set forth unto me. Swaha!
May the Brahmacharins attain to peace of soul. Swaha!*¹

आ मा यन्तु ब्रह्मचारिणः स्वाहा ।
वि मा यन्तु ब्रह्मचारिणः स्वाहा ।
प्र मा यन्तु ब्रह्मचारिणः स्वाहा ।
दमायन्तु ब्रह्मचारिणः स्वाहा ।
शमायन्तु ब्रह्मचारिणः स्वाहा ।

The good teacher as conceived in the ancient system of India interweaves his own life with the life of his pupils. He aspires and prays not for himself alone but also for his pupils. Togetherness is the watchword of the good teacher.

He prays:

*Together may He protect us,
Together may He possess us,
Together may we make unto us strength and virility;
May our study be full to us of light and power.
May we never hate.*²

And what is the advice that the good teacher gives to his pupils? He says, "Speak truth, walk in the way of thy duty, neglect not the study of knowledge. Thou shalt not be negligent of truth; thou shalt not be negligent of thy duty, thou shalt not be negligent of welfare; thou shalt not be negligent towards thy

1. Taittiriya Upanishad, Shikshavalli, chapter 4.

2. Taittiriya Upanishad, Brahmanandavalli, chapter I.

increase and thy thriving; thou shalt not be negligent of the study and teaching of the highest Truth."



Rishi Vashishtha

During the Vedic and Upanishadic periods, and even later, there was an emphasis on the pursuit of an integral aim of life, which determined the discipline of integral education. Both the material and spiritual poles of being had their place in this system. The ancient Sanskrit adage, Shareeram ādyam khalu dharma sādhanam (a sound body is the veritable instrument of the pursuit of the ideal law of life) underlined the importance of physical education. There was also a clear recognition that the fullness of physical, vital, and mental culture was necessary for arriving at spiritual perfection. And

if we study the Yoga of the Veda in its inmost significance, we find that there was an intense research into the possibilities of spiritual manifestation in physical life. Even though this research may not have been completed, there was a secret knowledge that the highest light is contained in the darkest caves of the physical or the inconscient, and that one must descend into the depths of darkness to recover that highest light. In practical terms, this implied not rejection of physical and material life but an intensive cultivation and transformation of that life.

It is true that there was a gradual deviation from the original Vedic conception of life and education. Much of it was recovered by the seers of the Upanishads, and the integrality of spirit and matter was preserved in some of their teachings. But already a kind of exclusivism had become manifest during the Upanishadic Age. Later, sharp distinctions came to be made between Spirit and Matter, and a denunciation of material life became more and more predominant. The call of the spirit and a recoil from matter characterize powerful movements of Indian thought. This affected the educational system, and the original impulse of integral education was lost. The consequences have been disastrous, and today we are in a deep crisis.

But is it a question merely of recovering that original impulse? Are we to propose revivalism? This is a matter of controversy. Although what was valuable in the ancient system should be preserved and developed, if we examine the spirit of the Indian Renaissance and the task it has set out to accomplish, we find that a mere revival of the old will not suffice; we shall have to admit new elements and new attitudes which are valuable for preparing the future humanity.

The Indian Renaissance strove for an India that is genuinely Indian and genuinely universal. India became free not only for itself but for the sake of humanity. Free India has to take up the deeper problems that today confront humanity as a whole. As Sri Aurobindo points out:

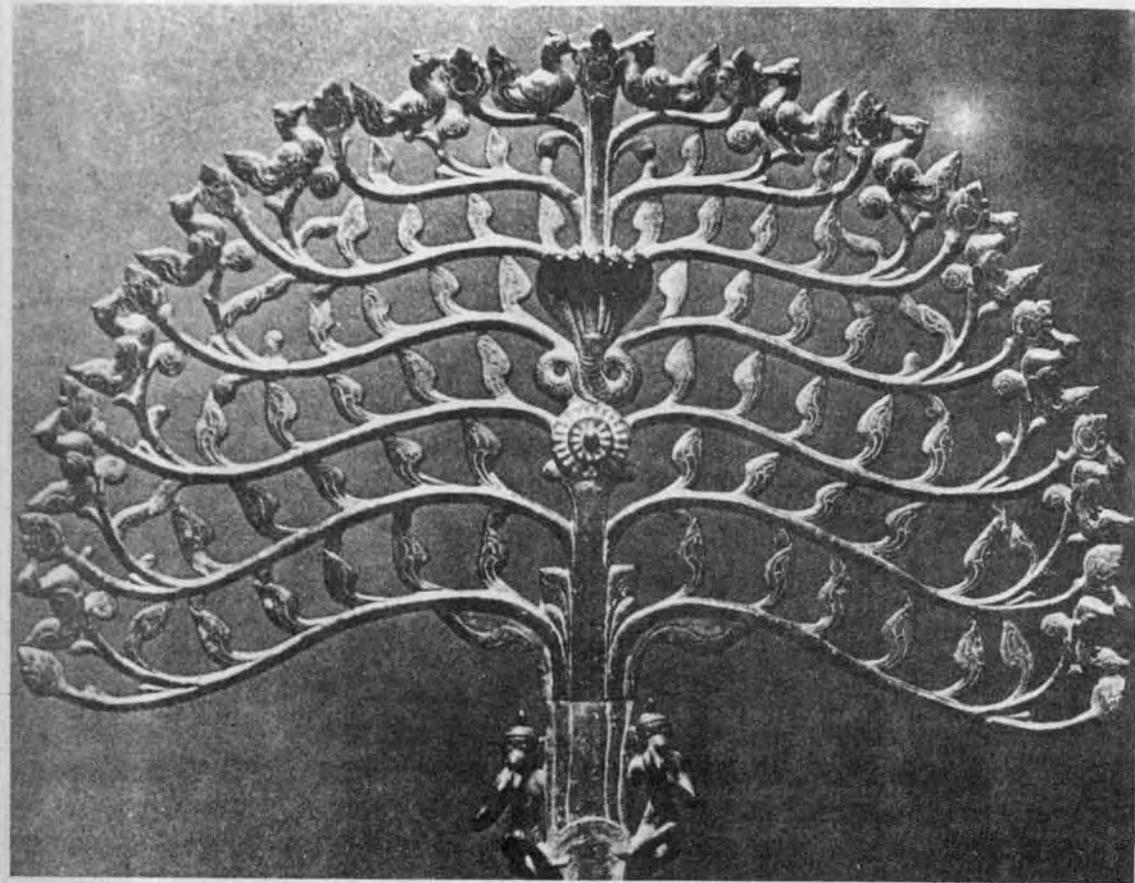
Mankind is passing today through an evolutionary crisis in which is contained the choice of its destiny.

It is in that context that Sri Aurobindo undertook a programme of research involving the discovery of new knowledge in the light of which a new synthesis relevant to the needs of today and tomorrow can be created. The secret of that synthesis, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, is the manifestation of Spirit in Matter, leading to an unprecedented perfection and even a mutation of the human species. Sri Aurobindo's discovery of the Supermind and its possibility

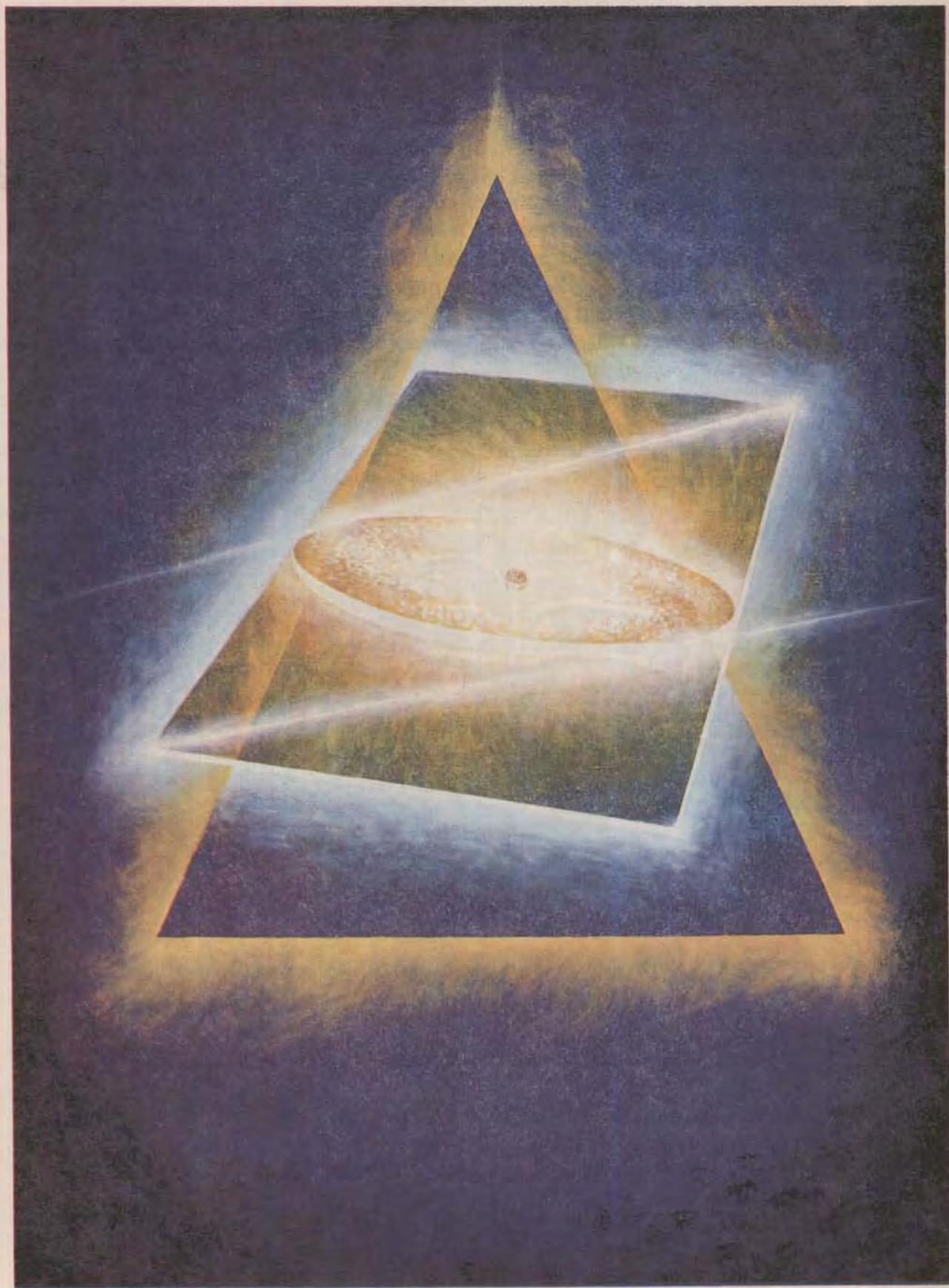
of full operation in physical life may be regarded as the most significant gift of renascent India to humanity's effort to overcome its crisis.

This has also a momentous consequence for education. The new education that must be built should be a new kind of integral education that will aim at organizing that discovery in more and more concrete forms. This is a matter of continuing experimentation and research.

We need to explore, and in that process to look back and collect the best experiences of the past. In the following few pages we are presenting some passages from the records of the Veda and the Upanishads which will provide a few glimpses into the early stages of Indian concepts of education and of the good teacher and the good pupil.



The Tree of Life and Knowledge, South Indian Bronze



Aspirations and Victories of the Ancient Rishis

(A few selections from the Rig Veda)

I

(The Rishi desires a state of spiritual wealth full of the divine working in which nothing shall fall away to the division and the crookedness. So, increasing by our works the divine Force in us daily, we shall attain to the Bliss and the Truth, the rapture of the Light and the rapture of the Force.)

1. O Will, O conqueror of our plenitude, the felicity which thou alone canst conceive in the mind, that make full of inspiration by our words and set it to labour in the gods as our helper.
2. They who are powers increased of thee in the fierceness of thy flame and strength, yet impel us not on the path, they fall away to division, they cleave to the crookedness of a law that is other than thine.
3. Thee, O Will, we take to us as the priest of the offering and the accomplisher of a discerning knowledge; holding for thee all our delights we call thee the ancient and supreme to our sacrifices by the word;
4. Rightly and in such wise that, O forceful god, O perfect power of works, we may increase thee day by day, that we may have the Bliss, that we may have the Truth, that we may have perfect rapture by the Rays of the knowledge, that we may have perfect rapture by the Heroes of the Force.

Rig Veda V.20.1-4

II

(The Rishi celebrates the flame of the Will high-blazing in the dawn of knowledge as the King of Immortality, the giver to the soul of its spiritual riches and felicity and of a well-governed mastery of Nature. He is the bearer of our oblation, the illumined guide of our sacrifice to its divine and universal goal.)

1. The Flame of Will burning high rises to his pure light in the heaven of mind; wide he extends his illumination and fronts the Dawn. She comes, moving upward, laden with all desirable things, seeking the gods with the oblation, luminous with the clarity.
2. When thou burnest high thou art king of immortality and thou cleavest to the doer of sacrifice to give him that blissful state; he to whom thou comest to be his guest, holds in himself all substance and he sets thee within in his front.
3. O Flame, put forth thy battling might for a vast enjoyment¹ of bliss; may there be thy highest illumination; create a well-governed union of the Lord and his Spouse, set thy foot on the greatness of hostile powers.
4. I adore, O Flame, the glory of thy high-blazing mightiness. Thou art the Bull with the illuminations; thou burnest up in the march of our sacrifices.
5. O Flame that receivest our offerings, perfect guide of the sacrifice, high-kindled offer our oblation to the godheads; for thou art the bearer of our offerings.
6. Cast the offering, serve the Will with your works² while your sacrifice moves forward to its goal, accept the carrier of our oblation.

Rig Veda V.28.1-6



ROLF, Yajna, Auroville 1986



ROLF, Auroville 1985

III

Vanished the darkness, shaken in its foundation; Heaven shone out (*rocata dyauh*, implying the manifestation of the three luminous worlds of Swar, *diyo rocanani*); upward rose the light of the divine Dawn; the Sun entered the vast fields (of the Truth) beholding the straight things and the crooked in mortals. Thereafter indeed they awoke and saw utterly (by the sun's separation of the straight from the crooked, the truth from falsehood); then indeed they held in them the bliss that is enjoyed in heaven.

Rig Veda I.20.7

May he the knower discern perfectly the Knowledge and the Ignorance, the wide levels and the crooked that shut in mortals; and, O God, for a bliss fruitful in offspring, lavish on us Diti and protect Aditi.

Rig Veda IV.2.11

Now as the seven seers of Dawn, the Mother, the supreme disposers (of the sacrifice), may we beget for ourselves the gods; may we become the Angirasas, sons of Heaven, breaking open the wealth-filled hill, shining in purity.

Rig Veda IV.2.15

We have done the work for thee, we have become perfect in works, the wide-shining Dawns have taken up their home in the Truth (or, have robed themselves with the Truth), in the fullness of Agni and his manifold delight, in the shining eye of the god in all his brightness.

Rig Veda IV.2.19

Brahmacharins in Search of Knowledge

(A few selections from the Upanishad)

I

Truthfulness

1. Satyakāma Jabālā said to his Mother Jabālā: "Venerable mother: I wish to join school as a *brahmacharin* (pupil wishing to learn the true knowledge). Please tell me from what family I hail."
2. She said to him: "My child, I don't know from what family you are. In my youth, I went about in many places as a maid-servant; during that period I begot you; I myself do not know from what family you hail; I am called Jabālā and you are called Satyakāma; so call yourself then Satyakāma, the son of Jabālā."
3. Then he went to Hāridrumata Gautama and said: "I wish to join your school, venerable Sir, as a *brahmacharin*, if you, venerable Sir, would desire to accept me."
4. He said to him: "My dear child, from what family do you hail?" He replied: "Venerable Sir, I do not know from what family I hail; I have asked my mother who answered me: 'In my youth, I went about in many places as a maid-servant; during that period I begot you. I myself don't know from what family you hail. I am called Jabālā and you are called Satyakāma.' Therefore I call myself Satyakāma, son of Jabālā, venerable Sir."
5. He (the preceptor) replied to him: "Only a Brāhmana can speak so candidly. My dear child, bring here the fuel-sticks (which are requisite for the ceremonial rite). I will accept you, because you have not swerved from truthfulness."

After he had accepted him, he separated from the herd four hundred lean and weak cows and said: "My dear, go after them and tend them." Satyakāma then drove them forth and said to his teacher: "Not before they have become one thousand, will I return." So he lived far away for a number of years.

Chhandogya Upanishad, Fourth Chapter, Fourth Part

II

The Good and the Pleasant

Yama speaks:

1. "One thing is the good and quite another thing is the pleasant, and both seize upon a man with different meanings. Of these whoso takes the good, it is well with him; he falls from the aim of life who chooses the pleasant.

2. "The good and the pleasant come to a man and the thoughtful mind turns all around them and distinguishes. The wise chooses out the good from the pleasant, but the dull soul chooses the pleasant rather than the getting of his good and its having.

3. "And thou, O Nachiketas, hast looked close at the objects of desire, at pleasant things and beautiful, and thou hast cast them from thee: thou hast not entered into the net of riches in which many men sink to perdition.

4. "For far apart are these, opposite, divergent, the one that is known as the Ignorance and the other the Knowledge. But Nachiketas I deem truly desirous of the knowledge whom so many desirable things could not make to lust after them.

5. "They who dwell in the ignorance, within it, wise in their own wit and deeming themselves very learned, men bewildered are they who wander about stumbling round and round helplessly like blind men led by the blind.

6. "The childish wit bewildered and drunken with the illusion of riches cannot open its eyes to see the passage to heaven: for he that thinks this world is and there is no other, comes again and again into Death's thralldom.

7. "He that is not easy to be heard of by many, and even of those that have heard, they are many who have not known Him, – a miracle is the man that can speak of Him wisely or is skilful to win Him, and when one is found, a miracle is the listener who can know Him even when taught of Him by the knower.
8. "An inferior man cannot tell you of Him; for thus told thou canst not truly know Him, since He is thought of in many aspects. Yet unless told of Him by another thou canst not find thy way to Him; for He is subtler than subtlety and that which logic cannot reach.
9. "This wisdom is not to be had by reasoning, O beloved Nachiketas; only when told thee by another it brings real knowledge, – the wisdom which thou hast gotten. Truly thou art steadfast in the Truth! Even such a questioner as thou art may I meet with always."

Nachiketas speaks:

10. "I know of treasure that it is not for ever; for not by things unstable shall one attain That One which is stable; therefore I heaped the fire of Nachiketas, and by the sacrifice of momentary things I won the Eternal."

Katha Upanishad, First Cycle: Second Chapter 1-10



MAYAURA, Auroville 1987

III

What is it Knowing Which Everything Is Known?

1. Svetaketu was the son of (Uddalaka) Aruni. His father said to him: "Svetaketu! Move and go to study the true Knowledge, because, my dear one, none of our family used to be unlearned and remain a mere appendage of Brahmanhood (a Brahman only in name)."
2. Then he, while twelve years of age, went as a pupil to a teacher and when he was twenty-four years old, had thoroughly studied all the books of Knowledge. He returned haughty in mind, conceited and thinking himself wise. Then his father said to him: "O dear one! Since you are haughty in mind, conceited and consider yourself wise, have you inquired into that instruction whereby what is even unheard of, becomes heard, what is not comprehended becomes comprehended, what is not known becomes known?"
3. "Venerable Sir, how is that instruction?"
"Just as, O dear one, through one lump of clay everything that consists of clay is known, modification being a clinging to words, only a name, it is only clay in reality.
4. "Just as, O dear one, through a copper pommel, everything that consists of copper is known, modification being merely a clinging to words, only a name, it is only copper in reality.
5. "Just as, O dear one, through a nail-parer, everything that consists of iron is known, modification being merely a clinging to words, only a name, it is only iron in reality-thus, my dear, is this instruction."
6. "Certainly my venerable teachers must not have known this teaching; because if they had known it, why would they not have communicated it to me? But venerable Sir, you will now please explain it to me!"
"So be it, my dear!

Chhandogya Upanishad, Sixth Chapter, First Part

1. "When, O dear one, the bees prepare honey, they gather the juice of manifold trees and assemble the juice into a unity.
2. "So also, in that juice of these, no distinction is preserved as that of a particular tree whose juices they are; so also, indeed, O dear one, all these creatures, when they enter into the Being (in deep sleep and death), have no consciousness thereof, that they enter into the Being.
3. "Whatever they may be here-a tiger, a lion or a wolf, or a boar, or a worm or a bird or a gadfly or a gnat, they are again born in these forms.
4. "This universe consists of what that finest essence is, it is the real, it is the soul, that thou art, Svetaketu!
5. "Venerable Sir, teach me still further," he (Svetaketu) said.
"So be it," he (Āruni) replied.

. Chhandogya Upanishad, Sixth Chapter, Ninth Part

1. "When one, O dear one, cuts this big tree here at the root, it trickles sap, because it lives; when one cuts it in the middle, it trickles sap, because it lives; when one cuts it at the top, it trickles sap, because it lives; thus it stands, penetrated through by the living self, prolific and rejoicing.
2. "Now if life departs from one branch, that branch withers; if life departs from the second branch, that also withers; if life departs from the third branch, that also withers; if life departs from the whole tree, the whole tree withers or dries up. Therefore, O dear one, you should mark this," he (Āruni) said.
3. "This body indeed dies if it is deserted by life; but this life does not die. This universe consists of what that finest essence is; it is the real, it is the soul, that thou art, O Svetaketu."
"Venerable Sir, teach me still further," he (Svetaketu) said.
"So be it," he (Āruni) replied.

Chhandogya Upanishad, Sixth Chapter, Eleventh Part

1. "Fetch me a fruit of that Nyagrodha (banyan) tree there."
 "Here it is, venerable Sir."
 "Split it."
 "It is split, venerable Sir."
 "What do you see therein?"
 "I see here, venerable Sir, very fine seeds."
 "Split one of them."
 "It is split, venerable Sir!"
 "What do you see therein?"
 "Nothing at all, venerable Sir!"

2. Then he (Āruni) spoke: "That finest essence which you do not perceive, O dear one—out of this finest essence, indeed, this great Nyagrodha tree has arisen.

3. "Believe, my dear, the universe consists of what that finest essence is; it is the real, it is the soul, that thou art, O Svetaketu!"
 "Teach me still further, venerable Sir."
 "So be it," he (Āruni) said."

Chhandogya Upanishad, Sixth Chapter, Twelfth Part

1. "Put this piece of salt, here, in water and come again tomorrow to me." He did it. Then he (Āruni) said: "Bring me the salt which you had put into the water last evening." He groped, feeling after it and found nothing of it, because it was completely dissolved.

2. "Taste that water from this side! How does it taste?"
 "Saltish."
 "Taste it from the middle! How does it taste?"
 "Saltish."
 "Taste it from that side! How does it taste?"
 "Saltish."
 "Let it be there; seat yourself by my side."
 He did it and said: "It (salt in water) is always present."
 Then the other one (Āruni) said: "Indeed, you do not perceive the Being here in the body but it is, nevertheless, therein."

3. "This universe consists of what that finest essence is, it is the real, it is the soul, that thou art, O Svetaketu!"
"Venerable Sir, instruct me still further!"
"So be it," he (Āruni) said.

Chhandogya Upanishad, Sixth Chapter, Thirteenth Part

1. "Just as, O dear one, a man who, with eyes bandaged, is led away out of the region of Gandhāra and then forsaken in a deserted place, will grope breathlessly towards the north or towards the south, because he has been led away with bandaged eyes and has been left in an uninhabited place.
2. "But thereafter somebody had removed the bandage from him and said to him: 'There lie the Gandhāra regions beyond; go thither from here.' He reaches home in the Gandhāra region, inquiring further from village to village, instructed by others and now quite sensible; in the same way a man, who has here found a teacher, attains knowledge: 'I would belong to this drift of worldly existence until I have been released; thereafter I shall reach my home.'
3. "This universe consists of what that finest essence is; it is the real, it is the soul, that thou art, O Svetaketu!"

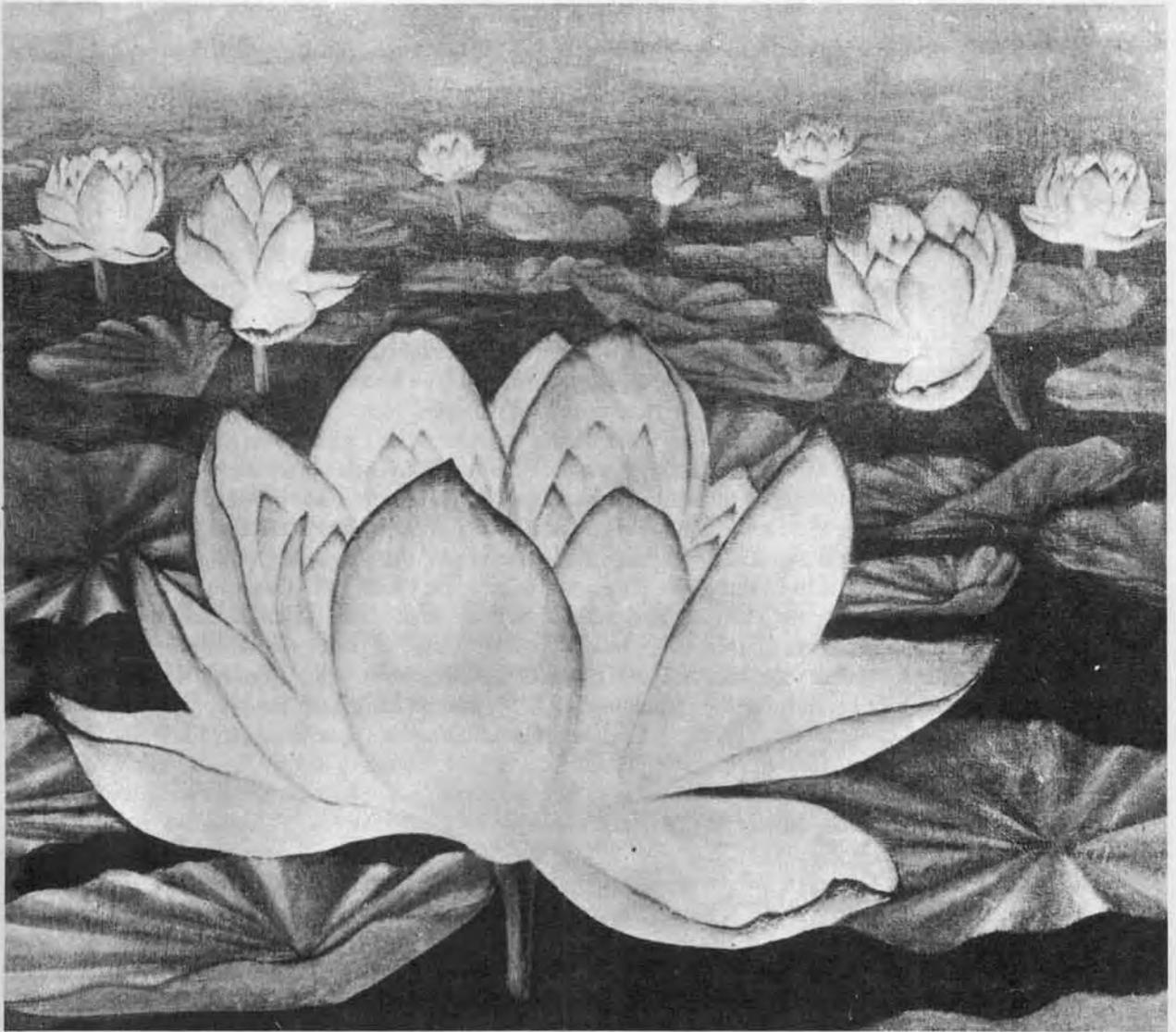
Chhandogya Upanishad, Sixth Chapter, Fourteenth Part

IV

Learning and the Knowledge of the Self

1. "Teach me, venerable Sir!" With these words Nārada approached Sanatkumāra.
He (Sanatkumāra) said to him: "Tell me what you already know; then I will impart to you what lies outside it."
2. And the other (Nārada) said, "I have, O venerable Sir, learnt the Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, the Atharvaveda as the fourth, the epic and mythological poems as the fifth Veda, grammar, the ritual concerning the Manes, arithmetic, *mantik*, counting or reckoning of time, dialectic, politics, divine lore, the lore of the prayer, the lore of the ghosts, the science of warfare, astronomy, spell against serpents, the art of the muse [literally, of demigods, *deva-jana*]. This it is, O venerable Sir, that I have learnt."
3. "And thus I am, O venerable Sir, no doubt learned in scriptures but not in the lore of the Ātman. Because I have heard from such as are like you that he who knows the Ātman, overcomes sorrow; but venerable Sir, I am afflicted with sorrow; that is why you will carry me, O Sir, to that yonder beach beyond sorrow!"
And he (Sanatkumāra) said to him: "Everything that you have studied is mere name (*nāman*)."
4. "The Rigveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda, the Atharvaveda as the fourth, the epic and mythological poems as the fifth Veda, grammar the ritual of the Manes, arithmetic, *mantik*, reckoning of time, dialectic, politics, the divine lore, the lore of prayer, the lore of the ghosts, the science of warfare, astronomy, spell against serpents and the art of the muse—all these are a name,—everything of this is a name. You may adore the name!
5. "He who adores the name as Brahman—so far as the name extends itself that far, over that extent, he will be entitled to move about according to his liking, that is why he adores the name as Brahman."
"Is there, O venerable Sir, anything greater than the name?"
"Well, there is one greater than the name."

Chhandogya Upanishad, Seventh Chapter, First Part



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1. The Vedic immortality is a vast beatitude, a large enjoyment of the divine and infinite existence reposing on a perfect union between the Soul and Nature; the soul becomes King of itself and its environment, conscious on all its planes, master of them, with Nature for its bride delivered from divisions and discords into an infinite and luminous harmony.
2. Or, "set the Will to its workings."

Notes

The Rishis and the Vedas

In ancient India, the concept of the Rishi connoted the highest ideal of the teacher. The teacher was a Yogin, one who had realized or was a seeker of true knowledge that comes through the practice of Yoga, which was at that time a developing science and art of psychological concentration and perfection. The Vedic Rishis described their aspirations and victories in the form of Mantra, inevitable expression born out of innermost vision and realization.

The Vedic Rishis refer to their "forefathers" as great pathfinders, and spoke of them in legends and myths in order to describe what they had achieved. For example, Parashara says: "Our fathers broke open the firm and strong places by their words, yea, the Angirasas broke open the hill by their cry; they made in us the path to the great heaven; they found the Day and Swar and vision and the luminous Cows" (1.71.2). This path, he tells us, is the path which leads to immortality, "They who entered into all things that bear right fruit formed a path towards immortality; earth stood wide for them by the greatness and by the Great Ones, the mother Aditi with her sons came (or, manifested herself) for the upholding" (1.72.9). The meaning of these cryptic verses is that the physical being is visited by the greatness of the infinite planes above and by the power of the great godheads who reign on those planes. This breaks the limits of the physical being, which opens out to the Light and is upheld in its new wideness by the infinite Consciousness, mother Aditi, and her sons, the divine powers of the supreme Deva or Lord. This was the meaning of Vedic immortality.

There are also references in the second hymn of the fourth Mandala to the seven divine seers, who are the divine Angirasas and the human fathers. Riks 12 to 15 describe the seven Rishis as the supreme ordainers of the world-sacrifice, and put forth the idea of the human being "becoming" the seven Rishis, that is to say, creating them in himself and growing into that which they mean, just as he becomes the Heaven and Earth and the other gods; or, as it is otherwise put, man begets or creates or forms the divine birth in his own being. As Rik 15 says: "Now as the seven seers of Dawn, the Mother, the supreme disposers [of sacrifice, which in psychological terms means self-consecration, the discipline by which the separative sense of egoism is destroyed], may we beget for ourselves the gods; may we become the Angirasas, sons of Heaven, breaking open the wealth-filled hill, shining in purity." These Riks bring out the idea of the human fathers as the original type of the great becoming and achievement.

The word *Veda* is derived from the root *vid*, to know, and the Vedic Rishis looked upon the Veda as the Book of Knowledge. The Vedic Rishis discovered that the secret of victory lies in aspiration, which expresses itself in the form of burning flame, Agni. This burning flame rises higher and higher in our being, destroying impurities and obscurities, and there arise in us king-ideas, master-wills, intense prayers. There is then a response, and the doors of secret knowledge and power swing open giving birth to creative action or event. Victory is achieved – our being with its imperfect thought, will and emotion, is filled with vastness, luminosity and unflinching energy. The immortal in us is realized and becomes manifest.

The Veda contains the secrets of this realization. It is the science and art of the inter-relationship of our earthly being with the powers around it and above it, and of the processes by which our imperfections can be remedied. The Veda is indeed a book of discoveries, a record of research that the ancient fathers and their initiates carried on by personal verification, rediscovery and constant enlargement.

One of the most important legends of the Veda is the legend of the Angirasas. Its theme is the spiritual life of man but, to make it concrete to themselves and while veiling its secrets from the unfit, the Vedic poets expressed it in poetic images drawn from outward life. The Angirasas are pilgrims of the light. They are those who travel towards the goal and attain to the highest, "they who travel to and attain that supreme treasure" (II.24.6). Their action is invoked for carrying the life of man farther towards its goal. The journey is principally the quest of the hidden light, but through the opposition of the powers of darkness it also becomes an expedition and a battle. The Angirasas are heroes and fighters of that battle, "fighters for the cows or rays of light and knowledge" (*goshu yodhah*). They discover the supraphysical power or being, the king of the kingdom of illumined intelligence (Swar), and they seek his help. This being is Indra, who marches with them (*saranyubhih*), travellers on the path (*skhibhih*), comrades, seers and singers of the sacred chant, and fighters in the battle. Strengthened by them he conquers during the journey and reaches the goal. The journey proceeds along the path discovered by Sarama, the hound of heaven, the intuitive power that sees that path directly, the path of the Truth, *ritasya panthah*, the great path, *mahas panthah*, which leads to the realms of the Truth.

The drinking of the soma wine as the means of strength, victory and attainment is one of the pervading figures of the Veda. The soma wine is the sweetness that comes flowing from the streams of the hidden upper world, it is that which flows in the seven waters, it is that with which the *ghrita*, the clarified butter of the mystic sacrifice, is instinct, it is the honeyed wave which rises out of the ocean of life. Such images, as pointed out by Sri Aurobindo, can have only one meaning: "It is the divine delight hidden in all existence which, once manifest, supports all life's crowning activities and is the force that finally immortalizes the mortal, the *amritam*, ambrosia of the gods." The Angirasas are distinguished by their seerhood, Rishihood. They are the fathers who are full of the soma, they have the word and are increasers of the Truth. The Angirasas have been described as those who speak rightly, masters of the Rik who place perfectly their thought; they are heroes who speak the truth and think with straightness and thus are able to hold the seat of illumined knowledge (*vide Rig Veda, X.67.2*).

The ancient Indian idea of the teacher is conceived in the light of the image of the Angirasas, and it is for this reason that the teacher came to be placed so supreme. The verses we have selected for this book give only a few glimpses of the aspirations and achievements of the ancient teachers.

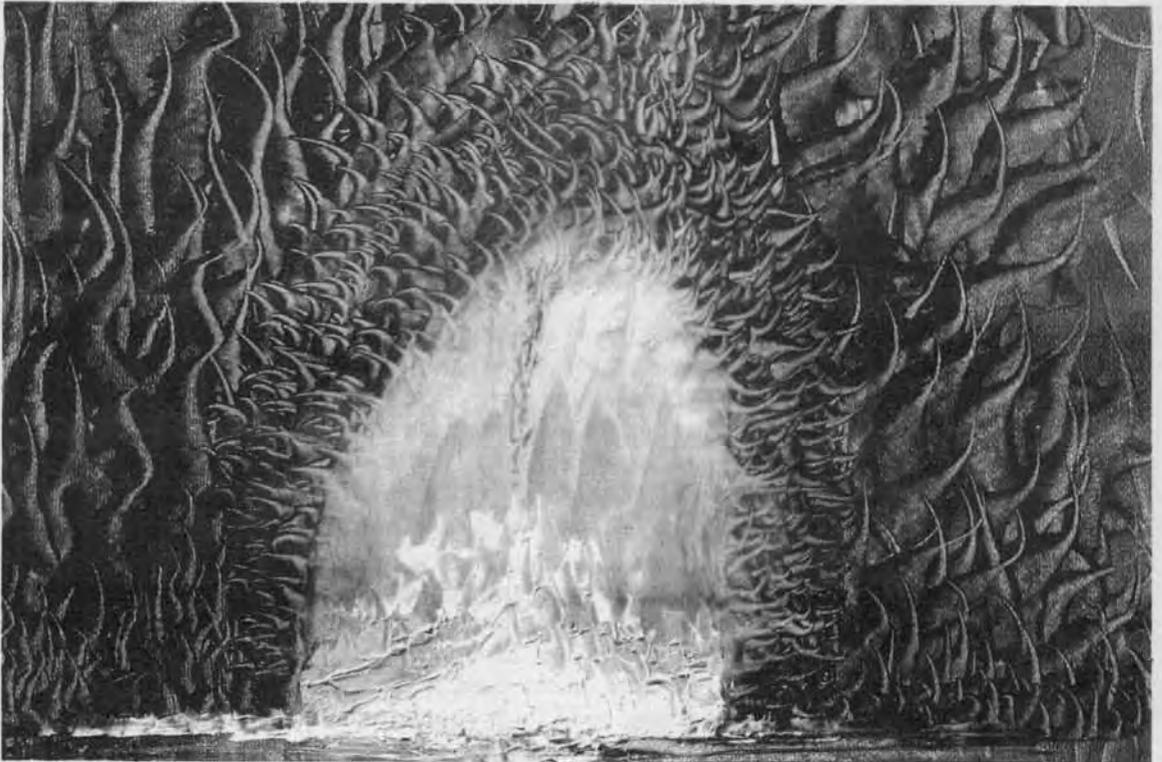
The meanings of the Vedic verses are not fully understandable; therefore, a great deal of research is required to discover the secret of the Veda. To understand exactly what the Vedic Rishis achieved, the reader may refer to Sri Aurobindo's luminous interpretation in *The Secret of the Veda*. These notes are based on that book, and the verses of the Veda included in the text have also been taken from that book.

The verses we have chosen are hymns addressed to Agni, a word which is translated as power, strength, will, the god-will, or the Flame according to the context. The Veda speaks of Agni, the divine Flame, in a series of splendid and opulent images. He is the rapturous priest of the sacrifice, the young sage, the sleepless envoy, the ever-wakeful flame in the house, the master of our gated dwelling-place, the beloved guest, the divine child, the pure and virgin god, the invincible warrior, the leader on the path who marches in front of the human peoples, the immortal in mortals, the

worker established in man by the gods, the unobstructed in knowledge, the infinite in being, the vast and flaming sun of the Truth, the sustainer of the sacrifice and discerner of its steps, the divine perception, the Light, the vision, the firm foundation. We experience Agni as our upward aspiration, the will towards Truth, and the force that uplifts us from our limitations by renunciation, purification and right enjoyment. This aspiration, when it reaches its acme, is what brings to us the victory – deliverance from falsehood into Truth, from darkness into Light, from death into immortality.

One of the great discoveries of the Vedic Rishis was the knowledge of the hierarchy of the various worlds and the inter-relationship and interaction of the physical world with the supraphysical worlds. Based on this knowledge, they found and applied the means by which man in the physical world can attain perfection. In their system of knowledge, Agni is found to be the fundamental bridge between the lower and the higher, a messenger that travels and turns human aspiration into divine victory, a will that enables man to rise above human limitations so as to become a candidate for perfection.

Agni, as sacrificial fire, is a symbol, useful for rituals, but the inner and secret sense can be experienced by every aspirant as a fire of aspiration and will. In this book, we are not concerned with religion and ritualism, but with the psychological knowledge of our being and the ways by which it can be educated and cultivated. Indeed that was the central aim of the Veda, and we have selected only a sampling of verses to indicate the educational value of the Vedic discoveries, so that those teachers and pupils who are so inclined may be encouraged to explore, through a more strenuous study, the secrets that can be found useful in the process of learning and teaching.



The Upanishads

The Vedas were followed by the Brahmanas and Aranyakas. While the Brahmanas dealt with the ritualistic aspects of the Veda, the Aranyakas brought out the inner meaning of the teachings of the Rishis. The Aranyakas were followed by the Upanishads. The word *Upanishad* consists of three components, *upa*, *ni* and *shad*, where *shad* means to dwell, *upa* means near and *ni* means closer. Thus *Upanishad* means dwelling very closely to the secret knowledge. Upanishads are also regarded as Vedanta, which means the end of the Veda. The Rishis of the Upanishads attempted to recover the Vedic knowledge which had become obscured in the course of time. The language of the Upanishads is much clearer than that of the Veda, even though it has yielded to various interpretations.

There are more than two hundred Upanishads. But the principal Upanishads are between eight and twelve. Isha, Kena, Katha, Prashna, Chhandogya, Brihadaranyaka, Mundaka, Mandukya, Taittiriya and Shvetashvatara are the most prominent. The stories that we have selected for this book are taken from the Chhandogya Upanishad and Katha Upanishad.

The Upanishads give us a clear idea of the ancient system of education and of the role of the teacher and the pupil. Some of the examples that we have given in this book clearly indicate that the pupil was supposed to approach the teacher and seek instruction from him, that the good teacher judged the pupil by his truthfulness and the earnestness of his seeking, and that the good pupil was the one who chose the path of the good rather than that of the pleasant. The Upanishads also point out that the knowledge sought by the teachers and pupils was the knowledge that transcends appearances and seizes upon Reality through direct experience.

In the story of Satyakāma, we have an illustration of a young student who has an ardent aspiration to learn and study. His first quality is truthfulness, and the teacher rightly accepts him, convinced that his truthfulness is sufficient evidence of his qualification to be admitted.

In the next story, taken from the Katha Upanishad, we have Nachiketas, a young *brahmacharin*, who is offered by his father to Yama, the god who controls and governs the kingdom of death. We are told that Nachiketas, seeing his father giving away old cows as offerings to Brahmins, feels that his father ought to give something valuable and asks his father to whom he (Nachiketas) should be given as a sacrifice and offering. Thrice he asks his father, and his father, annoyed with his insistence, pronounces that he is offered to Yama. The young Nachiketas visits the abode of Yama, where he waits for three days for Yama's arrival. When Yama comes, he is pleased with Nachiketas for his patience and sincerity, and offers him three boons. Nachiketas first asks for his father's appeasement and his well-being, which Yama grants readily. Next, he asks for the knowledge of the secret of the fire of austerity. And, lastly, he asks for the knowledge of the secret of death, of what happens to man after death and what really is the secret of immortality. Yama does not intend to give away this secret and offers him the choice of worldly happiness in the form of riches and progeny and success. However Nachiketas is firm in his demand and rejects the choice offered by Yama. Yama is pleased with the steadfast adherence of Nachiketas to his noble search, and grants him the secret knowledge. The short extract presented here in this book is a dialogue between Yama and Nachiketas, in which Yama explains the distinction between the good and the pleasant, and points out that since Nachiketas chose the good in preference to the pleasant, he considers Nachiketas a worthy pupil who deserves to be given the secret knowledge.

The third story, taken from the Chhandogya Upanishad, contains a famous dialogue between Āruni and his son, Shvetaketu. There are three important elements in the extract. In the first place, we have here an illustration of the method of teaching by dialogue and personal experimentation. Secondly, the central question raised by Āruni is one of the most striking questions that every good teacher and pupil should raise: "What is it knowing which everything is known?" Thirdly, the answer provided to the question is perhaps the quintessence of India's entire approach to the problem of knowledge. In brief the answer is that the knowledge of essence gives us the foundation of all that is manifested, and that the quintessence of all phenomena is the inner self which is identical with that which transcends all and manifests all. *Tat tvam asi*, "thou art That", is one of the great pronouncements of the Upanishadic knowledge, and Āruni explains this knowledge by various examples, so that the pupil can grasp it.

In modern times, science, after its triumphant discoveries and inventions, is slowly returning to the realization that knowledge depends very much on the knower, and that the most important object of knowledge is the self that is seeking knowledge. Schrödinger and others have come to the conclusion that this new orientation will press the scientific inquiry into the field of self-knowledge. Here we see the modern quest converging on the ancient wisdom.

In the fourth story, which is also taken from the Chhandogya Upanishad, we have a dialogue between Nārada and Sanatkumāra. When Nārada approaches Sanatkumāra, Sanatkumāra says: "Tell me what you already know; then I will impart to you what lies outside it." Nārada replies enumerating a large number of disciplines of knowledge that he has already learned. Sanatkumāra points out that what Nārada knows is only name and that there is something greater than name. This brings out the real distinction between learning and knowledge. The aim of the good teacher is to help the pupil liberate himself from the cobwebs of learning and to lead him to the luminosity of true knowledge.

In connection with the story of Nārada and Sanatkumāra, it may be worth noting that ancient India had developed a wide variety of disciplines of the sciences and arts. It is difficult to say whether these disciplines developed during the Upanishadic age, but to some extent they surely did, and we have some information about the curriculum followed in Taxila, the most important seat of learning in ancient India. It is said that Taxila was founded by Bharata and named after his son Taksha, who was established there as ruler. (Taxila was situated about twenty miles west of modern Rawalpindi.) Apart from the Vedic knowledge, grammar, philosophy, and eighteen *shilpas* were the principal subjects of specialization. It is surmised that these eighteen *shilpas* were as follows: vocal music, instrumental music, dancing, painting, mathematics, accounting, engineering, sculpture, agriculture, cattle-breeding, commerce, medicine, conveyancing and law, administrative training, archery and military art, magic, snake-charming and poison antidotes, the art of finding hidden treasures.

Later literature mentions sixty-four *Kalās*, which a cultured lady was expected to master. These included the art of cooking, skill in the use of body ointments and paints for the teeth, etc., music, dancing, painting, garland-making, floor decoration, preparation of the bed, proper use and care of dress and ornaments, sewing, elementary carpentry, repair of household tools and articles, reading, writing and understanding different languages, composing poems, understanding dramas, physical exercises, recreation for utilizing leisure hours, and the art of preparing toys for children.

Other Good Teachers and Pupils in The Upanishads

In the Upanishadic literature we come to know of a large number of good teachers and good pupils. In the selection presented in this book there are Satyakāma, Jabālā, Nachiketas, Shvetaketu and Nārada. We may also refer to the traditional story of Uddalāka Āruni, the son of Aruna Gautama and father of Shvetaketu. Most of the important works of the period refer to him as an authority on rituals and inner knowledge. As a pupil, he is often cited for his devotion to his teacher. He was asked by his teacher to prevent the inundation of the ashram farm during a rainy day. Unable to plug a crack in the dam, he used his own body to plug the breach and thus prevented the inundation of the farm. The Chhandogya Upanishad makes reference to Krishna Devakiputra who received initiation and knowledge from his teacher, Ghora. He is indeed the one declared later to be the Lord Krishna. The Upanishads describe him as a student eager in his pursuit of knowledge. We may also mention Pippalada, a great sage in the Prashna Upanishad. Raikva is the name of the cart driver whom the King Janashruti approached for instruction. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, we have a vivid account of the supremacy of Yajnavalkya. According to the story, Yajnavalkya's guru, Uddalāka Āruni, could not hold his own in a disputation with him in a vast assembly of scholars from the entire Kuru Panchala country which had been summoned by King Janaka of Videha. The Upanishads contain other great names of teachers and pupils, such as Ashvala, Jarat Karava Artabhiga, Bhujyu Lahyayani, Ushasti Chakrayana, Kahoda Kaushitakeya, and Gargi Vachaknavi. We should also mention Maitreyi, a learned wife of Yajnavalkya, who "was conversant with Brahman". One of the famous dialogues in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad is between Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi. This dialogue occurs when Yajnavalkya is about to renounce the life of a householder for that of a hermit, and he proposes to divide his wealth between his two wives, Kātyāyani and Maitreyi. But Maitreyi insists on his giving her instruction in spiritual wisdom.

According to tradition, Dhaumya was a great teacher, and stories are told not only of Aruni Uddalaka, one of his good pupils to whom we have referred earlier, but also of his other pupil Veda, who is reported to have himself become a very good teacher. Veda is especially noted for the devotion displayed by one of his pupils, Utanka. On the completion of his studentship, Utanka encounters every sort of experience and danger in order to procure the presents of Veda's choice before being free to leave his preceptor's home.

Another picture of ideal studentship is brought out in the story of Kacha and Devayani. Devayani's father Sukracharya, was Kacha's teacher. She fell in love with Kacha, but he had taken the vow of *brahmacharya* and refused to enter into marriage with her. One passage in the *Mahabharata* gives Kacha's description of the life he lived in that retreat of learning: "Carrying the burden of sacrificial wood, kusha grass, and fuel, I was coming towards the hermitage and feeling tired, sat for rest under the banyan tree, along with my companions, the kine, under my charge." This brings out the fact that one of the traditional duties of the student was to tend his preceptor's cattle, and collect wood for fire and sacrifice, and this put him into intimate touch with Nature and subjected him to the influence and educational processes of Nature working through "silent sympathy" as Wordsworth put it. The *Mahabharata* gives the full traditional story of Kacha and Devayani.

A number of books on the Upanishads are available. We have taken the extract from the Katha Upanishad from Sri Aurobindo's book *The Upanishads*. The other extracts are from the translation by V.M. Bedekar and G.B. Palsule.

For a detailed exposition of ancient Indian education, the reader is referred to *Ancient Indian Education* by Radha Kumud Mukherjee.

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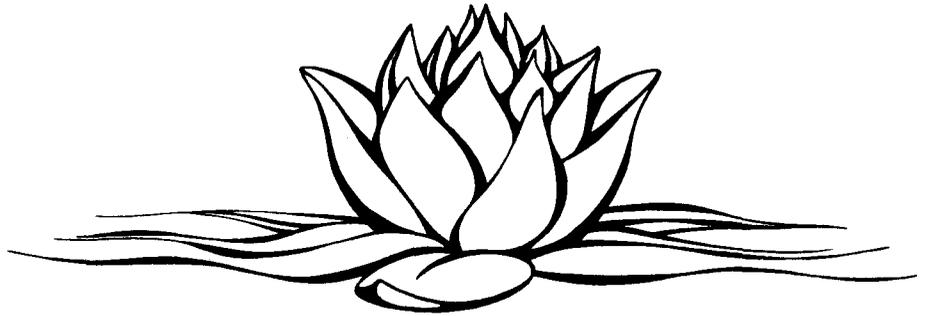
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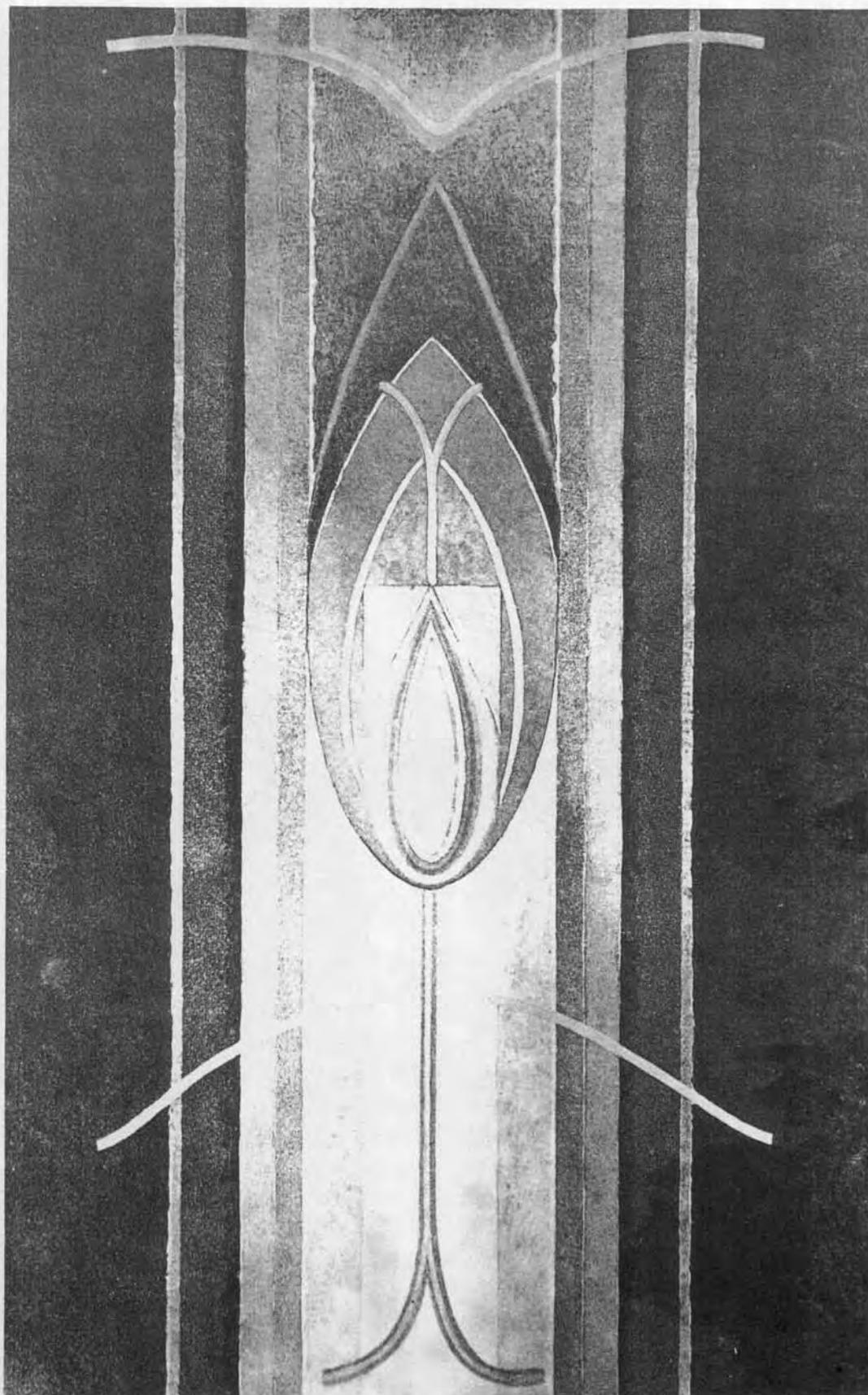
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THE HUMAN DISCIPLE

Introduction

There are moments when all that we have learnt, believed and practised seems to lead us to perplexity and confusion, and we find ourselves helpless and at a standstill. The norms and standards of conduct we have followed so far come into sharp conflict and we no longer know what to do or how to act, even when we are aware that some action is necessary. These are moments of crisis, and in our state of helplessness we are apt to give up the battle of life. Fortunate are they who, at such a moment, have a questioning and seeking mind and a teacher nearby to whom they can turn for advice, knowledge and inspiration. At such moments we realize that all life is unending education and that to receive it we must develop the right attitude. A good pupil is a constant learner.

One striking example of the acceptance of discipleship in the midst of a terrible crisis is the story of Arjuna at Kurukshetra that we find in the Mahabharata. This momentous episode provides the occasion for the teaching of the Gita, and its importance derives from the fact that Arjuna can be looked upon as a representative man. The crisis he faces could come upon anyone, for each human being has in him something of the same temperament, turn of thought and balance of strength and weakness as Arjuna. Like Arjuna, we are all subject to the rule of the three modes of the nature-force, or gunas, to use the language of the Gita.

Sattwa, rajas and tamas¹ are the three chains which bind us and, like Arjuna, most of our being is rajasic and pragmatic, with a degree of purer sattwa in respect to our attitude towards moral law, society and the claims of others upon us. To study Arjuna is to study ourselves. We have included here a most illuminating study of Arjuna, found in Sri Aurobindo's Essays on the Gita under the apt title, "The Human Disciple".

The human disciple, Arjuna, was fortunate, we might say, to have with him at a critical moment of his life the divine Teacher, Krishna; and we might wonder if very many of us would be so fortunate at the critical moments of life. Yet whether or not we accept the concept of divine omnipresence, we will find, if we watch ourselves and our surroundings with the eyes of an earnest seeker, that there are sermons even in stones. In any case, the Gita assures us that Krishna, the divine Teacher, is always near us to guide and teach, and that his help is unfailing. The figure of Krishna is the symbol of the Divine's dealing with humanity.

Arjuna, as we know him in the Mahabharata, is the rajasic man who governs his rajasic actions by a high sattwic ideal. At the opening of the episode in the Gita, we find him advancing to the field of a gigantic struggle, to Kurukshetra, with the full acceptance of the joy of battle, as to "a holiday of fight". He has confidence in the righteousness of his cause, believing that the sons of Dhritarashtra are unjust and wicked and that they should be destroyed in order to establish a reign of justice and good. He advances in his rapid chariot, driven by Krishna, tearing the hearts of his enemies with the victorious clamour of his war-conch. He asks Krishna to set his chariot between the armies so that he can look upon the kings who had come there to champion the cause of unrighteousness and, disregarding law, justice and truth, to establish the rule of selfish and arrogant egoism. But as he looks at them, and as he sees on the other side his teachers, guardians and brethren, he is inwardly defeated by the uprush of the tamasic quality. He recoils in horror, dismay and dejection, his mind bewildered and his reason at war with itself. His being collapses towards the principle of ignorance and inertia. "I will not fight," he declares. Casting down his Gandiva, the divine bow and inexhaustible quiver, he cries out, "It is for my welfare that the sons of Dhritarashtra armed should slay me unarmed and unresisting." He argues that the path of renunciation is preferable to the terrible action of war.

Krishna, the divine Teacher, knows that Arjuna is experiencing the typical

1. Sattwa connotes balance, equilibrium and a tendency towards knowledge and light; rajas connotes impulse, desire, ambition, drive, dynamism and a tendency towards action and battle; tamas connotes inertia, sloth, idleness, ignorance and a tendency towards mechanical repetition and inaction.

tamasic recoil from action of the sattwic-rajasic man. He discourages this recoil and enjoins Arjuna to go on with the fierce and terrible action that confronts him. And he points the disciple towards an inner renunciation which will be the real solution to his crisis and the way towards the soul's calm, self-possessed action in the world. Not a physical asceticism, not escapism, but an inner askesis is the teaching of the Gita. What Krishna impresses upon Arjuna is the necessity of the battle of life; and in Arjuna's case at that point in time his battle of life is the war of Kurukshetra.

To fully grasp this we must understand that ancient Indian civilization aimed to minimize the incidence and disaster of war. To achieve this aim it limited military obligation to the small class of Kshatriyas. The rest of the community was guarded from slaughter and outrage. War was considered an inevitable part of a certain stage of human evolution, when people are not sufficiently trained morally and spiritually to develop a social life based on mutual goodwill. At the same time, ancient Indian civilization maintained that harmony is greater than war, and love more the manifest divine than death. There was a constant stress on transcending the need for clash and warfare. Krishna himself undertook the mission of peace to Duryodhana. It was only when Duryodhana rejected Krishna's proposal that war became inevitable.

In this world of Ignorance, where our ascent is through a forest of wild forces, we are required to accept the battlefield of Kurukshetra. In due course, however, we must move towards the replacement of physical force by soul-force, of war by peace, of strife by union, of devouring by love, of egoism by universality, of death by immortality. While awaiting the day when that would be realized, ancient Indian civilization imposed conditions on the conduct of war so as to assure the minimum harm to the general life of the race. High ethical ideals and every possible rule of humanity and chivalry were exacted from the warrior. War of this kind and under these conditions is what the Gita envisaged. War is considered an inevitable part of life at a certain stage of human evolution, but even then is so restricted and regulated as to serve, like other activities, mankind's ethical and spiritual development – for this is regarded as the whole real object of life.

Perhaps today we are at a stage in evolution where no degree of violence seems justified. Yet it cannot be said that we have transcended the stage where life itself is a battlefield. The kingdom of God on earth is yet to be established and until then the call to battle is inevitable. And even when Truth prevails, the call to action shall still remain. It is fundamentally this call that the divine Teacher gives to the human disciple.



Arjuna is the fighter in the chariot with the divine Krishna as his charioteer. In the Veda also we have this image of the human soul and the divine riding in one chariot through a great battle to the goal of a high-aspiring effort. But there it is a pure figure and symbol. The Divine is there Indra, the Master of the World of Light and Immortality, the power of divine knowledge which descends to the aid of the human seeker battling with the sons of falsehood, darkness, limitation, mortality; the battle is with spiritual enemies who bar the way to the higher world of our being; and the goal is that plane of vast being resplendent with the light of the supreme Truth and uplifted to the conscious immortality of the perfected soul, of which Indra is the master. The human soul is Kutsa, he who constantly seeks the seer-knowledge, as his name implies, and he is the son of Arjuna or Arjuni, the White One, child of Switra the White Mother; he is, that is to say, the sattwic or purified and light-filled soul which is open to the unbroken glories of the divine knowledge. And when the chariot reaches the end of its journey, the own home of Indra, the human Kutsa has grown into such an exact likeness of his divine companion that he can only be distinguished by Sachi, the wife of Indra, because she is "truth-conscious". The parable is evidently of the inner life of man; it is a figure of the human growing into the likeness of the eternal divine by the increasing illumination of Knowledge. But the Gita starts from action and Arjuna is the man of action and not of knowledge, the fighter, never the seer or the thinker.

From the beginning of the Gita this characteristic temperament of the disciple is clearly indicated and it is maintained throughout. It becomes first evident in the manner in which he is awakened to the sense of what he is doing, the great slaughter of which he is to be the chief instrument, in the thoughts which immediately rise in him, in the standpoint and the psychological motives which make him recoil from the whole terrible catastrophe. They are not the thoughts, the standpoint, the motives of a philosophical or even of a deeply reflective mind or a spiritual temperament confronted with the same or a similar problem. They are those, as we might say, of the practical or the pragmatic man, the emotional, sensational, moral and intelligent human being not habituated to profound and original reflection or any sounding of the depths, accustomed rather to high but fixed standards of thought and action and a confident treading through all vicissitudes and difficulties, who now finds all his standards failing him and all the basis of his confidence in himself and his life shorn away from under him at a single stroke. That is the nature of the crisis which he undergoes.

Arjuna is, in the language of the Gita, a man subject to the action of the three Gunas or modes of the Nature-Force and habituated to move unquestioningly in that field, like the generality of men. He justifies his name only in being so far pure and sattwic as to be governed by high and clear principles and impulses and habitually control his lower nature by the noblest Law which he knows. He is not of a violent Asuric disposition, not the slave of his passions, but has been trained to a high calm and self-control, to an unswerving performance of his duties and firm obedience to the best principles of the time and society in which he has lived and the religion and ethics to which he has been brought up. He is egoistic like other men, but with the purer or sattwic egoism which regards the moral law and society and the claims of others and not only or predominantly his own interests, desires and passions. He has lived and guided himself by the Shastra, the moral and social code. The thought which preoccupies him, the standard which he obeys is the *dharmā*, that collective Indian conception of the religious, social and moral rule of conduct, and especially the rule of the station and function to which he belongs, he the Kshatriya, the high-minded, self-governed, chivalrous prince and warrior and leader of Aryan men. Following always this rule, conscious of virtue and right dealing he has travelled so far and finds suddenly that it has led him to become the protagonist of a terrific and unparalleled slaughter, a monstrous civil war involving all the cultured Aryan nations which must lead to the complete destruction of the flower of their manhood and threatens their ordered civilisation with chaos and collapse.

It is typical again of the pragmatic man that it is through his sensations that he awakens to the meaning of his action. He has asked his friend and charioteer to place him between the two armies, not with any profounder idea, but with the proud intention of viewing and looking in the face these myriads of the champions of unrighteousness whom he has to meet and conquer and slay "in this holiday of fight" so that the right may prevail. It is as he gazes that the revelation of the meaning of a civil and domestic war comes home to him, a war in which not only men of the same race, the same nation, the same clan, but those of the same family and household stand upon opposite sides. All whom the social man holds most dear and sacred, he must meet as enemies and slay, – the worshipped teacher and preceptor, the old friend, comrade and companion in arms, grandsires, uncles, those who stood in the relation to him of father, of son, of grandson, connections by blood and connections by marriage, – all these social ties have to be cut asunder by the sword. It is not that he did not know these things before, but he has never realised it all; obsessed by his claims and wrongs and by the principles of his life, the struggle for the right, the duty of the

Kshatriya to protect justice and the law and fight and beat down injustice and lawless violence, he has neither thought out deeply nor felt it in his heart and at the core of his life. And now it is shown to his vision by the divine charioteer, placed sensationally before his eyes, and comes home to him like a blow delivered at the very centre of his sensational, vital and emotional being.

The first result is a violent sensational and physical crisis which produces a disgust of the action and its material objects and of life itself. He rejects the vital aim pursued by egoistic humanity in its action, – happiness and enjoyment; he rejects the vital aim of the Kshatriya, victory and rule and power and the government of men. What after all is this fight for justice when reduced to its practical terms, but just this, a fight for the interests of himself, his brothers and his party, for possession and enjoyment and rule? But at such a cost these things are not worth having. For they are of no value in themselves, but only as a means to the right maintenance of social and national life and it is these very aims that in the person of his kin and his race he is about to destroy. And then comes the cry of the emotions. These are they for whose sake life and happiness are desired, our "own people". Who would consent to slay these for the sake of all the earth, or even for the kingdom of the three worlds? What pleasure can there be in life, what happiness, what satisfaction in oneself after such a deed? The whole thing is a dreadful sin, – for now the moral sense awakens to justify the revolt of the sensations and the emotions. It is a sin, there is no right nor justice in mutual slaughter; especially are those who are to be slain the natural objects of reverence and of love, those without whom one would not care to live, and to violate these sacred feelings can be no virtue, can be nothing but a heinous crime. Granted that the offence, the aggression, the first sin, the crimes of greed and selfish passion which have brought things to such a pass came from the other side; yet armed resistance to wrong under such circumstances would be itself a sin and crime worse than theirs because they are blinded by passion and unconscious of guilt, while on this side it would be with a clear sense of guilt that the sin would be committed. And for what? For the maintenance of family morality, of the social law and the law of the nation? These are the very standards that will be destroyed by this civil war; the family itself will be brought to the point of annihilation, corruption of morals and loss of the purity of race will be engendered, the eternal laws of the race and moral law of the family will be destroyed. Ruin of the race, the collapse of its high traditions, ethical degradation and hell for the authors of such a crime, these are the only practical results possible of this monstrous civil strife. "Therefore," cries Arjuna, casting down the divine bow and inexhaustible quiver given to him by the gods for that

tremendous hour, "it is more for my welfare that the sons of Dhritarashtra armed should slay me unarmed and unresisting. I will not fight."

The character of this inner crisis is therefore not the questioning of the thinker; it is not a recoil from the appearances of life and a turning of the eye inward in search of the truth of things, the real meaning of existence and a solution or an escape from the dark riddle of the world. It is the sensational, emotional and moral revolt of the man hitherto satisfied with action and its current standards who finds himself cast by them into a hideous chaos where they are in violent conflict with each other and with themselves and there is no moral standing-ground left, nothing to lay hold of and walk by, no *dharma*.¹ That for the soul of action in the mental being is the worst possible crisis, failure and overthrow. The revolt itself is the most elemental and simple possible; sensationally, the elemental feeling of horror, pity and disgust; vitally, the loss of attraction and faith in the recognised and familiar objects of action and aims of life; emotionally, the recoil of the ordinary feelings of social man, affection, reverence, desire of a common happiness and satisfaction, from a stern duty outraging them all; morally, the elementary sense of sin and hell and rejection of "blood-stained enjoyments"; practically, the sense that the standards of action have led to a result which destroys the practical aims of action. But the whole upshot is that all-embracing inner bankruptcy which Arjuna expresses when he says that his whole conscious being, not the thought alone but heart and vital desires and all, are utterly bewildered and can find nowhere the *dharma*, nowhere any valid law of action. For this alone he takes refuge as a disciple with Krishna; give me, he practically asks, that which I have lost, a true law, a clear rule of action, a path by which I can again confidently walk. He does not ask for the secret of life or of the world, the meaning and purpose of it all, but for a *dharma*.

Yet it is precisely this secret for which he does not ask, or at least so much of the knowledge as is necessary to lead him into a higher life, to which the divine Teacher intends to lead this disciple; for he means him to give up all Dharmas except the one broad and vast rule of living consciously in the Divine and acting from that consciousness. Therefore after testing the completeness of his revolt from the ordinary standards of conduct, he proceeds to tell him much that has to do with the state of the soul, but nothing of any outward rule of action. He must be equal in soul, abandon the desire of the fruits of work, rise above his intellectual notions of sin and virtue, live and act in Yoga with a mind in Samadhi, firmly fixed, that is to say, in the Divine alone. Arjuna is not satisfied: he wishes to know how the change to this state will affect the outward action of the man,

what result it will have on his speech, his movements, his state, what difference it will make in this acting, living human being. Krishna persists merely in enlarging upon the ideas he has already brought forward, on the soul-state behind the action, not on the action itself. It is the fixed anchoring of the intelligence in a state of desireless equality that is the one thing needed. Arjuna breaks out impatiently, – for here is no rule of conduct such as he sought, but rather, as it seems to him, the negation of all action, – "If thou holdest the intelligence to be greater than action, why then dost thou appoint me to an action terrible in its nature? Thou bewildereest my understanding with a mingled word: speak one thing decisively by which I can attain to what is the best." It is always the pragmatic man who has no value for metaphysical thought or for the inner life except when they help him to his one demand, a *dharma*, a law of life in the world or, if need be, of leaving the world; for that too is a decisive action which he can understand. But to live and act in the world, yet be above it, this is a "mingled" and confusing word the sense of which he has no patience to grasp.

The rest of Arjuna's questions and utterances proceed from the same temperament and character. When he is told that once the soul-state is assured there need be no apparent change in the action, he must act always by the law of his nature, even if the act itself seem faulty and deficient compared with that of another law than his own, he is troubled. The nature! But what of this sense of sin in the action with which he is preoccupied? Is it not this very nature which drives men as if by force and even against their better will into sin and guilt? His practical intelligence is baffled by Krishna's assertion that it was he who in the ancient times revealed to Vivasvan this Yoga, since lost, which he is now again revealing to Arjuna, and by his demand for an explanation he provokes the famous and oft-quoted statement of Avatarhood and its mundane purpose. He is again perplexed by the words in which Krishna continues to reconcile action and renunciation of action and asks once again for a decisive statement of that which is the best and highest, not this "mingled" word. When he realises fully the nature of the Yoga which he is bidden to embrace, his pragmatic nature accustomed to act from mental will and preference and desire is appalled by its difficulty and he asks what is the end of the soul which attempts and fails, whether it does not lose both this life of human activity and thought and emotion which it has left behind and the Brahmic consciousness to which it aspires and falling from both perish like a dissolving cloud?

When his doubts and perplexities are resolved and he knows that it is the Divine which must be his law, he aims again and always at such clear and decisive knowledge as will guide him practically to this source and this rule of his future

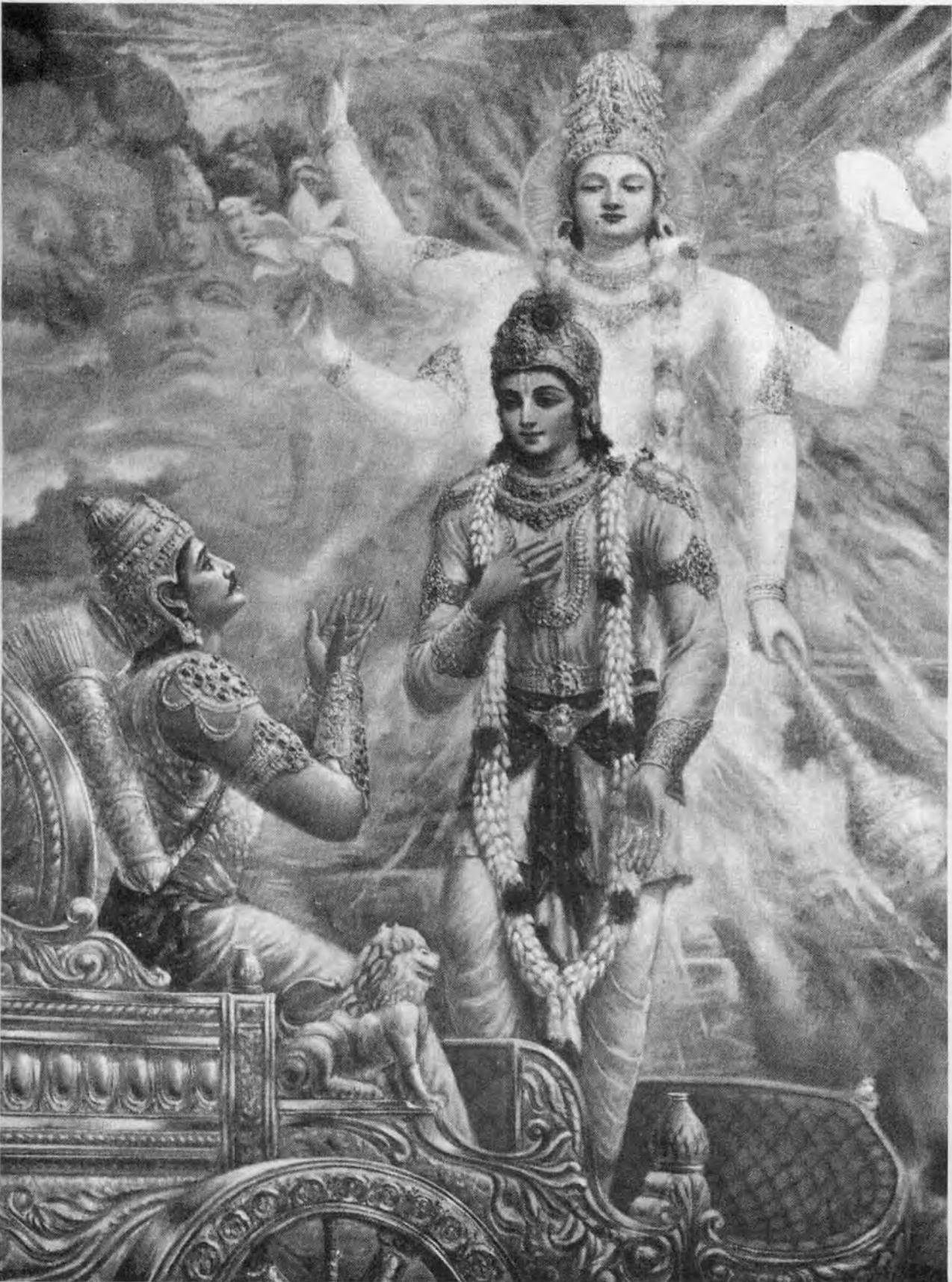
action. How is the Divine to be distinguished among the various states of being which constitute our ordinary experience? What are the great manifestations of its self-energy in the world in which he can recognise and realise it by meditation? May he not see even now the divine cosmic Form of That which is actually speaking to him through the veil of the human mind and body? And his last questions demand a clear distinction between renunciation of works and this subtler renunciation he is asked to prefer; the actual difference between Purusha and Prakriti, the Field and the Knower of the Field, so important for the practice of desireless action under the drive of the divine Will; and finally a clear statement of the practical operations and results of the three modes of Prakriti which he is bidden to surmount.

To such a disciple the Teacher of the Gita gives his divine teaching. He seizes him at a moment of his psychological development by egoistic action when all the mental, moral, emotional values of the ordinary egoistic and social life of man have collapsed in a sudden bankruptcy, and he has to lift him up out of this lower life into a higher consciousness, out of ignorant attachment to action into that which transcends, yet originates and orders action, out of ego into Self, out of life in mind, vitality and body into that higher nature beyond mind which is the status of the Divine. He has at the same time to give him that for which he asks and for which he is inspired to seek by the guidance within him, a new Law of life and action high above the insufficient rule of the ordinary human existence with its endless conflicts and oppositions, perplexities and illusory certainties, a higher Law by which the soul shall be free from this bondage of works and yet powerful to act and conquer in the vast liberty of its divine being. For the action must be performed, the world must fulfil its cycles and the soul of the human being must not turn back in ignorance from the work it is here to do. The whole course of the teaching of the Gita is determined and directed, even in its widest wheelings, towards the fulfilment of these three objects.

Text from Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita*, pp. 18-25.

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1. *Dharma* means literally that which one lays hold of and which holds things together, the law, the norm, the rule of nature, action and life.



Notes

Learning in the Mahabharata

According to the *Mahabharata*, the great epic of action, Bhishma was the guardian of the Pandu and Kuru princes committed to his care. He had appointed Drona as their preceptor. The Pandu princes were five: Yuddhishtira, Bhima, Arjuna, Sahadeva and Nakula. The Kuru princes, sons of Dhritarashtra, were one hundred, of whom Duryodhana was the eldest.

Drona was learned in all the Vedas, and he specially taught his students Dhanurveda, the science and art of warfare, in all its branches. "Unstring your bow and teach these princes the science of arms," (1:134) Bhishma directed Drona, while giving him charge of the education of the princes. Drona himself was taught by the great Rishi Agnivedha. At one place, Drona says: "I was engaged there in serving my preceptor, and lived with him for a long time as a humble-minded Brahmacharin with matted locks on my head."

Though Drona gave equal instruction to all, Arjuna became the foremost in agility and skill. It is said that Arjuna took great care in worshipping the preceptor and that he showed great devotion to his study of the science of arms. He became a favourite of Drona. Arjuna practised with his bow even in the night. Pleased with him, Drona taught him the art of fighting on horseback, on the elephant, on the car and on foot. He taught him how to fight with clubs, the sword, the lance, the spear and the dart, and how to defend himself against great numbers of adversaries.

As for the other pupils, Duryodhana and Bhima specialized in the art of fighting with clubs, Nakula and Sahadeva in handling the sword, Yuddhishtira as a "car-warrior", while Ashwatthama, Drona's son, excelled in the use of all arms.

Drona was a reputed teacher and his physical power was extraordinary. The *Mahabharata* tells us that Drona was eighty-five at the time of the battle of Kurukshetra, yet he acted "as if he were a vigorous youth of sixteen". Drona also knew "how to instruct one to wear the breastplate so that it should be invulnerable". Dhanurveda was not studied in the same way as the other Vedas, by memorizing texts. The learner was required to study Dhanurveda in isolation, by practising with his arms, and, if necessary, he could seek the aid of a teacher to be shown their use. In the story of Ekalavya, however, we find the student imbibing his lessons through an extraordinary process. Ekalavya had left home for the sake of his practice which included both physical and spiritual exercises. He approached Drona to accept him as a disciple, but Drona refused. Then Ekalavya made a clay idol of the teacher and practised the art of archery taking inspiration from the idol. It is said that he excelled to such an extent that he could have become superior to Arjuna but for the fact that when asked by Drona to give him his right thumb as a gift, he unhesitatingly gave it away.

Drona's Test

It is related that in one of the tests given to his pupils, Drona planted a wooden vulture on a tree-top and said, "You have each one turn. Take aim well; stand with arrows fixed. When I give the signal, shoot at the bird's head."

Then he turned to Yuddhishtira: "You first." Yuddhishtira lifted his bow and took aim.

"Do you see the bird?"

"Yes."

"Look again. Do you see the bird?"

"I see the tree, the bird, I see you, and my brothers."

Drona repeated the question, and received the same reply.

"Stand aside," Drona said, irritated. "Your turn is over."

The same question was put in turn to each of the others, including all the sons of Dhritarashtra, and the same reply was received in each case. Dismissed by Drona, they stood aside.

When Arjuna's turn came, Drona smiled. Do not disappoint me. Look straight at the bird. When I give the signal, shoot."

Arjuna stretched the bowstring and waited.

"Do you see the bird, or the tree, or myself?"

"I see the bird. I see no tree. I do not see you."

Drona was pleased. "Describe the bird."

"I see no bird," answered Arjuna, "I see only the head of a vulture."

"Shoot!"

The vulture's head snapped and fell to the ground.

Drona embraced Arjuna, who had the needed concentration and singleness of purpose.

Krishna the Teacher

Perhaps the war of the *Mahabharata* was a mistake, but it became inevitable when Duryodhana refused to give a legal share of the kingdom to the Pandavas, sons of Pandu. The forces were unequally divided, the armies on the side of Duryodhana being far more numerous than those on the side of the Pandavas. Teachers like Drona and grandsires like Bhishma, who were revered by the Pandavas, stood on the side of Duryodhana. Krishna was on the Pandava side but had declared that he would not use arms during the battle and had offered his own army to Duryodhana.

In the episode of the *Mahabharata* narrated in the *Gita*, we find Arjuna arriving at the battlefield in the chariot driven by Krishna. He requests Krishna to place the chariot at a strategic spot from where he can have a clear view of the formation of the armies. While viewing these formations Arjuna is overwhelmed by his sentiments, overcome by grief and depression. The way in which Krishna deals with Arjuna gives us an example of the methods of an ideal teacher. Krishna knows intimately the characteristics of the disciple's temperament. He knows that although Arjuna speaks high philosophical ideas of peace and renunciation, his thoughts and motives do not come from a philosophical mind. Even while he loves Arjuna, he is aware of his friend's and disciple's limitations. He understands at once that Arjuna is passing through a terrible crisis due to the sudden collapse of every norm and law that has so far guided his pragmatic

and rajasic character. He knows the depth of the crisis and brings him out of it by large and long and even winding steps, appealing to Arjuna's intelligence and heart at various levels and, finally, by uplifting him to a new and higher dimension of vision and experience. At no stage does Krishna show any impatience; on the contrary, he allows Arjuna to question him critically and towards the end of the dialogue, when he had told Arjuna all he had to tell, he said, "Now do as you wish and decide." There is in this dialogue an atmosphere of free questioning, and surprising and delightful revelations that evoke deep reverence and uplifting experience.

As was said earlier, most of us, like Arjuna, are pragmatic¹ and tend to base our decisions on personal or social ethics without trying to understand the subtleties and complexities involved. We have hedonistic ideas or utilitarian ideas or ideas of the categorical imperative, and often a mixture of all three, and we apply them in accordance with certain fixed attitudes, without examining the scope and province of their application. We are not aware of their inadequacies or inner contradictions. Thus we are bound to get deluded and perplexed, and in critical circumstances find ourselves in a state of bankruptcy.

The extract presented here might prove to be extremely useful to all of us who are earnest in our actions and keen to learn the secret of facing the severest challenge of life.

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1. According to pragmatism, the truth of a proposition cannot be determined by any intrinsic quality, coherence or clarity, or even by correspondence with actual fact, but only by the success of the proposal contained in the proposition. In other words, pragmatism maintains that truth is what works, what is practicable.





Gautama at School, from an Ajanta painting

The Seeker and the Teacher

Introduction

Some 2.500 years ago, in the Park of Lumbini, situated in the Himalayan foothills near the Indo-Nepalese border, a baby boy was born to Queen Mahamaya. This child, called Siddhartha, was destined to become the Buddha, one of the greatest teachers in world history.

The young prince grew up in the court of his father, King Suddhodana, in the midst of pleasure and luxury. During his childhood and adolescence, Suddhodana tried assiduously to prevent Siddhartha from seeing the ills and suffering of this world. But Destiny was stronger than the King's will. The Prince came into contact with the "Suffering of the World" three times: first, he saw an old man and understood that everyone, one day, has to become old; then he met a sick man, and finally he saw a man's corpse. These three sights and his meeting with a wandering mendicant troubled his mind so much that he decided to leave his princely life, his young wife, Yasodhara, and his new-born son, Rahula, and to search for an answer to his deep question: "Where is the way out of old age, sickness and death, what is the way to permanence?"



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After years of ascetic sadhana, having thus experienced extreme renunciation as well as luxury and pleasure, Siddhartha chose the Middle Path, and attained enlightenment on the full moon night in the month of May, under a peepul tree at Bodh-Gaya. He had become the Buddha, the Awakened One.

For a few days, he hesitated. How could he communicate his experience? How could he make people understand his teachings? Then the decision was taken: he went to the Deer Park, and taught the Four Noble Truths to his earlier companions:

- 1. The Truth of the universality of suffering.*
- 2. The Truth of the cause of suffering.*
- 3. The Truth of cessation of suffering.*
- 4. The way to Nirvana.*

For 45 years, he went walking from one village to another, from one city to the next. He met people of all castes, all ages. In a very structured society, in which the Brahmin caste had codified most of the customs and the relationships of the time, he met everyone, treated everyone with the same respect and taught everyone, not according to rank or caste, but according to the person's understanding and sincerity. He spoke to kings and children, to rich merchants and poor peasants, to dacoits and women. He adapted his teachings, telling stories or parables to the simple folk, or expounding the deepest psychological theories or the most profound practices of meditation to the more advanced disciples. Up to his last day (he was then 81 years old), he taught, and his death was his last and supreme teaching on the impermanence of the human form.

We present here three short stories that illustrate some aspects of the Buddha's method of teaching.

In the first story, the Buddha's teaching is addressed to a woman named Kisagautami whose child has just died and who wants the Buddha to bring him back to life. The fact that the Buddha teaches a woman is quite revolutionary at the time, because although in the old Vedic tradition women had a place of honour, when the Buddha came in the sixth century BC, society had become very rigid, and the flexible thoughts of the Rishis had been translated into fixed rules and rituals; even relationships between people had become strictly

codified. It was, therefore, a revolution when women became part of the Buddha's Sangha. The Buddha himself had hesitated before ordaining Mahaprajapati, his foster-mother, as the first Bhikkuni.

To teach Kisagautami, the Buddha chose to give her a concrete experience, so that she could discover and understand the truth by herself. As the great Mahayanist Master Shantideva later said, "It is not by reading a medical book that one can cure a patient." The Buddha was using a crisis in the life of the pupil. The aspiration of the student is one of the most important factors in the process of education. The problem faced by Kisagautami is concrete and terrible: her child has just died. She is ready to do anything to bring him back to life. She is not asking for philosophical answers. She needs something concrete to console her and heal her pain. But she is not ready to realize fully the sense of the first Noble Truth: the universality of suffering. In order to teach her that the suffering is universal, the Buddha sends her to collect a mustard seed from a house where nobody has died. Going from one house to the next Kisagautami progressively discovers that what she thought to be "her" problem is being faced by all people, that it is a terrestrial problem affecting all sentient beings. And thus her own pain and anguish is lessened.

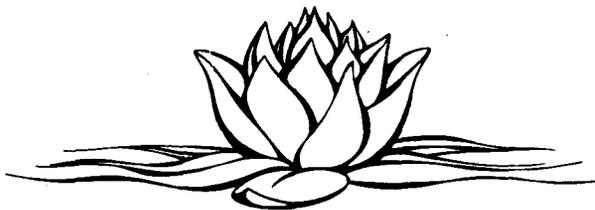
In this example, life itself is the real teacher; here the Buddha is a guide who leads the student towards the discovery of a truth which will help her to progress. This is probably the ideal way to teach; the teacher suggests certain ways for the student to follow, gives her certain leads by which she can discover and progress by herself. The other quality of a teacher the Buddha shows in this story is psychological insight: to understand the student or the disciple and the problem of the moment and thus give the adequate guidance. The Buddha chose this particular crisis in the life of Kisagautami to have her make the necessary progress. When Kisagautami comes back to the Buddha she has already buried her child, which means that she has understood the lesson, and she is returning because she has recognized the greatness of the teacher and wants to receive further teaching. In other words, she was ripe to receive the Buddha's teachings, and through external events she was in a position to get a true understanding of the teacher's words. A Buddhist would say that her own karma and her son's karma provoked the events which led her to a deep realization.

In the second story, the process of teaching is different, since the young Brahmin students have a different problem: they are searching for a more philosophical answer. The Buddha will teach them how to analyse a philosophical theory and to see that, before entering a dispute, it is better to use one's mind to understand the foundation of the problem. In this case, the

dispute is about the best way to reach the state of Brahma. Is it the path expounded by the Brahmin Pokkassarati or that shown by Tarukka? As a good teacher, the Buddha shows the way to the root of the disputed matter, but he does not give a demonstration; he only tries to put the two students on the track of logical reasoning which will ultimately lead them to the solution of their problem. As always in his teachings, the Buddha does not give any ready-made solution, but he tries to put the student or disciple on the path. Through a series of questions, the young Brahmins are forced to think deeper and are led to find the solution to the problem by themselves. "Does the Brahmin discoursing on Brahma, have the experience of Brahma?" – "No", so the logical conclusion is that they do not know Brahma and therefore are not entitled to speak about it; and the question of a dispute should not arise.

One should note that it is the decision of the students to refer the matter to the teacher. They also decide to accept his decision whatever it may be. This is an important point in education: the student should approach the teacher and, on his part, the teacher should gain the confidence of his pupils and be worthy of that confidence. It should also be noted that the Buddha always insisted that the student himself verify the truth of his words and not take them for granted. The other quality shown by the Buddha in this story is the patience and the gentleness of the teacher for the student. He does not hesitate to give many concrete examples to explain to the students the futility of their dispute. After each of his statements, he checks if the young Brahmins have followed the argument, have understood the implications of reasoning and have agreed with his conclusions. He never tries to impose his views; he only tries to lead the young Brahmins to the right understanding of the problem and thus the right conclusion.

In the third story, we have the declaration of the Buddha which contains the noblest spirit of teacherhood. The Buddha says: "As the wise test gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it on a piece of touchstone, so are you to accept my words only after examining them and not merely out of regard for me."





MAYAURA, Auroville 1987

The Mustard Seed

There was a woman named Gotami, whose child had just died. She was so upset by this that she lost her reason completely. She went everywhere trying to bring her child back to life. Her friends felt sorry for her and said, "Gotami, you should go and see the Buddha. Perhaps he can help you."

She went before the Buddha still holding her child in her arms. "Please bring him back to life for me," she cried. Very gently the Buddha answered her, "I can help you, Gotami, but first you must bring me something. I need one small mustard seed. However, it must come from a house where no one ever died."

Gotami quickly went out in search of a mustard seed. She asked at one home and the woman answered, "Of course you can have a mustard seed, you can have whatever you want – but you should know that last year my husband died."

"Oh," Gotami replied, "then I must search elsewhere," and ran off to the next house.

But wherever she went, the same thing happened. Everyone wanted to help her, but in every family she visited someone had died. One person told her, "Three years ago I lost my daughter." Another said, "My brother died here yesterday." It was always the same.

At the end of the day, she returned to the Buddha. "What have you found, Gotami?" he asked. "Where is your mustard seed? And where is your son? You are not carrying him any longer."

She answered, "O Buddha, today I have discovered that I am not the only one who has lost a loved one. Everywhere people have died. I see how foolish I was to think I could have my son back, and this afternoon I buried him. Now I have returned to you to hear your teachings. I am ready to listen."

Then the Buddha said, "Gotami, you have learned a great deal today. But if you learn the truth of the Law of Impermanence, you can live in happiness. In all the worlds of men, and of the gods too, there is only one law: everything is impermanent." And he taught her. She joined the Sangha, and subsequently came to be known for her progress in virtue and philosophical learning, which made the Buddha appoint her as the superintendent of the Convent at Jetavana. She is said to have eventually achieved Nirvana.

Tevigga Sutta

At one time when the Buddha was journeying through Kosala in the company of about five hundred disciples, he came to the Brahmin village of Manasakata. There he stayed in the mango grove on the bank of the river Akiravati to the south of Manasakata.

At that time, many distinguished and wealthy Brahmins were living at Manasakata; among them were two young men, Vasettha and Bharadvaga. One day, after taking their bath, they were walking up and down in a thoughtful mood; they started arguing about which was the true path to union with Brahma. The young Brahmin Vasettha said: "I think that the path that has been announced by the Brahmin Pokkassarati is the straight path, the direct way which leads those who act according to it into a state of union with Brahma."

Bharadvaga said: "I think the path of the Brahmin Tarukka is the straight path, the direct way which leads into a state of union with Brahma." But neither was able to convince the other. Then Vasettha said to his friend, "There is a sage named Gotama of the Sakya clan who is now living a religious life. He is staying in the mango grove nearby. He is of high reputation, he is even said to be a 'fully Enlightened One', full of wisdom and goodness, happiness and knowledge of the world, unsurpassed as a guide to erring mortals, a teacher of gods and men, a Buddha. Come, Bharadvaga, let us ask him and whatever he says, let us agree on it."

"Very well", assented Bharadvaga. Then the young Brahmins went on to the place where the Buddha was staying. When they reached there, they exchanged greetings with the Buddha and sat down beside him. The young Brahmin Vasettha said to the Buddha: "As we were taking exercise, walking up and down, a conversation started between us about the true path to union with Brahma. I said it was the path of Pokkassarati; Bharadvaga said that it was the way of the Brahmin Tarukka. Not being able to agree, we decided to refer the dispute to you."

Then the Buddha replied: "Vasettha, you said that the true path was the one taught by Pokkassarati; Bharadvaga, you said that it was the one of Tarukka. What is the cause, Vasettha, of the strife, the dispute, the difference of opinion between you?"

Vasettha replied: "Various Brahmins, Gotama, teach various paths to union with Brahma. Is one true and another false, or are all saving paths? Are they all

paths which will lead one who acts according to them into a state of union with Brahma? Is it like the different roads that come into a village and meet in the centre? Is it in that sense that all the various teachings of the Brahmins are to be accepted? Are they all saving paths?"

The Buddha replied: "Vasettha, do you think that all these various paths lead aright?"

"I think so, Gotama."

"Would you be willing to assert that they all lead aright, Vasettha?"

"Yes, Gotama."

"But then, Vasettha, is there a single one of the Brahmins versed in the Vedas who has ever seen Brahma face to face?"

"No, indeed, Gotama."

"But is there then, Vasettha, a single one of the pupils of the teachers of the Brahmins versed in the Vedas who has seen Brahma face to face?"

"No, indeed, Gotama."

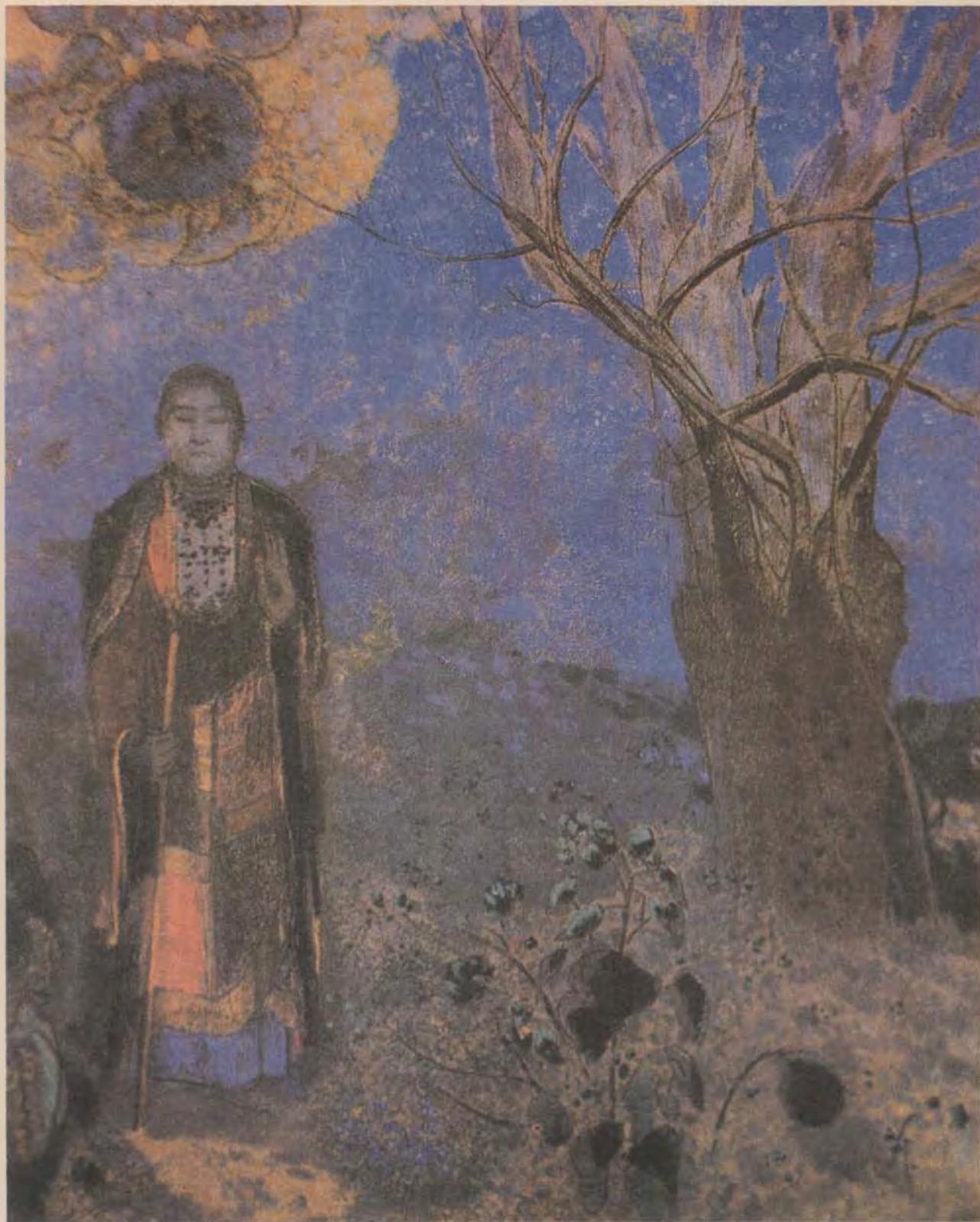
"But, Vasettha, is there a single one of the ancestors of all these Brahmins back to the seventh generation, who has seen Brahma face to face?"

"No, indeed, Gotama."

"Then do you mean, Vasettha, that not one of the Brahmins, nor their teachers, nor their teachers' pupils, nor their ancestors back for seven generations, has ever seen Brahma face to face, that those who today so carefully intone and recite precisely the Vedas as they have been handed down to them, that even they did not pretend to know or have seen where or whence or whither Brahma is? And yet, Vasettha, these Brahmins pretend that they can show the path to union with that which they have not seen and which they do not know, saying: 'This is the straight path, this is the direct way which leads he who acts according to it into a state of union with Brahma.' Now what do you think, Vasettha? Does it not mean that the talk of these Brahmins, versed though they be in the Vedas is foolish talk?"

"Yes, Gotama, it is true that the talk of the Brahmins is foolish talk."

"Vasettha, it is like a string of blind men clinging to one another, the foremost can not see the way, neither can the middle one, nor the hindmost. The talk of the Brahmins is but blind talk. The first sees not, the middle one sees not, the hindmost sees not. The talk, then, of these Brahmins turns out to be ridiculous, mere words, vain and empty. Vasettha, if a man should say, 'I long for and love the most beautiful woman in this land,' People should ask him, 'Well, friend, this most beautiful woman for whom you are longing, do you know her name, or her family name, whether she is tall or short, dark or of medium complexion,



Odilon Redon.

black or fair, or in what village or town or city she dwells?' But he should answer, 'I do not know.' And when people should say to him, 'So then, friend, the girl whom you know not, neither have seen, how do you love and long for her?' And then when asked he should answer, 'Nevertheless, I love her.' Now what think you, Vasettha? Would it not turn out that the talk of that man was foolish talk?"

"Truly, Gotama, it would turn out that the talk of this person was foolish talk."

"Vasettha, you say that the Brahmins and all connected with them, have never seen Brahma, Now what think you, Vasettha? Does it not mean that the talk of the Brahmins versed in the Vedas is foolish talk?"

"Truly, Gotama, it follows that the talk of the Brahmins is foolish talk."

"Very good, Vasettha. To say that it is true that the Brahmins should be able to show the way to a state of union with that which they do not know, neither have seen, this is not a correct assertion. Just as a man should make a stairway in a place where four roads meet, Vasettha, and people should say to him, 'Well, friend, where are you going to build your mansion for which you are building this stairway? Will it face the east, or the south, or the west, or the north? How large will it be? Large or small or of medium size?' And when asked, he should answer, 'I do not know.' And people should say to him, 'But then, friend, are you making a stairway and do not have any idea in your mind as to what the mansion is to be like?' And when asked, he should answer, 'Yes.' Now what do think you, Vasettha? Would it not turn out that the thing which the man was doing was a foolish thing to do?"

"Truly, Gotama, it would be a foolish thing he was doing."

"Vasettha, the way to union with Brahma which the Brahmins are proclaiming without having seen Brahma or knowing anything about him, is just as foolish. Is it not so?"

"Truly, Gotama, it means that the talk of the Brahmins is foolish."

"Very good, Vasettha. For these Brahmins to proclaim a way to union with Brahma which they do not know, neither have seen – such is a wrong assertion. Again, Vasettha, if this river Akiravati were full of water, even to the brim and overflowing, and a man should come up and want to cross over because he had business on the other side, and he, standing on this bank, should say, 'Come hither, O further bank! come over to this side!' Now what think you, Vasettha, would the further bank of the river, because of the man's invoking and praying and hoping and praising, come over to this side?"

"Certainly not, Gotama."

"The same way, Vasettha, do the Brahmins, omitting the practice of those qualities which really make a man a Brahmin and adopting the practice of those

qualities which really make men not Brahmins – say thus: Indra, we call upon thee, Soma, we call upon thee, Varuna, we call upon thee, Isana, we call upon thee, Prajapati, we call upon thee, Yama, we call upon thee! Truly, Vasettha, just by their invoking and praying and hoping and praising, that they should after death and when the body is dissolved, become united with Brahma – this is a wrong assertion."



The Monk has Said

One day, while visiting the Kingdom of Kosala, the Buddha passed through a small town called Kesaputra, where the Kalamas were living. Very often they were visited by mendicants, ascetics and wanderers of all kinds. Each one preached his own truth, his own path. The Kalamas were actually quite confused by all these different teachings; so when they heard of the forthcoming visit of the Buddha, they thought it could be a good occasion to clarify their confusion as the Buddha already had a very high reputation in the area.

"Lord, we are very confused, so many ascetics and Brahmins are visiting us; they teach different truths, each one pretends that his own truth is the only one. They all strongly condemn the other paths. Tell us what to do, whom to believe."

"Kalamas, to find out where the truth lies, you should not depend on certain things: the first is tradition. Also do not depend on hearsay, on the scriptures, on rumours. Do not decide on the good and bad only on the good reputation of a teacher, or on the appearances of things.

"Kalamas, remember also that you do not have the means to know all the facts of truth; therefore, you should not come to the conclusion, 'My conclusion is the only true one, everything else is false.' You would become dogmatic. So, Kalamas, do not be satisfied by hearsay or just because 'the monk is our teacher' or 'the monk has said'. Analyze by yourself even my words, see if they are conducive to good and happiness, study the cause and the origin of actions: if they are born out of ignorance, hatred or greed, they are certainly not good."

On many other occasions, the Buddha taught the same thing to disciples: "As the wise test gold by burning, cutting and rubbing it (on a piece of touchstone), so are you to accept my words only after examining them and not merely out of regard for me."

Notes

Beginnings

Siddhartha was sent at a young age to a writing school under the master Vishvamitra. There he inquired what he was to be taught besides the sixty-four kinds of writing he already knew.

Another of Siddhartha's teachers, the high-born Brahmana Sabbamitta, was a philologist and grammarian, well-read in the six Vedangas,¹ whom King Suddhodana, Siddhartha's father, sent for and charged to teach his son.

Once Siddhartha's relations complained to the king that his son was devoted to home pleasures and neglected those manly pursuits necessary for one who might one day lead his kinsmen in war. Siddhartha, when told of this, appointed a day when he would prove his skill against all comers. On that day he surpassed even the cleverest bowmen and, showing his mastery in "the twelve arts", won back the good opinion of the complaining clansmen.

Along with literary education, Siddhartha was given education in music and the military arts and pursued excellence in all his studies. He had a deep, questioning mind; it seems certain that he must have gone through a systematic course of study in all the deepest philosophies of the time. Although we hear nothing of Siddhartha between his youth and his twenty-ninth year and the great renunciation (*mahabhinishkramana*), an intense search shows that he was constantly meditating and contemplating on the supreme questions of the meaning and end of life.²

Intensity of Quest

At the age of twenty-nine, Siddhartha saw four things that altered him permanently: a man broken by age, a sick man, a decaying corpse, and a dignified hermit. He saw each of these in the company of his attendant Channa, and each time Channa was specially inspired to explain to his deeply-moved master the meaning of the sight. In the midst of luxury and comfort, a deep questioning arose in Siddhartha and he felt he was sitting on a volcano that might explode at any moment. The details of ordinary life became unbearable for him.

At about this time, the birth of a son was announced to Siddhartha in a garden at the riverside, where he had gone after seeing the hermit. The event was unexpected. "This is a new and strong tie I shall have to break," he said, and returned home thoughtful and sad.

But the villagers were delighted at the birth of the child, their king's only grandson. Siddhartha's return became a triumph, and he entered Kapilavastu amidst a crowd of rejoicing clansmen. Among the sounds of ovation which greeted his ear, one in particular is said to have attracted his attention – that of a young girl, his cousin, singing, "Happy the father, happy the mother, happy the wife of such a son and husband."

1. The entire body of the Vedic works composed in the style of the Sutras in accordance with the Indian traditional view, divided into six branches, called Vedangas (members of the Veda). These are: Shiksha, Chhanda, Vyakarana, Nirukta, Kalpa, and Jyotisha.

2. Rhys Davids, American Lectures, p.102

The word "happy" had a special meaning for Siddhartha – it meant freed, delivered from the chains of parenthood, saved. Grateful to the one who at such a time had reminded him of his highest thoughts, Siddhartha removed his necklace of pearls, and sent it to her, saying, "Let this be her fee as a teacher." She, quite naturally, began to build castles in the air, thinking, "Young Siddhartha is falling in love with me, and has sent me a present." But he took no further notice of her and passed on.

At midnight he sent Channa for his horse, and then went to the threshold of his wife's chamber. There by the light of the flickering lamp, he watched her sleeping, surrounded by flowers, with one hand on the head of their child. He had wished to take the babe in his arms for the last time, but now saw that he could not do so without awaking the mother. As this might frustrate all his plans, the fear of waking Yasodhara prevailed at last and he reluctantly tore himself away. Accompanied only by Channa, he left his father's home, his wealth and power, his young wife and only child. He rode away into the night to become a penniless seeker and pupil and a homeless wanderer.

The intensity of the quest outweighed all other considerations and possible pursuits. The hour had arrived when he had to take the staff in hand and set out on a journey into the unknown. Siddhartha rode a long distance that night, not stopping until he reached the bank of the river Aroma, beyond the Koliyan territory. There, removing his ornaments, he gave them and the horse to Channa to take back to Kapilavastu. Channa begged to be allowed to stay with his master, so that by becoming an ascetic he might continue to serve him. But Siddhartha would not hear of it, saying: "How will my father and my relatives know what has become of me unless you go back and tell them?" Siddhartha then cut off his long hair, exchanged clothes with a poor passer-by, sent home the dejected and sorrowing Channa, and hurried on towards Rajagriha to begin his new life as a homeless ascetic and seeker.¹

Years of Quest and Penance

Rajagriha, the capital of Magadha, was the seat of Bimbisara, one of the most powerful princes in the eastern valley of the Ganges. Several hermits had found it convenient to settle in the solitude of the caves of the surrounding hills, free from the dangers of more disturbed districts, yet near enough to the town whence they procured their simple supplies. Siddhartha approached one of the leading teachers, Alara Kalama, who had a following of 300 disciples. Alara taught him the successive stages of meditation and the doctrine of Atman. But Siddhartha turned back dissatisfied on the ground that this teaching did not lead to aversion, absence of passion, cessation, quiescence, knowledge, supreme wisdom, and Nirvana, but only as far as the realm of nothingness.

Siddhartha next approached Uddaka, the sage of Rajagriha with 700 pupils. Siddhartha was intellectually and spiritually so advanced and mastered the doctrines taught to him so quickly that the teacher came to treat him as his equal in every way, offering to take him as a co-teacher of his disciples. Siddhartha, however, was also dissatisfied with Uddaka's teachings. He was seeking the highest good, which he could not find there. He left Uddaka and came in the course of his journeying to Uruvela, near Gaya, where, perceiving a delightful spot with an enchanting grove of trees and a silvery river, the Niranjana, all easy of approach and delightful, with a village nearby in which to beg, he settled down.

1. Adapted from Buddhism by Rhys Davids, Indological Book House, Delhi, 1973.

Siddhartha then engaged in a veritable life-and-death struggle involving meditation and penance. He was his own teacher and his own pupil. The solitude of this struggle was relieved by the fellowship of five mendicants, who desired deliverance and attached themselves to him as his disciples.

One of the most common beliefs of those times was the efficacy of penance as a means to gain superhuman powers and insights. Siddhartha decided to make an experiment, and resolved to go apart and see what progress he could make by this much-vaunted method. For six years, attended by the five faithful disciples, he gave himself up to the severest penances until he wasted away to a shadow by fasting and self-mortification. He practised many difficult forms of abstinence. His self-control evoked wonder and admiration, and his fame is said to have spread round about like the sound of a great bell hung in the canopy of the sky.

But the more he thought, the more he examined himself and denied himself, the more he felt himself prey to a mental torture worse than any bodily suffering. He began to wonder whether all his efforts were in vain and that he would fail. At last, one day, when walking slowly up and down, lost in thought, he staggered and fell to the ground. Some of the disciples thought he was dead. His body had become so thin that the ribs could be counted from his back, and there was no distance left between his belly and his spine.

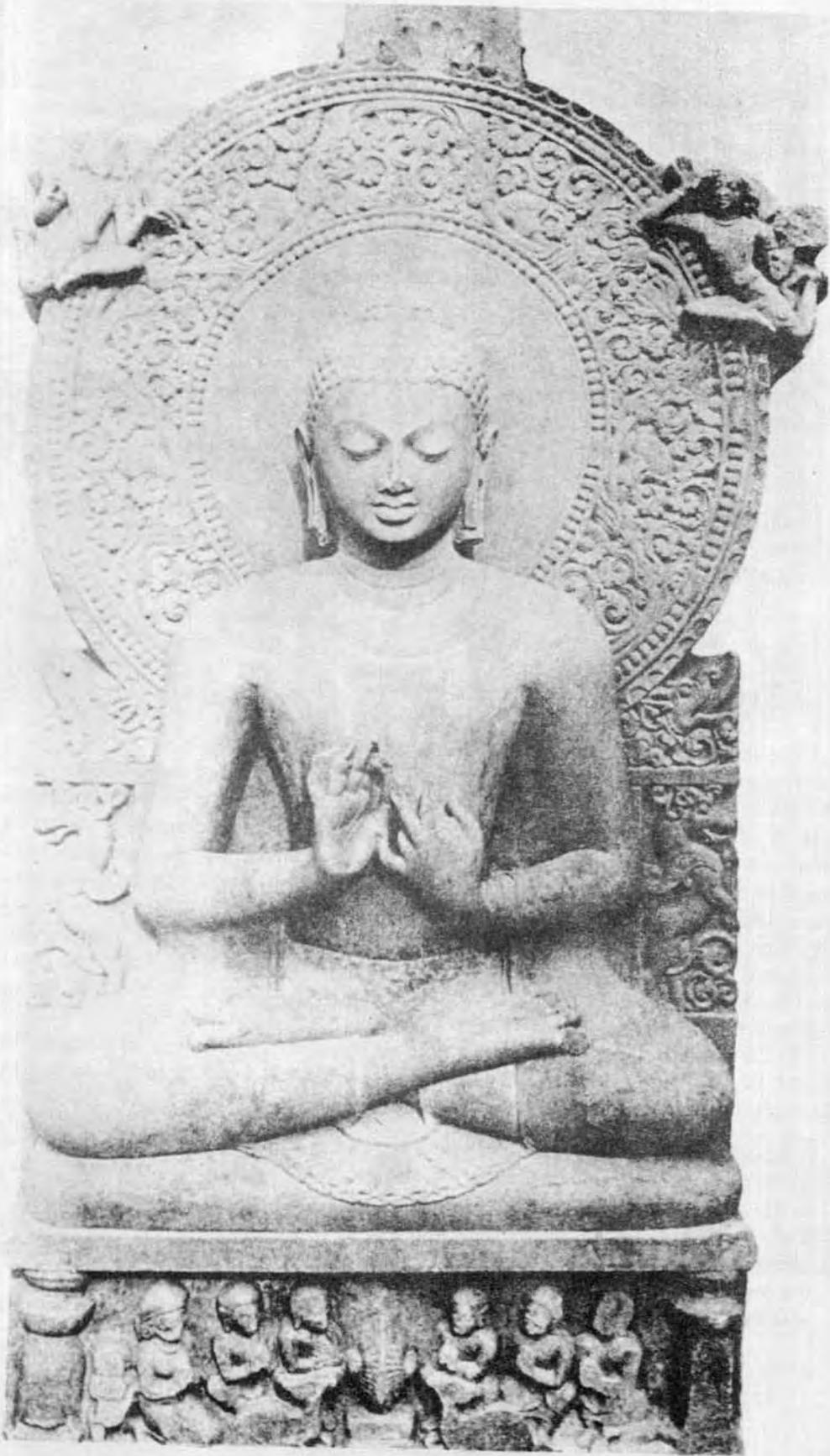
But he recovered, and concluded that "truth cannot be attained by one who has lost his strength". He then set about curing his body and, on the bank of the river Niranjana, he persuaded himself to take some milk offered by Nandabala, the daughter of the leader of neighbouring herdsmen. The five orthodox mendicants, who had so far accompanied Siddhartha in his pursuits, now felt that he had fallen from the high road to realization; thinking he had returned to the world, they left him and went to Varanasi.

Siddhartha, the indefatigable seeker, continued to strive. Accounts tell us of his conflicts with Mara, the Tempter, when the greatness of the temptation was shadowed forth by horrible convulsions of the powers of Nature.

When a conflict began . . . a thousand appalling meteors fell; clouds and darkness prevailed: Even this earth, with the oceans and mountains it contains though it is unconscious, quaked like a conscious being – like a fond bride when forcibly torn from her bridegroom – like the festoons of a vine shaking under the blasts of a whirlwind. The ocean rose under the vibration of this earthquake; rivers flowed back towards their sources; peaks of lofty mountains, where countless trees had grown for ages, rolled crumbling to the earth; a fierce storm howled all around; the roar of the concussion became terrific; and the very sun enveloped itself in awful darkness, and a host of headless spirits filled the air.¹

One day, shortly after his followers had left him, Siddhartha wandered out towards the banks of the Niranjana, received his morning meal from the hands of Sujata, the daughter of a neighbouring villager, and sat down to eat under the shade of a large peepul tree (*ficus religiosa*) which would come to be known from that time onward as the sacred bo-tree, the tree of wisdom. There he remained in meditation through the long hours of the day. Adverse suggestions came to him from Mara. The intimate delights of home and love, the charms of wealth and power, began to glow again with attractive colours.

1. Mathuratha Vilasini, *Journal of Bengal Asiatic Society*, vii, 812, 813.



The teaching Buddha

At last, Siddhartha said to Mara:

Lust is your first army; the second is dislike for higher life; the third is hunger and thirst; the fourth is craving; the fifth is torpor and sloth; the sixth is fear, cowardice; the seventh is doubt; the eighth is hypocrisy and obduracy; the ninth is gain, praise, honour, false glory; the tenth is exalting self, despising others. Mara, these are your armies. No feeble man can conquer them, yet only by conquering them one wins bliss. I challenge you! Shame on my life if defeated! Better for me to die in battle than live defeated . . .

Mara replied:

For seven years have I followed Thee step by step. I can find no entrance to the All-enlightened, the watchful one. As a crow went after a stone that looked like a lump of fat, thinking, surely, here I shall find a tender morsel, and finding no sweetness there, departed thence; so like a crow attacking a rock, in disgust I leave Thee Gautama.

Siddhartha became the Enlightened One, Gautama, the Buddha. He had gained the haven of peace, and through the power of inward culture and of love over the human heart, had come to rest at last on a certitude that could never be shaken.

Transition to Teacherhood

The Buddha had arrived at Nirvana, utter transcendence, which no negative or positive idea can truly or adequately describe. In that experience, the root of desire is destroyed and, even while in the body and while doing the works of Righteousness and Love in the world, one remains in a state of utter transcendence, sometimes described as the state of nothingness or of utter emptiness or of non-being, sometimes as the state that is neither being nor non-being, neither diversity nor oneness, neither immobility nor dynamism. True action, it is said, proceeds from silence, and there are deeper and deeper profundities of silence, each corresponding to a greater effectivity of action. At the deepest, or highest, state of silence is found the state of Buddhahood, where, like the Buddha, one can remain in Nirvana yet act in the world. In any case, the Buddha's life as a teacher showed that, although impersonal in his consciousness, in his action he was one of the most powerful personalities to have lived and produced results upon earth.

The Buddha accepted teacherhood after an important and meaningful struggle. For a time he felt that the truth he had attained was too high for others to understand. It is said that while he tarried in solitude this thought came to him:

I have penetrated this deep truth, which is difficult to understand, peace-giving, sublime, which transcends all thought, deeply significant, which only the wise can grasp. Man moves in an earthly sphere, in an earthly sphere he has his place and finds his enjoyment. For him, it will be difficult to grasp this matter, the law of causality, the chain of causes and effects, the extinction of all conformations; the withdrawal from all that is earthly, the extinction of desire, the cessation of longing, the end, the Nirvana. And so – why reveal to the world what I have won by a serene struggle? The truth remains hidden from him who desire and hate absorbs.

It is difficult, mysterious, deep, hidden from the coarse mind. He cannot apprehend it, whose mind earthly vocations surround with night."

Thinking this, the Buddha's heart was inclined to abide in quietude and not to proclaim the truth. However, a higher prayer arose, full of compassion, leading him to declare: "I shall not enter Nirvāna until the life of holiness which I point out has been successful, grown in favour, and extended among all mankind, and is in vogue and thoroughly made known to all men." He said:

Let opened be to all the door of eternity.
He who hath ears, let him hear the word and believe.¹



1. Mahavagga, i, 5, 2.

Teacherhood Begins

At first, he intended to address himself to his old teachers, Alara and Uddaka, but finding that they had died, he walked straight to Varanasi, where his former disciples were living. Along the way, he met Upaka and from him received his first rebuff. Upaka, surprised at the Buddha's expression and carriage, asked him: "Whence comes it that thy form is so perfect, thy countenance so lovely, thy appearance so peaceful? What system is it that imparts to thee such joy and such peace?"

To this, the Buddha replied that he had overcome all worldly influences and ignorance, all error and passionate craving. Then Upaka asked him where he was going and on hearing that the Buddha's destination was Varanasi, he inquired for what purpose. To this, the Buddha answered:

I now will turn the wheel of the excellent Law,
For this purpose I am going to that city of Varanasi,
To give light to those enshrouded in darkness,
And to open the gate of Immortality to men.

Upon further questioning, he informed Upaka that having conquered all evil passion, and forever having got rid of the remnants of personal being, he had willed by the light of his spiritual knowledge to dispense light to all, even as a lamp enlightens all in the house.

Unable to bear any more, Upaka said curtly: "Venerable Gautama, your way lies yonder." And turning away, Upaka strode off in the opposite direction.¹

The Buddha continued his journey and reached the Deer Park in Varanasi, where he met his five former disciples. There were reservations in their minds, but one among them, Kondanya, led the way in accepting the Buddha's teachings, and finally all five gave their adhesion to the Light revealed to them.



1. This story is to be found in Beal's *Romantic Legends from the Chinese*, p. 245, and it is related in *Buddhism* by Rhys Davids.

The Great Teachers as Examples

It is said that education is a preparation for life; and this is true, although it would be truer to say that all life is perpetual education. In any case, the quality and direction of education is dependent upon the aim of life that is conceived and attempted to be realized. It is in this context that we need to turn to the great teachers, the Rishis, Krishna, the Buddha, Christ, Socrates, and others who have attempted to churn the ocean of life and indicated what they have discovered at the peak of their achievements. However, they might differ among themselves, their very differences become for us objects of exploration and provide us the material on the basis of which a more synthetic and more flexible process of education can be conceived for our growing generations.

There is a facile view that the greatest teachers need not be presented as examples for emulation; for, it is argued, hardly anyone can reach the heights that they scaled, and by presenting too sublime examples, we are likely to create among the ordinary common teachers a sense of despair or frustration. But the history of human culture will show that the real forerunners of humanity have always presented the highest examples and endeavoured to lift others to their highest possible heights. And it is the climb to greater and greater heights and constant attempts at higher and higher approximations that constitute the epic theme of human endeavour. This theme is of central importance for education and teachers and pupils.

Ideals of Education

The Vedic ideal of education, as we saw earlier, was to achieve, through the practice of *brahmacharya*, a mastery over physical life and a conquest over the supraphysical planes of luminous knowledge and power so as to effect a kind of synthesis between material prosperity and spiritual liberation and immortality.

This ideal continued to inspire the Rishis of the Upanishads, but there was later an increasing tendency towards asceticism that put forward the idea of the meaninglessness of the world and its activities and favoured an exclusive pursuit of spiritual solitude, calm and peace. This ideal became so stamped on the general attitude in spiritual life that the Buddha was obliged to go through extreme practices of self-mortification and asceticism in the belief that these practices were necessary for the highest attainment. Fortunately he came to the conclusion that the real path was the Middle Path, which rejects physical torture on the one hand, and indulgence on the other. It may, indeed, be said that the Buddha did not teach a petty ideal of escape from action, but a subtle and difficult and lofty ideal of synthesizing the state of Silence with all the activities of righteousness, love and compassion.

Nevertheless, in the development of Buddhism, the rejection of worldly activities became more and more prominent.

The Buddha's Daily Life

The daily routine of the Bhikkhus came to be determined very much by the Buddha's daily life, which has been described in Buddhaghosha's commentary on the first of the *Dialogues of Gotama*. "He rose early in the morning (about 5 a.m.) and, out of consideration for his personal attendant, was in the habit of washing and dressing himself, without calling for any assistance. Then, till it was time to go on his round for alms, he would retire to a solitary place and meditate. When that time arrived, he would dress himself completely in the three robes, take his bowl in his hand and, sometimes alone and sometimes attended by his followers, would enter the neighbouring village or town for alms. Then the people understanding that 'today the Blessed One has come for alms', would vie with one another, saying: 'Today, Sir, take your meal with us; we will make provision for ten, and we for twenty, and we for a hundred of your followers.' So saying, they would take his bowl, and, spreading mats for him, and his attendant followers, they would await the moment when the meal was over. Then would the Blessed One, when the meal was done, discourse to them with due regard to their capacity for spiritual things, in such a way that some would take the layman's vow and some would enter on the path, and some would reach the highest fruit thereof.

This done, he would arise from his seat and depart to the place where he had lodged. And when he had come there, he would sit in the open veranda, awaiting the time when the rest of the followers should also have finished their meal. And when his attendant announced that they had done so, he would enter his private apartment. Thus was he occupied up to the midday meal. Then, afterwards, standing at the door of his chamber, he would exhort the congregation of brethren into strenuous efforts after the higher life. Then would some of them ask him to suggest a subject for meditation suitable to the spiritual capacity of each, and when he had done so, they would retire each to the solitary place he was wont to frequent, and meditate on the subject set. Then would the Blessed One retire within the private chamber for short rest during the heat of the day. Then, when his body was rested, he would arise from the couch, and for a space consider the circumstances of the people near, that he might do them good. And, at the fall of the day, the folk from the neighbouring villages or towns would gather together at the place he was lodging, and to them, seated in the lecture hall, would he, in a manner suitable to the occasion, and to their beliefs, discourse on the Truth. Then, seeing that the proper time had come, he would dismiss the folk. Thus was he occupied in the afternoon. Then, at the close of the day, should he feel to need the refreshment of a bath, he would bathe, while some brother of the Order, attendant on him, would prepare the divan in the chamber perfumed with flowers. And in the evening, he would sit awhile alone, still in all his robes, till the brethren, returned from their meditations, began to assemble. Then some would ask him questions on things that puzzled them, some would speak of their meditations, some would ask for an exposition of the Truth. Thus would the first watch of the night pass, as the Blessed One satisfied the desire of each and they would take their leave. And part of the rest of the night would he spend in meditation, walking up and down outside his chamber; and part he would rest, lying down calm, and self-possessed, within."

An Expert Physician: Jivaka Komarabhachcha

In the Vinaya text, there are some accounts of medicines, drugs, and surgical operations. We have in the Vinaya text the life and career of the most distinguished medical expert of the time of the Buddha, Jivaka Komarabhachcha. Some of the main points are as follows:

Jivaka was the son of the courtesan, Salavati of Rajagriha. The boy was thrown away on a dust heap from which Prince Abhaya rescued him alive. He also brought him up till he (Jivaka) thought: "In these royal families it is not easy to find one's livelihood without knowing an art. What if I were to learn an art!" Thinking thus, he went to Takkasila to study medicine under a world-renowned physician who lived there. He learnt much and easily, understood well, and did not forget what he had learnt. After studying thus for seven years, he asked his teacher when his studies might be regarded as completed, whereupon his teacher prescribed to him the following test: "Take this spade and seek round about Takkasila a *yojana* on every side, and whatever plant you see which is not medicinal, bring it to me." Jivaka examined all plants of the area specified and reported that he had not come across any plant that had no medicinal properties. The teacher, satisfied with the answer, said: "You have done your learning, my good Jivaka," and gave him a little money for his passage home.

The money was sufficient for his journey only up to Saketa where he was forced to earn by his art. At that time, a Setthi's wife had been suffering for seven years from a disease in the head whom many great and world-renowned physicians had failed to cure, though much gold was spent on them as their fees. But young Jivaka would not even be given a call until he proposed that his fees might be paid only if the patient were cured. Jivaka had one *paseta* (handful) of ghee boiled up with various drugs and administered the medicine to the patient through her nose. By one dose she was cured, and she gave to the doctor in all 16,000 *Kahapanas* together with a coach, horses, and two servants. These fees and presents Jivaka tendered on his return to Rajagriha to the prince who brought him up for the expenses incurred on his behalf.

Next, Jivaka cured the Emperor Bimbisara of his fistula by anointing and was then appointed the royal physician and the physician of the Buddha and his Sangha. The next important case he treated was that of a Setthi at Rajagriha who had been suffering for seven years from a head disease. Jivaka performed a surgical operation to cure him; he tied him fast to his bed, cut through the skin of the head, drew apart the flesh on each side of the incision, pulled two worms out of the wound, then closed up the sides of the wound, stitched up the skin on the head, and anointed it with salve. The next important call came from Varanasi to cure a Setthi's son who, by a gymnastic feat, got an entanglement of his intestines, by which he could not digest anything, nor could he ease himself in the regular way, and looked discoloured with the veins standing out upon his skin. Jivaka performed another of his successful and difficult surgical operations. He cut through the skin of the belly, drew the twisted intestines out, and showed them to his wife. He then disentangled the twisted intestines, put them back into their right position, stitched the skin together, and anointed it with salve. Before long the patient was cured and his father gave to the surgeon 16,000 *Kahapanas*.

The next call came from Ujjaini, whose King Pajjota, suffering from jaundice, asked the Emperor Bimbisara for the services of his physician. Jivaka wanted to boil up ghee for medicine, but as he understood that the patient had a great aversion to ghee, he resorted to an artifice of so boiling up the ghee with various other drugs that it took the colour, smell, and taste of an astringent decoction. Then anticipating that the king would vomit the medicine and detect it to be ghee, he craftily arranged for his escape by getting from the king the orders that he should be free to move

about and ride on any animal he chose, "on pretext of drawing out roots and gathering medical drugs". He thus effected his escape on the fastest she-elephant. Eventually, the King of Ujjaini recovered from his illness and sent on to Jivaka a present of Siveyyaka cloth.

There are also instances recorded of Jivaka's treatment of the Buddha and his brethren. Once, when the humours of the Buddha's body were disturbed, Jivaka asked Ananda to rub his body with fat for a few days but found that a purgative was necessary for him. Not considering it becoming to give him a strong purgative, he had three handfuls of three lotuses imbued with various drugs to be smelt by the patient. Each handful then produced ten motions. After that, the Buddha bathed in warm water and was asked to abstain from liquid food for some time till he was completely restored to health.

Buddhist Education

In the field of education, the development of Buddhism marked certain remarkable changes in the Indian educational system prevalent in pre-Buddhist days. Buddhist education was monastic in character, in contrast to the earlier system of Gurukula, where the pupil approached the teacher and, when accepted, stayed with him as a member of his family. In the course of time, the subjects of study had become quite enlarged, but during the development of Buddhism, the number of subjects grew still larger. In the Buddhist schools, the emphasis came to be laid on Buddhist literature. In the Gurukulas, the programme of studies included, apart from the Vedas, the study of Vedangas, and various systems of science and philosophy.¹ In the time of Kautilya (fourth century, B C), studies also included Varta, i.e., subjects relating to agriculture, cattle rearing, and trade, and Dandaniti or the science and art of government. In the Buddhist schools, Viharas, each pupil, young or old, was a monk. The teachers were also monks, and their tasks comprised the "giving of recitation, holding examination, making exhortations and explaining Dhamma". The pupils were of four classes, those who mastered recitations and propounding of Suttantas, those who studied Vinaya, those who were training themselves as teachers of the Dhamma, and those of the highest class who were given to meditation. Sanskrit was supplanted and superseded as a medium of instruction in the Buddhist schools by the vernacular dialects.

Some of the great teachers of the Buddhist schools were known as Thera (senior) Bhikkhus. The names of some of the early Thera Bhikkhus include Sariputta, Maha-Moggallana, Maha-Kachchana, Maha-Kotthita, Maha-Kappina, Maha-Chunda, Anuruddha, Revata, Upali, Ananda, and Rahula. These are described as travelling together through the country of Kashi. Another passage in Vinaya mentions the Theras, the brothers Isidasa, and Isibhatta, Nilavasi, Gopaka, Bhagu, and Phalika-Sandana. The pupils of these Theras are also mentioned.

The Buddhist system of education laid stress on the method of debate and discussion, in the

1. The entire body of the Vedic works composed in the style of the Sutras is divided into six branches called Vedangas (members of the Veda). (Sutra means a brief aphorism containing much content and meaning.) The first Vedanga is Shiksha, the science of the pronunciation of letters, accents and the like. The second Vedanga is Chhandas or metre, which arranged the archaic metres systematically. The third Vedanga is Vyakarana or grammar. (The most important information regarding pre-Panian grammar is to be derived from Yaska's work.) The fourth Vedanga is Nirukta or etymology, as represented in the work of Yaska, which is a sort of etymological lexicography of Vedic terms. The fifth Vedanga is Kalpa, science of ceremonies. The last Vedanga is called Jyotisha or astronomy. The age of Sutras which came after the age of the Upanishads was an age of scientific study and specialization, and there developed mathematics, grammar, philology, astrology, logic, law, and philosophies such as those of Nyaya, Mimamsa, etc.

same way as was done in the Brahmanical system. (Contemporaneous with the Buddhist schools, there were also schools of Jainism.) The places where great discussion took place were public halls or *sauthagaras*. Rules came to be framed for the conduct of discussions and proceedings. A special treatise on this subject, *Sapta-dasha-bhumi-Shastra-Yogacharya*, is attributed to Maitreya of about A D 400.

In the *Sigalavada Sutta* we have a list of the duties of parents and children, of pupils and teachers, of laymen and monks. It is pointed out that it is the duty of the parents to have their children taught the arts and sciences. "The pupil should honour his teachers by (i) rising in their presence; (ii) ministering to them; (iii) obeying them; (iv) supplying their wants; (v) attention to instruction. The teacher should show his affection for the pupils by (i) training them in all that is good; (ii) teaching them to hold knowledge fast; (iii) instruction in science and lore; (iv) speaking well of them to their friends and companions; and (v) guarding them from danger."

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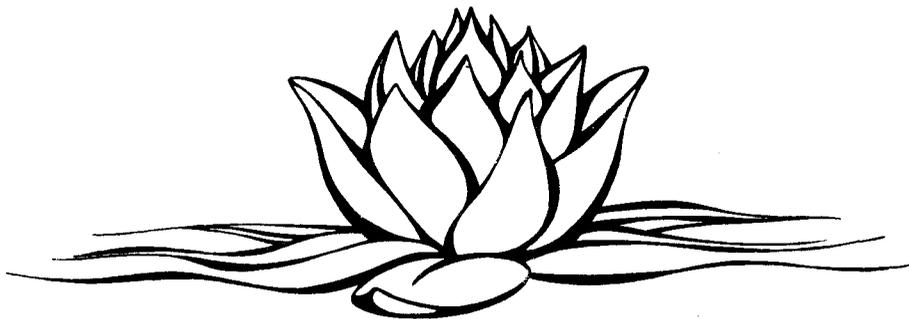
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Plato Discoursing with Student

Learning is Recollection

Introduction

What is learning? How do we learn? These and allied questions are central in determining the roles of the teacher and the pupil. There is a view that learning is effected by a stimulus-response process, and that learning manifests in modified behaviour. According to this view, the rudimentary power of responding to a stimulus is an innate reflex in the pupil which can be conditioned by various series of stimuli, either natural or designed. This view is intimately associated with the theory that the mind in its original state is a tabula rasa, a blank slate, over which sensations can inscribe images, producing perceptions and ideas. According to this theory, all ideas are rooted in sensations, and all mental ideas or mental knowledge can be traced back to sensations. In other words, sense perception is the basic brick and mortar that builds up the superstructure of knowledge. The pedagogical consequence of this theory is that learning is dependent on external stimuli and conditions.

There is an opposite theory which holds that, although sense perception may serve as a starting point, the process of ideation is not inevitably dependent on sense perception. According to this theory, mind, or rather reason, consists of a cluster of innate ideas of which we can become aware either directly or by the stimulation of sensations. Human knowledge consists of ideas, and all these ideas can be traced back to certain fundamental innate ideas. The

pedagogical consequence of this theory is that even when the learning process is initiated by external stimuli, genuine learning consists of understanding based on the operation of those innate ideas. In other words, learning is a gradual process of self-awareness depending centrally on what is within ourselves in the form of inborn or innate ideas or on what can be held within ourselves with the support of the inborn or innate ideas. The practical application of this view in the teaching-learning process would require of a teacher a great restraint in imposing external stimuli upon the learner and would oblige him to look upon himself not so much as a provider of knowledge but as a helper and guide in the pupil's process of discovering what is within himself and of drawing out his latent potentialities.

These two views and their respective pedagogical implications have given rise to the sharpest controversy in the field of education. At one extreme is an opinion that the pupil is like a plastic material which can be moulded at will by the educator. At the other extreme is the view that the pupil has some inherent drive in his being and that the task of the educator is to allow the pupil the necessary freedom required for self-propelled growth and development. In other words, at one end it is held that anything and everything can be taught to the pupil, and at the other end it is held that nothing can really be taught.

It is not our purpose to enter into the controversy and to resolve it. Probably the solution lies in a harmonious blending of the two opposite theories, and this would require a good deal of experimental work and unbiased research into the possibilities of the extension of our psychological experience. In the course of our exploration it will be necessary to take advantage of the accumulated results of the ancient records of experience and experimentation. The Indian system of yoga, for example, has been looked upon as a systematic study of experimental or practical psychology, and the ancient yogic knowledge is being revived today in the interests of advancing knowledge. It is being affirmed that yoga, if rightly understood, is a developing science and art of education, and that no comprehensive system of education can be built up without taking into account the fund of psychological knowledge that is available to us in the ancient systems of yoga. In the same way, we should be scrupulous in examining some of those theories of psychology and education which were developed in the past in the West. Socrates and Plato should receive our utmost attention. It is for this reason that we have selected here an extremely instructive passage from Plato's dialogue Meno, which expounds the startling view that learning is recollection.

The Platonic philosophy which developed out of the seminal thought of Socrates is centred on the theory of Ideas. According to Plato, Ideas have an



- Plato -

objective reality which manifests in a limited way in the world of matter. The objects of the physical world are only partially real. Since sense perception is limited to the objects of the world, says Plato, it cannot seize upon Ideas. Yet these Ideas really exist and alone are the right objects of knowledge. We can have opinions about the objects of the physical world, but no knowledge; for, Plato argues, only that can be known which really exists. But if sense perception cannot give us knowledge, by what faculty can we really know? Plato's answer is that we can know by the operation of reason, which is itself a cluster of unchangeable ideas.

Plato also held the view that behind our physical body is an inner soul or psyche, and that this soul has the knowledge of the realm of Ideas, which in physical existence is lost in forgetfulness. According to Plato, this forgotten knowledge can be recovered and the process of learning is actually a process of recollection. Plato also believed in the theory of rebirth, and he maintained that the knowledge gained by the soul in a previous birth can also be regained through recollection.

Platonic philosophy has played a major role in the history of Western thought, and all great Western thinkers since the time of Plato have acknowledged their indebtedness to him. This also holds true for Plato's theory of education. Plato's insights into the process of learning are so profound that even those who disagree with him admit the importance and significance of his philosophy of education.

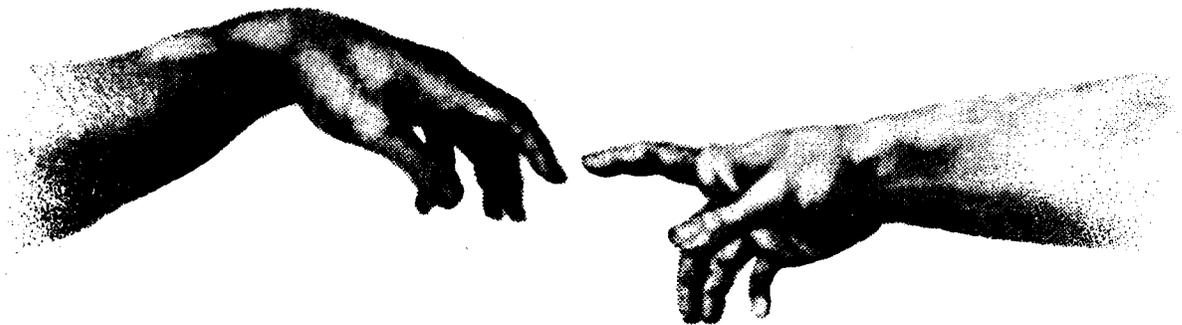
Apart from Meno, which deals specifically with education, Plato has discussed his theory of learning in several other dialogues. The main speaker in these dialogues is Socrates, and Plato has portrayed him as a great teacher. Socrates often discusses questions such as: What is a teacher? What is a philosopher? What is knowledge? What is virtue? Is virtue knowledge? Can virtue and knowledge be taught? The very method that Socrates employs in tackling such questions provides a luminous insight into how a good teacher should go about his business. We find Socrates in constant search of definitions, in search of the essential meaning of things. He is prepared to discuss a question from all points of view; he examines every possible argument as well as every possible objection against it. He leads each participant in the dialogue from stage to stage through a process of gradual clarification, and the conclusions emerge inevitably as all the threads of the discussion are brought together into a large synthesis. Presenting a thesis, confronting it with an antithesis and arriving at a synthesis – this, in fact, is the heart of the Socratic method.

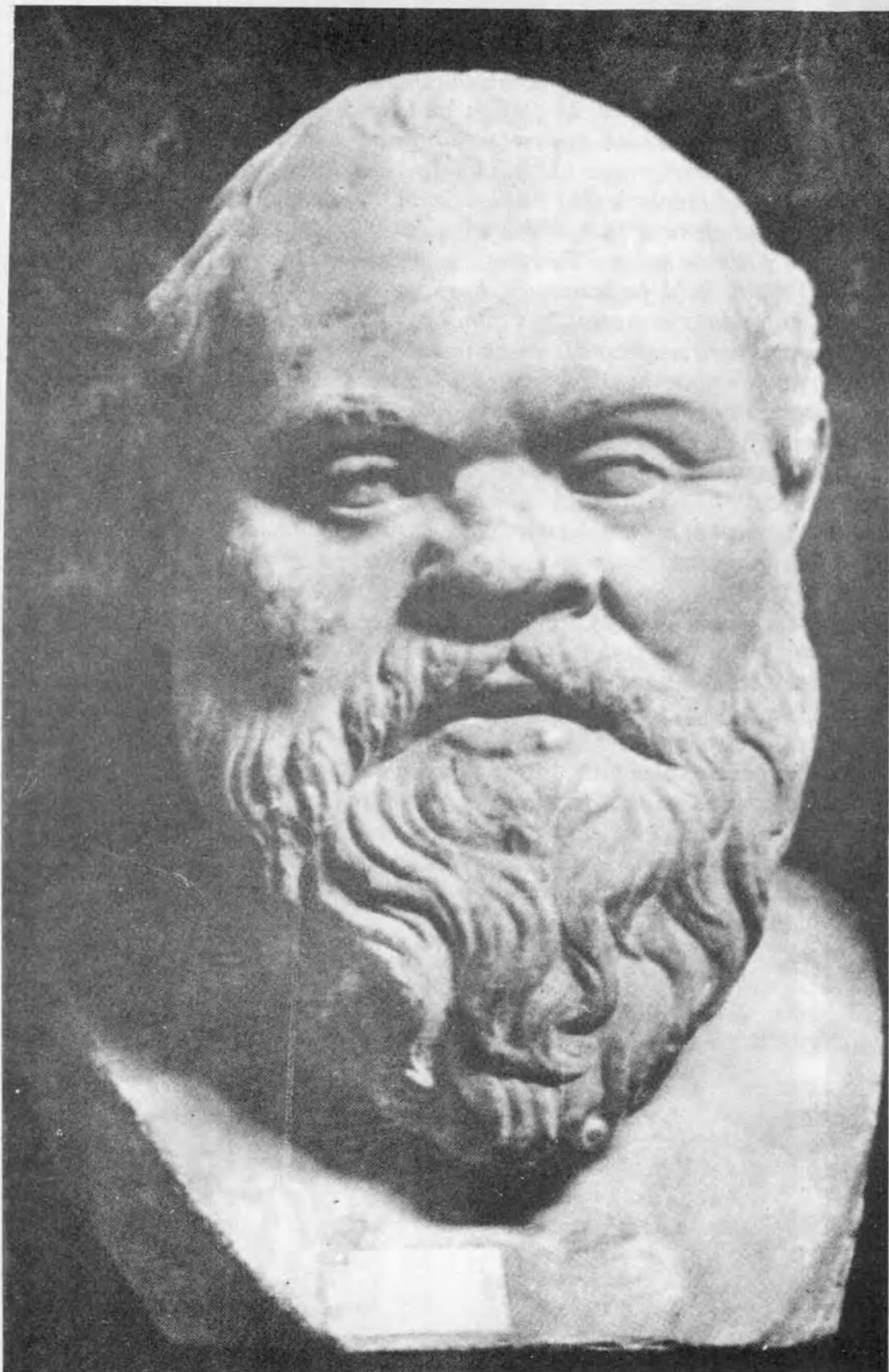
Meno begins with a discussion between Socrates and Meno on whether

virtue can be taught. Socrates points out that he certainly cannot teach virtue for he does not know what it is. When Meno then confidently offers a long list of virtuous qualities such as justice and temperance, Socrates dryly remarks that Meno has simply made a singular into a plural, as one does when he drops something and breaks it. The real question, Socrates says, is to discover the one essential element that makes all virtues virtues. But can the essential nature of virtue be known? Socrates says it can, and he bases his argument on a belief that is held, he points out, by many inspired people – the belief that the soul of man is immortal, and although at one time it comes to an end, at another it is born again and is never finally exterminated. Thus, says Socrates, if we try hard enough we can recollect what our souls knew in former lives. He illustrates this by making one of Meno's slaves, a completely uneducated lad, reason out facts about squares and triangles by himself. He is able to do this, Socrates says, because the truths his soul knew before birth still exist in it and can be recalled.

The last part of the dialogue is devoted to a further discussion on the nature of virtue, and Socrates concludes that if ever there were a man who, in addition to being virtuous, knew what virtue was and could teach it, he would be among men like a reality among flitting shades.

In the pages that follow, we present that portion of the dialogue where Socrates puts questions to Meno's slave and demonstrates that learning is recollection. Socrates questions the boy in such a way that he is helped to recollect what he already knew but was unaware of. This conversation is a brief but effective example of the Socratic method and an instructive exposition of the theory that learning is recollection. What is of special interest to us here is not the metaphysical theory of the soul and rebirth, but Socrates' actual teaching method which seems useful and worthy of emulation, irrespective of any metaphysical assumptions.





- Socrates -

Meno

MENO: I see, Socrates. But what do you mean when you say that we don't learn anything, but that what we call learning is recollection? Can you teach me that it is so?

SOCRATES: I have just said that you're a rascal, and now you ask me if I can teach you, when I say there is no such thing as teaching, only recollection. Evidently you want to catch me contradicting myself straightaway.

MENO: No, honestly, Socrates, I wasn't thinking of that. It was just habit. If you can in any way make clear to me that what you say is true, please do.

SOCRATES: It isn't an easy thing, but still I should like to do what I can since you ask me. I see you have a large number of retainers here. Call one of them, anyone you like, and I will use him to demonstrate it to you.

MENO: Certainly. [*To a slave boy.*] Come here.

SOCRATES: He is a Greek and speaks our language?

MENO: Indeed yes – born and bred in the house.

SOCRATES: Listen carefully then, and see whether it seems to you that he is learning from me or simply being reminded.

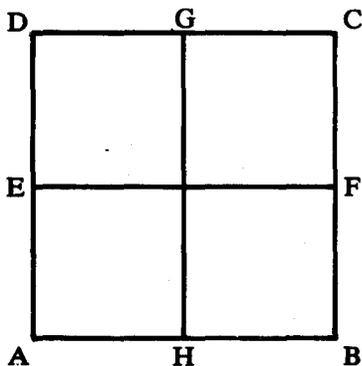
MENO: I will.

SOCRATES: Now boy, you know that a square is a figure like this?

(*Socrates begins to draw figures in the sand at his feet. He points to the square ABCD.*)

BOY: Yes

SOCRATES: It has all these four sides equal?



BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And these lines which go through the middle of it are also equal?
[EF,GH.]

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Such a figure could be either larger or smaller, could it not?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now if this side is two feet long, and this side the same, how many feet will the whole be? Put it this way. If it were two feet in this direction and only one in that, must not the area be two feet taken once?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: But since it is two feet this way also, does it not become twice two feet?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And how many feet is twice two? Work it out and tell me.

BOY: Four.

SOCRATES: Now could one draw another figure double the size of this, but similar, that is, with all its sides equal like this one?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: How many feet will its area be?

BOY: Eight.

SOCRATES: Now then, try to tell me how long each of its sides will be. The present figure has a side of two feet. What will be the side of the double-sized one?

BOY: It will be double, Socrates, obviously.

SOCRATES: You see, Meno, that I am not teaching him anything, only asking. Now he thinks he knows the length of the side of the eight-foot square.

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: But does he?

MENO: Certainly not.

SOCRATES: He thinks it is twice the length of the other.

MENO: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now watch how he recollects things in order – the proper way to recollect.

You say that the side of double length produces the double-sized figure? Like this I mean, not long this way and short that. It must be equal on all sides like the first figure, only twice its size, that is, eight feet. Think a moment whether you still expect to get it from doubling the side.

BOY: Yes, I do.

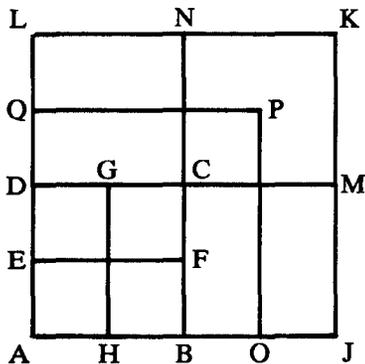
SOCRATES: Well now, shall we have a line double the length of this [AB] if we add another the same length at this end [BJ]?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: It is on this line then, according to you, that we shall make the eight-foot square, by taking four of the same length?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Let us draw in four equal lines [*i.e.*, counting AJ and adding JK, KL, and LA made complete by drawing in its second half LD], using the first as a base. Does this not give us what you call the eight-foot figure?



BOY: Certainly.

SOCRATES: But does it contain these four squares, each equal to the original four-foot one?

(Socrates has drawn in the lines CM, CN to complete the squares that he wishes to point out.)

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: How big is it then? Won't it be four times as big?

BOY: Of course.

SOCRATES: And is four times the same as twice?

BOY: Of course not.

SOCRATES: So doubling the side has given us not a double but a fourfold figure?

BOY: True.

SOCRATES: And four times four are sixteen, are they not?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then how big is the side of the eight foot-figure? This one has given us four times the original area, hasn't it?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And a side half the length gave us a square of four feet?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Good. And isn't a square of eight feet double this one and half that?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Will it not have a side greater than this one but less than that?

BOY: I think it will.

SOCRATES: Right. Always answer what you think. Now tell me. Was not this side two feet long, and this one four?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then the side of the eight-foot figure must be longer than two feet but shorter than four?

BOY: It must.

SOCRATES: Try to say how long you think it is.

BOY: Three feet.

SOCRATES: If so, shall we add half of this bit [BO, *half of* BJ] and make it three feet? Here are two, and this is one, and on this side similarly we have two plus one, and here is the figure you want.
(*Socrates completes the square AOPQ.*)

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: If it is three feet this way and three that, will the whole area be three times three feet?

BOY: It looks like it.

SOCRATES: And that is how many?

BOY: Nine.

SOCRATES: Whereas the square double our first square had to be how many?

BOY: Eight.

SOCRATES: But we haven't yet got the square of eight feet even from a three-foot side?

BOY: No.

SOCRATES: Then what length will give it? Try to tell us exactly. If you don't want to count it up, just show us on the diagram.

BOY: It's no use, Socrates, I just don't know.

SOCRATES: Observe, Meno, the stage he has reached on the path of recollection. At the beginning he did not know the side of the square of eight feet. Nor indeed does he know it now, but then he thought he knew it and answered boldly, as was appropriate – he felt no perplexity. Now however he does feel perplexed. Not only does he not know the answer; he doesn't even think he knows.

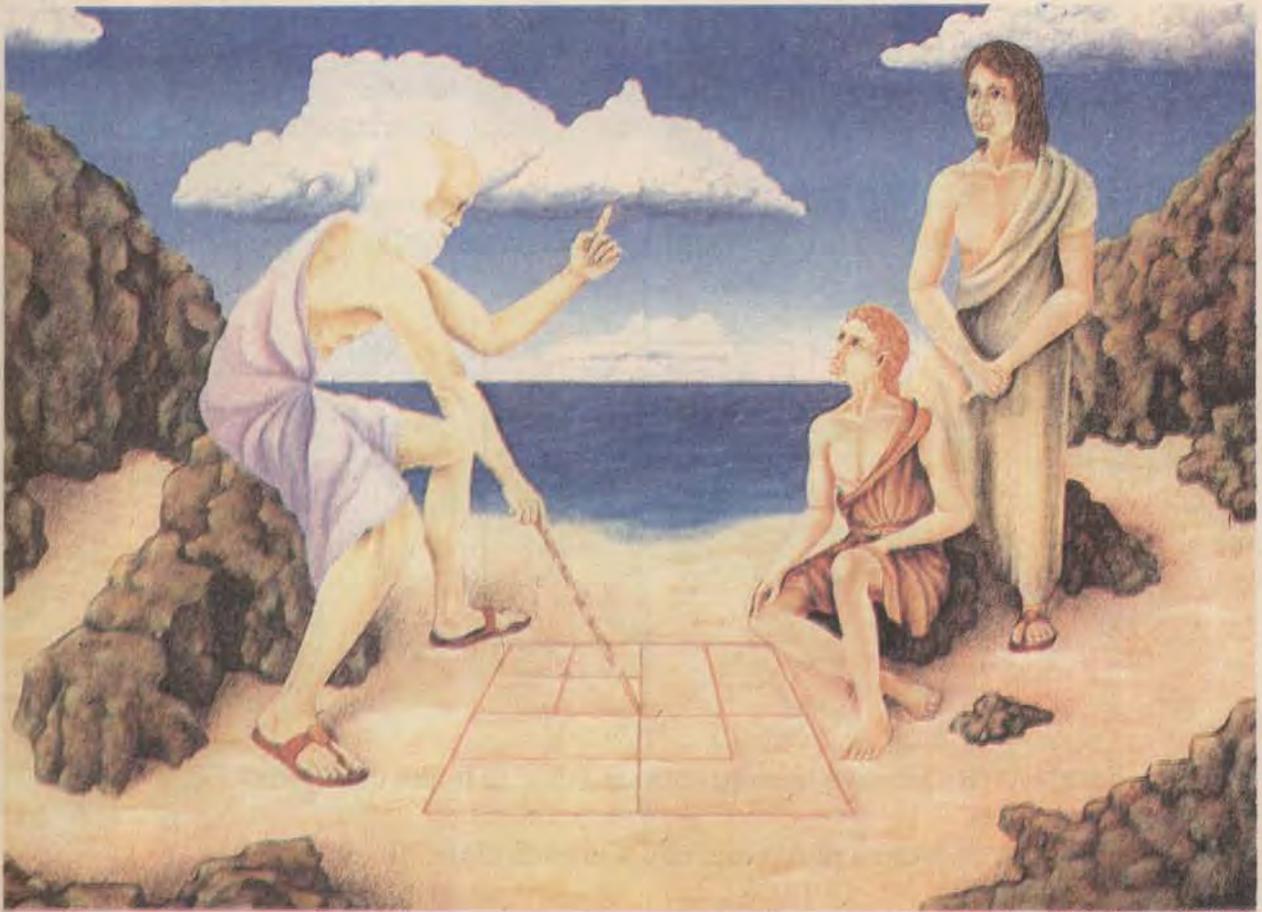
MENO: Quite true.

SOCRATES: Isn't he in a better position now in relation to what he didn't know?

MENO: I admit that too.

SOCRATES: So in perplexing him and numbing him like the sting ray, have we done him any harm?

MENO: I think not.



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SOCRATES: In fact we have helped him to some extent toward finding out the right answer, for now not only is he ignorant of it but he will be quite glad to look for it. Up to now, he thought he could speak well and fluently, on many occasions and before large audiences, on the subject of a square double the size of a given square, maintaining that it must have a side of double the length.

MENO: No doubt.

SOCRATES: Do you suppose then that he would have attempted to look for, or learn, what he thought he knew, though he did not, before he was thrown into perplexity, became aware of his ignorance, and felt a desire to know?

MENO: No.

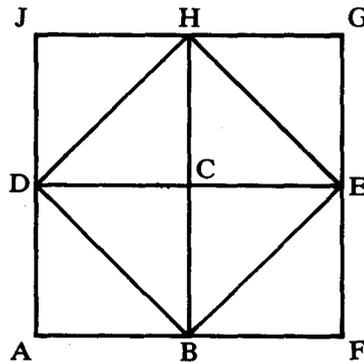
SOCRATES: Then the numbing process was good for him?

MENO: I agree.

SOCRATES: Now notice what, starting from this state of perplexity, he will discover by seeking the truth in company with me, though I simply ask him questions without teaching him. Be ready to catch me if I give him any instruction or explanation instead of simply interrogating him on his own opinions.

(Socrates here rubs out the previous figures and starts again.)

Tell me, boy, is not this our square of four feet? [ABCD.] You understand?



BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now we can add another equal to it like this? [BCEF.]

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And a third here, equal to each of the others? [CEGH.]

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And then we can fill in this one in the corner? [DCHJ.]

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Then here we have four equal squares?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And how many times the size of the first square is the whole?

BOY: Four times.

SOCRATES: And we want one double the size. You remember?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: Now does this line going from corner to corner cut each of these squares in half?

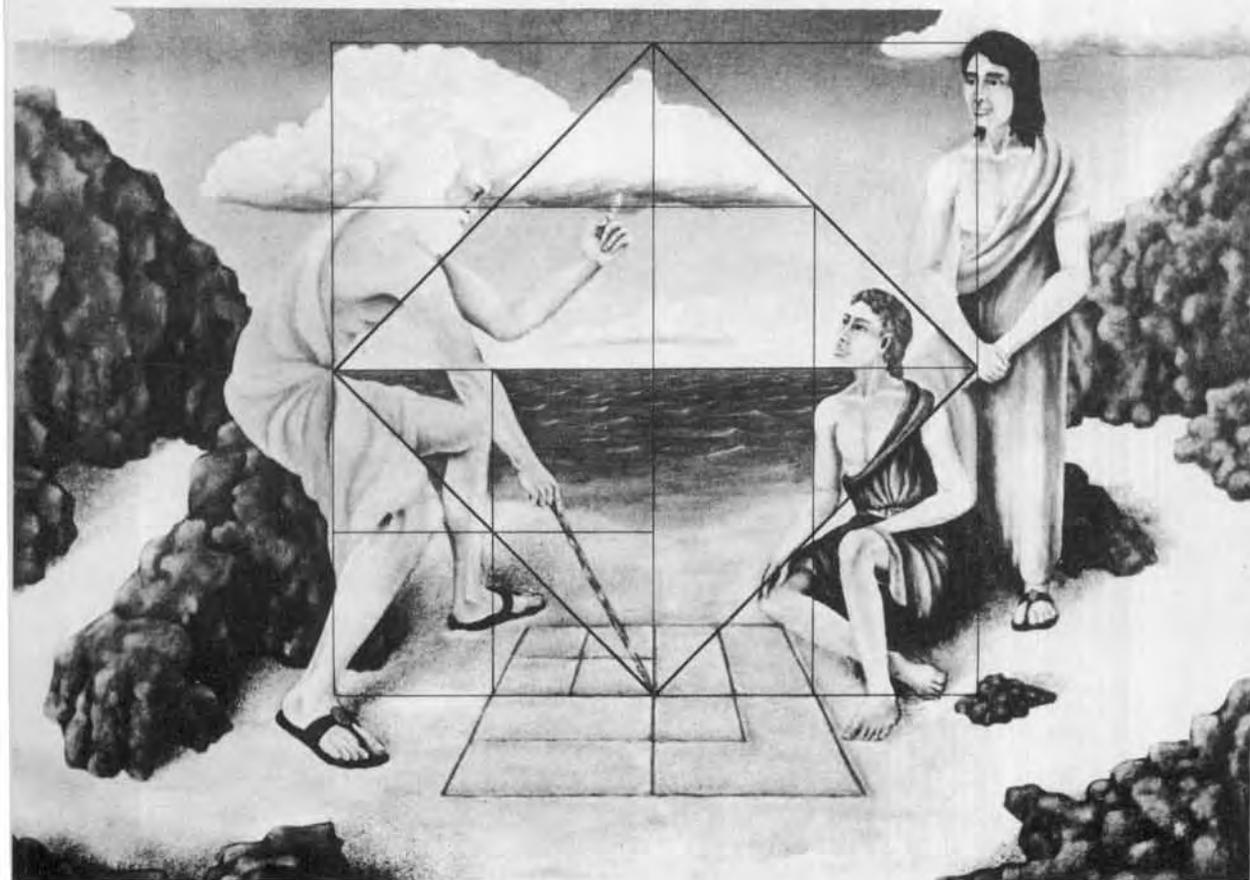
BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And these are four equal lines enclosing this area? [BEHD.]

BOY: They are.

SOCRATES: Now think. How big is this area?

BOY: I don't understand.



SOCRATES: Here are four squares. Has not each line cut off the inner half of each of them?

BOY: Yes.

SOCRATES: And how many such halves are there in this figure? [BEHD.]

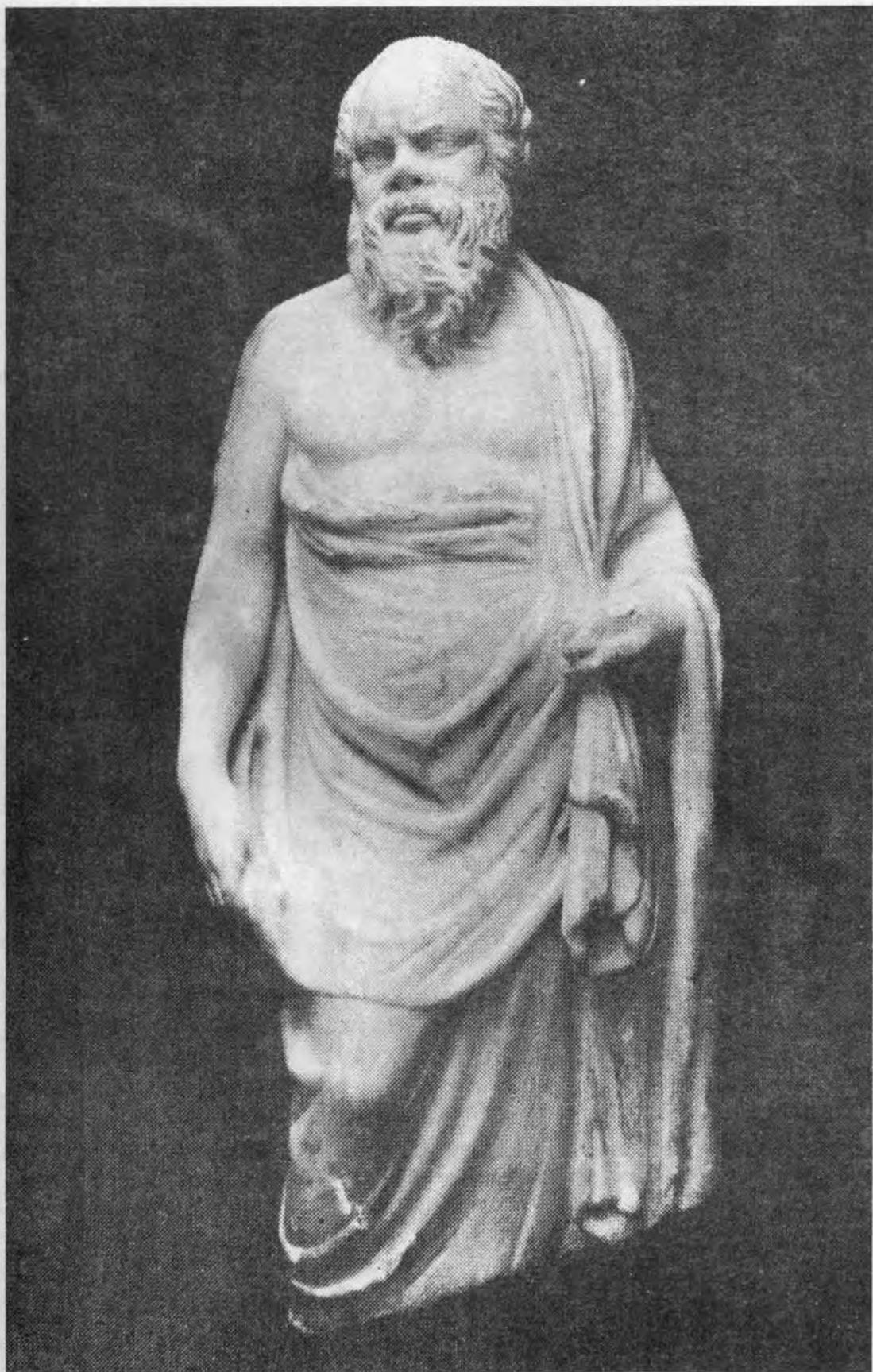
BOY: Four.

SOCRATES: And how many in this one? [ABCD.]

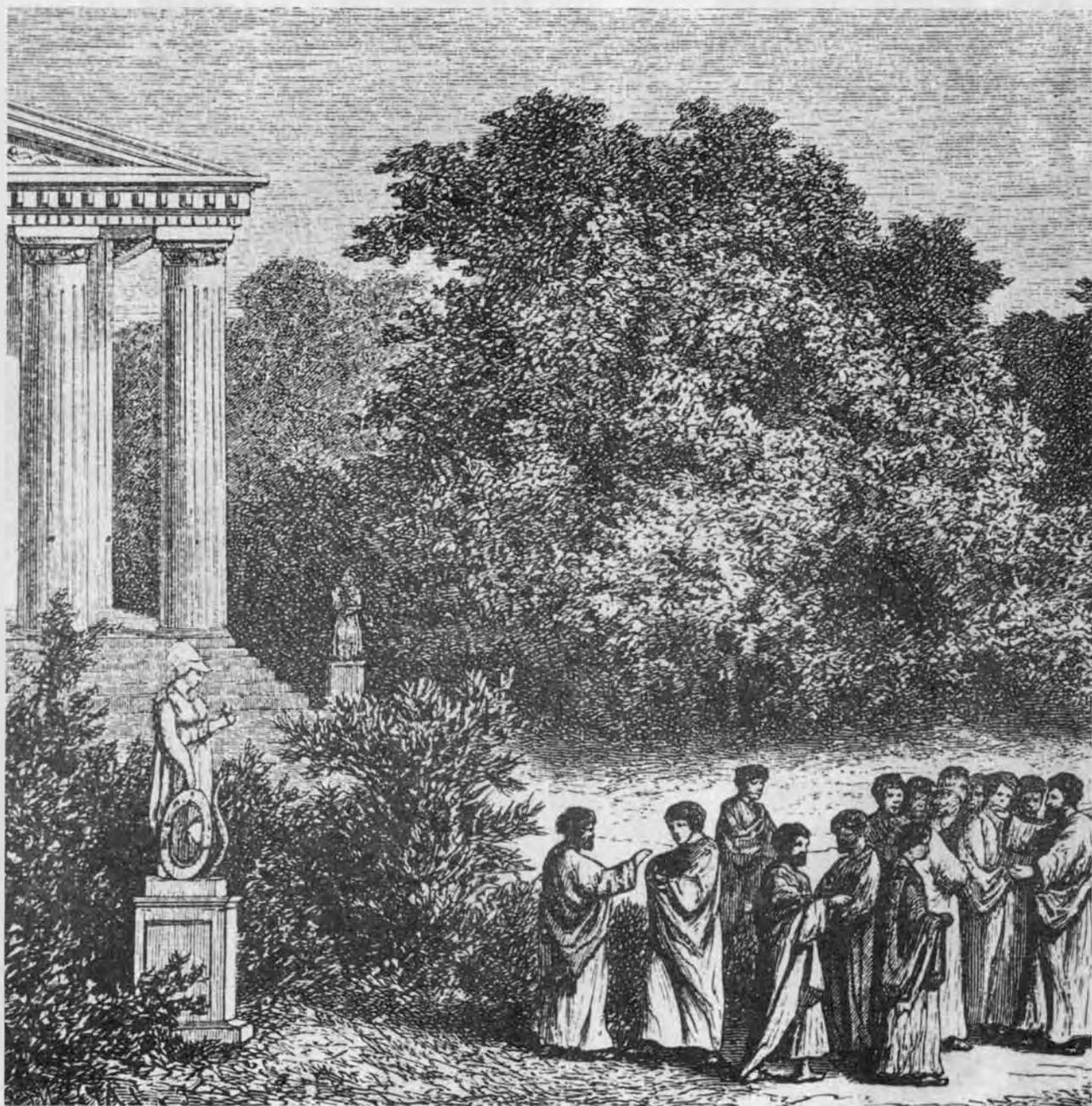
BOY: Two.

SOCRATES: And what is the relation of four to two?
BOY: Double.
SOCRATES: How big is this figure then?
BOY: Eight feet.
SOCRATES: On what base?
BOY: This one.
SOCRATES: The line which goes from corner to corner of the square of four feet?
BOY: Yes.
SOCRATES: The technical name for it is "diagonal"; so if we use that name, it is your personal opinion that the square on the diagonal of the original square is double its area.
BOY: That is so, Socrates.
SOCRATES: What do you think, Meno? Has he answered with any opinions that were not his own?
MENO: No, they were all his.
SOCRATES: Yet he did not know, as we agreed a few minutes ago.
MENO: True.
SOCRATES: But these opinions were somewhere in him, were they not?
MENO: Yes.
SOCRATES: So a man who does not know has in himself true opinions on a subject without having knowledge.
MENO: It would appear so.
SOCRATES: At present these opinions, being newly aroused, have a dreamlike quality. But if the same questions are put to him on many occasions and in different ways, you can see that in the end he will have a knowledge on the subject as accurate as anybody's.
MENO: Probably.
SOCRATES: This knowledge will not come from teaching but from questioning. He will recover it for himself.
MENO: Yes.
SOCRATES: And the spontaneous recovery of knowledge that is in him is recollection isn't it?
MENO: Yes.

From Plato, *Protagoras and Meno* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 130-138.



- Socrates -



Plato and His Students in the Garden of the Academy

Knower of Reality

Introduction

An allegory can reveal a message more powerfully than long and abstruse discourses or compositions weighted with analysis and arguments. Many great teachers have used allegories or parables to expound or explain a message or a lesson. One of the most famous allegories in the history of human thought is found in the seventh book of Plato's Republic: "The Simile of the Cave".

The main purpose of this allegory is to describe the ignorant state of humanity and its possible passage to a state of knowledge. According to Plato, most men are like prisoners tied in a cave since their childhood and able to see in only one direction, ignorant of all that is behind them and incapable of suspecting the existence of anything other than what is in front. If there were a fire behind the prisoners and objects between them and the fire, they would see nothing but shadows cast on the wall facing them. They would not even suspect that there existed objects and fire of an unimaginable concreteness and splendour.

Entering into this allegory, one is reminded of the theory of Ignorance and Knowledge found in the Upanishads. Ignorance, according to the Upanishads, is the apprehension of multiplicity without the awareness of the underlying light of unity. The apprehension of the multiplicity is analogous to the prisoners' perception of shadows. Knowledge, according to the Upanishads, is the concentrated vision of unity and a comprehending consciousness of unity-multiplicity. The Upanishads also declare that we are in a state of bondage or imprisonment, since we are tied by the senses which look outward (bahirmukha) and can apprehend only appearances, not reality. The path of Knowledge, then, consists in turning inward (antarmukha), away from appearances and towards the inner self which is one with the universal and transcendent Self, Atman or Brahman.

Plato also makes a distinction between the objects of sense-perception and the objects of reason or the soul. The former are phenomena of becoming which are real-unreal and matters of opinion, while the latter are essences of real being, matters of knowledge. Describing the process of moving from ignorance to knowledge, Socrates, who, in Plato's dialogues, voices philosophy, says: ". . . This organ of knowledge must be turned around from the world of becoming together with the entire soul, like the scene-shifting periactus¹ in the theatre, until the soul is able to endure the contemplation of essence and the brightest region of being."

That a good teacher must possess knowledge may be universally acknowledged, but the controversies begin as soon as we try to define knowledge. For example, knowledge is often equated with information. In the Upanishads, however, knowledge is described as the realization of That, from the knowing of which everything becomes known. In Plato, too, knowledge refers to the soul's ideative perception of the real, the Good, from the knowing of which the cause of the shadows and appearances is known, and one ceases to be a prisoner and becomes free. A good teacher, according both to the Upanishads and to Plato, is one who has liberated himself from the bondage of believing in shadows and appearances and thus knows the real.

But it is not enough to comprehend reality. Once the process of apprehending reality is known this knowledge must be applied in designing a process of education. From childhood, says Plato, our reason and soul should be hammered free of the leaden weight of ignorance and led towards the things that are real and true. Plato goes on to say: "It is the duty of us . . . to compel the best natures to attain the knowledge, which we pronounce the greatest, and to win to the vision of the good, to scale that ascent, and when they have reached the heights and taken an adequate view, we must not allow what is now permitted."

What must not be allowed? It is a normal experience of all those who have ascended the heights that they linger there and are disinclined to return to the lower levels of existence. But, says Plato, the mark of a good teacher is that he returns "to go down again among those bondsmen and share their labours and honours, whether they are of less or of greater worth." In other words, the good teacher is moved to go down in order to uplift those who are still tied to ignorance, that they too can see the real and attain to freedom. Indeed, we

1. periactoi, (Greek: "revolving"), ancient theatrical device by which a scene or change of scene was indicated. It was described by Vitruvius in his *De architectura* (c. 14 BC) as a revolving triangular prism made of wood, bearing on each of its three sides a different pictured scene. While one scene was presented to the audience, the other two could be changed.

have here the universal truth that the good teacher seeks pupils, even as good pupils seek good teachers.

The Platonic philosophy of education has deep metaphysical foundations related to the theory of Ideas and the theory of the immortality of the soul. In the simile of the cave, we find references to both these theories. There is also a reference to another important theory of Plato, according to which the knower of reality, the philosopher, should not only be a teacher but should also be the ruler or guardian of the State. Plato believes that government should be conducted by those who know how to govern, and only those know how to govern who have liberated themselves from the bondage of sense-perception by means of the ideative perception of the real. The good teacher, in this view, is also the good ruler, and, indeed, he is a philosopher as well.

Such is the message that Plato wishes to give us through the famous simile of the cave. It is not necessary to accept Platonic metaphysics or Platonic political philosophy to be able to appreciate the main point of our interest, the characteristics of a good teacher. Not many will dispute that a good teacher must be a knower of reality, that he must be able to distinguish between appearances and reality, and that, having known reality, he should wish to uplift all those who are still in the bondage of ignorance.



Plato among His Students, Pompeian Mosaic, National Museum, Naples



- Plato -

The Simile of the Cave

This is a more graphic presentation of the truths presented in the analogy of the Line; in particular, it tells us more about the two states of mind called in the Line analogy Belief and Illusion. We are shown the ascent of the mind from illusion to pure philosophy, and the difficulties which accompany its progress. And the philosopher, when he has achieved the supreme vision, is required to return to the cave and serve his fellows, his very unwillingness to do so being his chief qualification.

As Cornford pointed out, the best way to understand the simile is to replace "the clumsier apparatus" of the cave by cinema, though today television is an even better comparison. It is the moral and intellectual condition of the average man from which Plato starts; and though clearly the ordinary man knows the difference between substance and shadow in the physical world, the simile suggests that his moral and intellectual opinions often bear as little relation to the truth as the average film or television programme does to real life.

"I want you to go on to picture the enlightenment or ignorance of our human condition somewhat as follows. Imagine an underground chamber like a cave, with a long entrance open to the daylight and as wide as the cave. In this chamber are men who have been prisoners there since they were children, their legs and necks being so fastened that they can only look straight ahead of them and cannot turn their heads. Some way off, behind and higher up, a fire is burning, and between the fire and the prisoners and above them runs a road, in front of which a curtain-wall has been built, like the screen at puppet shows between the operators and their audience, above which they show their puppets."

"I see."

"Imagine further that there are men carrying all sorts of gear along behind the curtain-wall, projecting above it and including figures of men and animals made of wood and stone and all sorts of other materials, and that some of these men, as you would expect, are talking and some not."

"An odd picture and an odd sort of prisoner."

"They are drawn from life,"¹ I replied. "For, tell me, do you think our prisoners could see anything of themselves or their fellows except the shadows thrown by the fire on the wall of the cave opposite them?"



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"How could they see anything else if they were prevented from moving their heads all their lives?"

"And would they see anything more of the objects carried along the road?"

"Of course not."

"Then if they were able to talk to each other, would they not assume that the shadows they saw were the real things?"

"Inevitably."

"And if the wall of their prison opposite them reflected sound, don't you think that they would suppose, whenever one of the passers-by on the road spoke, that the voice belonged to the shadow passing before them?"

"They would be bound to think so."

"And so in every way they would believe that the shadows of the objects we mentioned were the whole truth."²

"Yes, inevitably."

"Then think what would naturally happen to them if they were released from their bonds and cured of their delusions. Suppose one of them were let loose, and suddenly compelled to stand up and turn his head and look and walk towards the fire; all these actions would be painful and he would be too dazzled to see properly the objects of which he used to see the shadows. What do you think he would say if he was told that what he used to see was so much empty nonsense and that he was now nearer reality and seeing more correctly, because he was turned towards objects that were more real, and if on top of that he were compelled to say what each of the passing objects was when it was pointed out to him? Don't you think he would be at a loss, and think that what he used to see was far truer³ than the objects now being pointed out to him?"

"Yes, far truer."

"And if he were made to look directly at the light of the fire, it would hurt his eyes and he would turn back and retreat to the things which he could see properly, which he would think really clearer than the things being shown him."

"Yes."

"And if, I went on, "he were forcibly dragged up the steep and rugged ascent and not let go till he had been dragged out into the sunlight, the process would be a painful one, to which he would much object, and when he emerged into the light his eyes would be so dazzled by the glare of it that he wouldn't be able to see a single one of the things he was now told were real."⁴

"Certainly not at first," he agreed.

"Because, of course, he would need to grow accustomed to the light before he could see things in the upper world outside the cave. First he would find it



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easiest to look at shadows, next at the reflections of men and other objects in water, and later on at the objects themselves. After that he would find it easier to observe the heavenly bodies and the sky itself at night, and to look at the light of the moon and stars rather than at the sun and its light by day."

"Of course."

"The thing he would be able to do last would be to look directly at the sun itself, and gaze at it without using reflections in water or any other medium, but as it is in itself."

"That must come last."

"Later on he would come to the conclusion that it is the sun that produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world, and it is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see."

"That is the conclusion which he would obviously reach."

"And when he thought of his first home and what passed for wisdom there, and of his fellow-prisoners, don't you think he would congratulate himself on his good fortune and be sorry for them?"

"Very much so."

"There was probably a certain amount of honour and glory to be won among the prisoners, and prizes for keen-sightedness for those best able to remember the order of sequence among the passing shadows and so be best able to divine their future appearances. Will our released prisoner hanker after these prizes or envy this power or honour? Won't he be more likely to feel, as Homer says, that he would far rather be 'a serf in the house of some landless man',⁵ or indeed anything else in the world, than hold the opinions and live the life that they do?"

"Yes," he replied, "he would prefer anything to a life like theirs."

"Then what do you think would happen," I asked, "if he went back to sit in his old seat in the cave? Wouldn't his eyes be blinded by the darkness, because he had come in suddenly out of the sunlight?"

"Certainly."

"And if he had to discriminate between the shadows, in competition with the other prisoners, while he was still blinded and before his eyes got used to the darkness – a process that would take some time – wouldn't he be likely to make a fool of himself? And they would say that his visit to the upper world had ruined his sight, and that the ascent was not worth even attempting. And if anyone tried to release them and lead them up, they would kill him if they could lay hands on him."

"They certainly would."

"Now, my dear Glaucon," I went on, "this simile must be connected throughout with what preceded it.⁶ The realm revealed by sight corresponds to the prison, and the light of the fire in the prison to the power of the sun. And you won't go wrong if you connect the ascent into the upper world and the sight of the objects there with the upward progress of the mind into the intelligible region. That at any rate is my interpretation, which is what you are anxious to hear; the truth of the matter is, after all, known only to god.⁷ But in my opinion, for what it is worth, the final thing to be perceived in the intelligible region, and perceived only with difficulty, is the form of the good; once seen, it is inferred

to be responsible for whatever is right and valuable in anything, producing in the visible region light and the source of light, and being in the intelligible region itself controlling source of truth and intelligence. And anyone who is going to act rationally either in public or private life must have sight of it."

"I agree," he said, "so far as I am able to understand you."

"Then you will perhaps also agree with me that it won't be surprising if those who get so far are unwilling to involve themselves in human affairs, and if their minds long to remain in the realm above. That's what we should expect if our simile holds good again."

"Yes, that's to be expected."

"Nor will you think it strange that anyone who descends from contemplation of the divine to human life and its ills should blunder and make a fool of himself, if, while still blinded and unaccustomed to the surrounding darkness, he's forcibly put on trial in the law-courts or elsewhere about the shadows of justice or the figures of which they are shadows, and made to dispute about the notions of them held by men who have never seen justice itself."

"There's nothing strange in that."

"But anyone with any sense," I said, "will remember that the eyes may be unsighted in two ways, by a transition either from light to darkness or from darkness to light, and will recognize that the same thing applies to the mind. So when he sees a mind confused and unable to see clearly he will not laugh without thinking, but will ask himself whether it has come from a clearer world and is confused by the unaccustomed darkness, or whether it is dazzled by the stronger light of the clearer world to which it has escaped from its previous ignorance. The first condition of life is a reason for congratulation, the second for sympathy, though if one wants to laugh at it one can do so with less absurdity than at the mind that has descended from the daylight of the upper world."

"You put it very reasonably."

"If this is true," I continued, "we must reject the conception of education professed by those who say that they can put into the mind knowledge that was not there before – rather as if they could put sight into blind eyes."

"It is a claim that is certainly made," he said.

"But our argument indicates that the capacity for knowledge is innate in each man's mind, and that the organ by which he learns is like an eye which cannot be turned from darkness to light unless the whole body is turned; in the same way the mind as a whole must be turned away from the world of change until its eye can bear to look straight at reality, and at the brightest of all realities which is what we call the good. Isn't this so?"

"Yes."

"Then this turning around of the mind itself might be made a subject of professional skill,⁸ which would effect the conversion as easily and effectively as possible. It would not be concerned to implant sight, but to ensure that someone who had it already was not either turned in the wrong direction or looking the wrong way."

"That may well be so."

"The rest, therefore, of what are commonly called excellences⁹ of the mind perhaps resemble those of the body, in that they are not in fact innate, but are implanted by subsequent training and practice; but knowledge, it seems, must surely have a diviner quality, something which never loses its power, but whose effects are useful and salutary or again useless and harmful according to the direction in which it is turned. Have you never noticed how shrewd is the glance of the type of men commonly called bad but clever? They have small minds, but their sight is sharp and piercing enough in matters that concern them; it's not that their sight is weak, but that they are forced to serve evil, so that the keener their sight the more effective that evil is."

"That's true."

"But suppose," I said, "that such natures were cut loose, when they were still children, from all the dead weights natural to this world of change and fastened on them by sensual indulgences like gluttony, which twist their minds' vision to lower things, and suppose that when so freed they were turned towards the truth, then this same part of these same individuals would have as keen a vision of truth as it has of the objects on which it is at present turned."

"Very likely."

"And is it not also likely, and indeed a necessary consequence of what we have said, that society will never be properly governed either by the uneducated, who have no knowledge of the truth, or by those who are allowed to spend all their lives in purely intellectual pursuits? The uneducated have no single aim in life to which all their actions, public and private, are to be directed; the intellectuals will take no practical action of their own accord, fancying themselves to be out of this world in some kind of earthly paradise."

"True."

"Then our job as lawgivers is to compel the best minds to attain what we have called the highest form of knowledge, and to ascend to the vision of the good as we have described, and when they have achieved this and see well enough, prevent them behaving as they are now allowed to."

"What do you mean by that?"

"Remaining in the upper world, and refusing to return again to the prisoners in the cave below and share their labours and rewards, whether trivial or serious."

"But surely," he protested, "that will not be fair. We shall be compelling them to live a poorer life than they might live."

"The object of our legislation," I reminded him again, "is not the special welfare of any particular class in our society, but of the society as a whole; and it uses persuasion or compulsion to unite all citizens and make them share together the benefits which each individually can confer on the community; and its purpose in fostering this attitude is not to leave everyone to please himself, but to make each man a link in the unity of the whole."

"You are right; I had forgotten," he said.

"You see, then, Glaucon," I went on, "we shan't be unfair to our philosophers, but shall be quite fair in what we say when we compel them to have some care and responsibility for others. We shall tell them that philosophers born in other states can reasonably refuse to take part in the hard work of politics; for society produces them quite involuntarily, and it is only just that anything that grows up on its own should feel it has nothing to repay for an upbringing which it owes to no one. 'But,' we shall say, 'we have bred you both for your own sake and that of the whole community to act as leaders and king-bees in a hive; you are better and more fully educated than the rest and better qualified to combine the practice of philosophy and politics. You must therefore each descend in turn and live with your fellows in the cave and get used to seeing in the dark; once you get used to it you will see a thousand times better than they do and will distinguish the various shadows, and know what they are shadows of, because you have seen the truth about things admirable and just and good. And so our state and yours will be really awake, and not merely dreaming like most societies today, with their shadow battles and their struggles for political power, which they treat as some great prize. The truth is quite different: the state whose prospective rulers come to their duties with least enthusiasm is bound to have the best and most tranquil government, and the state whose rulers are eager to rule the worst.'"

"I quite agree."

"Then will our pupils, when they hear what we say, dissent and refuse to take their share of the hard work of government, even though spending the greater part of their time together in the pure air above?"

"They cannot refuse, for we are making a just demand of just men. But of course, unlike present rulers, they will approach the business of government as an unavoidable necessity."

"Yes, of course," I agreed. "The truth is that if you want a well-governed state to be possible, you must find for your future rulers some way of life they like better than government; for only then will you have government by the truly rich, those, that is, whose riches consist not of gold, but of the true happiness of a good and rational life. If you get, in public affairs, men whose life is impoverished and destitute of personal satisfactions, but who hope to snatch some compensation for their own inadequacy from a political career, there can never be good government. They start fighting for power, and the consequent internal and domestic conflicts ruin both them and society."

"True indeed."

"Is there any life except that of true philosophy which looks down on positions of political power?"

"None whatever."

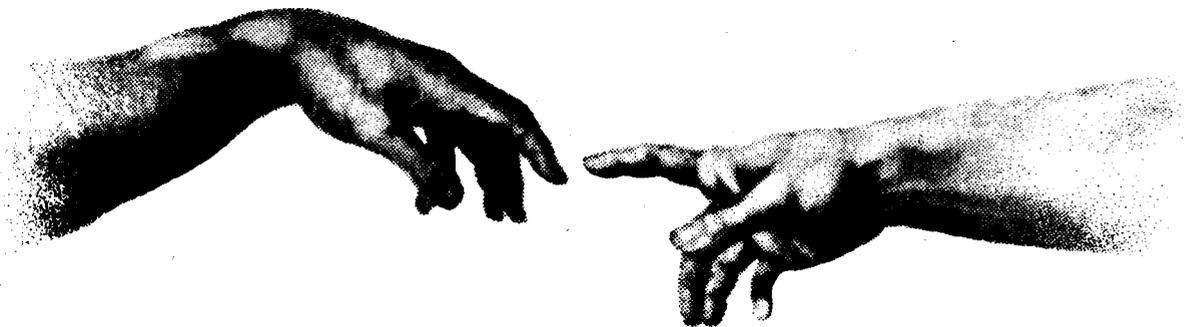
"But what we need is that the only men to get power should be men who do not love it, otherwise we shall have rivals' quarrels."

"That is certain."

"Who else, then, will you compel to undertake the responsibilities of Guardians of our state, if it is not to be those who know most about the principles of good government and who have other rewards and a better life than the politician's?"

"There is no one else."

From Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987), pp. 316-325.



References

1. Lit: "like us". How "like" has been a matter of controversy. Plato can hardly have meant that the ordinary man cannot distinguish between shadows and real things. But he does seem to be saying, with a touch of caricature (we must not take him too solemnly), that the ordinary man is often very uncritical in his beliefs, which are little more than a "careless acceptance of appearances" (Crombie).
2. Lit: "regard nothing else as true but the shadows". The Greek word *alēthēs* (true) carries an implication of genuineness, and some translators render it here as "real".
3. Or "more real".
4. Or "true", "genuine".
5. *Odyssey*, XI, 489.
6. I.e. the similes of the Sun and the Line. The detailed relations between the three similes have been much disputed, as has the meaning of the word here translated "connected". Some interpret it to mean a detailed correspondence ("every feature ... is meant to fit" – Cornford), others to mean, more loosely, "attached" or "linked to". That Plato intended some degree of "connection" between the three similes cannot be in doubt in view of the sentences which follow. But we should remember that they are similes, not scientific descriptions, and it would be a mistake to try to find too much detailed precision. Plato has just spoken of the prisoners "getting their hands" on their returned fellow and killing him. How could they do that if fettered as described at the opening of the simile? But Socrates was executed, so of course they must. This translation assumes the following main correspondences:

Tied prisoner in the cave	Illusion
Freed prisoner in the cave	Belief
Looking at shadows and reflections in the world outside the cave and the ascent thereto	Reason
Looking at real things in the world outside the cave	Intelligence
Looking at the sun	Vision of the form of the good.
7. Plato tends to use "gods" (plural) or "god" (singular) indifferently. When he speaks of "god" we must not interpret him in terms of simple monotheism. He thought that the myths of Greek polytheism were crude and misleading. He does seem to have believed (like most Greeks) in a *supreme* god, but he would not have regarded that belief as precluding the existence of a *multiplicity* of spiritual powers of whom many could rank as (subordinate) gods. This is the sort of theology we meet in the *Timaeus* and *Laws*.
8. *Technē*.
9. *Aretē*.

Biography

Plato was born c. 427 BC to one of the most distinguished families of the Athenian ruling aristocracy. Through his father Plato was supposed to be descended from Poseidon, the god of the sea and horses. Through his mother he was descended from Solon, the wise-man and law-giver of Athens.

Plato's early years coincided with the disastrous Peloponnesian War which shattered the Athenian Empire. He must have known Socrates from boyhood, and his early manhood must have been spent among the most brilliant men of the time. It would have been natural for him to play a prominent part in Athenian politics, but he felt disgusted by the violence and corruption of the city's political life, and concluded that he could collaborate with neither democrats nor oligarchs. In 399 BC he was especially sickened by the execution of his friend and teacher, Socrates.

After this event, Plato went on a series of travels, as he reflected on the life and teachings of Socrates. He was now brought to his mission of seeking a cure for society's ills not in politics but in philosophy, and he arrived at his fundamental conviction that those ills would never cease until philosophers became rulers or rulers philosophers. Plato's travels included Egypt and Italy, and at the age of forty he was invited to Syracuse, Sicily. The country was ruled by the tyrant Dionysius I, and Plato was asked to educate the tyrant. The visit was short and uneventful.

When Plato finally returned to Athens he presumably had completed some of his dialogues, notably those celebrating Socrates. He joined a group of friends who wanted to establish an institution of science and education. This was the famous Academy, the first permanent institution devoted to philosophical research and teaching, and the prototype of all western universities. Plato presided over the Academy for the rest of his life, making it into the intellectual centre of Greek civilization. In twenty years it collected the most brilliant minds of the time, great mathematicians, astronomers and philosophers, including Aristotle. From Aristotle we can infer that Plato lectured without manuscripts and that "problems" were posed for solution by joint researches of the students. During these years more dialogues were written, which included most probably the *Republic*.

In 367 BC, at the age of sixty, Plato was again invited to Syracuse to undertake the task discussed years earlier, this time with Dionysius II who had just assumed power. Plato's reluctance to take on the task was overcome partly by "a feeling of shame ... lest I might someday appear to myself wholly and solely a mere man of words." Apparently, serious efforts were made by both teacher and tyrant, but court intrigues and quarrels intervened and Plato returned to Athens and never again directly intervened in political affairs. Plato now wrote the so-called later dialogues. He continued to teach at the Academy and to play a leading role in the research "problems". He died in 346 BC.

Plato wrote over twenty philosophical dialogues and his literary activity extended over half a century. Few other writers have exploited so effectively the precision, grace and power of Greek prose. Along with Socrates and Aristotle, Plato stands as one of the great shapers of the whole intellectual tradition of the western world.

The Republic

The *Republic*, in fact is a long book, covering many topics, and the impression it makes on us depends to some extent on the eyes with which we look at it. The principal question that the *Republic* deals with is: what is justice? Let us, however, remember that a great deal of the *Republic* is not about politics at all. A large part of it is about education, and has been a continuing source of stimulus to educational thinking; there is a great deal about individual morality – the balance of impulses under the control of reason, the passionate desire for truth, the underlying religious seriousness. There is literary criticism, there is philosophy, there is a wealth of incidental comment on many things. When we do come to politics we find that Plato has little sympathy with the kind of outlook we should call "democratic". He had seen democracy at work in Athens, and was too deeply critical of its faults to regard it as a desirable form of government (though he was equally critical of other forms). And if we disagree with him, we should start by trying to understand his criticisms and the problems he was trying to solve.

The *Republic* consists, broadly, of three parts. The first (to near the end of Book V) consists in the construction of an ideal commonwealth; it is the earliest of Utopias.

One of the conclusions arrived at is that the rulers must be philosophers. Books VI and VII are concerned to define the word "philosopher." This discussion constitutes the second section.

The third section consists of a discussion of various kinds of actual constitutions and of their merits and defects.

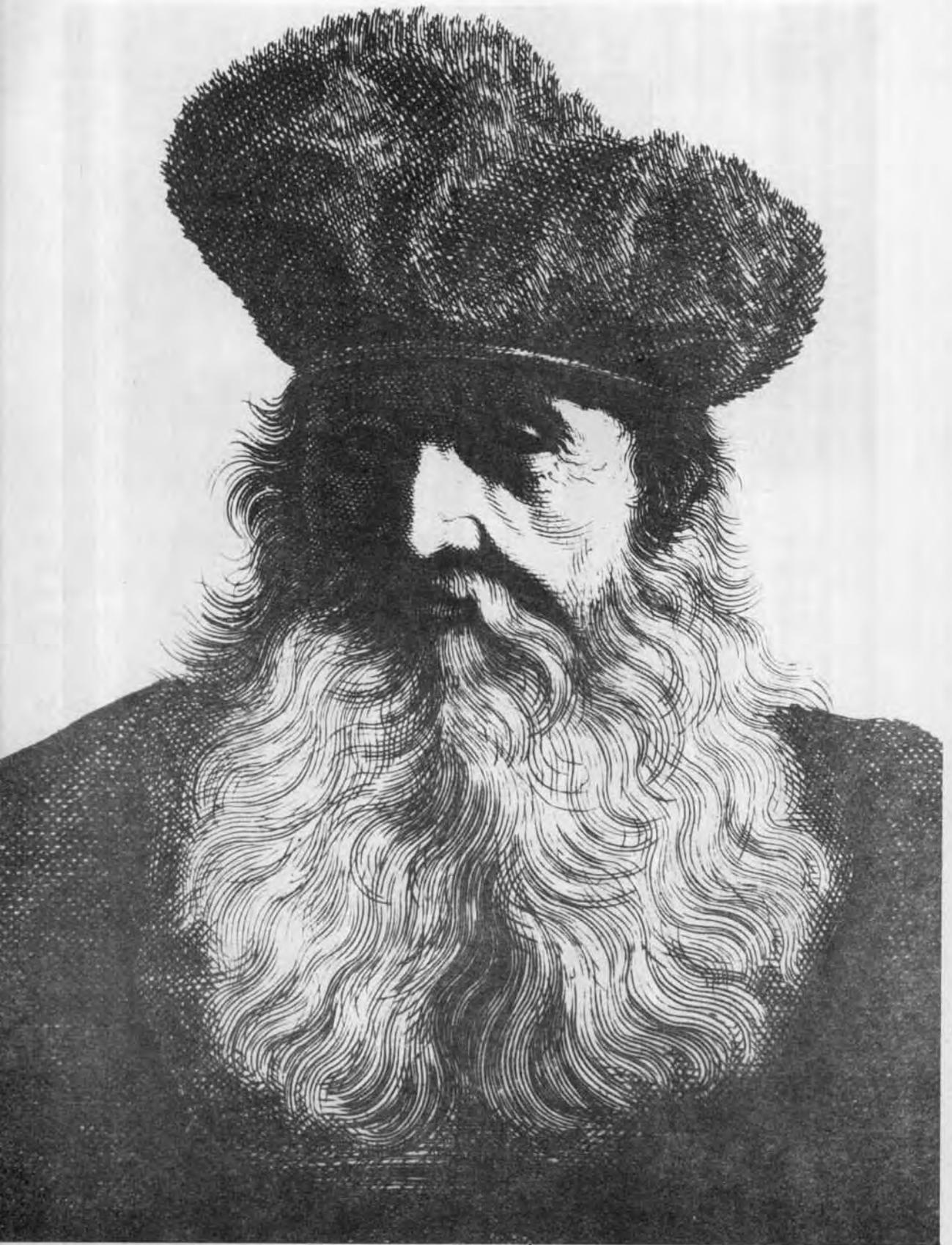
The *Republic* is in dialogue form and its style is conversational. The dialogue form was used by some of Plato's contemporaries, Xenophon, for example, as well as by Plato himself; and many have used it since his day. In a work of the length of the *Republic* the dramatic and conversational element can vary; in much of the argument there is very little of it. But none the less the general impression left is that of a conversation.

The following is a list of dialogues written by Plato: *Euthyphro*, *Apology*, *Crito*, *Laches*, *Lysis*, *Charmides*, *Hippias Minor*, *Ion*, *Protagoras*, *Meno*, *Gorgias*, *Phaedo*, *Menexenus*, *Euthydemus*, *Cratylus*, *Republic*, *Symposium*, *Phaedrus*, *Parmenides*, *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Theaetetus*, *Critias*, *Philebus*, *Timaeus*, *Laws*.

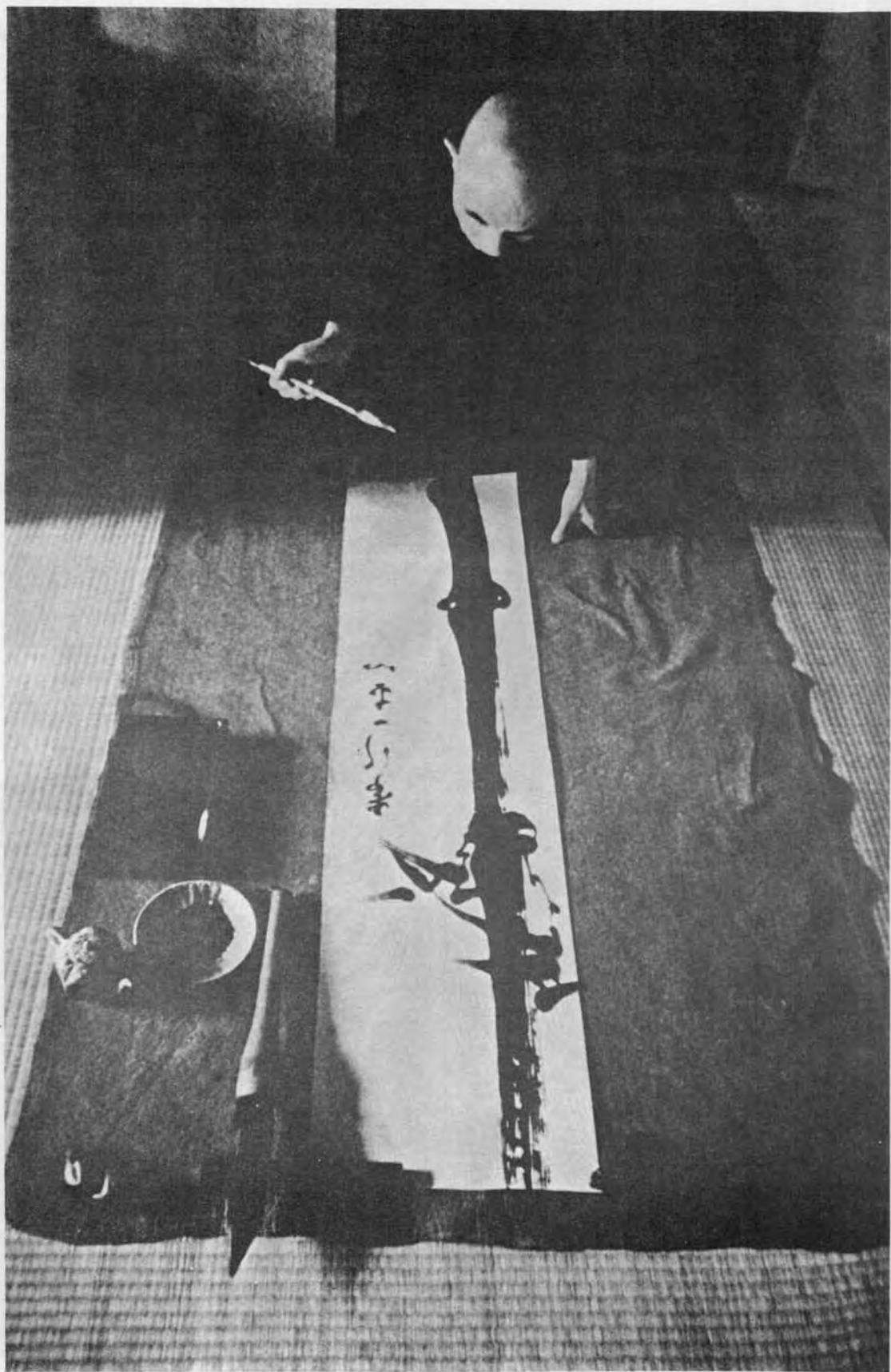
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- Plato -



Instruction and New Awareness

Introduction

Instruction is generally considered to be one of the teacher's most important tasks and verbal communication is its usual mode. The good teacher cultivates verbal communication to high degrees of subtlety and complexity. His power of ideation is so refined that words flow from him effortlessly, communicating difficult ideas with precision and expressiveness. Striking phrases formulated in inspired moments illumine the minds of pupils with ease and joy. He can expound the same idea in several different ways to suit the preparedness and intelligence of his pupils.

A good teacher is a spontaneous innovator, and he often invents new devices of formal or informal instruction. He realizes the importance of individual attention and finds or creates opportunities for personal conversation with each of his pupils. In an ideal system of education, these individual meetings can prove to be extraordinary occasions if a teacher has mastered the art of communicating with brevity and wit. Even non-verbal communication can be used most effectively. Every good teacher knows that silence often says more than long discourses. Profound ideas can often be expressed in short phrases, and they are very effective if communicated in an atmosphere of intensity and contemplation. In the Indian tradition, the pupil was given a short formula containing deep meaning and then left to himself for long hours or days or years of contemplation. Tat tvam asi (That art thou) was one such formula which pupils used to ponder day after day while taking the teacher's cattle for grazing. The sutra system of Indian sciences and philosophies was a great help for teachers and students in promoting individual explorations based on reflection and understanding.

All over the world wise teachers acquire a capacity to instruct without instructing. Sometimes even a gesture is enough to give a meaningful lesson. Among Zen teachers, in particular, we find a remarkably developed art that is well worth studying.

Zen is best understood as psychological exploration leading to experience that illumines what is real. Since education is a psychological cultivation of the faculties and capacities of consciousness leading to a knowledge of reality, we can appreciate how Zen can be useful to those who aim at perfecting the art and science of education.

Zen developed first in China, but it matured to a high degree of excellence in Japan. It is believed that Bodhidharma of India founded Zen in China. It is said that when he came to China he simply declared, "Directly pointing to one's own soul, my doctrine is unique, and is not hampered by the canonical teachings; it is the absolute transmission of the true seal."¹

The term "Zen" is derived from the Chinese transliteration (ch'an-na) of the original Sanskrit term dhyāna (meditation), which in Japanese becomes zenna. Zen masters, however, make it clear that Zen is not the same as dhyāna. They admit that one may meditate on a philosophical or religious subject while disciplining oneself in Zen, but they point out that this is only incidental, and not the essence of Zen. Meditation implies fixing the thought on an object while Zen emphasizes the attainment of freedom from all unnatural encumbrances. According to the Zen masters, thought is an artificial and unnatural encumbrance that prevents the direct experience of reality. As Suzuki points out, "Zen . . . is more than meditation and dhyāna in its ordinary sense. The discipline of Zen consists in opening the mental eye in order to look into the very reason of existence."²

Zen is a state of awareness beyond the state of dhyāna, and can be compared to the samādhi of Patanjali's system of Yoga.³ In Zen, thought-consciousness is transcended; there is a new awareness, called satori, and the object of knowledge is apprehended in its purity, its objectivity, its real reality.

Zen may be looked upon as a system of Yoga, having its own object and its own methods. Like Yoga, Zen is quite distinct from religion and philosophy.

1. D. T. Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (London: Rider, 1983), p. 46.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 40.

3. Patanjali's yoga system has come to be called Raja Yoga, which is distinct from other systems of Yoga. According to Patanjali, yoga means cessation of the modifications of the stuff of consciousness (chittavritti nirodhah), so that in stillness of consciousness the object of knowledge reveals all its contents. That state of stillness is called samādhi. The process for reaching samādhi has eight stages: yama, self-control; niyama, discipline; āsana, stability of posture; prānāyāma, breath control; pratyāhāra, withdrawal of consciousness from multiplicity of objects; dhāraṇa, fixing of consciousness on a single object; dhyāna, continuous concentration on a single object; and finally, samādhi.

Yoga and Zen aim at rising above the level of rational search; they aim at direct experience by extending psychological consciousness beyond the thought-process of thesis and antithesis. If philosophy is a process of intellectual "understanding", Yoga and Zen may be regarded as processes of experiential "overstanding".

Zen wants us to acquire an entirely new point of view on the mysteries of life and the secrets of nature. Zen has come to the conclusion that ordinary logical reasoning is powerless to satisfy our deepest psychological needs. To bring home this point, Zen masters often speak in what seem to be illogical terms. For example, the famous Zen master Fudaishi describes the point of view of Zen in the following lines:

*Empty-handed I go, and behold the spade is
in my hands;
I walk on foot, and yet on the back of an ox
I am riding;
When I pass over the bridge,
Lo, the water floweth not, but the bridge doth flow.*

Commenting on these lines, Suzuki writes:

Nothing can be more illogical and contrary to common sense than these few lines. The critic will be inclined to call Zen absurd, confusing, and beyond the ken of ordinary reasoning. But Zen is inflexible and would protest that the so-called common-sense way of looking at things is not final, and that the reason why we cannot attain to a thoroughgoing comprehension of the truth is due to our unreasonable adherence to a "logical" interpretation of things. If we really want to get to the bottom of life, we must abandon our cherished syllogisms, we must acquire a new way of observation whereby we can escape the tyranny of logic and the one-sidedness of our everyday phraseology. However paradoxical it may seem, Zen insists that the spade must be held in your empty hands, and that it is not the water but the bridge that is flowing under your feet.¹

Here are some other puzzling statements of the Zen masters:

"When Tom drinks, Dick gets tipsy."

"Who is the teacher of all the Buddhas, past, present and future? John the cook."

"Last night a wooden horse neighed and a stone man cut capers."

"Lo, a cloud of dust is rising from the ocean, and the roaring of the waves is heard over the land."²

1. Ibid., p. 58.

2. Ibid., p. 59.

Zen masters tell us that words are words and facts are facts, and that Zen deals with facts and not with verbal representations. Direct simplicity is the soul of Zen and the source of its vitality, freedom and originality. Zen often compares the mind to a spotless mirror. To be simple, therefore, will be "to keep this mirror always bright and pure and ready to reflect simply and absolutely whatever comes before it."¹ According to the Zen masters, we are too much the slaves of words and common-sense logic. So long as we remain thus fettered, we are miserable and suffering. They maintain that if we want to know something really worth knowing, we must endeavour once and for all to free ourselves from all conditions; we must gain a new point of view from which the world is seen in its wholeness and life comprehended inwardly. In this sense, Zen is pre-eminently practical. It avoids abstractions and dialectical subtleties. Logic, Zen says, is self-conscious and contains a trace of effort and pain. Life, on the other hand is an art, and like perfect art it should be unself-conscious; there should be no trace of effort or pain. Life ought to be lived as simply as a bird flies through the air or a fish swims in the water.

Central to Zen is an experience called satori, which may be translated as "new awareness" or enlightenment. Attempting to explain satori, C. G. Jung writes:

It is far better . . . to bear in mind the whole time that satori is a mysterium ineffabile as indeed the Zen masters wish it to be. . . . One has the feeling of touching upon a true secret, not something that has been imagined or pretended; this is not a case of mystifying secrecy, but rather of an experience that baffles all languages.²

And in the words of William Johnston:

It rarely comes when one is sitting silently in meditation. Master Hui-neng, for example, got enlightenment by listening to the chanting of the Diamond Sutra, Master Teshan got it by observing that Master Lung-t'an blew a candle flame out, Master Ling-yun got it by seeing a peach flower falling, Master Po-chang got it when his master Ma-tsun twisted his nose in his young days, Master Hakuin got it by hearing the sound of the temple gong. About enlightenment little can be said that will even remotely express the reality. It is a great crash accompanied by joy and followed by deep peace. It has been practically compared to the smashing of a layer of ice or the pulling down of a crystal tower; or the clouds have parted and the bright sun pierces through – others will say that it is as though their skull were broken into a thousand pieces.³

1. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

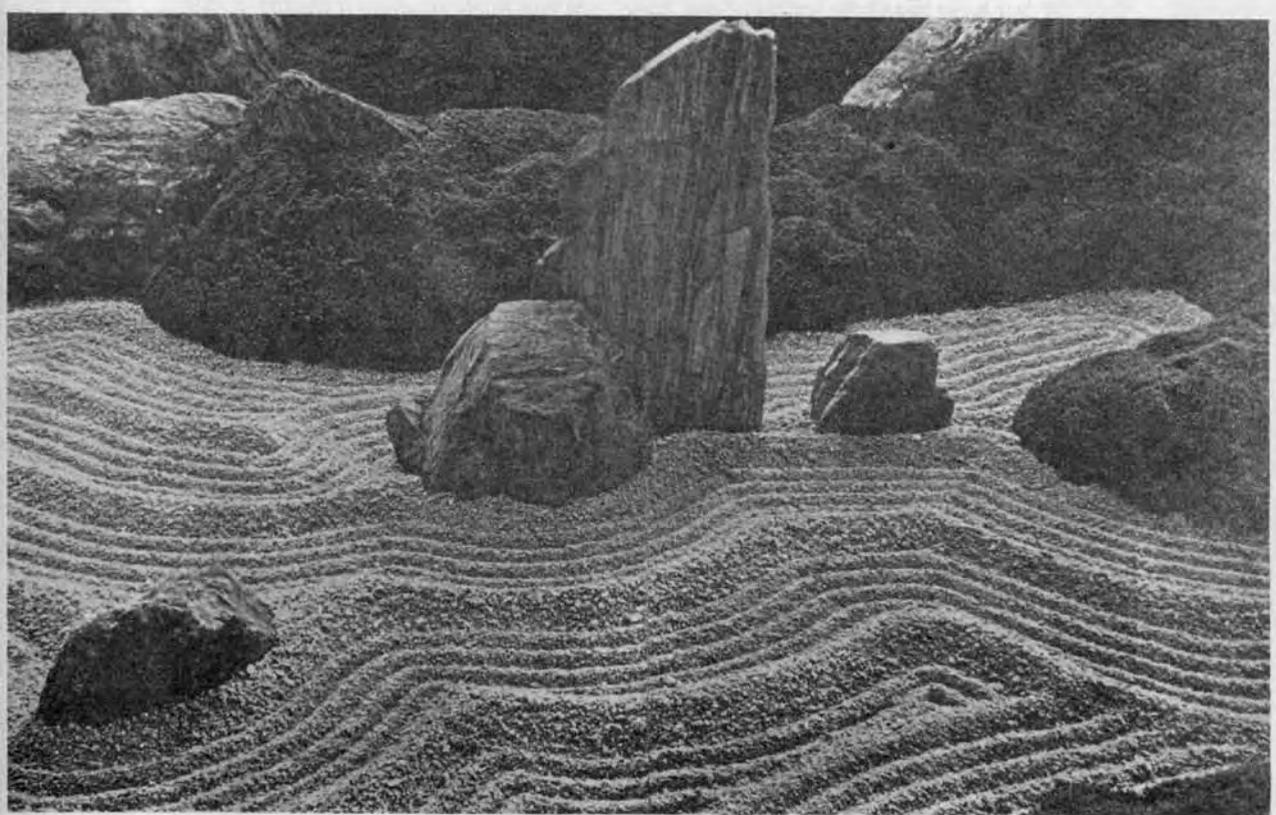
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, from Forward by C. G. Jung.

3. William Johnston, *Examples of Religious Experience* (Victoria: Deakin University, 1983), p. 27.

Satori may be regarded as a reversal of consciousness. Things remain the same and yet they are different. As Jung explains:

It is not that something different is seen, but that one sees differently. It is as though the spatial act of seeing were changed by a new dimension. When the master asks, "Do you hear the murmuring of the brook?" he obviously means something quite different from ordinary "hearing". Consciousness is something like perception, and just as the latter is subjected to conditions and limits, so is consciousness. For instance, one can be conscious at various stages, in a narrower or wider sphere, more superficially or more deeply. These differences of degree are, however, often differences of character, in that they depend completely upon the development of the personality – that is to say, upon the nature of the perceiving subject.¹

Satori is said to come upon us unawares, when we feel that we have exhausted our whole being. Spiritually, it is a new birth; intellectually, it is the acquiring of a new garment which seems to cover all the unsightly division. Zen is freedom from egoistic consciousness and a widening into awareness of a



1. C. G. Jung, Forward, in Suzuki, pp. 17-18.

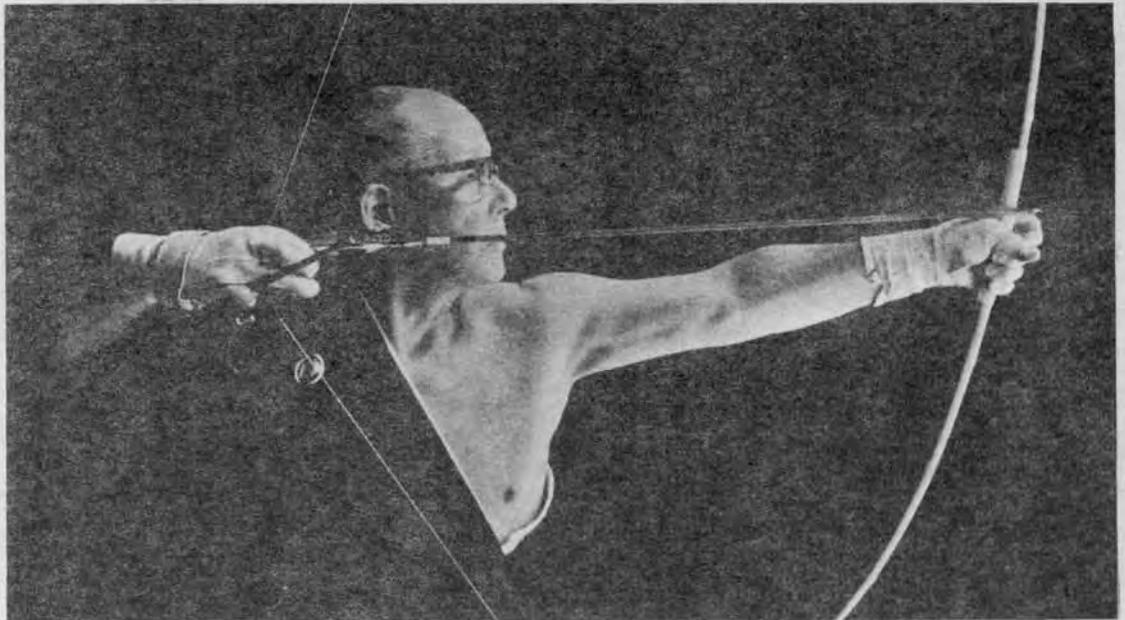
deeper self without walls and boundaries. As Jung explains:

However one may define self, it is always something other than the ego, and inasmuch as a higher understanding of the ego leads on to self the latter is a thing of wider scope, embracing the knowledge of the ego and therefore surpassing it. In the same way as the ego is a certain knowledge of my self, so is the self a knowledge of my ego, which, however, is no longer experienced in the form of a broader or higher ego, but in the form of a non-ego (Nicht-Ich).¹

In Zen literature, we come across a very important word, koan, which denotes an anecdote, statement or question put forward by a teacher, or a dialogue between a master and pupils, all of which are means for opening one's mind to the truth of Zen. Koans look like mere riddles or witty remarks, but in actuality they have the objective of arousing doubt and pushing it to its furthest limits. Consider the two following koans:

*"When both hands are clapped a sound is produced: listen to the sound of one hand."
"If you have heard the sound of one hand, can you make me hear it too?"²*

There is no logical way to grasp the meaning of a koan. The pupil feels arrested, he hesitates and doubts, he is troubled and agitated, not knowing how



1. Ibid., p. 13.

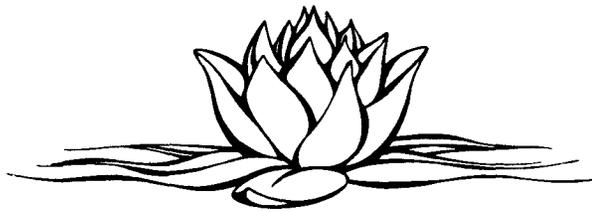
2. Suzuki, p. 59.

to break through what seems like an impenetrable wall. When this climax is reached, the whole personality of the pupil – his inmost will, his deepest nature – determined to bring the situation to an issue, throws itself with no thought of self or no-self, of this or of that, directly and unreservedly against the iron wall of the koan. This throwing of the entire being against the koan unexpectedly opens up an unknown region of consciousness. In the words of Suzuki:

Intellectually, this is the transcending of the limits of logical dualism, but at the same time it is a regeneration, the awakening of an inner sense which enables one to look into the actual working of things. For the first time the meaning of the koan becomes clear, and in the same way that one knows that ice is cold and freezing. The eye sees, the ear hears, to be sure, but it is the mind as a whole that has satori; it is an act of perception, no doubt, but it is a perception of the highest order. Here lies the value of the Zen discipline, as it gives birth to the unshakable conviction that there is something indeed going beyond mere intellection.¹

At the same time, Zen teachers warn their students against regarding the koan as an end in itself, and forgetting that the true object of Zen is the unfolding of the inner life and consciousness. To avoid this danger, the student Daiye burned up the book of one hundred koans compiled by his master, Yengo. The total number of koans is traditionally estimated at 1700, but only one may be sufficient to open the student's mind to the ultimate truth of Zen. The necessary requirement is personal effort, without which Zen is a mere bubble. And more often than not, pupils continue their effort for many years before they experience satori.

The relevance of Zen to our theme of the good student and the good teacher is that it shows how the proper attitude and state of consciousness need to be vigorously prepared by both the teacher and the pupil if one aspires to higher knowledge and experience. Zen stories and koans provide striking examples of the efforts made in this regard by the good teachers and good pupils of the Far East, as the reader will discover in the following passages.



¹ Ibid., p. 109.



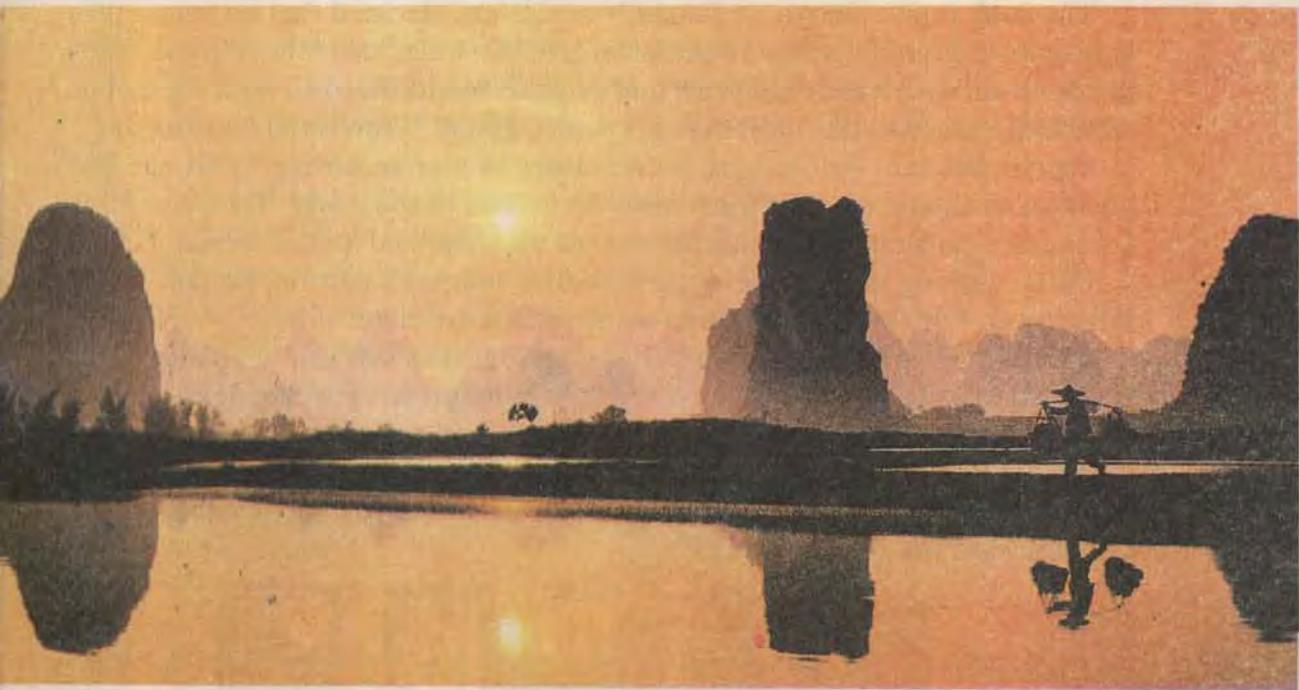
Sleeping in the Daytime

The master Soyen Shaku passed from this world when he was sixty-one years of age. Fulfilling his life's work, he left a great teaching, far richer than that of most Zen masters. His pupils used to sleep in the daytime during midsummer, and while he overlooked this he himself never wasted a minute.

When he was but twelve years old he was already studying Tendai philosophical speculation. One summer day the air had been so sultry that little Soyen stretched his legs and went to sleep while his teacher was away.

Three hours passed when, suddenly waking, he heard his master enter, but it was too late. There he lay, sprawled across the doorway.

"I beg your pardon, I beg your pardon," his teacher whispered, stepping carefully over Soyen's body as if it were that of some distinguished guest. After this, Soyen never slept again in the afternoon.¹



Accurate Proportion

Sen no Rikyu, a tea-master, wished to hang a flower basket on a column. He asked a carpenter to help him, directing the man to place it a little higher or lower, to the right or left, until he had found exactly the right spot. "That's the place," said Sen no Rikyu finally.

The carpenter, to test the master, marked the spot and then pretended he had forgotten. Was this the place? "Was this the place, perhaps?" the carpenter kept asking, pointing to various places on the column.

But so accurate was the tea-master's sense of proportion that it was not until the carpenter reached the identical spot again that its location was approved.²

Sour Miso

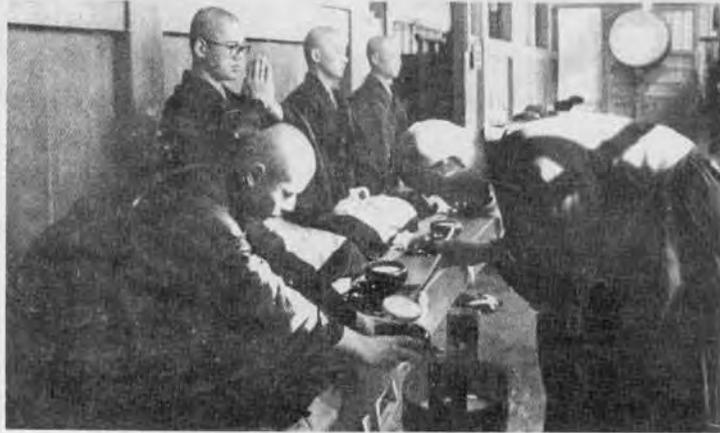
The cook monk Dairyo, at Bankei's monastery, decided that he would take good care of his old teacher's health and give him only fresh miso, a paste of soy beans mixed with wheat and yeast that often ferments. Bankei, noticing that he was being served better miso than his pupils, asked: "Who is the cook today?"

Dairyo was sent before him. Bankei learned that according to his age and position he should eat only fresh miso. So he said to the cook: "Then you think I shouldn't eat at all." With this he entered his room and locked the door.

Dairyo, sitting outside the door, asked his teacher's pardon. Bankei would not answer. For seven days Dairyo sat outside and Bankei within.

Finally in desperation an adherent called loudly to Bankei: "You may be all right, old teacher, but this young disciple here has to eat. He cannot go without food forever!"

At that Bankei opened the door. He was smiling. He told Dairyo: "I insist on eating the same food as the least of my followers. When you become the teacher I do not want you to forget this."³



Kasan Sweat

Kasan was asked to officiate at the funeral of a provincial lord.

He had never met lords and nobles before so he was nervous. When the ceremony started, Kasan sweat.

Afterwards, when he had returned, he gathered his pupils together. Kasan confessed that he was not yet qualified to be a teacher for he lacked the sameness of bearing in the world of fame that he possessed in the secluded temple. Then Kasan resigned and became the pupil of another master. Eight years later he returned to his former pupils, enlightened.⁴

Temper

A Zen student came to Bankei and complained:

"Master, I have an ungovernable temper. How can I cure it?"

"You have something very strange," replied Bankei. "Let me see what you have."

"Just now I cannot show it to you," replied the other.

"When can you show it to me?" asked Bankei.

"It arises unexpectedly," replied the student.

"Then," concluded Bankei, "it must not be your own true nature. If it were, you could show it to me at any time. When you were born you did not have it, and your parents did not give it to you. Think that over."⁵

Storyteller's Zen

Encho was a famous storyteller. His tales of love stirred the hearts of his listeners. When he narrated a story of war, it was as if the listeners themselves were on the field of battle.

One day Encho met Yamaoka Tesshu, a layman who had almost embraced masterhood in Zen. "I understand," said Yamaoka, "you are the best storyteller in our land and that you make people cry or laugh at will. Tell me my favorite story of the Peach Boy. When I was a little tot I used to sleep beside my mother, and she often related this legend. In the middle of the story I would fall asleep. Tell it to me just as my mother did."

Encho dared not attempt to do this. He requested time to study. Several months later he went to Yamaoka and said: "Please give me the opportunity to tell you the story."

"Some other day," answered Yamaoka.

Encho was keenly disappointed. He studied further and tried again. Yamaoka rejected him many times. When Encho would start to talk Yamaoka would stop him, saying: "You are not yet like my mother."

It took Encho five years to be able to tell Yamaoka the legend as his mother had told it to him.

In this way, Yamaoka imparted Zen to Encho.⁶

Midnight Excursion

Many pupils were studying meditation under the Zen master Sengai. One of them used to arise at night, climb over the temple wall, and go to town on a pleasure jaunt.

Sengai, inspecting the dormitory quarters, found this pupil missing one night and also discovered the high stool he had used to scale the wall. Sengai removed the stool and stood there in its place.

When the wanderer returned, not knowing that Sengai was the stool, he put his feet on the master's head and jumped down into the grounds. Discovering what he had done, he was aghast.

Sengai said: "It is very chilly in the early morning. Do be careful not to catch cold yourself."

The pupil never went out at night again.⁷



Silkpainting, Yüan Period (14th century)

The Sound of One Hand

The master of Kennin temple was Mokurai, Silent Thunder. He had a little protégé named Toyo who was only twelve years old. Toyo saw the older disciples visit the master's room each morning and evening to receive instruction in sanzen or personal guidance in which they were given koans to stop mind-wandering.

Toyo wished to do sanzen also.

"Wait a while," said Mokurai. "You are too young."

But the child insisted, so the teacher finally consented.

In the evening little Toyo went at the proper time to the threshold of Mokurai's sanzen room. He struck the gong to announce his presence, bowed respectfully three times outside the door, and went to sit before the master in respectful silence.

"You can hear the sound of two hands when they clap together," said Mokurai. "Now show me the sound of one hand."

Toyo bowed and went to his room to consider this problem. From his window he could hear the music of the geishas. "Ah, I have it!" he proclaimed.

The next evening, when his teacher asked him to illustrate the sound of one hand, Toyo began to play the music of the geishas.

"No, no," said Mokurai. "That will never do. That is not the sound of one hand. You've not got it at all."

Thinking that such music might interrupt, Toyo moved his abode to a quiet place. He meditated again. "What can the sound of one hand be?" He happened to hear some water dripping. "I have it," imagined Toyo.

When he next appeared before his teacher, Toyo imitated dripping water.

"What is that?" asked Mokurai. "That is the sound of dripping water, but not the sound of one hand. Try again."

In vain Toyo meditated to hear the sound of one hand. He heard the sighing of the wind. But the sound was rejected.

He heard the cry of an owl. This also was refused.

The sound of one hand was not the locusts.

For more than ten times Toyo visited Mokurai with different sounds. All were wrong. For almost a year he pondered what the sound of one hand might be.

At last little Toyo entered true meditation and transcended all sounds. "I could collect no more," he explained later, "so I reached the soundless sound."

Toyo had realized the sound of one hand.⁸

What Are You Doing!

What Are You Saying!

In modern times a great deal of nonsense is talked about masters and disciples, and about the inheritance of a master's teaching by favorite pupils, entitling them to pass the truth on to their adherents. Of course Zen should be imparted in this way, from heart to heart, and in the past it was really accomplished. Silence and humility reigned rather than profession and assertion. The one who received such a teaching kept the matter hidden even after twenty years. Not until another discovered through his own need that a real master was at hand was it learned that the teaching had been imparted, and even then the occasion arose quite naturally and the teaching made its way in its own right. Under no circumstance did the teacher even claim "I am the successor of So-and-so." Such a claim would prove quite the contrary.

The Zen master Mu-nan had only one successor. His name was Shoju. After Shoju had completed his study of Zen, Mu-nan called him into his room. "I am getting old," he said, "and as far as I know, Shoju, you are the only one who will carry on this teaching. Here is a book. It has been passed down from master to master for seven generations. I also have added many points according to my understanding. The book is very valuable, and I am giving it to you to represent your successorship."

"If the book is such an important thing, you had better keep it," Shoju replied. "I received your Zen without writing and am satisfied with it as it is."

"I know that," said Mu-nan. "Even so, this work has been carried from master to master for seven generations, so you may keep it as a symbol of having received the teaching. Here."

The two happened to be talking before a brazier. The instant Shoju felt the book in his hands he thrust it into the flaming coals. He had no lust for possessions.

Mu-nan, who never had been angry before, yelled: "What are you doing!"

Shoju shouted back: "What are you saying!"⁹

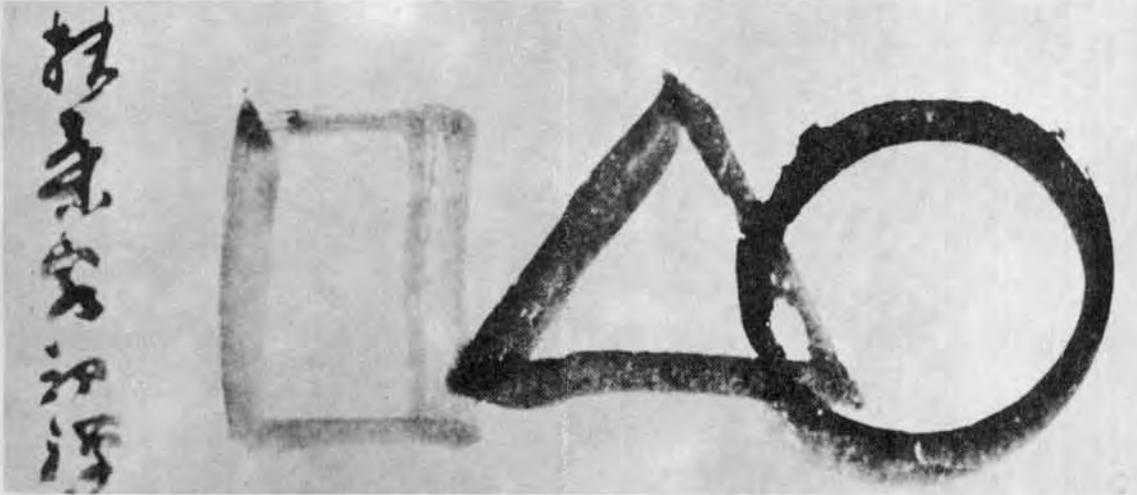
A Cup of Tea

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868-1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen.

Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring.

The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. "It is overfull. No more will go in!"

"Like this cup," Nan-in said, "you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?"¹⁰



This painting by Sengai represents the Universe

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1. Paul Reps, comp., *Zen Flesh, Zen Bones* (New York: Anchor, 1961), pp. 37-38.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.
5. *Ibid.*, pp. 64-65.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 77.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 78.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 24-26.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 59-60.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 5.



Coverillustration of *The Magic Monastery* by Idries Shah

Sufi Wisdom

Introduction

In an age where critical reason is said to reign supreme, claims of supra-rational knowledge are apt to be brushed aside as superstition or obscurantism. But recent breakthroughs in science, psychology and other branches of knowledge indicate that human civilization is reaching a point where we can no longer be so dogmatic in our rejection of the claim that beyond ordinary human consciousness lie higher ranges of knowledge, wisdom and power more luminous and more relevant to the contemporary needs of mankind than the knowledge and power of reason.

In Western history, Plato's philosophy marks a great transition between the age of supra-rational knowledge, represented by the mysteries, occultism and mysticism, and the age of reason. Plato made a distinction between perception and reason and argued that the true source of knowledge is reason. Reason, he taught, is made up of innate ideas analogous to the rays of the sun that radiate outward yet point back to the sun as the supreme source of light. In Plato's philosophy, innate ideas could be conceived as intuitions having their origin in a supra-rational source. Nevertheless, the emphasis Plato placed on reason and on dialectical thought is undeniable, and later schools of rationalism have derived their sustenance from Plato.

With Aristotle, who was a pupil of Plato, we have the first comprehensive statement of logic in the history of Western thought. The foundations he laid for logical thought remained unshaken for nearly 2,000 years, until the first decades of the present century, when a new movement started under the influence of some eminent mathematicians and philosophers. After Aristotle, there was an interlude during which theological thought held the field. With Descartes (1595-1650) rationalism again asserted itself with irresistible vehemence. His method of critical doubt has left an indelible impact on modern thought; his contention that nothing should be taken for granted and that no belief should be accepted unless reason shows it to be irrefutable has a powerful appeal to the contemporary mind. Subsequently, Western

philosophy passed through various forms of rationalism enriched by contributions made by great philosophers like Spinoza (1632-1677), Leibnitz (1646-1716), Kant (1728-1804) and Hegel (1770-1831). In the meantime, an opposition against rationalism arose with the empiricism¹ of John Locke (1632-1704). Locke attacked the theory of innate ideas and maintained that all ideas have their origin in sense-experience. Locke's empiricism reached its climax with David Hume (1711-1776), who maintained that sense-experience cannot provide a basis for belief in substance, either physical or spiritual, and hence nothing can be known with certainty. Hume's empiricism ended in scepticism.

It is true that Kant, who was awakened from his dogmatic slumber by Hume, attempted to provide a new foundation for certainty in his famous work, Critique of Pure Reason. But despite its originality and brilliance, Kant's work failed to convince rationalists and empiricists. The empiricists rejected Kantian epistemology² and tried to provide some practicable foundations to scientific knowledge.

Hegel reconstructed rationalism on the foundations of monistic³ ontology,⁴ and this was further developed by Bradley (1846-1924) in his book, Appearance and Reality. Although empiricism has not succeeded in restoring certainty to knowledge, it has made some acute attempts to develop criteria for various degrees of probability of knowledge. Empiricism is also a kind of rationalism, although it rejects Hegelian or Bradleyan rationalism which has its foundations in Platonism. Empiricism is rationalism because it contends that reason, although dependent on sense-experience, is our highest faculty; and it dismisses supra-rational knowledge because it collides with the evidence of sense-experience, which is the only evidence empiricism allows.

Thus the contemporary philosophical climate is ridden with the conflict between Platonic rationalism and empirical rationalism. This conflict has stimulated a fresh inquiry which questions the validity of the assumption that reason and reason alone is man's highest faculty. As a result, movements such as pragmatism,⁵ existentialism⁶ and phenomenology⁷ have begun to flourish and make some impact on the modern seeking mind. There is a sharp return

1. Empiricism: the philosophical system which, rejecting all a priori knowledge, rests solely on experience and induction.
2. Epistemology: the study of theory of the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge.
3. Monism: a philosophical theory that all being may ultimately be referred to one category; thus idealism, pantheism, materialism are monisms - as opposed to the dualism of matter and spirit.
4. Ontology: that part of metaphysics which treats of the nature and essence of things.
5. Pragmatism: a system of philosophy which tests the validity of all concepts by their practical results.
6. Existentialism: a literary-philosophic movement which holds that each man exists as an individual in the universe, and that he must struggle through the exercise of his free will.
7. Phenomenology: a movement of philosophizing on the basis of analysis of experience.

to subjectivism, and even some eminent scientists have manifested a tendency to look more deeply into the inner self of man as the subjective knower of the objective universe. Hegelian or Bradleyan rationalism, which had for some time remained subdued, has also begun to reassert itself. But it is not likely that this movement will seize the contemporary mind unless it makes room for the profounder experiences of the self that lie beyond the ken of reason.

It seems that we are poised for a new movement. This is evident from the reawakened interest all over the world in supra-rational knowledge and in such traditions as Vedanta, Yoga, Zen and Sufism. Emerging from a triumphant period of science and empirical reason, this new movement will be highly critical of any purely speculative or unverifiable claim of knowledge. On the other hand, it will also be critical of reason, and will reject the dogma that sense-experience is the ultimate source of all knowledge. The new movement is likely to be synthetic in character, reflecting various levels of consciousness which have come to be increasingly accepted during recent decades as East and West began to meet each other with fresh eyes of sympathy and understanding.

This new movement is bound to influence our educational thought and experience, and it will be reinforced by the new trends in education which have emphasized the total education of the complete man and the methodologies which comprehend not only the domains of cognition but also those of affection and volition.

It is against this background that we need to look afresh at the insights of teachers who were adepts in supra-rational knowledge. The attitudes that they advocated for teachers and pupils seem to be particularly in harmony with some of the progressive ideas now developing in the educational scene. We have considered some of the insights of the ancient Indian tradition and, to some extent, the insights of the Chinese and Japanese Zen masters. We shall now turn to the Sufi tradition.

There is some controversy over the exact etymology of the word Sufi. According to some, the word is derived from suf (wool), and was originally applied to those Muslim ascetics who, in imitation of Christian hermits, clad themselves in woollen garb as a sign of penitence and renunciation. However, Hujiwiri's eleventh century Persian work, Revelation, one of the earliest and most authoritative Sufi texts, specifically states that sufi has no etymology. It is contended that the Sufis regard the sounds of the letters S U F as significant in their effect upon human thinking and other mental and psychological operations. According to others, the word sufi is linked with the Greek word

for divine wisdom (sofia) and also with the Hebrew Cabbalistic term *ain sof* (the absolutely infinite).

Whatever the etymological origin of the word *sufi*, our aim here is to look for those insights in Sufism which are relevant to our examination of the relationship between the teacher and the pupil, and of the different levels of this relationship. But first it might be worthwhile for us to arrive at some idea of how Sufism developed and what Sufism means. Some say that Sufism developed out of historical Islam. Some say it developed as a reaction against Islamic attitudes. Others speak of Christian or Chinese or Indian influences. It is, however, widely believed that Sufism is like the breath that animates the entire body of Islam in both its social and intellectual manifestations.

The orders of the Sufis are well organized bodies within the larger context of Islamic society and have exerted influences of an enduring and profound nature upon the whole structure of that society. Their primary function has been to safeguard certain Islamic spiritual disciplines and make possible their propagation from one generation to another. At the same time, Islam admits that there is something corresponding to Sufism in every other religion and that Sufism can open an easy door for mutual understanding among the many religious and spiritual movements in the world.

It is well known that Sufi ideas and even literary texts were borrowed by or lay behind teachings as diverse as those of St. John of the Cross, St. Theresa of Avila, Roger Bacon and Guru Nanak, as well as the Vedas. Many Sufis claim that their knowledge has existed for thousands of years and has links with the Hermetic, Pythagorean and Platonic streams. This view reiterates the idea that Sufism is both perennial and universal. Although four major Sufi orders have developed within the framework of Islam, the masters of Sufism speak of their unity and of their common "work", and they believe in the unity of knowledge. This explains why the Muslim Rumi had disciples with Christian, Zoroastrian and various other backgrounds. The great Sufi "invisible teacher" Khidr is said to be a Jew. The Moghul Prince Dara Shikoh identified Sufi teachings in the Vedas and Upanishads. Even Pythagoras and Solomon are sometimes referred to as Sufi teachers.

But what is at the core of Sufism? It can be said that to follow Sufism is to die gradually to oneself and to become one-Self, to be born anew, and to become aware of what one has always been from eternity (*azal*) without having realized it. In metaphorical terms, Sufism means to glide out of one's own mould like a snake peeling off its skin. Sufism may be regarded as a process of change or a profound conversion through the effect of the Divine Presence (*hudur*). This effect, according to Sufism, is brought out through initiation by

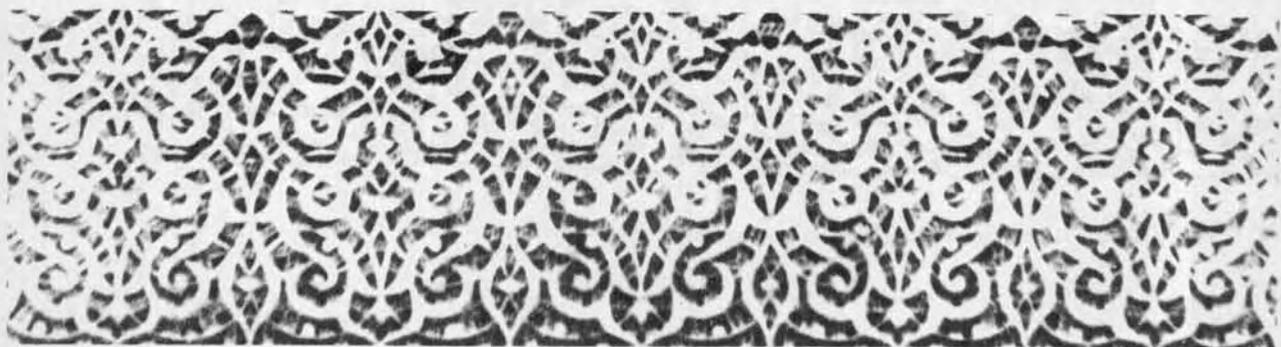
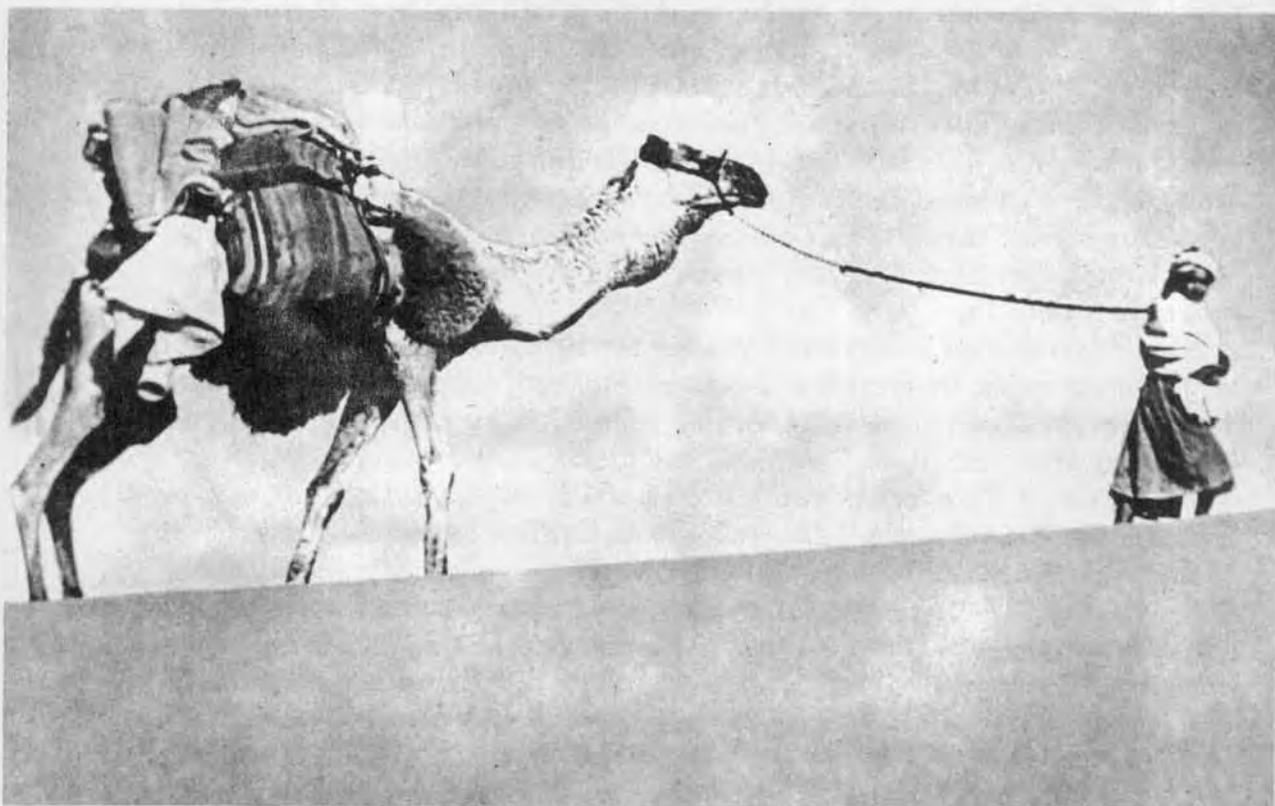
a teacher. In order to bring about this change there has to be a discipline or method of training the pupil, a master who can apply the method and guide the pupil through the stations of the journey, and a knowledge which will give direction to the pupil during the journey. Sufism is neither religion nor philosophy; it is neither belief nor a set of rituals; it is a discipline and a process of supra-rational knowledge.

Throughout the ages, the teachers of Sufism have all said essentially the same thing, yet their words are different. As pointed out by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "They are creations suited for the different people addressed and based upon a fresh vision of spiritual reality by their creators. They are like the new day, which is the same as the day before yet fresh and inspiring."¹ Sufism has greatly influenced the development of literature in various languages. It was the spirit of Sufism that raised local Arabic and Persian literature to a didactic and mystical literature of the most universal dimensions. The very genius of Sindhi reached its full fruition through a single Sufi poet, Shah Abd al-Latif. Many of the Muslim languages owe their development to the genius of Sufi poets. Among the classical Sufi authors, we may mention El-Ghazali, Omar Khayyam, Attar, Ibn El-Arabi, Saadi, Hakim Jami, Hakim Sanai and Jalaludin Rumi.

Sufism lays special stress on the relationship between teacher and pupil. In the following pages, we present a few stories that deal with this theme. All are taken from the books of Idries Shah. Idries Shah has long been recognized as the leading interpreter of Sufi methods and practice to the Western world. He is the author of Thinkers of the East, The Way of the Sufi, Tales of the Dervishes, and other works. In his writings, Idries Shah has revealed the secret of Sufism and explained some of the startling achievements of great Sufis. He draws from a wide selection of Sufi teachings and offers a unique and readable introduction to a body of thought which is widely relevant to the contemporary world.



1. Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Living Sufism (London: Unwin, 1983), p. 8.



Dividing Camels

There was once a Sufi who wanted to make sure that his disciples would, after his death, find the right teacher of the Way for them.

He therefore, after the obligatory bequests laid down by law, left his disciples seventeen camels, with this order:

"You will divide the camels among the three of you in the following proportions: the oldest shall have half, the middle in age one-third, and the youngest shall have one-ninth."

As soon as he was dead and the will was read, the disciples were at first amazed at such an inefficient disposition of their Master's assets. Some said, "Let us own the camels communally," others sought advice and then said, "We have been told to make the nearest possible division," others were told by a judge to sell the camels and divide the money; and yet others held that the will was null and void because its provisions could not be executed.

Then they fell to thinking that there might be some hidden wisdom in the Master's bequest, so they made enquiries as to who could solve insoluble problems.

Everyone they tried failed, until they arrived at the door of the son-in-law of the Prophet, Hazrat Ali. He said:

"This is your solution. I will add one camel to the number. Out of the eighteen camels you will give half – nine camels – to the oldest disciple. The second shall have a third of the total, which is six camels. The last disciple may have one-ninth, which is two camels. That makes seventeen. One – my camel – is left over to be returned to me."

This was how the disciples found the teacher for them.¹

Dispute with Academics

It is recorded that Bahaudin Naqshband was asked:

"Why do you not dispute with scholastics? Such-and-such a sage regularly does so. This causes the scholars' total confusion, and his own disciples' invariable admiration."

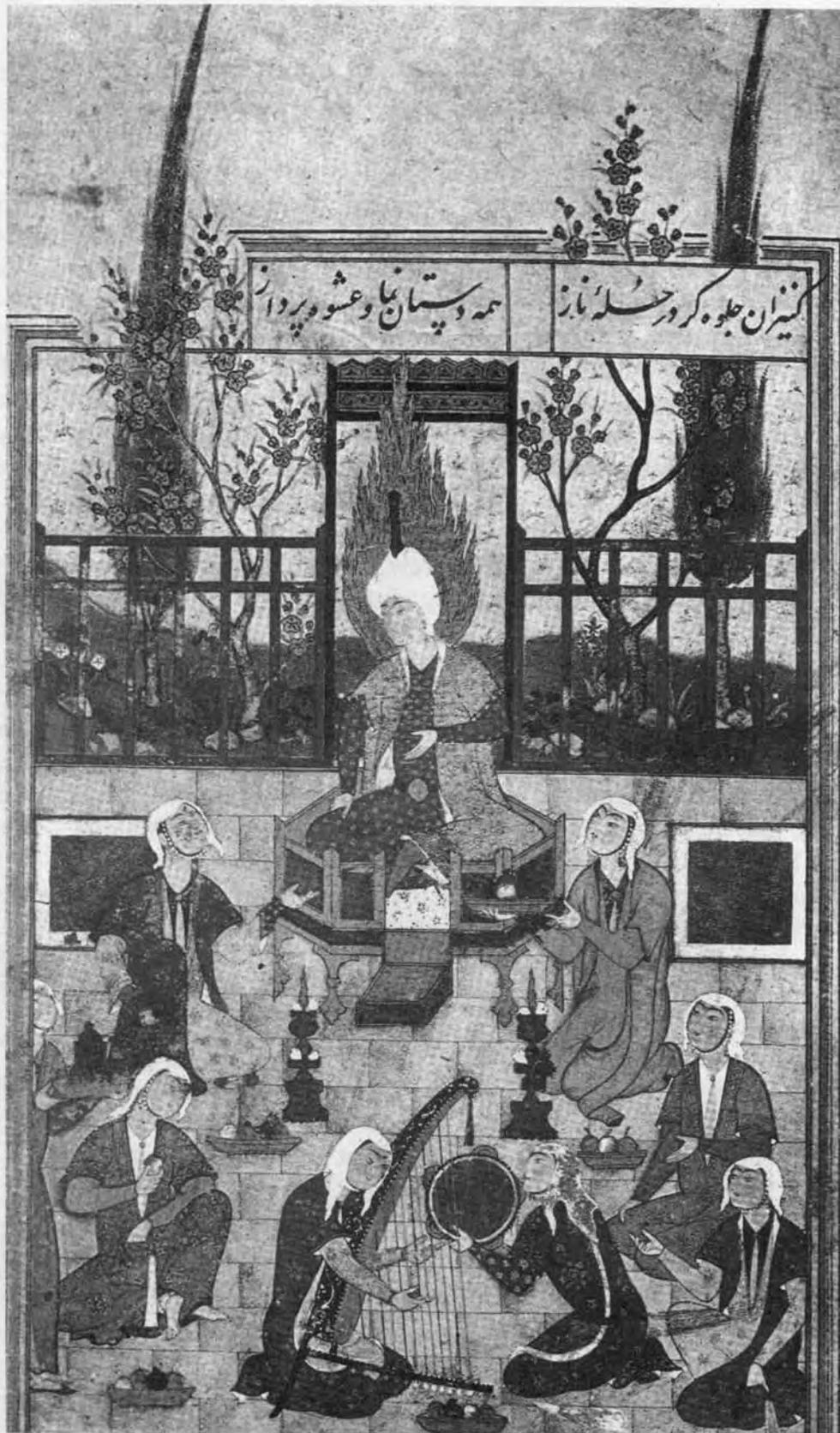
He said: "Go and ask those who remember the time when I myself used to contend with academics. I regularly refuted their surmises and their imagined proofs with relative ease. Those who were then present on numerous occasions will tell you that. But, one day, a wiser man than I said:

"You so frequently and predictably shame the men of the tongue that there is a monotony in it. This is especially so because it is to no final purpose, since the academicians are without understanding, and continue to wrangle long after their positions have been demolished.' He added: 'Your students are in a constant state of wonderment at your victories. They have learned to admire you. Instead they should have perceived the comparative worthlessness and lack of significance of your opponents. You have thus, in victory, failed by, let us say, a quarter.

"Their wonderment, too, takes up much of their time, when they could be appreciating something worthwhile. So you have failed by perhaps another quarter. Two quarters are equal to one-half. You have one-half of an opportunity left.'

"That was twenty years ago. That is why I do not trouble myself or others with scholars, whether for victory or defeat.

"Now and again one may strike the self-appointed scholars a blow, to demonstrate their hollowness to students: as one hits an empty pot. To do any more is both wasteful and tantamount to giving intellectuals an importance, through granting them gratuitous attention, that they certainly could not attain by themselves."²



The Story of Hiravi

At the time of King Mahmud the Conqueror of Ghazna there lived a young man by the name of Haidar Ali Jan. His father, Iskandar Khan, decided to obtain for him the patronage of the Emperor, and he sent him to study spiritual matters under the greatest sages of the time.

Haidar Ali, when he had mastered the repetitions and the exercises, when he knew the recitals and the bodily postures of the Sufi schools, was taken by his father into the presence of the Emperor.

"Mighty Mahmud," said Iskandar, "I have had this youth, my eldest and most intelligent son, specially trained in the ways of the Sufis, so that he might obtain a worthy position at your Majesty's court, knowing that you are the patron of learning of our epoch."

Mahmud did not look up, but he merely said: "Bring him back in a year."

Slightly disappointed, but nursing high hopes, Iskandar sent Ali to study the works of the great Sufis of the past, and to visit the shrines of ancient masters in Baghdad, so that the intervening time would not be wasted.

When he brought the youth back to the court, he said:

"Peacock of the Age! My son has carried out long and difficult journeys, and at the same time to his knowledge of exercises he has added a complete familiarity with the classics of the People of the Path. Pray have him examined, so that it may be shown that he could be an adornment of your Majesty's court."

"Let him," said Mahmud immediately, "return after another year."

During the next twelve months Haidar Ali crossed the Oxus and visited Bokhara and Samarkand, Qasr-i-Arifin and Tashqand, Dushambe and the turbats of the Sufi saints of Turkestan.

When he returned to the court, Mahmud of Ghazna took one look at him and said:

"He may care to come back after a further year."

Haidar Ali made the pilgrimage to Mecca in that year. He travelled to India; and in Persia he consulted rare books and never missed an opportunity of seeking out and paying his respects to the great dervishes of the time.

When he returned to Ghazna, Mahmud said to him:

"Now select a teacher, if he will have you, and come back in a year."

When that year was over and Iskandar Khan prepared to take his son to the court, Haidar Ali showed no interest at all in going there. He simply sat at the

feet of his teacher in Herat, and nothing that his father could say would move him.

"I have wasted my time, and my money, and this young man has failed the tests imposed by Mahmud the King," he lamented, and he abandoned the whole affair.

Meanwhile the day when the youth was due to present himself came and went, and then Mahmud said to this courtiers:

"Prepare yourselves for a visit to Herat, there is someone there whom I have to see."

As the Emperor's cavalcade was entering Herat to the flourish of trumpets, Haidar Ali's teacher took him by the hand. He led him to the gate of the tekkiā, and there they waited.

Shortly afterwards Mahmud and his courtier Ayaz, taking off their shoes, presented themselves at the sanctuary.

"Here, Mahmud," said the Sufi sheikh, "is the man who was nothing while he was a visitor of kings; but who is now one who is visited by kings. Take him as your Sufi counsellor: for he is ready."

This is the story of the studies of Hiravi, Haidar Ali Jan, the Sage of Herat.³



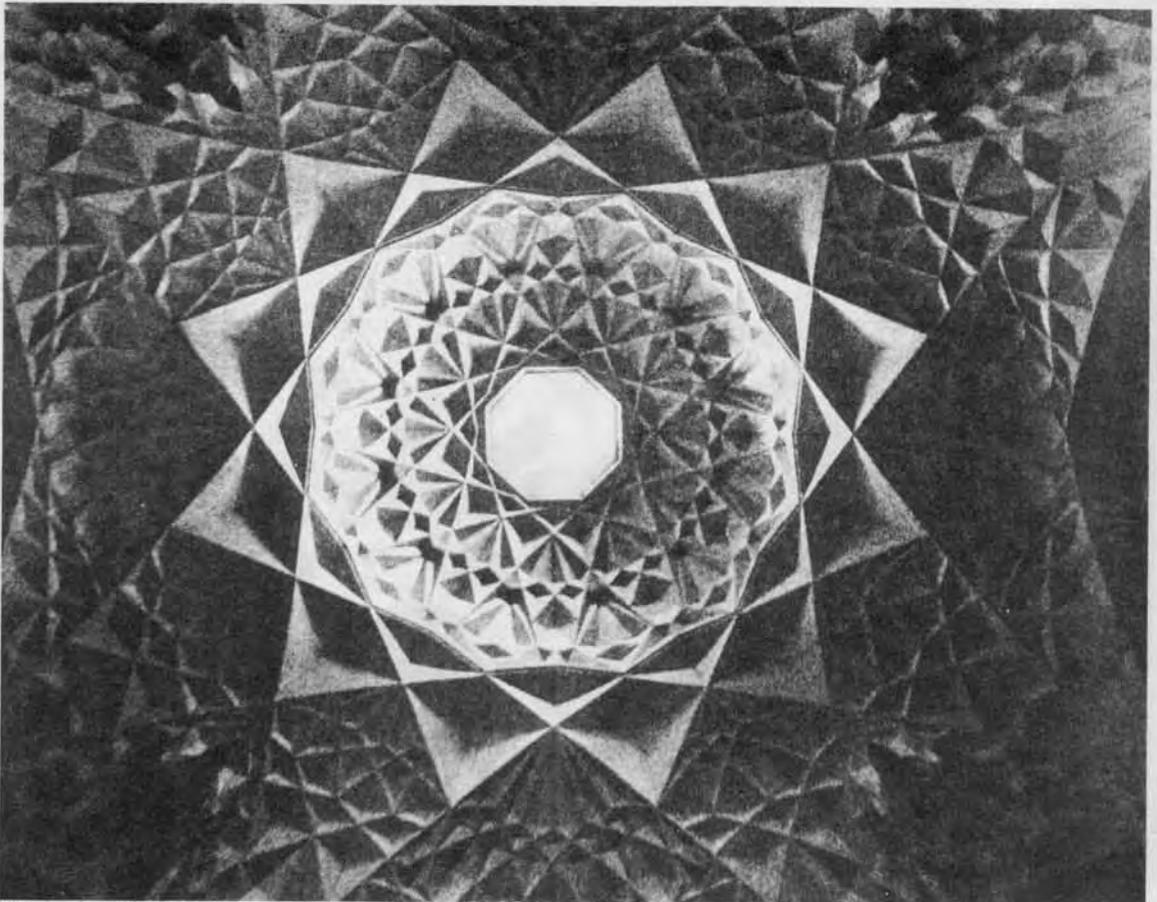
The roof of the Timchah Amin Dawlah, Kāshān, Iran

The Brick and the House

Q: How should a teacher appear to the students, according to the Sufis?

A: This question, like so many others which assume that they can be usefully answered in a few words, reminds me of a story about Mulla Nasrudin. Someone asked him what his house was like, basically. In reply he brought this man a brick, saying: "It is just a collection of these." What the fool may do without realising it is foolish, the wise man may have to do or say in order to show how unthinking the question is.

How can you say what a teacher should look like? The most one can do is to make a few remarks about it.



Khānaqāh ceiling, Māhān, Iran, 15th century

What is so perplexing to conditioned attitudes about the Sufis is that, unlike teachers of other kinds, they refuse to stick to one kind of appearance. As an example, if you go to see a Sufi divine, he may not look, talk or act like a mystical master at all. This is because he says either: "You can teach only by the method indicated for each pupil, and you may have to teach by what seems to him unlikely"; or else because he says: "There is a time and a place and certain company. According to these, we will teach. When it is a time to be serious, we will be serious. When it is a time to work through what looks like ordinary things, we have to do so."

So important is this lesson that it can be said to go before all others: in the sense that failure to know this can prevent you from learning more – and can leave you attached to the externals of hypocrites. This includes, of course, unconscious hypocrites.

If the Sufis are right in their claim that time affects behaviour, and that personal appearance should change (and even temperament) then obviously all the people who cultivate a reverend appearance, and all those who acquire it, mistaking this for spirituality, are wrong.

It is this unspoken contradiction which makes it almost impossible for people who want continuity and easily identifiable teaching figures, to accept the change in circumstances and attitudes which the Sufi Way demands.

These people, of course, will not have thought it out like this. All they know is that "A holy man must seem holy to me"; or "If he always behaves in the same manner, or always exhorts me to the same things, I believe that he may be right".

The other problem is that the observer is confusing, as he is bound to confuse without having understood, continuity and consistency with reliability or truth. Because butter always tastes the same when it looks the same, he expects a similar "reliability" in his spiritual teacher. He is, of course, self-deceived in this assumption.

The genesis of the attitude adopted by the people of externals is that their inward drive is for finding tidiness, order. This is not a spiritual activity, it is perhaps, rather, a therapeutic one. Order is essential for disordered people. Looking for it as a major factor in "esoteric" directions is the mistake.

In trying to make what – for them – is order out of what they imagine to be the disorder of Sufi tradition, they have to oversimplify. They ignore parts of the teaching and succeed only in creating an imitation of Sufism.

Because so many people desire order so strongly, you will find more imitations than reality. One cannot blame anyone for this. But pointing out facts can help.⁴

What a Teacher Should Be

Ibn Arabi's dictum on this matter has not been bettered:

"People think that a teacher should display miracles and manifest illumination. But the requirement in a teacher is that he should possess all that the disciple needs."⁵

Beyond Appearances

In order to possess what a disciple needs, the Teacher must be one who has gone beyond appearances and has realised his innermost self, after transcending the barriers imposed by attachment to secondary factors. He really exists and is aware of this existence. As Ibn Arabi says: "Absolute existence is the source of all existence".

Hallaj put it in this way, indicating the peculiarity of the realised individual: "I am the Real, for I have not ceased to be real – through the Real."

Sufi teachers who have reached stages where strange things happen in their vicinity, generally called miracles and wonders, due to actions other than any attempt to impress, have to try to compensate for this. Otherwise people are attracted to them or to the Sufis in general because of a craving for wonders.⁶

The Onion Shop

One example of this is when the great woman Sufi Rabia had no vegetables in the house, and mentioned it. Suddenly a string of onions fell from the sky, it seemed, and people cried out that this was a proof of divine blessing.

Conversions through miracles, Rabia realised, are only emotional happenings and have no essential spiritual reality. So she said, in a famous phrase:

"A miracle, you say? What, does my Lord therefore keep an onion shop?"⁷

The Master

It is related by a Sufi master that, when he was a youth, he wanted to attach himself to a teaching master. He sought the sage, and asked to become his disciple.

The teacher said: "You are not yet ready."

Since the young man was insistent, the sage said: "Very well, I will teach you something. I am going on a pilgrimage to Mecca. Come with me."

The disciple was overjoyed.

"Since we are travelling companions," said the teacher, "one must lead, and the other obey. Choose your role."

"I will follow, you lead," said the disciple.

"If you know how to follow," said the master.

The journey started. While they were resting one night in the desert of the Hejaz, it started to rain. The master got up and held a covering over the disciple, protecting him.

"But this is what *I* should be doing for you," said the disciple.

"I command you to allow me to protect you thus," said the sage.

When it was day the young man said: "Now it is a new day. Let *me* be the leader, and you follow me." The master agreed.

"I shall now collect brushwood, to make a fire," said the youth.

"You may do no such thing; I shall collect it," said the sage.

"I command you to sit there while I collect the brushwood!" said the young man.

"You may do no such thing," said the teacher, "for it is not in accordance with the requirements of discipleship for the follower to allow himself to be served by the leader."

And so, on every occasion, the Master showed the student what discipleship really meant, by demonstration.

They parted at the gate of the Holy City. Seeing the sage later, the young man could not meet his eyes. "That which you have learned," said the older man, "is something of the nature of discipleship."

The disciple must know *how* to obey, not merely that he must obey. The question of *whether* to become a disciple or not only comes after the person knows what discipleship really is. People spend their time wondering whether they should be disciples – or otherwise. Since their assumption (that they could be a disciple if they wished it) is incorrect, they are living in a false world, an intellectualist world. Such people have not learned the first lesson.⁸

Teachers, Teachings, Taught

Teachers talk about teachings.
Real teachers study their pupils as well.
Most of all, teachers should be studied.

Musa Kazim⁹

The Way in Which They Bring Their Teaching

Do not expect the way in which they bring their teaching to be wholly within your ordinary way of understanding. A pearl may be carried in a leather purse. The ignorant cry out: "This square object with a flap does not look like the necklace which has been described to me."

Arif Yahya¹⁰

How the Search for Knowledge is Frustrated

It is frustrated by pretence.

There is that which man knows within himself. He does not recognise it for what it is. He pretends that he can, or cannot, understand it. He does not know that he needs a certain preparation.

There is what man thinks that he knows, but does not. He only knows about a part of the things which he knows. This partial knowledge is in some ways worse than no knowledge at all.

There is also what man does not know, and cannot know at any given stage. This, however, he believes that he must know. He seeks it, or something that will seem to him to be this thing. Since he has no real measuring-stick, he starts to pretend.

Study-theme of the Azamia Dervishes¹¹



RUDOLPH ERNST, *The Lesson in the Mosque*, 1902

This Alone is True

When the Sufi says: "This alone is true", he is saying: "For this time and this person and this purpose, we must concentrate our attention as if this alone is true."

In doing this, the Sufi is helping to teach you just as surely as if he were a schoolmaster saying: "This is A and this is B, this alone is true for the period during which we are studying it."

In this way man learns literacy. In this way man learns metaphysics.

Sensitive yet unperceptive people often attack Sufis for behaving like this, because of their own lack of patience and co-operativeness. If you do not give a workman a chance to do his job, you can hardly accuse him of over-dedication to it.

Remember, if a dog barks and this annoys you, he may be signalling danger – while you think that he is barking at you. You have misunderstood him.

Hakim Tahirjan of Kafkaz¹²

Why I Did That

One day a man came to the great teacher Bahaudin.

He asked for help in his problems, and guidance on the path of the Teaching.

Bahaudin told him to abandon spiritual studies, and to leave his court at once.

A kind-hearted visitor began to remonstrate with Bahaudin.

"You shall have a demonstration," said the sage.

At that moment a bird flew into the room, darting hither and thither, not knowing where to go in order to escape.

The Sufi waited until the bird settled near the only open window of the chamber, and then suddenly clapped his hands.

Alarmed, the bird flew straight through the opening of the window, to freedom.

"To him that sound must have been something of a shock, even an affront, do you not agree?" said Bahaudin.¹³

Indirect Teaching

A disciple attended upon El-Shah Bahaudin Naqshband of Bokhara.

After sitting in his assembly for some days, Bahaudin's chief disciple made a sign to him to approach the Sheikh and speak.

"I have come," said the man, "from Sheikh Ridwan. I hope that you will give me something."

"From whom?"

"From Sheikh Ridwan."

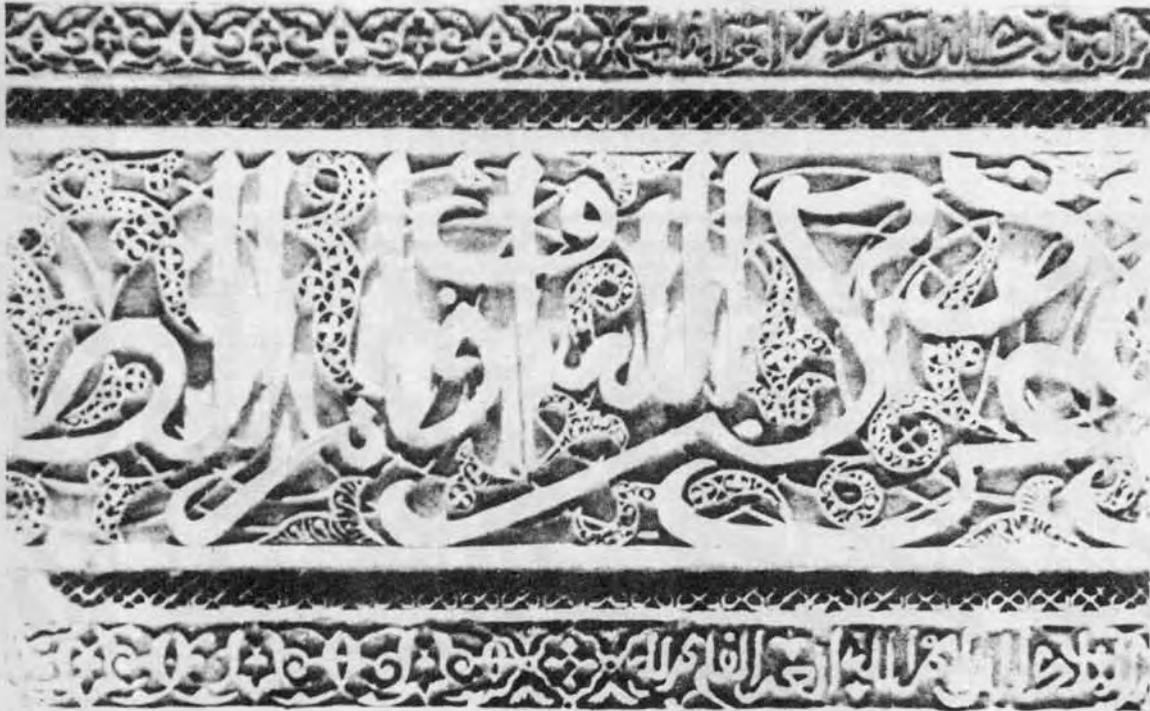
Bahaudin asked the man to repeat what he had said. And then he asked him again, and again, until the man was convinced that Naqshband was deaf and probably stupid.

When this interchange had gone on for an hour or more, Bahaudin said:

"I cannot hear you. I have not heard a word you have said."

The disciple stood up and started to withdraw, muttering: "May God forgive you."

El-Shah, no longer deaf, immediately said: "And you, and also Sheikh Ridwan."¹⁴



Bahaudin's Answers

Many questions, one answer.
I came to a city, where people crowded around . . .
They said: "Where are you from?"
They said: "Where are you going?"
They said: "In what company do you travel?"
They said: "What is your pedigree?"
They said: "What is your inheritance?"
They said: "What is your bequest?"
They said: "Whom do you understand?"
They said: "Who understands you?"
They said: "What is your doctrine?"
They said: "Who has the whole doctrine?"
They said: "Who has no doctrine at all?"
I said to them:
"What seems to you to be many is one;
What seems to you simple is not;
What seems to you complex is easy.
The answer to you all is: 'The Sufis'."¹⁵



Three Candidates

Three men made their way to the circle of a Sufi, seeking admission to his teachings.

One of them almost at once detached himself, angered by the erratic behaviour of the master.

The second was told by another disciple (on the master's instructions) that the sage was a fraud. He withdrew very soon afterwards.

The third was allowed to talk, but was offered no teaching for so long that he lost interest and left the circle.

When they had all gone away, the teacher instructed his circle thus:

"The first man was an illustration of the principle: 'Do not judge fundamental things by sight.' The second was an illustration of the injunction: 'Do not judge things of deep importance by hearing.' The third was an example of the dictum: 'Never judge by speech, or the lack of it.'"

Asked by a disciple why the applicants could not have been instructed in this matter, the sage retorted:

"I am here to give higher knowledge; not to teach what people pretend that they already know at their mothers' knees."¹⁶

Ghazali on the Path

A human being is not a human being while his tendencies include self-indulgence, covetousness, temper and attacking other people.

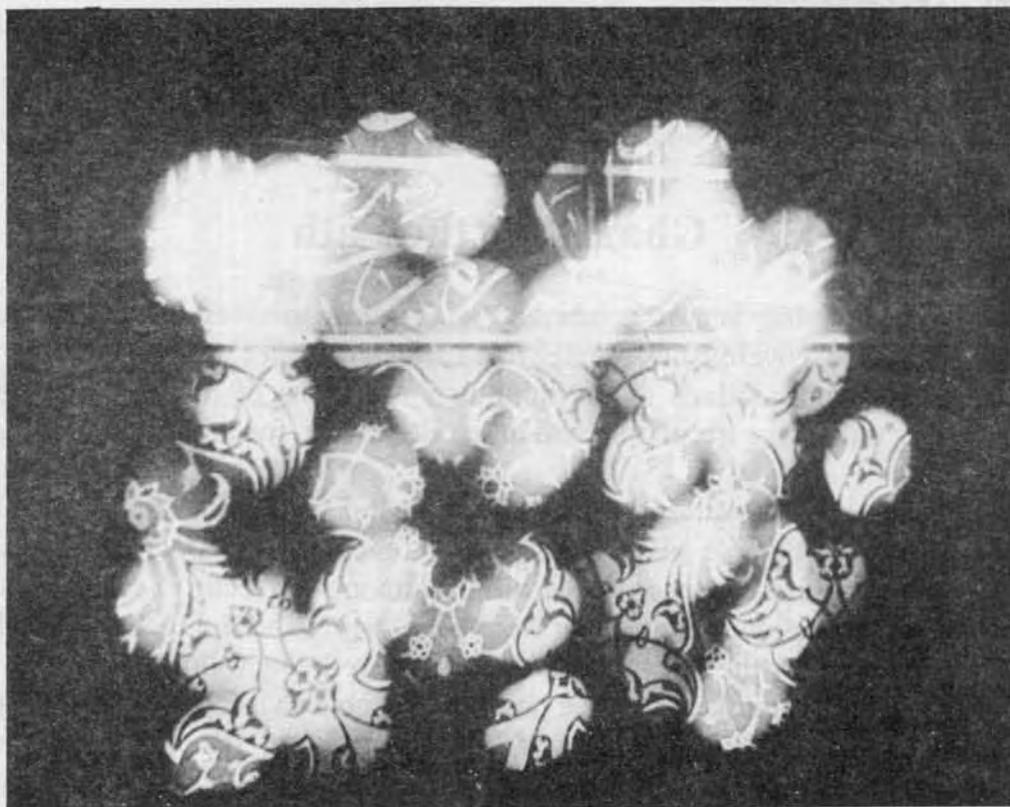
A student must reduce to the minimum the fixing of his attention upon customary things like his people and his environment, for attention-capacity is limited.

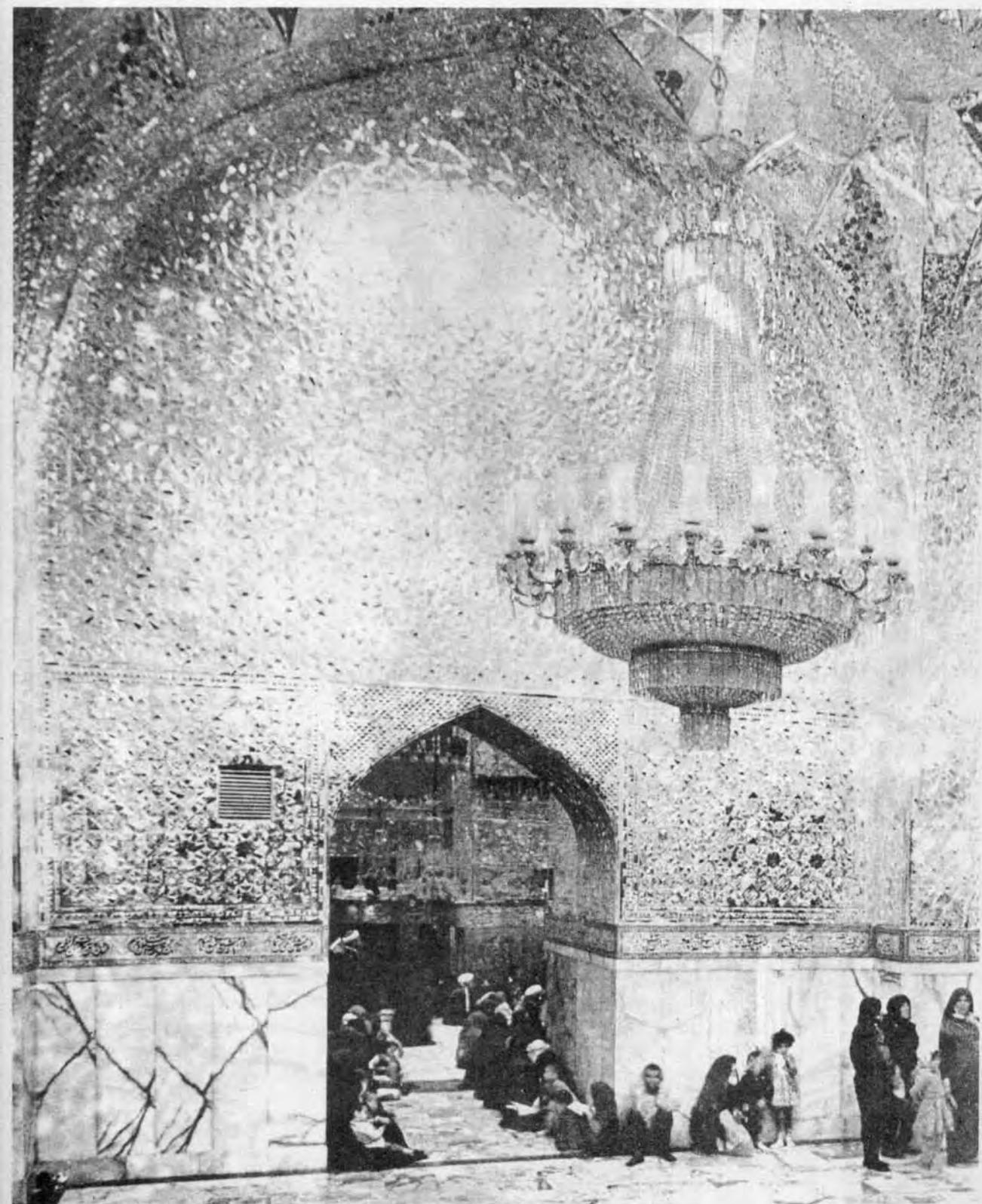
The pupil must regard his teacher like a doctor who knows the cure of the patient. He will serve his teacher. Sufis teach in unexpected ways. An experienced physician prescribes certain treatments correctly. Yet the outside observer might be quite amazed at what he is saying and doing; he will fail to see the necessity or the relevance of the procedure being followed.

This is why it is unlikely that the pupil will be able to ask the right questions at the right time. But the teacher knows what and when a person can understand.¹⁷

References

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3. *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.
4. Idries Shah, *Learning How to Learn* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1985), pp. 53-54.
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9. *Ibid.*, p. 221.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 240.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 244.
12. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-64.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 145-46.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
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Chamber of Salutations, Shrine of Imām Reza, Mashhad, Iran



G.N. CHATURVEDI, Auroville 1988

A Story of Initiation

Introduction

India has a great tradition of initiation. Initiation means a beginning, but in the context of education it means a marked beginning, and in the context of spiritual realization (which is also an educational process) it means a rebirth, a departure from the past and an entry into a series of austerities and liberations. The following story relates to spiritual initiation, but its message is relevant to our search for the qualities characteristic of the good teacher and the good pupil.

The story speaks of a certain teacher, Mahatma Junun, who was celebrated for his spiritual attainments. Its origin is not known, but it is supposed to be an old Gujarati story and was retold by the Mother to the children of the Ashram at Pondicherry in 1957. At the time of telling the story, Mother made the following remarks:

This evening I am going to read to you a short story which seemed quite instructive to me. It is a tale of ancient times, of what used to happen before there were printing presses and books, of the days when only the Guru or the Initiate had the knowledge and gave it only to those he considered worthy of having it. And for him, usually, "to be worthy of having it" meant putting into practice what one had learnt. He gave you a truth and expected you to practise it. And when you had put it into practice, he consented to give you another.

Now things happen quite differently. Everybody and anybody can have a book, read it right through and he is quite free to practise it or not as he pleases. This is all very well, but it creates a certain confusion in many minds, and people who have read many books think that it is enough and that all sorts of miraculous things must happen to them because they have read books, and that they don't need to take the trouble of practising. So they become impatient and say, "How is it that although I have read all this I am still just the same person, have the same difficulties, haven't achieved any realization?" I very often hear remarks of this kind.

They forget only one thing, that they have obtained the knowledge – intellectual, mental knowledge – before having deserved it, that is, before having put into practice what they have read, and that, naturally, there is discrepancy between their state of consciousness and the ideas, the knowledge they can speak about at length but which they haven't practised.

So it is for the impatient ones that I am going to read this story, to tell you how things happened in the days of old when one couldn't simply have a book and read it, when one depended on the Guru or the Initiate to obtain the knowledge which he alone had; he had received it from another Guru, another Initiate, and he transmitted it to you when he pleased, that is, when he found you worthy of having it.¹

According to Indian tradition, a pupil had to become a good pupil before he was qualified for initiation. There must be an inner preparedness (the concept of adhikār) if the pupil is to bear the tests and tribulations of the path.

A good teacher is not eager to give away his knowledge indiscriminately to anyone who simply declares that he wants to learn. A good pupil has something much more than curiosity. Curiosity is indeed a good sign, a necessary sign, but not a sufficient one to indicate that the pupil is prepared to meet the difficulties of the process of learning. Curiosity may be of many kinds, and its nature can be quite varied. There is superficial curiosity, and there is deep curiosity; there is even idle curiosity; then there is curiosity which is suffused with a charming or inspiring sense of wonder. A detailed analysis of the psychology of curiosity can bring out many hues and colours. But in the ultimate analysis, what is most important in a good pupil is his sincerity to learn and to progress. In ancient India children used to be initiated into education around the age of seven and the initiation was marked by a ceremony symbolizing the child's sincere resolve to thenceforth impose upon himself the arduous disciplines necessary for progress and accomplishment.

But even this is not enough for higher levels of initiation, and a good pupil who aspires for those higher levels should already have cultivated the qualities of self-knowledge and self-control. The difficulty of such cultivation is illustrated in this story.

Yusuf Hussein wanted to be initiated by Mahatma Junun, and indeed, he had shown his sincerity and patience by his four-year wait at the teacher's door. But the teacher knew that Yusuf was not ripe yet, and, like a good teacher, he wanted his pupil to realize for himself his unpreparedness. Hence, Mahatma Junun designed a special, real-life situation through which Yusuf could experience his own deficiencies.

1. The Mother, *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol. 9, pp. 66-67.

Just as a good gardener observes his plants, a good teacher observes his pupil, carefully watching not only the amount of growth but also its direction. A good teacher bases both the content and the method of his instruction on his psychological understanding of the pupil. In fact, a good teacher teaches without appearing to teach. A good teacher is essentially a living example and influence, and when he acts he gives his pupil some decisive lesson, experience or realization.

Knowledge is a secret treasure, knowledge is light and fire, and it is not easy to touch fire or to unravel secrets. One must have a great steadiness and mastery over the flickering mind and its impetuous rush of repetitive rounds. A good pupil must show a great capacity of concentration and self-control before he can qualify for profound depths of knowledge and realization.

A good teacher does not discard a pupil, because he is patient, and from time to time, shows his pupil what is needed for further development and progress. When the pupil acquires the qualities of a good pupil, and when he shows his preparedness, the day of his initiation soon arrives. When a good teacher and a good pupil meet, the ultimate result is a mature and ripe fruit of realization, as we see in the story of Yusuf Hussein.



G.N. CHATURVEDI, Auroville 1988



G.N. CHATURVEDI, Auroville 1988

Once upon a time there was a Mahatma who was a great ascetic and a great pandit. He was honoured by all, full of years and wisdom. His name was Junun. Many young boys, many young men used to come to him to receive initiation. They stayed in his hermitage, became pandits themselves, then returned home after a long and studious retreat.

One day a young man came to him. His name was Yusuf Hussein. The Mahatma agreed to let him stay with him without even asking who he was. Four years went by, thus, until one morning Junun sent for Yusuf and, for the first time, questioned him: "Why have you come here?" Without a second thought Yusuf answered: "To receive religious initiation." Junun said nothing. He called a servant and asked him, "Have you prepared the box as I asked you?"

"Yes, Master, it is there, quite ready."

"Bring it without further delay," said Junun.

With great care the servant placed the box before the Mahatma. He took it and gave it to Yusuf: "I have a friend who lives there on the banks of the river Neela. Go and take this box to him from me. But take good care, brother, don't make any mistake on the way. Keep this box carefully with you and give it to the man whom it is for. When you come back I shall give you initiation." Once again the Mahatma repeated his advice and described the route Yusuf had to follow to reach the river Neela. Yusuf bowed down at his Guru's feet, took the box and started on his way.

The retreat where the Mahatma's friend lived was quite far away and in those days there were no cars or railways. So Yusuf walked. He walked the whole morning, then came the afternoon. The heat was intense and radiated everywhere. He felt tired. So he sat down in the shade of an old tree by the roadside to rest a little. The box was very small. It was not locked. Besides, Yusuf had not even paid attention to it. His Guru had told him to carry a box, and he had started off without another word.

But now, during the afternoon rest, Yusuf began to think. His mind was free to wander with nothing to occupy it. . . . It would be very rare indeed if on such occasions some foolish idea did not cross the mind. . . . Thus his eyes fell on the box. He began to look at it. "A pretty little box! . . . Why, it does not seem to be locked. . . . And how light it is! Is it possible that there is anything inside? So light. . . . Perhaps it is empty?" Yusuf stretched out his hand as though to open it. Suddenly he thought better of it: "But no. . . . Full or empty, whatever is in this box is not my concern. My Guru asked me to deliver it to his friend, nothing more. And that's all that concerns me. I should not care about anything else."

For some time Yusuf sat quietly. But his mind would not remain quiet. The box was still there before his eyes. A pretty little box. "It seems quite empty," he thought, "what harm would there be in opening an empty box? . . . If it had been locked I would understand, that would be bad. . . . A box which is not even locked, it can't be very serious. I'll just open it for a moment and then shut it again."

Yusuf's thought turned round and round that box. It was impossible to detach himself from it, impossible to control this idea that had crept into him. "Let me see, only a quick glance, just a glance." Once again he stretched out his hand, drew it back once more, then again sat still. All in vain. Finally Yusuf made up his mind and gently, very gently, he opened the box. Hardly had he opened it then pfft! a little mouse jumped out . . . and disappeared. The poor mouse all stifled in its box did not waste a second in leaping to freedom!

Yusuf was bewildered. He opened his eyes wide and gazed and gazed. The box lay there empty. Then his heart started throbbing sadly: "So, the Mahatma had sent only a mouse, a tiny little mouse. . . . And I couldn't even carry it safe and sound to the end. Indeed I have committed a serious fault. What shall I do now?"

Yusuf was full of regrets. But there was nothing more to do now. In vain he went round the tree, in vain he looked up and down the road. The little mouse had actually fled. . . . With a trembling hand Yusuf closed the lid and in dismay resumed his journey.

When he reached the river Neela and the house of his master's friend, Yusuf handed the Mahatma's present to him and waited silently in a corner because of the fault he had committed. This man was a great saint. He opened the box and immediately understood what had happened. "Well, Yusuf," he said, turning to the young aspirant, "so you have lost that mouse. . . . Mahatma Junun won't give you initiation, I am afraid, for in order to be worthy of the supreme Knowledge one must have a perfect mastery over one's mind. Your Master clearly had some doubts about your will-power, that is why he resorted to this little trick, to put you to the test. And if you are not able to accomplish so insignificant a thing as to keep a little mouse in a box, how do you expect to keep great thoughts in your head, the true Knowledge in your heart? Nothing is insignificant, Yusuf. Return to your Master. Learn steadiness of character, perseverance. Be worthy of trust so as to become one day the true disciple of that great Soul."

Crestfallen, Yusuf returned to the Mahatma and confessed his fault. "Yusuf," he said, "you have lost a wonderful opportunity. I gave you a worthless mouse to take care of and you couldn't do even that! How then do you expect to keep the

most precious of all treasures, the divine Truth? For that you must have self-control. Go and learn. Learn to be master of your mind, for without that nothing great can be accomplished."

Yusuf went away ashamed, head down, and from then on he had only one thought: to become master of himself. . . . For years and years he made tireless efforts, he underwent a hard and difficult tapasya, and finally succeeded in becoming master of his nature. Then, full of confidence Yusuf went back to his Master. The Mahatma was overjoyed to see him again and find him ready. And this is how Yusuf received from Mahatma Junun the great initiation.

Many, many years went by, Yusuf grew in wisdom and mastery. He became one of the greatest and most exceptional saints of Islam.

From the Mother, *Collected Works of the Mother*, vol. 9, pp. 67-70.





PIERRE MIGNARD, Molière

The Would-be Gentleman

Introduction

Monsieur Jourdain, the "would-be gentleman", is by no means an ideal pupil. What prompts him is not really an urge to learn, but the vain desire to be recognized as a "gentleman". Nor would the various teachers that he uses to further his ambitions receive our approbation; they are satisfied to exploit his naïve obsession to serve their own ends. Why, then, are we including this extract? Perhaps we could say that even about serious matters it is sometimes good to laugh. And Molière presents Mr. Jourdain and his many teachers in a way that, while making us laugh, communicates powerfully his deep aversion to whatever smacks of false science, of infatuation with pseudo-knowledge, of mercenary attitudes in teachers.

Mr. Jourdain, in fact, despite all his foolishness, seems to genuinely regret not having been educated. When the so-called philosopher gives him a nonsensical lesson in spelling, the naïve Mr. Jourdain exclaims repeatedly over the wonders of science. "Oh, father and mother," he cries, "why didn't you teach me this?" The genius of Molière lies partly in this ability to manifest the complexity of a human being even while caricaturing him. Molière was a master observer of human nature. A contemporary writer once wryly labeled him "The Contemplator".

What was Molière contemplating? His was the world of theatre, a world of fiction. Yet from the seventeenth century until today audiences of all ages and walks of life have been able to identify with Molière's world. The names of a number of his heroes have become part of the French language. To call someone a miser, a French speaker may say, "He is a Harpagon". A hypocrite can be called a "Tartuffe". Someone who has difficulties adjusting to the superficial ways of society may be called an "Alceste".

What has endeared Molière to so many people, particularly in France, is the deep sense of humanity that pervades his plays. Harpagon, for instance, is above all a miser, but he is also a father, a man in love, a man torn between the fear of spending and the necessity of maintaining his social status. Molière's heroes truly possess all the complexity of living beings. "It is not incompatible," he wrote, "that a person be ridiculous in certain things and an honest man in others." Such a wide understanding of human nature has created a tender bond between Molière and his audiences. Molière never judges. Rather there is a deep compassion in his acute observation of man and society and a sorrow that humanity is as it is. Molière's way of expressing all this is through comedy.

Born in Paris in 1622, Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (Molière was his stage name) belonged to a bourgeois family. His future was planned: an office at the court purchased by his father with a right of reversion for his son. He received a noble's education without being a noble. But at the age of 21, he decided to become an actor, a rather unsavoury profession at the time. From then on, Molière's life was a constant battle until, exhausted, he died on stage at the age of 51, having sacrificed everything, including his health, to his consuming passion for theatre.

The Would-be Gentleman (Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme) is one of Molière's last plays. There is a strong element of farce in it, and the comical effects are not as subtle as in his other plays. Obsessed with the idea of being recognized as a gentleman, Monsieur Jourdain falls prey to a penniless nobleman who abuses his credulity and leads him to expect an introduction into high society. Playing the role of mentor, the nobleman provides him with various teachers who are supposed to give him the necessary knowledge and savoir-faire to hold his own. Mr. Jourdain wants to marry his daughter into the nobility, contrary to her wishes. A trick is played upon him in which the girl's real lover is introduced to him as the son of the "Great Turk", and Mr. Jourdain is only too pleased to accept him as his son-in-law. This occasions a hilarious mixture of ballet and farce in a mock ceremony during which Mr. Jourdain becomes a "Mamamouchi", a supposedly exalted rank of Turkish nobility. But the fact is that Mr. Jourdain, the would-be gentleman, is not changed at all; at the end of the play he is even more foolish than ever.

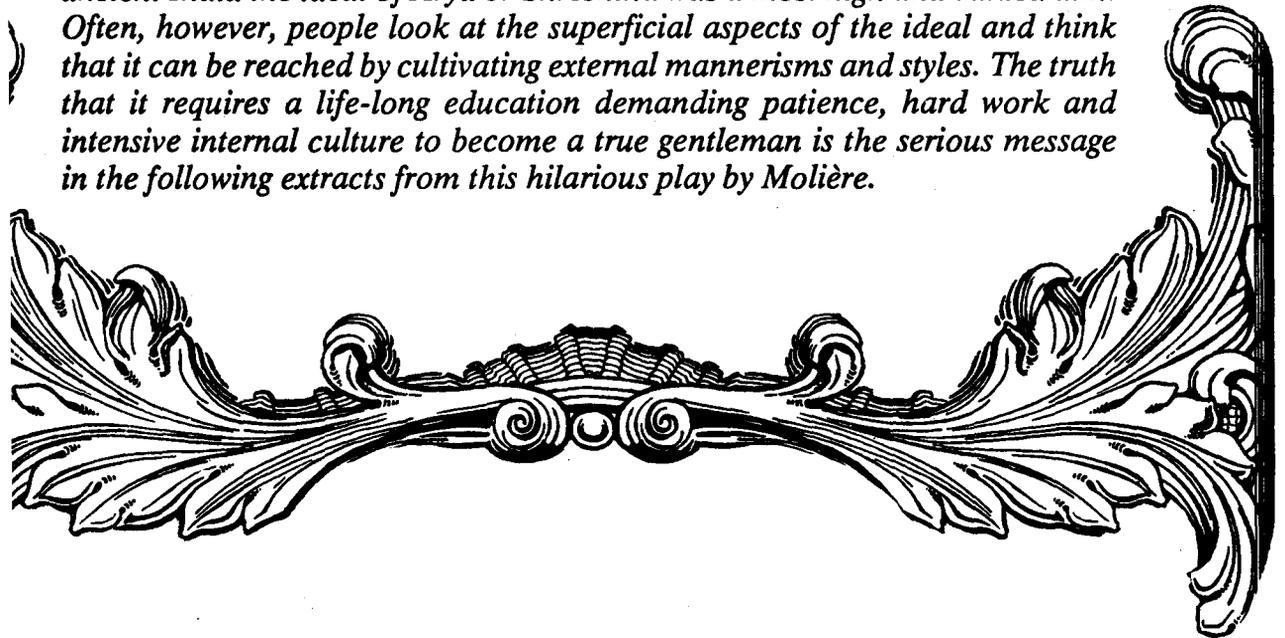
This is true of most of Molière's central characters: they are not intrinsically changed by the end of the plays. Indeed, if more credible endings were to be given to Molière's comedies, they would end in tragedy. Molière makes us laugh about situations that are essentially tragic, and there lies one of his greatest achievements. Despite all the farce and the frequent exaggerations of human foibles, his characters ring true, and that is what makes us laugh – a laughter

tinged with other emotions, for Molière is holding a mirror to us.

Although we may not be obsessed with vanity in the same way as Mr. Jourdain, we all have enough of it to feel that Molière is in fact talking about us, with a suppressed sorrow at the usual ways of society. It is not rare to find in great artists a strong element of purity, and in Molière there seems to be something of an offended purity. Look at Molière's face in the beautiful painting by Mignard: the eternal child is there in those dreamy eyes. Despite his difficult position as a courtier, Molière took many risks in the expression of his feelings, and remained a controversial figure all his life. Did he believe that people could change for the better? It does not appear so in his plays. He may exalt such qualities as common sense, simplicity, true love, disinterestedness, straightforwardness and true devotion, but Molière's way is not to sermonize – it is to make us laugh, to involve us deeply through emotion and laughter. Is that not, after all, the way of a very good teacher?

Molière was indeed a teacher of a kind. He taught his fellow actors, introducing an element of precision into acting that did not exist before. This is specialized teaching, no doubt, but one that requires the greatest qualities of a teacher. To be able to direct an actor well, one must be able to understand him deeply enough to help him find ways of manifesting a different personality. It requires also a capacity to instill confidence, to fill actors with enthusiasm, to help them understand every subtle meaning in the plays and to manifest this meaning in their acting.

To be a gentleman is a desirable goal of education. In European civilization, the truly cultured gentleman has been greatly valued and honoured, just as in ancient India the ideal of Arya or Shreshtha was a most high and valued aim. Often, however, people look at the superficial aspects of the ideal and think that it can be reached by cultivating external mannerisms and styles. The truth that it requires a life-long education demanding patience, hard work and intensive internal culture to become a true gentleman is the serious message in the following extracts from this hilarious play by Molière.



CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

MR JOURDAIN
MRS JOURDAIN, his wife
LUCILE, their daughter
NICOLE, a maidservant
CLÉONTE, in love with Lucile
COVIELLE, valet to Cléonte
DORANTE, a nobleman
DORIMENE, a lady
MUSIC MASTER
MUSIC MASTER'S PUPIL
DANCING MASTER
FENCING MASTER
PHILOSOPHER
MASTER TAILOR
TAILOR'S APPRENTICES
TWO LACKEYS
SINGERS AND DANCERS,
MUSICIANS, COOKS
THE MUFTI, TURKS,
AND DERVISHES

*The scene is a room in the
house of Mr Jourdain in Paris*



Act One

The overture is played by a great assemblage of instruments and the music pupil is discovered composing the air which MR JOURDAIN has commissioned for his concert. As the song ends the MUSIC MASTER and the DANCING MASTER enter with their attendant musicians, singers, and dancers.

MUSIC MASTER [*to musicians*]. Come in here and wait until he comes.

DANCING MASTER [*to dancers*]. And you can stay on this side.

MUSIC MASTER [*to his pupil*]. Well, is it finished?

MUSIC PUPIL. Yes.

MUSIC MASTER [*taking manuscript*]. Let me see. . . . Very good!

DANCING MASTER. Is it something new?

MUSIC MASTER. It is an air for a serenade I set him to compose while we were waiting for our friend to awake.

DANCING MASTER. May one see what it is?

MUSIC MASTER. You will hear it when he comes. He can't be long now.

DANCING MASTER. We are both being kept pretty busy at present.

MUSIC MASTER. Yes. We have found here the very man we both needed. This fellow Jourdain with the fantastic notions of gentility and gallantry he has got into his head means quite a nice thing for us. I only wish, both for my music and your dancing, that there were more people like him.

DANCING MASTER. I can't altogether agree. For his own sake I would like him to have a little more understanding of the things we provide for him.

MUSIC MASTER. It's true that he understands little – but he pays well, and, after all, that's the great need in our line of business just now.

DANCING MASTER. Yes – though for my own part I must confess that what I long for most is applause; it is appreciation I live for. To my way of thinking there is no fate more distressing for an artist than to have to show himself off before fools, to see his work exposed to the criticism of the vulgar and ignorant. You can say what you like but there is no joy like that of working for people who have a feeling for the fine points of one's art, who can appreciate the beauties of a work and repay all one's trouble by praise which is really discerning. There is no reward so delightful, no pleasure so exquisite, as having one's work known and acclaimed by those whose applause confers honour.

MUSIC MASTER. I agree. My feelings exactly. There is nothing more pleasing than the recognition you speak of, but you can't live on applause. Praise alone doesn't keep a man going. One needs something more substantial than that, and, to my mind, there's no praise to beat the sort you can put in your pocket. It's true that this fellow here has no great share of enlightenment: he usually gets hold of the wrong end of the stick and applauds all the wrong things, but his money makes up for his lack of discernment. His praise has cash value. Vulgar and ignorant he may be but he's more use to us, you know, than your fine cultured gentleman who put us in touch with him.

DANCING MASTER. There's something in what you say, but I still think you set too much value on money. Cultivated people should be superior to any consideration so sordid as a mercenary interest.

MUSIC MASTER. All the same you don't refuse to take our friend's pay.

DANCING MASTER. Of course not. But I don't find that it entirely contents me. I still wish that with all his great wealth he had a little more taste.

MUSIC MASTER. So do I, and isn't that just where we are both trying to help him – so far as we can? In any case, he is giving us a chance to make a name in the world and he will make up for the others by paying while they do the praising.

DANCING MASTER. Hush! Here he comes.

Enter MR JOURDAIN in dressing-gown and night-cap attended by two lackeys.

MR JOURDAIN. Well, gentlemen, what is it to be to-day? Are you going to show me your bit of tomfoolery?

DANCING MASTER. Tomfoolery? What bit of tomfoolery?

MR JOURDAIN. You know – your what ye may call it – your prologue or dialogue or whatever it is – your singing and dancing.

DANCING MASTER. Oh! That's what you mean!

MUSIC MASTER. You find us quite ready.

MR JOURDAIN. I had to keep you waiting a while because I'm getting dressed up to-day like one of the quality and my tailor had sent me a pair of silk stockings so tight I thought I should never get into them.

MUSIC MASTER. We are entirely at your disposal, sir.

MR JOURDAIN. I don't want you to go, either of you, until they've brought me my suit. I want you to see how I look in it.

DANCING MASTER. Whatever you please.

MR JOURDAIN. You'll see me turned out in style – head to foot, everything just as it should be.

MUSIC MASTER. We don't doubt that at all.

MR JOURDAIN. [*showing his dressing-gown*]. I had this Indian stuff made up for me specially.

DANCING MASTER. Very fine indeed.

MR JOURDAIN. My tailor tells me the quality wear this sort of thing on a morning.

MUSIC MASTER. It suits you splendidly.

MR JOURDAIN. Lackey! Hello there! Both my lackeys!

FIRST LACKEY. Your wishes, sir?

MR JOURDAIN. Nothing. I just wanted to be sure you could hear me. [*To the others*] What d'ye think of my liveries, eh?

DANCING MASTER. Magnificent.

MR JOURDAIN *opens his dressing-gown and shows his tight breeches of red velvet and his green velvet jacket.*

MR JOURDAIN. This is a little rig-out to do my morning exercises in.

DANCING MASTER. Most elegant.

MR JOURDAIN. Lackey!

LACKEY. Sir!

MR JOURDAIN. T'other lackey!

SECOND LACKEY. Sir!

MR JOURDAIN. Take my dressing-gown. [*To the others*] What d'ye think of me now?

DANCING MASTER. Excellent. Nothing could be finer.

MR JOURDAIN. Right then. Let us have a look at your show.

MUSIC MASTER. I would like you to hear first an air which this young man [*indicating the pupil*] has just composed for the serenade that you asked for. He is a pupil of mine who has quite a gift for this kind of thing.

MR JOURDAIN. Very well – but it shouldn't have been left to a pupil. You shouldn't have been above doing this job yourself.

MUSIC MASTER. Ah, don't be misled, sir, by my use of the word 'pupil'. Pupils like him know as much as the great masters, and the air itself couldn't be bettered. Do but listen.

MR JOURDAIN. Here. [*As the singer is about to begin*] Give me my dressing-gown so that I can listen better. Stop – I think perhaps I shall do better without it. No – give it me back. I can do best with it on.

SINGER. I languish night and day and sad must be my lay,
Till consenting to their sway I give your eyes their way,
If thus you treat your friends – fair Iris,
If thus you treat your friends,
Alas! Alas! How will you treat,

How will you treat your enemies?

MR JOURDAIN. It sounds a bit dismal to me. It makes me feel sleepy. Can't you liven it up a bit here and there?

MUSIC MASTER. But the tune must suit the words, sir!

MR JOURDAIN. I learned a song once – a really pretty one it was – wait a minute – la – la la – how does it go?

DANCING MASTER. I've not the remotest idea.

MR JOURDAIN. It had something about sheep in it.

DANCING MASTER. Sheep?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes – or lambs. Now I've got it!

[Singing] I thought my Janey dear
 As sweet as she was pretty, oh!
 I thought my Janey dear as gentle as a baa-lamb, oh!
 Alas, alas! She is a thousand times more cruel
 Than any savage tiger – oh!
 Isn't that nice?

MUSIC MASTER. Very nice indeed.

DANCING MASTER. And you sing it very well.

MR JOURDAIN. And yet I never learned music.

MUSIC MASTER. You ought to learn, sir, just as you are learning to dance. The two arts are closely allied.

DANCING MASTER. And develop one's appreciation of beauty.

MR JOURDAIN. What do the quality do? Do they learn music as well?

MUSIC MASTER. Of course.

MR JOURDAIN. Then I'll learn it. But I don't know how I'm to find time. I already have a fencing master giving me lessons and now I've taken on a teacher of philosophy and he's supposed to be making a start this morning.

MUSIC MASTER. Well, there is something in philosophy, but music, sir, music –

DANCING MASTER. And dancing, music and dancing, what more can one need?

MUSIC MASTER. There's nothing so valuable in the life of the nation as music.

DANCING MASTER. And nothing so necessary to mankind as dancing.

MUSIC MASTER. Without music – the country couldn't go on.

DANCING MASTER. Without dancing – one can achieve nothing at all.

MUSIC MASTER. All the disorders, all the wars, that we see in the world to-day, come from not learning music.

DANCING MASTER. All the troubles of mankind, all the miseries which make up history, the blunders of politicians, the failures of great captains – they all come from not having learned dancing.

MR JOURDAIN. How d'ye make that out?

MUSIC MASTER. What is war but discord among nations?

MR JOURDAIN. True.

MUSIC MASTER. If all men studied music wouldn't it be a means of bringing them to harmony and universal peace?

MR JOURDAIN. That seems sound enough.

DANCING MASTER. And what do we say when a man has committed some mistake in his private life or in public affairs? Don't we say he made a false step?

MR JOURDAIN. We certainly do.

DANCING MASTER. And making a false step – doesn't that come from not knowing how to dance?

MR JOURDAIN. True enough. You are both in the right.

DANCING MASTER. We want to make you realize the importance, the usefulness of music and dancing.

MR JOURDAIN. Yes. I quite see that now.

MUSIC MASTER. Would you like to see our performances?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes.

MUSIC MASTER. As I have told you already, the first is a little exercise I devised a short time ago in the expression of various emotions through music.

MR JOURDAIN. Very good.

MUSIC MASTER [*to singers*]. Come forward. [*To MR JOURDAIN*] You must imagine them dressed as shepherds.

MR JOURDAIN. But why shepherds again? It always seems to be shepherds.

MUSIC MASTER. Because, if you are to have people discoursing in song, you must for verisimilitude conform to the pastoral convention. Singing has always been associated with shepherds. It would not seem natural for princes or ordinary folk for that matter, to be indulging their passions in song.

MR JOURDAIN. Very well. Let's hear them.

TRIO

FIRST SINGER [*woman*]. Who gives her heart in loving
To a thousand cares is bound;
Men speak of love and wooing
As one continual round
Of rapture. – Not for me!
No, not for me!
I keep my fancy free,
I keep my fancy free.

SECOND SINGER [*man*]. Could I succeed in proving
The ardour of my heart,
Could I succeed in moving
You to that better part –
Surrender – then for me,
Oh then for me,
How happy life would be,
How happy life would be!

THIRD SINGER [*man*]. If one could find in loving
But one true faithful heart,
Could one succeed in proving
Faith were the better part
Of woman's heart – alas for me!
Alas for me!
None such there be,
None such there be!

SECOND SINGER. Oh rarest rapture.

FIRST SINGER. Would I could capture!

THIRD SINGER. Deceivers ever.

SECOND SINGER. Love, leave me never.

FIRST SINGER. Happy surrender –

THIRD SINGER. Faithless pretender –

SECOND SINGER. Change, change to love that scorn disdainful!

FIRST SINGER. Behold, behold, one lover faithful!

THIRD SINGER. Alas! where can one such a lover find?

FIRST SINGER. To vindicate my sex's part

I offer you – I offer you my heart.

SECOND SINGER. Oh, shepherdess how can I trust –
My heart you'll ne'er deceive?

FIRST SINGER. That time shall prove,
Ah, time shall prove

Who truest loves – who truest loves.

ALL THREE SINGERS. To love's tender ardours

Our hearts then we plight,

For whate'er can compare

With love's tender delights?

With love's tender delights?

Whate'er can compare with love's tender delights?

MR JOURDAIN. Is that all?

MUSIC MASTER. It is.

MR JOURDAIN. Well I thought it was very nicely worked out and there were some quite pretty sayings in it.

DANCING MASTER. Well now, in my show you will see a small demonstration of the most beautiful movements and attitudes which the dance can exemplify.

MR JOURDAIN. They aren't going to be shepherds again?

DANCING MASTER. They are whatever you please. [*To the dancers*] Come along!

The dancers at the command of the DANCING MASTER perform successively minuet, saraband, coranto, galliard, and canaries. The dance forms the First Interlude.



Mr. Jourdain and Dancing Master, Comédie Française, 1951

Act Two

MR JOURDAIN, MUSIC MASTER, DANCING MASTER, LACKEYS.

MR JOURDAIN. Well that wasn't too bad. Those fellows can certainly shake a leg.

DANCING MASTER. When the dancing and music are fully coordinated it will be still more effective and you will find that the little ballet we have arranged for you is a very pretty thing indeed.

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, but that's for later, when the lady I am doing all this for is going to do me the honour of dining here.

DANCING MASTER. Everything is arranged.

MUSIC MASTER. There is just one other thing, sir. A gentleman like you, sir, living in style, with a taste for fine things, ought to have a little musical at-home, say every Wednesday or Thursday.

MR JOURDAIN. Is that what the quality do?

MUSIC MASTER. It is, sir.

MR JOURDAIN. Then I'll do it too. Will it be really fine?

MUSIC MASTER. Beyond question! You will need three singers, a treble, a counter tenor, and a bass accompanied by a bass viol, a theorbo, a harpsichord for the thorough-bass, and two violins for the ritornellos.

MR JOURDAIN. I'd like a marine trumpet¹ as well. It's an instrument I'm fond of, it's really harmonious.

MUSIC MASTER. Leave these things in our hands.

MR JOURDAIN. Well, don't forget to arrange for people to sing during the meal.

MUSIC MASTER. You shall have everything as it should be.

MR JOURDAIN. And above all make sure that the ballet is really fine.

MUSIC MASTER. You will be pleased with it, particularly with some of the minuets.

MR JOURDAIN. Ah! Minuets! The minuet is my dance. You must see me dance a minuet. Come along, Mr Dancing Master.

DANCING MASTER. A hat, sir if you please. [MR JOURDAIN *takes the LACKEY'S hat and puts it over his night-cap. The DANCING MASTER takes his hand and makes him dance to the tune which he sings.*] La, la, la la la la etc. . . . once again . . . keep time if you ple-ase . . . la-la lala – now the right leg . . . la la . . . don't move . . . your shoulders so much . . . la la la . . . la la . . . your arms . . . are hanging too limply . . . la la la . . . up with your head, point your toes outward . . . point your toes out-ward . . . la la la . . . keep your body . . . e . . . rect.

MR JOURDAIN. Phew! What about that?

MUSIC MASTER. Well done! Well done!

MR JOURDAIN. And that reminds me. Just show me how to make a bow to a countess. I shall need to know that before long.

DANCING MASTER. How to make a bow to a countess?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes. A countess named Dorimène.

DANCING MASTER. Give me your hand.

MR JOURDAIN. No. Just do it yourself. I shall remember.

DANCING MASTER. If you wish to show great respect you must make your bow first stepping backwards and then advance towards her bowing three times, the third time going down right to the level of her knee.

MR JOURDAIN. Let me see you do it. Good!

LACKEY. Sir, your fencing master is here.

MR JOURDAIN. Tell him to come in and give me my lesson here. [*To the MUSIC MASTER and DANCING MASTER*] Don't go! I'd like you to see me perform.

Enter FENCING MASTER with LACKEY carrying the foils.

FENCING MASTER. [*after presenting a foil to MR JOURDAIN*]. Come, sir, your salute! Hold yourself straight. Take the weight of your body a little on your left thigh. Legs not so far apart. Feet more in line. Wrist in line with your hip. Point of the foil level with your shoulder. Arm not quite so far extended. Left hand level with your eye. Left shoulder squared a little more. Head up. Firm glance. Advance! Keep your body steady. Engage my point in quart and lunge.



Mr. Jourdain and Fencing Master, Comédie Française, 1951

One, two. As you were. Once again, repeat! Do keep your feet firm. One, two, and recover! When you make a pass, sir, it is important that the foil should be withdrawn first – so – keeping the body well covered. One, two. Come along. Engage my foil in tierce and hold it. Advance! Keep your body steady. Advance and lunge from there! One, two, and recover. As you were. Once again. One, two. Back you go. Parry, sir, parry! [*The FENCING MASTER scores two or three hits crying as he does so, Parry! Parry!*]

MR JOURDAIN. Phew!

MUSIC MASTER. You do splendidly.

FENCING MASTER. I have told you before that the whole art of sword-play lies in two things only – in giving and not receiving. And, as I showed you the other day by logical demonstration, it is impossible for you to receive a hit if you know how to turn your opponent's sword from the line of your body, for which all that is needed is the slightest turn of the wrist – inward or outward.

MR JOURDAIN. At that rate, then, a fellow can be sure of killing his man and not being killed himself – without need of courage.

FENCING MASTER. Exactly! Didn't you follow my demonstration?

MR JOURDAIN. Oh yes.

FENCING MASTER. Well then, you see what respect should be paid to men of my profession and how much more important is skill in arms than such futile pursuits as dancing and music –

DANCING MASTER. Go easy, Mr Scabbard Scraper. Mind what you say about dancing.

MUSIC MASTER. And try to treat music with a little more respect if you please.

FENCING MASTER. A fine lot of jokers you are, to think of comparing your professions with mine.

MUSIC MASTER. Just listen who's talking.

DANCING MASTER. The ridiculous creature, with his leather upholstered belly!

FENCING MASTER. My little dancing master, I could make you skip if I had a mind to, and as for you, Mr Music Master, I could make you sing to some tune!

DANCING MASTER. Mr Sabre-rattler, I shall have to teach you your trade.

MR JOURDAIN. [*to DANCING MASTER*]. You must be mad to quarrel with a man who knows all about tierce and quart and can kill a man by logical demonstration.

DANCING MASTER. I don't give a rap for his logical demonstration, his tierce, or his quart.

MR JOURDAIN [*to DANCING MASTER*]. Do be careful I tell you.

FENCING MASTER [*to* DANCING MASTER]. You impertinent jackanapes!
MR JOURDAIN. Oh, Mr Fencing Master!
DANCING MASTER. You great cart horse!
MR JOURDAIN. Oh, Mr Dancing Master!
FENCING MASTER. If I once set about you –
MR JOURDAIN [*to* DANCING MASTER]. Gently there – gently!
DANCING MASTER. If I once get my hands on you –
MR JOURDAIN. Easy now! Easy!
FENCING MASTER. I'll let a little daylight into you.
MR JOURDAIN [*to* FENCING MASTER]. Please – please – if – you please.
DANCING MASTER. I'll give you such a drubbing.
MR JOURDAIN [*to* DANCING MASTER]. I ask you – I –
MUSIC MASTER. Just give us a chance and we'll teach him how to talk to –
MR JOURDAIN [*to* MUSIC MASTER]. Do for goodness sake – stop!



Mr. Jourdain, Music Master, Dancing Master and Fencing Master, Comédie Française, 1951

Enter the PHILOSOPHER

MR JOURDAIN. Ah, Mr Philosopher. You've arrived in the nick of time with your philosophy. Come and make peace between these fellows.

PHILOSOPHER. What is it? What is it all about, gentleman?

MR JOURDAIN. They've got so worked up about which of their professions is the most important that they've started slanging each other and very nearly come to blows.

PHILOSOPHER. Come, come, gentlemen! Why let yourselves be carried away like this? Have you not read Seneca *On Anger*? Believe me there is nothing so base and contemptible as a passion which reduces men to the level of animals! Surely, surely, reason should control all our actions!

DANCING MASTER. But, my good sir, he's just blackguarding the pair of us and disparaging music, which is this gentleman's profession, and dancing which is mine.

PHILOSOPHER. A wise man is superior to any insults which can be put upon him, and the best reply to unseemly behaviour is patience and moderation.

FENCING MASTER. They had the impudence to compare their professions with mine.

PHILOSOPHER. Well, friend, why should that move you? We should never compete in vainglory or precedence. What really distinguishes men one from another is wisdom and virtue.

DANCING MASTER. I maintain that dancing is a form of skill, a science, to which sufficient honour can never be paid.

MUSIC MASTER. And I that music has been held in foremost esteem all down the ages.

FENCING MASTER. And I still stick to my point against the pair of them that skill in arms is the finest and most necessary of all the sciences.

PHILOSOPHER. In that case where does philosophy come in? I consider you are all three presumptuous to speak with such assurance before me and impudently give the title of sciences to a set of mere accomplishments which don't even deserve the name of arts and can only be adequately described under their wretched trades of gladiator, ballad singer, and mountebank!

FENCING MASTER. Oh get out! You dog of a philosopher!

MUSIC MASTER. Get out! You miserable pedant!

DANCING MASTER. Get out! You beggarly usher!

PHILOSOPHER. What! Rascals like you dare to – [*He hurls himself upon them and all three set about him.*]

MR JOURDAIN. Mr Philosopher!

PHILOSOPHER. Scoundrels, rogues, insolent –

MR JOURDAIN. Mr Philosopher!

FENCING MASTER. Confound the brute!

MR JOURDAIN. Gentlemen!

PHILOSOPHER. Insolent scoundrels!

MR JOURDAIN. Oh, Mr Philosopher!

DANCING MASTER. The devil take the ignorant blockhead!

MR JOURDAIN. Gentlemen!

PHILOSOPHER. Villains!

MR JOURDAIN. Mr Philosopher!

MUSIC MASTER. Down with him!

MR JOURDAIN. Gentlemen!

PHILOSOPHER. Rogues! Traitors! Impostors! Mountebanks!

MR JOURDAIN. Mr Philosopher, Gentlemen, Mr Philosopher, Gentlemen, Mr Philosopher, Gentlemen.

They rush out still fighting.

MR JOURDAIN. Go on then! Knock yourselves about as much as you like. I can do nothing about it and I'm not going to spoil my new dressing-gown in trying to separate you! I should look a fool shoving in among them and getting knocked about myself for my pains!

MR PHILOSOPHER *returns, straightening his neck-band.*

PHILOSOPHER. Let us come to our lesson.

MR JOURDAIN. Oh, Mr Philosopher, I'm sorry they've hurt you.

PHILOSOPHER. It is nothing. A philosopher learns how to take things as they come and I will get my own back on them with a satire in the manner of Juvenal. I'll fairly tear them to pieces. Let us think no more of it. What would you like to learn?

MR JOURDAIN. Whatever I can, for I want, above all things, to become a scholar. I blame my father and mother that they never made me go in for learning when I was young.

PHILOSOPHER. A very proper sentiment! *Nam sine doctrina vita est quasi mortis imago.* You know Latin I suppose?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, but just go on as if I didn't. Tell me what it means.

PHILOSOPHER. It means that without knowledge, life is no more than the shadow of death.

MR JOURDAIN. Ay. Your Latin has hit the nail on the head there.

PHILOSOPHER. Have you not mastered the first principles, the rudiments of the Sciences?

MR JOURDAIN. Oh yes, I can read and write.

PHILOSOPHER. Well, where would you like to begin? Shall I teach you logic?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, but what is it?

PHILOSOPHER. Logic instructs us in the three processes of reasoning.

MR JOURDAIN. And what are they, these three processes of reasoning?

PHILOSOPHER. The first, the second and the third. The first is the comprehension of affinities, the second discrimination by means of categories, the third deduction by means of syllogisms. *Barbara, celarent, Darii, Ferio, Baralipon.*

MR JOURDAIN. No. They sound horrible words. Logic doesn't appeal to me. Let me learn something nicer.

PHILOSOPHER. Would you like to study moral philosophy?

MR JOURDAIN. Moral philosophy?

PHILOSOPHER. Yes.

MR JOURDAIN. And what's moral philosophy about?

PHILOSOPHER. It is concerned with the good life and teaches men how to moderate their passions.

MR JOURDAIN. No, we'll leave that out. I'm as hot-tempered as they make 'em and whatever moral philosophy may say I'll be as angry as I want whenever I feel like it.

PHILOSOPHER. Well, do you wish to study physics – the natural sciences?

MR JOURDAIN. The natural sciences? What have they to say for themselves?

PHILOSOPHER. Natural science explains the principles of natural phenomena, and the properties of matter; it is concerned with the nature of the elements, metals, minerals, precious stones, plants, and animals, and teaches us the causes of meteors, rainbows, will-o'-the-wisp, comets, lightning, thunder and thunderbolts, rain, snow, hail, tempests, and whirlwinds.

MR JOURDAIN. This is too much of a hullabaloo for me, too much of a rigmarole altogether.

PHILOSOPHER. Then what am I to teach you?

MR JOURDAIN. Teach me to spell.

PHILOSOPHER. Willingly.

MR JOURDAIN. And then you can teach me the almanac so that I shall know if there's a moon or not.

PHILOSOPHER. Very well. Now, to meet your wishes and at the same time treat the matter philosophically one must begin, according to the proper order of

these things, with the precise recognition of the nature of the letters of the alphabet and the different ways of pronouncing them, and, in this connexion, I must explain that the letters are divided into vowels, so called because they express the various sounds, and consonants, so named because they are pronounced "con", or with, the vowels and serve only to differentiate the various articulations of the voice. There are five vowels, A, E, I, O, U.²

MR JOURDAIN. I understand all that.

PHILOSOPHER. The vowel A is pronounced with the mouth open wide. So – A, Ah, Ah.

MR JOURDAIN. Ah, Ah. Yes.

PHILOSOPHER. The vowel E is pronounced by bringing the jaws near together. So, A, E – Ah, Eh.

MR JOURDAIN. A, E. Ah, Eh, now that's fine.

PHILOSOPHER. For the vowel I, bring the jaws still nearer together and stretch the mouth corners towards the ears, so – A, E, I. Ah, Eh, EEE.

MR JOURDAIN. A, E, I. Ah, Eh, EEE – It's quite right. Oh! what a wonderful thing is knowledge!



Mr. Jourdain and Philosopher, Comédie Française, 1951

PHILOSOPHER. To pronounce the vowel O you must open the mouth again and round the lips so – O.

MR JOURDAIN. O, O. You are right again. A, E, I, O, splendid. I, O. I, O.

PHILOSOPHER. The opening of the mouth is exactly the shape of the letter – O.

MR JOURDAIN. O, O. You are right. O. How wonderful to know such things!

PHILOSOPHER. The vowel U is pronounced by bringing the teeth close together but without quite meeting and pushing the lips out so – U, U, as if you were making a face – so if you happen to show that you don't think much of a person you only need say U!

MR JOURDAIN. U, U. It's perfectly true. Oh why didn't I learn all this earlier.

PHILOSOPHER. To-morrow we will take the other letters, the consonants.

MR JOURDAIN. Are they as interesting as those we have done?

PHILOSOPHER. Undoubtedly. The consonant D, for example, is pronounced by pressing the tip of the tongue against the upper teeth so – D, D. Da.

MR JOURDAIN. Da! Da! Splendid! Splendid!

PHILOSOPHER. F by bringing the upper teeth against the lower lip. Fa!

MR JOURDAIN. Fa, Fa. It's quite true. Oh, fa-father and mother, why didn't you teach me this –

PHILOSOPHER. And R by placing the tip of the tongue against the palate so that, alternately resisting and yielding to the force of the air coming out, it makes a little trilling R, R, R.

MR JOURDAIN. R, R, Ra. R, R, R, RA. It's true. Ah what a clever man you are and how I've been wasting my time. R, R, Ra.

PHILOSOPHER. I will explain all these fascinating things for you.

MR JOURDAIN. Do please. And now I must tell you a secret. I'm in love with a lady of quality and I want you to help me to write her a little note I can let fall at her feet.

PHILOSOPHER. Very well.

MR JOURDAIN. That's the correct thing to do, isn't it?

PHILOSOPHER. Certainly. You want it in verse no doubt?

MR JOURDAIN. No. No. None of your verse for me.

PHILOSOPHER. You want it in prose then?

MR JOURDAIN. No. I don't want it in either.

PHILOSOPHER. But it must be one or the other.

MR JOURDAIN. Why?

PHILOSOPHER. Because, my dear sir, if you want to express yourself at all, there's only verse or prose for it.

MR JOURDAIN. Only verse or prose for it?

PHILOSOPHER. That's all, sir. Whatever isn't prose is verse and anything that isn't verse is prose.

MR JOURDAIN. And talking, as I am now, which is that?

PHILOSOPHER. That is prose.

MR JOURDAIN. You mean to say that when I say "Nicole, fetch me my slippers" or "Give me my night-cap" that's prose?

PHILOSOPHER. Certainly, sir.

MR JOURDAIN. Well, my goodness! Here I've been talking prose for forty years and never known it, and mighty grateful I am to you for telling me! Now, what I want to say in the letter is, "Fair Countess, I am dying for love of your beautiful eyes!" but I want it put elegantly, so that it sounds genteel.

PHILOSOPHER. Then say that the ardour of her glances has reduced your heart to ashes and that you endure night and day –

MR JOURDAIN. No. No. No! I don't want that at all. All I want is what I told you. "Fair Countess, I am dying for love of your beautiful eyes."

PHILOSOPHER. But it must surely be elaborated a little.

MR JOURDAIN. No, I tell you I don't want anything in the letter but those very words, but I want them to be stylish and properly arranged. Just tell me some of the different ways of putting them so that I can see which I want.

PHILOSOPHER. Well, you can put them as you have done, "Fair Countess, I am dying for love of your beautiful eyes", or perhaps "For love, fair Countess, of your beautiful eyes I am dying", or again "For love of your beautiful eyes, fair Countess, dying I am", or yet again, "Your beautiful eyes, fair Countess, for love of, dying am I", or even "Dying, fair Countess, for love of your beautiful eyes, I am".

MR JOURDAIN. But which of these is the best?

PHILOSOPHER. The one you used yourself, "Fair Countess, I am dying for love of your beautiful eyes".

MR JOURDAIN. Although I've never done any study I get it right first time. Thank you with all my heart. Please come in good time to-morrow.

PHILOSOPHER. You may rely upon me, sir. [*He goes out.*]

MR JOURDAIN. Hasn't my suit arrived yet?

LACKEY. Not yet, sir.

MR JOURDAIN. That confounded tailor has kept me waiting a whole day, and just when I'm so busy too. I'm getting really annoyed. Confound him! I'm sick to death of him! If only I had him here now, the detestable scoundrel, the rascally dog, I'd – I'd . . . Ah, there you are! I was beginning to get quite annoyed with you.

The TAILOR has come in, followed by his apprentice carrying the suit.
TAILOR. I couldn't get here any earlier. I've had a score of my men at work on your suit.
MR JOURDAIN. The silk stockings you sent me were so tight I could hardly get them on. I've already torn two ladders in them.
TAILOR. They'll stretch all right, by and by.
MR JOURDAIN. Yes, if I tear them enough! Then, the shoes that you made for me pinch me most dreadfully.
TAILOR. Not at all, sir.
MR JOURDAIN. How d'ye mean "not at all"?
TAILOR. They don't pinch you at all.
MR JOURDAIN. But I tell you they do!
TAILOR. No, you imagine it.
MR JOURDAIN. I imagine it? If I imagine it, it's because I can feel it. Isn't that a good enough reason?
TAILOR. Tch! Tch! The coat I have here is as fine as any at the court, most beautifully designed. It's a work of art to have made a suit which looks dignified without using black. You won't find another anywhere to touch it.
MR JOURDAIN. But what's this? You've put the sprigs upside down.
TAILOR. You didn't say you wanted them the other way up.
MR JOURDAIN. Ought I to have told you?
TAILOR. Certainly. All gentlemen of quality wear them this way up.
MR JOURDAIN. Gentlemen of quality wear the sprigs upside down?
TAILOR. Undoubtedly.
MR JOURDAIN. Well, that's all right then.
TAILOR. You can have them the other way up if you want.
MR JOURDAIN. No. No. No.
TAILOR. You've only to say so.
MR JOURDAIN. No, you've done very well. Do you think it will fit me?
TAILOR. What a question! If I'd drawn you on paper I couldn't have got nearer your fit. I have a man who is a genius at cutting out breeches and another who hasn't an equal at fitting a doublet.
MR JOURDAIN. Are my wig and hat all they should be?
TAILOR. Everything is excellent.
MR JOURDAIN [*looking at the TAILOR'S suit*]. Ha ha! Master Tailor! Isn't that some of the stuff I got for the last suit you made me? I am sure that I recognize it.

TAILOR. Yes, the fact is I liked the material so much I felt I must have a suit cut from it myself.

MR JOURDAIN. That's all very well but it shouldn't have come out of my stuff.

TAILOR. Are you going to try your suit on?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, hand it here.

TAILOR. Wait a moment! That is not the way things are done. I have brought my men with me to dress you to music. Suits like these must be put on with ceremony. Hello there! Come in!

Enter four tailor boys dancing.

TAILOR. Put on the gentleman's suit in a manner befitting a gentleman of quality! *Four tailor boys dance up to MR JOURDAIN. Two take off the breeches in which he did his exercises: the others remove his jacket, after which they dress him in his new suit. MR JOURDAIN struts round to be admired in time with the music.*

FIRST TAILOR BOY. Now, kind gentleman, please give something to these fellows to drink your health.

MR JOURDAIN. What did you call me?

TAILOR BOY. "Kind gentleman."

MR JOURDAIN. "Kind gentleman." What it is to be got up as one of the quality! Go on dressing as an ordinary person and nobody will ever call you a gentleman. Here! That's for your "kind gentleman".

TAILOR BOY. My lord! We are infinitely obliged to you.

MR JOURDAIN. "My lord!" Oh my goodness! "My lord." Wait a minute, my lad. "My lord" is worth something more. "My lord" is something like! Here, that's what "My lord" brings you [*gives more money*].

TAILOR BOY. My lord, we will all drink to your Grace's good health.

MR JOURDAIN. "Your Grace!" Oh. Oh wait! Don't go away. Come here. "Your Grace!" [*Aside*] If he goes as far as Your Highness he'll get the whole purse. Take this for your "Your Grace".

TAILOR BOY. My lord, we thank your Lordship for your Grace's liberality.

MR JOURDAIN. Just as well he stopped. I nearly gave him the lot.

The four tailor boys show their satisfaction by a dance which forms the Second Interlude.



Act Three

MR JOURDAIN *and* LACKEYS.

MR JOURDAIN. Follow me! I'm going out to show off my clothes in the town.

Mind you keep close behind me so that people know you belong to me.

LACKEYS. Very good, sir.

MR JOURDAIN. Wait! Call Nicole for me. I want to tell her what she has to do.

No, wait a minute. She's coming.

Enter NICOLE

MR JOURDAIN. Nicole!

NICOLE. Yes sir, what is it?

MR JOURDAIN. Listen.

NICOLE [*laughing*]. Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. What are you laughing at?

NICOLE. Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. What's wrong with the hussy?

NICOLE. Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! Fancy you got up like that! Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. Whatever d'ye mean?

NICOLE. Oh, my goodness! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. Silly creature! Are you laughing at me?

NICOLE. No master. I should hate to do that. Oh ho ho! Ho ho ho! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. I'll box your ears if you laugh any more.

NICOLE. Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha! I can't help it, master [*laughs again*].

MR JOURDAIN. Are you never going to stop?

NICOLE. I'm sorry, master, but you look so funny I just can't help laughing [*laughs again*].

MR JOURDAIN. Oh! the impudence!

NICOLE. But you look so – so funny like that [*laughs again*].

MR JOURDAIN. I'll –

NICOLE. Forgive me, I – [*laughs again*].

MR JOURDAIN. Look here! If you laugh any more I'll give you such a smack across the face as you've never had in your life.

NICOLE. All right, master, I've finished! I shan't laugh any more.

MR JOURDAIN. Well take care you don't. You must clean up the hall ready for –

NICOLE. Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. You must clean it up properly or –

NICOLE. Ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. What! Again?

NICOLE. Look here, master, wallop me afterwards but let me have my laugh out first. It'll do me more good – ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. I'm losing my temper –

NICOLE. Oh master, please, let me laugh – ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. If I once start to –

NICOLE. I shall die if you don't let me laugh – ha ha ha!

MR JOURDAIN. Was there ever such a good-for-nothing! She laughs in my face instead of listening to what I'm telling her.

NICOLE. What – what is it you want me to do, sir?

MR JOURDAIN. What do you think, you slut? Get the house ready for the company I'm expecting here shortly.

NICOLE. My goodness. That stops my laughing. Those visitors of yours make such an upset that the very word company puts me out.

MR JOURDAIN. And am I to shut my door on my visitors to please you?

NICOLE. You ought to shut it on some of them.

Enter MRS JOURDAIN

MRS JOURDAIN. What new nonsense is it this time? What are you doing in that get-up, man? Whatever are you thinking about to get yourself rigged out like that! Do you want to have everybody laughing at you?

MR JOURDAIN. My good woman, only the fools will laugh at me.

MRS JOURDAIN. Well, it isn't as if folk have not done it before!. Your goings on have long been a laughing-stock for most people.

MR JOURDAIN. What sort of people may I ask?

MRS JOURDAIN. People with more sense than you have. I'm disgusted with the life you are leading. I can't call the house my own any more. It's like a carnival-time all day and every day with fiddling and bawling enough to rouse the whole neighbourhood.

NICOLE. The mistress is right. I can't keep the place clean because of the good-for-nothing pack you bring into the house. They pick up mud all over the town and cart it in here. Poor Frances is wearing her knees out polishing

the floors for your fine gentlemen to come and muck them up again every day.

MR JOURDAIN. Now, now, our Nicole! For a country lass you've a pretty sharp tongue.

MRS JOURDAIN. Nicole is quite right. She has more sense than you have. I'd like to know what you think you want with a dancing master at your time of life.

NICOLE. Or with that great lump of a fencing master that comes stamping in, upsetting the house and loosening the very tiles in the floor.

MR JOURDAIN. Be quiet, both of you!

MRS JOURDAIN. Are you learning dancing against the time when you'll be too feeble to walk?

NICOLE. Is it because you want to murder somebody that you are learning fencing?

MR JOURDAIN. Shut up, I tell you! You are just ignorant, both of you. You don't understand the significance of these things.

MRS JOURDAIN. You'd do much better to think about getting your daughter married now that she's of an age to be provided with a husband.

MR JOURDAIN. I'll think about getting my daughter married when a suitable husband comes along. In the meantime I want to give my mind to learning and study.

NICOLE. I've just heard tell, madam, that, to crown all, he's taken on a philosophy master to-day.

MR JOURDAIN. Well, why not? I tell you I want to improve my mind and learn to hold my own among civilized people.

MRS JOURDAIN. Then why don't you go back to school one of these days and get yourself soundly whipped?

MR JOURDAIN. Why not? I wish to goodness I could be whipped here and now and never mind who saw me if it would help me to learn what they teach them in schools.

NICOLE. My goodness! A lot of good that would do you!

MR JOURDAIN. Of course it would.

MRS JOURDAIN. No doubt it's all very useful for carrying on your household affairs.

MR JOURDAIN. Of course it is. You are both talking nonsense. I'm ashamed of your ignorance. For example, do you know what you are doing – what you are talking at this very moment?

MRS JOURDAIN. I'm talking plain common sense – you ought to be mending your ways.



Title-page of the 1682 edition

MR JOURDAIN. That's not what I mean. What I'm asking is what sort of speech are you using?

MRS JOURDAIN. Speech. I'm not making a speech. But what I'm saying makes sense and that's more than can be said for your goings on.

MR JOURDAIN. I'm not talking about that. I'm asking what I am talking now. The words I am using – what are they?

MRS JOURDAIN. Stuff and nonsense!

MR JOURDAIN. Not at all! The words we are both using. What are they?

MRS JOURDAIN. Well, what on earth *are* they?

MR JOURDAIN. What are they called?

MRS JOURDAIN. Call them what you like.

MR JOURDAIN. They are prose, you ignorant creature!

MRS JOURDAIN. Prose?

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, prose! Everything that's prose isn't verse and everything that isn't verse isn't prose. Now you see what it is to be a scholar! And you [to NICOLE], do you know what you have to do to say "U"?

NICOLE. Eh?

MR JOURDAIN. What do you have to do to say "U"?

NICOLE. What?

MR JOURDAIN. Say "U" and see!

NICOLE. All right then – "U".

MR JOURDAIN. Well, what did you do?

NICOLE. I said "U".

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, but when you said "U" what did you do?

NICOLE. I did what you told me to.

MR JOURDAIN. Oh! what it is to have to deal with stupidity! You push your lips out and bring your lower jaw up to your upper one and – "U" – you see? I make a face like this – "U-U-U".

NICOLE. Yes, that's grand I must say!

MRS JOURDAIN. Really remarkable!

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, but that's only one thing. You should have heard "O" and "Da" and "Fa".

MRS JOURDAIN. What on earth is all this rigmarole?

NICOLE. And what good is it going to be to anybody?

MR JOURDAIN. It exasperates me to see how ignorant women can be!

MRS JOURDAIN. Oh get off with you! You ought to send all these fellows packing with their ridiculous tomfoolery.

NICOLE. And especially that great lump of a fencing master who fills my kitchen with dust.

MR JOURDAIN. Fencing master again! You've got him on the brain. I can see I shall have to teach you your manners. [*Calls for the foils and hands one to NICOLE.*] There, take it! Now for a logical demonstration! The line of the body! When you lunge in quart you do – so, and when you lunge in tierce you do – so! If you only do like that you can be sure that you'll never be killed. It's a grand thing to know that you are safe when you are fighting. There now – have at me. Let's see what you can do.

NICOLE. Very well, what about that? [*She thrusts at him several times.*]

MR JOURDAIN. Steady on! Steady on! Confound the silly creature!

NICOLE. Well you told me to do it.

MR JOURDAIN. Yes, but you led in tierce before you led in quart and you never gave me time to parry.



Dorimene, Dorante and Mr. Jourdain, Comédie Française, 1951

References

1. Not a trumpet but a one-stringed instrument.
2. The Philosopher's instructions refer to French vowels.

Notes

Aspects of France at the Time of Molière

During the latter half of the seventeenth century France was the leading nation in Europe. Its population was twice that of Spain and over four times that of England. Its land was fertile and its commerce and industry were growing. There were no disturbing arguments over forms of government; absolute monarchy was accepted by almost all Frenchmen as necessary, reasonable, and right. By the Peace of the Pyrenees (1659) the French army had displaced the Spanish as the strongest military machine on the Continent. As time went on, it seemed as if not only French generals, French military engineers, and French diplomatists but also French architects, painters, dramatists, and philosophers were the best in Europe. French fashions in dress dominated the Continent; the French language became the leading language of diplomacy and polite conversation, and the French court with its elaborate etiquette and ceremonial became the model for countless smaller courts throughout Europe. As Florence had been the nerve center of the Italian Renaissance and Spain of the Catholic Reformation, so France was the nerve center of late-seventeenth-century politics, diplomacy, and culture.

How much of this predominance is to be attributed to the long reign of Louis XIV is one of those questions that historians can speculate about but never answer. No one doubts that French (and European) history would have run in different channels had Louis never lived – or had he not lived so long. He was born in 1638, became king in 1643, took the reins of power into his own hands in 1661 at twenty-three, and died in 1715 at the age of seventy-seven, leaving the throne to his great-grandson. By temperament and training Louis was the very incarnation of divine-right monarchy – the idea that hereditary monarchy is the only divinely approved form of government, that kings are responsible to God alone for their conduct, and that subjects should obey their kings as the direct representatives of God on earth. In an age that put its trust in absolute rulers, the achievements of the French people at the peak of their greatness cannot be separated from the personality of their ruler, even if it can be proved that many of those achievements were unrelated to, or even accomplished in spite of, the ruler.

Louis is said to have remarked, "I am the state." Even if the remark is apocryphal, the words reveal more of the true importance of his reign than anything else he said or wrote. Louis XIV set out early in his reign to personify the concept of sovereignty. He dramatized this aim immediately after Mazarin's death by ordering his ministers thereafter to report to him in person, not to a "first minister."

To be the real head of a large and complicated government required long, hard work, and Louis paid the price. His education was poor, and he had little imagination, no sense of humor, and only a mediocre intelligence. But he had common sense, a knack of picking up information from others, and a willingness to work steadily at the business of governing. "If you let yourself be carried away by your passions," he once said, "don't do it in business hours." Painstakingly he caught up all the threads of power in his own hands. All major decisions were made in four great councils, which he attended regularly. These decisions were then carried out by professional "secretaries" at the head of organized bureaucracies. In the provinces, the *intendants* more and

more represented the direct authority of the central government in justice, finance, and general administration. The old French monarchy imposed its authority through judicial decisions and had frequently consulted local and central assemblies. The new monarchy, begun by Richelieu and perfected by Louis XIV, imposed its authority through executive decisions. Louis reduced the importance of the *parlements*, never summoned the Estates General, and, so far as such a thing was humanly possible in his century, built a government that was himself. . . .

The most dangerous potential opponents of royal absolutism, as Louis XIV knew from his own experience during the Fronde, were the members of the nobility. Louis completed Richelieu's work of destroying the political power of the French nobility. He excluded the nobles completely from all responsible positions in government and cheapened their status by increasing their numbers. An army commission came to be almost the only major outlet for a noble's ambition, which meant that the nobles as a class generally constituted a war party at court. All important positions in Louis XIV's government, such as the secretaryships and intendancies, were filled by men of bourgeois or recently ennobled families.

Louis did not attack the social privileges of the nobility; he used them to make the nobles utterly dependent on him. In 1683 he moved the court and government from the Louvre in Paris to Versailles, fifteen miles away. He had hated Paris since the riots of the Fronde, and now in the formal gardens and ornate chateaux of Versailles, which he had built on waste marsh at considerable cost of human lives and treasure, he felt at home. He also felt safe; Versailles was the first royal residence that was completely unfortified. At Versailles, the king lived in an utterly artificial atmosphere, as far removed from reality as Versailles was physically removed from the bustle of Paris. Here the great nobles were compelled to live. Here a ball seemed as important as a battle and holding the basin for the king's morning ablutions was a job as much to be coveted as commanding the king's armies. Instead of competing for political power, nobles squandered their fortunes and exhausted their energies in jockeying for social prestige.

The regular rectangular shapes of the gardens, the balanced classical lines of the baroque architecture, the bright glint of mirrors and chandeliers, all these seemed to symbolize and emphasize the isolation of Versailles from nature, from the French nation, from the real world. Through all this Louis moved with impassive dignity. Years of self-conscious practice in kingship had given him a kind of public personality – cool, courteous, impersonal, imperturbable – which carried out perfectly the artificiality of the little world at Versailles. At his death he left to his successors a privileged nobility shorn of all political power and responsibility, demoralized by the empty pleasures and petty intrigues of court life and uneasily aware of its uselessness. It was a dangerous legacy. . . .

To dramatize his conception of kingship and to underscore the dependence on the monarch of all other persons and institutions in the state, Louis chose as his emblem Apollo, the sun god. The symbol of the sun, on whose rays all earthly life is dependent, was worked into the architecture and sculpture of the palace of Versailles. The Sun King patronized the arts and gave historians some reason to call his reign the "Augustan Age" of French culture. As befitted such a patron, the prevailing taste was classical, insisting on form, order, balance and proportion. The ideals of literature and art were "order, neatness, precision, exactitude" – and these were presumed to be the ideals of all reasonable men of all ages.

Pierre Corneille (1606-84) was the father of French classical tragedy. In 1636 he had written *Le Cid*, the first of his powerful dramas that glorified will power and the striving for perfection. Corneille was still writing when Louis XIV began his personal reign, but he was soon eclipsed by his brilliant younger contemporary, Jean Racine (1639-99). Racine wrote more realistically about

human beings in the grip of violent and sometimes coarse passions, bringing French tragedy to its highest point of perfection in the years between 1667 and 1677. Then he underwent a religious conversion and renounced playwriting as an immoral occupation. Some who thrilled to his and Corneille's tragedies had little respect for the comedian Molière (1622-73), but Molière's wit and satire became the unsurpassable model for future French dramatists. From 1659 to his death in 1673 he was the idol of audiences at Versailles. All three playwrights concentrated on portraying types, not individuals – the hero, the man of honor violently in love, the miser, the hypocrite – embodiments of human passions and foibles who belonged to no particular time or place. As a result, French classical drama of the age of Louis XIV could be understood and appreciated by people everywhere, and French taste in writing came to be the dominant taste of other countries as well. So it was with architecture and the other arts. The baroque style, which ruled the design and decoration of the palace of Versailles, was intelligible and exportable. French artistic and literary standards became the standards of cultivated Europeans everywhere.

From Joseph R. Strayer and Hans W. Gatzke, *The Mainstream of Civilization* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch, 1979), pp. 446-51.

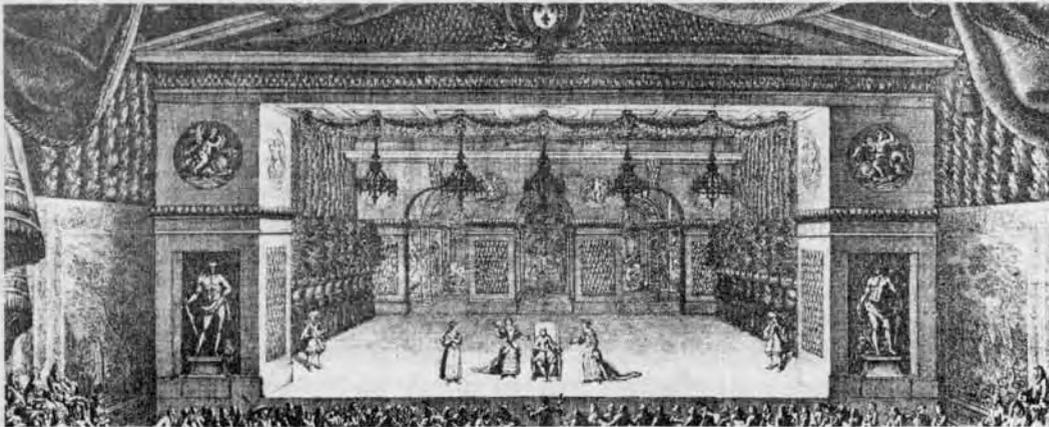


Molière in the role of Cæsar in one of Corneille's tragedies

Material Conditions in the French Theatre of the Mid-seventeenth Century

In its material shape the French theatre of the mid-seventeenth century was still in the stage of improvisation. Such companies as Molière's *Illustre Théâtre*, which he founded with the Bédjarts, played in tennis courts, inn-yards, or the halls of great houses with little specialized setting and, originally, no proscenium curtain. The audience stood before the stage in the *parterre* or pit (not around it as in Elizabethan England) or sat in tiers on three sides of the room. The young men of fashion sat on the stage. With the development of spectacular plays the proscenium curtain came into general use to withhold the surprise of the setting, cover scene changes, and mask the *machines* which enabled gods to fly, nymphs to emerge from their fountains, and villains to go to their last account as in *Dom Juan*. The influence of a stage without front curtain is seen in Molière's openings – with individuals walking and conversing – and in his endings which so often become processions or dances. The elaborations seen at Versailles were much modified elsewhere and the contemporary inventories show how simple were stage furniture and properties. For *L'Avare*, a table, a chair, an inkstand, paper, a cash-box, a broom, a stick, overalls, spectacles, two candles on the table in the fifth act; for *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, chairs, table for the meal and one for the buffet, accessories for the Turkish ceremony; for *Dom Juan*, a trap, incense (to make smoke), two chairs, and a stool. Costumes, on the other hand, were rich, varied, and stylized according to character. The audience could recognize characters by their dress and deportment immediately they entered, master and man, mistress and maid, soldier, doctor, pedant, ruffian, poor, rich, old, young, comic, serious. There are relatively few references in the plays to the setting, but allusions to costume and personal appearance are abundant and indicative of character – as Don Juan's flame-coloured ribbons, Cléante's fashionable attire in *L'Avare*, and Jourdain's finery. Costume was used to concentrate attention on the actor, and the stage was the unencumbered space where he must create his illusion by voice, movement, and gesture in patterns of colour and sound. . . .

From John Wood, Introduction, in Molière, *The Miser and Other Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1962), pp. xvii-xviii.



Performance of "Le Malade Imaginaire", 1673

Molière: His Life and Works

Molière was born in Paris in 1622 and died there in 1673. His father, Jean Poquelin, was a merchant upholsterer and a man of some substance. He had purchased an office at court and in 1637 secured the reversion to his son. Meanwhile young Poquelin (the name Molière was assumed later) was receiving, as a pupil of the Jesuits, the best education the age afforded. Afterwards he appears to have studied law at a university, but where is not known for certain.

At the age of 21, on the threshold of the career that was planned for him, he resigned his rights in the office at court, compounded for his share of his deceased mother's estate, and threw in his lot with a company of actors. What motives there were, if any, beyond the irresistible attraction of the theatre, we do not know. One thing is certain, that the choice was final and decisive. Thereafter through all the vicissitudes of thirty years on the stage his passion for acting burned unabated to his death.

The nucleus of the company to which Molière attached himself was provided by members of one family, the Bédjarts. Three daughters, Madeleine, Geneviève, and Armande, and two sons, Joseph and Louis, were at various times members of the troupe and, once enrolled, never left it. Madeleine, it has always been assumed, was at one time Molière's mistress; that she was his comrade and colleague until her death, the year before his own, is beyond question; Armande, younger by twenty years, was to become his wife.

The project of establishing a new theatre in competition with the two companies then playing permanently in Paris did not meet with success. Molière was imprisoned for debt and released on the intervention of his father. In 1646 he and his companions forsook the capital for the provinces and, for the next twelve years, led the life of itinerant players. They have been traced in various provincial towns mainly in the South, but little is known of their adventures. It is clear, however, that it was in this school that Molière learned his trade: when in 1658 the company came back to Paris, they were an experienced team of actors, he had become their acknowledged leader, and their repertory included, with many of the well known plays of the time, a number of short farces of his own devising which had already proved popular with provincial audiences. A further turning point in Molière's career came when his company, having established a precarious foothold in Paris, secured an invitation to perform before the young King, Louis XIV. The play chosen was a tragedy of Corneille, but it was followed by Molière's short farce, now lost, *Le Docteur amoureux*. The King was amused and the way to patronage and success was opened. The company had already come under the protection of the King's brother; they now established themselves in the hall of the Petit-Bourbon which they shared with the Italian company of the great farcical actor Fiorelli, the creator of Scaramouche. Each company took certain fixed days of the week. Molière now played *L'Etourdi* and *Le Dépit amoureux*, and in 1659 achieved a resounding success with *Les Précieuses ridicules*, a high-spirited and farcical treatment of contemporary literary enthusiasms. This success was surpassed and consolidated by *L'Ecole des Femmes*, a full-length comedy in verse which made its author the talk of the town. It also provoked the jealousy of rival companies and authors, but the box office thrived on controversy and in the war of the theatres Molière proved well able to look after himself. He showed in this play a new range of comic invention, a growing sureness of touch and, at the same time, a tendency to cut deeper than the conventional surface of things and provoke reactions other than laughter which was to make him one of the most controversial figures of his time. If *L'Ecole des Femmes* put the strongholds of convention on the alert, *Le Tartuffe*, the first of the great comedies of human

obsession, went on to outrage them. It is concerned with religion and religious hypocrisy. With *Tartuffe* himself, Molière created an unforgettable character. The play is a major achievement, as strong theatrically as deep in its implications; but it hit the age hard on a touchy spot and the reaction was immediate and violent. Despite the known support of the King, the author was attacked, execrated, anathematized and not only by those whom he chose to regard as the professional and organized forces of hypocrisy but by many of the truly devout. To this day there are those, not all among his detractors, who feel that in this play and its successor Molière attacked not religiosity but the foundations of religion itself. The King was driven to temporize. The play was forbidden public performance. Even when reshaped and probably toned down, in the form that we know, it was not allowed to be played for nearly five years. For Molière the setback was serious and the disappointment acute, but his output did not slacken – with the limited play-going public of Paris of that day new plays were a constant necessity. Nevertheless his attitude hardens. He is no longer content to assert that the test of a play lies in its ability to please. The function of comedy is now to castigate folly and vice and when in an attempt, as it would seem, to cut a way out of his difficulties, he chose for his new play one of the most popular themes of the day, the story of *Don Juan*, where the known plot required that religion should triumph and unbelief be confounded, he produced one of the most enigmatic and powerful of his comedies, a masterpiece, in the circumstances, of artistic intransigence! It provoked a fierce renewal of polemics against him, but it was played to full houses. Between 15 February and 20 March 1665 the play was performed fifteen times, a considerable run for those days, but thereafter never again in Molière's lifetime and not for nearly two centuries after his death in the form in which he wrote it. It was not printed until 1682 and then in a bowdlerized version. In what form the interdict fell is not known, but the effect was conclusive.

Meanwhile Molière had been at work for some time on *Le Misanthrope*. First played in 1666, it enjoyed only a moderate success, but discerning contemporaries acclaimed the masterpiece which posterity has recognized it to be, a consummate revelation of character and human relationships within the terms of pure comedy. If, after *Le Misanthrope*, the peak of artistic achievement was past, Molière's verve and creative energy were undiminished. Spectacular plays for the court, *Amphitryon*, *Psyché*, *Les Amants magnifiques*, jostle with plays for the town, *L'Avare*, *Le Médecin malgré lui*, *Scapin*, and plays which pleased court and town alike, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*, *Monsieur de Pourceaugnac*, *La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, *Les Femmes savantes*. In these years he exploited increasingly the comedy-ballet, seeking the ideal union of acting, music, and dancing. He had experimented with this form much earlier in *Les Fâcheux* and turned to it again, after the tumults of *Tartuffe* and *Don Juan*, in *L'Amour médecin*. Molière was himself musical and came, on his mother's side, of a family of musicians; the King was at that time passionately fond of music and dancing; the court adored ballets and spectacle, and, in Lully, Molière found a collaborator of genius, whose music lent a charm to the most hurriedly extemporized of plays and diversions. The conception of comedy-ballet was most completely realized in *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* and *Le Malade imaginaire*. The former, first played in 1670, exemplifies the mood of these later years at its happiest.

Favoured by the King – he had resumed the office of Groom of the Bedchamber on the death of his brother in 1667 and his company had become *La Troupe du Roi* in 1665 – playing now in the Palais-Royal, once the private theatre of Richelieu, the ban on *Tartuffe* finally lifted in 1669, enjoying the friendship of many of the great men of his day, Molière knew success in full measure, but his personal life was unhappy. His two sons died in infancy. His relationship with his young wife, Armande, was such that for a time they lived apart. His health, which gave trouble as early

as 1665, grew worse. His relations with Lully deteriorated as the Italian exploited the royal favour increasingly to his own advantage. His friends advised him to give up acting and enjoy a more leisurely life, but in vain. The road he had taken in 1643 he followed to the end. In February 1673 he produced *Le Malade imaginaire*, playing himself the role of Argan, the invalid more fortunate on the stage than his creator in life. At the third performance Molière was taken ill and died shortly afterwards. His fame did not save him from the penalty of an outcast profession and the malice of his enemies. Only the appeal of his widow to the King in person secured him burial in consecrated ground.

Molière's company, which had stood by him in good times and bad, held together and was playing again within a week of his death; it survived to unite eventually with its old rivals of the theatres of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and Le Marais, and maintain, as the *Comédie Française*, the tradition of French acting from the theatre of Molière to that of our day.

The bare facts of Molière's life are well known, but the man himself eludes us. Contemporary descriptions are fragmentary: the most complete are done by his enemies with intent to malign him. His manner in company was said to have been reserved. Boileau called him "Le Contemplateur". As he depicts himself in *L'Impromptu de Versailles* rehearsing his cast, he is quick, highly strung, and irascible, immersed in the immediate task of dealing with those most difficult of creatures, actors and actresses. His portraits show a man with fine eyes and wide mouth. The daughter of his colleague Du Croisy, speaking of him long afterwards as she remembered seeing him in her youth, said he was of medium build, imposing carriage, grave in manner with a large nose, wide mouth and full lips, dark of complexion, with eyebrows black and strongly marked which he could move in a way which gave his whole face a most comical expression.

Molière's relations with his father seem to have been close in spite of their early divergence of purpose. He had the loyalty and respect of his company over many years, no common thing in the theatre. With the King his relations seem to have been consistently fortunate. Louis may have found it necessary at times to set bounds to his impetuosity, but on critical occasions he gave his support with deliberate discrimination. When the attacks on *L'Ecole des Femmes* were being pressed hard he made his own position clear by the award of a pension and *L'Impromptu de Versailles* in which Molière replied to his enemies seems to have been a royal commission; at a time when personal attacks on Molière and his wife exceeded all bounds the King stood godfather to their first child; at the most critical stage of his fortunes, when *Le Tartuffe* was under interdict and the position of the company precarious, the King increased his annual subvention and conferred on them the title of *Troupe du Roi*. That such a relationship was possible attests the enlightenment of the monarch and the discretion of the subject. In dedications of the plays and the petitions he addressed to the King, Molière shows that he could play the courtier to achieve his own purposes: life at court must have made great demands on his physical strength and perhaps on his integrity but only a man of great inward serenity and courage could, after the storms of *Tartuffe* and *Dom Juan* and what we assume to have been the partial disappointment of *Le Misanthrope*, have retained such zest and love of life as found expression in the later comedies and comedy-ballets. Yet he was under no illusion. "Among all human weaknesses" – says Filerin in *L'Amour médecin* – "love of living is the most powerful." If it was not himself he put on the stage as Argan, the dupe of the doctors, it was his own dilemma. He who turned so many others to comic account did not except himself.

From John Wood, Introduction, in Molière, *The Miser and Other Plays* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Classics, 1962,) pp. ix-xiv.



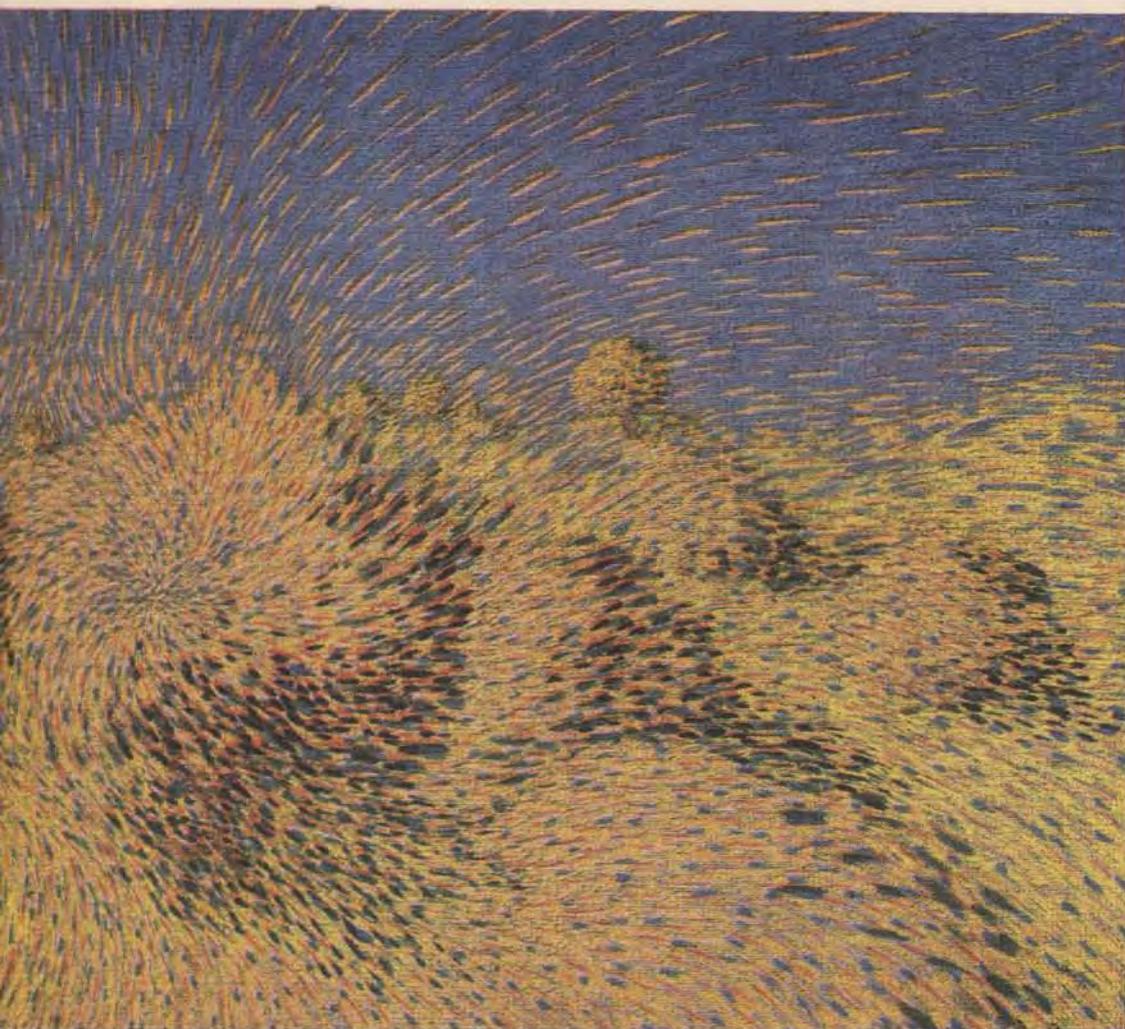
PIERRE MIGNARD, Molière



Communion with Nature

Introduction

Many of us, usually in moments of solitude and in the midst of natural surroundings, have experienced a quietening of our external faculties and have felt ourselves in contact with or in the presence of some other being, some other spirit. As this experience deepens, we may feel at times an invisible presence



ROLF, Auroville 1988

in objects around us – trees, rocks, streams. With a little self-observation, we may also feel something in us which responds to this being, this presence, and establishes an identity with it. For some hours, or even for some days, we are full of this experience – it hovers around us and is in us, and we are moved by it.

The rush of modern life denies to us what nature can contribute to our lives by bringing to us quiet, peace, joy and oneness with the world around us. What we are offered today are packaged tours of scenic natural spots around the world, organized by the tourist industry, which has commercialized this natural relationship between man and nature.

For William Wordsworth, nature was a living reality and it bestowed on him many experiences which contributed to the growth and development of his personality. In his poems, he has been able to present his experiences with such great force and vividness that the reader could well be transported into the same experience.

William Wordsworth was born on 7 April 1770, at Cockermouth, in the Lake District of Northern England. His father was a law agent. After his mother's death, he was sent to school at Hawkshead, in the heart of the Lake District. It was here that Nature took a leading role in his education. Here at Hawkshead he was not only in the midst of an unspoilt rural community but could range freely over heights commanding the finest panorama imaginable: the distant sea on one side and a great mountain amphitheatre on the other. Wordsworth spent much of his time in his natural surroundings, – skating by starlight on the lake, fishing in every pool and stream, nutting in hazel woods, galloping over the sands of Furness, poaching for woodcock on frosty nights, hanging from the rocks above the raven's nest. Slowly the glad animal days passed into days of a deeper ecstasy. Soon he learnt to hear "the ghostly language of the ancient earth", and drank thence "the visionary power". He became conscious of various presences in nature, some fearful, some benign, and he often experienced the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe". On one occasion, while taking a walk around a lake, transported by beauty and happiness, he seems to have lost his identity in the outer world; for,

*such a holy calm
Did overspread my soul, that I forgot
That I had bodily eyes, and what I saw
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,
A prospect in my mind.*

In 1787 he went to Cambridge. Here he fell in with the ordinary ways of student life, roaming aimlessly with his friends about town, riding, sailing and going to parties. While there seemed to be a danger that he might be carried away by the common tide of life at Cambridge, his memories of the experiences at Hawkshead made him conscious of a spirit that was greater than the external world. He lived with a feeling that he was "not for that hour, nor for that place".

On examining himself more closely he recognized:

visitings
Of the Upholder of the tranquil Soul,
Which underneath all passion lives secure
A steadfast life.

In 1790, Wordsworth undertook a walking tour of France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany. He was quite enthused about the hope held out by the French Revolution. He took another trip to France in 1791. Shortage of funds and the war between England and France necessitated his coming back to England. When the Terror broke out in France, he became disillusioned with the Revolution. In 1795, a friend's legacy helped him to settle down with his sister Dorothy in Dorset. Here, in the depth of the country and in the society of his sister, he recovered his habit of tranquil meditation and recollection as well as "that deep power of joy" that enabled him to see into the life of things. It was here that Wordsworth met the poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Their acquaintance soon ripened into the friendship that has linked their names, together with Dorothy's, in a spiritual partnership unique in literary biography. That partnership produced the Lyrical Ballads first published anonymously in 1798.



PAUL SANDBY, Grasmere from the Road through Bainriggs

At the end of 1799, Wordsworth and Dorothy returned to the Lake District at Grasmere, Westmoreland. This spot more than any other is associated with the poet. He had first discovered Grasmere as a boy while on a ramble from Hawkshead and had then thought "what happy fortune were it here to live". In 1802 he married Mary Hutchinson, a childhood friend.

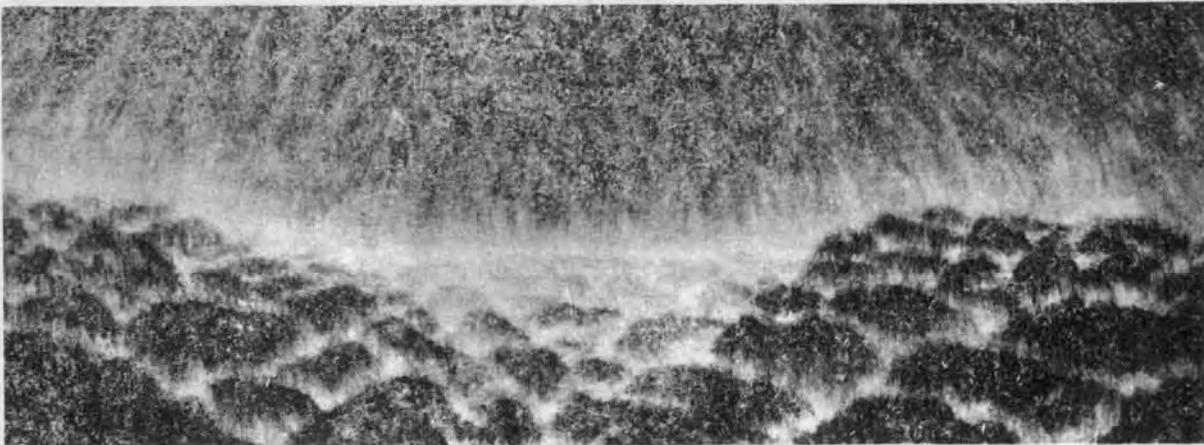
Critics consider this period of Wordsworth's life (1796-1806) as his greatest. The Lyrical Ballads, the "Lucy" poems, The Prelude and Intimations of Immortality were all written during this period. Wordsworth lived on until 1850, during which time he was awarded many honours including Poet Laureate.

The lines selected for the present collection are from The Prelude, begun in 1798 and completed in 1805. Wordsworth described The Prelude as "a long poem upon the formation of my own mind" and dedicated it to Coleridge. His comments on this piece reveal its autobiographical intentions.

Several years ago, when the author retired to his native mountains with the hope of being enabled to construct a literary work that might live, it was a reasonable thing that he should take a review of his own mind and examine how far Nature and Education had qualified him for such an employment. As subsidiary to this preparation, he undertook to record in verse the origin and progress of his own powers as far as he was acquainted with them.

Apart from the poetic beauty of Wordsworth's poems, what is of singular significance is the substance of the experiences that are described. These experiences transcend the ordinary limits of the mind. They bring us the message from the Unknown, not through a mere flight of imagination but through an enlargement of the psychological being. There is a tradition of mystical experience both in the East and in the West which is not sufficiently understood or appreciated by the modern mind because of its excessive inclination towards analysis and abstraction. But Wordsworth's poems can very well bring to us an easier access and entry into the world of mystical experience.

ROLF, Auroville 1988



As Sri Aurobindo has said,

It is difficult for the modern mind to understand how we can do more than conceive intellectually of the Self or of God; but it may borrow some shadow of this vision, experience and becoming from that inner awakening to Nature which a great English poet has made a reality to the European imagination. If we read the poems in which Wordsworth expressed his realisation of Nature, we may acquire some distant idea of what realisation is. For, first, we see that he had the vision of something in the world which is the very Self of all things that it contains, a conscious force and presence other than its forms, yet cause of its forms and manifested in them. We perceive that he had not only the vision of this and the joy and peace and universality which its presence brings, but the very sense of it, mental, aesthetic, vital, physical; not only this sense and vision of it in its own being but in the nearest flower and simplest man and the immobile rock; and, finally, that he even occasionally attained to that unity, that becoming the object of his dedication, one phase of which is powerfully and profoundly expressed in the poem "A slumber did my spirit seal",¹ where he describes himself as become one in his being with earth, "rolled round in its diurnal course, with rocks, and stones, and trees."²



ROLF, Auroville 1988

1. A slumber did my spirit seal;

I had no human fears:

She seemed a thing that could not feel

The touch of earthly years.

No motion has she now, no force;

She neither hears nor sees;

Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,

With rocks, and stones, and trees.

2. Sri Aurobindo, *The Synthesis of Yoga*, vol. 20, Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library, pp. 292-93.



W. HANCOCK, William Wordsworth

Fair seed-time had my soul, and I grew up
Fostered alike by beauty and by fear:
Much favoured in my birthplace, and no less
In that belovéd Vale to which erelong
We were transplanted – there were we let loose
For sports of wider range. Ere I had told
Ten birth-days, when among the mountain-slopes
Frost, and the breath of frosty wind, had snapped
The last autumnal crocus, 'twas my joy
With store of springes o'er my shoulder hung
To range the open heights where woodcocks run
Among the smooth green turf. Through half the night,
Scudding away from snare to snare, I plied
That anxious visitation; – moon and stars
Were shining o'er my head. I was alone,
And seemed to be a trouble to the peace
That dwelt among them. Sometimes it befell
In these night wanderings, that a strong desire
O'erpowered my better reason, and the bird
Which was the captive of another's toil
Became my prey; and when the deed was done
I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Nor less when spring had warmed the cultured Vale,
Roved we as plunderers where the mother-bird
Had in high places built her lodge; though mean
Our object and inglorious, yet the end
Was not ignoble. Oh! when I have hung
Above the raven's nest, by knots of grass
And half-inch fissures in the slippery rock
But ill sustained, and almost (so it seemed)
Suspended by the blast that blew amain,
Shouldering the naked crag, oh, at that time
While on the perilous ridge I hung alone,
With what strange utterance did the loud dry wind
Blow through my ear! the sky seemed not a sky
Of earth – and with what motion moved the clouds!

Dust as we are, the immortal spirit grows
Like harmony in music; there is a dark
Inscrutable workmanship that reconciles
Discordant elements, makes them cling together
In one society. How strange that all
The terrors, pains, and early miseries,
Regrets, vexations, lassitudes interfused
Within my mind, should e'er have borne a part,
And that a needful part, in making up
The calm existence that is mine when I
Am worthy of myself! Praise to the end!
Thanks to the means which Nature deigned to employ;
Whether her fearless visitings, or those
That came with soft alarm, like hurtless light
Opening the peaceful clouds; or she may use
Severer interventions, ministry
More palpable, as best might suit her aim.

One summer evening (led by her) I found
A little boat tied to a willow tree
Within a rocky cave, its usual home.
Straight I unloosed her chain, and stepping in
Pushed from the shore. It was an act of stealth
And troubled pleasure, nor without the voice
Of mountain-echoes did my boat move on;
Leaving behind her still, on either side,
Small circles glittering idly in the moon,
Until they melted all into one track
Of sparkling light. But now, like one who rows,
Proud of his skill, to reach a chosen point
With an unswerving line, I fixed my view
Upon the summit of a craggy ridge,
The horizon's utmost boundary; for above
Was nothing but the stars and the grey sky.
She was an elfin pinnace; lustily
I dipped my oars into the silent lake,
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my boat
Went heaving through the water like a swan;



Painting by William Turner

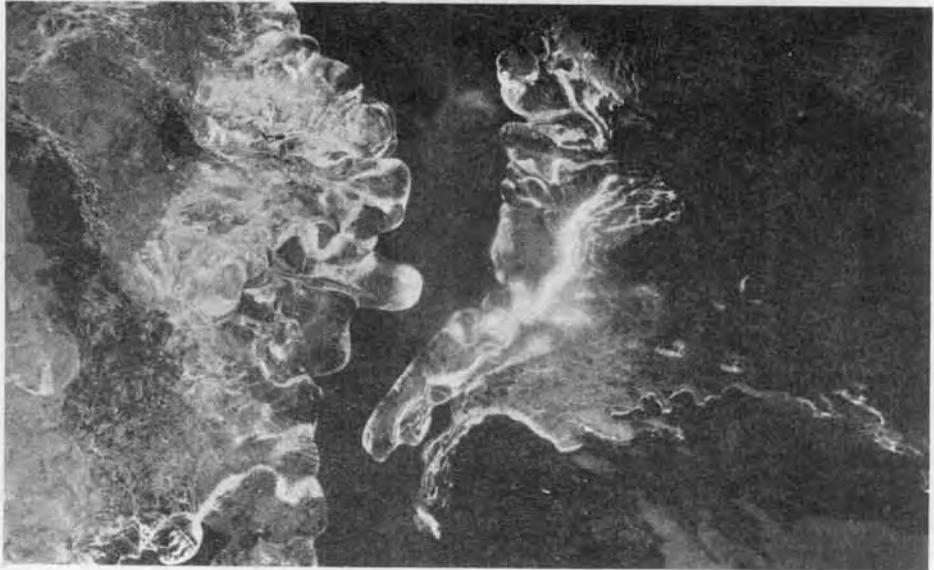
When, from behind that craggy steep till then
The horizon's bound, a huge peak, black and huge,
As if with voluntary power instinct
Upreared its head. I struck and struck again,
And growing still in stature the grim shape
Towered up between me and the stars, and still,
For so it seemed, with purpose of its own
And measured motion like a living thing,
Strode after me. With trembling oars I turned,
And through the silent water stole my way
Back to the covert of the willow tree;
There in her mooring-place I left my bark, –
And through the meadows homeward went, in grave
And serious mood; but after I had seen
That spectacle, for many days, my brain
Worked with a dim and undetermined sense
Of unknown modes of being; o'er my thoughts
There hung a darkness, call it solitude
Or blank desertion. No familiar shapes
Remained, no pleasant images of trees,
Of sea or sky, no colours of green fields;
But huge and mighty forms, that do not live
Like living men, moved slowly through the mind
By day, and were a trouble to my dreams.



Wisdom and Spirit of the universe!
Thou Soul that art the eternity of thought,
That givest to forms and images a breath
And everlasting motion, not in vain
By day or star-light thus from my first dawn
Of childhood didst thou intertwine for me
The passions that build up our human soul;
Not with the mean and vulgar works of man,
But with high objects, with enduring things –
With life and nature – purifying thus
The elements of feeling and of thought,
And sanctifying, by such discipline,
Both pain and fear, until we recognise
A grandeur in the beatings of the heart.
Nor was this fellowship vouchsafed to me
With stinted kindness. In November days,
When vapours rolling down the valley made
A lonely scene more lonesome, among woods,
At noon and 'mid the calm of summer nights,
When, by the margin of the trembling lake,
Beneath the gloomy hills homeward I went
In solitude, such intercourse was mine;
Mine was it in the fields both day and night,
And by the waters, all the summer long.



And in the frosty season, when the sun
Was set, and visible for many a mile
The cottage windows blazed through twilight gloom,
I heeded not their summons: happy time
It was indeed for all of us – for me
It was a time of rapture! Clear and loud
The village clock tolled six,– I wheeled about,
Proud and exulting like an untired horse
That cares not for his home. All shod with steel,
We hissed along the polished ice in games
Confederate, imitative of the chase
And woodland pleasures,– the resounding horn,
The pack loud chiming, and the hunted hare.
So through the darkness and the cold we flew,
And not a voice was idle; with the din
Smitten, the precipices rang aloud;
The leafless trees and every icy crag
Tinkled like iron; while far distant hills
Into the tumult sent an alien sound
Of melancholy not unnoticed, while the stars
Eastward were sparkling clear, and in the west
The orange sky of evening died away.



Not seldom from the uproar I retired
Into a silent bay, or sportively
Glanced sideways, leaving the tumultuous throng,
To cut across the reflex of a star
That fled, and, flying still before me, gleamed
Upon the glassy plain; and oftentimes,
When we had given our bodies to the wind,
And all the shadowy banks on either side
Came sweeping through the darkness, spinning still
The rapid line of motion, then at once
Have I, reclining back upon my heels,
Stopped short; yet still the solitary cliffs
Wheeled by me – even as if the earth had rolled
With visible motion her diurnal round!
Behind me did they stretch in solemn train,
Feebler and feebler, and I stood and watched
Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep.

Ye Presences of Nature in the sky
And on the earth! Ye Visions of the hills!
And Souls of lonely places! can I think
A vulgar hope was yours when ye employed
Such ministry, when ye through many a year
Haunting me thus among my boyish sports,
On caves and trees, upon the woods and hills,
Impressed upon all forms the characters
Of danger or desire; and thus did make
The surface of the universal earth
With triumph and delight, with hope and fear,
Work like a sea?
Not uselessly employed,
Might I pursue this theme through every change
Of exercise and play, to which the year
Did summon us in his delightful round.

William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford, 1984), pp. 498-500.

Notes

The Romantic Movement

The Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe can be described as the rebellion of feelings against reason, of instinct against intellect, of the subject against the object, of solitude against society, of imagination against bare reality, of spirituality against science, of mysticism against ritual, of the feminine against the masculine, of romantic love against the marriage of convenience, of Nature against civilization, of youth against authority, of the individual man against the social order and the state.

We have seen how Jean-Jacques Rousseau was a great inspirer of this movement; his books provoked radical changes in education, politics and art. The nineteenth century saw the birth of a group of poets whose body of work was so astounding as to perpetuate the notion that "Romantic" refers directly, even solely, to their poetry. These were Byron, Shelley, Keats, Coleridge, and Wordsworth.

William Wordsworth's "Preface" to his *Lyrical Ballads* is considered the manifesto of the Romantic movement from a poet's viewpoint. The following extracts are taken from this essay, and describe what Wordsworth, as well as the other poets of the Romantic school, felt good poetry and a good poet should be.

... all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: and though this be true, Poems to which any value can be attached were never produced on any variety of subjects but by a man who, being possessed of more than usual organic sensibility, had also thought long and deeply. . . .

Aristotle, I have been told, has said, that Poetry is the most philosophic of all writing: it is so: its object is truth, not individual and local, but general, and operative; not standing upon external testimony, but carried alive into the heart by passion; truth which is its own testimony, which gives competence and confidence to the tribunal to which it appeals, and receives them from the same tribunal. Poetry is the image of man and nature. . . .

What then does the Poet? He considers man and the objects that surround him as acting and re-acting upon each other, so as to produce an infinite complexity of pain and pleasure; he considers man in his own nature and in his ordinary life as contemplating this with a certain quantity of immediate knowledge, with certain convictions, intuitions, and deductions. . . .

To this knowledge which all men carry about with them, and to these sympathies in which, without any other discipline than that of our daily life, we are fitted to take delight, the Poet principally directs his attention. He considers man and nature as essentially adapted to each other, and the mind of man as naturally the mirror of the fairest and most interesting properties of nature. And thus the Poet, prompted by this feeling of pleasure, which accompanies him through the whole course of his studies, converses with general nature, with affections akin to those, which, through labour and length of time, the Man of science has raised up in himself, by conversing with those particular parts of nature which are the objects of his studies. The knowledge both of the Poet and the Man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of our existence, our natural and unalienable inheritance. . . . The Man of science seeks truth as a remote

and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the Poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion. Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all Science. Emphatically may it be said of the Poet, as Shakespeare hath said of man, "that he looks before and after." He is the rock of defence for human nature; an upholder and preserver, carrying everywhere with him relationship and love. In spite of difference of soil and climate, of language and manners, of laws and customs: in spite of things silently gone out of mind, and things violently destroyed; the Poet binds together by passion and knowledge the vast empire of human society, as it is spread over the whole earth, and over all time. The objects of the Poet's thoughts are everywhere; though the eyes and senses of man are, it is true, his favourite guides, yet he will follow wheresoever he can find an atmosphere of sensation in which to move his wings. Poetry is the first and last of all knowledge – it is as immortal as the heart of man.¹



GEORGE CATTIERMOLE, Wordsworth and Scott at Newark Tower in 1831

1. William Wordsworth, *Wordsworth Poetical Works*, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford, 1984), pp. 735-38.

The Prelude

Seldom has a poet described his early schooling in such moving lines. Yet we look in vain for a conventional "school"; Wordsworth's education took place in the great school of Nature and his teacher was the "Wisdom and Spirit of the universe". The passage included here is from Book First of *The Prelude*, "Childhood and School-Time". The poet sings the "seed-time" of his soul, the simple events that marked a normal boyhood. He describes wandering half the night trying to snare woodcock – though his success, he says, was all in "thought and wish". Sometimes he would resort to stealing a bird trapped by another hunter, and he recalls the fearful sound of footsteps running after him.

In spring he would climb the hills looking for birds' nests to plunder. His aim, he admits, was inglorious, "yet the end was not ignoble". For in those solitary moments, dangling perilously above some raven's nest, strange winds blew through his ears, and through his soul.

Now Wordsworth switches from a description of events to reflections on the "teacher" who, taking up the many and discordant elements of a human life, makes them move in harmony and thus fashions the mind of the pupil. The "favoured being", he suggests, is specially moulded by the "visitations", gentle and severe, of conscious Nature.

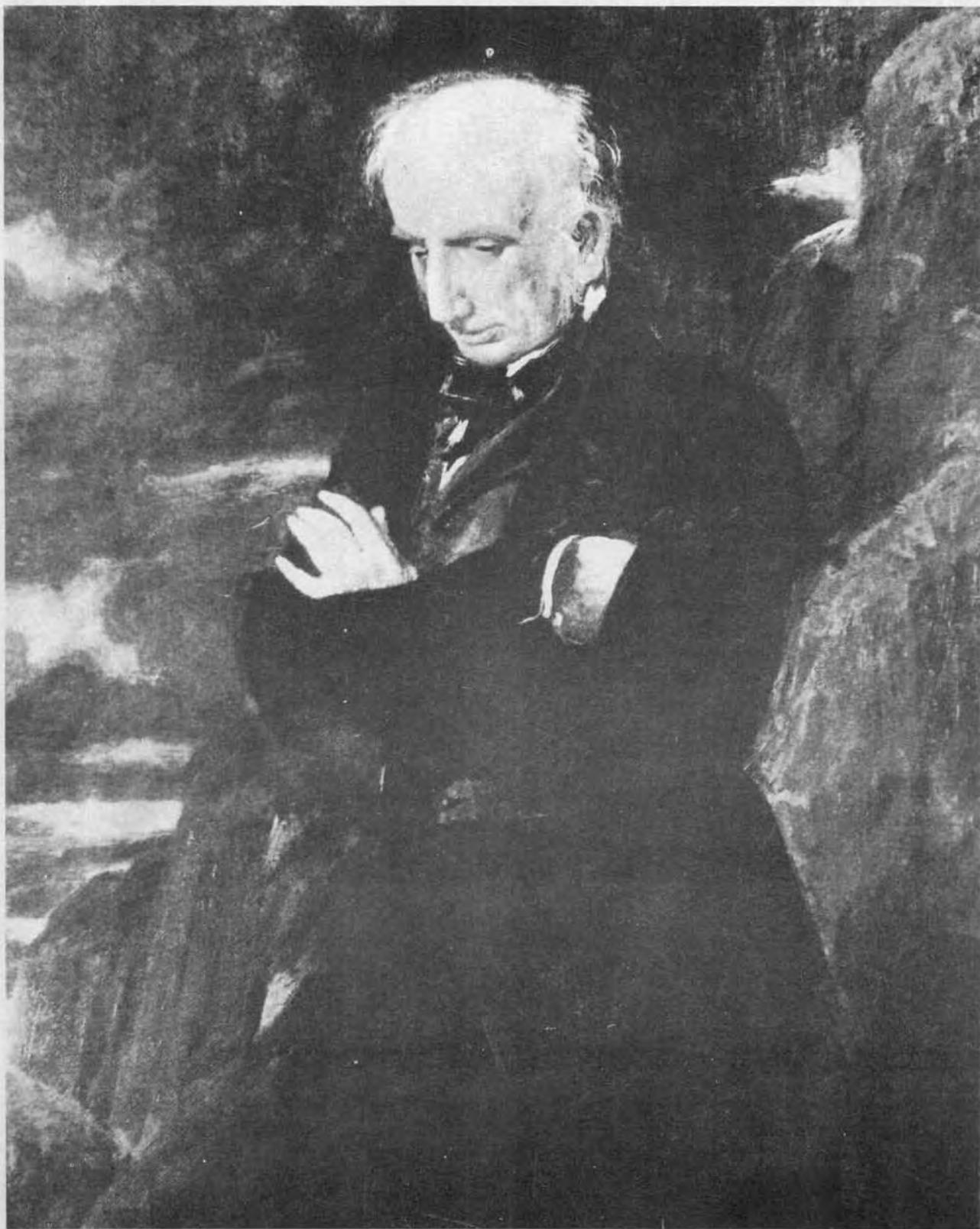
Then he describes another childhood event that marked his life and troubled his dreams long afterwards. Alone by a lake he finds a small shepherd's boat moored in a cave and cannot resist going out for a row on the moonlit water.

He fixes the outline of a crag as a point to steer by. As he approaches that ridge, from behind it a huge cliff rears its head and grows larger, larger . . . and "like a living thing, strode after me". The boy quickly returns the boat to its mooring place and hurries homeward "with grave and serious thoughts". Through this "lesson" he had been given a first glimpse of "huge and mighty forms that do not live like living men".

The next part is again addressed to Wordsworth's "teacher", the one soul that is "the eternity of thought", whose guidance from early childhood "didst . . . intertwine for me the passions that build up our human soul". The method used was often a severe discipline of "both pain and fear", but fear in the sense of profound awe. The result was a purification of feeling and thought, a growing grandeur in the heart.

Wordsworth now describes how, while ice-skating with friends on a wintery night, he would at times leave the circle of boys and skate off alone "to cut across the reflex of a star" reflected in the ice; or, stopping short, he would watch the solitary cliffs continue to wheel round and round him until, at last, "all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep".

In the last stanza Wordsworth sings a paean of praise to his teacher, to the Presences and Visions of Nature, who ministered to him through all his boyish sports, and thus moulded the deep, spiritual soul of the poet.



B. ROBERT HAYDON, William Wordsworth, 1842



QUENTIN DE LA TOUR, Jean-Jacques Rousseau

Holding the Hand of the Pupil

Introduction

How did it come about that a man born poor, losing his mother at birth and soon deserted by his father, afflicted with a painful and humiliating disease, left to wander for twelve years among alien cities and conflicting faiths, repudiated by society and civilization, repudiating Voltaire, Diderot, the Encyclopédie, and the Age of Reason, driven from place to place as a dangerous rebel, suspected of crime and insanity, and seeing, in his last months, the apotheosis of his greatest enemy – how did it come about that this man, after his death, triumphed over Voltaire, revived religion, transformed education, elevated the morals of France, inspired the Romantic movement and the French Revolution, influenced the philosophy of Kant and Schopenhauer, the plays of Schiller, the novels of Goethe, the poems of Wordsworth, Byron, and Shelley, the socialism of Marx, the ethics of Tolstoi, and, altogether, had more effect upon posterity than any other writer or thinker of that eighteenth century in which writers were more influential than they had ever been before? Here, if anywhere, the problem faces us: what is the role of genius in history, of man versus the mass and the state?¹

Thus Will and Ariel Durant open volume 10, Rousseau and Revolution, of the Story of Civilization. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was born in Geneva in 1712. His family was of French origin. The father was a master watchmaker, imaginative and unstable; the mother died within a week of Jean-Jacques' birth. When he was ten his father fled Geneva to escape imprisonment (he had quarrelled with an acquaintance and given him a bloody nose), and from then on the boy lived the life of an orphan. He was apprenticed to an engraver who often beat him severely, and the once happy lad became a morose and unsociable introvert. He consoled himself with books and excursions into the countryside. In 1728 he left Geneva and from then on was to wander through Europe, usually on foot, seeking an elusive happiness. From his youth he was uncomfortable in the society of educated men, shy and wordless before beautiful women, but happy when alone with woods and fields, water and sky.

1. Will Durant, Rousseau and Revolution, The Story of Civilization, vol. 10 (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1967), p. 3.

He made Nature his confidante and in silent speech told her his loves and dreams. He imagined that the moods of Nature entered at times into a mystic accord with his own. Though he was not the first to make men feel the loveliness of Nature, he was her most fervent and effective apostle; half the nature poetry since Rousseau is part of his lineage.¹

Rousseau's formal education ended at the age of twelve, but an aptitude for music led to his becoming a music teacher and composer. One or two of his minor operas were quite popular in their day and his contemporaries considered him a musician of the first order, although today the rating would not be so high. Throughout his life Rousseau was to fall back on music as a means of livelihood, for his writings brought him more persecution than fortune.

In 1741 Rousseau moved to Paris where he made friends with Diderot who commissioned him to write the musical articles for the Encyclopédie. In 1746, when he was thirty-four, he met Thérèse Levasseur, a servant girl in his boarding house. In his Confessions, Rousseau writes of Thérèse:

At first I decided to improve her mind; I was wasting my time. Her mind is as Nature made it; culture and teaching have no effect on it. I do not blush to admit that she has never been able to read properly, though she can write fairly well. . . . She has never been able to recite the twelve months of the year in their proper order, and does not know a single figure, despite all the trouble I have taken to teach her. . . .²

Nonetheless, he lived with her for the rest of his life. She was his most constant and faithful companion in a career strewn with aborted friendships and bitter misunderstandings. In 1768, ten years before his death, perhaps out of gratitude, Rousseau legalized their bond with marriage.

In 1749 Diderot was imprisoned for offensive passages in some of his writings. Walking the ten miles from Paris, Rousseau often went to visit him in prison. On one of those visits he took a journal to read as he walked. In it he came across an announcement of an essay competition sponsored by the Dijon Academy on the question: "Has the restoration of the sciences and the arts contributed to corrupt or to purify morals?" He was tempted to compete, for he was now thirty-seven years old and it was time he made a name for himself. The result was the Discourse on Arts and Science that would spread his name from the salons of Paris throughout Europe. In a letter to his friend

1. Ibid., p. 11.

2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1987), p. 311.

Malesherbes he described that fateful walk:

All at once I felt myself dazzled by a thousand sparkling lights. Crowds of vivid ideas thronged into my mind with a force and confusion that threw me into unspeakable agitation; I felt my head whirling in a giddiness like that of intoxication. A violent palpitation oppressed me. Unable to walk for difficulty in breathing, I sank down under one of the trees by the road, and passed half an hour there in such a condition of excitement that when I rose I saw that the front of my waistcoat was all wet with tears. . . . Ah, if ever I could have written a quarter of what I saw and felt under that tree, with what clarity I should have brought out all the contradictions of our social system! With what simplicity I should have demonstrated that man is by nature good, and that only our institutions have made him bad.¹

The last sentence was to be the theme song of his life. The Discourse took Paris by storm, and he won the first prize. At the height of the Age of Reason, a voice was raised against it, and in the decades to come that voice would triumph.

In the Discourse Rousseau blames the overly-sophisticated arts for many of society's ills. He attacks the philosophers who "sap the foundations of our faith, and destroy virtue". As for science: "Let men learn for once that nature would have preserved them from science as a mother snatches a dangerous weapon from the hands of her child." And he exalts virtue, saying, "Virtue! sublime science of simple minds . . . are not your principles graven upon every heart? Need we do more, to learn your laws, than . . . listen to the voice of conscience? . . . This is the true philosophy, with which we must learn to be content."²

About that time (1752) Quentin de La Tour portrayed Rousseau in pastel, showing him smiling, handsome and well-groomed. Diderot condemned the portrait as being unfaithful to Rousseau's somber temperament, and another contemporary described him thus: "A timid politeness, sometimes . . . so obsequious as to border on humility. Through his fearful reserve distrust was visible; his lowering eyes watched everything with a look full of gloomy suspicion. He seldom entered into conversation, and rarely opened himself to us."³

But it seemed that everything about Rousseau provoked controversy. A visitor who met him a few years later had this to say: "You have no idea how

1. Durant, op. cit., p. 19.

2. Ibid., p. 22.

3. Ibid., p. 26.

*charming his society is, what true politeness there is in his manners, what a depth of serenity and cheerfulness in his talk. . . . To an expression of great mildness he unites a glance of fire, and eyes the vivacity of which was never seen."*¹

The 1750's saw mounting quarrels with Voltaire and Diderot, as his writings struck new notes of defiant independence. In 1754 another essay competition prompted a second discourse, the Discourse on the Origin and Foundations of Inequality Among Men. In it he argues that all economic, political, social and moral inequalities are unnatural and arise when men leave the "state of nature". "Man is naturally good," he declares. This discourse contains the famous line, "If she [Nature] destines man to be healthy, I venture to declare that a state of reflection is a state contrary to nature, and that a thinking man is a depraved animal." Here he also makes a strong statement about the evils of private property:

*The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, bethought himself of saying, This is mine, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. From how many crimes, wars, and murders, from how many horrors and misfortunes, might not anyone have saved mankind, by pulling up the stakes, or filling up the ditch, and crying to his fellows: "Beware of listening to this imposter; you are undone if you once forget that the fruits of the earth belong to us all, and the earth itself to nobody."*²

In 1758 he attacked his former friends, the Encyclopédistes, in a treatise which blasted cultured society. He and Thérèse moved to the country and the next five years were perhaps the most fruitful in his life. His novel La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761) met with immediate and enormous success. It is a study of friendship and love which Rousseau raises to the level of philosophy. In 1762 he published his two most famous works: The Social Contract and Emile. In The Social Contract Rousseau attempts to solve the problem of finding a "form of association which will defend and protect, with the whole common force, the person and goods of each associate, and in which each, while uniting himself to all, may still obey himself alone, and remain free as before." It begins with the bold cry that was to inspire both the American and French revolutions and other revolutions to come in the following centuries: "Man is born free, and he is everywhere in chains."

In Emile Rousseau proposed a revolution in education. The book is a treatise on education in the form of a novel. At a very young age Emile is given

1. Ibid., p. 205.

2. Ibid., p. 30.



J. E. NOCHEZ, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

by his parents into the hands of the teacher, Jean-Jacques (Rousseau uses his own name). The novel traces the course of the boy's education from then until manhood and marriage. Will Durant gives a concise account of Emile:

Rousseau began by rejecting existing methods as teaching, usually by rote, worn-out and corrupt ideas; as trying to make the child an obedient automaton in a decaying society; as preventing the child from thinking and judging for himself; as deforming him into a mediocrity and brandishing platitudes and classic tags. Such schooling suppressed all natural impulses, and made education a torture which every child longed to avoid. But education should be a happy process of natural unfolding, of learning from nature and experience, of freely developing one's capacities into full and zestful living. It should be the "art of training men": the conscious guidance of the growing body to health, of the character to morality, of the mind to intelligence, of the feelings to self-control, sociability, and happiness.

Rousseau would have wanted a system of public instruction by the state, but as public instruction was then directed by the Church, he prescribed a private instruction by an unmarried tutor who would be paid to devote many years of his life to his pupil. The tutor should withdraw the child as much as possible from its parents and relatives, lest it be infected with the accumulated vices of civilization. Rousseau humanized his treatise by imagining himself entrusted with almost full authority over the rearing of a very malleable youth called Emile. It is quite incredible, but Rousseau managed to make these 450 pages the most interesting book ever written on education. When Kant picked up Emile he became so absorbed that he forgot to take his daily walk.

If nature is to be the tutor's guide, he will give the child as much freedom as safety will allow. He will begin by persuading the nurse to free the babe from swaddling clothes, for these impede its growth and the proper development of its limbs. Next, he will have the mother suckle her child instead of turning it over to a wet nurse; for the nurse may injure the child by harshness or neglect, or may earn from it, by conscientious care, the love that should naturally be directed to the mother as the first source and bond of family unity and moral order. Here Rousseau wrote lines that had an admirable effect upon the young mothers of the rising generation:

Would you restore all men to their primal duties? – begin with the mother; the results will surprise you. Every evil follows in the train of this first sin. . . . The mother whose children are out of sight wins scanty esteem; there is no home life, the ties of nature are not strengthened by those of habit; fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters cease to exist. They are almost strangers; how should they love one another? Each thinks of himself.

But when mothers deign to nurse their own children, there will be a reform in morals; natural feeling will revive in every heart; there will be no lack of citizens for the state; this first step will by itself restore

mutual affection. The charms of home are the best antidote of vice. The noisy play of children, which we thought so trying, becomes a delight; mother and father . . . grow dearer to each other; the marriage tie is strengthened. . . . Thus the cure of this one evil would work a widespread reformation; nature would regain her rights. When women become good mothers men will become good husbands and fathers.

Rousseau divided the educational career of his pupil into three periods: twelve years of childhood, eight of youth, and an indeterminate age of preparation for marriage and parentage, for economic and social life. In the first period education is to be almost entirely physical and moral; books and book learning, even religion, must await the development of the mind; till he is twelve. Emile will not know a word of history, and will hardly have heard any mention of God. Education of the body must come first. So Emile is brought up in the country, as the only place where life can be healthy and natural.

Men are not made to be crowded together in anthills, but scattered over the earth to till it. The more they are massed together, the more corrupt they become. Disease and vice are the sure results of overcrowded cities. . . . Man's breath is fatal to his fellows. . . . Man is devoured by our towns. In a few generations the race dies out or becomes degenerate; it needs renewal, and is always renewed from the country. Send your children out to renew themselves; send them to regain in the open field the strength lost in the foul air of our crowded cities.

Encourage the boy to love nature and the outdoors, to develop habits of simplicity, to live on natural foods. Is there any food more delectable than that which has been grown in one's own garden? A vegetarian diet is the most wholesome, and leads to the least ailments.

The indifference of children toward meat is one proof that the taste for meat is unnatural. Their preference is for vegetable foods, milk, pastry, fruit, etc. Beware of changing this natural taste and making your children flesh-eaters. Do this, if not for their health, then for the sake of their character. How can we explain away the fact that great meat-eaters are usually fiercer and more cruel than other men?

After proper food, good habits. Emile is to be taught to rise early. "We saw the sun rise in midsummer, we shall see it rise at Christmas; . . . we are no lie-abeds, we enjoy the cold." Emile washes often, and as he grows stronger he reduces the warmth of the water, till "at last he bathes winter and summer in cold, even in ice water. To avoid risk, this change is slow, gradual, imperceptible." He rarely uses any headgear, and he goes barefoot all the year round except when leaving his house and garden. "Children should be accustomed to cold rather than heat; great

cold never does them any harm if they are exposed to it soon enough." Encourage the child's natural liking for activity. "Don't make him sit still when he wants to run about, nor run when he wants to be quiet. . . . Let him run, jump, and shout to his heart's content." Keep doctors away from him as long as you can. Let him learn by action rather than by books or even by teaching; let him do things himself; just give him materials and tools. The clever teacher will arrange problems and tasks, and will let his pupil learn by hitting a thumb and stubbing a toe; he will guard him from serious injury but not from educative pains.

Nature is the best guide, and should be followed this side of such injury:

Let us lay it down as an incontrovertible rule that the first impulses of nature are always right. There is no original sin in the human heart. . . . Never punish your pupil, for he does not know what it means to do wrong. Never make him say, "Forgive me." . . . Wholly unmoral in his actions, he can do nothing morally wrong, and he deserves neither punishment nor reproof. . . . First leave the germ of his character free to show itself; do not constrain him in anything; so you will better see him as he really is.



L'Ermitage, Rousseau's Residence in Montmorency

However, he will need moral education; without it he will be dangerous and miserable. But don't preach. If you want your pupil to learn justice and kindness, be yourself just and kind, and he will imitate you. "Example! Example! Without it you will never succeed in teaching children anything." Here too you can find a natural basis. Both goodness and wickedness (from the viewpoint of society) are innate in man; education must encourage the good and discourage the bad. Self-love is universal, but it can be modified until it sends a man into mortal peril to preserve his family, his country, or his honor. There are social instincts that preserve the family and the group as well as egoistic instincts that preserve the individual. Sympathy (pitié) may be derived from self-love (as when we love the parents who nourish and protect us), but it can flower into many forms of social behaviour and mutual aid. Hence some kind of conscience seems universal and innate.

Cast your eyes over every nation of the world, peruse every volume of its history; amid all these strange and cruel forms of worship, in this amazing variety of manners and customs, you will everywhere find the same [basic] ideas of good and evil. . . . There is, at the bottom of our hearts, an inborn principle of justice and virtue by which, despite our maxims, we judge our own actions, or those of others, to be good or evil; and it is this principle that we call conscience.

Whereupon Rousseau breaks out into an apostrophe which we shall find almost literally echoed in Kant:

Conscience! Conscience! Divine instinct, immortal voice from heaven; sure guide of a creature ignorant and finite indeed, yet intelligent and free, infallible, judge of good and evil, making man like to God! In thee consists the excellence of man's nature and the morality of his actions; apart from thee I find nothing in myself to raise me above the beasts – nothing but the sad privilege of wandering from one error to another by the help of an unbridled intellect and reason which knows no principle.

So intellectual education must come only after the formation of moral character. Rousseau laughs at Locke's advice to reason with children:

Those children who have been constantly reasoned with strike me as exceptionally silly. Of all human faculties reason . . . is the last and choicest growth – and you would use this for the child's early training? To make a man reasonable is the coping stone of a good education, and yet you profess to train a child through his reason. You begin at the wrong end.

No; we must, rather, retard mental education. "Keep the child's mind [intellect] idle as long as you can." If he has opinions before he is twelve you may be sure they will be absurd. And don't bother him yet with science; this is an endless chase, in which everything that we discover merely adds to our ignorance and our foolish pride. Let your pupil learn by experience the life and workings of nature; let him enjoy the stars without pretending to trace their history.

At the age of twelve intellectual education may begin, and Emile may read a few books. He may make a transition from nature to literature by reading Robinson Crusoe, for that is the story of a man who, on his island, went through the various stages through which men passed from savagery to civilization. But by the age of twenty Emile will not have read many books. He will quite ignore the salons and the philosophes. He will not bother with the arts, for the only true beauty is in nature. He will never be "a musician, an actor, or an author." Rather, he will have acquired sufficient skill in some trade to earn his living with his hands if that should ever be necessary. (Many a tradeless émigré, thirty years later, would regret having laughed, as Voltaire did, at Rousseau's "gentilhomme menuisier" – gentleman carpenter.) In any case Emile (though he is heir to a modest fortune) must serve society either manually or mentally. "The man who eats in idleness what he has not earned is a thief."¹

Emile learns to be a cabinet maker and finally meets Sophie, an idealized country girl, and marries her. At the end of the book he announces to his beloved teacher that he is going to be a father, and will try to educate his child. ". . . But continue to be the teacher of the young teachers," Emile pleads to Jean-Jacques. "Advise and control us; we shall be easily led; as long as I live I shall need you. . . . You have done your duty; teach me to follow your example, while you enjoy the leisure you have earned so well."²

So startlingly revolutionary was Emile, so open in its attack upon the evils of society and of established Christianity, that a decree was issued for Rousseau's arrest, and the Parlement of Paris was told:

That this work appears to have been composed solely with the aim of reducing everything to natural religion, and of developing that criminal system in the author's plan for the education of his pupil; . . .

That he regards all religions as equally good, and as all having their reasons . . .

That in consequence he dares seek to destroy the truth of Sacred Scripture . . . and the authority of the Church . . .

*The author of this book . . . should be arrested as soon as possible. . . .*³

1. Ibid., pp. 179-82.

2. Ibid., p. 187.

3. Ibid., pp. 189-90.

Emile was publicly torn and burned on 11 June 1762. Rousseau had already fled to Switzerland. Nonetheless, this remarkable book set some standards for the good pupil and the good teacher which can inspire us even today.

From the burning of Emile onwards, Rousseau was hounded, or felt himself hounded, from country to country, from home to home. The British philosopher David Hume was struck by Rousseau's writings and offered him refuge in England. Rousseau accepted and he and Thérèse arrived in London in early 1766. But Rousseau quickly succeeded in making an enemy of Hume, and sixteen months later the couple was back in France to continue their continental peregrinations.

Despite a promise that he had made in 1762 to write no more books, Rousseau had been stung into renewed composition by the constant attacks of his enemies. To answer these and all the unkind Paris gossip, he had undertaken the Confessions, which was completed in 1770. In it he set out to win his readers' sympathy, and the sympathy of posterity, which might compensate him for the misunderstandings of which he felt he had been a victim throughout the long misery of his life. His method was to give form to his feelings while at the same time narrating the events of his early years. What was important to him was not so much to tell his history and achievements, as to prove himself a man who, with all his imperfections, was fundamentally honest and good and the innocent victim of persecution. For this purpose he took particular pains to record, and even to exaggerate, the more disgraceful sides of his nature.

I have displayed myself as I was, as vile and despicable when my behaviour was such, as good, generous, and noble when I was so. I have bared my secret soul as Thou thyself hast seen it, Eternal Being! So let the numberless legion of my fellow men gather round me, and hear my confessions. Let them groan at my depravities, and blush for my misdeeds. But let each one of them reveal his heart at the foot of Thy throne with equal sincerity, and may any man who dares, say "I was a better man than he."¹

Such disconcerting frankness is one aspect of the Confessions which has made it fascinating reading ever since. Perhaps no other autobiographer has bared himself so candidly. ". . . so faithfully did Rousseau recall his earliest feelings when at the age of fifty-four he began to write his Confessions," writes one modern critic, "that we have not only a beautifully etched outline of those

1. Rousseau, op. cit., p. 17.

*far-away childhood scenes, but a clear picture as well . . . of the formative influence of those first incidents on the unattractive, hypersensitive small boy that he was, and through him on the European thought of two centuries."*¹

In the last years of Rousseau's life his bitterness diminished. At that time he wrote his most beautiful book, Reveries of a Solitary Walker, harking back to the days when he had wandered alone throughout Europe. In it he suggests that the meditative spirit may always find in Nature a deeply nourishing response to its innermost moods. In the spring of 1778 Rousseau and Thérèse moved from Paris to a cottage in the countryside where he died on 1 July. On July 4 Rousseau was buried on the Isle of Poplars situated in a small lake thirty miles from Paris. For a long time thereafter the isle was a place of pilgrimage; all the world of fashion, even the Queen of France, went to worship at Rousseau's tomb. In 1794 his remains were removed to the Pantheon in Paris and were laid beside those of his old enemy, Voltaire.

Rousseau's influence on Western civilization has been immense. He was the father of the Romantic movement that swept across Europe in the nineteenth century and inspired the poetry of Wordsworth. Thomas Jefferson derived the Declaration of Independence partly from Rousseau, and it is said that Napoleon ascribed the French Revolution more to Rousseau than to any other writer. Not least significant, education still feels repercussions from Emile. The book's educational ideas stimulated Pestalozzi in Switzerland, Maria Montessori in Italy, and John Dewey in America; "progressive education" is part of Rousseau's legacy.

And thus we find that the solitary, brooding and often unhappy genius gave impetus to an educational and cultural movement that would bring hitherto unheard of joy and freedom to generations of children more fortunate than he. Will Durant assesses the importance of Emile:

*After two centuries of laudation, ridicule, and experiment, the world is generally agreed that Emile is beautiful, suggestive, and impossible. Education is a dull subject, for we remember it with pain, we do not care to hear about it, and we resent any further imposition of it after we have served our time at school. Yet of this forbidding topic Rousseau made a charming romance. The simple, direct, personal style captivates us despite some flowery exaltations; we are drawn along and surrender ourselves to the omniscient tutor, though we should hesitate to surrender our sons. . . .*²

1. From J. M. Cohen, Introduction, in Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions*, p. 8.

2. Durant, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

Like his master Plato, he took the child away from the contagion of his parents in the hope that the child, graduating from a saving education, would then be fit to rear his own children. And like Plato, he "laid up in heaven a pattern" of a perfect state or method, so that "he who desires may behold it, and beholding, may govern himself accordingly." He announced his dream, and trusted that somewhere, to some men and women, it would carry inspiration and make for betterment. It did.¹



Rousseau's Arrival in the Elysian Fields, Greeted by Plato, Diogenes, Montaigne and Others

1. Ibid., p. 188.



Jean-Jacques Rousseau

O men, be humane; it is your foremost duty. Be humane to all classes and to all ages, to everything not foreign to mankind. What wisdom is there for you outside of humanity? Love childhood; encourage its sports, its pleasures, its amiable instincts. Who of you has not sometimes looked back with regret on that age when a smile was ever on the lips, when the soul was ever at peace? Why would you take from those little innocents the enjoyment of a time so short which is slipping from them, and of a good so precious which they can not abuse? Why would you fill with bitterness and sorrow those early years so rapidly passing, which will no more return to them than to you?

.....

In order to strengthen the body and to make it grow, Nature resorts to means which ought never to be thwarted. A child must not be constrained to keep still when he wishes to move, nor to move when he wishes to remain quiet. When the will of children has not been spoiled by our fault, they wish nothing that is to no purpose. They must jump, and run, and scream, whenever they have a mind to do so. All their movements are needs of their constitution which is trying to fortify itself; but we should distrust the desires which they themselves have not the power to satisfy. We must then be careful to distinguish the true or natural need from the fancied need which begins to appear, or from that which comes merely from that superabundance of life of which I have spoken.

.....

There is an excess of severity and an excess of indulgence, and both are equally to be avoided. If you allow children to suffer, you expose their health and their life, and make them actually miserable; if you are overcareful in sparing them every sort of discomfort, you are laying up in store for them great wretchedness by making them delicate and sensitive; you remove them from that condition of men to which they will one day return in spite of you. In order not to expose them to some ills of Nature, you are the author of others which she has not provided for them. You will tell me that I fall into the error of those unwise fathers whom I reproach with sacrificing the happiness of children out of consideration for a remote time which may never come. By no means; for the liberty which I grant my pupil amply rewards him for the slight discomforts to which I allow him to be exposed. I see little vagabonds playing in the snow, purple with cold, benumbed and hardly able to move their fingers. They are at liberty to go and warm themselves, but they do not do it; and if they were forced to go they would feel the rigors of constraint a hundred times more than they feel those of the cold. Of what, then, do you complain? Shall I make your child wretched by exposing him only to the discomforts which he is perfectly willing to suffer? I am doing him good at the present moment by leaving him free; and I am doing him a future good by arming him against ills which he ought to endure. If he could choose between being my pupil and yours, do you think he would hesitate for an instant?

.....

The master-work of a good education is to make a reasonable man, and we propose to train up a child through the reason! This is to begin at the end, and

to confound the instrument with the work. If children were capable of reasoning, they would have no need of being educated; but by speaking to them from their earliest years in a language they do not understand, we accustom them to be satisfied with words, to pass judgment on everything said to them, to esteem themselves just as wise as their teachers, and to become disputatious and stubborn; and whatever we expect to obtain from them by reasonable motives we never obtain save by motives of selfishness, fear, or vanity, which we are always obliged to add to the first.

Here is the formula to which may be reduced almost all the moral lessons which are given, or may be given, to children:

Teacher: You must not do that. *Child:* And why must I not do that? *T.* Because it is wrong. *C.* Wrong! What is it to do wrong? *T.* To do what is forbidden. *C.* What is the penalty for doing what is forbidden? *T.* You will be punished for your disobedience. *C.* I will do it in such a way that nothing will be known about it. *T.* You will be watched. *C.* I will hide myself. *T.* You will be questioned. *C.* I will lie. *T.* You must not lie. *C.* Why must I not lie? *T.* Because it is wrong to lie. Etc., etc.

.....

In attempting to convince your pupils of the duty of obedience, you add force and threats to this pretended persuasion, or, still worse, flattery and promises. In this way, then, baited by interest or constrained by force, they pretend to be convinced by reason; they see very clearly that obedience is very advantageous to them, and rebellion harmful, the moment you become aware of either. But as you exact nothing of them which is not disagreeable and as it is always painful to obey the wills of others, they secretly gratify their own wishes, persuaded that they are doing right as long as their disobedience is unknown, but ready to acknowledge that they have done wrong if they are found out, for fear of a greater evil. The ground of duty not being within the compass of their years, there is not a man living who can succeed in making them truly conscious of it; but the fear of punishment, the hope of pardon, importunity, and embarrassment at replying, draw from them all the confessions that are exacted; and we fancy that they have been convinced when they have only been wearied or intimidated.

What follows? In the first place, by imposing on them a duty which they do not feel, you arm them against your tyranny; then you teach them to become insincere, deceitful, untruthful, in order to extort rewards or to escape punishments; and, finally, accustoming them always to cover a secret motive with an apparent motive, you yourselves furnish them the means of imposing on you

constantly, of depriving you of the knowledge of their true character, and on occasion of satisfying you and others with empty words. The laws, you will say, though obligatory on the conscience, also employ restraint in the case of grown men. This I grant; but what are these men but children who have been spoiled by education? This is precisely what we must prevent.

.....

Do not give your pupil any sort of verbal lesson, for he is to be taught only by experience. Inflict on him no species of punishment, for he does not know what it is to be in fault. Never make him ask your pardon, for he does not know how to offend you. Divested of all morality in his actions, he can do nothing which is morally wrong, and which merits either chastisement or reprimand.

I see that the reader, already dismayed, is judging of this child by his own. But he is mistaken. The perpetual restraint under which you hold your pupils irritates their spirits; and the more they are held in constraint under your eyes, the more turbulent they become the moment they regain their liberty. They must needs compensate themselves, when they can, for the harsh constraint in which you hold them. Two pupils from the city will do more mischief in the country than the youth of a whole village. Shut up a little gentleman and a little peasant in the same room, and the first will have overturned and broken everything before the second has stirred from his place. Why is this, unless the one is in haste to abuse a moment of license; while the other, always sure of his liberty, is never in haste to make use of it? And yet, village children, often humored or thwarted, are still very far from the condition in which I would have them kept.

Shall I venture to state, at this point, the most important, the most useful rule, of all education? It is not to gain time, but to lose it. Ye ordinary readers, pardon my paradoxes, for they must be uttered by any one who reflects; and, whatever you may say to it, I would much rather be a man of paradoxes than a man of prejudices. The most dangerous period in human life is the interval between birth and the age of twelve. It is the time when errors and vices germinate, and when, as yet, there is no instrument to destroy them; and when the instrument comes, the roots have gone down so deep that the time has passed for pulling them out. If children leaped at a single bound from the state of nurslings to the age of reason, the current education might be the best for them; but in accordance with natural progress they require an education of a totally different sort.

.....

Cease to blame others for your own faults. The evil which children see corrupts them less than the evil which you teach them. Always preaching, always moralizing, always playing the pedant, for one idea which you give them in the belief that it is good, you give them at the same time twenty others which are worth nothing. Full of what is passing in your own head, you do not see the effect which you are producing in theirs. In that long stream of words with which you are incessantly tiring them, do you think there is not one which is thus wrongly apprehended? Do you think that they do not comment in their way on your diffuse explanations, and that they do not find in them material for constructing a system of their own, which they will find occasion to set up against you?

Listen to a little fellow whom you have just indoctrinated: let him chatter, ask questions, and run on at his ease; and you will be surprised at the strange turn your arguments have taken in his mind. He confounds all you have said, perverts your entire meaning, puts you out of patience, and sometimes dismays you by unforeseen objections. He reduces you to silence or causes you to silence him; and what can he think of that silence on the part of a man who has such love for talking? If he once carries off this advantage and becomes conscious of it, farewell to education. From this moment there is nothing more to be done; he seeks no longer to be instructed, but searches for opportunities to refute your arguments.

.....

Readers, always bear in mind that he who speaks to you is neither a scholar nor a philosopher, but a plain man, a friend of truth, attached to no system or party; a recluse, who, living little among men, has fewer occasions for being imbued with their prejudices, and more time for reflecting on what strikes him when he associates with them. My arguments are founded less on principles than on facts; and I imagine I can not better put you in a condition to judge of them than by frequently reporting to you some instance of the observations which have suggested them to me.

I once spent a few days in the country at the house of a lady who took great interest in the education of her children. One morning as I was present at the lesson of the eldest, his tutor, who had very thoroughly instructed him in ancient history, calling up the story of Alexander, dwelt on the well-known incident of his physician Philip, which has often been represented on canvas, and is surely well worth the trouble.¹ The tutor, a man of worth, made several reflections on the intrepidity of Alexander which did not please me, but which I refrained from combating in order not to discredit him in the estimation of his pupil. At table,

according to the French custom, there was no lack of effort to make the little fellow chatter with great freedom.

After dinner, suspecting from several indications that my young savant had comprehended nothing whatever of the history that had been so finely recited to him, I took him by the hand and we made the tour of the park together. Having questioned him with perfect freedom, I found that he admired the boasted courage of Alexander more than any other one of the company; but can you imagine in what particular he saw his courage? It was merely in the fact of having swallowed at a single draught a disagreeable potion without hesitation, without the least sign of disgust. The poor child, who had been made to take medicine not a fortnight before, and who had swallowed it only after infinite effort, still had the taste of it in his mouth. In his mind, death and poisoning passed for disagreeable sensations, and he could conceive no other poison than senna. However, it must be acknowledged that the firmness of the hero had made a strong impression on his young heart, and that he had resolved to be an Alexander the very first time he should find it necessary to swallow medicine. Without entering into explanations which were evidently beyond his capacity, I confirmed him in these laudable intentions, and I returned laughing in my sleeve at the exalted wisdom of parents and teachers who think that they can teach history to children.

It is easy to put into their mouths the words *kings, empires, wars, conquests, revolutions, and laws*; but when it comes to attaching definite ideas to these words, there will be a long distance between all these explanations and the conversation with Robert the gardener.

.....

Children, who are great imitators, all try their hand at drawing. I would have my pupil cultivate this art, not exactly for the art itself, but for rendering the eye accurate and the hand flexible; and, in general, it is of very little consequence that he understand such or such an exercise, provided he acquire the perspicacity of sense, and the correct habit of body, which are gained from that exercise. I shall take great care, therefore, not to give him a drawing-master who will give him only imitations to imitate, and will make him draw only from drawings. He shall have no master but Nature, and no models but objects. He shall have before his eyes the very original, and not the paper which represents it; he shall draw a house from a house, a tree from a tree, a man from a man, so as to become accustomed to observe bodies and their appearances correctly, and not to take false and conventional imitations for real imitations. I shall discourage him even

from tracing anything from memory in the absence of objects, until, by frequent observations, their exact figures are firmly impressed on his imagination; for fear that, substituting odd and fantastic forms for the truth of things, he lose the knowledge of proportions and the taste for the beauties of Nature.

.....

When I represent to myself a child from ten to twelve years old, healthy, vigorous, and well formed for his age, he does not excite in me an idea which is not agreeable, either for the present or for the future. I see him impetuous, sprightly, animated, without corroding care, without long and painful foresight, wholly absorbed in his actual existence, and enjoying a plenitude of life which seems bent on reaching out beyond him. I look forward to another period of life, and I see him exercising the senses, the mind, and the powers which are being developed within him from day to day, and of which he gives new evidences from moment to moment. I contemplate the child, and he pleases me; I imagine the man, and he pleases me more; his ardent blood seems to add warmth to my own; I seem to live with his life, and his vivacity makes me young again.

.....

We are fond of forming happy predictions of children, and we always feel regret for that stream of absurdities which almost always comes to overthrow the hopes that we have founded on some happy witticism which has chanced to fall from their lips. If my pupil rarely furnishes such hopes, he will never occasion this regret; for he never speaks a useless word, and does not exhaust himself on babble which he knows receives no attention. His ideas are limited, but they are clear; if he knows nothing by heart, he knows much by experience; if he reads less than other children in our books, he reads better in the book of Nature; his mind is not in his tongue, but in his head; he has less memory than judgment; he knows how to speak but one language, but he understands what he says; and if he does not speak as well as others, he has the merit of doing better than they do.

.....

Emile has arrived at the end of the period of infancy, has lived the life of a child, and has not bought his perfection at the cost of his happiness. On the contrary, they have lent each other mutual aid. While acquiring all the reason suited to his age, he has been as happy and as free as his constitution permitted

him to be. If the fatal scythe has come to cut down in him the flower of our hopes, we shall not have to mourn at the same time his life and his death, nor to intensify our griefs by the recollection of those which we have caused him; and we can say to ourselves that he has at least enjoyed his childhood, and that we have caused him to lose nothing of all that Nature had given him.

The great disadvantage of this primary education is that none but clear-sighted men take account of it, and that, in a child educated with such care, vulgar eyes see nothing but a vagabond. A teacher thinks of his own interest rather than that of his pupil. He endeavors to prove that he does not waste his time, and that he earns the money which is paid him; and so he furnishes the child with acquisitions capable of easy display, and which can be exhibited at will. Provided it can easily be seen, it matters not whether what he learns is useful. He stores his memory with this rubbish, without discernment and without choice. When the time comes for examining the child, he is made to display his wares; he brings them out, and we are satisfied; then he ties up his bundle and goes his way. My pupil is not so rich; he has no bundle to display, and has nothing to show but himself. Now, a child can no more be seen in a moment than a man. Where are the observers who can seize at the first glance the traits which characterize him? There are such, but they are few; and out of a hundred fathers not one of this number will be found.

Too many questions weary and disgust people in general, and especially children. At the end of a few minutes their attention flags; they no longer hear what a persistent questioner requires of them, and no longer reply save at random. This manner of examining them is vain and pedantic. It often happens that a random word portrays their mind and heart better than a long discourse could do; but care must be taken that this word is neither dictated nor fortuitous. We must have good judgment ourselves in order to appreciate the judgment of a child.

I once heard the late Lord Hyde relate an anecdote concerning one of his friends, who, having returned from Italy after an absence of three years, wished to examine the progress of his son, a boy nine or ten years of age. In company with the child and his tutor, they were walking one afternoon where pupils were engaged in the sport of flying their kites. As they were going along, the father said to his son, "Where is the kite whose shadow we see yonder?" Without hesitating or raising his head, the child replied, "On the highway." And in fact, added Lord Hyde, the highway was between us and the sun. At this reply the father embraced his son, and, finishing the examination at that point, continued his walk without saying a word. The next day he sent the tutor a life-pension in addition to his salary.

What a man that father was! And what a son was promised him.² The question was precisely adapted to the child's age. The reply was very simple; but observe what accuracy of childish judgment it supposes. It is thus that Aristotle's pupil³ tamed the celebrated steed⁴ which no horseman could subdue.

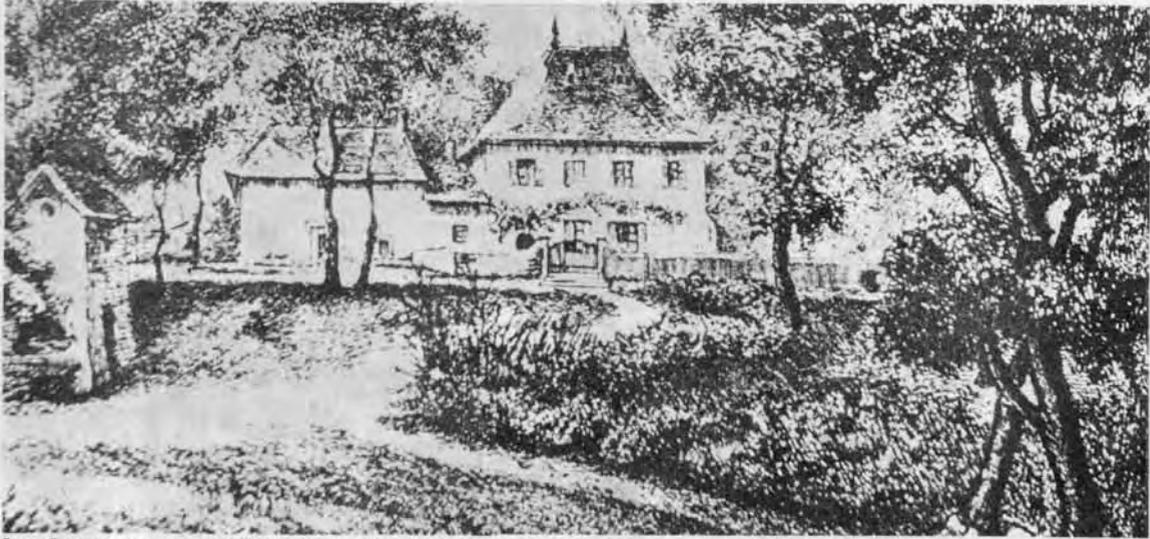
.....

Always recollect that the spirit of my system is not to teach the child many things, but never to allow anything to enter his mind save ideas which are accurate and clear. Though he learn nothing, it is of little importance to me provided he is not deceived; and I furnish his head with truths only to protect him from errors which he would learn in their place. Reason and judgment come slowly; but prejudices rush forward in flocks, and it is from these that he must be preserved. But if you make knowledge your sole object, you enter a bottomless and shoreless sea, everywhere strewn with rocks, and you will never extricate yourself from it. When I see a man smitten with the love of knowledge allow himself to be seduced by its charm, and to run from one subject to another without knowing how to stop, I fancy I see a child upon the sea-shore gathering shells. At first, he loads himself with them; then, tempted by those he sees beyond, he throws them away and picks up others, until, weighed down by their number, and not knowing what to select, he ends by throwing all away and returns empty-handed.

During the period of infancy the time was long, and we sought only to lose it, for fear of making a bad use of it. It is now the very reverse of all this, and we have not time enough in which to do all that is useful. Reflect that the passions are approaching, and that the moment they knock at the door your pupil will no longer be attentive save to them. The peaceful epoch of intelligence is so short, it passes so rapidly, it has so many necessary uses, that it is folly to imagine that it suffices to make a child wise. It is not proposed to teach him the sciences, but to give him a taste for them, and methods for learning them, when this taste shall be better developed. Without doubt this is the fundamental principle of all good education.

This is also the time for accustoming the pupil, little by little, to give consecutive attention to the same subject; but it is never constraint, but always pleasure or desire, which should produce this attention. Great care should be taken that attention does not become a burden to him, and that it does not result in *ennui*. Therefore, keep a watchful eye over him, and, whatever may happen, abandon everything rather than have his tasks become irksome; for how much he learns is of no account, but only that he does nothing against his will.

If he asks you questions, reply just enough to stimulate his curiosity, but not enough to satisfy it. Above all, when you see that, instead of asking questions for instruction, he undertakes to beat the bush and to annoy you with silly questions, stop on the instant, for you may then be sure that he no longer cares for the thing itself, but merely to subject you to his interrogations. You must have less regard to the words which he pronounces than for the motive which prompts him to speak. This caution, hitherto less necessary, becomes of the utmost importance the moment the child begins to reason.



Les Charmettes, one of Rousseau's Residences

We were observing the position of the forest at the north of Montmorency when he interrupted me by his importunate question, *Of what use is that?* You are right, I say to him; we must think of that at our leisure; and if we find that this work is good for nothing, we will not resume it, for we have no lack of useful amusements. We occupy ourselves with something else, and the question of geography is not raised for the rest of the day.

On the following morning I propose to him a walk before breakfast; he asks nothing better. Children are always ready for a ramble, and this one has good legs. We enter the forest, we stroll through the meadows, we become lost, we no longer know where we are; and when we attempt to return we are no longer able to find our way back. Time passes, the heat increases, and we are hungry; we hurry on, we wander about to no purpose from place to place, and everywhere we find but woods, walks, plains, but no information for finding our way. Very warm, very weary, very hungry, the only purpose served by our wanderings is to lead us farther astray. We finally seat ourselves in order to rest and deliberate.

Emile, whom I suppose to be educated as other children are, does not deliberate; he weeps. He does not know that we are at the gate of Montmorency, and that a simple hedge conceals it from us; but this hedge is a forest for him; a man of his stature is buried in bushes.

After a few moments' silence, I say to him with a disturbed air: "My dear Emile, how shall we proceed to get out of this place?"

EMILE (*dripping with sweat and weeping bitterly*). "I know nothing about it. I am tired, hungry, and thirsty; I can do nothing more."

JEANJACQUES. "Do you fancy I am in a better condition than you are, and do you think that I should fail to weep if I could dine on my tears? It is not a question of weeping, but of finding our way. Let us see your watch; what time is it?"

E. "It is noon, and I have not had my breakfast."

JJ. "That is true; it is noon, and I, too, have had nothing to eat."

E. "Oh, then you too must be hungry!"

JJ. "The misfortune is that my dinner will not come to find me here. It is noon, and it is exactly the hour when we were observing yesterday from Montmorency the position of the forest. If we could also observe from the forest the position of Montmorency? . . ."

E. "Oh, yes; but yesterday we saw the forest, and from this place we do not see the city."

JJ. "This is the difficulty. . . . If we could do without seeing it and still find its position? . . ."

E. "O my good friend!"

JJ. "Did we not say that the forest was? . . ."

E. "At the north of Montmorency."

JJ. "Consequently, Montmorency should be . . ."

E. "At the south of the forest."

JJ. "We have a means of finding the north at noon."

E. "Yes, by the direction of a shadow."

JJ. "But the south?"

E. "How shall we find it?"

JJ. "The south is opposite the north."

E. "That is true; we have only to look opposite the shadow. Oh! there is the south! There is the south! Surely Montmorency is in that direction; let us look for it there."

JJ. "Perhaps you are right; let us take this path through the woods."

E. (*clapping his hands and shouting for joy*). "Ah! I see Montmorency! There it is before us, in plain sight. Let us go to breakfast, let us go to dinner, let us make haste. Astronomy is good for something."



Illustration of Emile, after Moreau

Never direct the child's attention to anything which he can not see. While humanity is almost unknown to him, as you are not able to raise him to the state of man, lower man for him to the state of childhood. While thinking of what would be useful to him at another age, speak to him only of that whose utility he sees at present. Moreover, let there never be comparisons with other children; as soon as he begins to reason let him have no rivals, no competitors, even in running. I would a hundred times rather he would not learn what he can learn only through jealousy or through vanity. But every year I will mark the progress he has made; I will compare it with that which he makes the following year. I will say to him: "You have grown so many inches; there is the ditch which you jumped and the load which you carried; here is the distance you threw a stone and the course you ran at one breath. Let us see what you can do now." In this way I excite him without making him jealous of any one. I would have him surpass himself, and he ought to do it. I see no harm in his being his own rival.

.....

To what an abundance of interesting objects may we not thus turn the curiosity of the pupil without ever quitting the real and material relations which are within his reach or allowing a single idea to arise in his mind which he can not comprehend! The art of the teacher consists in never allowing his observations to bear on minutiae which serve no purpose, but ever to confront him with the wide relations which he must one day know in order to judge correctly of the order, good and bad, of civil society. He must know how to adapt the conversations with which he amuses his pupil to the turn of mind which he has given him. A given question which might not arouse the attention of another would torment Emile for six months.

We go to dine at an elegant house, and find all the preparations for a feast – many people, many servants, many dishes, and a table-service elegant and fine. All this apparatus of pleasure and feasting has something intoxicating in it which affects the head when we are not accustomed to it. I foresee the effect of all this on my young pupil. While the repast is prolonged, while the courses succeed each other, and while a thousand noisy speeches are in progress around the table, I approach his ear and say to him: "Through how many hands do you really think has passed all that you see on this table before it reaches it?" What a host of ideas do I awaken in his mind by these few words! In an instant all the vapors of delirium are expelled. He dreams, he reflects, he calculates, he becomes restless. While the philosophers, enlivened by the wine, and perhaps by their companions, talk nonsense and play the child, he philosophizes all alone in his

corner. He interrogates me, but I refuse to reply, and put him off until another time; he becomes impatient, forgets to eat and drink, and longs to be away from the table in order to converse with me at his ease. What an object for his curiosity! What a text for his instruction! With a sound judgment which nothing has been able to corrupt, what will he think of luxury when he finds that all the regions of the world have been put under contribution, that twenty millions of hands, perhaps, have been at work for a long time to create the material for this feast, and that it may have cost the lives of thousands of men?

.....

I insist absolutely that Emile shall learn a trade. "An honorable trade, at least," you will say. What does this term mean? Is not every trade honorable that is useful to the public? I do not want him to be an embroiderer, a gilder, or a varnisher, like Locke's gentleman; neither do I want him to be a musician, a comedian, or a writer of books.⁵ Except these professions, and others which resemble them, let him choose the one he prefers; I do not assume to restrain him in anything. I would rather have him a cobbler than a poet; I would rather have him pave the highways than to decorate china. But, you will say, "Bailiffs, spies, and hangmen are useful people." It is the fault only of the government that they are so. But let that pass; I was wrong. It does not suffice to choose a useful calling; it is also necessary that it does not require of those who practice it qualities of soul which are odious and incompatible with humanity. Thus, returning to our first statement, let us choose an honorable calling; but let us always recollect that there is no honor without utility.

This is the spirit which should guide us in the choice of Emile's occupation, though it is not for us to make this choice, but for him; for, as the maxims with which he is equipped preserve in him a natural contempt for useless things, he will never wish to consume his time in work of no value, and he knows no value in things save that of their real utility. He must have a trade which might serve Robinson in his island.

By causing to pass in review before a child the productions of Nature and art, by stimulating his curiosity and following it where it leads, we have the advantage of studying his tastes, his inclinations, and his propensities, and to see glitter the first spark of his genius, if he has genius of any decided sort. But a common error, and one from which we must preserve ourselves, is to attribute to the ardor of talent the effect of the occasion, and to take for a marked inclination toward such or such an art the imitative spirit which is common to man and monkey, and which mechanically leads both to wish to do whatever they see done without

knowing very well what it is good for. The world is full of artisans, and especially of artists, who have no natural talent for the art which they practice, and in which they have been urged forward from their earliest age, either through motives of expedience, or through an apparent but mistaken zeal which would have also led them toward any other art if they had seen it practiced as soon. One hears a drum and thinks himself a general; another sees a house built and wishes to be an architect. Each one is drawn to the trade which he sees practiced, when he believes it to be held in esteem.

.....

When Emile learns his trade I wish to learn it with him; for I am convinced that he will never learn anything well save what we learn together. We then put ourselves in apprenticeship, and we do not assume to be treated as gentlemen, but as real apprentices, who are not such for the sport of the thing. Why should we not be apprentices in real earnest? The Czar Peter was a carpenter at the bench and a drummer in his own army; do you think that this prince was not your equal by birth or by merit? You understand that I am not saying this to Emile, but to you, whoever you may be. Unfortunately, we can not spend all our time at the bench. We are not only apprenticed workmen, but we are apprenticed men; and our apprenticeship to this last trade is longer and more difficult than the other. How, then, shall we proceed? Shall we have a master of the plane one hour a day, just as we have a dancing-master? No; we shall not be apprentices, but disciples; and our ambition is not so much to learn cabinet-making as to rise to the position of cabinet-maker. I am therefore of the opinion that we should go, at least once or twice a week, to spend a whole day with the master workman; that we should rise when he does; that we should be at work before he comes; that we should eat at his table, work under his orders, and that, after having had the honor to sup with his family we, if we wish, should return to rest on our hard beds. This is how we learn several trades at once, and how we employ ourselves at manual labor without neglecting the other apprenticeship.

If I have been understood thus far, it ought to be plain how, with the habitual exercise of the body and labor of the hands, I insensibly give to my pupil a taste for reflection and meditation in order to counterbalance in him the indolence which would result from his indifference for the judgments of men and from the repose of his passions. He must work as a peasant and think as a philosopher in order not to be as lazy as a savage. The great secret of education is to make the exercises of the body and of the mind always serve as a recreation for each other.

.....

Emile is industrious, temperate, patient, firm, and full of courage. His imagination, in nowise enkindled, never magnifies dangers for him. He is sensible to few evils, and knows how to suffer with constancy because he has not learned to contend against destiny. With respect to death, he does not yet know clearly what it is; but accustomed to submit without resistance to the law of necessity, when he must die he will die without a groan and without a struggle; and this is all that Nature permits in that moment abhorred by all. To live in freedom and in but slight dependence on things human is the best means of learning how to die.

In a word, Emile has every virtue which is related to himself. In order to have the social virtues also, all he lacks is to know the relations which exact them; he lacks merely the knowledge which his mind is wholly prepared to receive.

He considers himself without regard to others, and thinks it well that others are not thinking at all of him. He exacts nothing of any one, and believes that he is in debt to nobody. He is alone in human society, and counts only on himself. He has also a greater right than any other to count upon himself, for he is all that one can be at his age. He has no faults, or has only those which are inevitable to us; he has no vices, or only those against which no man can protect himself. He has a sound body, agile limbs, a just and unprejudiced mind, and a heart that is free and without passions. Self-love, the first and the most natural of all, is as yet scarcely excited in it. Without disturbing the repose of any one, he has lived as contented, happy, and free as Nature has permitted. Do you think that a child who has thus reached his fifteenth year has lost the years preceding?

From Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile*, trans. William H. Payne (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1904).

References

1. The same incident is related by Montaigne: "Alexander having been informed by a letter from Parmenion that Philip, his most esteemed physician, had been bribed by Darius to poison him, at the same moment that he gave to Philip Parmenion's letter to read, drank the beverage which he had presented to him."
2. A letter of Rousseau to Madame Latour de Franqueville, September 26, 1762, informs us that this young man was the Count de Gisors.
3. Alexander the Great.
4. Bucephalus. The horse was frightened only at his own shadow. The young Alexander discovered the cause and the remedy.
5. "You yourself are one," some one will say. I am, to my sorrow, I acknowledge; and my faults, which I think I have sufficiently expiated, are no reasons why others should have similar ones. I do not write to excuse my faults, but to prevent my readers from imitating them.



- Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi -

A Lover of Children

Introduction

... a very ugly man with bristly hair, a face lined with smallpox scars and covered with freckles, an irregular and prickly beard, with no neckerchief; a man whose badly buttoned trousers drooped over his socks as these did over his rough shoes; a man with a panting, jerky walk, with eyes which at one moment sparkled, wide open, and at another closed in inward contemplation, with features which sometimes reflected a deep sorrow and then sometimes the purest joy, with a voice which was now hesitating and now impetuous, now soft and harmonious, and now storming like thunder... We all loved him, as he loved us all; we loved him so deeply that we were sad when we did not see him for a time, and when he returned we could not turn our eyes away from him.¹

This is how a former pupil describes Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, whose name has now almost faded into oblivion. In eighteenth century Europe, however, he was an almost legendary, Albert Schweitzer-like figure, a guest of kings and a subject of impassioned debate.

Pestalozzi was born in Zurich on 12 January 1746, the second of three surviving children. The early death of his father, which left the family in straitened circumstances, had a great influence on Pestalozzi's education, since a very close relationship between mother and child developed. To the lack of the firm guiding hand of a father, Pestalozzi attributed his over-sensitive, even unstable character; his tendency towards single-mindedness also showed up early. To quote his own words:

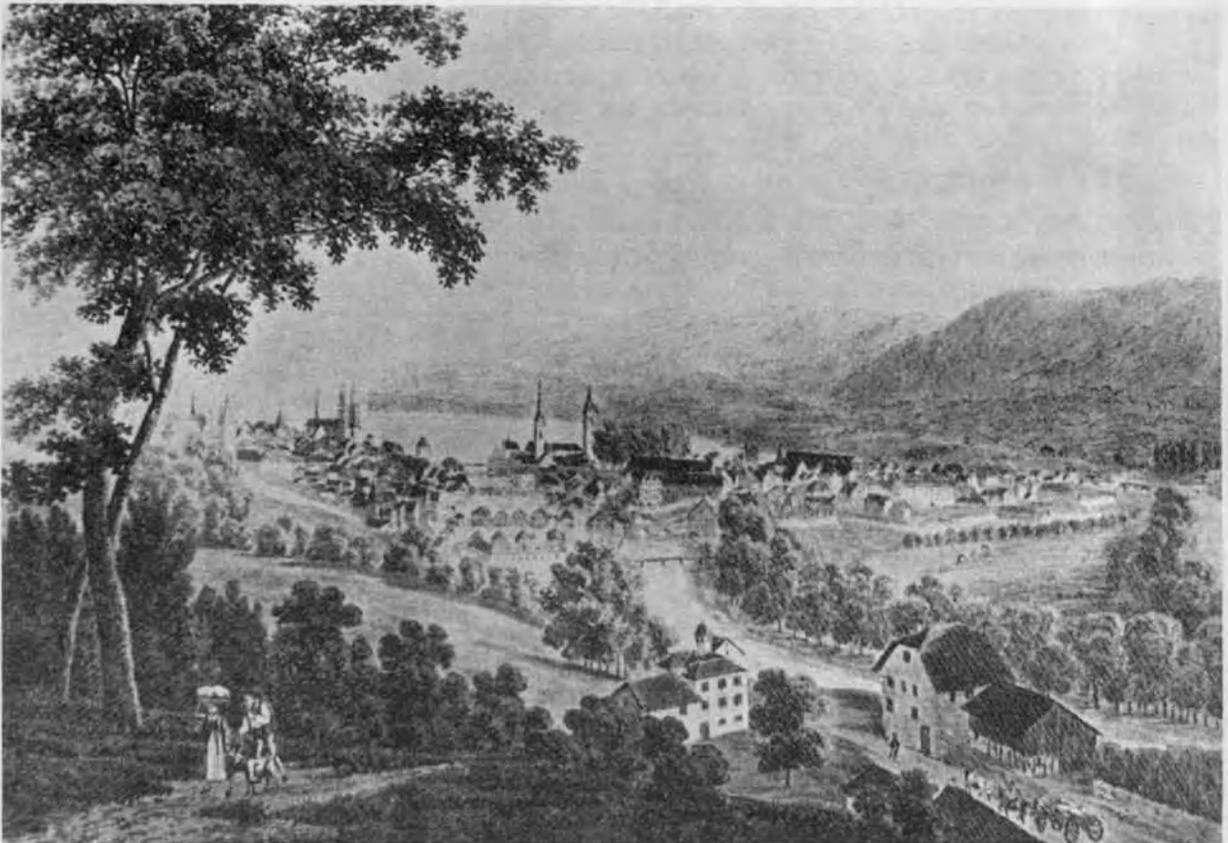
From the cradle I was delicate and weakly; from a very early age I distinguished myself in the vigour with which I developed some of my faculties and inclinations; but just as I took a warm interest in certain objects and points of view, I equally showed myself, at just as early an age, extremely inattentive and indifferent to everything which was not in some way actively connected with one of the objects temporarily occupying my fancy.²

1. Michael Heafford, *Pestalozzi: His Thought and its Relevance Today* (London: Methuen, 1967), p. 34.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

He was a good pupil at school, at least in regard to subjects which interested him. He grew into a young man with radical views who joined with other young men of Zurich in a "society" advocating widespread political and social reform. (It should be remembered that Zurich was a city-state at the time, strictly controlled by a few dominant families where a large number of inhabitants were deprived of political rights.) Pestalozzi was very much impressed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, whose book Emile had appeared in 1762. Rousseau's concept of "natural education", his deep aversion for book-learning, his idea that a child grows up through definite stages, had a deep influence on him. In the preface to Emile, Rousseau writes:

We do not know children: with the false ideas we have of them, the further we proceed the more we go astray. The wisest concentrate on that which it is important for grown-ups to know, without considering what children are capable of learning. They are always looking for the man in the child without thinking of what he is before he becomes a man.¹



1. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

ZURICH, Engraving by F. Hegi, 1810

Pestalozzi felt very much in tune with Rousseau's plea for reform. As he says himself:

I compared the education which I had received in a corner of my mother's living-room and in the school class which I had attended with that which Rousseau claimed and demanded for his Emile. Home education as well as public education everywhere and in all classes of society appeared to me to be exactly like a crippled figure which would be able to find a cure for the wretchedness of its existing condition in the fine ideas of Rousseau, and that it was there that it should seek this cure.¹

Although keen to improve social conditions in Zurich, he was not sure of how to go about it. He first thought of entering holy orders, then of becoming a lawyer, and finally concluded that to attain his social aims he should try to improve the methods of popular education. Even then, he remained undecided for quite some time.

I knew the way which I planned to take as little as I knew myself and had no idea where it would lead me. As I was then, I was not able even to imagine it and in blind enthusiasm at my newly adopted plan, I made the decision to devote myself whole-heartedly to agriculture.²

Pestalozzi tried to combine agriculture and education. He first decided to study agricultural methods and went to work with a patrician from Berne, J.R. Tschiffeli, at his experimental farm. Tschiffeli wanted to increase the productivity of the land as a means of promoting the well-being of the peasants. He succeeded in this endeavour, but at great financial cost, a fact which Pestalozzi was not aware of when he tried to imitate him. He bought a piece of land and built a home on it that he called the Neuhof (New Farm).

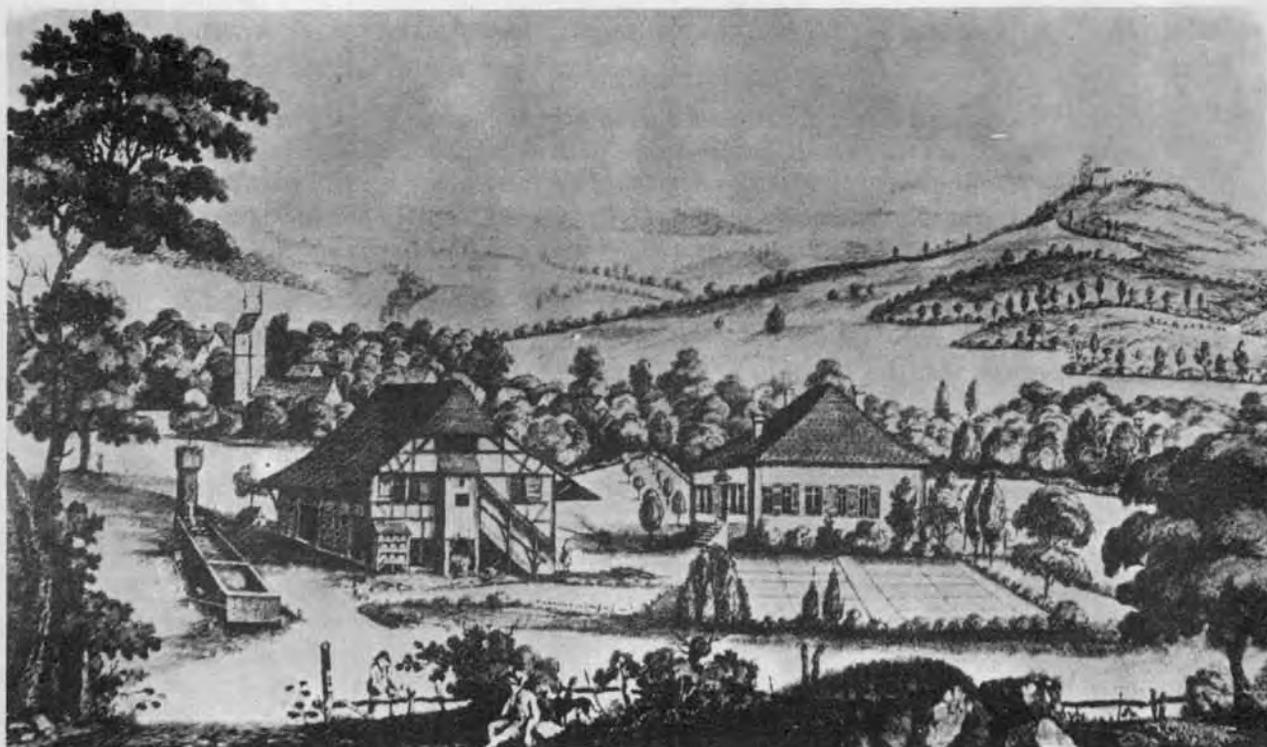
Pestalozzi's situation when he began his first experiment was already quite difficult. He was having trouble paying for the land, and moreover had to deal with an unscrupulous agent. The land was not fertile and needed a lot of money for improvement. His wife, Anna Schulthess, was pregnant and in poor health. Yet Pestalozzi was undaunted. He had a great sense of mission which made him face squarely all obstacles, including his own deficiencies. He felt that he was called to serve his country and humanity:

I had absolutely nothing in my favour except one deep-rooted purpose, one irrevocable motto: I will, – one belief which no experience could shatter: I can – and an indefinable feeling within me: I must.³

1. Ibid., pp. 5-6.

2. Ibid., p. 6.

3. Ibid., p. 7.



NEUHOF, Engraving by J. Aschmann, 1780

He had once written to Anna, "I will forget my own life, the tears of my wife and my children in order to be of service to my fatherland."¹

They moved to the Neuhof early in 1771, and were immediately beset by financial difficulties. Nevertheless, he soon decided to take in poor children, hoping that they would be able to produce enough for their upkeep by helping on the farm. The first children arrived in 1774. There were twenty-two by 1776 and thirty-seven in 1778. They were given elementary instruction in reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. The boys were given simple agricultural jobs and weaving to do, the girls were set to spinning, gardening and cooking; initially there were many difficulties and little response from children and parents, but after some time the situation improved, and the children became more cheerful and healthy.

It is an indescribable joy to see boys and girls, who had been wretched, growing and thriving, to see peace and satisfaction in their faces, to train their hands to work, and to lift their hearts towards their Creator . . .²

1. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

But the growing financial problems forced him to sell some of the land in 1779. In 1780 he was forced to send the children away. He himself recognized that the ultimate failure was partly due to his tendency to precipitate action, "to try and climb to the top rung of the ladder leading to my aims, before I had set my foot firmly on the bottom rung."¹ On the educational level, the experiment had been a success. He had proved the validity of the two principles of education which he considered most essential for the child: security and genuine affection.

*This remarkable attitude was completely at odds with the pedagogy prevalent at that time, and for twenty years Pestalozzi lived in a sort of personal no-man's land. The failure of his enterprise had shattered all the confidence people had in him. Yet, although depressed, he was unruffled: "My conviction that basically my aims were correct was never stronger than at that point in time when they were outwardly a complete failure."² To earn a living for his family, he reluctantly started writing, discovered that he had talent and published several essays. In the first one, *The Evening Hour of a Hermit*, he conveyed his conviction that man can be changed and the nature of society radically reformed by education. The book that won him sudden fame was a story about village life which, ". . . I know not how, flowed from my pen and developed out of itself without my having formed any plan of it in my head."³ This was to be *Part One of Lienhard and Gertrud*, a story where an official exploiting the villagers is finally defeated by Lienhard's wife, Gertrud, who appeals to the Squire against the corrupt bailiff. The book was an instant success.*

This success, coming as it did after the resounding failure of the Neuhof, helped Pestalozzi to gain back in some measure the confidence of his contemporaries. But he himself was hardly satisfied with his fame as a writer.

I was not brought up to be a writer. I feel at home when I have a child in my arms, or when a man who feels for humanity stands before me. And then I forget the poor truths fashioned by the pen. . . . For of everything which does not interest me as being indispensable to mankind I am unconcerned and the most ignorant of men.⁴

Furthermore, Pestalozzi felt that the real meaning of his story had been misunderstood.

He wrote other books and essays but they did not meet with the same popular

1. *Ibid.*, p. 11.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

success, and he found it increasingly difficult to earn a living. He corresponded with powerful political figures outside Switzerland, hoping to convince them of his ideas, but even when they showed interest, they did nothing to promote his methods. In 1792, Pestalozzi was proclaimed an honorary French citizen by the French Parliament, but after having looked upon the French Revolution with hope, he became a disillusioned spectator of the growing violence and continuous upheavals.

The twenty years that Pestalozzi spent as a writer were very frustrating for a man who wanted so much to do something for his fellow human beings. He wrote in 1793:

It is indeed true that the existence of him who bears the interest of humanity within his breast is blessed. But if, as helpless as a lame man by the road, he must spend his life calling to blind passers-by: "Take me on your shoulders and I will show you the way which you cannot see", and in his whole long life not a single one takes him on his shoulders, then he is to be pitied.¹

The impossibility of action, however, led him to look closely at his theories as well as his own capacities, and he was later to recognize the value of this arid period for his own development: "The sufferings of my life were of more value to me than ever its enjoyments can be. The sufferings of my life made that mature in me which would never have matured if I had been happy."²

At long last, Pestalozzi got the opportunity he was waiting for. A new federal government set up in Switzerland by the French offered Pestalozzi the charge of a home for orphans and homeless children at Stans, which had nearly been destroyed by battles between Swiss patriots and the occupying French Army. Pestalozzi accepted the proposal enthusiastically. He was fifty, and felt it was his last chance, the "death or success of my aims". He moved into a half-built convent, still swarming with masons and carpenters. There were many difficulties. Not only was he considered as a representative of a highly unpopular central government, he was a Protestant in a predominantly Catholic area. He had hardly settled when the children began to arrive. Soon there were eighty, some from good families, some destitute, a number of them quite violent. Pestalozzi threw himself body and soul into the task of winning their confidence.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 16.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 17.

From morning to evening I was virtually alone in their midst. Everything which benefited their bodies and souls came from my hand. Every piece of help, every form of succour in need which they received came directly from me. My hand lay in theirs; my eyes rested on theirs. My tears flowed with theirs and my smile accompanied theirs. They were outside the world, outside Stans, they were with me and I with them. Their soup was my soup, their drink, my drink. I had nothing, no servants, no friends, no helpers with me, I had only them. If they were healthy, I stood in their midst, if they were ill I was at their side. In the evening I was the last to go to bed, in the morning I was the first to get up.¹

The dampness of the convent caused many children to fall sick and Pestalozzi was blamed for it by their parents. It took many months to manifest, but finally Pestalozzi won the confidence of most of the children. "They felt that through me they were getting further than other children; they realized the inward connection between my guidance and their future life."²

And finally, by early 1799 a triumphant cry: "It is succeeding, it is succeeding in every way. I am blotting out the disgrace of my life. . . . I see and feel that my destiny is equal to that of other men, I myself have become a human being again and reconcile myself so gladly with my race."³

Pestalozzi's success was based on a relation of love with the children. With love he found that the number and age of the pupils did not matter; they were ready to help each other. Through his devotion to the children he was able to stimulate the desire to learn. He had realized that the actual process of learning was more than a means to an end: it was something of value, interest and enjoyment in itself. In June 1799, unfortunately, the convent was turned into a military hospital and the experiment came to an end. But Pestalozzi had proved to himself the validity of his approach to education.

A few weeks later, he started to teach in a school in Burgdorf, but his unconventional methods resulted in a crisis which led to his departure from the school. Finally, in October 1800, Pestalozzi was able to run his own institute with an assistant and again met with success. At the beginning of 1801, he wrote to a friend:

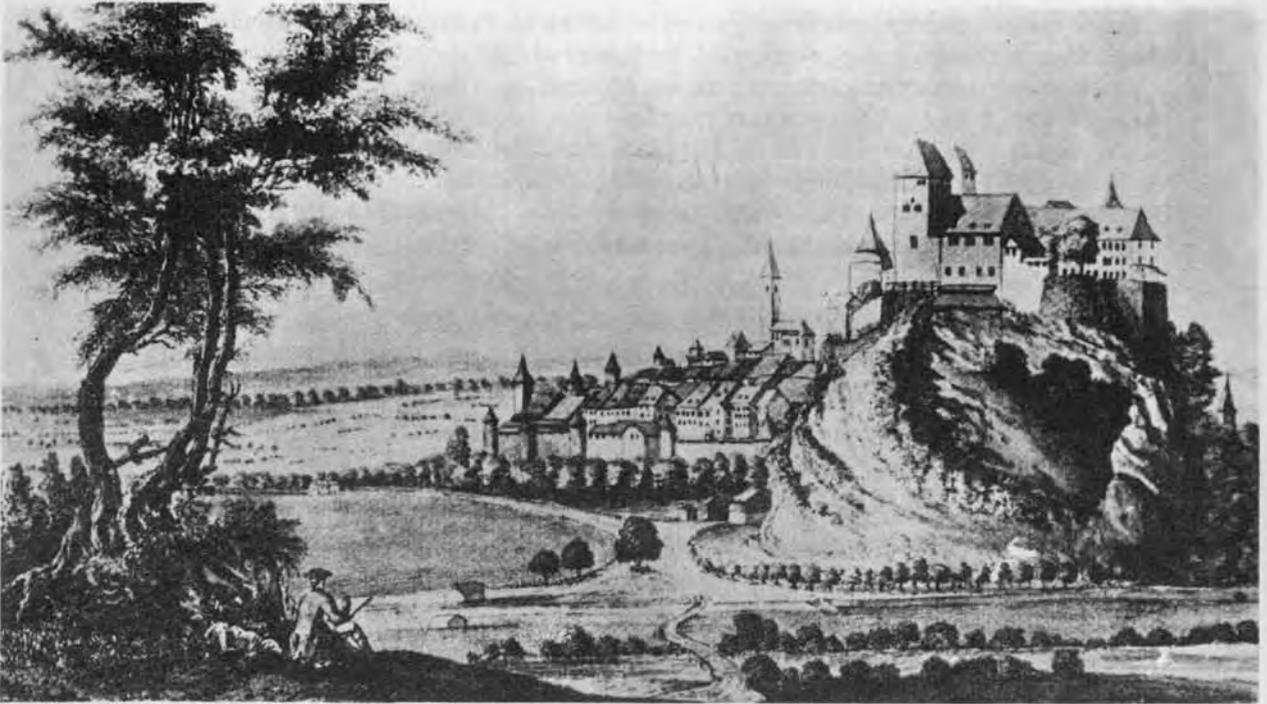
Imagine how it stirs my heart when alongside their great intellectual progress I see love, profound goodwill, and interest developing with equal rapidity in children who a few weeks before had been complete strangers. Imagine how it stirs my heart when even parents, with tears in their eyes, declare: I can see that my child is better; is more good-natured and kinder than before.⁴

1. Ibid., p. 20.

2. Ibid., p. 20.

3. Ibid., p. 21.

4. Ibid., p. 24.



BURGDORF, Engraving by C. Wyss, 1760

A public inspection by a two-man commission resulted in a glowing tribute which helped to spread Pestalozzi's reputation beyond Switzerland. With fame came a great change. Assistants who wanted to learn about the new method began to arrive, and Pestalozzi became more and more dependent upon them. In 1804 he wrote to one of these assistants: "As long as you live our cause is not deserted. My conviction that you and Krüsi have been sent to me as saviours cannot be stronger. Daily I surrender myself up more and more to your strength. Your joining me makes me into something which I am not really and which, at my age, I never can become."¹

There were more and more visitors to Pestalozzi's institute at Burgdorf. He felt very happy about it. "Foreigners arrive daily from all parts to see, to examine, and even to participate, and I now contemplate the approaching end of my career with calm, as honest and careful attention is being almost universally paid to the essence of my activity."²

There were still detractors and their attacks grew along with his reputation, but what he considered more dangerous were the misconceptions many had

1. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 25.

regarding his method and principles. In 1801 he wrote his most famous educational essay, *How Gertrude teaches her Children*, where he explains the development of his educational ideas and how he hoped to fit them into one simple system. "For months I had worked at the elementary stages of instruction and done everything to reduce them to the greatest simplicity; yet I did not know how they fitted together, or at least I was not clearly conscious of how they did; with every hour, however, I felt that I was moving forwards, that I was moving quickly forwards."¹

Even this book does not give a full account of Pestalozzi's method. Such a definitive work was never produced. His basic conception, which he explained till the end of his life, is that learning processes must be reduced to the simplest patterns and that these patterns should be seen as parts of a harmonious whole.

Pestalozzi's problem in Burgdorf was that he was personally ill-suited to run such an organization. He later considered the Burgdorf institute to be a turning point for the worse in his life: "With the first step my foot made on the staircase in Burgdorf castle I was lost to myself in that I had entered on a career in which I could not be other than unhappy, for by accepting this post . . . I put myself in a position which presupposed as essential and necessary the capacity to wield authority which I lacked."²

Up to 1803, the experiment was a success, with more than seventy pupils taught by twenty assistants. But a change in the Swiss political scene cost Pestalozzi the support of the central government, and he was soon asked to vacate the castle. He found alternative accommodation in an empty convent at Münchenbuchsee, not far from the institute and experimental farm of another educational pioneer, Daniel von Fellenberg. Von Fellenberg being a very able administrator and Pestalozzi a genial educator, it seemed ideal to combine the two institutions. But their differing attitudes soon came into conflict and the partnership broke up. As Pestalozzi wrote to Von Fellenberg, after their separation in 1804:

*I saw your strength but also knew of what I, with my weaknesses, was capable. I esteemed your sense of order but knew also the value of the unconstrained atmosphere which had been the hallmark of my institute until then. I valued your internal and external methods of administration, but at the same time I knew that without any of these methods the hearts of my household were drawn to me. I recognized the advantage of allocating responsibility, but knew of the effects of love which can surpass anything that mere responsibility can do.*³

1. *Ibid.*, p. 26

2. *Ibid.*, p. 26

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 27-28.

Fortunately, when Pestalozzi left Burgdorf, he had accepted the charge of a castle at Yverdon as well as the convent at Münchenbuchsee. Pupils and staff were divided between the two places. As his relations with Von Fellenberg became increasingly difficult, Pestalozzi spent more and more time in Yverdon, finally regrouping everything there by the end of 1804.

From the start, Yverdon was very different from the happy experience of Stans, where he had looked after the education of a large group of children on his own. Now, with so many assistants and under constant public scrutiny, Pestalozzi became an admired source of inspiration but he had no illusions about the degree of control that he could exert. "I am in my enterprise like a boat lost in the raging seas. The control of my enterprise rests no more in my hands; I am in its power and must let myself be swept along wherever it wishes. So far its course has been smooth and strong, yet I follow it with a trembling heart – it is beyond my strength to resist."¹

By 1809 there were more than a hundred and forty pupils and candidates had to be refused. Pestalozzi considered that the best age to enter was six, but



YVERDON, Engraving by F. Hegi, 1810

1. Ibid., p. 29.

accepted pupils up to twelve. The number of teachers had greatly increased, including a large group of teachers in training sent by the Prussian Ministry of Education for three full years. There were teachers' meetings three times a week after the evening meal, one devoted to discussing the children, one about problems met by the teachers during the week, and one about the "method", principles of which were applied by the assistants to various subjects.

Things went smoothly for a while, until a personality conflict between two of Pestalozzi's main assistants, Niederer and Schmid, led to the departure of Schmid. Schmid later published a work which brought the whole institute into disrepute, and an official inspection requested by Pestalozzi did not produce the results he had hoped for. The inspectors, while praising the work accomplished, particularly in the field of moral education, also pointed out many deficiencies, and concluded that it was not an example to admire and emulate. This marked the beginning of the decline of the institute. Financial difficulties also increased and finally Pestalozzi was persuaded to ask Schmid to come back. Unfortunately, after his return in 1815, Schmid did not limit himself to administration but set out to organize everything, changing the happy freedom previously enjoyed by the staff into the strictest discipline.

This led to a crisis in 1816 and many teachers resigned. Pestalozzi, now seventy years old, threw in his lot with Schmid till the end, in 1825, when Schmid's enemies managed to get him expelled from the Canton of Vaud. Pestalozzi spent the last two years of his life in Neuhof, where he died in February 1827, after receiving a last defamatory pamphlet about himself and his work.

Pestalozzi was a true pioneer who opened a new road for education. He took risks, he suffered setbacks, he sometimes failed; but above all he loved children deeply, and in this deep love he undoubtedly found the inspiration to serve them.

Throughout my life I have sought the basic elements of the faculties and capacities which my country needs more urgently now than ever before. Often I went astray, often I made mistakes, but often I seemed to have gone astray, I seemed to have made mistakes just because I was alone, and here and there there have been those who more than smiled when, quietly sitting on their chairs in their rooms sipping their tea and smoking their pipes, they saw the poor toiler running about looking for a good and advantageous path over mountain and valley, and saw him neglecting and destroying himself in bog and thicket for his cause. I was seeking the path for their children and for a country which was their country and my country.¹

1. Ibid., p. 35.



- Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi -

What was it in the teaching methods of his time against which Pestalozzi reacted so violently? A description of a school period by a contemporary of his should give a clear indication:

Every day the first period was devoted to reading the Bible. We began at the place where we had left off the day before until we had "finished" the Bible. Then we immediately restarted at the first word of the first book of Genesis and continued through to the last word of the Revelation of John. Thus we went through the Old Testament, the Apocrypha, and the New Testament; not a single word was left out. We really achieved something, for in about eight months we had got through. That is good going. It can be explained, however, when one realizes that absolutely nothing was clarified, and that it was the "done thing" to read away as quickly as possible without any expression or a single hesitation. For this reason we always looked forward to the Books of Chronicles, in which there were so many difficult names one after the other and one did not have to think. In fact in other places too one very rarely did because everything rushed past far too quickly. The pupils read in turn and during the period the Headmaster seldom said more than the word: "Next!" when another pupil had to continue. At the most he corrected a word which had been pronounced wrongly or called to someone who had not been following, "Next!" even though it was not his turn. If he stumbled, he was struck a few times with the cane. For us the Bible was no more than a reader which was only of interest to us because with its help we could show how well and quickly we were able to read. The contents were mostly incomprehensible to us, especially to the children who spoke dialect; moreover we did not pay much attention to the contents. Of course, we knew the Bible was God's word; but we did not really understand what that meant. For us the title-page, the prefaces, and the chapter headings were equally God's word because they were in the Bible, and if the bookbinder had felt like binding another book in with the Bible we would not have doubted but that it was equally God's word.

The cruelty of the schoolmasters, the severity of the discipline have possibly been exaggerated as causes of Pestalozzi's attitude. Certainly he was completely opposed to all forms of inhumanity in the classroom, yet by no means all teachers would have depended on rule by force of the cane. Pestalozzi's criticism was far more basic and universal than the maltreatment of pupils in certain schools, for he accused the whole system – both the methods and the content – of having become fettered by routine and tradition, to the point where teaching had degenerated into cramming and where school subjects had become no more than a particular selection of facts to be learnt by heart. Teaching methods had become so rigid that they took into account neither the capacities of a child to learn what was placed in front of him, nor the purpose for which he was expected to do so.

The most important mistake of present-day education is undoubtedly the following: Too much is expected of the child and too many of the topics only appear to be something but are nothing.

Schools instead of acting with nature, and stimulating and encouraging the child, seemed to do everything to stunt originality and the imagination. For children entry to school after some five years of freedom was a form of punishment:

Suddenly the whole of nature around them is made to vanish from their sight, the attractive expression of their spontaneity and their freedom is tyrannically stopped; shoved into groups they are thrown like sheep into a stinking room, they are chained mercilessly for hours, days, weeks, months, and years, and forced to look at miserable, unattractive and monotonous letters and to follow a whole way of life capable of driving them mad, so different is it from their previous existence.

Schools had become no more than "artificial machines to stifle all the achievements of strength and experience which nature herself brings to life within them".

To replace old methods Pestalozzi wanted to introduce a new system of education which would take fully into account the child himself, what he was capable of achieving mentally and physically, and what he was capable of experiencing spiritually. While bearing in mind a child's future station in adult life, education was to become "child-centred" and adapt itself to the intelligence, feelings, and enthusiasms of the children. This system, which he hoped would

be established universally, Pestalozzi called his "method". The "method" was far more than a system of recommended classroom procedures:

People are completely mistaken in assuming without good reason that my aims are limited to facilitating the elementary skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. They are not! My purpose does not stop here but probes deeply into the very essence of higher intellectual and moral education and into the most thorough investigations of human nature itself.

The "method" was a philosophical concept, an ultimate value, which can perhaps best be defined as "the ideal method of developing a child's personality and capacities to the full and of preparing him to live a full and happy life as an adult". Of course, such a definition is not very revealing, but it does emphasize two features of Pestalozzi's "method". It recognizes an ideal which every effort should be made to approach; the existing passive acceptance of old forms should be replaced by active interest in the educational field. The structure of society was changing and education could and should play an important part in these changes. The second feature which needs to be stressed is the empirical approach to education allowed by a system where there are no definite boundaries. The test of any educational theory lay in its practical application, and therefore Pestalozzi did not concern himself whether any idea was new or original nor whether it could logically be fitted into existing theories, as long as it proved to be beneficial to the child.

A reputation can be a dangerous thing to have, and that of Pestalozzi's "method" was such that people came to imagine that it was some entirely new magic formula. Yet on examination many of the theories seemed to have been advocated before, and the men who were attempting to put them into practice seemed anything but magicians. And so, not finding what they had expected, critics blamed Pestalozzi for their own misconceptions, pointing out that many of his ideas were not original, and deeming this a fault. In fact, Pestalozzi had never claimed that his theories were entirely new, nor did he regard originality for its own sake as a virtue:

It is in no way my intention to stress any one of my points of view because it is new; I hold fast to my system because I believe it consistent with human nature, and I am convinced that educational theory in all aspects in which it is fully developed, corresponds to that which is true in my

system. I am convinced that every good educationist was more or less on the scent of my most important ideas. Indeed I believe even the Greeks employed methods of teaching which in spirit and in form were similar to mine. It is absolutely certain that every good father and every good mother will be naturally forced within the family circle to make use of the whole range of my method's elementary principles.

Even if Pestalozzi's ideas considered singly were not all original, and despite efforts of critics to play them down, the impact of the ideas is undeniable. For Pestalozzi not only had positive ideas but also had the personality and perseverance to force them on the attention of an age which hovered between revolution and conservatism, an age which needed yet feared change.

It is fairly generally felt in towns and villages alike that schools are not what they should be.

Indeed! But when it is a matter of changing them, everyone cries out: "The old system is good!" and clings to it for grim death.

Pestalozzi never produced a comprehensive description of all his educational theories. Despite this, certain ideas recur again and again in his works. It is therefore possible to talk of the general principles which Pestalozzi made into a foundation for his educational theories and practice. In *How Gertrude teaches her Children* Pestalozzi explains how he was exposing his views to a friend without being able to sum up his main aim in any simple catch-phrase when the friend suddenly exclaimed: "You want to mechanize education." Pestalozzi found the description apt, but, like all over-simplified definitions, it must be interpreted correctly. If the friend had said to Pestalozzi: "You want to humanize education", his definition would have been equally valid. An outline of Pestalozzi's general principles should help to show that the apparently contradictory definitions are useful and can be reconciled.

Pestalozzi was the first to acknowledge the heritage he had received from Rousseau – the man who had been "the turning point between the old and the new worlds of education". It was Rousseau who had condemned contemporary educational methods as "unnatural":

Powerfully gripped by all-powerful nature, realizing as no other the separation of his fellow-men from the strong influence of the senses and from intellectual life, he broke with Herculean strength the chains of

the mind, and gave the child back to himself and education back to the child and to human nature.

Pestalozzi took over the concept that education must harmonize with nature. However simple such a plan might seem when one bears in mind the rigid, stultified system of the time, Pestalozzi and his followers regarded it as outspoken and revolutionary. Their attitude emerges clearly in the following description by Niederer of the method's aim:

The principle of Pestalozzi when he took over the castle and founded the Institute (i.e. at Burgdorf) was revolutionary. By word and deed he wanted to tear down and build up again: tear down the whole school system as it had existed up to then, a system which appeared to him monstrous; then to build up a new school system in which he wanted to entrust the subjects taught to the basic elements and methods of nature. The subjects taught had to be adapted to the nature of the child, to the range of activity of which he was capable, to the stage of his development and to his individual needs. The basic elements of instruction he wished to educe from the physical, mental, moral, and religious nature of the child, from its elemental appearances. The course of instruction had to be brought into complete harmony with the stages of development of human nature.

The passage already gives an impression of the methods Pestalozzi considered necessary in order to render education more "natural". The early part of the passage underlines the vigour with which Pestalozzi felt they would have to be propagated if they were to replace the old methods.

It is not surprising to find that Pestalozzi uses a natural image to convey one of his most fundamental principles:

Man, imitate the action of great nature which from the seed of even the largest tree pushes at first but an imperceptible shoot, but then by a further imperceptible growth which progresses smoothly every hour and every day unfolds the young trunk, then that which will grow into the main branches, then the subsidiary branches, and finally the smallest twigs from which will hang the ephemeral leaves. Notice how nature tends and protects each single part formed and how she attaches each new part to the strong life of the old.



K. GROB, Pestalozzi and His Beloved Pupils

Pestalozzi did not see the new-born child as a rough-hewn stone into which parents and educators could carve the image they wanted, but as a seed which already contained the essence of the child's intelligence and personality. The aim of his method was to provide the stimulation necessary to enable the elementary potential of the child to be developed to the full. Thus Pestalozzi's view of the influence of heredity on the one hand and environment on the other corresponds to the modern assessment of their relative roles. Heredity does have a vital influence on mental, personal, and physical characteristics – but this influence can be almost completely annulled if during the first years of life the child's environment represses his capacities.

The belief that talents were inborn and not imposed from outside did not in any way reduce the importance of parents and teachers. Indeed the art of

education lay in providing the correct exercises and a satisfactory background for the child's talents to develop to the full. Pestalozzi's claim was that in presenting material in an educational form to the child, there was an ideal order in which to present it. To establish what this order was, it was necessary to reduce a topic to its most fundamental elements and then build it up gradually from there step by step. The development of a topic from the most simple to the most difficult should be divided up into as many gradations as possible. To do this did not involve discovering any new material but merely laying bare and interpreting facts which were already known. The method

aims at finding and grasping essential elements, i.e. the unalterable points of departure and links of all instruction and all education. It aims at uncovering, not discovering, the elements.

By grouping facts and experiences together in the right way, by arranging them in the right order, it should be possible to establish a natural progression from the most simple to the most difficult without there being any gaps. Pestalozzi gave a clear indication of how this progression was to be established:

First of all learn to arrange your observations and to complete the elementary before proceeding to something complicated. In every aspect of education try to organize a progression of experiences in which each new concept is a small, almost unnoticeable addition to former experiences already firmly engrained and never to be forgotten by you.

The progression from simple to difficult could not emerge merely from studying the relevant material; if it were to be used to teach children it must take child psychology into consideration. For Pestalozzi the art of the teacher lay in ensuring that the level of difficulty of the subject matter corresponded exactly to the child's developing capacity to comprehend. He insisted that instruction had to be based on a child's understanding, not on that of an adult. Hence education was for him child-centred, and to be successful depended on close observation of children and on deep insight into the way a child's mind works and develops. Pestalozzi therefore proposed empirical methods to educe the ways in which educational material should be presented to the children:

That which he (the teacher) wishes to impart to his children, he must have mastered himself as thoroughly as he wishes them to master it. He can best achieve this if he often learns with and alongside the children,

and thereby places himself in a position not only to gain a complete grasp of the subject with which he wishes to become acquainted, but also to observe the children themselves and all their reactions when learning; he should notice how he can stimulate and direct the awakening faculties of each child and how he brings them step by step closer to the goal which he has decided upon.

If close observation was to be the means of discovering the ideal method of education, the interest shown by the child would be the best indication of the success of any method. For a child would only be interested by that which he could fully understand and that which was presented to him in an exciting form:

His desire to develop his mental powers by exercising them will necessarily diminish if the means whereby it is hoped to teach him to think do not appeal in an attractive way to his mental faculties, but only irritate him by their tedium, and subdue and confuse him rather than stimulate and arouse him by their harmony.

There is an interesting similarity between Pestalozzi's approach and that of the modern Swiss psychologist, Jean Piaget, who by extensive observation and experiment, has tried to show how a child's capacity to comprehend the world around him develops, pointing out that often a child's comprehension of certain phenomena and concepts follows a strict chronological order. It follows that a child cannot understand what one might call concept C until he has understood concepts A and B. Pestalozzi's view that all experience and information must be provided in a certain order which corresponds to a child's age and ability to understand is, therefore, upheld by modern opinion.

Because the method was based on developing the natural talents of the child, it had not only to take child psychology into account, but also had to examine the character and intelligence of the individual child:

In as much as the method is positive, it bases itself directly on the individual child which it has in its care; indeed there is nothing positive in education and in teaching but the individual child and the individual talents he has.

Instead of presenting material to children and leaving it to chance what they retained, the teacher's function, according to Pestalozzi, was to find out the

capacities of each individual child and thereby which stage in the natural progression from simple to difficult within each sphere of education he had reached. No longer would the child have to adapt himself as best he could to the material presented to him; instead he would be taught in a class where his individual needs would be catered for.

So far we have considered the analytical aspect of Pestalozzi's theories: his desire to reduce educational topics to their basic elements and then build them up again in a natural progression from simple to difficult in accordance with a child's growing capacity to comprehend. For this purpose Pestalozzi recognized three basic aspects of education: Intellectual education, moral education, and practical education (i.e. physical education in the broadest sense). . . . Here, however, it should be noted that while Pestalozzi attempted to break the educational process down into basic elements in order to simplify and rationalize it, he insisted that it was the whole personality which had to be educated:

Nature forms the child as an indivisible whole, as a vital organic unity with many-sided moral, mental, and physical capacities. She wishes that none of these capacities remain undeveloped. Where nature has influenced and the child is well and truly guided by her, she develops the child's heart, mind, and body in harmonious unity. The development of the one is not only indivisibly linked with the development of the other, but each of these capacities is developed through and by means of the others.

Again we find Pestalozzi upholding a modern view – for in the past it has often wrongly been maintained that abilities compensated for each other: for example, a good athlete would often prove a poor pupil in the class-room, a bright pupil would often prove bad at games. It has now been shown that there is a high correlation between the various human abilities, i.e. the bright pupil is likely to do quite well at games, the poor pupil is likely to be weak at them. In trying to educate the whole personality, Pestalozzi was interested in every aspect of education – hence the interest of so many of his contemporaries in his work.

The aim of Pestalozzi's method was not only to develop the individual to the full, but also to benefit every child whatever his age or class or future profession. By basing his system on the natural growth of a child's capacities, he could rightly claim that it was universally applicable. Through the method the various types of education – general and professional, private and public, working class and middle class – would be seen to have a common basis. Pestalozzi had no desire

to make the system more uniform, but felt that every type of teaching could be related to every other type and that by so doing, the aim and limits of each type would become more clearly defined. He did not believe that each individual was capable of reaching the same standards of attainment, but he did insist that each and every child should have the chance to develop those talents which he had to the full. Of the treatment of pupils in Yverdon he wrote:

In our dealings with the children we make no distinctions which are based on outward things or on matters of chance. In these respects we recognize absolutely no superiority in the merit of one child over another except to be and to become that which, according to the strength of his will and the degree of his effort and self-control, he can be and should become. We acknowledge humanity, i.e. human nature, in all alike.

By emphasizing that which every child had in common, not that which separated them, Pestalozzi maintained that his method could help everyone in every stage of development.

From this summary of Pestalozzi's general principles, the humanizing and mechanizing elements in his theories should have become clear. By ordering knowledge and experiences, he hoped to find an ideal way in which to teach children, and methods which would prove universally applicable. At the same time by continually stressing that education was for the child and not the child for education, he showed that the needs of the individual child had to be taken into account. Education was to become at the same time more human and more scientific.

From Michael Heafford, *Pestalozzi, His Thought and its Relevance Today* (London: Methuen, 1967), pp. 39-49.

Notes

There are many books about Pestalozzi in German, but very few in English. A thorough account of his life and work can be found in:

Silber, Kate. *Pestalozzi, the man and his work*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960.



F.G.A. SCHÖNER, Pestalozzi and his Grandson



Sri Ramakrishna and Swami Vivekananda

An Illumined Teacher and a Brilliant Pupil

Introduction

A question is sometimes raised as to whether the scholastic education imparted in schools and colleges is really necessary to prepare individuals to attain maturity and fulfilment. There are a number of cases of unlettered men and women who have achieved greatness and left their impact on posterity. Sri Ramakrishna is one such shining example in the domain of spiritual realization and mastery. If one can achieve such great heights as he did without what we call education, we need to ask ourselves quite seriously if we should not revise our educational pedagogy which insists so much on reading, writing and numerous intellectual exercises.

To some extent, the answer seems to lie in the fact that mental education, which is given an overwhelmingly large role in the total scheme of our normal pedagogy, is not oriented in any considerable measure to the development of personality. If this orientation were effected in our pedagogy, we would not have any serious ground for complaint. What constitutes the development of personality is a complex question, and this is not the right place to discuss it in detail. Briefly speaking, however, there are two elements which must be cultivated to a very high degree of excellence if we want to have an effective and well-developed system of education. These two elements are concentration and irresistible will. If these powers are sufficiently developed and widely applied in certain domains of activity, one can achieve a living experience and possession of manhood even though one may not have cultivated those things which are so insistently and exclusively emphasized in our present system of education.

For a comprehensive pedagogy, however, we should make a distinction between the development of personality and the development of integral personality. While some can dispense with mental education and yet achieve a high level of human excellence, we cannot afford to ignore the demands of mental education if our aim is to develop integral personality. Deficiency in mental education will always be felt as a handicap, particularly when there is a question of involving oneself in an action relating to large masses of people. Akbar the Great, for example, who was unlettered, filled his deficiency by cultivating the companionship of some of the most learned and accomplished men of his time. And even Sri Ramakrishna, whose personality was highly integrated, felt the need of the services, for the accomplishment of his work for humanity, of such a brilliant mind as that of Swami Vivekananda.

These brief reflections will provide some clues to the development of a new pedagogy of integral education, in which a right place would be found for mental education in the overall context of the aims of the development of integral personality.

This new pedagogy will not pursue mental education as we do today in our schools and colleges. The present system of mental education is book-oriented, subject-oriented and examination-oriented. On the other hand, in the integral system of education a stress would be laid on the methods of concentration so as to cultivate the qualities and powers of clarity, complexity, subtlety, intuition and silence. Swami Vivekananda once remarked that if he had known at an early stage the significance of concentration, he would have devoted his time to the development of concentration rather than to reading a number of books. In the same way, an integral system of education would emphasize the energizing of will in all domains of the being – physical, vital, mental, ethical, aesthetic and spiritual.

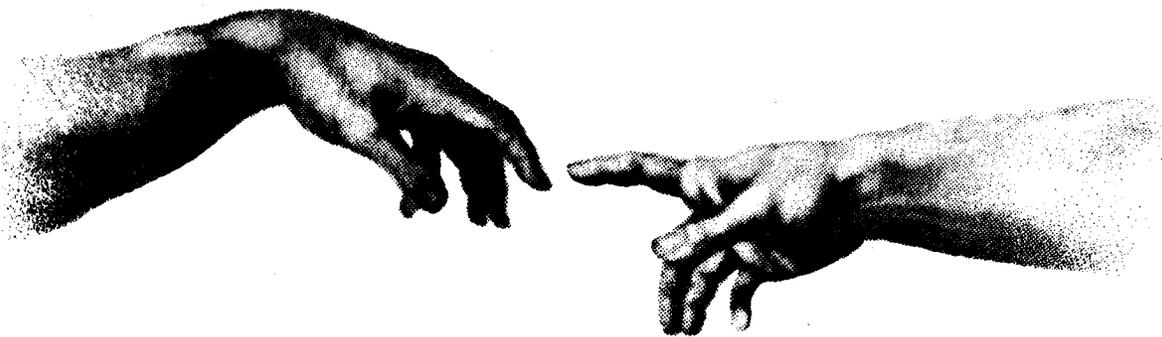
That there is something much vaster and much more important than the mind is underlined in an integral scheme of education. Our present system of education considers mind as the summit of our being, and leaves out of the scheme the consideration of profounder and sublimer domains of being. In this sceptical age of ours, it has become quite common to doubt the existence of these domains and even to deny them dogmatically. But a true seeker and a good pupil eschews every kind of dogmatism and is prepared to launch upon a bold adventure to make his own experiments and discover deeper and higher possibilities of personality.

The significance of some of the passages presented here is that they portray an exemplary pupil who had the courage and patience to examine critically the possibilities of transcending the limits of the mind. Narendranath, later

known as Swami Vivekananda, was an extraordinary student. He had a multi-sided intellectual curiosity and a persistent will to discover truth. He knew intellectual doubt very well, and even when an undergraduate had achieved a rare mastery over logical thought. And yet he refused to develop a brilliant shell of mind and to get caught up in it. He had a deep yearning for the truth, even if that meant treading a razor's edge. It is true that he questioned the validity of his spiritual yearning, but when his questioning was answered, he did not desist from pursuing it in full measure. He embraced the path of spiritual realization by accepting and following an exemplary teacher, Sri Ramakrishna.

The mark of a good pupil is his self-sustaining perseverance, effort and enthusiasm. Another mark of a good pupil is that he tests on the anvil of experience every belief or claim of truth that comes to him in the course of his quest. He may accept a teacher or an authority, but only after questioning and testing. He knows in his heart of hearts that he is not a follower of a book or of any human agency, but that he is a seeker of the unknown and of the infinite. Finally, a good pupil is utterly humble and obedient in imposing upon himself the severest discipline required in his search for the highest truth. All these characteristics we find in Swami Vivekananda.

It is not easy for a good pupil to find a good teacher, nor is it easy for a good teacher to find a good pupil. But sometimes a good pupil and a good teacher happen to meet each other, and their relationship becomes so intense that they fulfil each other and enact an unforgettable drama where the pupil seeks the teacher as much as the teacher seeks the pupil – a drama of love that uplifts the inmost soul and spirit to ever-increasing excellence and perfection. Such a marvellous example of the relationship between pupil and teacher we find in Swami Vivekananda, the brilliant pupil, and Sri Ramakrishna, the illumined teacher.





Sri Ramakrishna and Narendranath could not have been more different in their background and approach to life. Sri Ramakrishna represented traditional India, with its spiritual perspective, its ideal of renunciation and its realizations – the India of the Upanishads. To him came Narendranath, representing the analytical, rational, truth-seeking and vigorous modern mind. With all the doubts and scepticism of youth, unwilling to accept any claim of truth without verification, he had a highly developed scientific temper. He was a votary of reason and had studied and mastered different systems of Western philosophy and the Vedanta, but none of these could satisfy his searching mind. He doubted the existence of God.



Narendranath Datta, who later was to become famous as Swami Vivekananda, was born in Calcutta on January 12, 1863, into a wealthy Kshatriya family of scholars and philanthropists. Naren's father, an attorney of the Calcutta High Court, had earned a lot of money and was free in spending it. His mother was deeply devout, highly intelligent and, though without formal education, had a remarkable memory. Naren was the eldest boy among three brothers and four sisters.

In his boyhood he showed exceptional intellectual capacities and powers of concentration, as well as physical courage, self-confidence, a spirit of independence, resourcefulness and a tender heart. Like his mother, he had an extraordinary memory. His earlier years at home were spent in a spiritual atmosphere of purity and truth.

A child's first education is usually at his mother's knee, and Narendra's mother was keen to educate her eldest son well. He would listen with rapt attention as she read from the epics and mythology and in his later life he said, "I am indebted to my mother for the efflorescence of my knowledge."¹ At the age of six he was sent to a traditional Indian school, and was soon noticed for his exceptional intelligence. He would often close his eyes and sit motionless in the classroom. It is said that one day a teacher got particularly provoked by this apparent inattentiveness and rudely reprimanded him. But when challenged to repeat the lesson, Narendra recited it word for word, much to the teacher's surprise. He was energetic, restless and aggressively independent and a natural leader among the boys of his age. Once, when Naren was quite small, someone told him that a ghost lived in a certain tree. He immediately scrambled up the tree to show his friends that this was not true.

At the age of eight, he entered the Metropolitan Institution of Pandit Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and in January 1880, at the age of seventeen, he entered Calcutta's Presidency College. His college days were marked by intellectual fervour and spiritual upheaval. He was a voracious reader, and studied history, mathematics, logic, psychology, and philosophy. He also made great efforts to master the English language. His favourite subject was history and he made a detailed study of the modern European nations. His studies were not limited to the university curriculum. By himself he acquired a thorough grasp of the masterpieces of Western thought and philosophy. He had many other interests as well – sports, music, friends and meditation. He was a wonderful singer.

Narendra's mind was original and intensely analytical. Everything was subordinated to the demands of reason. For him, truth was too sacred to be trifled with. He was also an idealist and had taken a vow of celibacy, brahmacharya.

Narendra went to see Sri Ramakrishna at the suggestion of his English professor, W. W. Hastie. While discussing states of meditation, purity and concentration, Mr. Hastie had told Naren, ". . . I have seen only one person who has experienced that blessed state of mind, and he is Ramakrishna Paramahansa of Dakshineswar. You can understand if you go there and see for yourself."² Some college friends accompanied Narendra on his first visit to Dakshineswar. He was then in a very critical state of mind, and pointedly asked Sri Ramakrishna: "Have you seen God, sir?" Narendra had earlier approached other so-called holy men with the same challenging query, and never received a convincing answer. But this time the young man was shaken by the prompt, terse reply:

"Yes, I see Him just as I see you here, only in a much intenser sense."

"For the first time," Narendra recounted later, "I found a man who dared to say that he had seen God. . . As I heard these things from his lips, I could not but believe that he was saying them not like an ordinary preacher, but from the depths of his

own realizations."³

The same day, Narendra was asked to sing in Sri Ramakrishna's presence. Sri Ramakrishna narrated this in the following words:

Naren entered the room by the western door. . . . I noticed that he had no concern about his bodily appearance, his hair and clothes weren't tidy at all. He seemed altogether unattached, as if nothing external appealed to him. His eyes showed that the greater part of his mind was turned inward, all the time. When I saw this, I marvelled to myself, "How is it possible that such a great spiritual aspirant can live in Calcutta, the home of the worldly-minded?" There was a mat spread out on the floor. I asked him to sit; a few of his friends were with him that day. I saw that their nature was that of ordinary worldly people, just the opposite of his. They were thinking only of their pleasure. I asked him about his singing and I found that he knew only two or three songs in Bengali. I asked him to sing them. He began singing [a] Brahma song. . . . He sang that song with his whole soul, as though he were in deep meditation. When I heard it, I couldn't control myself. I went into ecstasy.⁴

What followed is better told in Narendra's own words:

As soon as I had finished that song, the Master stood up, took me by the hand and led me onto the northern verandah . . . the Master closed the door. I thought he must be going to give me some instruction in private. But what he said and did next was something I could never have believed possible. He suddenly caught hold of my hand and began shedding tears of joy. He said to me, affectionately as if to a familiar friend, "You've come so late! Was that right? Couldn't you have guessed how I've been waiting for you? My ears are nearly burned off, listening to the talk of these worldly people. I thought I should burst, not having anyone to tell how I really felt!" He went on like that, raving and weeping. And then suddenly he folded his palms together and began addressing me as if I were some divine being. "I know who you are, My Lord. You are Nara, the ancient sage, the incarnation of Narayana. You have come back to earth to take away the sufferings and sorrows of mankind." I was absolutely dumbfounded. I said to myself, "What kind of a man is this? He must be raving mad! How can he talk like this to me, who am nobody – the son of Vishwanath Datta?" . . . Presently he asked me to stay there on the verandah, and he went back into the room and came out again bringing butter, rock candy and a few pieces of *sandesh*; and then he began feeding me with his own hands. I kept

asking him to give me the sweetmeats, so I could share with my friends, but he wouldn't. "They will get some later," he said, "you take these for yourself." And he would not be satisfied until I had eaten all of them. Then he took my hand and said, "Promise me – you will come back here soon, alone." I couldn't refuse his request; it was made so earnestly. So I had to say, "I will". Then I went back into the room with him and sat down beside my friends.⁵

Sri Ramakrishna seemed perfectly sane and spoke lucidly and beautifully about renunciation, but Narendranath began to reflect. To quote his own words:

"Here is a true man of renunciation," I said to myself, "he practises what he preaches; he has given up everything for God. 'God can be seen and spoken to,' he told us, 'just as I am seeing you and speaking to you. But who wants to see and speak to God? People grieve and shed enough tears to fill many pots, because their wives or sons are dead, or because they lost their money and their estates. But who weeps because he can't see God? And yet – if anyone really wants to see God, and if he calls upon him – God will reveal Himself, that's certain.'" I thought, "Well, he may be mad – but this is indeed a rare soul . . . Yes; he is mad – but how pure! . . ."⁶

Narendra hesitated to visit Sri Ramakrishna again because the holy man represented a challenge to his way of thinking; besides, Sir Ramakrishna's ecstasies embarrassed Narendra. That first meeting had deeply disturbed him. How could he follow a madman?

But a month later, Narendranath was back at Dakshineswar:

I walked . . . and went straight to the Master's room. I found him sitting, deep in his own meditations . . . There was no one with him. As soon as he saw me, he called me joyfully to him and made me sit on one end of the bed. He was in a strange mood. He muttered something to himself which I could not understand, looked hard at me, then rose and approached me. I thought we were about to have another crazy scene. Scarcely had that thought passed through my mind before he placed his right foot on my body. Immediately I had a wonderful experience. My eyes were wide open, and I saw everything in the room, including the walls themselves, whirling rapidly around and receding; and at the same time, it seemed to me that my consciousness of self, together with the entire universe, was about to vanish into a vast, all-devouring void. . . . I felt that death was right before me, very close. Unable to control myself, I cried out loudly, "Ah, what are you doing to me? Don't you know I have my parents at home?" When



The Kali Temple at Dakshineswar



the Master heard this, he gave a loud laugh. Then touching my chest with his hand, he said, "All right – let it stop now. It needn't be done all at once. It will happen in its own good time." To my amazement, this extraordinary vision of mine vanished as suddenly as it had come. I returned to my normal state and saw things inside and outside the room standing stationary, as before. Although it had taken so much time to describe all this, it actually happened in only a few moments. And yet it changed my whole way of thinking. I was bewildered . . . I had read about hypnotism . . . But my heart refused to believe that was it. For even people of great will-power can only create such conditions when they are working on weak minds. And my mind was by no means weak. Up to then, in fact, I had been proud of my intelligence and will-power. This man did not bewitch me or reduce me to his puppet. On the contrary, when I first met him, I had decided that he was mad. Why then should I have suddenly found myself in this state? It seemed an utter mystery to me. But I was determined to be on my guard, lest he should get further influence over me in the future.⁷

Narendranath was to return a week later for their third meeting. He was very much on his guard, determined not to be hypnotized, as he said. They were sitting in the garden house when Sri Ramakrishna passed into samadhi. Narendra watched him. Suddenly Sri Ramakrishna touched him and despite Narendra's strong will to resist, he was unable to control himself and became completely unconscious. When he came to himself, he found Sri Ramakrishna passing his hand over his chest and sweetly smiling at him. He had no idea what had happened in the meantime.

Of this third meeting, Sri Ramakrishna said:

That day, after Naren had lost consciousness of his present individuality, I asked him many questions such as who he really was, where he had come from, how long he would stay in this world, and so forth. I made him enter into his innermost being and find his answers to my questions there. These answers confirmed what I had already learned about him in visions. It is forbidden to tell all those things . . . Naren is a great soul, perfect in meditation.⁸

Sri Ramakrishna later described this vision as follows:

One day I found that my mind was soaring high in Samadhi along a luminous path. It soon transcended the stellar universe and entered the subtler region of ideas. As it ascended higher and higher, I found on both sides of the way ideal forms of gods and goddesses. The mind then reached the outer limits of that

region, where a luminous barrier separated the sphere of relative existence from that of the Absolute. Crossing that barrier, the mind entered the transcendental realm, where no corporeal being was visible. Even the gods dared not peep into that sublime realm and were content to keep their seats far below. But the next moment I saw seven venerable sages seated there in Samadhi. It occurred to me that these sages must have surpassed not only men but even the gods in knowledge and holiness, in renunciation and love. Lost in admiration, I was reflecting on their greatness, when I saw a portion of that undifferentiated luminous region condense into the form of a divine child. The child came to one of the sages, tenderly clasped his neck with his lovely arms, and addressing him in a sweet voice, tried to drag his mind down from the state of Samadhi. That magic touch roused the sage from the superconscious state, and he fixed his half-open eyes upon the wonderful child. His beaming countenance showed that the child must have been the treasure of his heart. In great joy the strange child spoke to him, "I am going down. You too must go with me." The sage remained mute but his tender look expressed his assent. As he kept gazing at the child, he was again immersed in Samadhi. I was surprised to find that a fragment of his body and mind was descending to earth in the form of a bright light. No sooner had I seen Narendra than I recognised him to be that sage.⁹

When questioned, Sri Ramakrishna admitted that the child in the vision had been himself.

Narendranath's doubting, sceptical and highly intelligent mind grew to accept Sri Ramakrishna as his Master. One marvels at such a transformation. Narendra was opposed to the traditional Indian idea of the chela owing blind obedience to the guru. He revolted at the very thought of surrendering his freedom of judgment to another. On his part, Sri Ramakrishna expected neither blind faith nor blind allegiance. He was able to fully satisfy the demands of Narendra's inquisitive mind. The Master was glad that Naren was a rebel and a doubter because he believed that without questioning and struggle no one can arrive at illumination. Years later, when Naren had become Swami Vivekananda, he remarked to some of his Western followers who were discussing the question of accepting everything he said, "Let none regret that they were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six long years, with the result that I know every inch of the way! Every inch of the way!"¹⁰

Sri Ramakrishna dealt with his pupil with much psychological perception. Little by little, the disciple was led from doubt to certitude, from darkness to light, from anguish of mind to the peace of vision, from bondage to spiritual freedom.

This is how Narendra described his teacher:

I . . . had the great good fortune to sit at the feet of one . . . whose life, a thousandfold more than whose teaching, was a living commentary on the texts of the Upanishads, was in fact the spirit of the Upanishads living in human form . . . the harmony of all the diverse thoughts of India. . . . India has been rich in thinkers and sages. . . . The one had a great head (Shankara), the other a large heart (Chaitanya), and the time was ripe for one to be born, the embodiment of both this head and heart . . . who in one body would have the brilliant intellect of Shankara and the wonderfully expansive infinite heart of Chaitanya; one who would see in every sect the same spirit working, the same God; one who would see God in every being; one whose heart would weep for the poor, the weak, for the outcaste, for the downtrodden, for everyone in this world, inside India or outside India; and at the same time whose grand brilliant intellect would conceive of such noble thoughts as would harmonize all conflicting sects . . . and bring a marvellous harmony, the universal religion of head and heart into existence; such a man was born . . . his life's work was just near a city which was full of Western thought, a city which had run mad after these Occidental ideas . . . There he lived without any book-learning whatsoever; this great intellect never learnt even to write his own name, but the most brilliant graduates of our university found in him an intellectual giant . . . the sage for the time. . . . If I have told you one word of truth it was his . . .¹¹

And what did Narendra have to say about himself?

My motto is to learn whatever good things I may come across anywhere. This leads many friends to think that it will take me away from my devotion to the Guru. These ideas I count as those of lunatics and bigots. For all Gurus are one and are fragments and radiations of God, the Universal God.¹²

Sri Aurobindo has written, "Ramakrishna had the siddhi himself before he began giving to others – so had Buddha. . . . Ramakrishna always put that as a rule that one should not become teacher to others until one has the full authority."¹³ All that Sri Ramakrishna had to teach was based on the bedrock of realization and he could give a practical demonstration of all he preached. He used to say to Narendra, "Test me as the money-changers test their coins. You must not accept me until you have tested me thoroughly."¹⁴ Naren's great respect for Western science and its analytical processes made him test Sri Ramakrishna's experiences and he accepted only those which stood the test. One day, Narendra came to Dakshineshwar and found that

Sri Ramakrishna had gone to Calcutta. He was alone in the room and suddenly felt a desire to test the genuineness of Sri Ramakrishna's often expressed aversion for money – so he hid a rupee under the mattress. Presently Sri Ramakrishna returned and no sooner had he touched the bed than he started back – he had actually felt physical pain! Narendra was watching him quietly. Sri Ramakrishna called one of the attendants to examine the bed. The rupee was discovered. Narendra then frankly explained what he had done. The Master fully approved of this action.

Sri Ramakrishna had absolute faith in his pupil too, but he also used to test him. Once for an entire month he completely ignored Narendra whenever he came. But Narendra continued his visits. Finally, Sri Ramakrishna asked Naren why he kept coming when he spoke scarcely a word to him. Naren replied that he came because he loved him and wanted to see him. Sri Ramakrishna was happy with his pupil's answer, and admitted, "I was only testing you to see if you would stay away when I did not show love and attention. Only one of your calibre could have put up with such neglect and indifference. Anyone else would have left me long ago, never to come again."¹⁵

Sri Ramakrishna put Narendra to other tests as well.

One day he said, "My son, as the result of *tapasyas*, I have acquired some supernatural powers, which are of little use to me – a man who cannot even keep his body properly covered. I would like to transmit them to you." Narendra asked whether the powers would help him sooner to attain God. Sri Ramakrishna said they might not be helpful that way but after he had attained God, they might assist him in carrying out His purpose. "I do not want them," said Narendra, "let me have God's grace first, next I shall consider whether I should have those powers, or not."¹⁶

The answer was certainly the one his Master expected of him.

Such, then, was the relationship between the teacher and his pupil, between the man of realization and the man of reason. The love and liberty which Narendra enjoyed at the hands of his Master were unique: Sri Ramakrishna confided the secrets of his heart to Narendra. This helped increase Narendra's innate spirituality and provided a protection for the freedom loving disciple against any deviations from the set goal.

Sri Ramakrishna commissioned Narendra to look after the spiritual well-being of his brother-disciples, and after the Master's passing on August 16, 1886, these young men banded together as a brotherhood of monks. In spite of a flood of difficulties and hardships they remained together: such was the strength of the



Swami Vivekananda as a Wandering Monk

Master's influence and of his pupil's personality. When Sri Ramakrishna passed away, Narendra was only twenty-three years old. It was many years before he would begin the work of translating Sri Ramakrishna's thought into living action. The young monk was hesitant, torn between dream and action. One side of his nature desired to possess, to conquer, to dominate the earth, and the other to renounce all earthly things in order to realize God. This conflict was resolved in due course. It was the Master's discerning and prophetic eye which had foreseen and declared:

The day when Naren comes in contact with suffering and misery, the pride of his character will melt into a mood of infinite compassion. His strong faith in himself will be an instrument to re-establish in discouraged souls the confidence and faith they have lost. And the freedom of his conduct, based on mighty self-mastery, will shine brightly in the eyes of others, as a manifestation of the true liberty of the Ego.¹⁷

What Narendra was able to achieve as Swami Vivekananda is a tremendous story in itself. He took the message of Sri Ramakrishna to people throughout India and the world. His favourite theme was:

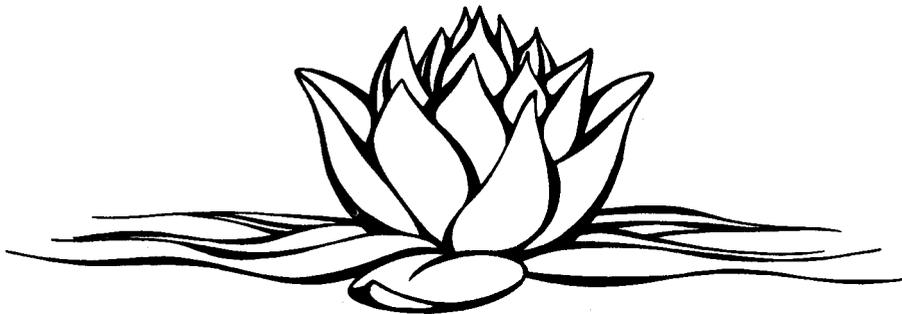
Do not care for doctrines, do not care for dogmas or sects, or churches, or temples; they count for little compared with the essence of existence in each man, which is spirituality; and the more this is developed in a man, the more powerful is he for good. Earn that first, acquire that, and criticize no one, for all doctrines and creeds have some good in them. . . . Only those who have attained to spirituality can communicate it to others, can be great teachers of mankind. They alone are the powers of light.¹⁸

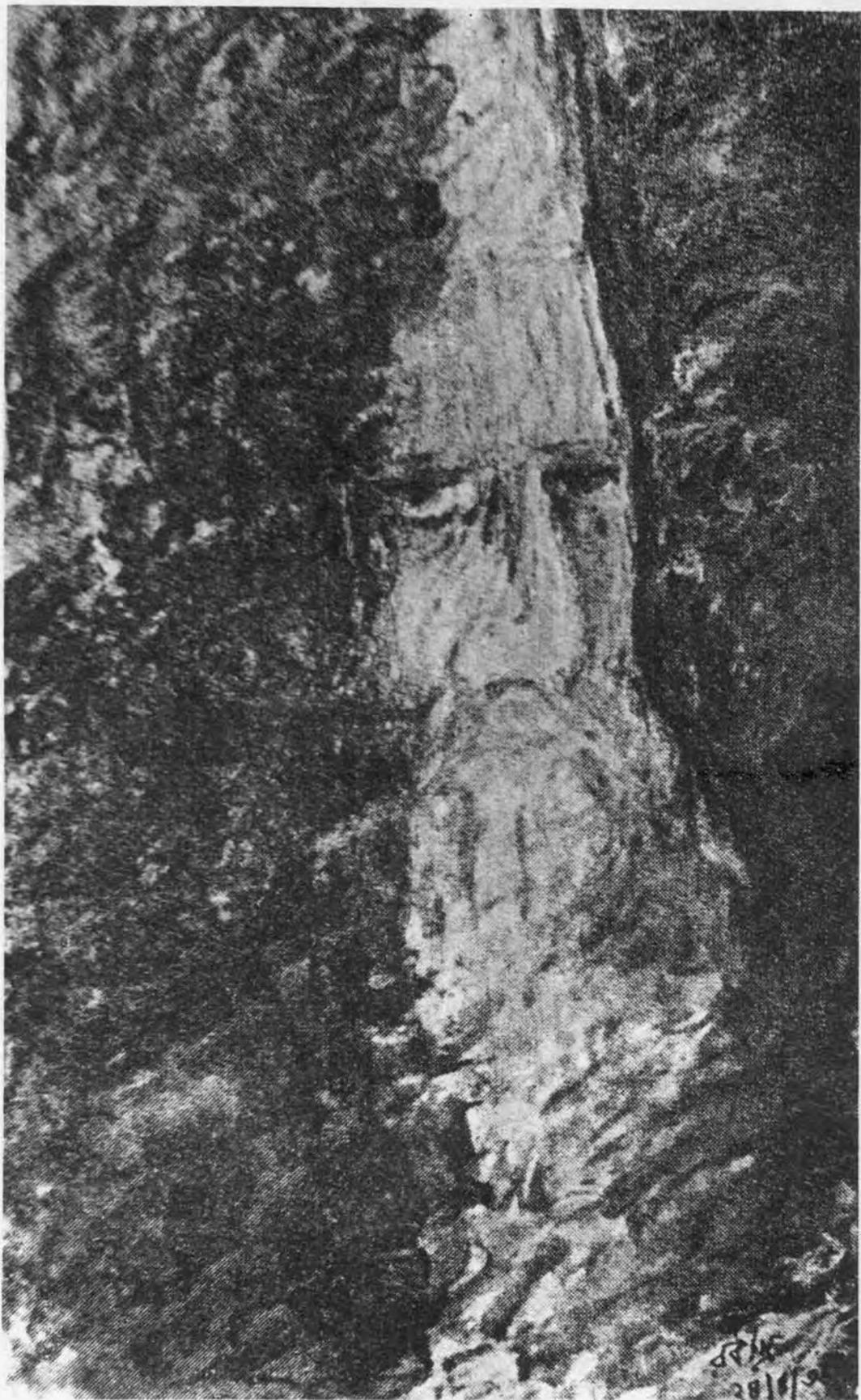
In later years, Swami Vivekananda was to recall the sweet memories of the five years he spent with Sri Ramakrishna, and he paid perhaps the most exalted compliment that a pupil can ever make to his teacher:

It is difficult to explain to others how blissfully I spent my days with the Master. It is simply astonishing to think how, through play, merriment and other ordinary daily activities, he gave us the most exalted spiritual education and moulded our lives without our knowledge.

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RABINDRANATH TAGORE, Autoportrait

The Parrot's Training

Introduction

This unusual story drives home its message by a kind of literary reductio ad absurdum. It is a satire, full of wit and sarcasm, and can be regarded as a preface to a revolution in education.

Rabindranath Tagore dreamed of creating a garden of learning where children would command the centre of attention. During his own school days he had experienced the deadening effects of the formal system of education, and his soul had rebelled against its imprisonment within school walls. He ultimately rejected the school and educated himself, and he discovered a teaching-learning process governed by freedom and ever-increasing intimacy with nature – physical, human and divine.

In 1901, Rabindranath Tagore established a new school at Shantiniketan, a school without walls. It was to be a place where children would be free to live under the canopy of the sky and listen to the wind and the birds. Tagore maintained that there is an inherent harmony between man and nature and that man can learn from nature by an intimate friendship with it. Tagore also conceived of his school as a place where teachers and students would live together, as in the ancient Gurukulas of India. When teachers and students live together, they learn from each other; the growth of the pupil is intertwined with the growth of the teacher. In Indian terminology, a school has to be an "ashram", and Rabindranath Tagore looked upon Shantiniketan as an ashram.

Tagore was a true teacher, rightly known as Gurudev, since he placed children in the centre of his ashram and put himself at their disposal. He interwove his own life with the life of the ashram children. He wrote plays which were staged at Shantiniketan, and himself played different roles along with the students. He wrote innumerable songs and poems and composed incomparable music that can be a perennial source of inspiration and

awakening to the inmost soul. Tagore's deepest interest was to bring out the mystery, wonder and delight of the human soul's yearning to unite with the divine, and he attempted to give a concrete shape to this interest in the setting and rhythms of life of Shantiniketan. Tagore's was a revolutionary experiment in education and like every revolution it had modest beginnings. Although there was rough weather throughout the course of its development, there was a widespread appreciation of the attempt. Several leading teachers, such as Nandalal Bose, C. F. Andrews and W. Pearson, joined him in his unusual experiment.

In 1913, Tagore was awarded the Nobel Prize for his famous book *Gitanjali*. Thereafter he was invited to visit many foreign countries where he often spoke of his school and its experiments. As a result, a large number of people came to know and understand the significance of his educational revolution. Indeed, his revolution was unusual for it involved not war, but peace. The very name of the school, Shantiniketan, means the abode of peace. He also named his school "Vishwa Bharati" to emphasize international understanding and the universality of man. And he selected for Vishwa Bharati the motto, "Yatra Vishvam Bhavate Ekanidam" – "Where the world makes its home in a single nest."

Rabindranath Tagore declared that Vishwa Bharati was open to all who wanted to live together in the spirit of universal fraternity. He wanted Vishwa Bharati to be a living symbol of a new life that would foster world citizens not bound to any narrow affiliation. It was to be a setting of the complete life of man, and he saw interconnections between the life of his ashram and the neighbouring villages. He realized the importance of rural development and the contribution education can make to it. To give a concrete shape to this perception, a special wing was added to Vishwa Bharati under the name of "Sriniketan", and Tagore emphasized the need to integrate both Shantiniketan and Sriniketan in a close bond.

In 1951, ten years after Tagore's death, Vishwa Bharati was given the status of an Institution of National Importance by an act of Parliament. Since then it has become a Central University. However, its revolutionary character was diluted and it began to be run on lines not very different from the other universities in the country. In 1984 a comprehensive amendment to the Vishwa Bharati Act was carried out, and it is expected that, with some new features that emphasize innovations in education, the university might be able to recover something of the original idea that Gurudev strove to realize. The experiment of Vishwa Bharati presents to us many lessons which can be useful in any new educational experiment.

Tagore saw no opposition between the humanities and science, no conflict between science and spirituality. Even as he wrote great poetry and composed unusual music, in the latter part of his life he gave his students and teachers an instructive book on the science of the universe, Vishwaparichay.

Tagore was a great poet and artist, a great philosopher and humanist, a great teacher and student. Through all his works and activities he studied the mysterious and multi-coloured personality of man and he emphasized the truth that education should be a free and joyous growth of faculties and capacities so as to develop a harmonious personality in the learner.



Tagore and his Daughter Madhurilata



The Parrot's Training

Once upon a time there was a bird. It was ignorant. It sang all right, but never recited scriptures. It hopped pretty frequently, but lacked manners.

Said the Raja to himself: "Ignorance is costly in the long run. For fools consume as much food as their betters, and yet give nothing in return."

He called his nephews to his presence and told them that the bird must have a sound schooling.

The pundits were summoned, and at once went to the root of the matter. They decided that the ignorance of birds was due to their natural habit of living in poor nests. Therefore, according to the pundits, the first thing necessary for this bird's education was a suitable cage.

The pundits had their rewards and went home happy.

A golden cage was built with gorgeous decorations. Crowds came to see it from all parts of the world.

"Culture, captured and caged!" exclaimed some, in a rapture of ecstasy, and burst into tears.

Others remarked: "Even if culture be missed, the cage will remain, to the end, a substantial fact. How fortunate for the bird!"

The goldsmith filled his bag with money and lost no time in sailing homewards.

The pundit sat down to educate the bird. With proper deliberation he took his pinch of snuff, as he said: "Text-books can never be too many for our purpose!"

The nephews brought together an enormous crowd of scribes. They copied from books, and copied from copies, till the manuscripts were piled up to an unreachable height.

Men murmured in amazement: "Oh, the tower of culture, egregiously high! The end of it lost in the clouds!"

The scribes, with light hearts, hurried home, their pockets heavily laden.

The nephews were furiously busy keeping the cage in proper trim.

As their constant scrubbing and polishing went on, the people said with satisfaction: "This is progress indeed!"

Men were employed in large numbers, and supervisors were still more numerous. These, with their cousins of all different degrees of distance, built a palace for themselves and lived there happily ever after.

Whatever may be its other deficiencies, the world is never in want of fault-finders; and they went about saying that every creature remotely connected with the cage flourished beyond words, excepting only the bird.

When this remark reached the Raja's ears, he summoned his nephews before him and said: "My dear nephews, what is this that we hear?"

The nephews said in answer: "Sire, let the testimony of the goldsmiths and the pundits, the scribes and the supervisors, be taken, if the truth is to be known. Food is scarce with the fault-finders, and that is why their tongues have gained in sharpness."

The explanation was so luminously satisfactory that the Raja decorated each one of his nephews with his own rare jewels.

The Raja at length, being desirous of seeing with his own eyes how his Education Department busied itself with the little bird, made his appearance one day at the great Hall of Learning.

From the gate rose the sounds of conch-shells and gongs, horns, bugles and trumpets, cymbals, drums and kettle-drums, tomtoms, tambourines, flutes, fifes, barrel-organs and bagpipes. The pundits began chanting *mantras* with their topmost voices, while the goldsmiths, scribes, supervisors and their numberless cousins of all different degrees of distance, loudly raised a round of cheers.

The nephews smiled and said: "Sire, what do you think of it all?"

The Raja said: "It does seem so fearfully like a sound principle of Education!"

Mightily pleased, the Raja was about to remount his elephant, when the fault-finder, from behind some bush, cried out: "Maharaja, have you seen the bird?"

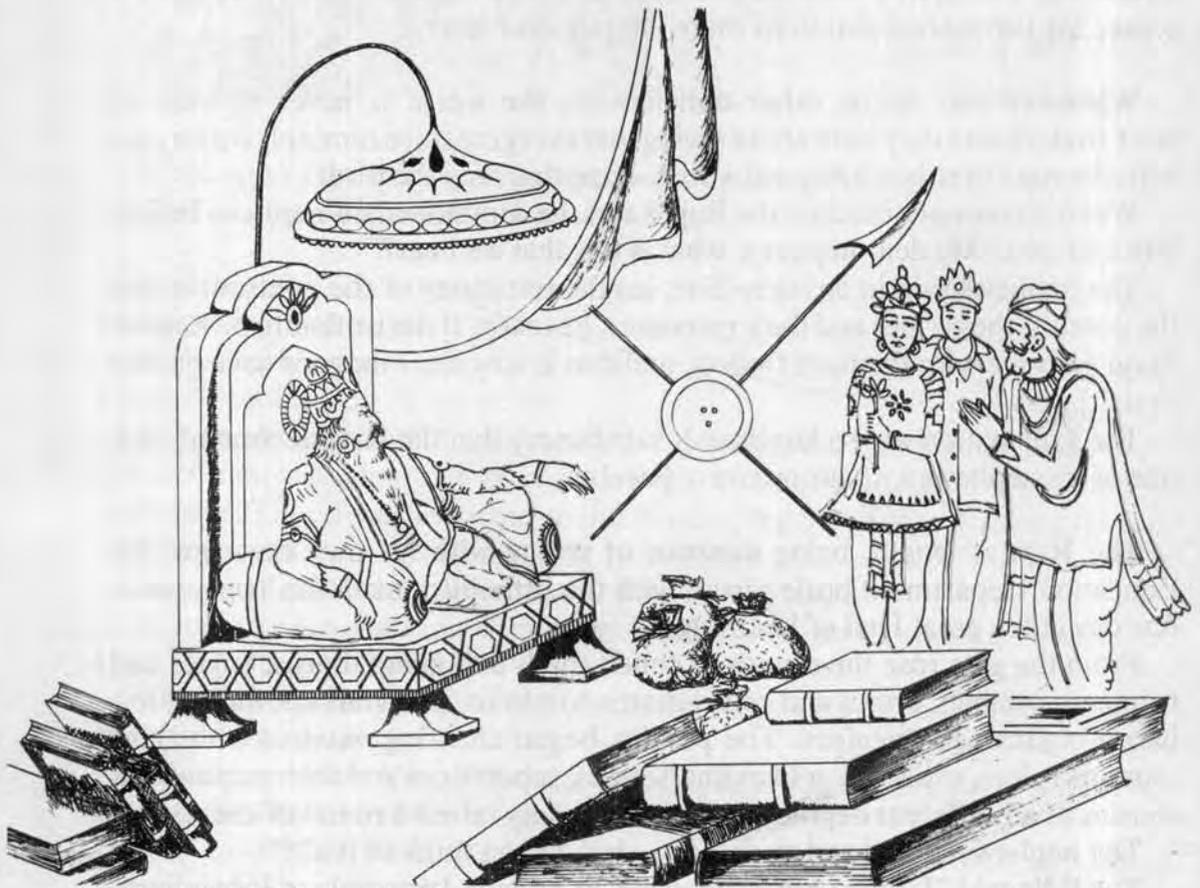
"Indeed, I have not!" exclaimed the Raja, "I completely forgot about the bird."

Turning back, he asked the pundits about the method they followed in instructing the bird.

It was shown to him. He was immensely impressed. The method was so stupendous that the bird looked ridiculously unimportant in comparison.

The Raja was satisfied that there was no flaw in the arrangements. As for any complaint from the bird itself, that simply could not be expected. Its throat was so completely choked with the leaves from the books that it could neither whistle nor whisper. It sent a thrill through one's body to watch the process.

This time, while remounting his elephant, the Raja ordered his State Earpuller to give a thorough good pull at both the ears of the fault-finder.



G.N. CHATURVEDI, Auroville 1988

The bird thus crawled on, duly and properly, to the safest verge of inanity. In fact, its progress was satisfactory in the extreme. Nevertheless, nature occasionally triumphed over training, and when the morning light peeped into the bird's cage it sometimes fluttered its wings in a reprehensible manner. And, though it is hard to believe, it pitifully pecked at its bars with its feeble beak.

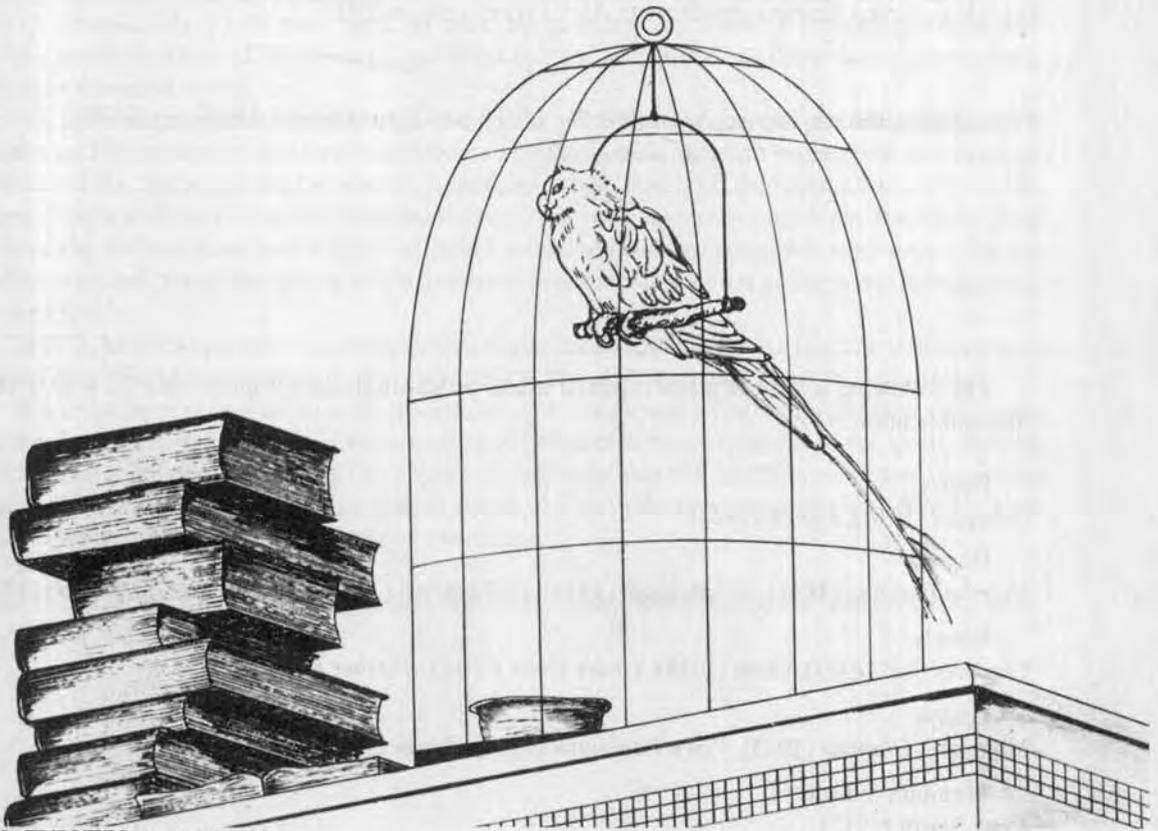
"What impertinence!" growled the *kotwal*.

The blacksmith, with his forge and hammer, took his place in the Raja's Department of Education. Oh, what resounding blows! The iron chain was soon completed, and the bird's wings were clipped.

The Raja's brothers-in-law looked black, and shook their heads, saying: "These birds not only lack good sense, but also gratitude!"

With text-book in one hand and baton in the other, the pundits gave the poor bird what may fitly be called lessons!

The *kotwal* was honoured with a title for his watchfulness, and the blacksmith for his skill in forging chains.



G.N. CHATURVEDI, Auroville 1988

The bird died.

Nobody had the least notion how long ago this had happened. The fault-finder was the first man to spread the rumour.

The Raja called his nephews and asked them: "My dear nephews, what is this that we hear?"

The nephews said: "Sire, the bird's education has been completed."

"Does it hop?" the Raja enquired.

"Never!" said the nephews.

"Does it fly?"

"No."

"Bring me the bird," said the Raja.

The bird was brought to him, guarded by the *kotwal* and the sepoy and the sowars. The Raja poked its body with his finger. Only its inner stuffing of book-leaves rustled.

Outside the window, the murmur of the spring breeze amongst the newly budded *asoka* leaves made the April morning wistful.

From Rabindranath Tagore, *Boundless Sky* (Calcutta: Visva-Bharati, 1964), pp. 84-88.

The following is a list of a few selected works by Rabindranath Tagore with the year of their first publication.

Poetry

Gitanjali (1910), *Lipika* (1921).

Drama

Valmiki Pratibha (1881), *Achalayatan* (1912), *Tasher Desh* (1933), *Nrityanatya Chitrangada* (1936).

Novels

Chokher Bali (1903), *Gora* (1910), *Ghare Baire* (1916), *Shesher Kavita* (1929).

Essays

Manusher Dharma (1933), *Visva Parichaya* (1937), *Banglar Bhasha Parichaya* (1938).

Memoirs & Letters

Jivan Smriti (1912).

Biography

Rabindranath Tagore was born on 7 May 1861 (Vaisakh 25, 1268 according to the Bengali calendar). A clear picture of his early days emerges in his *Story of My Childhood*, written a half-century later. He began writing prose and verse in his mid-teens.

Morning Songs, the first notable landmark in his poetic development, had already been preceded by a dozen slim volumes. The young poet then turned to drama.

Out of an immense exuberance that had to find an outlet, verses came in scores, in hundreds, amazing in their variety of form and rhythm and in imaginative vigour. The period of youthful dedication to the spirit of beauty passed presently into mature contemplation and philosophic profundity. Next came the *Gitanjali* phase and the poet rose to world stature. The Nobel Prize award followed in 1913.

The quantity of his output was immense. He wrote more than a hundred volumes of poetry and plays, but the range and variety of his production were no less astounding. There were many novels, short stories, essays, philosophic and aesthetic treatises (mainly addresses delivered in India, Great Britain and the United States), travel diaries and even textbooks for children. Among the most significant of his works were his songs, the number of which ran into four figures. Set to music, exquisite in imagery and sensitiveness, these songs are today an integral part of the cultural life of Bengal. When well over sixty, he took up painting and evolved a highly personalized technique. Collections of his paintings exhibited in Paris and elsewhere drew warm appreciation from the foremost critics.

His lifework, however, was not confined to the arts. He was a great patriot, though not a politician. He was resolved to work not only for a co-ordination between India's past and present, a fusion of the best elements, but also for a synthesis of the East with the West, a "union" between them. The world outlook of Rabindranath Tagore drew eager response from Europe's great writers and philosophers, and Romain Rolland voiced a common feeling when he stated that the Indian poet had "contributed more than anyone else towards the union of these two hemispheres of the spirit."

In 1901, he started a school at Santiniketan. Later the time came for the fulfilment of the poet's dream of a "World University." In December 1921, *Viswa Bharati* was formally inaugurated.

Whoever came in contact with the personality of Rabindranath Tagore, even for a brief space, received one predominating impression – that of richness. It was a richness of the spirit and was not limited to genius. There was the superb charm softening the intellectual blaze; the innate simplicity belying the sophistication, but, above all, the never-failing humanity with which the poet made his forceful impact on all levels of awareness.

Based on Bhabani Bhattacharya, Introduction, in Rabindranath Tagore, *The Golden Boat* (Bombay: Jaico, 1985), pp. vi-ix.



Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan

Piercing the Veils of Darkness

Introduction

The story of Helen Keller's formative years is a wonderful example of the peculiar alchemy wrought by the coming together of perfectly matched teacher and pupil, each fulfilling the other. Anne Mansfield Sullivan was a young, aspiring teacher when she met and started working with the little blind and deaf girl who, under her awakening touch, was transmuted into one of the greatest persons of her time.

Born in 1880 in Tuscumbia, a little town in northern Alabama, USA, Helen Keller was a perfectly normal child until the age of two, when an illness permanently deprived her of sight and hearing. Her subsequent journey from this utterly silent darkness to her position as the world's first well-educated blind and deaf person is a marvellous story.

More than any other, the person who made this possible was Helen's teacher, Anne Sullivan. It is difficult to decide which of the two was more remarkable: Helen Keller, the brilliant and exemplary pupil who overcame seemingly insurmountable odds to achieve learning; or Anne Sullivan, the totally self-giving and self-effacing teacher, who for close to a decade and a half devoted every minute of her time to helping her pupil.

To understand their story, one must first understand the particular difficulty that the blind and deaf face: they have to rely solely on their sense of touch to contact the outside world. In the last century, relatively little was known of how to educate such handicapped persons and Helen Keller's achievements blazed a trail through virgin land.

Anne Sullivan came to Helen in 1887 when the latter was seven years old. She herself had just graduated from the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston, which she had joined after becoming almost totally blind at a very early age. Although her sight was later partially restored, her education in this Institute, which began at the most elementary level, gave her a unique understanding of the handicap of blindness.

She had only a few months to prepare for her work with Helen, and almost no guidance on the method to be used. Her only help was the example of Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe who, just a few years before, had succeeded in teaching language to a blind and deaf child through raised type. This pioneering work was Anne's first guide, but every subsequent step was based on her own intuitive understanding of what was best for the child in her care. She did not keep any record of her work, nor did she follow a particular method, but she learned from her task constantly, keeping the best interests of her pupil in mind. That she gave herself utterly to this task, never leaving the side of her pupil, always available to interpret and to direct, is obvious from her letters to friends and from Helen Keller's account of her education.

To start with, Miss Sullivan made contact with the child's mind through the sense of touch. Slowly Helen learned the manual alphabet by connecting words with objects. In a little while she could read and write in Braille. In a few years the child was transformed. Books became her constant companions. Soon her desire to read encompassed the most serious literature, and books had to be specially embossed for her. She developed a large correspondence and long letters were exchanged with her many friends, some of them the most eminent persons of the day. Poets and writers like John Greenleaf Whittier, Oliver Wendell Holmes and Mark Twain had but to come in contact with this radiant soul to fall in love with her. Alexander Graham Bell was from the first a guiding light in her life, watching her progress with infinite interest.

Until the age of ten Helen could communicate only with the sign language of the deaf-mute. This condition was most unsatisfactory for her and she resolved to learn to speak. That this was considered a near impossibility did not deter her. She was used to measuring herself by the standards of a normal person, protesting vehemently at any attempted easing of her taxing daily schedule. The only means Helen had of distinguishing the thousands of intonations that make up habitual speech was to place her hands on the lips and throat of her teacher and then do the same to herself, and try to imitate the sound. This had to be repeated hundreds of times before a satisfactory result was achieved.

The pain and heartache of this struggle is described in her own words, and the fact that she succeeded is proof of her indomitable spirit. She could not have done so without her teacher. So close were they that they would seem to be one being in two bodies. Miss Sullivan describes how Helen could often "hear" sounds just by being in physical contact with her teacher, although it was indubitably proved that the child was stone-deaf.

Having learned speech, Helen decided she wished to go to college. Here too her teacher's aid became indispensable as Helen strove to keep up with the rest of the seeing and hearing students. All the books of which embossed copies did not exist had to be read to her by Miss Sullivan. Besides English, she learned French, German, Latin and Greek. She did all her writing on a typewriter, though once having typed something she had no way to check what she had written unless someone read it out to her.

Helen graduated from Radcliffe with honours in 1904. After this she became concerned with the conditions of the blind and deaf and soon was active on the staff of the American Association for the Blind. The indefatigable energy that she had given to her own education she now spent in improving the lives of handicapped persons all over the world. She travelled extensively, met hundreds of people, charming everyone with the radiance and purity of her soul. Mark Twain said that she and Napoleon were the two most interesting characters of the nineteenth century. Her whole life was a series of attempts to do what other people do as well as they do it. That she succeeded to the fullest is in no small measure because of the unfailing support of her teacher, who was also her dearest friend and the wisest of advisors. It has verily been said that the world would not have heard of Helen Keller if Anne Sullivan had not been there.

Anne Sullivan gave the best years of her life to Helen, seldom leaving her side until her pupil had graduated from college. The principles of teaching that Anne Sullivan evolved through her association with Helen are applicable universally. The fundamental point was to draw out the innate, latent capabilities within the child, taking care not to destroy her originality in the artificial atmosphere of a classroom where lessons are "taught". One of her most strongly held beliefs was never to silence a child who asks questions. She urged everyone to talk to Helen naturally, to give her full sentences and intelligent ideas, never minding whether Helen understood or not. Similarly, she did not believe in imposing tasks and ideas that would be wearisome or distasteful. Every child is naturally curious and she believed in satisfying this curiosity and using it as a door to the child's mind. It was her genius for sensing the right approach for each situation that helped create the phenomenon of Helen Keller. Her approach remains of perennial value to all teachers of young children.



Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan

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hen Anne Sullivan came to Helen, she found a strong-willed, healthy child, completely spoiled, who was used to getting her own way by throwing the most violent tantrums. Her parents had been utterly at a loss in finding a way to deal with her. Almost the first thing Anne did was to separate Helen from her family and literally battle it out with the willful child until she could establish contact with her. In her own words:

... I could do nothing with Helen in the midst of the family, who have always allowed her to do exactly as she pleased. She has tyrannized over everybody, her mother, her father, the servants ... and nobody had ever seriously disputed her will ... until I came. ... As I began to teach her, I was beset by many difficulties. She wouldn't yield a point without contesting it to the bitter end ... I meant to go slowly ... I had an idea that I could win the love and confidence of my little pupil by the same means that I should use if she could see and hear. But I soon found that I was cut off from all the usual approaches to the child's heart. ... Thus it is, we study, plan and prepare ourselves for a task, and when the hour for action arrives, we find that the system we have followed with such labour and pride does not fit the occasion; and then there's nothing for us to do but rely on something within us, some innate capacity for knowing and doing, which we did not know we possessed until the hour of our great need brought it to light.¹

She started to spell words into Helen's hand, and the child, thinking this a new game, learned the movements quickly without understanding the connection between things and their names. And then one day a miracle happened. The incident is described by Helen:

The morning after my teacher came she led me into her room and gave me a doll. ... When I had played with it a little while, Miss Sullivan slowly spelled into my hand the word "d-o-l-l." I was at once interested in this finger play and tried to imitate it. When I finally succeeded in making the letters correctly I was flushed with childish pleasure and pride. ... I did not know that I was spelling a word or even that words existed; I was simply making my fingers go in monkey-like imitation. In the days that followed I learned to spell in this uncomprehending way a great many words. ...²

This went on for several days until one day . . .

We walked down the path to the well-house . . . Some one was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word *water*, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motions of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten – a thrill of returning thought; and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me. I knew then that "w-a-t-e-r" meant the wonderful cool something that was flowing over my hand. That living word awakened my soul, gave it light, hope, joy, set it free! There were barriers still, it is true, but barriers that could in time be swept away.

I left the well-house eager to learn. Everything had a name, and each name gave birth to a new thought. As we returned to the house every object which I touched seemed to quiver with life. That was because I saw everything with the strange, new sight that had come to me.³

I recall many incidents of the summer of 1887 that followed my soul's sudden awakening. I did nothing but explore with my hands and learn the name of every object that I touched; and the more I handled things and learned their names and uses, the more joyous and confident grew my sense of kinship with the rest of the world.⁴

Here is her teacher's description of the morning after this incident, which transformed the little child.

. . . Helen got up this morning like a radiant fairy. She has flitted from object to object, asking the name of everything and kissing me for very gladness. Last night when I got in bed, she stole into my arms of her own accord and kissed me for the first time, and I thought my heart would burst, so full was it of joy.⁵

Anne Sullivan groped for a way to start teaching language to the child:

I have decided not to try to have regular lessons for the present. I am going to treat Helen exactly like a two-year-old child. It occurred to me the other day that it is absurd to require a child to come to a certain place at a certain time and recite certain lessons, when he has not yet acquired a working vocabulary. . . I asked myself, "How does a normal child learn language?" The answer was simple, "By imitation." The child comes into the world with the ability to learn, and he learns of himself, provided he is supplied with sufficient outward

stimulus. He sees people do things, and he tries to do them. He hears others speak, and he tries to speak. But long before he utters his first word, he understands what is said to him. . . . These observations have given me a clue to the method to be followed in teaching Helen language. I shall talk into her hand as we talk into the baby's ears. I shall assume that she has the normal child's capacity of assimilation and imitation. I shall use complete sentences in talking to her, and fill out the meaning with gestures and her descriptive signs when necessity requires it; but I shall not try to keep her mind fixed on any one thing. I shall do all I can to interest and stimulate it, and wait for results.⁶

Since I have abandoned the idea of regular lessons, I find that Helen learns much faster. I am convinced that the time spent by the teacher in digging out of the child what she has put into him, for the sake of satisfying herself that it has taken root, is so much time thrown away. It's much better, I think, to assume that the child is doing his part, and that the seed you have sown will bear fruit in due time. It's only fair to the child, anyhow . . .⁷

From the beginning, Anne Sullivan's "classroom" was life itself – nature, the garden, people – and she "spoke" to Helen of everything.



Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan

... I don't want any more kindergarten materials. ... I am beginning to suspect all elaborate and special systems of education. They seem to me to be built up on the supposition that every child is a kind of idiot who must be taught to think. Whereas, if the child is left to himself, he will think more and better, if less showily. Let him go and come freely, let him touch real things and combine his impressions for himself, instead of sitting indoors at a little round table, while a sweet-voiced teacher suggests that he build a stone wall with his wooden blocks, or make a rainbow out of strips of coloured paper, or plant straw trees in bead flower-pots. Such teaching fills the mind with artificial associations that must be got rid of, before the child can develop independent ideas out of actual experiences.⁸

— We have begun to take long walks every morning ... Indeed, I feel as if I had never seen anything until now, Helen finds so much to ask about along the way. ... Every new word Helen learns seems to carry with it necessity for many more. Her mind grows through its ceaseless activity.⁹



Helen Keller and Rabindranath Tagore, New York, 1930

Helen describes the way her teacher went about the task of awakening her:

Thus I learned from life itself. At the beginning I was only a little mass of possibilities. It was my teacher who unfolded and developed them. When she came, everything about me breathed of love and joy and was full of meaning. She has never since let pass an opportunity to point out the beauty that is in everything, nor has she ceased trying in thought and action and example to make my life sweet and useful.

It was my teacher's genius, her quick sympathy, her loving tact which made the first years of my education so beautiful. It was because she seized the right moment to impart knowledge that made it so pleasant and acceptable to me. She realized that a child's mind is like a shallow brook which ripples and dances merrily over the stony course of its education and reflects here a flower, there a bush, yonder a fleecy cloud; and she attempted to guide my mind on its way, knowing that like a brook it should be fed by mountain streams and hidden springs, until it broadened out into a deep river, capable of reflecting in its placid surface, billowy hills, the liminous shadows of trees and the blue heavens, as well as the sweet face of a little flower.

Any teacher can take a child to the classroom, but not every teacher can make him learn. He will not work joyously unless he feels that liberty is his, whether he is busy or at rest; he must feel the flush of victory and the heart-sinking of disappointment before he takes with a will the tasks distasteful to him and resolves to dance his way bravely through a dull routine of textbooks.

My teacher is so near to me that I scarcely think of myself apart from her. How much of my delight in all beautiful things is innate, and how much is due to her influence, I can never tell. I feel that her being is inseparable from my own, and that the footsteps of my life are in hers. All the best of me belongs to her – there is not a talent, or an aspiration or a joy in me that has not been awakened by her loving touch.¹⁰

The most important day I remember in all my life is the one on which my teacher, Anne Mansfield Sullivan, came to me. I am filled with wonder when I consider the immeasurable contrasts between the two lives which it connects. . . .¹¹

Have you ever been at sea in a dense fog, when it seemed as if a tangible white darkness shut you in, and the great ship, tense and anxious, groped her way toward the shore with plummet and sounding-line, and you waited with beating heart for something to happen? I was like that ship before my education began, only I was without compass or sounding-line, and had no way of knowing how

near the harbour was. "Light! give me light!" was the wordless cry of my soul, and the light of love shone on me in that very hour."¹²

From the beginning of my education Miss Sullivan made it a practice to speak to me as she would speak to any hearing child; the only difference was that she spelled the sentences into my hand instead of speaking them. If I did not know the words and idioms necessary to express my thoughts she supplied them, even suggesting conversation when I was unable to keep up my end of the dialogue. . . .

The deaf and the blind find it very difficult to acquire the amenities of conversation. How much more this difficulty must be augmented in the case of those who are both deaf and blind! They cannot distinguish the tone of the voice or, without assistance, go up and down the gamut of tones that give significance to words; nor can they watch the expression of the speaker's face, and a look is often the very soul of what one says.¹³

Thus within a few months, a child who had had no means of communicating with the world except to scream and kick for what she wanted, was transformed into an eager, ardent pupil, asking endless questions, radiant and joyful in her delight in all things. Everything stimulated her interest and Miss Sullivan took care to answer all her questions, even if she was sometimes severely taxed to find satisfying answers. Hundreds of words and sentences were spelled into Helen's hand all day long so that she was able to absorb much of the life around her which her lack of sight and hearing veiled. In keeping with her resolve not to deny her any of the experiences that would normally come in a child's way, she took Helen to the circus, and the child touched each animal to discover its shape. She was taken to the beach, where she experienced the might and grandeur of the ocean, demanding an answer to her indignant question: "Who has put salt in the water?"

Helen tells us more about her learning process:

For a long time I had no regular lessons. Even when I studied most earnestly it seemed more like play than work. Everything Miss Sullivan taught me she illustrated by a beautiful story or a poem. Whenever anything delighted or interested me she talked it over with me just as if she were a little girl herself. What many children think of with dread, as a painful plodding through grammar, hard sums and harder definitions, is to-day one of my most precious memories.

I cannot explain the peculiar sympathy Miss Sullivan had with my pleasures and desires. . . . Added to this she had a wonderful faculty for description. She went quickly over uninteresting details, and never nagged me with questions to see if I remembered the day-before-yesterday's lesson. She introduced dry

technicalities of science little by little, making every subject so real that I could not help remembering what she taught.

We read and studied out of doors, preferring the sunlit woods to the house. All my early lessons have in them the breath of the woods – the fine, resinous odour of pine needles, blended with the perfume of wild grapes. Seated in the gracious shade of a wild tulip tree, I learned to think that everything has a lesson and a suggestion.¹⁴

Thus the stimulus was provided for Helen's innate genius to flower. In a year Helen had changed completely. In the words of her teacher, from a report written in 1888, Helen's eighth year:

... her whole body is so finely organized that she seems to use it as a medium for bringing herself into closer relations with her fellow creatures. She is able not only to distinguish with great accuracy the different undulations of the air and the vibrations of the floor made by various sounds and motions, and to recognize her friends and acquaintances the instant she touches their hands or clothing, but she also perceives the state of mind of those around her. It is impossible for any one with whom Helen is conversing to be particularly happy or sad, and withhold the knowledge of this fact from her.¹⁵

Having mastered language, Helen was eager to learn to speak normally, which, as far as she knew, a blind-deaf child had never achieved. Then one day Helen heard of a girl in Norway, blind and deaf like herself, who had been taught to speak. She decided to learn to speak whatever it might cost her. Here she describes the struggle she underwent:

The impulse to utter audible sounds had always been strong within me. I used to make noises, keeping one hand on my throat while the other hand felt the movements of my lips. . . .

I had known for a long time that the people about me used a method of communication different from mine; and even before I knew that a deaf child could be taught to speak, I was conscious of dissatisfaction with the means of communication I already possessed. One who is entirely dependent upon the manual alphabet has always a sense of restraint, of narrowness. . . .

No dear child who has earnestly tried to speak the words which he has never heard – to come out of the prison of silence, where no tone of love, no song of bird, no strain of music ever pierces the stillness – can forget the thrill of surprise, the joy of discovery which came over him when he uttered his first word. Only

such a one can appreciate the eagerness with which I talked to my toys, to stones, trees, birds and dumb animals, or the delight I felt when at my call Mildred [her sister] ran to me or my dogs obeyed my commands. It is an unspeakable boon to me to be able to speak in winged words that need no interpretation. As I talked, happy thoughts fluttered up out of my words that might perhaps have struggled in vain to escape my fingers. . . .

But for Miss Sullivan's genius, untiring perseverance and devotion, I could not have progressed as far as I have toward natural speech. In the first place, I laboured night and day before I could be understood even by my most intimate friends; in the second place, I needed Miss Sullivan's assistance constantly in my efforts to articulate each sound clearly and to combine all sounds in a thousand ways. . . .

In reading my teacher's lips I was wholly dependent on my fingers: I had to use the sense of touch in catching the vibrations of the throat, the movements of the mouth and the expression of the face; and often this sense was at fault. In such cases I was forced to repeat the words or sentences, sometimes for hours, until I felt the proper ring in my own voice.¹⁶

Just as Miss Sullivan supported Helen in her struggle for normal speech, she was there when Helen decided she wished to go to college. After overcoming the greatest difficulties, Helen was accepted at Radcliffe.

I remember my first day at Radcliffe. It was a day full of interest for me. I had looked forward to it for years. A potent force within me, stronger than the persuasion of my friends, stronger even than the pleadings of my heart, had impelled me to try my strength by the standards of those who see and hear. I knew that there were obstacles in the way; but I was eager to overcome them. . . . Debarred from the great highways of knowledge, I was compelled to make the journey across country by unfrequented roads – that was all. . . .¹⁷

I am frequently asked how I overcome the peculiar conditions under which I work in college. In the classroom I am of course practically alone. The professor is as remote as if he were speaking through a telephone. The lectures are spelled into my hand as rapidly as possible, and much of the individuality of the lecturer is lost to me in the effort to keep in the race. The words rush through my hand like hounds in pursuit of a hare which they often miss. . . . Usually I jot down what I can remember of them when I get home. . . .¹⁸



Helen Keller reading Braille, 1950

The Braille Characters

line 1	⠁	⠃	⠉	⠇	⠑	⠕	⠓	⠈	⠊	⠋
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0
line 2	⠅	⠙	⠍	⠎	⠏	⠑	⠒	⠗	⠘	⠞
line 3	⠥	⠺	⠞	⠽	⠵	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
	u	v	x	y	z	and	for	of	the	with
line 4	⠡	⠢	⠤	⠦	⠨	⠬	⠮	⠰	⠲	⠴
	ch	gh	sh	th	wh	ed	er	ou	ow	w
line 5	⠸	⠼	⠾	⠿	⠞	⠗	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
	,	;	:	.	en	!	()	"/?	in	"
line 6	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠				
	st	ing	#	ar	'	-				
line 7	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠	⠠
	general accent sign	used for two-celled contractions			italic sign	letter sign	capital sign			

1 • •4
2 • •5
3 • •6

the Braille
positions

Miss Sullivan gave herself utterly to helping her pupil and in the process almost ruined her already delicate eyes. Helen expressed her anguish in a letter to a friend:

... I am now sure that I shall be ready for my examinations in June. There is but one cloud in my sky at present; but that is one which casts a dark shadow over my life, and makes me very anxious at times. My teacher's eyes are no better: indeed, I think they grow more troublesome, though she is very brave and patient, and will not give up. But it is most distressing to me to feel that she is sacrificing her sight for me. I feel as if I ought to give up the idea of going to college altogether: for not all the knowledge in the world could make me happy, if obtained at such a cost. I do wish . . . you would try to persuade Teacher to take a rest, and have her eyes treated. She will not listen to me.¹⁹

More than anyone can intimate or estimate, the story of Helen Keller is the story of Anne Mansfield Sullivan. This is not said to minimize the heroic achievements of the one, but to do justice to the intelligent, affectionate, and courageous devotion of the other.

References

1. Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Lancer, 1968), pp. 360-61.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 35-36.
3. *Ibid.*, pp. 36-37.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 371.
6. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-73.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 377.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 375.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 377-78.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 54-55.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 34.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 35.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-47.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 419-20.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-79.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 119.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 289-90.



Notes

The following passages are from the paper Anne Sullivan prepared for the July 1894 meeting of the American Association to Promote the Teaching of Speech to the Deaf.

You must not imagine that as soon as Helen grasped the idea that everything had a name she at once became mistress of the treasury of the English language, or that "her mental faculties emerged, full armed, from their then living tomb, as Pallas Athena from the head of Zeus," as one of her enthusiastic admirers would have us believe. At first, the words, phrases and sentences which she used in expressing her thoughts were all reproductions of what we had used in conversation with her, and which her memory had unconsciously retained. And indeed, this is true of the language of all children. Their language is the memory of the language they hear spoken in their homes. Countless repetition of the conversation of daily life has impressed certain words and phrases upon their memories, and when they come to talk themselves, memory supplies the words they lisp. Likewise, the language of educated people is the memory of the language of books.

Language grows out of life, out of its needs and experiences. At first my little pupil's mind was all but vacant. She had been living in a world she could not realize. *Language* and *knowledge* are indissolubly connected; they are interdependent. Good work in language presupposes and depends on a real knowledge of things. As soon as Helen grasped the idea that everything had a *name*, and that by means of the manual alphabet these names could be transmitted from one to another, I proceeded to awaken her further interest in the *objects* whose names she learned to spell with such evident joy. *I never taught language for the PURPOSE of teaching it*; but invariably used language as a medium for the communication of *thought*; thus the learning of language was *coincident* with the acquisition of knowledge. In order to use language intelligently, one must have something to talk *about*, and having something to talk about is the result of having had experiences; no amount of language training will enable our little children to use language with ease and fluency unless they have something clearly in their minds which they wish to communicate, or unless we succeed in awakening in them a desire to know what is in the minds of others.

At first I did not attempt to confine my pupil to any system. I always tried to find out what interested her most, and made that the starting-point for the new lesson, whether it had any bearing on the lesson I had planned to teach or not. During the first two years of her intellectual life, I required Helen to write very little. In order to write one must have something to write about, and having something to write about requires some mental preparation. The memory must be stored with ideas and the mind must be enriched with knowledge before writing becomes a natural and pleasurable effort. Too often, I think, children are required to write before they have anything to say. Teach them to think and read and talk without self-repression, and they will write because they cannot help it.

Helen acquired language by practice and habit rather than by study of rules and definitions. Grammar with its puzzling array of classifications, nomenclatures, and paradigms, was wholly discarded in her education. She learned language by being brought in contact with the *living* language itself; she was made to deal with it in everyday conversation, and in her books, and to turn it over in a variety of ways until she was able to use it correctly. No doubt I talked much more with my fingers, and more constantly than I should have done with my mouth; for had she possessed the use of sight and hearing, she would have been less dependent on me for entertainment and instruction.

I believe every child has hidden away somewhere in his being noble capacities which may be quickened and developed if we go about it in the right way; but we shall never properly develop the higher natures of our little ones while we continue to fill their minds with the so-called rudiments. Mathematics will never make them loving, nor will the accurate knowledge of the size and shape of the world help them to appreciate its beauties. Let us lead them during the first years to find their greatest pleasure in Nature. Let them run in the fields, learn about animals, and observe real things. Children will educate themselves under right conditions. They require guidance and sympathy far more than instruction.

I think much of the fluency with which Helen uses language is due to the fact that nearly every impression which she receives comes through the medium of language. But after due allowance has been made for Helen's natural aptitude for acquiring language, and for the advantage resulting from her peculiar environment, I think that we shall still find that the constant companionship of good books has been of supreme importance in her education. It may be true, as some maintain, that language cannot express to us much beyond what we have lived and experienced; but I have always observed that children manifest the greatest delight in the lofty, poetic language which we are too ready to think beyond their comprehension. "This is all you will understand," said a teacher to a class of little children, closing the book which she had been reading to them. "Oh, please read us the rest, even if we won't understand it," they pleaded, delighted with the rhythm, and the beauty which they felt, even though they could not have explained it. It is not necessary that a child should understand every word in a book before he can read with pleasure and profit. Indeed, only such explanations should be given as are really essential. Helen drank in language which she at first could not understand, and it remained in her mind until needed, when it fitted itself naturally and easily into her conversation and compositions. Indeed, it is maintained by some that she reads too much, that a great deal of originative force is dissipated in the enjoyment of books; that when she might see and say things for herself, she sees them only through the eyes of others, and says them in their language; but I am convinced that original composition without the preparation of much reading is an impossibility. Helen has had the best and purest models in language constantly presented to her, and her conversation and her writing are unconscious reproductions of what she has read. Reading, I think, should be kept independent of the regular school exercises. Children should be encouraged to read for the pure delight of it. The attitude of the child toward his books should be that of unconscious receptivity. The great works of the imagination ought to become a part of his life, as they were once of the very substance of the men who wrote them. It is true, the more sensitive and imaginative the mind is that receives the thought-pictures and images of literature, the more nicely the finest lines are reproduced. Helen has the vitality of feeling, the freshness and eagerness of interest, and the spiritual insight of the artistic temperament, and naturally she has a more active and intense joy in life, simply as life, and in nature, books, and people than less gifted mortals. Her mind is so filled with the beautiful thoughts and ideals of the great poets that nothing seems commonplace to her; for her imagination colours all life with its own rich hues.

From Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Lancer, 1968), pp. 449-53.

Braille

Braille, the universally accepted system of writing used by and for blind persons, consists of a code of sixty-three characters, each made up of one to six raised dots arranged in a six-position matrix or cell. These Braille characters are embossed in lines on paper and read by passing the fingers lightly over the manuscript. Louis Braille (1809-52), who was blinded at the age of three, invented the system in 1824 while a student at the Institution Nationale des Jeunes Aveugles (National Institute for Blind Children), Paris.

Braille's Invention

When Louis Braille entered the school for the blind in Paris, in 1819, it had fourteen books in embossed characters available for the students, but they were rarely used. In addition to the difficulty encountered by even the best readers using this system, and the slow pace at which they had to proceed, there was another disadvantage of which the young Braille and his classmates were keenly aware: there was no way for them to write using the raised lines of this system. Braille learned of a system of tangible writing using dots, invented in 1819 by Captain Charles Barbier, a French army officer. It was called night writing and was intended for night-time battlefield communications. In 1824, when he was only fifteen years old, Braille developed a six-dot "cell" system. He used Barbier's system as a starting point and cut its twelve-dot configuration in half. The system was first published in 1829; a more complete elaboration appeared in 1837.



Helen Keller and Anne Sullivan

Diffusion of Braille

Braille's system was immediately accepted and used by his fellow students, but wider acceptance was slow in coming. The system was not officially adopted by the school in Paris until 1854, two years after Braille's death. A universal Braille code for the English-speaking world was not adopted until 1932, when representatives from agencies for the blind in Great Britain and the United States met in London and agreed upon a system known as Standard English Braille, grade 2. In 1957 Anglo-American experts again met in London to further improve the system.

In addition to the literary Braille code, there are other codes utilizing the Braille cell but with other meanings assigned to each configuration.

The "Nemeth Code of Braille Mathematics and Scientific Notation" (1965) provides for Braille representation of the many special symbols used in advanced mathematical and technical material. There are also special braille codes or modifications for musical notation, shorthand, and, of course, many of the more common languages of the world.

Handwritten Braille

Writing Braille by hand is accomplished by means of a device called a slate that consists of two metal plates hinged together to permit a sheet of paper to be inserted between them. Some slates have a wooden base or guide board onto which the paper is clamped. The upper of the two metal plates, the guide plate, has cell-sized windows; under each of these, in the lower plate, are six slight pits in the Braille dot pattern. A stylus is used to press the paper against the pits to form the raised dots. A person using Braille writes from right to left; when the sheet is turned over, the dots face upward and are read from left to right.

Machine-Produced Braille

Braille is also produced by special machines with six keys, one for each dot in the Braille cell. The first Braille writing machine was invented in 1892. A recent innovation for producing Braille is electric embossing machines similar to electric typewriters.

Multiple copies of Braille materials are made with embossed zinc plates that are used for press masters. These plates are produced by a stereograph machine invented in 1893. In the 1920's the interpoint system was developed to emboss both sides of a sheet of paper without the dots on one side opposing those on the other side. Recently, a computer programme for automatically translating printed English into contracted Braille has been used to produce stereograph plates and to provide Braille feedback from a standard teletypewriter keyboard.

How Helen Keller Wrote Her Story

The way in which Miss Keller wrote her story shows, as nothing else can show, the difficulties she had to overcome. When we write, we can go back over our work, shuffle the pages, interline, rearrange, see how the paragraphs look in proof, and so construct the whole work before the eye, as an architect constructs his plans. When Miss Keller puts her work in typewritten form, she cannot refer to it again unless some one reads it to her by means of the manual alphabet.

This difficulty is in part obviated by the use of her braille machine, which makes a manuscript that she can read; but as her work must be put ultimately in typewritten form, and as a braille machine is somewhat cumbersome, she has got into the habit of writing directly on her typewriter. She depends so little on her braille manuscript, that, when she began to write her story more than a year ago and had put in braille a hundred pages of material and notes, she made the mistake of destroying these notes before she had finished her manuscript. Thus she composed much of her story on the typewriter, and in constructing it as a whole depended on her memory to guide her in putting together the detached episodes, which Miss Sullivan read over to her.

Last July, when she had finished under great pressure of work her final chapter, she set to work to rewrite the whole story. Her good friend, Mr. William Wade, had a complete braille copy made for her from the magazine proofs. Then for the first time she had her whole manuscript under her finger at once. She saw imperfections in the arrangement of paragraphs and the repetition of phrases. She saw, too, that her story properly fell into short chapters and redivided it.

Partly from temperament, partly from the conditions of her work, she has written rather a series of brilliant passages than a unified narrative; in point of fact, several paragraphs of her story are short themes written in her English courses, and the small unit sometimes shows its original limits.

In rewriting the story, Miss Keller made corrections on separate pages on her braille machine. Long corrections she wrote out on her typewriter, with catchwords to indicate where they belonged. Then she read from her braille copy the entire story, making corrections as she read, which were taken down on the manuscript that went to the printer. During this revision she discussed questions of subject matter and phrasing. She sat running her finger over the braille manuscript, stopping now and then to refer to the braille notes on which she had indicated her corrections, all the time reading aloud to verify the manuscript.

From Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (New York: Lancer, 1968), pp. 326-28.

The following is a partial list of other books written by Helen Keller:

Optimism (1903), *The World I Live In* (1910), *My Religion* (1927), *Midstream* (1929), *Hellen Keller's Journal* (1938), *Let Us Have Faith* (1940), *Teacher: Anne Sullivan Macy* (1955).

So. Boston.

May 1, 1891.

My dear Mr. Brooks;

Helen

sends you a loving greet
ing this bright May-day.

My teacher has just told
me that you have been
made a bishop, and that
your friends everywhere
are rejoicing because



- Maria Montessori -

Discovery of the Child

Introduction

When, at the age of fourteen, Maria Montessori was advised by her parents to become a teacher (it was practically the only career open to women at that time) her reaction was categorical: anything but that! Yet she was to become one of the most celebrated educators of all time. Her name came to be associated with a new method of teaching which has gained a world-wide following.

Maria first thought of becoming an engineer because of her deep interest in mathematics, but finally decided to study medicine. That was easier said than done, for in the Italy of those days only men attended medical school. When the head of the Board of Education told her that it was not possible, she remarked quietly, "I know I shall become a Doctor of Medicine."¹ Surely enough, she succeeded. Despite all opposition she became the first woman medical student in Italy.

But this was not the end of her difficulties. The other students resented her intrusion into their exclusively masculine world and subjected her to many petty persecutions. In addition, her father continued to disapprove of her chosen career. It came to such a point that she thought of abandoning the attempt. That very day she had an experience which was to alter her outlook on life. On her way home from school she met a shabbily dressed woman with a child of about two years. Hardly hearing the professional whine of the beggar, she intently observed the little child playing on the ground with a small piece of coloured paper. Something in the expression of the child, so serenely happy in the possession of that worthless scrap of coloured paper, observing it with the full absorption of its little soul, provoked in Maria a profound inner experience. "I cannot explain it," she was to say in later years. "It just happened like that. You will probably think it a very silly story; and if you told it to others

1. E. M. Standing, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1957), p. 5.

they would probably just laugh at it."¹ But from that moment, she returned to her work with new energy, convinced that she had some special vocation to fulfil, although for many years to come she had no idea that she would find her life's mission in education.

In 1896, at the age of twenty-five, she became the first woman in Italy to receive the degree of Doctor of Medicine. For ten years thereafter she led a very active life. Soon after graduating, Dr. Montessori was appointed to the Psychiatric Clinic at the University of Rome. In this capacity, she came across idiot children living in extremely bad conditions inside Rome's lunatic asylums. She came to differ with the usual views on how to deal with such cases, believing that with proper educational treatment their mental condition could be considerably improved.

"That form of creation," she said, "which was necessary for these unfortunate beings, so as to enable them to re-enter human society, to take their place in the civilized world and render them independent of the help of others – placing human dignity within their grasp – was a work which appealed so strongly to my heart that I remained in it for years."²

From 1899 to 1901 Maria Montessori was the director of a state orthophrenic³ school that housed children considered hopelessly deficient. She prepared a group of teachers "in a special method of observation and in the education of feeble-minded children."⁴ She worked all day with the children, and spent the evenings making, comparing, and analyzing notes, and preparing new material. She remarked later, "Those two years of practice are indeed my first and only true degree in pedagogy."⁵

She was so successful that some of these children learnt to read and write and were able to pass an examination given to normal children. This success raised further questions in Dr. Montessori. "Whilst everyone was admiring my idiots," she wrote, "I was searching for the reasons which could keep back the healthy and happy children of the ordinary schools on so low a plane that they could be equalled in tests of intelligence by my unfortunate pupils."⁶

She concluded that the key lay in the difference between ordinary educational principles and those she applied in teaching her "idiots". "This

1. Ibid., pp. 7-8.

2. Ibid., p. 10.

3. Orthophrenia: the normal mental state in social relations.

4. Ibid., p. 11.

5. Ibid., p. 11.

6. Ibid., p. 11.

*feeling, so deep as to be of the nature of an intuition, became my controlling idea. I became convinced that similar methods applied to normal children would develop and set free their personality in a marvellous and surprising way."*¹

*She gave up her work with the deficient in 1901. Already she was deeply interested in the problem of educating normal children but somehow did not feel ready to put her theories into practice. She felt a need for further study. Although she was already a lecturer at the university, she registered again as a student, this time in philosophy and pedagogy. During this period she made a thorough study of the works of two French doctors, Jean Itard and Edouard Séguin, who had looked after deficient children. Itard lived at the time of the French Revolution and was best known for having educated an idiot boy found abandoned in a forest. He also made a study of deaf mutes. Séguin was Itard's student. He founded a school for mental deficient in Paris and became well known for his remarkable success. Séguin insisted that his "physiological method", based upon an individual study of the pupil and analysis of physiological and psychological phenomena, should also be applied to normal children. This, according to him, would "lead the way to a complete human regeneration."*²

*Maria Montessori was so interested in the works of Séguin and Itard that, she said, "I translated into Italian and copied out with my own hand the writing of these two men from beginning to end (Séguin's book alone was 600 pages long), making for myself books as the Benedictines did before the diffusion of the art of printing. I chose to do this by hand in order that I might have time to weigh the sense of each word and read in truth the spirit of the authors."*³

Besides these private studies, Maria Montessori continued to have a very active life. From 1896 to 1906, she occupied the Chair of Hygiene at a women's college and for four years the Chair of Anthropology at the University of Rome. During this time she published her first major work, a large volume entitled Pedagogical Anthropology. In addition to these activities, she practised medicine in various clinics and hospitals in Rome and even carried on a private practice. One of her students gives a glimpse of Maria Montessori as professor:

The hall was crowded with young people of both sexes. The lecturer remained standing during her discourse, and kept her eyes fixed on her audience with a penetrating look.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

I found out afterwards that, even with quite a large audience, she was able somehow to be conscious of each one individually with what one might describe as a kind of spiritual contact.

I noticed at once that she was a very good-looking woman; but what impressed me more was that she did not follow the fashion of so many learned women of that time by dressing in a somewhat masculine style. Her attire, though simple, retained an elegant and feminine touch.

In that opening lecture she spoke, not so much about anthropology, as about schools – what the function of a school should be. She emphasized two main points: first, that it is the duty of the teacher to help rather than to judge; and second, that true mental work does not exhaust, but rather gives nourishment, food for the spirit.

She was a most attractive lecturer with a manner that was easy and gracious. Everything that she said had the warmth of life. I remember some of the students saying, "Her lectures make us want to be good," which recalls the remark made by another teacher at another of her courses a year or two later, "We do not understand all that she is trying to teach us; but we all find in it a spiritual stimulus."¹

In 1906, at the age of thirty-six, Maria Montessori was leading a brilliant career indeed. Then something happened which, within two years, would make her name known all over the world. The stage was an unlikely one: a classroom hastily organized in a slum of Rome for sixty young children, in order to prevent them from damaging the new flats recently allotted to their families.

It was here in the San Lorenzo slum that Maria Montessori would make her fundamental discovery: that a precious treasure lies hidden within each child, and that her work with mentally deficient children had given her a key to unlock it. In the quotation that follows, taken from Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work, the author, Mortimer Standing, describes the outcome of the San Lorenzo experiment and the rapid spread of Montessori's fame:

So great a wonder could not remain long hid. The strange happenings in the heart of the slum quarter of San Lorenzo began to be talked about. A second "Children's House" was set up in another tenement building; and there too the same wonders began to reveal themselves. Soon visitors of all sorts were to be seen making their way through the drab streets of San Lorenzo to see these astonishing children for themselves, and went away marvelling, to relate what they had seen to their friends.²

The year of the San Lorenzo experiment (1907-1908) forms a landmark in Montessori's career. At the commencement of this annus mirabilis she was known to certain circles in Rome. That was all. By the end of it – or of the year following – her name had travelled all over the civilized world, even beyond it. We might almost say that, like Byron, "she woke up to find herself famous."

1. Ibid., p. 15.

2. Ibid., p. 35.



La mia cara Anna Marchionni - in segno di vicinanza

Maria Montessori

- Maria Montessori -

For many reasons she would have preferred to go on living as she had been living, directing the work of the Children's Houses; and at the same time carrying on as a lecturer at Rome University; lecturing at the women's training college; and, in addition, doing as much private practice as time allowed. But it was not to be. From various countries, especially from England and America, people wrote, or came to Rome in person, clamouring for further instruction in the principles of this new method. Apart from these requests, as she came to realize more completely the wider significance of her discoveries, she felt increasingly the burden of a responsibility that could not be evaded. Her mission in life was now no longer a vague sense of something to come: it had crystallized out. Into her hands, without her seeking it, had been placed a key which would unlock immense treasures for humanity. Or, to put it without metaphor, she felt the duty of going forth as an apostle on behalf of all the children in the world, born and as yet unborn, to preach for their rights and their liberation.¹

Maria Montessori began to travel extensively. Her writings were translated into many languages and her ideas spread remarkably quickly. In certain countries they even led to a new form of architecture. In Germany, Austria, America, Holland, India and Italy, special "Children's Houses" were built, many of them in collaboration with Dr. Montessori herself. In these buildings everything was constructed in proportion to the dimensions of the physical and mental needs of children.

She received many invitations and gave teacher-training courses in Italy, France, Holland, Germany, Spain, England, Austria, India and Ceylon. She also went to South America. Wherever she went, she made a deep impression.

Her profound insight into the soul of the child; her long and varied experience; her scientific outlook combined with a maternal tenderness and sympathy; the lucidity of her discourses and their originality; her strong yet charming personality, at once humble yet dignified; the passionate sincerity of her devotion to her mission – all these combined to make her the perfect advocate of her cause, which was the cause of the child.²

Yet she knew that immense potential energies were still waiting to be set free, and she felt the need of continuing to study and meditate. She was aware of the risk of dissipating her energies in endless lecture tours. So, for forty years after her initial discovery, and in the midst of her other absorbing activities, she continued to research. The training of teachers, the study of the pre-school child, and the application of her principles to children of more and more advanced ages were subjects of that research. The result was a plan for the

1. Ibid., pp. 41-42.

2. Ibid., p. 46.

reconstruction of society and civilization, based on the idea that "true education is the armament of peace."¹

In 1939 Maria Montessori went to India to give a training course to teachers in Madras. It was attended by more than three hundred teachers and students. During this time the Second World War broke out. Being Italian, she was automatically regarded as an enemy alien. But an exception was made in her case, and she was allowed to continue her work. During the war years, she gave courses in various parts of India and met many leaders of India, including Rabindranath Tagore and Jawaharlal Nehru.

After the war, she went back to Europe. In 1949 she attended the International Montessori Congress at San Remo, the eighth congress of its kind since 1925. In the last years of her life, she was as active as ever, constantly moving from one country to another giving lectures and courses. In the autumn of 1949 she was invited to address a gathering of UNESCO, where she received a standing ovation. She died suddenly on 6 May 1952, at the age of eighty-one.

Maria Montessori dedicated her life to bringing forth the "hidden treasure" that exists in every child. She understood that a child is not a blank slate but a conscious being, and that the role of education is to help this conscious being to grow and develop.

All other methods of education have taken the work of certain adults as their points of departure and have sought to educate or teach the child according to programmes dictated by adults. For my part, I believe that the child himself must be the pivot of his own education – not the child as people ordinarily think of him, but rather his innermost soul, seen from a perspective that was unprecedented before the advent of what has been called the Montessori Method.

At the end of one of her training courses, she made the following speech which sums up beautifully her basic attitude:

It is difficult for me to express my sentiments and my thanks. We have been together several months and we have become conscious of a bond uniting us, which has grown stronger and which I believe will never break. I am a pilgrim and you are pilgrims towards an idea. I voyage and you voyage and we unite ourselves together, almost as spiritual pilgrims, to work for the triumph of a principle which does not concern ourselves – but the child for whom we are working, and wish to work.

You and I have been, as it were, seduced by something attractive and deep in the child. Not only in those beautiful individual creatures whom we all love, but also in an almost symbolic being – one who holds in himself a secret, a secret we can never wholly fathom, and one which will therefore always attract us.

1. Ibid., p. 347.

We began by protecting the child and now we realize that it is we who need protecting. We began with methods of education and culture for the child, and we end by acknowledging that he is our teacher. Not a teacher who gives us culture, but one who can reveal to us, as no other, our own nature and its possibilities. Therefore we are drawn towards the child, as individuals, as members of society, and for the good of the human race as a whole.

The child is an authority: and the adult must make himself in accord with this authority if he wishes to better his conditions. We have been studying the means towards a harmony between the child and the adult; and we have learned many deep things – but there are many more to be learned.

Some of you will go back to your own country and home just to teach. Others will do more: you will go on studying the child. That is why we are all united in this sphere and can never be separated.

This course has not been primarily a course for the study of culture. I myself speak a foreign language you do not understand; and you, young and old, of all nations, races, religions – some of you still seeking a place in the world, others already with honoured names – you all sit, side by side, together and without surprise. We have come together in this way because we have touched a point which is common to all cultures, nations, societies, religions – "The Child".¹



1. Ibid., p. 58.



- Maria Montessori -



Madame Montessori at the age of seventy

DISCOVERY

A New Columbus

If Montessori had died at the beginning of 1906 – she was then thirty-six years of age – she would hardly have been heard of beyond her immediate circle. By 1908 – only two years later – her name was known all over the world. In that short interval she had made the discovery for which all her previous life had formed a preparation. It is really no exaggeration to say that, like Columbus, she had discovered a new world.

The world which Columbus discovered was a world *without*; Montessori discovered a world *within* – within the soul of the child. Let us make no mistake about it; it was a genuine discovery of something as objective as America was to Columbus, or the Law of Gravitation to Newton. It is really this discovery which has made her famous, not her method.

Her method is but the consequence of her discovery as she herself makes clear. "It would be a great mistake," she says, "to believe that, by merely observing children, we were led to form such a new idea as that of the existence of a hidden nature in the child, and that such an intuition gave rise to a special school and a special method of education. It is impossible to observe something that is not known; and it is not possible for anyone, all at once, by a vague intuition to imagine that a child may have two natures (deviated and normal) and say, 'Now I will try to prove it by experiment.' Anything new must emerge, so to speak, by its own energies; it must spring forth and strike the mind evoked by what we call chance."¹

What exactly was this new phenomenon which "emerged by its own energy?" And what was the "chance" which called it into existence?

The Stage is Set

To answer this we must go backwards for a moment to trace briefly the providential chain of circumstances which brought forth this great and unexpected event.

There existed in Rome at that time a slum district known as the San Lorenzo quarter. It was an area of squalor, poverty and crime. In it were to be found a number of large buildings, put up during a building boom, "with utter disregard for the laws of hygiene, and rendered still worse by being used as temporary habitations." They were then occupied by the poorest class of the whole city.

Here flourished unchecked all the evils of sub-letting, overcrowding, promiscuous immorality and other crimes. To form an adequate idea of the appalling conditions which prevailed in this San Lorenzo quarter one must read Montessori's own account of it.²

At that time there was a building society known as the Istituto Romano dei Beni Stabili – a well-established concern backed by the principal banks in Italy. This society constructed two large adjacent blocks of flats in the heart of the San Lorenzo quarter. (The intention – never carried out – was eventually to reform all the houses in that district.) When all was ready, upwards of a thousand of the poor people from the district were installed, in families, in these flats – on condition that they would observe certain rules of decency and clean living.

But very soon a new problem arose. Most of the parents were away at work during the day, and the older children absent at school. The younger children, left to their own devices, played up and down the stairs and corridors, defacing the walls and staircases and generally creating disorder – "like ignorant little vandals."

After some consideration it was decided by the authorities that it would be more economical in the long run to collect this rabble of children together in one room and pay someone to look after them, than to be constantly paying for repainting and repairing the damage they had done.

A room was set apart for this purpose. Then the question arose, to whom could be entrusted the care of these children? One of those responsible, recalling a magazine article by Dr. Montessori, decided that she was the best person to direct the work; and accordingly approached her about it. Dr. Montessori readily consented, for she saw in it the fulfilment of a long-cherished hope – the opportunity to work with normal children. We have already noted that for several years she had a "hunch" that if one were to apply the methods with which she had been so successful in the teaching of backward children to normal ones good results might follow. But hitherto such an opportunity had been denied her because of the regulation that all children at the age of six should attend the state schools; and it had been difficult for her to interfere in this department.

Having accepted the responsibility for these "little vandals" the next thing was to fit up the room which had been set apart for them. It was not in her power to furnish it with desks like an ordinary schoolroom, because her expenses, being borne by a building society, had to be put down as an indirect item in the general upkeep of the building. For this reason the only expenditure permitted was such as would have been required by an office for furniture and equipment. That is why she had tables made for these small children, with chairs to match, instead

of school desks which were universally in use at that time. This turned out, as it happened, to be a fortunate limitation. She also had a number of little armchairs made, presumably under the excuse that, even in an office, people have to rest sometimes. In addition, she had some precise scientific materials prepared, not identical with, but similar to those she had used in the institution for defectives. These, too, "had nothing about them which should be considered as school equipment."

Dramatis Personae

Such then was the not very promising stage-setting for the unexpected drama which was to follow: a slum quarter in Rome, and a room in a tenement house. Nor were the actors any more promising. Let us look at them: "Sixty tearful, frightened children, so shy that it was impossible to get them to speak; their faces were expressionless, with bewildered eyes as though they had never seen anything in their lives . . . poor abandoned children who had grown up in dark tumble-down cottages without anything to stimulate their minds – dejected, uncared for. It was not necessary to be a doctor to see that they suffered from malnutrition, lack of fresh air and sunlight. They were indeed closed flowers, but without the freshness of buds, souls concealed in a hermetic cell." That is how Dr. Montessori described them.

Owing to her many other duties Montessori was unable to look after the children continuously herself, so someone had to be found to do so. As it was a position which offered no future prospects – this job of looking after these sixty children, ages three to six – it was given to the porter's daughter. Later on it was entrusted to a seamstress who, though somewhat better educated, was equally without training as a teacher. "Even in this was heaven ordina^{nt}";³ for the chances are that if a teacher trained in the old methods had been employed, she would have been so wedded to the old system that she would have found it next to impossible to carry out Montessori's directions. Montessori did not train these girls: "I laid no restriction on the mistress, gave her no special duties; I merely taught her how to use the apparatus so that she could present it accurately to the children."⁴

Prologue

It was decided to have an official opening ceremony, and Montessori was invited to give the inaugural address. The porter's daughter, wishing to be equal to the occasion, informed Montessori that she had taught her charges how to make a military salute. But when the actual day came and the poor dejected mites appeared in their "stout blue orphan smocks" they forgot even their one accomplishment, and were led away in confusion. "I wonder," remarked a Roman lady who was present, "if there will be any change visible in these children in a month's time." She did not speak hopefully.

Montessori, however, felt differently. On this opening day – it was 6th January 1906 – there came to her suddenly a mysterious intuition of the immense significance of the enterprise which was about to begin under those humble circumstances. "I had," she says, "a strange feeling which made me announce emphatically that here was the opening of an undertaking of which the whole world would one day speak." It was the Feast of the Epiphany; and the words of the Epistle seemed to her at once "an omen and a prophecy." "For behold darkness shall cover the face of the earth . . . but the Lord shall arise upon thee. And the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about and see . . . Then shalt thou see and abound; and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee. . . ."

When they heard her read these words and listened to the speech which followed the audience were "stupefied" – "amazed" that she should see in a roomful of sixty poor children a matter of such wonderful significance. Yet the event proved her intuition to be right. Before a year had passed, literally kings were to walk in the brightness of its rising, and a multitude from beyond the seas were to become converted, as they beheld with wonder and reverence this new epiphany.

The Curtain Rises – "Living in a Fairy Tale"

In the whole history of education, from the time of Plato to the present day, there is no episode more remarkable than the series of happenings which came tumbling into being, one after the other, during the next six months. Nothing that took place in Pestalozzi's school at Iverdun, or in Froebel's Anstalt at Neuheim, or amongst Tolstoy's peasant children can equal it for sheer wonder.

It reads like a fairy story.

Everyone who wishes to understand the origin of the Montessori method – and indeed the method itself – should not fail to read the whole of Dr. Montessori's graphic and poignant description in *The Secret of Childhood* (Part II, Chapter II) from which these extracts are taken:

I set to work, [she says], like a peasant woman who, having set aside a good store of seed-corn, has found a fertile field in which she may freely sow it. But I was wrong. I had hardly turned over the clods of my field, when I found gold instead of wheat; the clods concealed a precious treasure. I was not the peasant I had thought myself. Rather I was like foolish Aladdin, who, without knowing it, had in his hand a key that would open hidden treasures.

What were these hidden treasures which revealed themselves so unexpectedly to Dr. Montessori? Speaking generally, they are the *normal characteristics of childhood* hitherto concealed under a mask of "deviations". *Montessori discovered that children possess different and higher qualities than those we usually attribute to them. It was as if a higher form of personality had been liberated, and a new child had come into being.*

We must now pass briefly in review, as Dr. Montessori has related them, these new qualities which so unexpectedly made themselves manifest.

Before doing so it may be well to mention the fact that, when she had worked with backward children, she had found that the materials she had made proved useful to *her* – as a means of arousing their interest. At the same time, however, she had been obliged all along to put forth the whole energy of her will to persuade the children to keep on working with them. With the normal children things happened differently. In fact – to continue the simile used by Dr. Montessori above – it was the materials which were to prove the "Aladdin's Lamp" which opened up to her wondering eyes the concealed treasures within. For the children chose them and worked with them *spontaneously*.





Amazing Mental Concentration

One day Montessori was observing a child of three who was occupying herself with some graded wooden cylinders which had to be slipped in and out of corresponding sockets in a wooden block. She was amazed to find this tiny girl showing such an extraordinary interest: she showed, in fact, a concentration so profound that it seemed to have isolated her mentally from the rest of her environment. To test the intensity of this concentration – which seemed so unusual in a child of three – Montessori asked the teacher to make the other children sing aloud and promenade round her. But the child did not even seem conscious of this disturbance; she went on just as before, mysteriously repeating this same exercise (i.e. taking the cylinders out, mixing them, and replacing them in their sockets). Then Montessori gently picked up the armchair on which the child was sitting, with her in it, and placed her on a table. The child, who had clung on to her precious cylinders during this interruption, at once continued her task as if nothing had happened. With her scientific habit of measuring phenomena Montessori counted the number of times the child repeated the exercise; it was forty-two. Then quite suddenly she stopped "as though coming out of a dream." She smiled as if she was very happy; her eyes shone and she looked round about her. And, strangely enough, after all that long concentration she appeared to be rested rather than fatigued.

Here we see the germ of what was later to become one of the fundamental principles of the Montessori method, viz. the reliance, in the schoolroom, on the *spontaneous* interest of children as the mainspring of their work.

Love of Repetition

This display of mental concentration in so young a child seemed to Montessori a new phenomenon – "a first glimpse into the unexplored depths of the child's mind." Accompanying it came another interesting revelation, another characteristic feature of child mentality – viz., the tendency to repeat the same thing over and over again. In time Montessori came to regard this mysterious and apparently meaningless repetition of an exercise *already known* as one of the essential features of the child's manner of working. One of the most valuable fruits of that liberty, which has become an essential part of her method, is that it gives unlimited scope for the carrying out of this repetition – which obviously answers to some profound psychological need.

Love for Order

The love for order is not a characteristic usually associated with small children. Here again a surprise was in store. This characteristic, like many others, was revealed by chance, the result of an indiscretion on the part of the teacher. The materials with which the children worked were kept in a large cupboard – locked – and the teacher kept the key. Contrary to what happens now in a Montessori class, it was she who distributed the materials at the beginning, and it was she who collected them and put them away in the cupboard at the end of the lesson. The teacher noticed that these little children – however often she told them to remain in their places – used to follow her when she went to the cupboard to put the materials away and solemnly stand round her watching whilst she put the various objects back. This seemed to her to be nothing less than deliberate disobedience. It is the genius who sees the significance of small things. Watching the children behaving in this way, Montessori realized that what they really wanted was *to put the things back in their places again themselves*. So she left them free to do it.

Whereupon a new kind of life began for them. They revelled in putting things back in their places, and, in general, in keeping the environment in order. Later on Montessori saw in this love of order in small children (which older children do *not* share) an example of a general law – the "law of sensitive periods in development". This was the sensitive period for order, which lasts from about the age of twelve months to three and a half years. Montessori was quick to realize the practical value of this unexpected trait in small children. Unless this love of order was already innate at that early age it would be impossible to impose it on a whole roomful of small children. And without it, it would be impossible to grant choice of occupation and liberty of movement to a group of forty small children without chaos ensuing.

Freedom of Choice

One day the teacher arrived late. In addition she had forgotten to lock the cupboard the evening before. It turned out to be another of those occasions in life when "our indiscretions sometimes serve us well where our deep plots do pall."⁵ Upon her arrival the teacher found the children had already opened the cupboard doors. Some were standing looking on in a meditative sort of way; others were helping themselves to materials; others still had already done so and

were taking them away, whilst a fourth group were already busily at work with materials at their own places. The teacher was angry with the children and wished to punish them for "stealing". Again Montessori saw deeper into their motives. She realized that these children, who already knew how to use the materials, were – just because of that knowledge – in a position to be able to choose *some* materials in preference to *others*. This was in fact what they had done. That they had no intention of "stealing" was evident from the fact that they regarded the putting back of the material chosen into its right place as an essential part of the cycle of activity involved – almost the crowning joy of the whole procedure. This incident was the beginning of that principle of "free choice of activity" which became so vital a factor in the Montessori system. *Here again let us notice that it was the discovery which came first and the method followed after.* Shortly after this Montessori replaced the one big, locked cupboard with a number of little low and attractively-painted cupboards, placed round the room at the children's level. In these the materials were so displayed that the children could easily see, choose, take and replace them without the need of any assistance from an adult. This formed an important step towards their more complete independence.

They Preferred Work to Play

We usually think of *play* as the natural spontaneous expression of the child's personality; and of *work*, on the contrary, as something which has to be imposed. But now came another and very astonishing revelation. Some of Dr. Montessori's rich friends – society ladies in Rome who were interested in her work with these poor children – had presented her with a number of costly toys. These included elegant dolls, a doll's house, doll's crockery and even a doll's kitchen. These toys Montessori placed in the room with the children, making them as easily accessible as the materials for work.

This led to the next surprise. *The children never chose the toys.* Montessori was so astonished at this that she intervened herself, showing them how to play with these toys, how to handle the doll's crockery, how to light the fire in the doll's kitchen, "placing a pretty doll beside it," etc. The children showed an interest for a time; and then went away. "They never made such toys the object of their spontaneous choice." In this way Montessori was led to one of the most revolutionary discoveries of all – a fact which is still unknown to, indeed still beyond the credibility of most persons, viz., *that children prefer work to play. . . .*

No Need for Rewards and Punishment

The teacher – or rather the girl who was put in charge, for she was not a trained teacher – devised a system of rewards and punishments for the children. One day Montessori came into the room and found a child sitting in one of the little armchairs; and on his breast he wore a "pompous decoration" which the teacher had prepared as a reward for good behaviour. As it turned out, however, this particular child was actually being punished. What had happened was that a few moments before a boy, decorated for his good behaviour, had taken his medal off and pinned it upon the breast of the young malefactor. Apparently the former regarded his decoration as a thing of little worth, apt to get in his way when working. The culprit, for his part, looked round about him complacently without feeling at all disgraced by his punishment. This struck Montessori as an anomalous state of affairs. After making a great number of experiments the teacher, realizing that the children set no store by these rewards and punishments, abandoned the practice. As the Montessori method developed and many Montessori schools came into existence, this same experience was repeated many times. The children became good and orderly as soon as they learned how to work. On the other hand it was found that the naughtiness of others was in almost every case the result of "deviations" – i.e. manifestations of disordered personalities, due to the fact that constructive energies had been diverted from their true channels. Further, it was found that no amount of punishment could set the matter right; but only the sloughing off of these "deviations" by a new orientation of the elements of personality through spontaneously chosen work.

Many years after this, the present writer once spent a morning in a large Montessori school in the Borough of Acton (London). There were over three hundred children in that school, yet the only name in the official punishment register was that of the H.M. Inspector whose duty it was to examine and sign his name therein. One might imagine this was a special case; but it is not so. I once sent a questionnaire round to a number of long-established Montessori schools, and one of the questions in it was this: "What use do you make of punishments?" One directress wrote: "Work is its own reward. Punishments are rare; a troublesome child might be removed from her companions until she is ready to behave properly." Another said: "With younger children the greatest reward is to be able to pass on to a new stage in each subject. It is a punishment to a young child not to be allowed to use the apparatus, but to sit still and do nothing." Another teacher (with twenty years Montessori experience behind her) said: "If a warning does not suffice, the offender is separated from other

children and made to sit beside the directress. The lessons given by the directress to other children generally arouse interest and the child settles down to work. Either this or she becomes bored and asks to return to her place. This 'punishment' proves quite sufficient."

Lovers of Silence

Most persons are apt to think of children, especially in large numbers, as noisy creatures; indeed delighting in noise. As mothers sometimes say: "He is never quiet unless he is asleep." It was therefore a real revelation when Montessori discovered that, deep down in their souls, children have a great love for silence. We must leave the reader to find out for himself (in *The Secret of Childhood*, pp. 153-55) the manner in which, with the assistance of a baby four months old, Montessori was led to make this discovery. . . .

The Children Refused Sweets

One day when the children had carried out the "silence game," which involves great patience and self-discipline, Montessori decided to reward them each with a sweet. But to her astonishment the children refused them. It was as though they said, "Don't spoil our lovely experience: we are still filled with delights of the spirit; don't distract us."

This phenomenon seemed to Montessori so unexpected, so extraordinary, that she tested it again and again; for, as she remarks, "everyone knows that children are always greedy for sweets. But repeated experiments only confirmed this extraordinary happening." The sweets remained untouched – sometimes for weeks. "Was it", she asks, "from a feeling like that of monks, who flee from ease and from such outward things as are useless for the true good of life, once they have risen in the ladder of spiritual life?"

In later years this same indifference to the allurements of sweets when placed in conflict with the interests of the mind, was to be verified times without number. The present writer himself witnessed a striking example. It happened in a Montessori school in Barcelona run by the Sisters of Charity in connection with a maternity home. A little girl of about five to five-and-a-half years was doing sums with the help of the number rods on a rug on the floor, recording

her operations in chalk on a little blackboard. She was so absorbed in this occupation that she had not even left it (though quite free to do so) to join her companions who were dancing round the room to a musical rhythm. The door opened and some visitors entered. One of these – having more kindness than discretion – began to give a sweet to each marching child as it passed her by.

As was only to be expected, this ill-timed charity disorganized the marching, and the children soon began to cluster round the visitor. The latter, becoming embarrassed by this clamorous attention, quickly handed the bag to the young assistant who had, by this time, left the piano. (The senior directress was not in the room at the time.) At this particular juncture the little girl whom I had been watching – being in some doubt as to the accuracy of her latest sum – had left her work and had come to ask the assistant-directress to help her. The latter, seeing her amongst all the other little ones crowding round her holding their hands up for sweets, and thinking she had come for the same purpose, placed a bon-bon in the child's hand. The little girl's expression betrayed surprise and disappointment. She looked, in fact, as if she had "asked for bread and had been given a stone." Without saying a word she turned round and went straight back to her rug, carrying the sweet in her hand. There she at once set to work to do the sum over again by herself. The most astonishing thing about the whole incident was that – far from eating the sweet or even thinking about doing so – *the child actually used it as a sort of pointer* – tapping with it each of the divisions of the various number rods, placed end to end, until she finally came to the correct answer, which she duly recorded on her little blackboard. Then, automatically putting the sweet away in her pocket, she set to work to compose another sum. It was a complete triumph of mind over matter.

The emergence in these small children of intellectual interests so strong as to cause a sort of "ligature" of the lower faculties (as in the ecstasies of the saints) seemed so extraordinary that, upon hearing of it, a number of persons came especially to verify it. One day a Cardinal came to visit the Casa dei Bambini in San Lorenzo. Beneath the scarlet robes of his high office there beat a simple and kindly heart; and the old gentleman brought with him a bag of biscuits. Now it just happened that these dainties had been manufactured in geometric shapes similar to those with which the children had been working in the wooden insets. Imagine his astonishment when, instead of eating them, the little children crowded round the table eagerly looking at them, and recognizing them, cried out excitedly – "That's a triangle!" "Mine's a circle!" "Cosmo has a rectangle!" and so on.

A Sense of Personal Dignity

The next incident has its amusing as well as its pathetic side. One day, when Montessori came to see how the children were getting on, she decided to give them what was at that time a rather unusual lesson – on how to blow one's nose. After explaining first of all how it should not be done she showed them how to do it as politely as possible, with as little noise as one need, and taking out the handkerchief unobtrusively so that the action remains more or less unnoticed. The children followed her demonstration with silent interest. When the lesson was quite finished they all together broke forth into a burst of genuine and heartfelt applause, clapping their hands "as when in a theatre a great actress evokes an ovation repressed with difficulty." Montessori was completely amazed at this sudden demonstration of emotion, until all at once its true significance dawned on her. The question she had touched upon – keeping one's nose clean – was one which children too often associate with derision and humiliation. People are perpetually complaining to them on this score, and making disparaging remarks, such as "Blow your nose, Tommy", "Why don't you use your handkerchief, you dirty boy," etc., etc. But no one had ever quietly and calmly taught them *how* to do it, without attacking them or reproofing them at the same time.⁶

This was the first of many similar experiences by which Montessori was led to realize that even very small children have a profound sense of personal dignity; and that if adults neglect to respect it "their souls may remain wounded, ulcerated and oppressed in a way adults seldom realize." Later on the inculcation of this respect for their personal dignity – of even the smallest child – became one of the most prominent elements in the training of her teachers.



The "Explosion" into Writing

Perhaps none of the happenings which took place during these wonderful months "when we seemed to be living in a fairy tale", made more impression on those who heard about it than the fact that a number of these children – ages four to five years – "*burst spontaneously into writing*" without having been taught.

When she began Montessori had no intention of tackling the problem of writing with children as young as this. In fact she tells us that at that time she shared the general prejudice that it was necessary to begin writing as late as possible – certainly not before the age of six. But the children themselves thought otherwise: some of them came to her and demanded to be taught to read and write. Even then she did not concede this request but gave in only when the parents added *their* solicitations.

She decided to apply means similar to those which she had used previously with defective children. Accordingly she and her assistants set to work to make some sets of alphabets. These were of two different kinds. In one the letters were cut out of cardboard; in the other out of sandpaper – each sandpaper letter being mounted on a little wooden board. Both kinds of alphabets were made in cursive style, i.e. as used for writing, not for printing. The children were not taught the names of the letters, but only the sounds they represent. Further, they were encouraged to trace the forms of the sandpaper letters with their "writing fingers," i.e. the first and second fingers of the right hand. That was all. They were not taught to write.

One day a little fellow of five made a great discovery. Montessori heard him going round saying to himself, "To make 'Sofia' you need S, O, F, I and A." He had in fact discovered that one can analyze spoken words into their component sounds; and that those sounds were the ones he had already learned in connection with the symbols. Thereupon he, and others with him, began to compose various words with the movable cardboard letters, spreading them out on rugs on the floor.

But still this was not *Writing*.

What happened next was so extraordinary, and so unexpected, that we must give the account of it in Montessori's own words:

One December day when the sun shone and the air was like Spring, I went up on the roof with the children. They were playing freely about and a number of them were gathered about me. I was sitting near a chimney, and said to a five-year-old boy who sat next to me: "Draw me a picture of this chimney," giving him a piece of chalk. He got down obediently and made a rough sketch of the chimney on the tiles which formed the floor of this roof terrace. As is my custom with the littler children I encouraged him,

praising his work. The child looked at me, smiled, remained for a moment as if on the point of bursting into some joyous act, and then cried out: "I can write, I can write," and kneeling down again he wrote on the pavement the word "hand" (*mano*). Then full of enthusiasm, he wrote also "chimney, roof" (*cammino, tetto*). As he wrote he continued to cry out "I can write: I know how to write." His cries of joy brought the other children, who formed a circle about him, looking down at his work in stupefied amazement. Two or three of them said to me, trembling with excitement, "Give me the chalk. I can write too." And indeed they began to write various words: MAMA, HAND, JOHN, CHIMNEY, ADA (in Italian of course). Not one of them had ever taken chalk or any other instrument in hand for the purpose of writing. It was the *first time* they had ever written, and they traced an entire word, as a child when speaking for the first time speaks an entire word.

The first word written by my little ones aroused within themselves an indescribable emotion of joy. Not being able to adjust in their minds the connection between the preparation and the act, they were possessed by the illusion that, having now grown to proper size, they knew how to write. In fact they seemed to think that writing was but one of the many gifts of nature; and at the proper time it would come to them, just as later on, a moustache would appear at the proper age.

The child who wrote a word for the first time was full of excited joy. He might be compared to a hen who has just laid an egg. Indeed no one could escape from his noisy manifestations. In general, after the first word the children, with a species of frenzied joy, continued to write everywhere. I saw children crowding about one another at the blackboard; and behind those who were standing on the floor another line would form consisting of children mounted upon chairs so that they might write above the heads of their fellows.

Others ran to the window shutters or the door, covering them with writing. In these first days we walked upon a carpet of written signs. Daily accounts showed us that the same thing was going on at home; and some of the mothers, in order to save the floors of their houses, and even the crust of their loaves upon which they found words written, made their children presents of paper and pencil.

Later experience came to control the exuberance of this phenomenon, keeping it within reasonable bounds, so that now the moment of "explosion" does not come to all the children at the same time. Nevertheless in a well-run Montessori school the rapturous moment of "explosion into writing" still comes for many children. It comes when certain inner elements of preparation having been completed, fuse together in a psychic synthesis.

The writer knew one little boy who – on the day of *his* "explosion" – went round saying excitedly to everyone, "I can write, I can write," adding quickly and emphatically: "But nobody told me how! Nobody told me how!"

The Discovery of Reading

One might very naturally conclude that because these children had learned to write they had also acquired the art of reading. But here again another surprise was in store. Montessori found that writing came before reading; came in fact several months before. "Their tireless activity in writing was like a torrent – six months of continuous and unlimited exercise. All their energy, all their forces were given to writing – but not to reading."

One day towards the end of this period Montessori, without saying anything, wrote on the blackboard some little sentences such as "If you love me, give me a kiss." "If you can read this, come to me." For several days she did this, but nothing happened. "They thought" – says Montessori – "that I was just writing on the blackboard for *my* own amusement as they themselves were writing for *their* own joy and edification. However on the fourth day a tiny mite of a girl came up to me and said *eccomi* (here I am) and a short time after another came up and gave me a kiss."

And so the secret was out! One human being can communicate with another in this new and mysterious way *without a word being spoken*. It was a thrilling experience. "And so they watched with silent eagerness as I wrote sentence after sentence – little commands for them to carry out. They read and responded and carried them out with an intense and secret joy.

"In this way they discovered the essence of writing – that it transmits human thought. Whenever I began to write they fairly trembled in their eagerness to understand what I was thus about to communicate to them – without a word spoken." In this way were born those reading commands which have now passed into general use.

Spontaneous Self-Discipline

When one remembers that the very reason why this first Casa dei Bambini came into existence was *just because these children were so disorderly*, their next "revelation" seems all the more astonishing. As the weeks went by and the children became accustomed to this new mode of life, a happy and extraordinary change came over them. From being unruly they became just the opposite. It seemed as though a new form of goodness had developed inside them, which – as it grew – caused their disorderly habits to fall away, as the opening flower causes the leaf scales to fall off. They began to exhibit an extraordinary

self-discipline; and with it a serenity of spirit, and a great respect for the rights of others.

It was a *spontaneous* self-discipline coming from within. (We have already seen that rewards and punishments were done away with.) These transformed children moved about their little world in a quiet and orderly manner, each getting on with his own business. They selected their materials for work; settled down at their tables and got on with their affairs, without disturbing their companions; and afterwards quietly replaced the materials when finished with them. Their bodily movements became more harmonious; their very expressions serene and joyful. Everything about them betokened a heightened interest in life, and with it a new form of dignity. They looked – as indeed they had become – independent personalities with power to choose and to carry out their own acts. They did not abuse the liberty which had been granted them. Rather this liberty was the very means through which they were able to reveal this new self-discipline.

This independence which they had acquired did not in any way diminish their respect for authority. In fact they became so obedient that the woman in charge of them said one day to Dr. Montessori: "These children are so ready to do what I say that I begin to feel a sense of responsibility for every word I utter." This statement recalls a remark made to the writer, some twenty years later, by an experienced Montessori directress in a school in London.

She said, speaking of the children in her class, "Their docility is so great that when one wishes an individual or a group to do something *at a given moment* one has to take care to explain first *when* to do it before *what* to do: otherwise the children will carry out the order instantaneously."

In after years, when Montessori schools came to be set up in all the countries of Europe and beyond, this same phenomenon of self-discipline regularly appeared. And so it has remained to the present day. Many teachers who still teach in the old collective method find it hard to believe that such *spontaneous* self-discipline is possible in a class of forty children under six. They think such descriptions as are given here, and elsewhere, *must* be exaggerations – until they enter a well-run Montessori class and see for themselves. Even then it has sometimes remained beyond belief to some observers. I knew one man, a lecturer on education too, who, rather than believe it, fell back on the theory that somehow or other all these children who appeared free *had really been hypnotized.*⁷

Cosmic Discipline

When Montessori beheld for the first time this self-discipline in such small children – a sight so touching in its simplicity, and as beautiful as unexpected – she was deeply moved. It roused in her a feeling akin to awe. "Where did it come from?" she asked herself: "Who was the author of it?" The more she pondered over it and marvelled at it, the more clearly was it borne in upon her that it was a part of that universal discipline which holds the atoms to their affinities and keeps the stars in their courses.

In a passage of great beauty (even in its translation) she expressed herself as follows:

The quiet in the class when the children were at work was complete and moving. No one had enforced it; and what is more, no one could have obtained it by external means. Had these children, maybe, found the orbit of their cycle, like the stars that circle unwearying and which, without departing from their order, shine through eternity? Of these the Bible speaks, in words that could be applied to such children, "And the stars have given light in their watches and rejoiced: They were called, and they said: Here we are, and with cheerfulness have shined forth to Him that made them."⁸

A natural discipline of this kind seems to transcend its immediate environment, and to show itself as part of a universal discipline ruling the world. It is of such discipline that the prophet speaks as something men have lost, "Young men have seen the light and dwelt upon the earth, but the way of discipline they have not known!"⁹

Even at that time – a generation ago – Montessori had the feeling that the beneficial effect of this revelation would extend beyond the classroom. This is apparent from the rest of the passage quoted above; which goes on: "One has the impression that this natural discipline must provide the foundation for all other forms of discipline, determined – like that of social life, for instance – by outward and immediate considerations. One of the things, indeed, which aroused the greatest interests and gave greatest food for thought, seeming as it did to hold something mysterious, was precisely this fact of order and discipline being so closely united as to result in freedom."

"Of Such is the Kingdom of Heaven"

These then are some of the revelations which were manifested to Montessori and her assistants by the poor children of San Lorenzo during those extraordinary months in 1907. Not that they complete the tale. Others – like the

law of sensitive periods – were still to come, but for these it was necessary that a longer period of time should elapse before they could show themselves completely. Nevertheless, this San Lorenzo experiment, taken as a whole, resulted in an epoch-making discovery with regard to the nature and capacity of young children.

We can readily sympathize with any reader who finds the record of these events hard to believe. It was exactly the same with Montessori herself at the time, as she herself freely admits:

It took time for me to convince myself that all this was not an illusion. After each new experience proving such a truth I said to myself, "I won't believe yet; I'll believe in it next time." Thus for a long time I remained incredulous, and at the same time deeply stirred and trepidant. How many times did I not reprove the children's teacher when she told me what the children had done of themselves! "The only thing which impresses me is truth," I would reply severely. And I remember that the teacher would answer, without taking offence, and often moved to tears: "You are right! When I see such things I think it must be the holy angels who are inspiring these children."

One day, in great emotion, I took my heart in my two hands as though to encourage it to rise to the heights of faith, and I stood respectfully before the children, saying to myself: "Who are you then? Have I perhaps met with the children who were held in Christ's arms and to whom the divine words were spoken? I will follow you, to enter with you into the Kingdom of Heaven."

And holding in my hands the torch of faith I went on my way.

From E. M. Standing, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1957), pp. 17-34.

References

1. *Secret of Childhood* (Longmans).
2. *Montessori Method*, pp. 50 seq.
3. *Hamlet*.
4. *The Secret of Childhood*.
5. *Hamlet*.
6. Here we see a good example of Montessori's maxim, "Teach teaching, not correcting" and also of a "Lesson in Grace and Courtesy".
7. It reminds one of the man at the Zoo who saw a giraffe for the first time and said, "I don't believe it!"
8. Baruch iii.
9. *Ibid*.

Notes

Silence: The Inhibition of Movements

For how long, in the common schools, it has been thought that silence could be obtained by a command.

The meaning of the word has not been studied. It has not been realized that it demands immobility, almost the suspension of life for that particular instant during which silence is maintained. Silence means the suspension of every movement; it is not, as is generally considered in schools, in a rough and ready way, the secession of noises greater than the normal noises tolerated in the place.

Silence in the ordinary schools means stopping talking, quelling a disturbance, the opposite of noise and disorder.

On the other hand, silence may have a positive meaning, indicate a state of things or a higher level than that of normal conditions. It may be like an instantaneous inhibition which costs an effort, a dictate of the will, something which detaches us from the noises of common life, almost isolating the mind from outside voices.

This is the silence which we have attained in our schools – profound silence, although it is produced in a class of more than forty little children between the ages of three and six.

A command could never have secured the marvellous victory of wills united in preventing all action, during that period of life in which movement seems to be the irresistible, ever-present characteristic of life.

This collective work is done by children who are accustomed to act independently in satisfying their own desires.

It is necessary to teach the children silence. To accomplish this we get them to perform various silence exercises which contribute in a noteworthy way to the surprising capacity for discipline displayed by our children.

The exercises of silence and afterwards the "silence lesson", one of the most characteristic peculiarities of our schools, had their origin in a casual episode.

During a visit paid to a Children's House, I met in the court-yard a mother who was holding in her arms her four-months' old baby, swaddled as was still the custom among the people of Rome. Tiny infants were so tightly swathed in the bands moulded round their little bodies, having no other coverings, that they are known as pupi (puppets). This little one, fat and tranquil, looked the incarnation of peace.

I took her into my arms where she lay quiet and good. I went inside with her in my arms, to be met by the children of the House who rushed out to meet me, as they usually do, all trying to embrace my knees in such a tumultuous fashion that they almost upset me. I smiled at them, showing them the "cocoon". They understood, and danced round me but without touching me out of regard for the little creature in my arms. So I entered the room with the children walking all round me. We sat down, I in front of them, on a high chair, not on one of the small chairs which I generally used. That is to say, I seated myself with some solemnity. They gazed on my little one with a mixture of tenderness and joy: we had not yet pronounced a single word. I said – "I have brought you a little teacher." They were surprised; they laughed. "A little teacher, for no one can keep as still as she does." Every little figure stiffened itself in its place. "No one keeps his legs as

still as she does." They all carefully adjust their legs so as to keep them still. I look at them smiling – "Yes, but they will never be as motionless as hers; you will move them a little, she will not: no one can be like her." The children are serious: they seem to have realized the superiority of the small teacher: some of them smile, and seem to say with their eyes that the bandages deserve the credit. "No one can keep as quiet as she does." General silence. "It is not possible to keep silent like her; you hear how delicate her breathing is. Come close up on tip-toe." Some of them rise up and creep up to me very, very slowly, on the tips of their toes, stretching out their heads and turning their ears towards the little one. Deep silence. "No one can breathe as silently as she does." The children gaze in astonishment; they have never thought that even when they keep still they are making noises, and that the silence of little ones is deeper than that of the big ones. They almost try to stop breathing. I get up. "I am going away very, very quietly" (I walk on the tips of my toes without making any noise), "yet you hear that I make some noise, however quietly I go; but *she* walks with me in silence, she goes away in silence." The children smile, but they are moved, for they understand the truth and the joking in my words. I restore the "cocoon" to the mother through a window.

Behind the little one there seems to remain a fascination which takes possession of every mind; nothing in nature is sweeter than the silent breathing of the newly born. Human life renewed, resting in silence, what majesty! Compared with that how colourless are the words of Wordsworth about the silent peace of nature – "How calm, how quiet! One single sound, the drip from the suspended oar."

Even the children feel the poetry of the silence of tranquil, new-born human life.

The Silence Lesson is Established

After this surprising experience I felt a desire to repeat it, but how to achieve this? One day I decided in favour of simplicity and asked the children: "Shall we make silence?" To my astonishment all the children seemed happy at the prospect and answered: "Yes, yes!"

I then began my attempt. "In order to obtain silence nobody should move. . . ." "Even a foot that moves, makes a noise. . . ." "Also loud breathing may make a noise. . . ." All tried to keep still and so did I with them.

During these attempts the children remained enchanted, all of them competed in the effort to avoid even the slightest movement. Thus the attention of the children was drawn to every part of their body.

Whilst these doings are going on, and my short, excited speeches are being interrupted by intervals of immobility and silence, the children listen and watch with great delight. Very many of them are interested by the fact which they had never noticed that they make many noises of which they are not aware, and also, that there are many degrees of silence. There is an absolute silence, in which nothing, absolutely nothing, moves. They look at me in astonishment when I stop right in the middle of the room; it is really as if I were not there. Then they all set themselves to imitate me and try to do the same. I point out that here and there a foot is moving about almost inadvertently. The attention of the children is fixed on every part of their bodies, in an anxious desire to attain immobility. Whilst they are doing this, there is truly created a silence which is different from that thoughtlessly called silence. It seems that life gradually vanishes, that the room by degrees becomes empty, as if there were no longer anybody in it. Then there begins to be heard the tic-tac of the clock on the wall; and this tic-tac seems to grow in intensity little by little as the

silence becomes absolute. From the outside, from the court-yard which had seemed silent, there come various noises – a bird chirping, a child passing. The children are fascinated by this silence, as by a real conquest of their own. "See," I say, "it is now quite as quiet as if there were no longer any one here."

This stage reached. I darkened the windows and said to the children, "Now listen for a gentle voice to call you by name."

Then from an adjacent room situated behind the children, through a wide-open door, I called, in a muted voice but lengthening out the syllables as one would in calling to someone across the mountains, and this half-hidden voice seemed to reach the hearts of the children and to call upon their souls. Every one I called rose up silently trying not to move the chair, and walking on the tips of the toes so silently that one scarcely knew they were walking; nevertheless the step resounded in the absolute silence which is never broken whilst all the others remain motionless. The one called gained the door with a countenance full of joy, making a little leap into the next room, stifling little outbursts of laughter; or he laid hold of my dress leaning against me; or he set himself to watch the companions who were still waiting in silent expectation. He felt almost as if he had received a privilege, a gift, a reward, yet he knew that all would be called, beginning with the most absolutely silent one who was left in the room. In this way each one tried to deserve by waiting in perfect silence the call which was sure to come. I once saw a little one of three trying to check a sneeze, and managing to do it; she held back the breath in her heaving little chest, and resisted, to emerge triumphant.

Such a game fascinates the little ones; their intent faces, their patient immobility, show that they are eager to get the pleasure it affords. At first, when I was still ignorant of the child's mind, I used to show them little sweets and toys, promising to give them to whoever was called out, imagining that presents were necessary to stimulate such efforts in childhood. But very quickly I had to acknowledge that they were useless.

The children arrived like ships in port, after having experienced the efforts, the emotions and the delights of silence; they were happy, because they had felt something new and had gained a victory. This was their reward. They forgot the promised sweets, and did not trouble to take the toys which I had supposed would attract them. So I abandoned this useless method, and was amazed to find that after the game had been repeated again and again, even children three years old could keep silent during the whole of the period necessary for calling out of the room some forty other children. It was then that I learnt that within the mind of the child dwell its own reward and its own spiritual pleasures. After such exercises it seemed to me that their love for me was greater; they certainly became more obedient, sweeter and gentler. We had really isolated ourselves from the world, and had passed a few moments of intimacy among ourselves – I in desiring them and calling for them, they in hearing in the deepest silence¹, the voice directed to each one of them personally, adjudging him at that moment to be the best of all!

From Maria Montessori, *The Discovery of the Child*, trans. Mary A. Johnstone (Madras: Kalakshetra, 1948), pp. 134-39.

1. Silence, which has become one of the best-known characters of the Montessori method, has been adopted in many ordinary schools, and so to some extent the Montessori spirit has penetrated into these schools. It was its influence which has caused to penetrate into the public manifestations of social and political order the silence of immobility, and it was also used for religious education.

Montessori and Froebel: Similarities and Differences

Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852), was a German educator who founded the kindergarten movement. Other educators had established schools for very young children, but Froebel was the first to use the word kindergarten. This word comes from two German words meaning "garden of children". He started his first kindergarten in 1837, and by 1900 kindergartens had spread throughout Europe, Canada and the United States.

The question is often asked: What is the relation between Montessori and Froebel and their respective systems? As we shall see, there are certain differences – more in practice but also in theory – which go very deep. It is rather when one compares the spirit of Froebel with that of Montessori that one realizes their profound affinity. It is in their attitude of love and reverence for the child as a spiritual being that they are in complete unity – not in the details of their system nor in their philosophy of life.

According to Montessori – the vital thing in a true educational method is the activity of the child, and that the function of the teacher is to direct the child's spontaneous energies. This is also Froebel's fundamental maxim; "Education, in instruction and training and in its first principles, should necessarily be a passive following – only guarding and protecting – not prescriptive, categorical, interfering." Again, "All prescriptive categorical interfering must necessarily hinder and destroy." As Dr. Montessori so succinctly phrases it, "Every useless aid arrests development."

Because Froebel and Montessori both realized the vital importance of Self-Activity in education they both saw the necessity of devising special occupations to arouse and sustain it – the "Froebelian Gifts" on the one hand, and the "Montessori Materials" on the other. But they differed considerably as to the principles on which these materials were constructed. As the Board of Education's report on infant and nursery schools says: "Madame Montessori, like Froebel, stands for the right of the child to unfettered growth; but while Froebel approached problems of education from the stand-point of theology and metaphysics, Madame Montessori has approached them from the stand-point of modern physiology and psychology."

Montessori often uses the simile that the child's soul can be compared to soft wax; while at the same time she inveighs against the notion, once so prevalent, that the teacher must make use of this delicate plasticity in order to mould it. On the contrary she maintains that just because it is so sensitive we must be extra careful not to obliterate the first delicate tracings made on this infantile intelligence by destroying its spontaneous activity. Froebel uses this same simile:

We grant space and time to young plants and animals because we know that, in accordance with the laws that live in them, they will develop properly and grow well. Young plants and animals are left in peace; and arbitrary interference with their growth is avoided so as not to disturb their pure unfolding and sound development. But the young human being is looked upon as a piece of wax which man can mould into what he pleases, instead of being allowed to unfold in beauty and all-sided harmonious development.



Madame Montessori at the age of eighty

Dr. Montessori compares the child's mental development to a series of metamorphoses; and insists that the important thing is that, at each stage, the child should have what it needs *at that stage* without thinking of the future. "Each plane must be lived through in order that the individual may pass from one plane to the next." Otherwise there may be arrested development, for, "those who have not lived through any plane fully may return to it later . . . The child's work is to create the man that is to be, and we cannot hurry it. The adult will be a fully harmonious individual only if he has been able, at each preceding stage to live as Nature intended him to."

This is exactly Froebel's idea, which he repeats again and again in many different forms. "The child", he says, "the boy, the man, should know no other endeavour but to be at every stage of development wholly what that stage calls for. Then will each successive stage spring like a new shoot from a healthy bud, for only the adequate development of man at each preceding stage can effect and bring about adequate development at each succeeding stage." Or again, "The boy has not become a boy, nor has the youth become a youth, by reaching a certain age, but only by having lived through childhood, and further on through boyhood, true to the requirements of his mind, his feelings and his body. Similarly the adult man has not become an adult simply by reaching a certain age, but only by faithfully satisfying the requirements of his childhood, boyhood and youth." "Rousseau has ascribed all the defects of body and mind in pupils to the 'desire to make men of them before their time'."

According to Montessori, these various stages through which the developing child passes are each characterized by special sensibilities and corresponding interests. Froebel, too, in a general sense was aware of these periods of special sensibility, though they were never so clearly demarcated by him as with Montessori.

Dr. Montessori constantly refers to the small child in her lectures as – the explorer. She sees in the child's never-ending interest in stones, flowers, coloured objects, sticks – anything he can get hold of – an activity of the highest importance – corresponding to the researches of the scientist into the mysteries of matter and energy. So also does Froebel.

Both Froebel and Montessori emphasize the importance of assisting this "little explorer" in his researches. With the former this is to be accomplished by the direct help of the adult; with the latter more indirectly by means of a "prepared environment" so simplified and set in order that the objects in it easily and systematically reveal their qualities to the enquiring mind of the little scientist.

One of the chief differences between the Montessori school and the Froebel Kindergarten lies just in the fact that Montessori has been more successful in finding and placing at the child's disposal "the means to find the answer in the sphere of his own knowledge" by himself.

According to Montessori, many of the disagreeable traits of children – their caprices, fears, lying, timidity, etc. – are generally caused by a deviation of the child's vital energies from their normal constructive channels. Froebel too realizes this; but again in a more vague and general way. Where Montessori diverges from Froebel is in her belief that the cure for deviations lies not in play but in "normalization through work."

Froebel stood firmly for auto-education as a first principle. "To stir up, to animate, to awaken and to strengthen the pleasure and power of the human being to labour uninterruptedly at his own education has become and always will remain the fundamental principle of my educational work." Realizing too, that the will can be strengthened only by voluntary activity he sees the importance of liberty in the schoolroom; and that this freedom "can only come by self-activity". We have noted . . . how much further Dr. Montessori has gone in actually achieving this liberty for the child *in practice*. But here we are only concerned to point out how vividly Froebel realized

the importance of freedom. With him, too, as with Dr. Montessori, freedom was not to be confused with licence; and for him, too, "only freedom within the law was to be regarded as true freedom".

Montessori and Froebel resemble each other in relating their educational aims to ultimate religious values as they saw them. In this sense they can be both called idealists. . . . Montessori and Froebel are both at one in having a spiritual or religious aim in their educational systems; and both are equally opposed to purely utilitarian or materialistic conceptions of education.

Coming now to differences . . . let us first look at the sphere of practice. All who have had experience both of Montessori schools and Froebelian kindergartens are in agreement as to one fundamental practical difference. It relates to what one might call the Teaching Unit. In her attractive little book *Teaching in the Infant School* Miss Hume states the matter succinctly as follows: "In the Froebelian school the unit of teaching is the group of eight to ten children; in the Montessori school the unit of teaching is the individual child."

Speaking generally . . . Froebelians, as a whole, tend to regard the Montessori system as too rigidly intellectual, not giving enough scope to the child's spontaneous play and make-belief. On the other hand, the point of view of the average Montessorian is that the Froebelians have never realized – *because they have never seen* – the child's passion for intellectual work. The Froebelians, they would say, treat the child as something lower than he really is; and this because they have never seen what Montessori calls "the soul of the awakened child".

Perhaps no part of Dr. Montessori's doctrine has aroused more opposition than her belief that the child prefers work to play. Not only prefers work; but . . . never really comes to himself until he has had the opportunity of "becoming normalized through work."

On this question of work or play – or to put it another way, reality or make-belief – we come to a real divergence between Froebel and Montessori. "Play", says Froebel, "is the purest, most spiritual activity of man at this stage, and at the same time typical of human life as a whole." Dr. Montessori says: "The child's aptitude for work represents a vital instinct, and it is by work (not play – *sic*) that the child organizes his personality." To her it is work, not play which is typical of humanity – *Homo Laborans* should be man's title even more than *Homo Sapiens*.

Montessori and Froebel differ in their attitude or approach to reality. Montessori's approach is more objective while Froebel's is more subjective. In the Montessori system the child takes things (selected things) for what they are, instead of turning them by imagination into something else. The Montessori child is subject to the discipline of reality, to the persuasion of truth as revealed in sensible objects, and in their relations one to another. On the other hand the most ardent supporters of Froebel, such as the German Professor Hessen, maintain that it is the teacher's business to exploit the child's immaturity; and deliberately to encourage his tendency "*aus allem alles zu machen*" ("to make anything out of anything"). This is why such Froebelians as he protest against the Montessori principle that the child must use each piece of material for the purpose for which it was intended, and not otherwise. He would allow the child, for instance, to use the bells as silver toad-stools for fairy dolls to sit on; the five-cube-chain to be used as a necklace; and encourage the child to hang out the contents of the box of fabrics along the 1000-bead-chain in an imaginary washing day. Montessori would say: If the child wants to wash something – let him do so by all means. Let him wash out the dusters and hang them on a real line in the garden. If the child wants to build a house or a bridge let him use some materials specially kept and made for this purpose. If he wants to make a necklace let him use the proper beads kept for that purpose; *but not those which are dedicated to some special problem in number.*

Readers of Froebel are aware how often he speaks of the importance in Education of "making the inner the outer". This is well enough in so far as it refers to the importance of creative self-expression; but it does not sufficiently realize the importance of also *making the outer the inner*, especially in early childhood. After all it is the Macrocosm which has to be reflected in the Microcosm – and not *vice versa*.

The German writer Dr. Helming . . . emphasized this same point, in the following passage:

The Montessori occupations have been prepared as the result of long observation of the child, and correspond to his needs. The child works with them as long as he wishes to do so. The Montessori material does not enter the child's life as a hard and forbidding task to be accomplished; but rather as a door through which he enters a fuller life.

It is just the definite limits of the material which form a further help to the child. More than is the case with other playthings they are a proof against the arbitrary whims of the child, and so lead him towards reality. Out of an ordinary piece of wood the child can make anything he likes, and even a doll is subject to the child's arbitrary decision. But the Montessori material stands solidly there, an invitation to something definite, not to be changed by the child's arbitrary whim, something which teaches obedience with freedom.

That world, which is not the child's self, reports itself there and draws the child towards it. Here we see the difference between the Catholicity of Montessori and the philosophy of Froebel, which leaves the child shut up in itself.

The soul of the child is awakened by the material. By its resistance to the child's own still very limited and short existence it stirs within it the presentment that it stands at the threshold of two worlds – within and without – and thereby wins readier access to that freedom which is his human birthright.

From E. M. Standing, *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* (London: Hollis and Carter, 1957), pp. 301-31.





Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi

Letters from a Father to His Daughter

Introduction

Aspiration is the hallmark of a good pupil. Through the kindling of aspiration the flame of knowledge begins to burn in his mind and heart. The teacher's role is to uplift the aspiration of the pupil and to answer it not so much by instruction as by suggestion, example and influence. A good teacher is a guide, philosopher and friend who does not impose himself on the pupil, but communes with him in intimate understanding of his needs. He may commune in silence or through conversation, letters, even discourses, though he does not preach. He varies his method according to the pupil's age and psychological state.

All this is illustrated in Jawaharlal Nehru's letters to his daughter, Indira. We present in this selection two of these letters, "The Book of Nature" and "How Early History was Written". Jawaharlal Nehru was not only a great political leader and world statesman but also a keen seeker, a loving father and a good teacher. A teacher does not necessarily have to hold classes and give lessons. A good teacher is in his very being an intimate friend of nature and lover of children. Parents, if they so choose, can become very good teachers. In fact, teaching should be regarded as the natural profession of every parent, and every parent should strive to cultivate the qualities of a good teacher. How a good father can be a good teacher is very well illustrated by Jawaharlal Nehru.

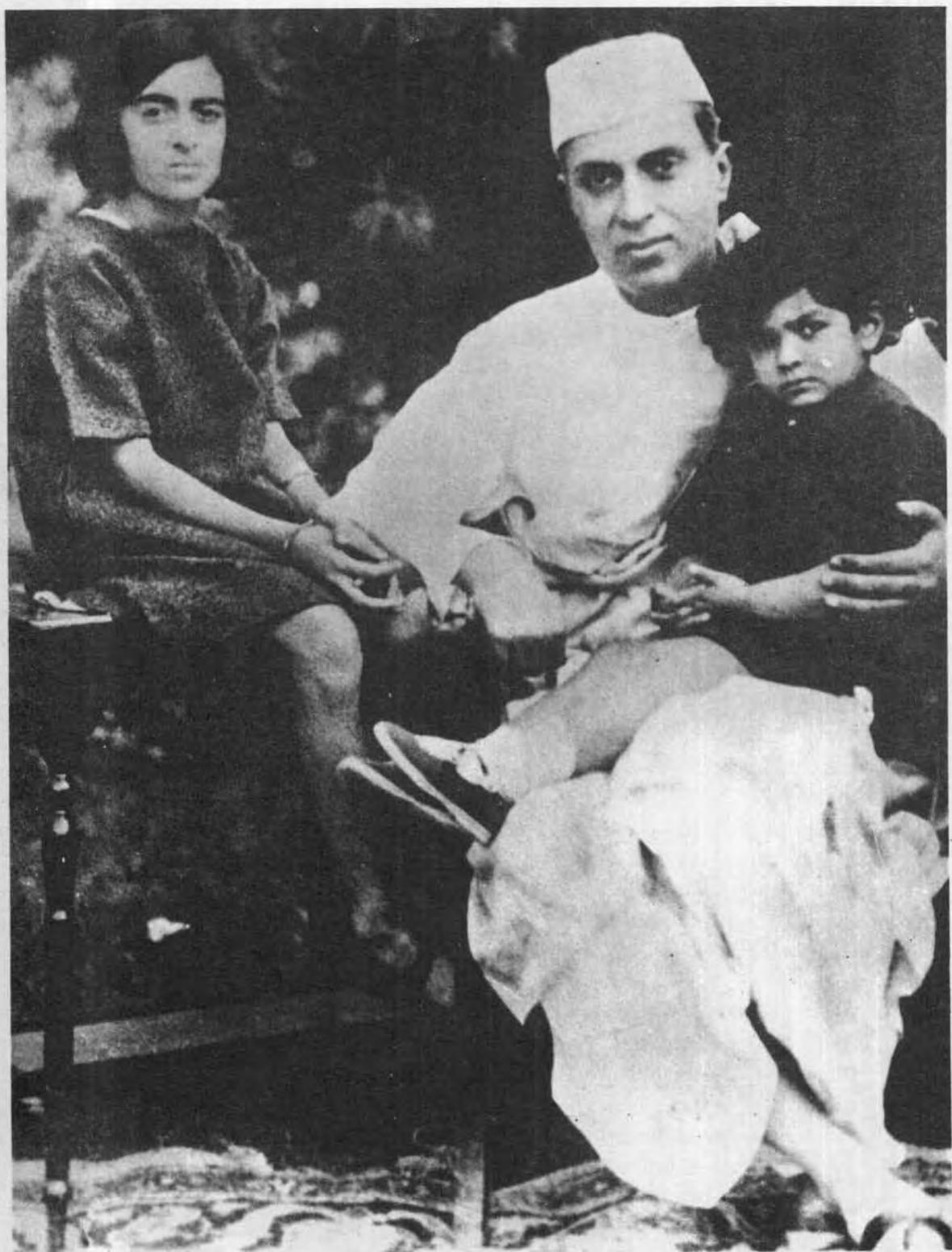
Jawaharlal Nehru began writing letters to Indira in the summer of 1928, when she was eight or nine years old. She was in the Himalayas at Mussoorie and he was on the plains below. One great secret of learning that Nehru reveals in these letters is to treat Nature as a book. Indeed, knowledge vibrates everywhere and in everything. Books are not the only repositories of knowledge.

Knowledge is basically the result of an interaction between our consciousness and the objects of our experience. The process of knowing is a living process, and when knowledge is approached through direct contact and experience, it comes to us with all its freshness. A good pupil is not so much a reader of books as a seeker of experience. The best principle of learning is to grow from experience to experience, and to treat every encounter in life, with nature or creatures or people, as a field of experience and learning. It is thus that we find, in Shakespeare's words, "sermons in stones and books in running brooks".

The letters were obviously addressed to a good pupil. In 1973, in her introductory notes to Letters from a Father to His Daughter, she wrote: "I was full of questions and this enabled him to tell me about the world, and the men and women who inhabited it and who have moved others by their ideas and actions, and through literature and art. . . . The letters in this book, written when I was eight or nine, deal with the beginnings of the earth and of man's awareness of himself. They were not merely letters to be read and put away. They brought a fresh outlook and aroused a feeling of concern for people and interest in the world around. They taught one to treat nature as a book. I spent absorbing hours studying stones and plants, the lives of insects and at night, the stars."

Just as there is a Book of Nature, there is also a hidden book in the deeper heart of our being. There is one question of supreme importance for each one of us, and the answer to it can be found in no book or library. It cannot be found even in the great Book of Nature. It can be found only when we begin to learn to read the book of our inner self. The question is, "What am I?" and "What is my role in the world?" In fact, the ideal answer to this question is found when we discover through experience the right relation between our inner self and the universe. Some of the greatest teachings of the world have revealed that both the self and the universe are equally vast and point to something beyond. It is in the knowledge of that "something" that our quest finds its resting-place.

Jawaharlal Nehru does not speak in his letters of this deeper dimension, but he reveals something of his own inner enquiry in another series of letters to his daughter, written between 1930 and 1933. These letters constitute his famous book, Glimpses of World History. Here again we meet a good teacher describing his encounters with the world and its long, mysterious and meaningful history. In this selection we present the first and the last letters from this book.





The Book of Nature

When you and I are together you often ask me questions about many things and I try to answer them. Now that you are at Mussoorie and I am in Allahabad we cannot have these talks. I am therefore going to write to you from time to time short accounts of the story of our earth and the many countries, great and small, into which it is divided. You have read a little about English history and Indian history. But England is only a little island and India, though a big country, is only a small part of the earth's surface. If we want to know something about the story of this world of ours we must think of all the countries and all the peoples that have inhabited it, and not merely of one little country where we may have been born.

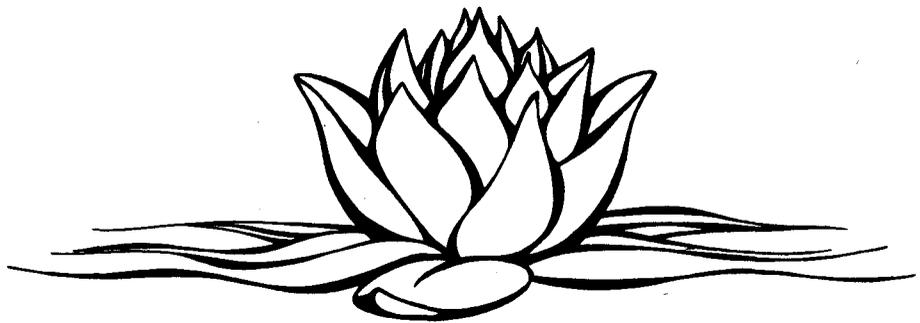
I am afraid I can only tell you very little in these letters of mine. But that little, I hope, will interest you and make you think of the world as a whole, and of other peoples in it as our brothers and sisters. When you grow up you will read about the story of the earth and her peoples in fat books and you will find it more interesting than any other story or novel that you may have read.

You know of course that our earth is very, very old – millions and millions of years old. And for a long long time there were no men or women living in it. Before the men came there were only animals, and before the animals there was a time when no kind of life existed on the earth. It is difficult to imagine this world of ours, which is so full today of all kinds of animals and men, to be without them. But scientists and those who have studied and thought a great deal about these matters tell us that there was a time when the earth was too hot for any living being to live on it. And if we read their books and study the rocks and the fossils (the remains of old animals) we can ourselves see that this must have been so.

You read history in books. But in old times when men did not exist surely no books could have been written. How then can we find out what happened then? We cannot merely sit down and imagine everything. This would be very interesting for we could imagine anything we wanted to and would thus make up the most beautiful fairy tales. But this need not be true as it would not be based on any facts that we had seen. But although we have no books written in those far-off days, fortunately we have some things which tell us a great deal as well almost as a book would. We have rocks and mountains and seas and stars and rivers and deserts and fossils of old animals. These and other like things are our books for the earth's early story. And the real way to understand this story

is not merely to read about it in other people's books but to go to the great Book of Nature itself. You will I hope soon begin to learn how to read this story from the rocks and mountains. Imagine how fascinating it is! Every little stone that you see lying in the road or on the mountain side may be a little page in nature's book and may be able to tell you something if you only knew how to read it. To be able to read any language, Hindi or Urdu or English, you have to learn its alphabet. So also you must learn the alphabet of nature before you can read her story in her books of stone and rock. Even now perhaps you know a little how to read this. If you see a little round shiny pebble, does it not tell you something? How did it get round and smooth and shiny without any corners or rough edges? If you break a big rock into small bits, each bit is rough and has corners and rough edges. It is not at all like a round smooth pebble. How then did the pebble become so round and smooth and shiny? It will tell you its story if you have good eyes to see and ears to hear it. It tells you that once upon a time, it may be long ago, it was a bit of a rock, just like the bit you may break from a big rock or stone with plenty of edges and corners. Probably it rested on some mountain side. Then came the rain and washed it down to the little valley where it found a mountain stream which pushed it on and on till it reached a little river. And the little river took it to the big river. And all the while it rolled at the bottom of the river and its edges were worn away and its rough surface made smooth and shiny. So it became the pebble that you see. Somehow the river left it behind and you found it. If the river had carried it on, it would have become smaller and smaller till at last it became a grain of sand and joined its brothers at the seaside to make a beautiful beach where little children can play and make castles out of the sand.

If a little pebble can tell you so much, how much more could we learn from all the rocks and mountains and the many other things we see around us?¹



How Early History was Written

In my letter to you yesterday, I pointed out that we have to study the early story of the earth from the book of nature. This book consists of everything that you see around you – the rocks and mountains and valleys and rivers and seas and volcanoes. This book is always open before us but how few of us pay any attention to it or try to read it! If we learnt how to read it and understand it, how many interesting stories it could tell us! The stories we would read about in its pages of stone would be more interesting than a fairy tale.

And so from this book of nature we would learn something of those far-off days when no man or animal lived on this earth of ours. As we read on we shall see the first animals appear and later more and more animals. And then will come man and woman, but they will be very different from the men and women we see today. They will be savages not very different from animals. Gradually they will gather experience and begin to think. The power of thought will make them really different from the animals. It will be a real power which will make them stronger than the biggest and fiercest animal. You see today a little man sit on top of a great big elephant and make him do what he wills. The elephant is big and strong, far stronger than the little *mahaut* sitting on his neck. But the *mahaut* can think, and because he can think he becomes the master and the elephant is his servant. So, as thought grew in man he became cleverer and wiser. He found out many things – how to make a fire, how to cultivate the land and grow his food, how to make cloth to wear and houses to live in. Many men and women used to live together and so we had the first cities. Before the cities were made men used to wander about from place to place, probably living in some kind of tents. They did not know then how to grow their food from the land. They had no rice therefore, nor did they have any wheat from which bread is made. There were no vegetables and most of the things you eat today were not known then. Perhaps there were some wild nuts and fruits which men ate but mostly they must have lived on animals which they killed.

As cities grew people learnt many beautiful arts. They also learnt how to write. But for a long time there was no paper to write on and people used to write on the bark of the *Bhojpatra* tree – I think this is called the birch in English – or they wrote on palm leaves. Even now you will find in some libraries whole books written in those far-off days on the leaves of the palm tree. Then came paper and it was easier to write. But there were no printing presses and books could not be printed off in their thousands as is done today. A book could only be written once and then copied out by hand laboriously. Of course there could not

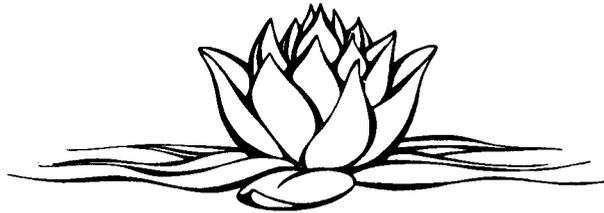
be many books. You could not just go to a bookseller or a bookstall to buy a book. You had to get someone to copy it and this took a long time. But people in those days wrote beautifully and we have today many books in our libraries which were beautifully written by hand. In India we have specially books in Sanskrit and Persian and Urdu. Often the man who copied the book made flowers and drawings on the sides of the page.

With the growth of cities, gradually countries and nations were formed. People who lived near each other in one country naturally got to know each other better. They thought they were better than others who lived in other countries and, very foolishly, they fought with these others. They did not realize, and people do not realize even now, that fighting and killing each other are about the most stupid things that people can do. It does good to nobody.

To learn the story of these early days of cities and countries we sometimes get old books. But there are not many of these. Other things help us. The kings and emperors of old times used to have accounts of their reigns written on stone tablets and pillars. Books cannot last long. Their paper rots away and gets moth-eaten. But stones last much longer. Perhaps you remember seeing the great stone pillar of Ashoka in the Allahabad Fort. On this is cut out in stone a proclamation of Ashoka who was a great king of India many hundreds of years ago. If you go to the museum in Lucknow you will find many stone tablets with words engraved on them.

In studying the old history of various countries we shall learn of the great things that were done in China and Egypt long ago when the countries of Europe were full of savage tribes. We shall learn also of the great days of India when the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* were written and India was a rich and powerful country. Today our country is very poor and a foreign people govern us. We are not free even in our own country and cannot do what we want. But this was not so always and perhaps if we try hard we may make our country free again, so that we may improve the lot of the poor, and make India as pleasant to live in as are some of the countries of Europe today.

In my next letter I shall begin this fascinating story of the earth from the very beginning.²



A New Year's Gift

New Year's Day, 1931

Do you remember the letters I wrote to you, more than two years ago, when you were at Mussoorie and I was at Allahabad? You liked them, you told me then, and I have often wondered if I should not continue that series and try to tell you something more about this world of ours. But I have hesitated to do so. It is very interesting to think of the past story of the world and of the great men and women and of the great deeds that it contains. To read history is good, but even more interesting and fascinating is to help in making history. And you know that history is being made in our country to-day. The past of India is a long, long one, lost in the mists of antiquity; it has its sad and unhappy periods which make us feel ashamed and miserable, but on the whole it is a splendid past of which we may well be proud and think with pleasure. And yet to-day we have little leisure to think of the past. It is the future that fills our minds, the future that we are fashioning, and the present that absorbs all our time and energy.

I have had time enough here in Naini Prison to read or write what I wanted to. But my mind wanders and I think of the great struggle that is going on outside; of what others are doing and what I would do if I were with them. I am too full of the present and the future to think of the past. And yet I have felt that this was wrong of me. When I cannot take part in the work outside, why should I worry?

But the real reason – shall I whisper it to you? – why I put off writing was another one. I am beginning to doubt if I know enough to teach you! You are growing up so fast, and becoming such a wise little person, that all that I learnt at school and college and afterwards may not be enough for you, and at any rate may be rather stale. After some time, it may be that you will take up the rôle of teacher and teach me many new things! As I told you, in the letter I wrote to you on your last birthday, I am not at all like the Very Wise Man who went about with copper-plates round about him, so that he might not burst with excess of learning.

When you were at Mussoorie it was easy enough for me to write about the early days of the world. For the knowledge that we have of those days is vague and indefinite. But as we come out of those very ancient times, history gradually begins, and man begins his curious career in various parts of the world. And to follow man in this career, sometimes wise, more often mad and foolish, is no easy matter. With the help of books one might make an attempt. But Naini Prison does not provide a library. So I am afraid it is not possible for me to give

you any connected account of world history, much as I should have liked to have done so. I dislike very much boys and girls learning the history of just one country, and that, too, very often through learning by heart some dates and a few facts. But history is one connected whole and you cannot understand even the history of any one country if you do not know what has happened in other parts of the world. I hope that you will not learn history in this narrow way, confining it to one or two countries, but will survey the whole world. Remember always that there is not so very much difference between various people as we seem to imagine. Maps and atlases show us countries in different colours. Undoubtedly people do differ from one another, but they resemble each other also a great deal, and it is well to keep this in mind and not be misled by the colours on the map or by national boundaries.

I cannot write for you the history of my choice. You will have to go to other books for it. But I shall write to you from time to time something about the past and about the people who lived in the days gone by, and who played a big part on the world's stage.

I do not know if my letters will interest you or awaken your curiosity. Indeed, I do not know when you will see them, or if you will see them at all. Strange that we should be so near and yet so far away! In Mussoorie you were several hundred miles away from me. Yet I could write to you as often as I wished, and run up to you when the desire to see you became strong. But here we are on either side of the Jumna river – not far from each other, yet the high walls of Naini Prison keep us effectively apart. One letter a fortnight I may write, and one letter a fortnight I may receive, and once a fortnight I may have a twenty-minute interview. And yet these restrictions are good. We seldom value anything which we can get cheaply, and I am beginning to believe that a period in prison is a very desirable part of one's education. Fortunately there are scores of thousands in our country who are having this course to-day!

I cannot say if you will like these letters when you see them. But I have decided to write them for my own pleasure. They bring you very near to me, and I feel almost that I have had a talk with you. Often enough I think of you, but to-day you have hardly been absent from my mind. To-day is New Year's Day. As I lay in bed, very early in the morning, watching the stars, I thought of the great year that was past, with all its hope and anguish and joy, and all the great and gallant deeds performed. And I thought of Bapuji, who has made our old country young and vigorous again by his magic touch, sitting in his prison cell in Yeravada. And I thought of Dadu³ and many others. And especially I thought of Mummie and you. Later in the morning came the news that Mummie had been arrested and taken to gaol. It was a pleasant New Year's gift for me. It had long been expected

and I have no doubt that Mummie is thoroughly happy and contented.

But you must be rather lonely. Once a fortnight you may see Mummie and once a fortnight you may see me, and you will carry our messages to each other. But I shall sit down with pen and paper and I shall think of you. And then you will silently come near me and we shall talk of many things. And we shall dream of the past, and find our way to make the future greater than the past. So on this New Year's Day let us resolve that, by the time this year also grows old and dies, we shall have brought this bright future dream of ours nearer to the present, and given to India's past a shining page of history.⁴





Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi

The Last Letter

August 9, 1933

We have finished, my dear; the long story has ended. I need write no more, but the desire to end off with a kind of flourish induces me to write another letter – the Last Letter!

It was time I finished, for the end of my two-year term draws near. In three and thirty days from to-day I should be discharged, if indeed I am not released sooner, as the gaoler sometimes threatens to do. The full two years are not over yet, but I have received three and a half months' remission of my sentence, as all well-behaved prisoners do. For I am supposed to be a well-behaved prisoner, a reputation which I have certainly done nothing to deserve. So ends my sixth sentence, and I shall go out again into the wide world, but to what purpose? *A quoi bon?* When most of my friends and comrades lie in gaol and the whole country seems a vast prison.

What a mountain of letters I have written! And what a lot of good *swadeshi*⁵ ink I have spread out on *swadeshi* paper. Was it worth while, I wonder? Will all this paper and ink convey any message to you that will interest you? You will say, yes, of course, for you will feel that any other answer might hurt me, and you are too partial to me to take such a risk. But whether you care for them or not, you cannot grudge me the joy of having written them, day after day, during these two long years. It was winter when I came. Winter gave place to our brief spring, slain all too soon by the summer heat; and then, when the ground was parched and dry and men and beasts panted for breath, came the monsoon, with its bountiful supply of fresh and cool rain-water. Autumn followed, and the sky was wonderfully clear and blue and the afternoons were pleasant. The year's cycle was over, and again it began: winter and spring and summer and the rainy season. I have sat here, writing to you and thinking of you, and watched the seasons go by, and listened to the pitapat of the rain on my barrack roof –

*O doux bruit de la pluie,
Par terre et sur les toits!
Pour un coeur qui s'ennuie,
Oh! le chant de la pluie!*

Benjamin Disraeli, the great English statesman of the nineteenth century, has written: "Other men condemned to exile and captivity, if they survive, despair; the man of letters may reckon those days as the sweetest of his life." He was writing about Hugo Grotius, a famous Dutch jurist and philosopher of the seventeenth century, who was condemned to imprisonment for life, but managed to escape after two years. He spent these two years in prison in philosophic and literary work. There have been many famous literary gaolbirds, the two best known perhaps being the Spaniard, Cervantes, who wrote *Don Quixote*, and the Englishman, John Bunyan, the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

I am not a man of letters, and I am not prepared to say that the many years I have spent in gaol have been the sweetest in my life, but I must say that reading and writing have helped me wonderfully to get through them. I am not a literary man, and I am not a historian; what, indeed, am I? I find it difficult to answer that question. I have been a dabbler in many things; I began with science at college, and then took to the law, and, after developing various other interests in life, finally adopted the popular and widely practised profession of gaol-going in India!

You must not take what I have written in these letters as the final authority on any subject. A politician wants to have a say on every subject, and he always pretends to know much more than he actually does. He has to be watched carefully! These letters of mine are but superficial sketches joined together by a thin thread. I have rambled on, skipping centuries and many important happenings, and then pitching my tent for quite a long time on some event which interested me. As you will notice, my likes and dislikes are pretty obvious, and so also sometimes are my moods in gaol. I do not want you to take all this for granted; there may, indeed, be many errors in my accounts. A prison, with no libraries or reference books at hand, is not the most suitable place in which to write on historical subjects. I have had to rely very largely on the many note-books which I have accumulated since I began my visits to gaol twelve years ago. Many books have also come to me here; they have come and gone, for I could not collect a library here. I have shamelessly taken from these books facts and ideas; there is nothing original in what I have written. Perhaps occasionally you may find my letters difficult to follow; skip those parts, do not mind them. The grown-up in me got the better of me sometimes, and I wrote as I should not have done.

I have given you the barest outline; this is not history; they are just fleeting glimpses of our long past. If history interests you, if you feel some of the fascination of history, you will find your way to many books which will help you to unravel the threads of past ages. But reading books alone will not help. If you

would know the past you must look upon it with sympathy and with understanding. To understand a person who lived long ago, you will have to understand his environment, the conditions under which he lived, the ideas that filled his mind. It is absurd for us to judge of past people as if they lived now and thought as we do. There is no one to defend slavery to-day, and yet the great Plato held that slavery was essential. Within recent times scores of thousands of lives were given in an effort to retain slavery in the United States. We cannot judge the past from the standards of the present. Every one will willingly admit this. But every one will not admit the equally absurd habit of judging the present by the standards of the past. The various religions have especially helped in petrifying old beliefs and faiths and customs, which may have had some use in the age and country of their birth, but which are singularly unsuitable in our present age.

If, then, you look upon past history with the eye of sympathy, the dry bones will fill up with flesh and blood, and you will see a mighty procession of living men and women and children in every age and every clime, different from us and yet very like us, with much the same human virtues and human failings. History is not a magic show, but there is plenty of magic in it for those who have eyes to see.

Innumerable pictures from the gallery of history crowd our minds. Egypt – Babylon – Nineveh – the old Indian civilizations – the coming of the Aryans to India and their spreading out over Europe and Asia – the wonderful record of Chinese culture – Knossos and Greece – Imperial Rome and Byzantium – the triumphant march of the Arabs across two continents – the renaissance of Indian culture and its decay – the little-known Maya and Aztec civilizations of America – the vast conquests of the Mongols – the Middle Ages in Europe with their wonderful Gothic cathedrals – the coming of Islam to India and the Moghal Empire – the Renaissance of learning and art in western Europe – the discovery of America and the sea-routes to the East – the beginnings of Western aggression in the East – the coming of the big machine and the development of capitalism – the spread of industrialism and European domination and imperialism – and the wonders of science in the modern world.

Great empires have risen and fallen and been forgotten by man for thousands of years, till their remains were dug up again by patient explorers from under the sands that covered them. And yet many an idea, many a fancy, has survived and proved stronger and more persistent than the empire.

*Egypt's might is tumbled down,
Down a-down the deeps of thought;
Greece is fallen and Troy town,
Glorious Rome hath lost her crown,
Venice' pride is nought.
But the dreams their children dreamed,
Fleeting, unsubstantial, vain,
Shadowy as the shadows seemed,
Airy nothing, as they deemed,
These remain.*

So sings Mary Coleridge.

The past brings us many gifts; indeed, all that we have to-day of culture, civilization, science, or knowledge of some aspects of the truth, is a gift of the distant or recent past to us. It is right that we acknowledge our obligation to the past. But the past does not exhaust our duty or obligation. We owe a duty to the future also, and perhaps that obligation is even greater than the one we owe to the past. For the past is past and done with, we cannot change it; the future is yet to come, and perhaps we may be able to shape it a little. If the past has given us some part of the truth, the future also hides many aspects of the truth, and invites us to search for them. But often the past is jealous of the future and holds us in a terrible grip, and we have to struggle with it to get free to face and advance towards the future.

History, it is said, has many lessons to teach us; and there is another saying that history never repeats itself. Both are true, for we cannot learn anything from it by slavishly trying to copy it, or by expecting it to repeat itself or remain stagnant; but we can learn something from it by prying behind it and trying to discover the forces that move it. Even so, what we get is seldom a straight answer. "History," says Karl Marx, "has no other way of answering old questions than by putting new ones."

The old days were days of faith, blind, unquestioning faith. The wonderful temples and mosques and cathedrals of past centuries could never have been built but for the overpowering faith of the architects and builders and people generally. The very stones that they reverently put one on top of the other, or carved into beautiful designs, tell us of this faith. The old temple spire, the mosque with its slender minarets, the Gothic cathedral – all of them pointing

upward with an amazing intensity of devotion, as if offering a prayer in stone or marble to the sky above – thrill us even now, though we may be lacking in that faith of old of which they are the embodiments. But the days of that faith are gone, and gone with them is that magic touch in stone. Thousands of temples and mosques and cathedrals continue to be built, but they lack the spirit that made them live during the Middle Ages. There is little difference between them and the commercial offices which are so representative of our age.

Our age is a different one; it is an age of disillusion, of doubt and uncertainty and questioning. We can no longer accept many of the ancient beliefs and customs; we have no more faith in them, in Asia or in Europe or America. So we search for new ways, new aspects of the truth more in harmony with our environment. And we question each other and debate and quarrel and evolve any number of "isms" and philosophies. As in the days of Socrates, we live in an age of questioning, but that questioning is not confined to a city like Athens; it is world-wide.

Sometimes the injustice, the unhappiness, the brutality of the world oppress us and darken our minds, and we see no way out. With Matthew Arnold, we feel that there is no hope in the world and that all we can do is to be true to one another.

*For the world which seems
To lie before us, like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here, as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.*

And yet if we take such a dismal view we have not learnt aright the lesson of life or of history. For history teaches us of growth and progress and of the possibility of an infinite advance for man. And life is rich and varied, and though it has many swamps and marshes and muddy places, it has also the great sea, and the mountains, and snow, and glaciers, and wonderful starlit nights (especially in gaol!), and the love of family and friends, and the comradeship of workers in a common cause, and music, and books and the empire of ideas. So that each one of us may well say: –

*Lord, though I lived on earth, the child of earth,
Yet was I fathered by the starry sky.*

It is easy to admire the beauties of the universe and to live in a world of thought and imagination. But to try to escape in this way from the unhappiness of others, caring little what happens to them, is no sign of courage or fellow-feeling. Thought, in order to justify itself, must lead to action. "Action is the end of thought", says our friend Romain Rolland. "All thought which does not look towards action is an abortion and a treachery. If then we are the servants of thought we must be the servants of action."

People avoid action often because they are afraid of the consequences, for action means risk and danger. Danger seems terrible from a distance; it is not so bad if you have a close look at it. And often it is a pleasant companion, adding to the zest and delight of life. The ordinary course of life becomes dull at times, and we take too many things for granted and have no joy in them. And yet how we appreciate these common things of life when we have lived without them for a while! Many people go up high mountains and risk life and limb for the joy of the climb and the exhilaration that comes from a difficulty surmounted, a danger overcome; and because of the danger that hovers all around them, their perceptions get keener, their joy of the life which hangs by a thread, the more intense.

All of us have our choice of living in the valleys below, with their unhealthy mists and fogs, but giving a measure of bodily security; or of climbing the high mountains, with risk and danger for companions, to breathe the pure air above, and take joy in the distant views, and welcome the rising sun.

I have given you many quotations and extracts from poets and others in this letter. I shall finish up with one more. It is from the Gitanjali; it is a poem, or prayer, by Rabindranath Tagore: –

*Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high;
Where knowledge is free;
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow
domestic walls;
Where words come out from the depth of truth;
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection;
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way into the dreary
desert sand of dead habit;
Where the mind is led forward by thee into ever-widening
thought and action –
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.*

We have finished, *carissima*, and this last letter ends. The last letter! Certainly not. I shall write you many more. But this series ends, and so

*Tamām Shud!*⁶



Jawaharlal Nehru and Rabindranath Tagore

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1. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Letters From a Father to His Daughter* (New Delhi: Children's Book Trust, 1987), pp. 7-8.
2. *Ibid.*, pp. 9-11.
3. Indira's grandfather, Pandit Motilal Nehru.
4. Jawaharlal Nehru, *Glimpses of World History* (New Delhi: Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, 1984), pp. 2-5.
5. *Swadeshi* means made in one's own country.
6. Nehru, *Glimpses of World History*, pp. 949-54.



Bertrand Russel at nine years

What the Educator Needs and What His Pupils Should Acquire

Introduction

Bertrand Russell (1872-1970) has been acknowledged as one of the leading mathematicians of our times. His philosophical writings have made a great impact on contemporary philosophical thought. His writings on social reconstruction have stimulated radical thinking about some of society's important institutions. In the field of education, although his contributions were not as massive as in mathematics and philosophy, he was considered an ardent leader of those who held that education ought to emphasize scientific methods of enquiry rather than the transmission of a settled body of knowledge.

The importance of Russell's views on education owes a great deal to his personal experience with a variety of educational problems. From 1927 to 1932, he and his wife, Dora Winifred Black, directed the activities of an experimental school for young children. During the course of the experiments conducted at this school, he studied the entire gamut of problems encountered in the teaching-learning process. Commenting on the educational objects of his experimental school in a letter to H. G. Wells (24 May 1928), he wrote:

I believe profoundly in the importance of what we are doing here. If I were to put into one single phrase our educational objects, I should say that we aim at training initiative without diminishing its strength. I have long held that stupidity is very largely the result of fear leading to mental inhibitions, and the experience that we are having with our children confirms me in this view. Their interest in science is at once passionate and intelligent, and their desire to understand the world in which they live exceeds enormously that of children brought up with the usual taboos upon curiosity. What we are doing is of course only an experiment on a small scale, but I confidently expect its results to be very important indeed. You will realise that hardly any other educational reformers lay much stress upon intelligence. A. S. Neill,¹ for example, who is in many ways an admirable man, allows such complete liberty

1. Founder of the well-known experimental school named Summerhill.

that his children fail to get the necessary training and are always going to the cinema, when they might otherwise be interested in things of more value. Absence of opportunity for exciting pleasures at this place is, I think, an important factor in the development of the children's intellectual interests. I note what you say in your book on the subject of amusements, and I agree with it very strongly.¹

In a self-critical evaluation of his experiments, Russell wrote in his Autobiography:

In retrospect, I feel that several things were mistaken in the principles upon which the school was conducted. Young children in a group cannot be happy without a certain amount of order and routine. Left to amuse themselves, they are bored, and turn to bullying or destruction. In their free time, there should always be an adult to suggest some agreeable game or amusement, and to supply an initiative which is hardly to be expected of young children.

Another thing that was wrong was that there was a pretence of more freedom than in fact existed. There was very little freedom where health and cleanliness were concerned. The children had to wash, to clean their teeth, and to go to bed at the right time. True, we had never professed that there should be freedom in such matters, but foolish people, and especially journalists in search of a sensation, had said or believed that we advocated a complete absence of all restraints and compulsions. The older children, when told to brush their teeth, would sometimes say sarcastically: "Call this a free school!" Those who had heard their parents talking about the freedom to be expected in the school would test it by seeing how far they could go in naughtiness without being stopped. As we only forbade things that were obviously harmful, such experiments were apt to be very inconvenient.²

*Even before he started on his career in experimental education, Russell had written a book entitled *On Education – Especially in Early Childhood*, first published in 1926. In it he examined the postulates of modern educational theory and stated what he thought should be the aims of education. He laid emphasis on the development of an ideal character based on four characteristics: vitality, courage, sensitivity and intelligence. He also emphasized the importance of developing the wish to co-operate. He concluded that a community of men and women possessing the highest degree of vitality, courage, sensitivity and intelligence that education can produce would be very different from anything hitherto existing. "Education," he said, "is the key to the new world."*

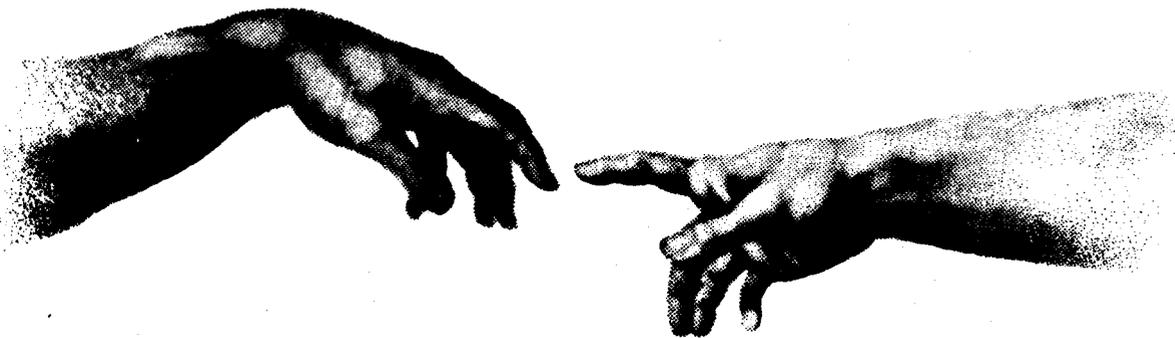
1. Bertrand Russel, *Autobiography* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1978), p. 418.

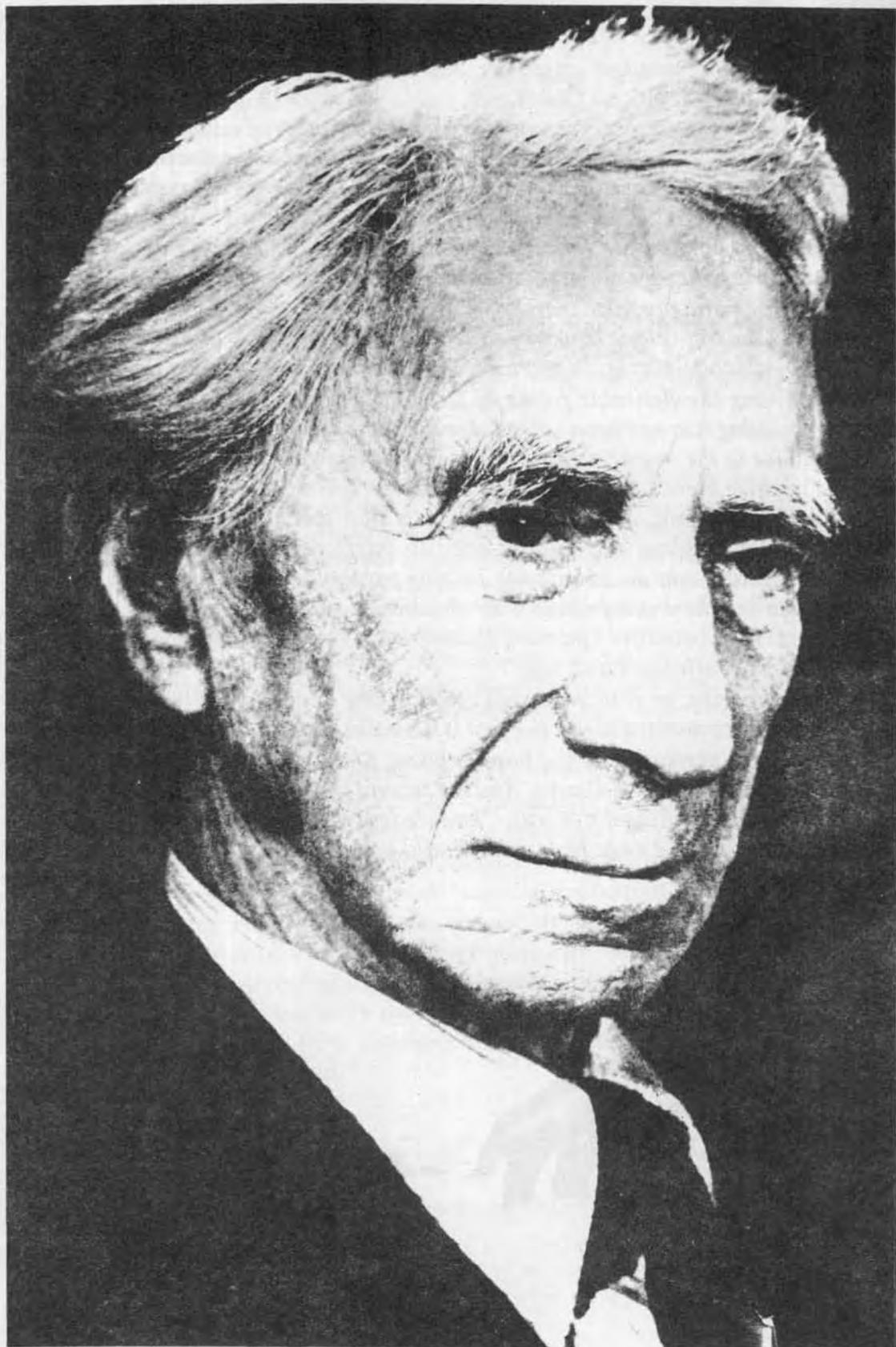
2. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

Russell wrote another extremely important book on education entitled Education and the Social Order, first published in 1932. It is a very readable book in which he presents a comprehensive philosophy of education covering a wide variety of subjects such as religion in education, patriotism in education, nationalism in education, competition in education, education under communism, educational economics, and propaganda in education. Even those who might disagree with the views expressed in that book will agree that some of its insights are of perennial value to teachers and pupils, as well as to educationists and parents.

One of the important issues in education is the problem of discipline, and Russell has dealt with this in several of his essays. He believes that the problem of combining the desirable forms of freedom with a necessary minimum of moral training has not been solved. He thinks that theorists attach too much importance to the negative virtue of not interfering with children, and too little to the positive merit of enjoying their company. Russell's own approach to the problem of freedom and discipline suggests that teachers who have genuine affection for children will seldom need to interfere with their freedom, but when necessary can do so without causing psychological damage. He thinks that when teachers are friends with children it will be unnecessary to have penalties. In a beautiful epigram, Russell says: "No rules, however wise, are substitutes for affection and tact."

To summarize, we find in Russell's philosophy of education two underlying and logically connected ideas: the first is his basic aspiration for mankind: that in seeking the perfection of the human being, knowledge, emotion and power should be widened to the utmost. And the second is an extension of this concept to education. In Russell's words, "knowledge wielded by love is what the educator needs, and what his pupils should acquire."





- Bertrand Russel -

Knowledge wielded by love is what the educator needs, and what his pupils should acquire. In earlier years, love towards the pupils is the most important kind; in later years, love of the knowledge imparted becomes increasingly necessary. The important knowledge at first is knowledge of physiology, hygiene, and psychology, of which the last more especially concerns the teacher. The instincts and reflexes with which a child is born can be developed by the environment into the most diverse habits, and therefore into the most diverse characters. Most of this happens in very early childhood; consequently it is at this period that we can most hopefully attempt to form character. Those who like existing evils are fond of asserting that human nature cannot be changed. If they mean that it cannot be changed after six years old, there is a measure of truth in what they say. If they mean that nothing can be done to alter the instincts and reflexes with which an infant is born, they are again more or less in the right, though of course eugenics could, and perhaps will, produce remarkable results even here. But if they mean, as they usually do, that there is no way of producing an adult population whose behaviour will be radically different from that of existing populations, they are flying in the face of all modern psychology. Given two infants with the same character at birth, different early environments may turn them into adults with totally different dispositions. It is the business of early education to train the instincts so that they may produce a harmonious character, constructive rather than destructive, affectionate rather than sullen, courageous, frank and intelligent. All this can be done with a great majority of children; it is actually being done where children are rightly treated. If existing knowledge were used and tested methods applied, we could, in a generation, produce a population almost wholly free from disease, malevolence, and stupidity. We do not do so, because we prefer oppression and war.

The crude material of instinct is, in most respects, equally capable of leading to desirable and to undesirable actions. In the past, men did not understand the training of instinct, and therefore were compelled to resort to repression. Punishment and fear were the great incentives to what was called virtue. We now know that repression is a bad method, both because it is never really successful and because it produces mental disorders. The training of instincts is a totally different method, involving a totally different technique. Habits and skill make, as it were, a channel for instinct, leading it to flow one way or another according to the direction of the channel. By creating the right habits and the right skill, we cause the child's instincts themselves to prompt desirable actions.

There is no sense of strain, because there is no need to resist temptation. There is no thwarting, and the child has a sense of unfettered spontaneity. I do not mean these statements to be taken in an absolute sense; there will always be unforeseen contingencies in which older methods may become necessary. But the more the science of child psychology is perfected, and the more experience we acquire in nursery schools, the more perfectly the new methods can be applied.

I have tried to bring before the reader the wonderful possibilities which are now open to us. Think what it would mean: health, freedom, happiness, kindness, intelligence, all nearly universal. In one generation, if we chose, we could bring the millennium.

But none of this can come about without love. The knowledge exists; lack of love prevents it from being applied. We must let loose our natural kindness; if a doctrine demands that we should inflict misery upon children, let us reject it, however dear it may be to us. In almost all cases, the psychological source of cruel doctrines is fear; that is one reason why I have laid so much stress upon the elimination of fear in childhood. Let us root out the fears that lurk in the dark places of our own minds. The possibilities of a happy world that are opened up by modern education make it well worth while to run some personal risk, even if the risk were more real than it is.

When we have created young people freed from fear and inhibitions and rebellious or thwarted instincts, we shall be able to open to them the world of knowledge, freely and completely, without dark hidden corners; and if instruction is wisely given, it will be a joy rather than a task to those who receive it. It is not important to increase the amount of what is learnt above that now usually taught to the children of the professional classes. What is important is the spirit of adventure and liberty, the sense of setting out upon a voyage of discovery. If formal education is given in this spirit, all the more intelligent pupils will supplement it by their own efforts, for which every opportunity should be provided. Knowledge is the liberator from the empire of natural forces and destructive passions; without knowledge, the world of our hopes cannot be built. A generation educated in fearless freedom will have wider and bolder hopes than are possible to us, who still have to struggle with the superstitious fears that lie in wait for us below the level of consciousness. Not we, but the free men and women whom we shall create, must see the new world, first in their hopes, and then at last in the full splendour of reality.

The way is clear. Do we love our children enough to take it? Or shall we let them suffer as we have suffered? Shall we let them be twisted and stunted and terrified in youth, to be killed afterwards in futile wars which their intelligence

was too cowed to prevent? A thousand ancient fears obstruct the road to happiness and freedom. But love can conquer fear, and if we love our children nothing can make us withhold the great gift which it is in our power to bestow.

From Bertrand Russell, *On Education* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1985), pp. 203-06.

Untruthfulness, as a practice, is almost always a product of fear. The child brought up without fear will be truthful, not in virtue of a moral effort, but because it will never occur to him to be otherwise. The child who has been treated wisely and kindly has a frank look in the eyes, and a fearless demeanour even with strangers; whereas the child that has been subject to nagging or severity is in perpetual terror of incurring reproof, and terrified of having transgressed some rule whenever he has behaved in a natural manner. It does not at first occur to a young child that it is possible to lie. The possibility of lying is a discovery, due to observation of grown-ups quickened by terror. The child discovers that grown-ups lie to him, and that it is dangerous to tell them the truth; under these circumstances he takes to lying. Avoid these incentives, and he will not think of lying.

But in judging whether children are truthful, a certain caution is necessary. Children's memories are very faulty, and they often do not know the answer to a question when grown-up people think they do. Their sense of time is very vague; a child under four will hardly distinguish between yesterday and a week ago, or between yesterday and six hours ago. When they do not know the answer to a question they tend to say yes or no according to the suggestion in your tone of voice. Again, they are often talking in the dramatic character of some make-believe. When they tell you solemnly that there is a lion in the back garden this is obvious; but in many cases it is quite easy to mistake play for earnest. For all these reasons a young child's statements are often objectively untrue, but without the slightest intention to deceive. Indeed, children tend, at first, to regard grown-ups as omniscient, and therefore incapable of being deceived. My boy (three and three-quarters years old) will ask me to tell him (for the pleasure of the story) what occurred to him on some interesting occasion when I was not present; I find it almost impossible to persuade him that I don't know what happened. Grown-up people get to know so many things in ways the child does not understand, that he cannot set limits to their powers. Last Easter my boy was given a number of chocolate Easter eggs. We told him that if he ate too much chocolate he would be sick, but, having told him, we left him alone. He ate too

much and was sick. He came to me as soon as the crisis was over, with a beaming face, saying, in a voice almost of triumph: "I was sick, Daddy – Daddy told me I should be sick". His pleasure in the verification of a scientific law was astonishing. Since then it has been possible to trust him with chocolate, in spite of the fact that he seldom has it; moreover, he implicitly believes everything we tell him about what food is good for him. There has been no need of moral exhortation or punishment or fear in bringing about this result. There has been need, at earlier stages, of patience and firmness. He is nearing the age where it is usual for boys to steal sweet things and lie about it. I dare say he will steal sometimes, but I shall be surprised if he lies. When a child does lie, parents should take themselves to task rather than him; they should deal with it by removing its causes, and by explaining gently and reasonably why it is better not to lie. They should not deal with it by punishment, which only increases fear and therefore the motive for lying.



Rigid truthfulness in adults towards children is, of course, absolutely indispensable if children are not to learn lying. Parents who teach that lying is a sin, and who nevertheless are known to lie by their children, naturally lose all moral authority. The idea of speaking the truth to children is entirely novel; hardly anybody did it before the present generation. I greatly doubt whether Eve told Cain and Abel the truth about apples; I am convinced that she told them she had never eaten anything that wasn't good for her. It used to be the thing for parents to represent themselves as Olympians, immune from human passions, and always actuated by pure reason. When they reproached the children they did it more in sorrow than in anger; however they might scold, they were not "cross", but talking to the children for their good. Parents did not realise that children are astonishingly clear-sighted; they do not understand all the solemn political reasons for humbug, but despise it straightforwardly and simply. Jealousies and envies, of which you are unconscious, will be evident to your child, who will discount all your fine moral talk about the wickedness of the objects of these passions. Never pretend to be faultless and inhuman; the child will not believe you, and would not like you any the better if he did. I remember vividly how, at a very early age, I saw through the Victorian humbug and hypocrisy with which I was surrounded, and vowed that, if I ever had children, I would not repeat the mistakes that were being made with me. To the best of my ability I am keeping this vow.

Another form of lying, which is extremely bad for the young, is to threaten punishments you do not mean to inflict. Dr Ballard, in his most interesting book on *The Changing School*¹ has stated this principle rather emphatically: "Don't threaten. If you do, let nothing stop you from carrying out your threat. If you say to a boy, 'Do that again and I'll murder you', and he does it again, then you must murder him. If you don't, he will lose all respect for you." The punishments threatened by nurses and ignorant parents in dealing with infants are somewhat less extreme, but the same rule applies. Do not insist, except for good reason; but when you have once begun insisting, continue, however you may regret having embarked upon the battle. If you threaten a punishment, let it be one that you are prepared to inflict; never trust to luck that your bluff will not be called. It is odd how difficult it is to get this principle understood by uneducated people. It is particularly objectionable when they threaten something terrifying, such as being locked up by the policeman, or carried off by the bogey-man. This produces first a state of dangerous nervous terror and then a complete scepticism as to all statements and threats by grown-up people. If you never insist without carrying the matter through, the child soon learns that on such occasions resistance is useless, and he obeys a mere word without giving further trouble.

But it is essential to the success of this method that you should not insist unless there is some really strong reason for doing so.

Another undesirable form of humbug is to treat inanimate objects as if they were alive. Nurses sometimes teach children, when they have hurt themselves by bumping into a chair or table, to smack the offending object and say, "naughty chair", or "naughty table". This removes a most useful source of natural discipline. Left to himself, the child soon realises that inanimate objects can only be manipulated by skill, not by anger or cajolery. This is a stimulus to the acquisition of skill, and a help in realising the limits of personal power.

Lies about sex are sanctioned by time-honoured usage. I believe them to be wholly and utterly bad, but I shall say no more on this subject now, as I propose to devote a chapter to sex-education.

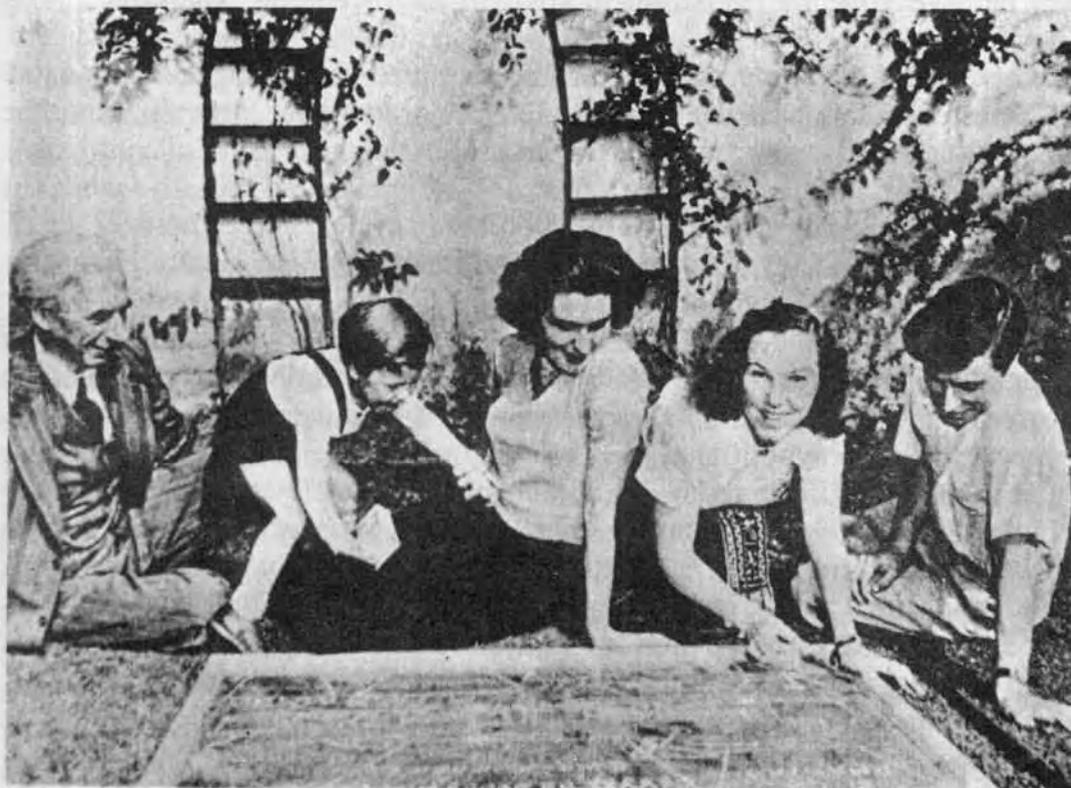
Children who are not suppressed ask innumerable questions, some intelligent, others quite the reverse. These questions are often wearisome, and sometimes inconvenient. But they must be answered truthfully, to the best of your ability. If the child asks you a question connected with religion, say exactly what you think, even if you contradict some other grown-up person who thinks differently. If he asks you about death, answer him. If he asks you questions designed to show that you are wicked or foolish, answer him. If he asks you about war, or capital punishment, answer him. Do not put him off with "you can't understand that yet", except in difficult scientific matters, such as how electric light is made. And even then make it clear that the answer is a pleasure in store for him, as soon as he has learnt rather more than he now knows. Tell him rather more than he can understand, not rather less; the part he fails to understand will stimulate his curiosity and his intellectual ambition.

Invariable truthfulness to a child reaps its reward in increased trust. The child has a natural tendency to believe what you say, except when it runs counter to a strong desire, as in the case of the Easter eggs which I mentioned just now. A little experience of the truth of your remarks even in these cases enables you to win belief easily and without emphasis. But if you have been in the habit of threatening consequences which did not happen, you will have to become more and more insistent and terrifying, and in the end you will only produce a state of nervous uncertainty. One day my boy wanted to paddle in a stream, but I told him not to, because I thought there were bits of broken crockery which would cut his feet. His desire was keen, so he was sceptical about the crockery; but after I had found a piece and shown him the sharp edge, he became entirely acquiescent. If I had invented the crockery for my own convenience I should have lost his confidence. If I had not found any I should have let him paddle. In

consequence of repeated experiences of this sort he has almost entirely ceased to be sceptical of my reasons.

We live in a world of humbug, and the child brought up without humbug is bound to despise much that is commonly thought to deserve respect. This is regrettable, because contempt is a bad emotion. I should not call his attention to such matters, though I should satisfy his curiosity whenever it turned towards them. Truthfulness is something of a handicap in a hypocritical society, but the handicap is more than out-weighed by the advantages of fearlessness, without which no one can be truthful. We wish our children to be upright, candid, frank, self-respecting; for my part, I would rather see them fail with these qualities than succeed by the arts of the slave. A certain native pride and integrity is essential to a splendid human being, and where it exists lying becomes impossible, except when it is prompted by some generous motive. I would have my children truthful in their thoughts and words, even if it should entail worldly misfortune, for something of more importance than riches and honours is at stake.

From Bertrand Russell, *On Education* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1985), pp. 104-09.



Bertrand Russel with Members of His Family

In education, the ideal of competition has had two kinds of bad effects. On the one hand, it has led to the teaching of respect for competition as opposed to co-operation, especially in international affairs; and on the other hand, it has led to a vast system of competitiveness in the class-room, and in the endeavour to secure scholarships, and subsequently in the search for jobs. This last stage has been somewhat softened, where wage-earners are concerned, by trade-unionism. But among professional men it has retained all its unmitigated severity.

One of the worst defects of the belief in competition in education is that it has led, especially with the best pupils, to a great deal of over-education. At the present day there is a dangerous tendency, in every country of Western Europe, though not in North or South America, to inflict upon young people so much education as to be damaging to imagination and intellect, and even to physical health. Unfortunately, it is the cleverest of the young who suffer most from this tendency; in each generation the best brains and the best imaginations are immolated upon the altar of the Great God Competition. To one who has, as I have had, experience at the university of some of the best minds of a generation, the damage done by overstrain in youth is heart-rending. The educational machine in the United States is in many ways inferior to those of Western Europe, but in this respect it is better than they are. Able young post-graduates in America seldom have the breadth of culture or the sheer extent of erudition that is to be found in the same class in Europe, but they have a love of knowledge, an enthusiasm for research, and a freshness of intellectual initiative which in Europe have usually given place to a bored and cynical correctness. To learn without ceasing to love learning is difficult, and of this difficulty European educators have not found the solution.

The first thing the average educator sets to work to kill in the young is imagination. Imagination is lawless, undisciplined, individual, and neither correct nor incorrect; in all these respects it is inconvenient to the teacher, especially when competition requires a rigid order of merit. The problem of the right treatment of imagination is rendered more difficult by the fact that, in most children, it decays spontaneously as interest in the real world increases. Adults in whom imagination remains strong are those who have retained from childhood something of its emancipation from fact; but if adult imagination is to be valuable, its emancipation from fact must not spring from ignorance, but from a certain lack of slavishness. Farinata degli Uberti held Hell in great contempt, in spite of having to live there for ever. It is this attitude towards fact that is most likely to promote fruitful imagination in the adult.

To pass to more concrete considerations, take such a matter as children's drawing and painting. Most children, from about five years old to about eight, show considerable imagination of a pictorial kind if they are encouraged but otherwise left free. Some, though only a small minority, are capable of retaining the impulse to paint after they have become self-critical. But if they have been taught to copy carefully and to aim at accurate representation, they become increasingly scientific rather than artistic, and their painting ceases to show any imagination. If this is to be avoided, they must not be shown how to draw correctly except when they themselves ask for instruction, and they must not be allowed to think that correctness constitutes merit. This is difficult for the teacher, since artistic excellence is a matter of opinion and individual taste, whereas accuracy is capable of objective tests. The social element in school education, the fact of being one of a class, tends, unless the teacher is very exceptional, to lead to emphasis upon socially verifiable excellences rather than upon such as depend upon personal quality. If personal quality is to be preserved, definite teaching must be reduced to a minimum, and criticism must never be carried to such lengths as to produce timidity in self-expression. But these maxims are not likely to lead to work that will be pleasing to an inspector.

The same thing, at a slightly later age, applies to the teaching of literature. Teachers tend to teach too much, and to make up silly rules of style, such as that no sentence should begin with "and" or "but". Definite rules of grammar must of course be observed, though even grammar is more elastic than most teachers suppose. Any child who wrote:

And damned be him that first cries hold, enough

would be reproached not only for profanity but also for bad grammar. In regard to literature, as in regard to painting, the danger is lest correctness should be substituted for artistic excellence. The teaching of literature should be confined to reading, and the reading should be intensive rather than extensive. It is good to know by heart things from which one derives spontaneous pleasure, and it is totally useless, from the standpoint of education in literature, to read anything, however classical, which does not give actual delight to the reader. The literature that is read with avidity and known intimately moulds diction and style, whereas the literature that is read once coldly merely promotes pseudo-intelligent conversation. Pupils should, of course, write as well as read, but what they write should not be criticised, nor should they be shown how, in the teacher's opinion, they might have written it better. So far as writing is concerned, there should be no teaching.

Passing from imagination to intellect, we find somewhat similar considerations relevant, together with certain others connected with fatigue. Fatigue may be general or special; the former is to be considered in connection with health, but the latter should be borne in mind by all who are engaged in intellectual training. Readers may remember Pavlov's dog, who learnt to distinguish ellipses from circles. But as Pavlov gradually made the ellipses more nearly circular, there came at last a point – where the ratio of major and minor axes was 9:8 – at which the dog's powers of discrimination gave way, and after this he forgot all that he had previously learnt on the subject of circles and ellipses. The same sort of thing happens to many boys and girls in school. If they are compelled to tackle problems that are definitely beyond their powers, a kind of bewildered terror seizes hold of them, not only in relation to the particular problem in question, but also as regards all intellectually neighbouring territory. Many people are bad at mathematical subjects all their lives because they started them too young. Of the capacities tested in school, the power of abstract reasoning is the latest to develop, as may be seen from the data collected in Piaget's valuable book on *Judgement and Reasoning in the Child*. A pedagogue, unless he is very psychological and very experienced, cannot believe that children are as muddle-headed as they are: so long as the right verbal responses are obtained, it is supposed that the subject is understood. Arithmetic and mathematics generally are learnt at too early an age, with the result that, in regard to them, many pupils acquire the artificial stupidity of Pavlov's canine student of geometry. To prevent this kind of misfortune, it is necessary that teachers should have some knowledge of psychology, considerable training in the art of teaching, and a certain freedom to relax the curriculum where necessary. To know how to teach is at present thought desirable in those who teach the poor, but the sons of "gentlemen" are still taught by wholly untrained teachers. This is one of the unpredictable results of snobbery.

Fatigue damages the actual quality of the intellect, and is therefore very grave. Less disastrous, though still seriously harmful, is the discouragement of interest in intellectual things which results from the fact that much of what is taught is (or at least seems) wholly useless. Take any average class of a hundred boys: I should guess that ninety of them learn only from fear of punishment, nine from a competitive desire for success, and one from love of knowledge. This lamentable state of affairs is not inevitable. By means of short hours, voluntary lessons, and good teaching, it is possible to cause about 70 per cent to learn from love of knowledge. When this motive can be invoked, attention becomes willing and unstrained, with the result that fatigue is greatly diminished and memory greatly improved. Moreover, the acquisition of knowledge comes to be felt as a

pleasure, with the consequence that it is likely to be continued after the period of formal education is ended. It will be found that more is learnt in the shorter hours of voluntary lessons than in the longer times of enforced and inattentive boredom. But the teacher must adapt the instruction to the pupils' sense of what is worth knowing, and not attempt to bully them into an insincere pretence that ancient rubbish has some occult and mysterious value.

Another intellectual defect of almost all teaching, except the highest grade of university tuition, is that it encourages docility and the belief that definite answers are known on questions which are legitimate matters of debate. I remember an occasion when a number of us were discussing which was the best of Shakespeare's plays. Most of us were concerned in advancing arguments for unconventional opinions, but a clever young man, who, from the elementary schools, had lately risen to the university, informed us, as a fact of which we were unaccountably ignorant, that *Hamlet* is the best of Shakespeare's plays. After this the subject was closed. Every clergyman in America knows why Rome fell: it was owing to the corruption of morals depicted by Juvenal and Petronius. The fact that morals became exemplary about two centuries before the fall of the Western Empire is unknown or ignored. English children are taught one view of the French Revolution, French children are taught another; neither is true, but in each case it would be highly imprudent to disagree with the teacher, and few feel any inclination to do so. Teachers ought to encourage intelligent disagreement on the part of their pupils, even urging them to read books having opinions opposed to those of the instructor. But this is seldom done, with the result that much education consists in the instilling of unfounded dogmas in the place of a spirit of inquiry. This results, not necessarily from any fault in the teacher, but from a curriculum which demands too much apparent knowledge, with a consequent need of haste and undue definiteness.

The most serious aspect of over-education is its effect on health, especially mental health. This evil, as it exists in England, is a result of the hasty application of a Liberal watchword, "equality of opportunity". Until fairly recent times, education was a prerogative of the sons of the well-to-do, but under the influence of democracy it was felt, quite rightly, that higher education ought to be open to all who could profit by it, and that ability to profit by it depended in the main upon intellect. The solution was found in a vast system of scholarships depending upon scholastic proficiency at an early age, and to a very large extent upon competitive examinations. Belief in the sovereign virtues of competition prevented anyone from reflecting that boys and girls and adolescents ought not to be subjected to the very severe strain involved. If the strain were only intellectual it would be bad enough, but it is also emotional: the whole future of

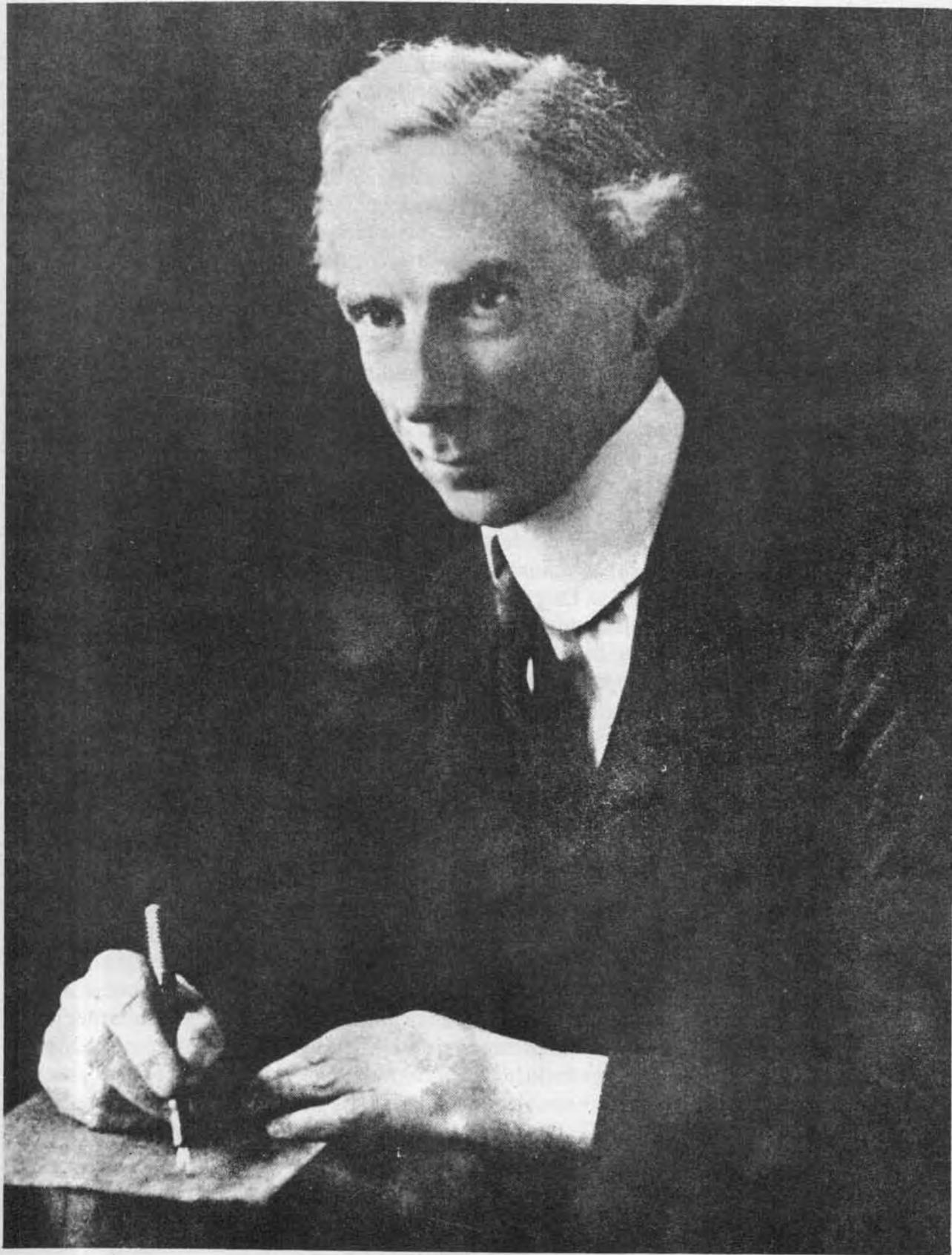
a boy or girl, not only economically, but socially, turns upon success in a brief test after long preparation. Consider the situation of an intelligent boy from a poor home, whose interests are almost wholly intellectual, but whose companions care nothing for books. If he succeeds in reaching the university, he may hope to make congenial friends and spend his life in congenial work; if not, he is doomed not only to poverty but to mental solitude. With this alternative before him, he is almost certain to work anxiously but not wisely, and to destroy his mental resiliency before his education is finished.

While the evil is obvious to everyone who has experience of teaching in a university, the remedy is not easy to devise. It is probably undesirable, and certainly financially impossible, to give a university education to everybody; consequently some method of selection is necessary, and the method must depend chiefly upon intellectual proficiency. It would be better if the strain were not so concentrated as it is when it depends upon an examination, and if teachers could select a certain proportion of their pupils on the basis of their general impression. No doubt this would lead to a certain amount of toadying and favouritism, but probably these evils would be less grave than those of the present system. It would be well to select those who were to have a university education at the age of twelve, after which they should not be subjected to competition, but only to reasonable conditions of industry. And at the age of twelve they should be selected rather for intelligence than for actual proficiency.

This is a merit in the intelligence tests, which are too little used in England, though in America they are relied upon to an extent for which there is, to my mind, no scientific justification. Their merit is not that they are infallible – no test can be that – but that they bring out more or less correct results on the whole, and that they do not demand the exhausting and nerve-racking preparation which is required for the usual type of examination.

In urban areas, and wherever there is a sufficient density of population, there ought to be special schools for very clever boys and girls, as there already are for the mentally deficient. A beginning has been made in this direction in America,² but as yet only on a small scale.

Some of the results are interesting. For example: a boy whose intelligence quotient was 190 (100 being the average) was found in an ordinary school, where he had no friends and was regarded as a fool. He was transferred to a special class for boys with median intelligence quotient 164, where he was quickly recognised as a leader and "was elected to many posts of trust and honour". A great deal of needless pain and friction would be saved to clever children if they were not compelled to associate intimately with stupid contemporaries. There is an idea that rubbing up against all and sundry in youth is a good preparation



- Bertrand Russel -

for life. This appears to me to be rubbish. No one, in later life, associates with all and sundry. Bookmakers are not obliged to live among clergymen, nor clergymen among bookmakers. In later life a man's occupation and status give an indication of his interests and capacities. I have, in my day, lived in various different social strata – diplomatists, dons, pacifists, gaol-birds, and politicians – but nowhere have I found the higgledy-piggledy ruthlessness of a set of boys. Intellectual boys, for the most part, have not yet learnt to conceal their intellectuality, and are therefore exposed to constant persecution on account of their oddity. The more adaptable among them learn, in time, to seem ordinary and to put on a smooth and vacuous exterior, but I cannot see that this is a lesson worth learning. If you walk through a farmyard, you may observe cows and sheep and pigs and goats and geese and ducks and hens and pigeons, all behaving in their several ways: no one thinks that a duck should acquire social adaptability by learning to behave like a pig. Yet this is exactly what is thought so valuable for boys at school, where the pigs tend to be the aristocracy.

The advantages of special schools for the cleverer children are very great. Not only will they avoid social persecution, thereby escaping much pain and emotional fatigue and all the lessons in cowardice which cause clever adults often to prostitute their brains in the service of powerful fools. From a purely intellectual point of view they can be taught much faster, and not have to endure the boredom of hearing things that they already understand being explained to the other members of the class; moreover, their conversation with each other is likely to be of a sort to fix knowledge in their memory, and their sparetime occupations can be intelligent without fear of ridicule. Nothing can be urged against such schools except administrative difficulties and that form of democratic sentiment which has its source in envy. At present, every clever boy or girl feels odd; in such an environment this feeling would disappear.

One of the difficulties of every large educational machine is that the administrators are, as a rule, not teachers, and have not the required experience for knowing what is possible and what is impossible. When a man begins to teach, unless he teaches selected groups of specially intelligent pupils, he finds with surprise that young people learn much less and much more slowly than he had supposed. A subject may be well worth knowing, but nevertheless, not worth teaching, because in the time available most pupils will learn nothing of it. The tendency of those who construct a curriculum without having experience of teaching is to put too much into it, with the result that nothing is learnt thoroughly. On the other hand, the experienced teacher is apt to have a different bias, which is just as undesirable: he tends, largely because he must place pupils in order of merit, to prefer those subjects in which there can be no doubt whether

the pupil has given the right answer. The long vogue of Latin grammar has been partly attributable to this source. Arithmetic, for the same reason, is overvalued; in British elementary schools it takes up far more of the time than it should. The average man should be able to do accounts, but beyond that he will seldom have occasion for sums. What he may have learnt of complicated arithmetic will be of no more practical use to him in later life than would the amount of Latin he could have learnt in the same time, and of far less use than what he could have learnt of anatomy and physiology and elementary hygiene.

The problem of over-education is both important and difficult. It is important because a clever person who has been over-educated loses spontaneity, self-confidence, and health, and thereby becomes a far less useful member of the community than he might have been. It is difficult because, as the existing mass of knowledge grows greater, it becomes increasingly laborious to know all that is relevant, both in the more complicated practical questions and in scientific discovery. We cannot therefore avoid the evils of over-education by merely saying: "Let boys and girls run wild and not be bothered with too much learning." Our social structure increasingly depends upon trained and well-informed intelligence. The present world-wide depression is largely due to lack of education on the part of practical men: if bankers and politicians understood currency and credit, we should all, from the highest to the lowest, be much richer than we are. The advancement of science – to take another illustration – cannot continue at anything like its present rate unless a man can reach the frontiers of existing knowledge by the time he is twenty-five, since few men are capable of profound originality after the age of thirty. And the average citizen cannot play his part in a complicated world unless he is more accustomed than at present to view practical issues as matters to be decided by the application of trained intelligence to masses of fact, rather than by prejudice, emotion and clap-trap. For all these reasons, intellectual education is a vital necessity in the modern social order.

There must be sufficient instruction, and there must not be the evils of over-education. This demands three things. First and foremost, there must be as little emotional strain as possible in connection with the acquisition of knowledge; this requires great changes in the system of examinations and scholarships, and the segregation, wherever possible, of the cleverer pupils. Emotional strain is the chief cause of harmful fatigue, purely intellectual fatigue, like muscular fatigue, is repaired each night during sleep, but emotional fatigue prevents sufficient sleep or makes it unrestful through bad dreams. During education, therefore, young people should, as far as is at all possible, have a care-free existence.

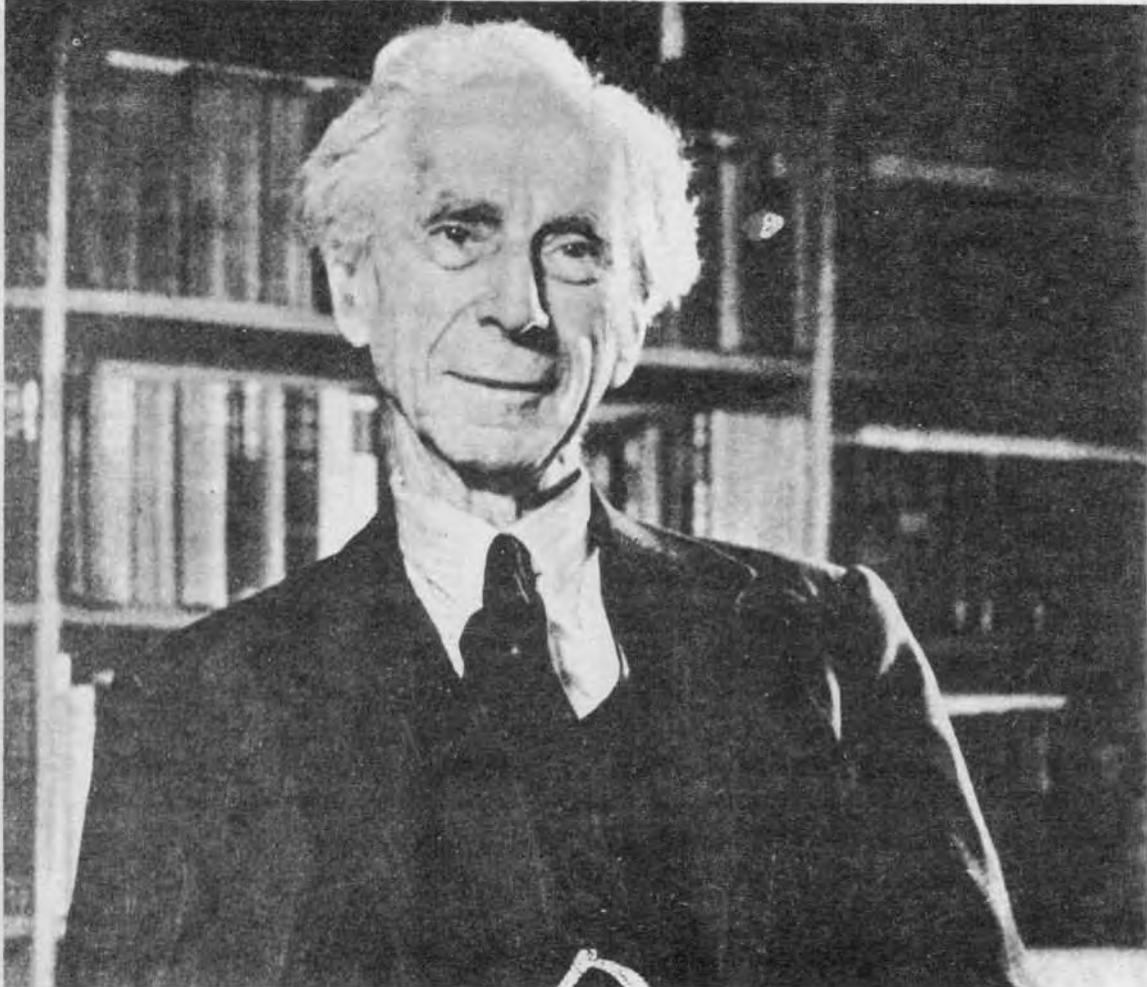
The second thing required is a drastic elimination of instruction that serves no useful purpose. I do not mean that children and young people should only acquire what is termed "useful" knowledge, but that they should not learn things merely because they always have been learnt. I have frequently questioned young people lately finished with school as to what they had learnt of history. I have generally found that they had done English history from Hengest and Horsa to the Norman Conquest, over and over again, in each new class, and that beyond that they knew nothing. I may be exceptional, but I have never yet found myself in a situation where it was really profitable to know about (say) the relations of the kingdoms of Mercia and Wessex in the eighth century. There is much in history that is abundantly worth knowing, but this is hardly ever taught in schools.

The third thing required is that all higher instruction should be given with a view to teaching the spirit and technique of inquiry rather than from the standpoint of imparting the right answers to questions. Here, again, examinations are to blame. The young person who has to pass (say) an elementary examination in English literature will probably be well advised to read no single word of any of the great writers, but to learn by heart some manual giving all the information except what is worth having. For the sake of examinations, young people have to learn by heart all kinds of things, such as dates, which it is far more sensible to look up in books of reference. The proper sort of instruction teaches the use of books, not useless feats of memory designed to make books unnecessary. This is already recognised as regards post-graduate work, but it ought to be recognised at a much earlier stage of education. And the pupil's research should not be judged by the orthodoxy or otherwise of the conclusion arrived at, but by the extent of knowledge and the reasonableness of the argument. This method will not only teach the power of forming sound judgements and keep alive the learner's initiative, but will make the acquisition of knowledge interesting, thereby diminishing very greatly the amount of fatigue involved in the process. The fatigue of intellectual work is largely due to the effort of forcing oneself to give attention to what is boring, and therefore any method that removes the boredom also removes most of the fatigue.

By these methods it is possible to become highly educated without endangering health and spontaneity. But this is not possible while the tyranny of examinations and competition persists. Competition is not only bad as an educational fact, but also as an ideal to be held before the young. What the world now needs is not competition but organisation and co-operation; all belief in the utility of competition has become an anachronism. And even if competition were useful, it is not in itself admirable, since the emotions with which it is

connected are the emotions of hostility and ruthlessness. The conception of society as an organic whole is very difficult for those whose minds have been steeped in competitive ideas. Ethically, therefore, no less than economically, it is undesirable to teach the young to be competitive.

From Bertrand Russell, *Education and the Social Order* (London: Unwin Paperbacks, 1984), pp. 102-11.



– Bertrand Russell –

References

1. Hodder and Stoughton, 1925, p. 112.
2. See *Gifted Children*, by Hollingworth, Chapters IX and X.



My Elder Brother

Introduction

Premchand, the famous Hindi writer, always brings home his message by his penetrating accounts of situations and his authentic delineation of characters. In the story that follows, Premchand gives a simple example of our book-oriented and examination-oriented educational system by portraying the interaction of two brothers. The story is told with an abundance of wit, yet contains a serious denunciation of the way in which children in our schools are stifled, how they are denied the real joy of learning and of combining work and play.

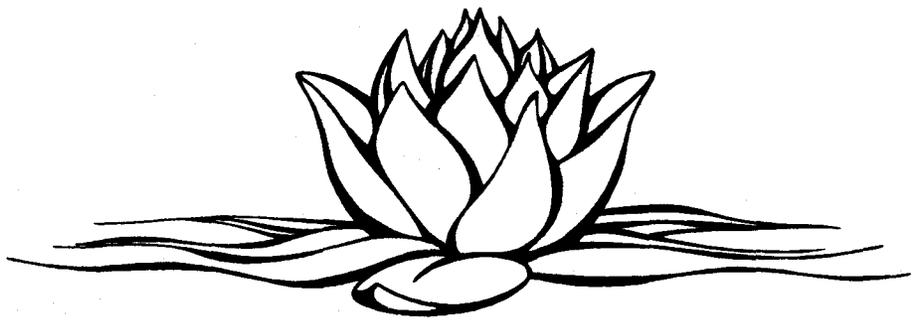
The elder brother is a victim of the examination system, and considering the fact that he completes one year's work in the space of two or even three years, we might be tempted to think him a dunce. But can we improve upon his criticism of teaching and learning? Consider his comments on essay writing.

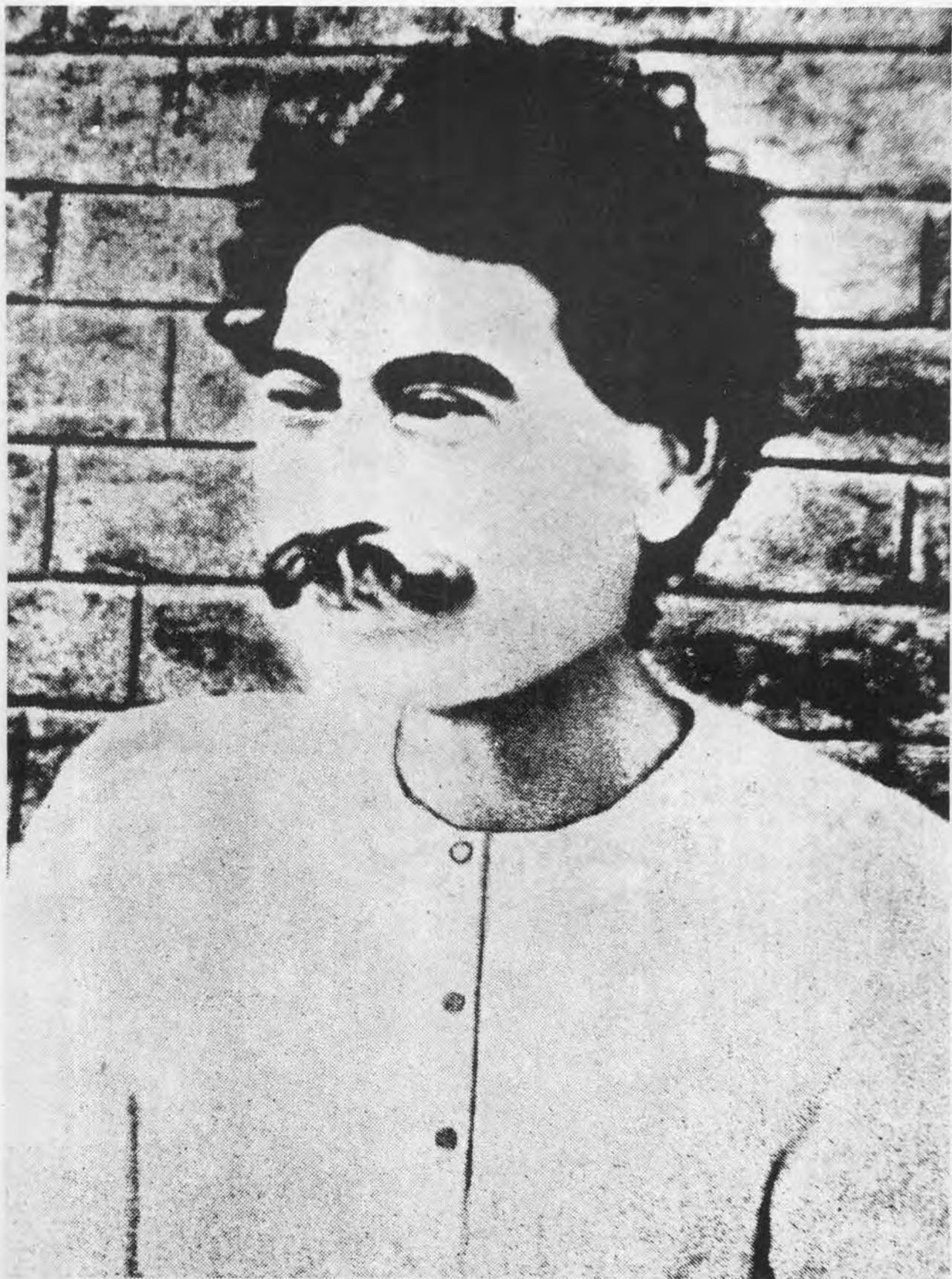
... You are told to write an essay on "punctuality", not less than four pages in length. All you do is, open your notebook, pick up your pen and curse them. Who doesn't know that punctuality is a very good thing? It brings discipline into a man's life. Other people begin to have a regard for him and his business prospers. But how can one write four pages on a little thing like that? What, anyway, is the use of writing four pages on something that can be said in a single sentence? I would call this folly. Overstressing a thing without sufficient reason is not economy but misuse of time. ...

We cannot help agreeing with him. Indeed, every word the elder brother pronounces on our educational system is poignantly true. The irony of the situation is that he cannot even think of transgressing the prison walls of the system by going out to play.

The younger brother is intelligent and can afford to play gulli-danda [a simple stick game] without spoiling his examination results. And yet his elder brother's orthodox and conservative attitude towards games and sports is so forcefully expressed that he feels guilty when he engages in those educative activities, although he confesses that he is "not at all interested in studies". Is it not a simple, candid criticism of the way in which lessons are made so dull that even intelligent students do not take interest in them?

Besides the amusing personal idiosyncrasies of the two brothers, we have in this short story an instructive indictment of an educational system that prevents pupils from becoming good pupils. The comi-tragedy of the elder brother and the tragi-comedy of the younger brother are typical examples of what students experience in their day-to-day life in school and at home, bound as they are in a triple prison of lecture system, syllabus system and examination system. The two brothers both have the potential of becoming good pupils, yet are prevented from growing freely along the lines suitable to their inclinations. The conclusion Premchand seems to draw is that as long as the system smothers and grinds down the students, we cannot expect the flowering of good pupils. Only in a garden of joy and freedom, only under the conditions of right guidance and help can good pupils blossom.







My Elder Brother

(Bade Bhai Sahib)

My brother, though five years my senior in age, was only three classes ahead. He started going to school at the same age as I, but in a vital matter like education, he did not wish to be hasty. He wanted to lay a solid foundation so that later he could build a magnificent palace over it. He did one year's work in two. Sometimes it took him even three years. If the foundations were weak, how would the house be sturdy?

I was younger than him. He was fourteen and I was nine. He had every right, by virtue of his birth, to watch over me and rebuke me. As far as I was concerned, courtesy demanded that I look upon his orders as law.

He was very studious by nature and always sat with a book before him. Perhaps to give a little rest to his brain he doodled. He sometimes drew pictures of birds, dogs and cats on his notebooks or along the margin of his books. Sometimes he wrote a single name or word or sentence several times over. Sometimes he copied down a couplet in a beautiful hand, again and again. He often wrote things that had neither meaning nor logic. For example, once I saw on his notebook the following text – special, Amina, between brothers, in truth, two brothers, Radhey Shyam, Mr. Radhey Shyam, within an hour . . . There followed the face of a man. I tried hard to find an answer to this riddle, but failed, and did not have the courage to ask him. He was in class nine and I in class five. It was presumptuous of me to expect to understand his composition.

I was not at all interested in studies. It was a monumental task to sit with my books even for an hour. At the first opportunity, I would run out of the hostel and on to the field. Sometimes I played with pebbles, at other times I made paper butterflies and flew them. If I ran into a friend, my happiness knew no bounds. Sometimes we would scramble up the compound wall and jump down, sometimes we would swing on the gate and by pushing it back and forth derive the pleasure of a joy-ride in a car. But when I came back and saw my brother's severe countenance, I would be scared to death. His first question would invariably be, "Where were you?" Always the same question, always asked in the same tone. And my only reply to it would be silence. I don't know why I couldn't utter a simple thing like, "I was out playing." My silence appeared to be a

confession of guilt and my brother had no choice but to scold me, "If this is how you go about reading English, you will be at it all your life and not learn a single word. Learning English is no joke. Not many people can do it, or else every Tom, Dick and Harry would become a scholar of English. We have to pore over books night and day and undergo terrible strain. And what do we learn but a smattering? Even great scholars can't write chaste English, much less speak it. And I must say you are a fool not to take a leaf out of my book. You see perfectly well how hard I work. If you don't see it, you must be blind, and stupid too! So many fairs and shows are held here. Have you ever seen me attend any? Cricket and hockey matches are played every day, but I don't go anywhere near them. I'm studying all the time. Even then I spend two or three years in each class. How then can *you* hope to pass when you spend all your time fooling around? I take two or three years, you will spend your entire life rotting in the same class. If you are bent upon wasting your life in this manner, better go home and enjoy yourself playing *gulli-danda*. Why waste your father's hard-earned money?"

On being thus rebuked I always burst into tears. What could I say in reply? I *was* guilty, but who can stand reproof? He would make such caustic remarks that I would be heart-broken and lose all confidence in myself. I did not feel equal to a strenuous activity like studying and would begin to think despondently, "Why don't I go home? Why should I ruin my life by attempting something that is beyond my capacity?" I was not content to remain a fool but could not possibly work so hard. Such thoughts would make me dizzy, but after an hour or two the clouds would lift and I would resolve to put my heart and soul into my studies. A time-table was made in a flash. Without advance planning and a proper scheme, how could I start? The time-table did not allow for any respite in the shape of games. It ran, "Get up early morning. After a wash and breakfast, sit down to study at six. From six to eight – English. Eight to nine – Arithmetic. Nine to nine-thirty – History, followed by lunch and school. After return from school at three-thirty – half an hour's rest. From four to five – Geography, five to six – Grammar, followed by a half-hour stroll in front of the hostel. From six-thirty to seven – English composition. After dinner, from eight to nine – translation, nine to ten – Hindi. Ten to eleven – other subjects, thereafter sleep."

But it is one thing to make a time-table and quite another to follow it. From the very first day I would begin to transgress it. So many things drew me quite unawares and irresistibly – the peaceful green of the fields, gentle puffs of breeze, the bounce of a game of football, the swiftness and agility of volley-ball and the dodges of *kabaddi*. Once there I forgot everything else. I forgot that killer time-table and those books that all but destroyed the eyesight. I remembered neither and once again Bhai Sahib got a chance to preach to me.

I ran from his very shadow and tried my best to avoid him, entering a room softly so that he would not become aware of my presence. The moment he raised his eyes and saw me, I nearly died of fright. I always felt as if there was a naked sword poised over my head. Yet, in spite of all the scolding, I could not give up games and sports just as, caught between death and disaster, man is still bound by attachment and desire.

The annual examination was held, Bhai Sahib failed; I not only passed but stood first in my class. Now the gap between us was reduced to two years. I felt like taking Bhai Sahib to task and asking him, "Where did your penance get you? Look at me. I played around happily and still managed to stand first in my class." But he was so depressed and unhappy that my heart went out to him and the very idea of rubbing things in appeared contemptible. I became a little proud and self-assured. Bhai Sahib no longer had the old influence over me. I freely joined in sports and games. If he preached to me again, I would bluntly say, "What have you achieved by killing yourself? Look at me. I kept playing and still stood first." Although I did not have the guts to give voice to this boast, it was clear from my conduct that Bhai Sahib had lost his hold on me. Bhai Sahib understood this. He had a very robust commonsense and one morning when I came back after a session of *gulli-danda* he set upon me, armed with a sword, as it were: "I can see that you have grown conceited because you passed and stood first in class. But the pride of even the greatest has been humbled. What is your standing? You must have read in history what happened to Ravana. What lesson have you learnt from his character? Or did you read through it casually? Simply passing an examination is nothing, the main thing is the development of your brains. You must understand the significance of what you read. Ravana was the lord of the earth. An empire such as his is called *chakravarty*. These days the British have a vast empire. But we cannot call it *chakravarty*. Several nations of the world refuse to acknowledge the supremacy of the British. They are absolutely independent. But Ravana was a *chakravarty raja*. All the kings of the world paid him tribute. The greatest among the gods were like his slaves. The gods of fire and water were also his servants. But what was his end? His pride wiped out both him and his race, there was not a soul left. Whatever evil deeds a man may do, let him not indulge in pride. Let him not put on airs. If he is proud, he loses in both the material and the spiritual worlds. You must also have read what happened to Satan. He was proud that there was no greater and truer devotee of God than himself. In the end he was cast out from heaven into hell. Once the Emperor of Rome also gave way to pride. He died begging for alms. If your head has turned on clearing just one class, then your progress is indeed

assured! You can take it from me that you have not succeeded through hard work, but through sheer luck. This kind of thing can happen only once, not again and again. Sometimes when playing *gulli-danda* one makes a hit by chance but this does not make one a successful player. A successful player is one whose shots never miss their mark. Don't go by my failure. When you reach my class you will sweat and toil, battling with things like algebra and geometry and English history. It is not easy to remember the names of kings. There have been as many as eight Henrys. Do you think it is easy to remember in which Henry's reign a particular event took place? Write Henry VIII instead of Henry VII and you lose all marks! Not even a zero will you get, not even a zero! Have you ever thought of that? There have been dozens of Jameses, dozens of Williams, scores of Charleses. The brain reels, one feels giddy thinking of them. The unfortunate British could not even find names. They simply affixed Second, Third, Fourth and Fifth to a single name. Had they asked me I would have suggested a million names. As for geometry, God help us! Write ABC instead of ACB and all your marks are cut. There is no one to ask these heartless examiners what, after all, the difference is between ABC and ACB and why they slaughter candidates for such trivial reasons. How does it matter whether you eat *dal* and rice and *roti* or rice and *dal* and *roti*? But are these examiners concerned with anything beyond the book? They want the boys to learn every single letter by heart. And such cramming has been given the name of education. After all what is the use of reading things that have neither head nor tail? 'If you drop a perpendicular on this line, the base will be twice the perpendicular'.

"What, one may ask, is the use of this? How do I care whether it is twice or four times the size or remains a mere half? But if you want to pass an exam you must learn all this rubbish. You are told to write an essay on 'punctuality', not less than four pages in length. All you do is, open your notebook, pick up your pen and curse them. Who doesn't know that punctuality is a very good thing? It brings discipline into a man's life. Other people begin to have a regard for him and his business prospers. But how can one write four pages on a little thing like that? What, anyway, is the use of writing four pages on something that can be said in a single sentence? I would call this folly. Overstressing a thing without sufficient reason is not economy but misuse of time. We want a man who says quickly what he has to say. But no. You are compelled to colour four pages, no matter how you do it. And mind you, foolscap pages at that. Isn't this a cruelty to students? The irony of the whole situation is that you are told to write briefly. Write a brief essay, not less than four pages! Fine! A brief essay means four pages. Otherwise we would have to write a hundred or two hundred pages. It's like running both fast and slow. Isn't that a contradiction? Even a child can

understand a little thing like that but not these teachers. When you come to my class, sir, you will know just what is what. You have topped in this class so you are walking on air. Take my advice. I might fail a hundred-thousand times, still I am older than you and have more experience of the world than you have. Make a note of what I say or you'll be sorry."

It was nearly time for school, otherwise God knows when this sermon would have ended. My food seemed tasteless to me. When I was being harangued on having passed, perhaps I would have been killed if I had failed. I was terrified by the fearful picture of studies in his class that Bhai Sahib had painted. It is a wonder that I did not leave school and run away home. But in spite of all these warnings I still remained uninterested in books. I never lost an opportunity to play games. I studied too, but very little, just enough to complete the day's task and to avoid being disgraced in class. The self-confidence that had taken root within me disappeared again, and once more I began to live the life of a thief.

Again the annual exams were held and as chance would have it, again I passed and Bhai Sahib failed. I did not work very hard but somehow managed to stand first in class. I was myself surprised. Bhai Sahib had put heart and soul into his work. He had swallowed every single word of the course, working till ten in the night, from four in the afternoon, and from six to nine-thirty before going to school. He looked completely drained with the effort but still he failed. I felt sorry for him. When the result was announced he burst into tears and I also began to cry. My joy at my success was halved. Had I also failed Bhai Sahib would not have been so unhappy. But who can divert destiny?

Between Bhai Sahib and me there now remained a gap of only one class. An evil thought sprang up within me: if Bhai Sahib failed another year I would be his equal. On what basis then would he preach to me? But I forcibly thrust this uncharitable thought from my heart. "After all, he scolds me for my own good. At this time I doubtless find it unpleasant but perhaps it is due to his sermons that I pass again and again and secure such good marks too."

By now Bhai Sahib had softened to a great extent. Several times, even on finding an opportunity to scold me, he showed great patience. Perhaps now he had himself come to understand that he no longer had a right to scold me, or at best, to a very small extent. I became more and more self-willed and began to take advantage of his tolerance. I had the conviction that I would pass, whether I studied or not. Luck was on my side. Thus I stopped studying what little I used to for fear of Bhai Sahib. I had developed a new interest – flying kites – and now all my time was devoted to it. Even so, I respected my brother and flew kites in secret. Preparing the *manjha*, correcting the balance of the kite, planning for

kite tournaments and allied problems were all solved in secrecy. I did not want Bhai Sahib to suspect that my respect and regard for him had gone down.

One evening, at some distance from the hostel, I was running recklessly to loot a drifting kite. My eyes were turned upwards to the sky and my heart lay with this traveller who came gliding slowly, rolling towards a fall, like a restless soul coming out of heaven to inhabit a new world. A whole army of children was surging towards it to welcome it, armed with sticks and bamboos. Nobody was aware of his surroundings. Everyone was, as it were, flying with that kite up in the sky, where everything is smooth and there are neither cars, nor trams or trains.



At the entrance of "Last School" in Auroville

Suddenly I ran into Bhai Sahib who was perhaps returning from the market. Then and there he caught me by the hands and said angrily, "Aren't you ashamed, running after a worthless kite with these street urchins? You don't have any consideration for the fact that now you are no longer in a junior class. On the contrary you are in class eight and only one class below me. After all, man should have some regard for his position. There was a time when people used to become *naib-tehsildars* after passing class eight. I know several *middlechis* who are first class magistrates or superintendants. So many who have passed class eight are our leaders and the editors of our newspapers. Great scholars work under them. And you, having come to the same class, are running after a kite with these street urchins! I am grieved by your lack of sense. Without a doubt, you are clever, but what use is cleverness if it destroys one's self-respect? You must be thinking to yourself, 'I am only one class below Bhai Sahib and now he has no right to say anything to me.' But this is where you are mistaken. I am five years older than you and even if you come to my class today – (and if this is the attitude of examiners, then without a doubt, next year you will be my class-fellow and perhaps after a year you will be ahead of me) – the five years' difference between you and me cannot be erased by God himself, to say nothing of you. I am, and shall always remain, five years older than you. You cannot equal my experience of life and this world, even if you become an M.A. and D.Phil. and D.Litt. Our mother has not passed a single class and even our father has, perhaps, not gone beyond class five or six. But they will always retain the right to guide and correct us, even if we acquire all the knowledge in the world. Not only because they have given us life but also because they have and will always continue to have more experience of the world than we do. What kind of government America has, or how many times Henry VIII married, or how many planets there are in the sky—these things they may not know. But there are thousands of things which they know better than you or I. God forbid, if I were to fall ill today, you would be at your wits' end. You would not be able to think of anything save sending a wire to Dada. But if Dada were in your place he would not send a wire to anyone, nor would he get nervous or panicky. First he would diagnose the illness himself and then proceed to treat it. If he were unsuccessful, he would call a doctor. But an illness is a big thing. The two of us do not even know how to stretch our monthly allowance to last a whole month. Whatever Dada sends, we finish by the twentieth or twenty-second and then become paupers. We have to cut out snacks and avoid meeting the *dhobi* and the barber. But living on half of what we are spending now, Dada has managed a large portion of his life with credit and honour. He has raised a family in which there are a total of nine members. Look at our own Headmaster Sahib. Isn't he an M.A.? And not an M.A. from here,

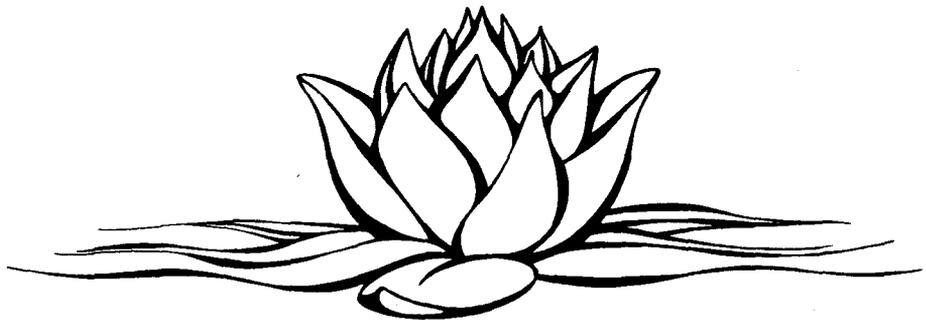
but an M.A. from Oxford. He gets a thousand rupees, but who is managing his household? His old mother. Headmaster Sahib's degree proved useless in this matter. Earlier he used to run the household himself but there was never enough money. He incurred debts. Ever since his mother has taken the management into her own hands, it is as if Lakshmi has come into the house. So, my dear brother, root out from your mind the notion that you have come close to me and are now independent. You will not be able to go astray while I am there to watch over you. If you don't obey me, I can make use of this too [indicating a slap]. I know that my words are like poison to you."

I felt humbled at this new attitude of his. I honestly became aware of my smallness and a deep regard for Bhai Sahib took root within me. I said with tears in my eyes, "Certainly not! Whatever you are saying is absolutely true and you have a right to say it."

Bhai Sahib embraced me and said, "I am not forbidding you to fly kites. Even I long to do so but what can I do? If I go astray myself how can I safeguard you? This duty has also fallen to my lot."

As luck would have it, just at that moment a kite drifted above our heads. Its string was trailing and a horde of boys came running after it. Bhai Sahib was tall. He leapt and caught the string and raced towards the hostel. I ran after him.

From Pratibha Nath, *Premchand, The Voice of Rural India* (New Delhi: NCERT, 1974).



Biography

Four miles from Benares there lies the small village of Lamhi. It is here, on July 31, 1880, that Premchand was born, the family's first son. As a child he was naughty and spent most of his time in sports. He was fond of listening to stories and had a weakness for sweets. Premchand received his early schooling from a teacher who was also a tailor – so the students had plenty of free time. Nevertheless, he still played truant whenever he could, and went wandering in the fields, chewing sugarcane or watching the pranks of a tamed bear or monkey.

At the age of eight he lost his mother. His father soon re-married, but the stepmother had a negative influence on the boy. In high school, he developed an insatiable love for reading, and this awakened in him the desire to write. He was barely fifteen when he was married. Shortly after this his father died and Premchand had to support not only his wife but his stepmother and her two sons. Still he was determined to continue his education and was admitted to the Hindu College at Benares. He took on various teaching jobs while continuing to study. Premchand now decided to dedicate his services to his motherland through writing, and, under a pen name, started writing novels dealing with problems of Hindu society. He worked as a journalist as well.

By 1907 Premchand had established himself in Urdu letters but he was unhappy. His wife had left him for good. Without consulting his family he decided to marry a girl who had been widowed in childhood, a radical step in those days. In 1908 a collection of his stories attracted the attention of the bureaucracy and he was summoned before the Collector and was told, "You are spreading sedition and have insulted the British Government." He was ordered to stop publishing without permission. This led him to adopt the name "Premchand", and he continued writing. He was disgusted by the British authorities and wanted badly to give up his government teaching job. In order to become more independent, he was determined to secure higher education. While studying he continued to write. His first collection of short stories was published in 1917.

Meanwhile, events around him were influencing Premchand, primarily the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and India's Freedom Movement. In 1921, he resigned from his job, saying, "My conscience does not permit me to serve the government any longer." Premchand then went through a number of jobs and was always in financial difficulty. He dreamed of establishing a printing press of his own but several attempts ended in failure.

In his writings he criticized all fanaticism and vehemently advocated Hindu-Muslim unity. His fame began to spread far and wide. He was invited to write scenarios for a film company in Bombay, and went to that city in 1934. However, he became totally disillusioned with the film world and left Bombay to become very active on the problem of a national language. He felt that India would never be free as long as the English language dominated, and he toured the country promoting Hindi. He dreamed of a national literature of India, and his journal, *Hamsa*, became the organ of an all-India organization to promote this cause.

While Premchand was rising to meteoric heights in the literary world, his financial condition and health were deteriorating day by day. In June of 1936 there was no printing paper left in his press, and efforts to remedy this caused him to fall ill. The death of Maxim Gorky was an additional shock, and soon he was bed-ridden. Still, he continued to write his last novel for *Hamsa*. On October 8, 1936, at the age of fifty-six, he fell into a coma and died. Thus came the end of a great writer, a light that continues to illumine millions of hearts in India and throughout the world.

Based on *Premchand: An Anthology*, ed. Dr. Nagendra (Delhi: Bansal and Co., 1981).



- Saint-Exupéry -

The Little Prince

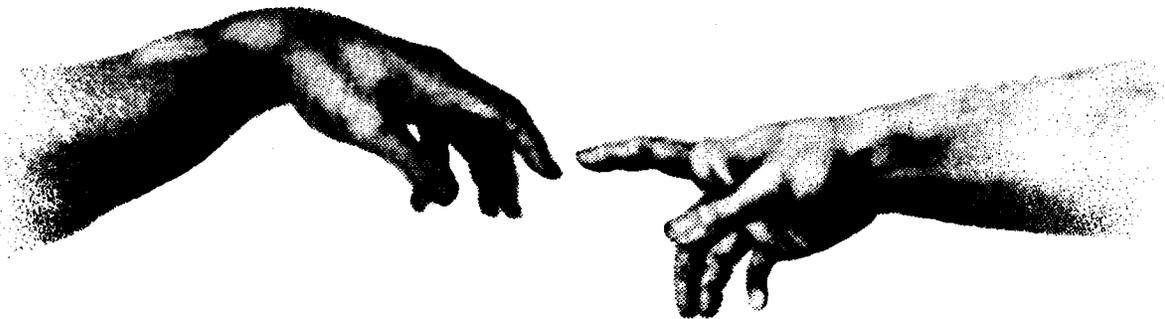
Introduction

Does age matter in teaching and learning? Is there an essential difference between teaching and learning? In a sense, all of us are learners, whether we are playing the role of teacher or of pupil. A pupil asks questions in the process of learning, and his questions may be so penetrating that they stimulate a process of learning in the mind of his teacher. A teacher gives answers to questions, and they may be so honest and open-ended that they stimulate a process of further questioning in the mind of the pupil. The common idea that teachers are adults and pupils are children perhaps needs to be corrected. The greatest teachers have looked upon themselves as children leading children. In Saint-Exupéry's story The Little Prince, from which we present some extracts, the reader is not sure who is the teacher and who is the pupil. The little prince poses a number of questions, expresses surprise at many of the answers and gives the adults he encounters a stimulating learning experience. For although he is a child, the little prince is a teacher as well as a learner.

The Little Prince is a modern parable which has stirred the minds and hearts of countless readers, children and adults alike. It presents a commentary on standard notions of education and attempts to demolish some of the current ideas about what we can and cannot understand, about what is important and not important, and about how we ought to judge and how we ought not to. The narrator of the story is a pilot who, because of mechanical difficulties, has been obliged to make an emergency landing in the desert. He wants to take off as quickly as possible since he has only a few days' supply of food and water. He is fully absorbed in the task of repairing his aeroplane. In those conditions he encounters the little prince, a voyager from a small planet far from earth. What ensues is a series of surprises for both of them, surprises which are loaded with meaning.

The little prince is a symbol of the inner being of man who appears in different traditions and cultures under various names. In the Katha Upanishad, the inner being is described as something "not bigger than a man's thumb" (angushthamātram). The early Greeks called it the psyche. In other traditions it is spoken of as the soul. However, some schools of intellectual thought deny the existence of this little spark and see the human personality as a mere physical, vital and mental complex. This limited concept is at the core of many theories of education where learning is viewed in terms of stimulation and response and the human being seen as a battlefield of conflicting impulses, desires, wills and thought processes with an unstable ego-structure as his helpless leader. In contrast with this limited concept we have in the little prince an enlightening affirmation of the presence of a luminous but searching entity within us, an entity which, by virtue of being a true learner, is also our true teacher and true guide. The little prince is a spark that can grow into a fire of light and glory. One lesson that can be drawn from Saint-Exupéry's story is that the teacher should try to discover and awaken the little prince that lives in each child.

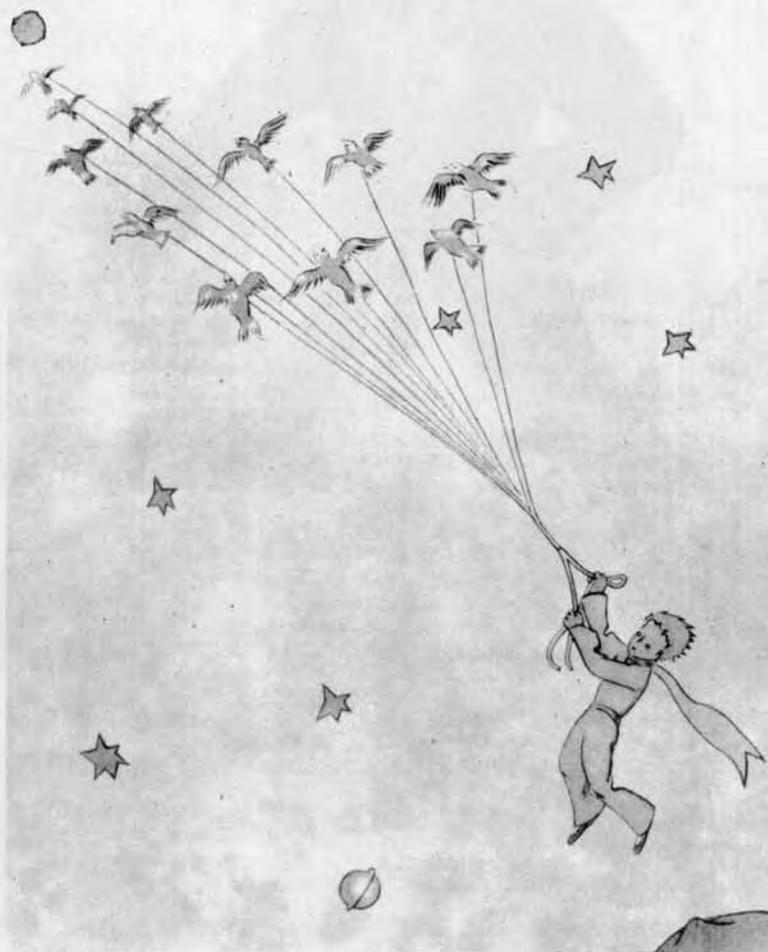
The educational consequences of the recognition of that hidden spark could initiate startlingly new trends in educational experiments and invention. The purpose of Saint-Exupéry's parable, however, is not to propound any educational theory, but to awaken us to the presence of the inner soul in each human being. And once we awaken to this reality, it is clear that we have to rethink our usual assumptions about education, about the learning process, and about the teacher and pupil.

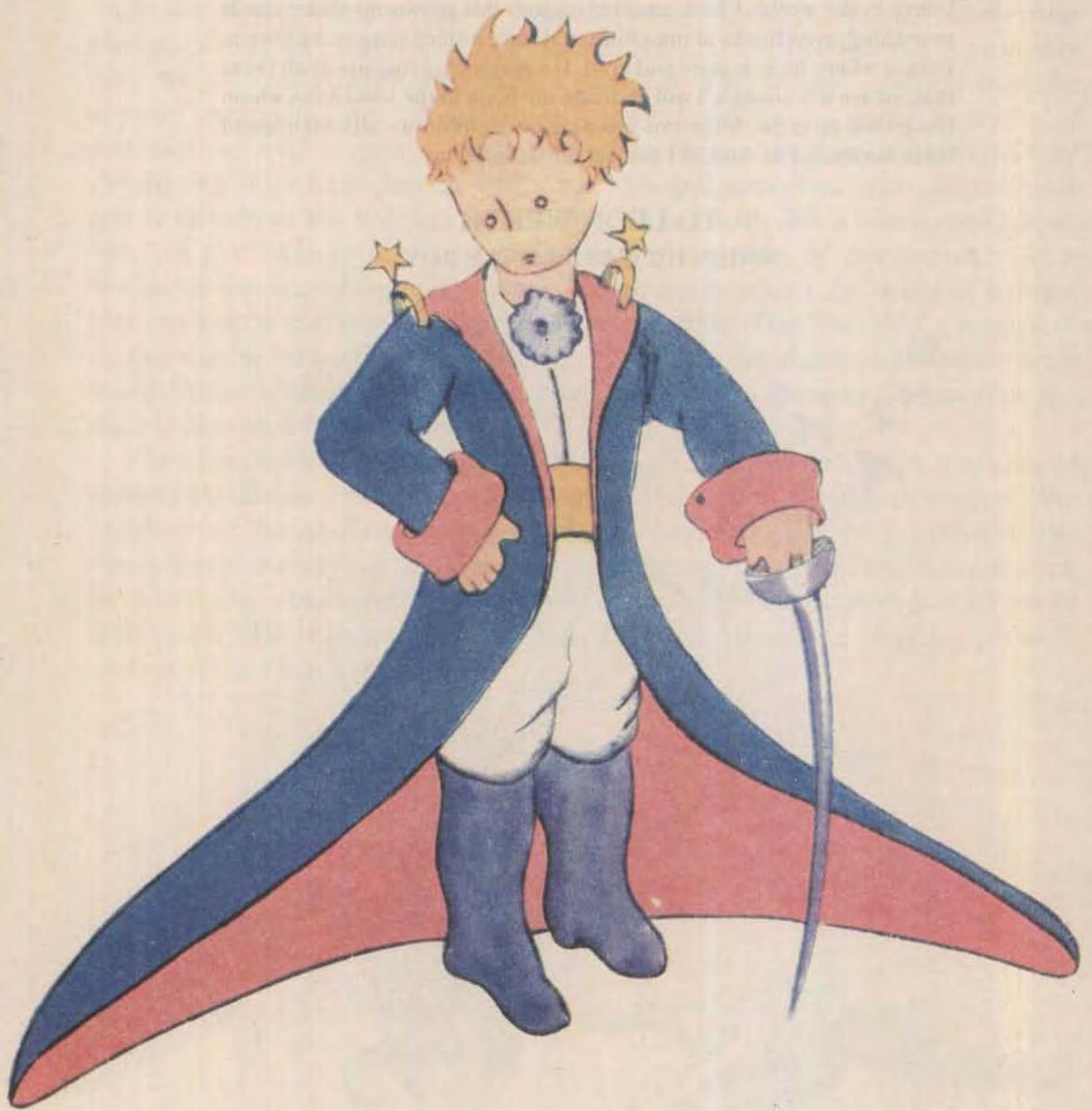


TO LEON WERTH

I ask the indulgence of the children who may read this book for dedicating it to a grown-up. I have a serious reason: he is the best friend I have in the world. I have another reason: this grown-up understands everything, even books about children. I have a third reason: he lives in France where he is hungry and cold. He needs cheering up. If all these reasons are not enough, I will dedicate the book to the child from whom this grown-up grew. All grown-ups were once children – although few of them remember it. And so I correct my dedication:

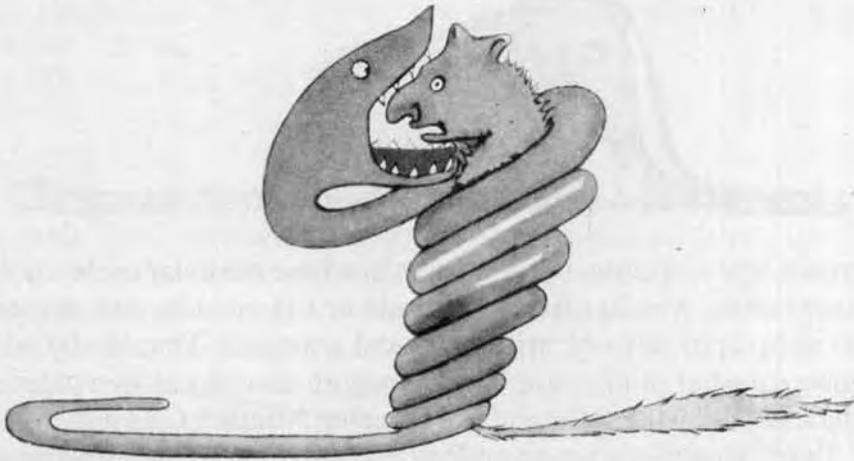
TO LEON WERTH WHEN HE WAS A LITTLE BOY





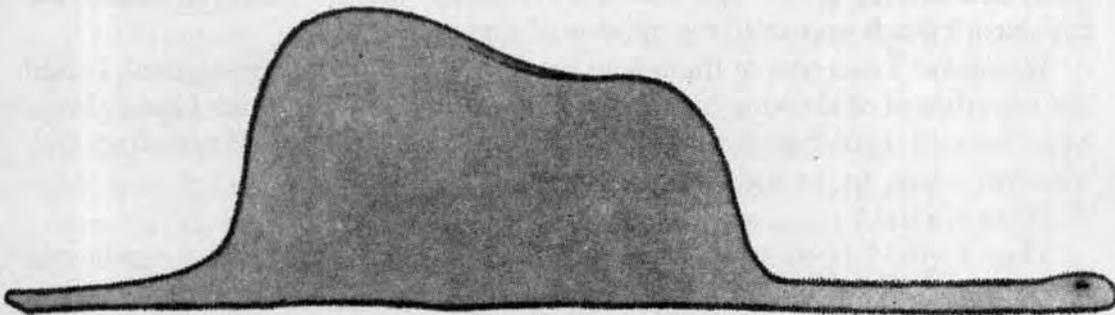
The Little Prince

Once when I was six years old I saw a magnificent picture in a book, called *True Stories from Nature*, about the primeval forest. It was a picture of a boa constrictor in the act of swallowing an animal. Here is a copy of the drawing.



In the book it said: "Boa constrictors swallow their prey whole, without chewing it. After that they are not able to move, and they sleep through the six months that they need for digestion."

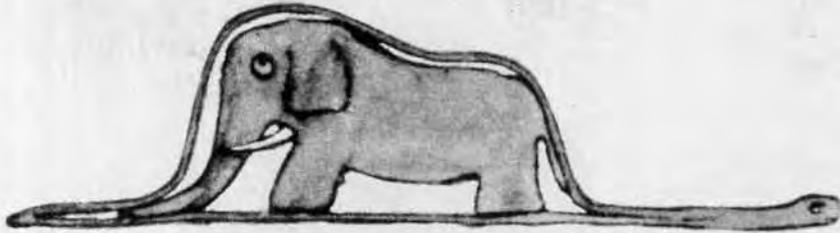
I pondered deeply, then, over the adventures of the jungle. And after some work with a coloured pencil I succeeded in making my first drawing. My Drawing Number One. It looked like this:



I showed my masterpiece to the grown-ups, and asked them whether the drawing frightened them.

But they answered: "Frighten? Why should any one be frightened by a hat?"

My drawing was not a picture of a hat. It was a picture of a boa constrictor digesting an elephant. But since the grown-ups were not able to understand it, I made another drawing: I drew the inside of the boa constrictor, so that the grown-ups could see it clearly. They always need to have things explained. My Drawing Number Two looked like this:



The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictors, whether from the inside or the outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter. I had been disheartened by the failure of my Drawing Number One and my Drawing Number Two. Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them.

So then I chose another profession, and learned to pilot aeroplanes. I have flown a little over all parts of the world; and it is true that geography has been very useful to me. At a glance I can distinguish China from Arizona. If one gets lost in the night, such knowledge is valuable.

In the course of this life I have had a great many encounters with a great many people who have been concerned with matters of consequence. I have lived a great deal among grown-ups. I have seen them intimately, close at hand. And that hasn't much improved my opinion of them.

Whenever I met one of them who seemed to me at all clear-sighted, I tried the experiment of showing him my Drawing Number One, which I have always kept. I would try to find out, so, if this was a person of true understanding. But, whoever it was, he, or she, would always say:

"That is a hat."

Then I would never talk to that person about boa constrictors, or primeval forests, or stars. I would bring myself down to his level. I would talk to him about bridge, and golf, and politics, and neckties. And the grown-up would be greatly pleased to have met such a sensible man.

.....

So I lived my life alone, without anyone that I could really talk to, until I had an accident with my plane in the Desert of Sahara, six years ago. Something was broken in my engine. And as I had with me neither mechanic nor any passengers, I set myself to attempt the difficult repairs all alone. It was a question of life or death for me: I had scarcely enough drinking water to last a week. The first night, then, I went to sleep on the sand, a thousand miles from any human habitation. I was more isolated than a shipwrecked sailor on a raft in the middle of the ocean. Thus you can imagine my amazement, at sunrise, when I was awakened by an odd little voice. It said:

"If you please – draw me a sheep!"

"What!"

"Draw me a sheep!"

I jumped to my feet, completely thunderstruck. I blinked my eyes hard. I looked carefully all around me. And I saw a most extraordinary small person, who stood there examining me with great seriousness. Here you may see the best portrait that, later, I was able to make of him. But my drawing is certainly very much less charming than its model.

That, however, is not my fault. The grown-ups discouraged me in my painter's career when I was six years old, and I never learned to draw anything, except boas from the outside and boas from the inside.

Now I stared at this sudden apparition with my eyes fairly starting out of my head in astonishment. Remember, I had crashed in the desert a thousand miles from any inhabited region. And yet my little man seemed neither to be straying uncertainly among the sands, nor to be fainting from fatigue or hunger or thirst or fear. Nothing about him gave any suggestion of a child lost in the middle of the desert, a thousand miles from any human habitation. When at last I was able to speak, I said to him:

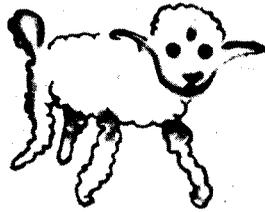
"But – what are you doing here?"

And in answer he repeated, very slowly, as if he were speaking of a matter of great consequence:

"If you please – draw me a sheep . . ."

When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey. Absurd as it might seem to me, a thousand miles from any human habitation and in danger of death, I took out of my pocket a sheet of paper and my fountain-pen. But then I remembered how my studies had been concentrated on geography, history, arithmetic and grammar, and I told the little chap (a little crossly, too) that I did not know how to draw. He answered me:

"That doesn't matter. Draw me a sheep . . ."



But I had never drawn a sheep. So I drew for him one of the two pictures I had drawn so often. It was that of the boa constrictor from the outside. And I was astounded to hear the little fellow greet it with,

"No, no, no! I do not want an elephant inside a boa constrictor. A boa constrictor is a very dangerous creature, and an elephant is very cumbersome. Where I live, everything is very small. What I need is a sheep. Draw me a sheep."

So then I made a drawing.

He looked at it carefully, then he said:

"No. This sheep is already very sickly. Make me another."



So I made another drawing.

My friend smiled gently and indulgently.

"You see yourself," he said, "that this is not a sheep. This is a ram. It has horns."

So then I did my drawing over once more.

But it was rejected too, just like the others.



"This one is too old. I want a sheep that will live a long time."

By this time my patience was exhausted, because I was in a hurry to start taking my engine apart. So I tossed off this drawing.

And I threw out an explanation with it.

"This is only his box. The sheep you asked for is inside."

I was very surprised to see a light break over the face of my young judge: "That is exactly the way I wanted it! Do you think that this sheep will have to have a great deal of grass?"

"Why?"

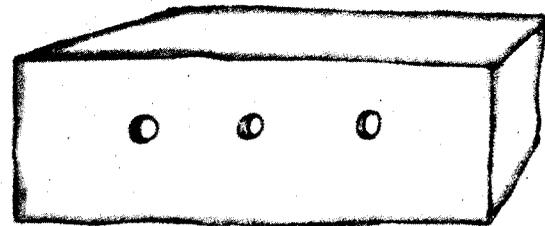
"Because where I live everything is very small . . ."

"There will surely be enough grass for him," I said. "It is a very small sheep that I have given you."

He bent his head over the drawing:

"Not so small that - Look! He has gone to sleep . . ."

And that is how I made the acquaintance of the little prince.



.....

It took me a long time to learn where he came from. The little prince, who asked me so many questions, never seemed to hear the ones I asked him. It was from words dropped by chance that, little by little, everything was revealed to me.

The first time he saw my aeroplane, for instance (I shall not draw my aeroplane; that would be much too complicated for me), he asked me:

"What is that object?"

"That is not an object. It flies. It is an aeroplane. It is my aeroplane."

And I was proud to have him learn that I could fly.

He cried out, then:

"What! You dropped down from the sky?"

"Yes," I answered, modestly.

"Oh! That is funny!"

And the little prince broke into a lovely peal of laughter, which irritated me very much. I like my misfortunes to be taken seriously.

Then he added:

"So you, too, come from the sky! Which is your planet?"

At that moment I caught a gleam of light in the impenetrable mystery of his presence; and I demanded, abruptly:

"Do you come from another planet?"

But he did not reply. He tossed his head gently, without taking his eyes from my plane:

"It is true that on that you can't have come from very far away . . ."

And he sank into a reverie, which lasted a long time. Then, taking my sheep out of his pocket, he buried himself in the contemplation of his treasure.

You can imagine how my curiosity was aroused by this half-confidence about the "other planets." I made a great effort, therefore, to find out more on this subject.

"My little man, where do you come from? What is this 'where I live,' of which you speak? Where do you want to take your sheep?"

After a reflective silence he answered:

"The thing that is so good about the box you have given me is that at night he can use it as his house."

"That is so. And if you are good I will give you a string, too, so that you can tie him during the day; and a post to tie him to."

But the little prince seemed shocked by this offer:

"Tie him! What a queer idea!"

"But if you don't tie him," I said, "he will wander off somewhere, and get lost."

My friend broke into another peal of laughter:
"But where do you think he would go?"
"Anywhere. Straight ahead of him."
Then the little prince said, earnestly:
"That doesn't matter. Where I live, everything is so small!"
And, with perhaps a hint of sadness, he added:
"Straight ahead of him, nobody can go very far . . ."

.....

I had thus learned a second fact of great importance: this was that the planet the little prince came from was scarcely any larger than a house!

But that did not really surprise me much. I knew very well that in addition to the great planets – such as the Earth, Jupiter, Mars, Venus – to which we have given names, there are also hundreds of others, some of which are so small that one has a hard time seeing them through the telescope. When an astronomer discovers one of these he does not give it a name, but only a number. He might call it, for example, "Asteroid 325."

I have serious reason to believe that the planet from which the little prince came is the asteroid known as B-612.

This asteroid has only once been seen through the telescope. That was by a Turkish astronomer, in 1909.

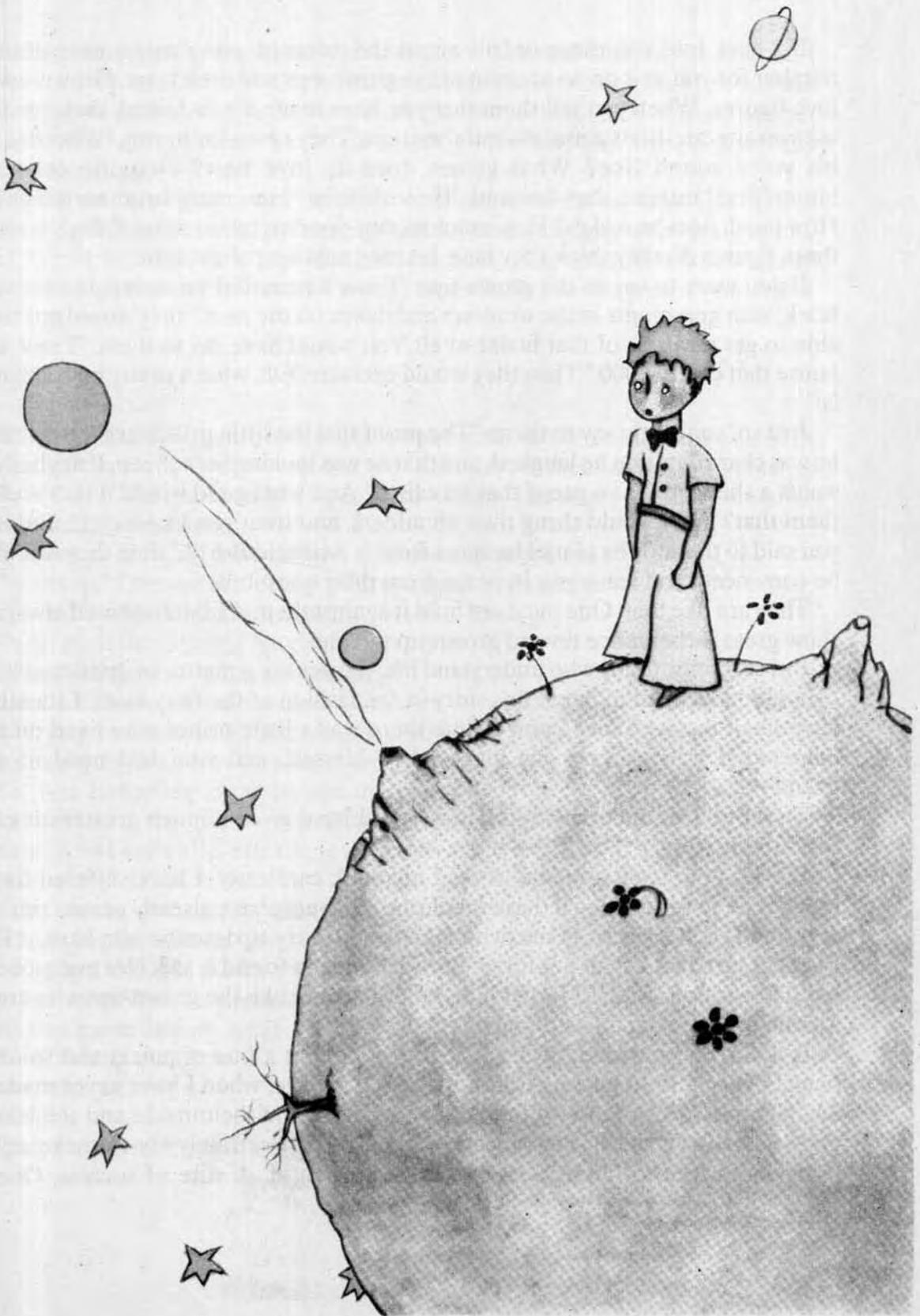
On making his discovery, the astronomer had presented it to the International Astronomical Congress, in a great demonstration.

But he was in Turkish costume, and so nobody would believe what he said.

Grown-ups are like that . . .

Fortunately, however, for the reputation of Asteroid B-612, a Turkish dictator made a law that his subjects, under pain of death, should change to European costume. So in 1920 the astronomer gave his demonstration all over again, dressed with impressive style and elegance. And this time everybody accepted his report.





If I have told you these details about the asteroid, and made a note of its number for you, it is on no account of the grown-ups and their ways. Grown-ups love figures. When you tell them that you have made a new friend, they never ask you any questions about essential matters. They never say to you, "What does his voice sound like? What games does he love best? Does he collect butterflies?" Instead, they demand: "How old is he? How many brothers has he? How much does he weigh? How much money does his father make?" Only from these figures do they think they have learned anything about him.

If you were to say to the grown-ups: "I saw a beautiful house made of rosy brick, with geraniums in the windows and doves on the roof," they would not be able to get any idea of that house at all. You would have say to them: "I saw a house that cost £ 4,000." Then they would exclaim: "Oh, what a pretty house that is!"

Just so, you might say to them: "The proof that the little prince existed is that he was charming, that he laughed, and that he was looking for a sheep. If anybody wants a sheep, that is a proof that he exists." And what good would it do to tell them that? They would shrug their shoulders, and treat you like a child. But if you said to them: "The planet he came from is Asteroid B-612," then they would be convinced, and leave you in peace from their questions.

They are like that. One must not hold it against them. Children should always show great forbearance toward grown-up people.

But certainly, for us who understand life, figures are a matter of indifference. I should have liked to begin this story in the fashion of the fairy-tales. I should have liked to say: "Once upon a time there was a little prince who lived on a planet that was scarcely any bigger than himself, and who had need of a friend . . ."

To those who understand life, that would have given a much greater air of truth to my story.

For I do not want any one to read my book carelessly. I have suffered too much grief in setting down these memories. Six years have already passed since my friend went away from me, with his sheep. If I try to describe him here, it is to make sure that I shall not forget him. To forget a friend is sad. Not every one has had a friend. And if I forget him, I may become like the grown-ups who are no longer interested in anything but figures . . .

It is for that purpose, again, that I have bought a box of paints and some pencils. It is hard to take up drawing again at my age, when I have never made any pictures except those of the boa constrictor from the outside and the boa constrictor from the inside, since I was six. I shall certainly try to make my portraits as true to life as possible. But I am not at all sure of success. One

drawing goes along all right, and another has no resemblance to its subject. I make some errors, too, in the little prince's height: in one place he is too tall and in another too short. And I feel some doubts about the colour of his costume. So I fumble along as best I can, now good, now bad, and I hope generally fair-to-middling.

In certain more important details I shall make mistakes, also. But that is something that will not be my fault. My friend never explained anything to me. He thought, perhaps, that I was like himself. But I, alas, do not know how to see sheep through the walls of boxes. Perhaps I am a little like the grown-ups. I have had to grow old.

.....

On the fifth day – again, as always, it was thanks to the sheep – the secret of the little prince's life was revealed to me. Abruptly, without anything to lead up to it, and as if the question had been born of long and silent meditation on his problem, he demanded:

"A sheep – if it eats little bushes, does it eat flowers, too?"

"A sheep," I answered, "eats anything it finds in its reach."

"Even flowers that have thorns?"

"Yes, even flowers that have thorns."

"Then the thorns – what use are they?"

I did not know. At that moment I was very busy trying to unscrew a bolt that had got stuck in my engine. I was very much worried, for it was becoming clear to me that the breakdown of my plane was extremely serious. And I had so little drinking water left that I had to fear the worst.

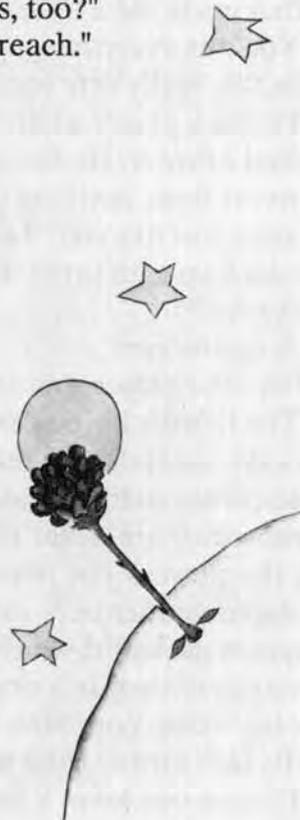
"The thorns – what use are they?"

The little prince never let go of a question, once he had asked it. As for me, I was upset over that bolt. And I answered with the first thing that came into my head:

"The thorns are of no use at all. Flowers have thorns just for spite!"

"Oh!"

There was a moment of complete silence.



Then the little prince flashed back at me, with a kind of resentfulness:

"I don't believe you! Flowers are weak creatures. They are naïve. They reassure themselves as best they can. They believe that their thorns are terrible weapons . . ."

I did not answer. At that instant I was saying to myself: "If this bolt still won't turn, I am going to knock it out with the hammer." Again the little prince disturbed my thoughts:

"And you actually believe that the flowers –"

"Oh, no!" I cried. "No, no, no! I don't believe anything. I answered you with the first thing that came into my head. Don't you see – I am very busy with matters of consequence!"

He stared at me, thunderstruck.

"Matters of consequence!"

He looked at me there, with my hammer in my hand, my fingers black with engine-grease, bending down over an object which seemed to him extremely ugly . . .

"You talk just like the grown-ups!"

That made me a little ashamed. But he went on, relentlessly:

"You mix everything up together . . . You confuse everything . . ."

He was really very angry. He tossed his golden curls in the breeze.

"I know a planet where there is a certain red-faced gentleman. He has never smelled a flower. He has never looked at a star. He has never loved any one. He has never done anything in his life but add up figures. And all day he says over and over, just like you: 'I am busy with matters of consequence!' And that makes him swell up with pride. But he is not a man – he is a mushroom!"

"A what?"

"A mushroom!"

The little prince was now white with rage.

"The flowers have been growing thorns for millions of years. For millions of years the sheep have been eating them just the same. And is it not a matter of consequence to try to understand why the flowers go to so much trouble to grow thorns which are never of any use to them? Is the warfare between the sheep and the flowers not important? Is this not of more consequence than a fat red-faced gentleman's sums? And if I know – I, myself – one flower which is unique in the world, which grows nowhere but on my planet, but which one little sheep can destroy in a single bite some morning, without even noticing what he is doing – Oh! You think that is not important!"

His face turned from white to red as he continued:

"If some one loves a flower, of which just one single blossom grows in all the

millions and millions of stars, it is enough to make him happy just to look at the stars. He can say to himself: 'Somewhere, my flower is there . . .' But if the sheep eats the flower, in one moment all his stars will be darkened . . . And you think that is not important!"

He could not say anything more. His words were choked by sobbing.

The night had fallen. I had let my tools drop from my hands. Of what moment now was my hammer, my bolt, or thirst, or death? On one star, one planet, my planet, the Earth, there was a little prince to be comforted. I took him in my arms, and rocked him. I said to him:

"The flower that you love is not in danger. I will draw you a muzzle for your sheep. I will draw you a railing to put around your flower. I will —"

I did not know what to say to him. I felt awkward and blundering. I did not know how I could reach him, where I could overtake him and go on hand in hand with him once more.

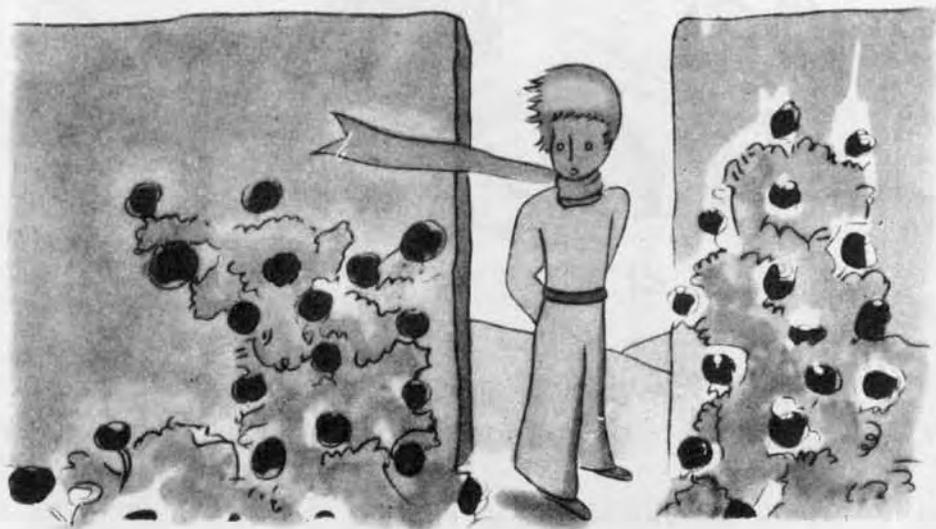
It is such a secret place, the land of tears.

.....

But it happened that after walking for a long time through sand, and rocks, and snow, the little prince at last came upon a road. And all roads lead to the abodes of men.

"Good morning," he said.

He was standing before a garden, all a-bloom with roses.



"Good morning," said the roses.

The little prince gazed at them. They all looked like his flower.

"Who are you?" he demanded, thunderstruck.

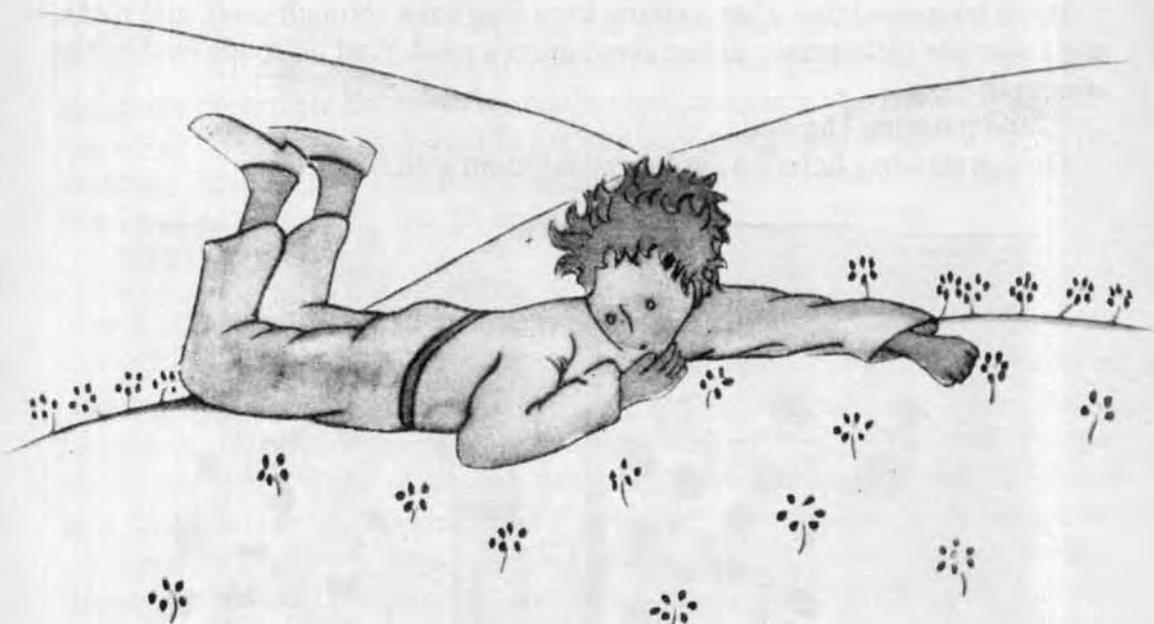
"We are roses," the roses said.

And he was overcome with sadness. His flower had told him that she was the only one of her kind in all the universe. And here were five thousand of them, all alike, in one single garden!

"She would be very much annoyed," he said to himself, "if she could see that . . . She would cough most dreadfully, and she would pretend that she was dying, to avoid being laughed at. And I should be obliged to pretend that I was nursing her back to life – for if I did not do that, to humble myself also, she would really allow herself to die . . ."

Then he went on with his reflections: "I thought that I was rich, with a flower that was unique in all the world; and all I had was a common rose. A common rose, and three volcanoes that come up to my knees – and one of them perhaps extinct forever . . . That doesn't make me a very great prince . . ."

And he lay down in the grass and cried.



.....

It was then that the fox appeared.

"Good morning," said the fox.

"Good morning," the little prince responded politely, although when he turned around he saw nothing.

"I am right here," the voice said, "under the apple tree."

"Who are you?" asked the little prince, and added, "You are very pretty to look at."

"I am a fox," the fox said.

"Come and play with me," proposed the little prince. "I am so unhappy."

"I cannot play with you," the fox said. "I am not tamed."

"Ah! Please excuse me," said the little prince.

But, after some thought, he added:

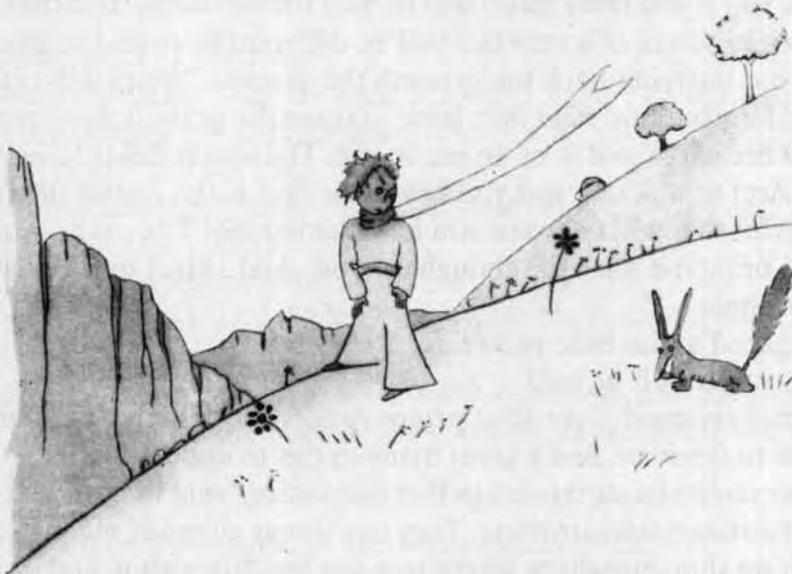
"What does that mean – 'tame'?"

"You do not live here," said the fox. "What is it that you are looking for?"

"I am looking for men," said the little prince. "What does that mean – 'tame'?"

"Men," said the fox. "They have guns, and they hunt. It is very disturbing. They also raise chickens. These are their only interests. Are you looking for chickens?"

"No," said the little prince. "I am looking for friends. What does that mean – 'tamed'?"



"It is an act too often neglected," said the fox. "It means to establish ties."

"To establish ties?"

"Just that," said the fox. "To me, you are still nothing more than a little boy who is just like a hundred thousand other little boys. And I have no need of you."

And you, on your part, have no need of me. To you, I am nothing more than a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But if you tame me, then we shall need each other. To me, you will be unique in all the world. To you, I shall be unique in all the world . . ."

"I am beginning to understand," said the little prince. "There is a flower . . . I think that she has tamed me . . ."

"It is possible," said the fox. "On the Earth one sees all sorts of things."

"Oh, but this is not on the Earth!" said the little prince.

The fox seemed perplexed, and very curious.

"On another planet?"

"Yes."

"Are there hunters on that planet?"

"No."

"Ah, that is interesting! Are there chickens?"

"No."

"Nothing is perfect," sighed the fox.

But he came back to his idea.

"My life is very monotonous," he said. "I hunt chickens; men hunt me. All the chickens are just alike, and all men are just alike. And, in consequence, I am a little bored. But if you tame me, it will be as if the sun came to shine on my life. I shall know the sound of a step that will be different from all the others. Other steps send me hurrying back underneath the ground. Yours will call me, like music, out of my burrow. And then look: you see the grain-fields down yonder? I do not eat bread. Wheat is of no use to me. The wheat fields have nothing to say to me. And that is sad. But you have hair that is the colour of gold. Think how wonderful that will be when you have tamed me! The grain, which is also golden, will bring me back the thought of you. And I shall love to listen to the wind in the wheat . . ."

The fox gazed at the little prince, for a long time.

"Please – tame me!" he said.

"I want to, very much," the little prince replied. "But I have not much time. I have friends to discover, and a great many things to understand."

"One only understands the things that one tames," said the fox. "Men have no more time to understand anything. They buy things all ready made at the shops. But there is no shop anywhere where one can buy friendship, and so men have no friends any more. If you want a friend, tame me . . ."

"What must I do, to tame you?" asked the little prince.

"You must be very patient," replied the fox. "First you will sit down at a little distance from me – like that – in the grass. I shall look at you out of the corner

of my eye, and you will say nothing. Words are the source of misunderstandings. But you will sit a little closer to me, every day . . ."

The next day the little prince came back.

"It would have been better to come back at the same hour," said the fox. "If, for example, you came at four o'clock in the afternoon, then at three o'clock I shall begin to be happy. I shall feel happier and happier as the hour advances. At four o'clock, I shall already be worrying and jumping about. I shall show you how happy I am! But if you come at just any time, I shall never know at what hour my heart is to be ready to greet you . . . One must observe the proper rites . . ."

"What is a rite?" asked the little prince.

"Those also are actions too often neglected," said the fox. "They are what make one day different from other days, one hour from other hours. There is a rite, for example, among my hunters. Every Thursday they dance with the village girls. So Thursday is a wonderful day for me! I can take a walk as far as the vineyards. But if the hunters danced at just any time, every day would be like every other day, and I should never have any vacation at all."

So the little prince tamed the fox. And when the hour of his departure drew near –

"Ah," said the fox, "I shall cry."

"It is your own fault," said the little prince. "I never wished you any sort of harm; but you wanted me to tame you . . ."

"Yes, that is so," said the fox.

"But now you are going to cry!" said the little prince.

"Yes, that is so," said the fox.

"Then it has done you no good at all!"

"It has done me good," said the fox, "because of the colour of the wheat fields." And then he added:

"Go and look again at the roses. You will understand now that yours is unique in all the world. Then come back to say goodbye to me, and I will make you a present of a secret."

The little prince went away, to look again at the roses.

"You are not at all like my rose," he said. "As yet you are nothing. No one has tamed you, and you have tamed no one. You are like my fox when I first knew him. He was only a fox like a hundred thousand other foxes. But I have made him my friend, and now he is unique in all the world."

And the roses were very much embarrassed.

"You are beautiful, but you are empty," he went on. "One could not die for you. To be sure, an ordinary passer-by would think that my rose looked just like you – the rose that belongs to me. But in herself alone she is more important than all the hundreds of you other roses: because it is she that I have watered; because it is she that I have put under the glass globe; because it is she that I have sheltered behind the screen; because it is for her that I have killed the caterpillars (except the two or three that we saved to become butterflies); because it is she that I have listened to, when she grumbled, or boasted, or even sometimes when she said nothing. Because she is *my* rose."

And he went back to meet the fox.

"Goodbye," he said.

"Goodbye," said the fox. "And now here is my secret, a very simple secret: It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye."

"What is essential is invisible to the eye," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

"It is the time you have wasted for your rose that makes your rose so important."

"It is the ~~time~~ I have wasted for my rose –" said the little prince, so that he would be sure to remember.

"Men have forgotten this truth," said the fox. "But you must not forget it. You become responsible, forever, for what you have tamed. You are responsible for your rose . . ."

"I am responsible for my rose," the little prince repeated, so that he would be sure to remember.

.....

It was now the eighth day since I had had my accident in the desert, and I had listened to the story of the merchant as I was drinking the last drop of my water supply.

"Ah," I said to the little prince, "these memories of yours are very charming; but I have not yet succeeded in repairing my plane; I have nothing more to drink; and I, too, should be very happy if I could walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water!"

"My friend the fox –" the little prince said to me.

"My dear little man, this is no longer a matter that has anything to do with the fox!"

"Why not?"

"Because I am about to die of thirst . . ."

He did not follow my reasoning, and he answered me:

"It is a good thing to have a friend, even if one is about to die. I, for instance, am very glad to have a fox as a friend . . ."

"He has no way of guessing the danger," I said to myself. "He has never been either hungry or thirsty. A little sunshine is all that he needs . . ."

But he looked at me steadily, and replied to my thought:

"I am thirsty, too. Let us look for a well . . ."

I made a gesture of weariness. It is absurd to look for a well, at random, in the immensity of the desert. But nevertheless we started walking.

When we had trudged along for several hours, in silence, the darkness fell, and the stars began to come out. Thirst had made me a little feverish, and I looked at them as if I were in a dream. The little prince's last words came reeling back into my memory:

"Then you are thirsty, too?" I demanded.

But he did not reply to my question. He merely said to me:

"Water may also be good for the heart . . ."

I did not understand this answer, but I said nothing. I knew very well that it was impossible to cross-examine him.

He was tired. He sat down. I sat down beside him. And, after a little silence, he spoke again:

"The stars are beautiful, because of a flower that cannot be seen."

I replied, "Yes, that is so." And, without saying anything more, I looked across the ridges of sand that were stretched out before us in the moonlight.

"The desert is beautiful," the little prince added.

And that was true. I have always loved the desert. One sits down on a desert sand dune, sees nothing, hears nothing. Yet through the silence something throbs, and gleams . . .

"What makes the desert beautiful," said the little prince, "is that somewhere it hides a well . . ."

I was astonished by a sudden understanding of that mysterious radiation of the sands. When I was a little boy I lived in an old house, and legend told us that a treasure was buried there. To be sure, no one had ever known how to find it; perhaps no one had ever even looked for it. But it cast an enchantment over that house. My home was hiding a secret in the depths of its heart . . .

"Yes," I said to the little prince. "The house, the stars, the desert – what gives them their beauty is something that is invisible!"

"I am glad," he said, "that you agree with my fox."

As the little prince dropped off to sleep, I took him in my arms and set out walking once more. I felt deeply moved, and stirred. It seemed to me that I was carrying a very fragile treasure. It seemed to me, even, that there was nothing more fragile on all the Earth. In the moonlight I looked at his pale forehead, his closed eyes, his locks of hair that trembled in the wind, and I said to myself: "What I see here is nothing but a shell. What is most important is invisible . . ."

As his lips opened slightly with the suspicion of a half-smile, I said to myself, again: "What moves me so deeply, about this little prince who is sleeping here, is his loyalty to a flower – the image of a rose that shines through his whole being like the flame of a lamp, even when he is asleep . . ." And I felt him to be more fragile still. I felt the need of protecting him, as if he himself were a flame that might be extinguished by a little puff of wind . . .

And, as I walked on so, I found the well, at daybreak.

.....

"Men," said the little prince, "set out on their way in express trains, but they do not know what they are looking for. Then they rush about, and get excited, and turn round and round . . ."

And he added:

"It is not worth the trouble . . ."

The well that we had come to was not like the wells of the Sahara. The wells of the Sahara are mere holes dug in the sand. This one was like a well in a village. But there was no village here, and I thought I must be dreaming . . .

"It is strange," I said to the little prince. "Everything is ready for use: the pulley, the bucket, the rope . . ."

He laughed, touched the rope, and set the pulley to working. And the pulley moaned, like an old weathervane which the wind has long since forgotten.

"Do you hear?" said the little prince. "We have wakened the well, and it is singing . . ."

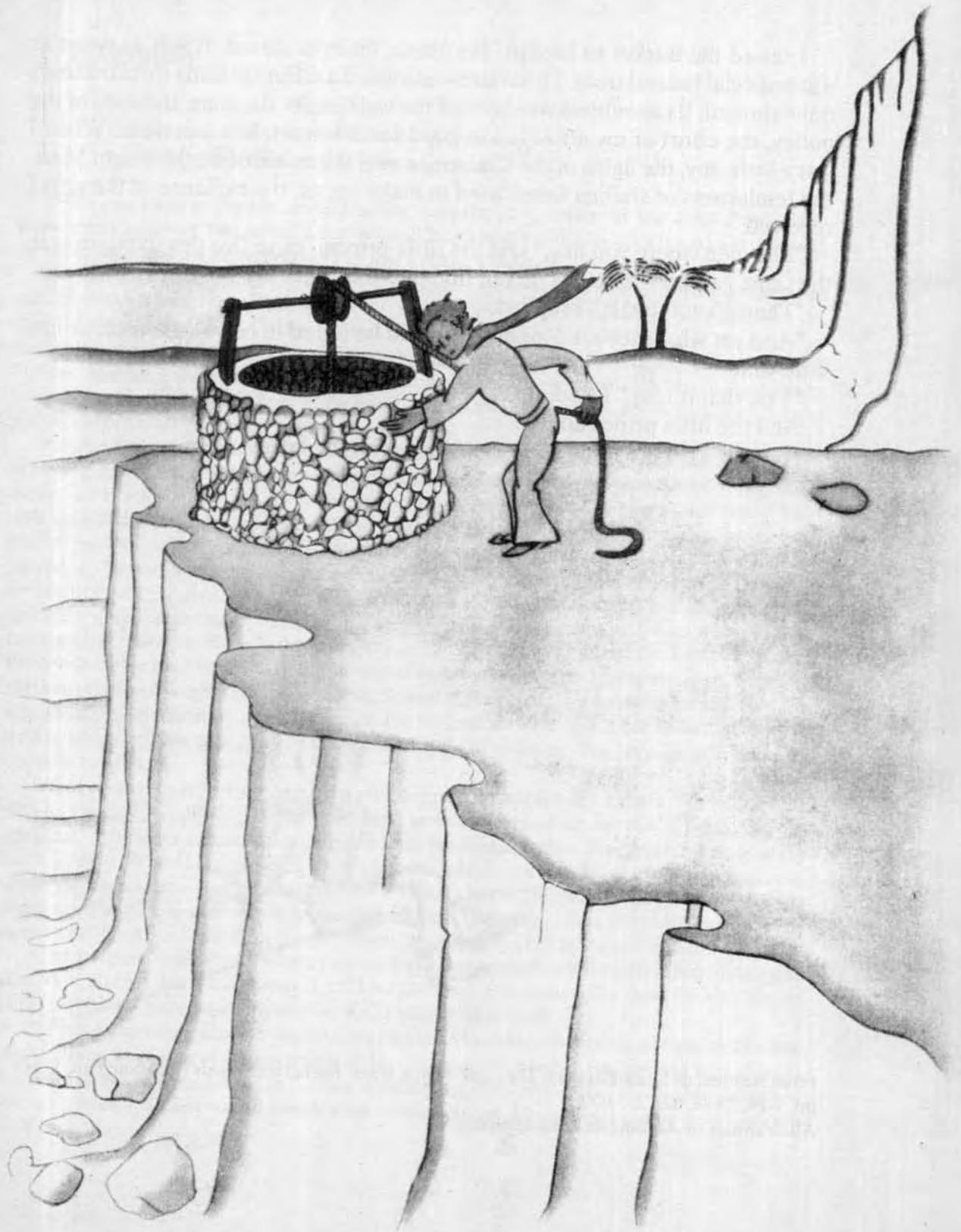
I did not want him to tire himself with the rope.

"Leave it to me," I said. "It is too heavy for you."

I hoisted the bucket slowly to the edge of the well and set it there – happy, tired as I was, over my achievement. The song of the pulley was still in my ears, and I could see the sunlight shimmer in the still trembling water.

"I am thirsty for this water," said the little prince. "Give me some of it to drink . . ."

And I understood what he had been looking for.



I raised the bucket to his lips. He drank, his eyes closed. It was as sweet as some special festival treat. This water was indeed a different thing from ordinary nourishment. Its sweetness was born of the walk under the stars, the song of the pulley, the effort of my arms. It was good for the heart, like a present. When I was a little boy, the lights of the Christmas tree, the music of the Midnight Mass, the tenderness of smiling faces, used to make up, so, the radiance of the gifts I received.

"The men where you live," said the little prince, "raise five thousand roses in the same garden – and they do not find in it what they are looking for."

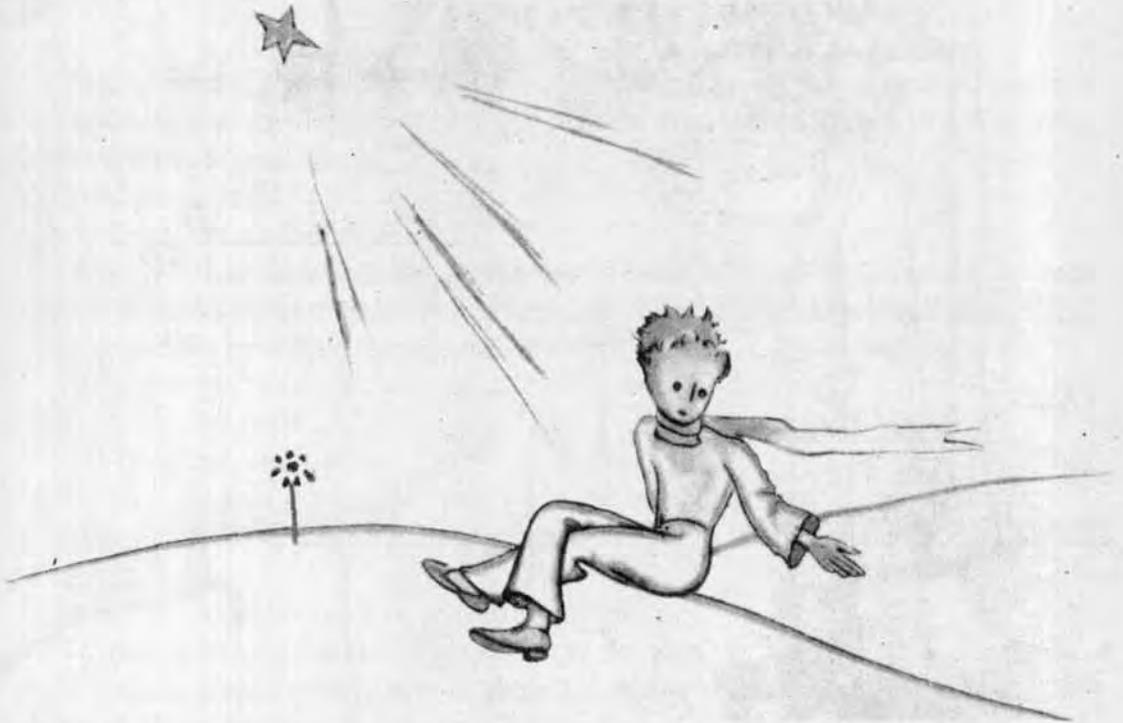
"They do not find it," I replied.

"And yet what they are looking for could be found in one single rose, or in a little water."

"Yes, that is true," I said.

And the little prince added:

"But the eyes are blind. One must look with the heart . . ."



From Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (London: Pan, 1974), pp. 7-19, 25-28, 62-72, 74-79.

All drawings by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry.

Biography

Whence come I? I come from my childhood.
I come from childhood as from a homeland.

When one turns to the life of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *The Little Prince*, it is immediately apparent that he led a very intense life during his childhood. He had a great taste for the strange and the marvellous and he had a fertile imagination.

His summer holidays were particularly memorable, spent with his brother and three sisters in one of those numerous nondescript but homey castles of France, the old château of Saint-Maurice-de-Rémens. The brothers and sisters were all bright and lively, but Antoine was the wildest of all and often autocratic in organizing their games. Saint-Exupéry later remarked that his childhood memories are bathed in summer light. "For a home such as this laid down layers of sweetness, forming, deep in the heart, that obscure range from which, as waters from a spring, are born our dreams."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry was born with the century, in 1900. At school, first a Jesuit institution in France, then another religious school in Switzerland, he did not prove particularly successful except in French composition. He was subject to some mockery due to his peculiar round face with upturned nose and a comical skyward gaze which earned him the nickname *pique-la-lune* (moon pecker), which he detested. He gave the overall impression of being an eccentric character – demanding, immoderate and unsatisfied. The College of Saint-Jean at Fribourg, Switzerland, was a pleasant place, with progressive views on education. But tragedy struck suddenly when Saint-Exupéry's brother François, who was studying with him there, fell ill, returned to France and died. In the same year, 1917, Saint-Exupéry joined the Ecole Bossuet in Paris to study for the French Navy entrance examination. Contrary to his expectations, he failed. He then registered without enthusiasm at the School of Fine Arts for a course in architecture. He was unhappy and uncertain about his future. His aspirations were vague, but he felt the need to do something, to have a profession which was out of the ordinary. The urge for adventure lay dormant within him.

When he was about twenty, Saint-Exupéry did military service but did not like military life with its emphasis on physical exercise. It seems he felt no immediate interest in flying, but was attracted by the sheer adventurousness of the first commercial flights. Shortly after the end of the First World War the first commercial lines had been established: Paris-London, Toulouse-Casablanca, Paris-Bucharest. The travellers had to be stoical, for there were many accidents. The planes were very light and their engines uncertain. Pilots and machines operated as one unit. It was, as Saint-Exupéry put it later, "the mystery of metal turned into living flesh."

Saint-Exupéry studied both military and civil aviation, and while still an army man obtained a civil pilot's license. He left the army in 1923. At that time, flying was still a sport for him, not yet the great obsession for which everything would later be sacrificed.

For three years thereafter he tried various jobs but was neither happy nor successful. His lack of resources was somewhat compensated by the many invitations for lunches and dinners extended to him as Count Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, by Parisian society. Yet this life depressed him and his only remedy was to snatch a few hours of flying. Flying now became a real passion for him.

In October 1926 he joined the Latécoère Airlines Company with headquarters in Toulouse. The planes had no radios and were not built for the kind of storms they had to face above the mountains. He was put through a gruelling training. For the first time, Saint-Exupéry was out of his aristocratic milieu, leading a common life with the other pilots, most of whom stayed at the same small hotel. In this new life, he satisfied his need to associate with men he considered superior, men removed from the shabby futilities of ordinary life. "The aeroplane is a means of getting away from towns and their book-keeping and coming to grips with reality . . . It is the men and not flying that concerns me most."

In October 1927, one year after joining Latécoère Airlines he was posted to Cape Juby in North Africa and put in charge of the refuelling station. There he led a life of austerity, which suited him. He wrote happy letters to his mother, telling her, "I don't need anything" – an uncharacteristic statement from one who had been seeking financial assistance from his mother for years. What moulded Saint-Exupéry were his aircraft, the desert (which he loved at first sight), his comrades and, in particular, the comradeship. "Happiness ! It is useless to seek it elsewhere than in this warmth of human relations. Our sordid interests imprison us within their walls. Only a comrade can grasp us by the hand and haul us free."

One year later he was back in France where he prepared himself to become Managing Director of Aeroposta Argentina, a job he took up in October, 1929. Meanwhile, his first book, *Southern Mail* had been published and was a success.

When Saint-Exupéry reached Buenos Aires he was already a celebrity, both as a pilot and as a writer. For the first time he was well off, thanks to a large salary which he spent recklessly. The austerity of Juby was forgotten but the two years in Buenos Aires enlarged his experience of life. Besides the social aspect, what he enjoyed most about his job were the many opportunities it offered to fly and travel. Flying above the Andes, the high mountains of South America, made a lasting impression on him.

In the spring of 1931 he returned to France with Consuelo Carrillo from San Salvador, a petite, exuberant woman, full of wit and intelligence. Their marriage marked the beginning of a rather extravagant and bohemian life; the couple went through many ups and downs, particularly in their relationship. They had constant financial problems, since both tended to spend recklessly. Along with Consuelo, Saint-Exupéry brought the manuscript of *Night Flight*. After three months in France, instead of returning to South America, he went to Casablanca to fly the Casablanca-Dakar line as an ordinary pilot. The reasons for this change are not known.

In December 1931, Saint-Exupéry received the coveted prize Femina for *Night Flight*. The following years were difficult for him. Apparently hesitating between the careers of pilot and writer, he took long leaves of absence and in 1933 he lost his job in Casablanca. He applied for a job with Air France, which eventually hired him not as a pilot, but in the publicity department.

The next five years continued to be difficult. He tried several times to establish long-distance flight records. One such attempt was to fly from Paris to Saigon in less than eighty-seven hours. He failed, and this put him in further financial troubles. Another attempt between New York and Tierra del Fuego ended in an accident. Meanwhile he wrote a few newspaper articles which again showed his qualities as a writer.

During these years, he was based in Paris, and frequented the Left Bank cafés. "Customers who saw that tall, husky fellow, carelessly dressed, puffy-faced, half-bald, were surprised to learn that he was no other than the famous airman and writer, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, author of *Southern Mail* and *Night Flight*."

One of his friends describes him during that time: "Saint-Exupéry had a horror of mediocrity."

He liked to enter into long discussions on a variety of subjects. There was practically no subject on which he was not sufficiently informed to discuss it even with a specialist. His universality of interests and knowledge smacked of genius. He was a writer, poet, philosopher and aviator, but he could talk interestingly on biology, genetics, physics even when the QUANTUM THEORY or the THEORY OF RELATIVITY were concerned, astronomy, sociology, painting, music."

But Saint-Exupéry still felt unhappy. He missed the comradeship of the early years, the hard but beautiful life. "Tell me what I am seeking and why, leaning against my window, leaning against the city which holds my friends, my desires, my memories, for I am full of despair."

He thought himself born to do great things but was now losing faith in himself. On top of that, he had financial worries. Saint-Exupéry was not attached to money, but he liked to spend it. He and his wife moved from apartment to apartment, living an expensive bohemian life which he could ill afford.

In 1939 the French Academy awarded him the first prize for his novel *Wind, Sand and Stars*. Saint-Exupéry went to the USA, where his book met with great success. The Second World War had started, and upon his return to France he was conscripted into the Air Force and assigned a job as flying instructor, a big disappointment to him since he wanted to join a fighting squadron. After much effort he finally was assigned to an air reconnaissance group. He was happy to find some comradeship again, yet felt the absence of men of his own calibre. He was also growing bitter about the mediocrity of the French leadership, both civil and military.

Saint-Exupéry executed dangerous missions over Germany. In August 1940, he was demobilized and returned to the south of France where he worked on *The Wisdom of the Sands*. "I am working on my posthumous book," he remarked to his sister.

Towards the end of 1940, he went again to the United States. He was quite disheartened by the German victory and the French defeat, but America's entry into the war in 1941 gave him hope. *Flight to Arras* was published in 1942, and was received positively in the USA and enthusiastically in France. After the American landing in North Africa, he wanted to join the fighting again and was accepted, despite his age (forty-three) and some health problems. He left the United States in April 1943 with an American military convoy. The news of the arrival of Saint-Exupéry, the famous airman and writer, had a tonic effect on the French pilots in North Africa. "From that moment, I began to hope," said Jules Roy, a French writer.

Saint-Exupéry had to struggle to be accepted as a war pilot. For one year he made dangerous reconnaissance missions, mostly over France. Before leaving America he had remarked, "I won't be back." He seemed almost indifferent to the idea of death. On 31 July 1944, at the end of what might have been his last dangerous mission, his plane was attacked and plunged into the sea.

Saint-Exupéry always spoke of death with great serenity, and sought to understand its significance. He said, "There are no more things-in-themselves, but only aspects of that divine hand which binds things together."

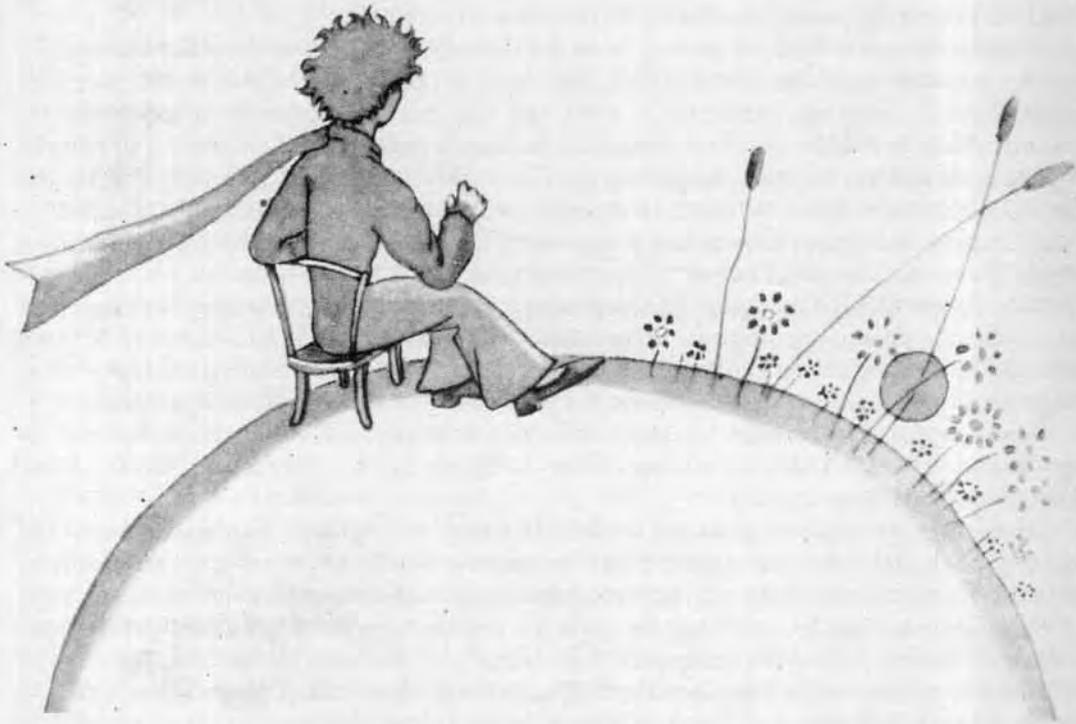
Saint-Exupéry was not religious but believed in a kind of "religion of man" and in evolution. About a young girl he chanced to see at Punta Arenas he wrote, "Born yesterday of the volcanoes, of green-swards, of brine of the sea, she walks here already half-divine." And in the last sentence of *Wind, Sand and Stars* he says, "Only the spirit, if it breathe upon the clay, can create the Man."

Saint-Exupéry's personality was in many ways remarkable. He was a mathematical genius and with more application might have been a successful inventor. He possessed unusual psychological insight, was hypersensitive, intuitive and felt a thirst to investigate every domain of knowledge. He could be extremely charming, yet if he felt indifference towards a person could grow unpleasant. He had no time to waste on anyone he deemed incapable of noble feelings.

The Little Prince was written in 1941-42 at the same time as *Flight to Arras*, *Letter to a Hostage* and part of *The Wisdom of the Sands*. "This little book had a curious genesis," writes Saint-Exupéry's biographer Marcel Migeo. "When Bernard Lamotte began to illustrate *Flight to Arras*, Ms. Reynal asked if she might keep the first drawing. Saint-Exupéry wrote a droll inscription across it: 'For Elisabeth. Anyone else who has this in his possession is a thief,' and in one corner he drew a small winged figure. He kept on 'doodling' with the little flying creatures; and his friends commented that they were so good, why not put them into a book. Eugène Reynal suggested that he try colouring them – and so the pictures and the story of *The Little Prince* were evolved simultaneously. . . . Certainly he must have enjoyed writing this little book. Escaping the dissensions of his fellow men, he entered the pure realm of childhood. It also offered him a new method for expressing his general philosophy."

Above all, Saint-Exupéry had a great sense of the need for personal transformation. For him this was the true aim of human life.

Based on Marcel Migeo, *Saint-Exupéry: A Biography* (London: MacDonald, 1961).





- Saint-Exupéry -



Hermann Hesse

Magister Ludi

Introduction

In Hermann Hesse's novel Magister Ludi, set in Europe in an unspecified future, we encounter an imaginary elite educational institution called Castalia, a community devoted to the mind, whose carefully selected members are given a unique opportunity to develop their diverse creative and intellectual capacities. Every facility imaginable is placed at the disposal of the budding Castalians, who are protected from all worldly pressures and assured a basic allotment of food, clothing, and shelter. In return for this they sacrifice all desire for material rewards and fame. In Castalia there are no titles or honours, nor is there any possibility for marriage, family life, or proprietary possession. Every Castalian is expected to find his true place within the hierarchy, a harmony in which each plays his true role. For the true Castalian, each step in the hierarchy is perceived as a deeper opportunity for selfless service to the community.

Meditation plays a key role in the life of Castalia. Elite pupils are individually initiated and guided throughout their lives by meditation instructors. Though the specific technique is not clearly defined, it is presented as a process by which the meditator comes to perceive within himself the oneness of all. This process is accompanied by an intense feeling of bliss and joy. For Castalians, meditation is seen as a necessary balance to a vigorous intellectual life. Only a few seem to realize its spiritual value. Most Castalians graduate and work as teachers or instructors both within Castalia and outside. The most highly gifted individuals, however, either continue their studies in a remarkable atmosphere of disciplined freedom or become part of Castalia's elite: the Glass Bead Game players.

Hesse's protagonist, Joseph Knecht,¹ studies and develops under Castalia's guidance, and eventually takes his place in the hierarchy. Throughout his life,

1. The word "Knecht" in German means "servant".

Joseph is conscious of an inner sensation which he describes as "awakening". It is his personal way of describing his own growth of consciousness. Probably it is Joseph's awareness of this inner dimension which makes him such a remarkable student. He allows it to influence his life and studies. At particularly significant stages of his life, the feeling of awakening intensifies. Joseph treasures his inner life and follows its indications at every stage, even when it finally calls him to transcend Castalia and its ideals.

Throughout this life-long process of awakening, Joseph comes into contact with many teachers. None influences him so profoundly as his beloved Music Master. The bond between them is formed at their first meeting when the Music Master initiates him into the world of music and shows him the "joy-giving harmony of law and freedom, of service and rule" that lies behind the veil of outer sounds. Joseph happily and reverently surrenders himself to the vision of truth which he feels Castalia represents and to the teacher who so splendidly embodies that ideal.

Closer examination of the Music Master as a teacher reveals some of the qualities that make him such an embodiment of excellence. He never forces his own knowledge or understanding on his students, but tenderly leads them to discover those possibilities within themselves. Once he explains to Joseph: "To be candid, I myself, for example, have never in my life said a word to my pupils about the 'meaning' of music; if there is one, it does not need my explanations. On the other hand, I have always made a great point of having my pupils count their eighths and sixteenths nicely. Whatever you become, teacher, scholar, or musician, have respect for the 'meaning', but do not imagine that it can be taught."¹

Through his contact with the Music Master, Joseph experiences his first awakening and its transforming power in his life. Chosen to be a pupil at Castalia, he joyfully enters the community, eager to serve its ideals. At almost every important stage of his evolution, he again comes into contact with the Music Master who guides and encourages him. As he develops, Joseph finds himself drawn more and more to the Glass Bead Game.

This game lies at the heart of Castalian society. Although never clearly described, the reader comes to understand it as a kind of imaginative intellectual play in which contraries are first explored as contraries, then recognized as integral elements of a greater unity. On a deeper level, the Music Master explains, the game is really a vehicle whereby the individual may

1. Hermann Hesse, *Magister Ludi*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Bantam, 1972), p. 107.

discover perfection in himself and out of that discovery lead a more perfect outer life. He says:

Each of us is merely one human being, merely an experiment, a way station. But each of us should be on the way toward perfection, should be striving to reach the center, not the periphery. . . . The kind of person we want to develop, the kind of person we aim to become, would at any time be able to exchange his discipline or art for any other. He would infuse the Glass Bead Game with crystalline logic, and grammar with creative imagination.¹

The Glass Bead Game is essentially a kind of mental synthesis of the spiritual values of all ages and cultures. These are experienced as being vividly alive and the players appreciate the mysterious and sacred nature of the world of appearances and take joy in its play of elements.

At a certain point Joseph begins to have doubts about the Glass Bead Game. These he confesses to his teacher who cautions him about the limits of the human consciousness:

There is truth, my boy. But the doctrine you desire, absolute, perfect dogma that alone provides wisdom, does not exist. Nor should you long for a perfect doctrine, my friend. Rather, you should long for the perfection of yourself. The deity is within you, not in ideas and books. Truth is lived, not taught.²

It is this central educational principle which the Music Master sincerely embodies.

As his life unfolds, Joseph is revealed as a rare combination of intellectual adeptness and secure inner balance and modesty. Growing steadily within him has been a capacity for lucid inner discernment. The Castalian hierarchy recognizes his capacities and he is selected as Magister Ludi, Master of the Glass Bead Game. Now Joseph becomes the perfect instrument, the humble servant of the organization, the jewel in Castalia's crown.

For a while the challenges of his new office are sufficient to absorb all his energy. Gradually, however, the feeling of awakening quickens in him again. Some of his experiences have led him to question the relationship between Castalia and the world. He appreciates the dangers of an excessive aestheticism which severs itself from life. Aware of the potential catastrophe inherent in the situation, he seeks to warn his colleagues of the jeopardy to Castalia which he intuitively feels. He petitions the Castalian hierarchy to be

1. Ibid., p. 68.

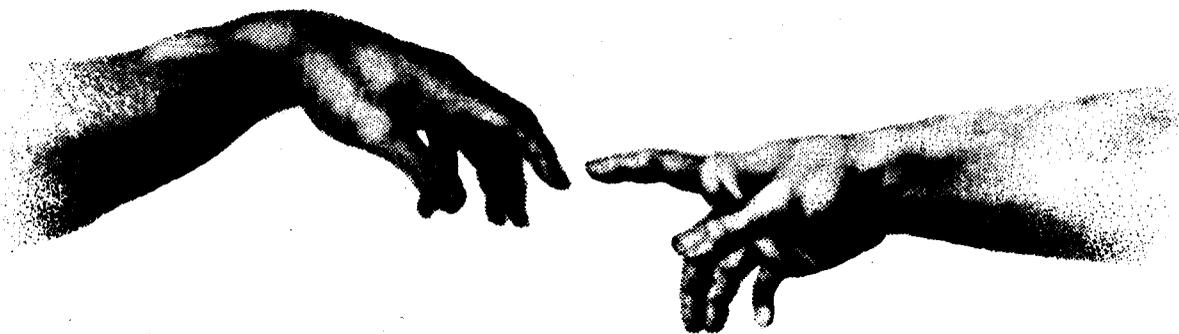
2. Ibid., p. 69.

relieved of his responsibilities. Their denial of his petition triggers off another critical inner awakening:

... he felt a faint shiver, a matutinal coolness and sobriety which told him that the hour had come, that from now on there could be no more hesitating or lingering. This peculiar feeling, which he was wont to call "awakening", was familiar to him from other decisive moments of his life. It was both vitalizing and painful, mingling a sense of farewell and of setting out on new adventures, shaking him deep down in his unconscious mind like a spring storm.¹

He gathers his courage, quietly leaves Castalia and takes up a position as tutor to Tito, the unruly yet talented son of an old friend. A true servant of truth, Joseph has the necessary sincerity to follow its guidance even when it calls him to transcend the world he knows and loves.

*Hesse's work stands as a luminous testimony to the essence of the true educational process as it is experienced by both teacher and pupil. As a novelist Hesse often postulated the possibility of a spiritual kingdom towards which his heroes strive. In several essays he sought a new morality that would transcend the traditional dichotomy between good and evil and embrace all extremes of life in one unified vision. In *Magister Ludi*, the hero struggles to be true to his inner guide and is assisted by a teacher who is centred in his inner self. Both teacher and pupil (who later becomes a teacher) aspire to live and express their joyful experience of inner perfection. The example they set before us is an inspiration that will hearten us all on our own educational journeys.*



¹ Ibid., pp. 342-43.



Hermann Hesse



Joseph's first meeting with the Music Master.

Knecht turned pale with fright. He stumbled from the classroom, ran to the dormitory, put down his books, washed and combed his hair. Trembling, he took his violin case and his book of exercises. With a lump in his throat, he made his way to the music rooms in the annex. An excited schoolmate met him on the stairs, pointed to a practice room, and told him: "You're supposed to wait here till they call you."

The wait was short, but seemed to him an eternity. No one called him, but a man entered the room. A very old man, it seemed to him at first, not very tall, white-haired, with a fine, clear face and penetrating, light-blue eyes. The gaze of those eyes might have been frightening, but they were serenely cheerful as well as penetrating, neither laughing nor smiling, but filled with a calm, quietly radiant cheerfulness. He shook hands with the boy, nodded, and sat down with deliberation on the stool in front of the old practice piano. "You are Joseph Knecht?" he said. "Your teacher seems content with you. I think he is fond of you. Come, let's make a little music together."

Knecht had already taken out his violin. The old man struck the A, and the boy tuned. Then he looked inquiringly, anxiously, at the Music Master.

"What would you like to play?" the Master asked.

The boy could not say a word. He was filled to the brim with awe of the old man. Never had he seen a person like this. Hesitantly, he picked up his exercise book and held it out to the Master.

"No," the Master said. "I want you to play from memory, and not an exercise but something easy that you know by heart. Perhaps a song you like."

Knecht was confused, and so enchanted by this face and those eyes that he could not answer. He was deeply ashamed of his confusion, but unable to speak. The Master did not insist. With one finger, he struck the first notes of a melody, and looked questioningly at the boy. Joseph nodded and at once played the melody with pleasure. It was one of the old songs which were often sung in school.

"Once more," the Master said.

Knecht repeated the melody, and the old man now played a second voice to go with it. Now the old song rang through the small practice room in two parts.

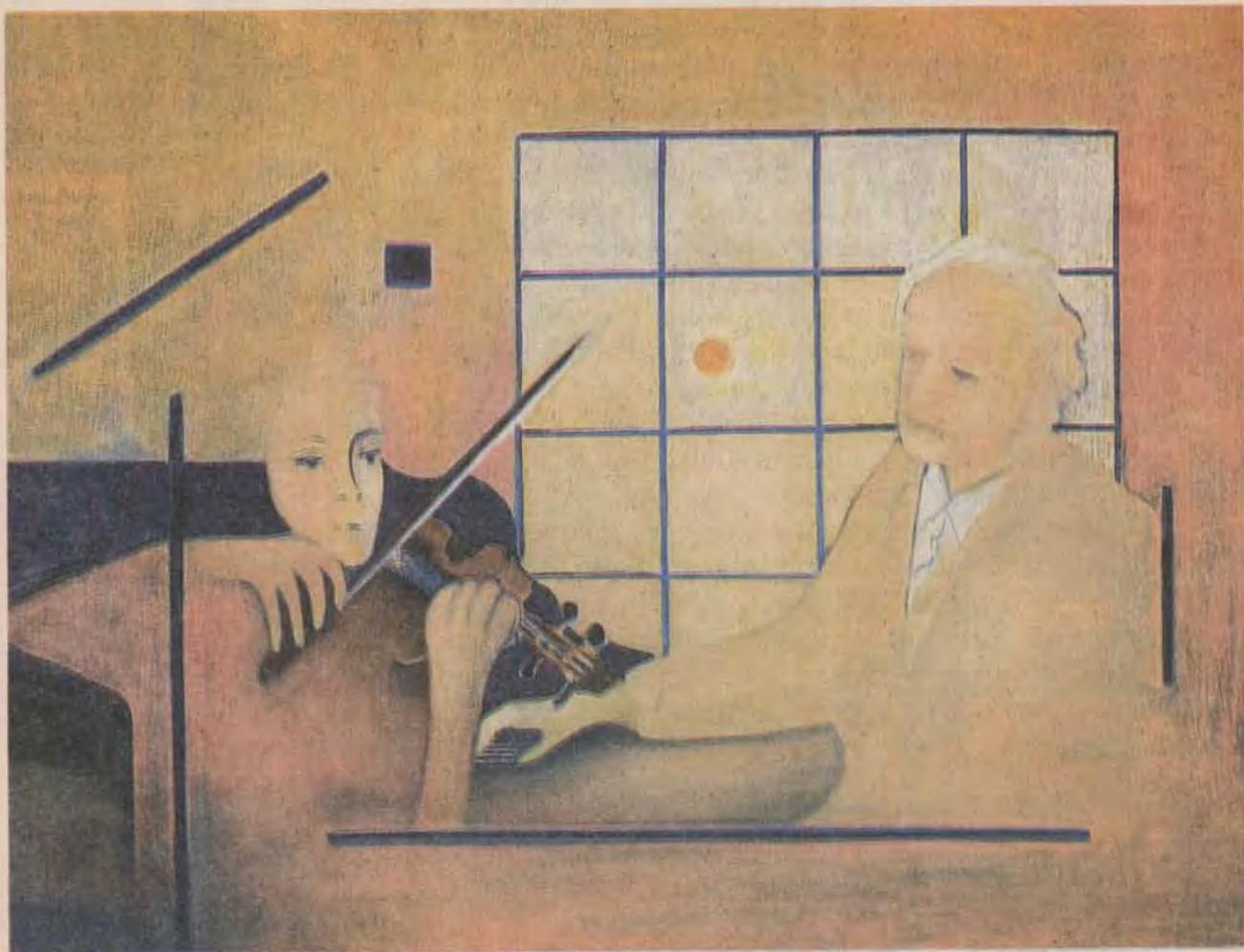
"Once more."

Knecht played, and the Master played the second part, and a third part also. Now the beautiful old song rang through the room in three parts.

"Once more." And the Master played three voices along with the melody.

"A lovely song," the Master said softly. "Play it again, in the alto this time."

The Master gave him the first note, and Knecht played, the Master accompanying with the other three voices. Again and again the Master said, "Once more," and each time he sounded merrier. Knecht played the melody in the tenor, each time accompanied by two or three parts. They played the song many times, and with every repetition the song was involuntarily enriched with embellishments and variations. The bare little room resounded festively in the cheerful light of the forenoon.



PASCAL, Auroville 1988

After a while the old man stopped. "Is that enough?" he asked. Knecht shook his head and began again. The Master chimed in gaily with his three voices, and the four parts drew their thin, lucid lines, spoke to one another, mutually supported, crossed, and wove around one another in delightful windings and figurations. The boy and the old man ceased to think of anything else; they surrendered themselves to the lovely, congenial lines and figurations they formed as their parts crisscrossed. Caught in the network their music was creating, they swayed gently along with it, obeying an unseen conductor. Finally, when the melody had come to an end once more, the Master turned his head and asked: "Did you like that, Joseph?"

Gratefully, his face glowing, Knecht looked at him. He was radiant, but still speechless.

"Do you happen to know what a fugue¹ is?" the Master now asked.

Knecht looked dubious. He had already heard fugues, but had not yet studied them in class.

"Very well," the Master said, "then I'll show you. You'll grasp it quicker if we make a fugue ourselves. Now then, the first thing we need for a fugue is a theme, and we don't have to look far for the theme. We'll take it from our song."

He played a brief phrase, a fragment of the song's melody. It sounded strange, cut out in that way, without head or tail. He played the theme once more . . .

The boy looked at the player's clever white fingers, saw the course of the development faintly mirrored in his concentrated expression, while his eyes remained quiet under half-closed lids. Joseph's heart swelled with veneration, with love for the Master. His ear drank in the fugue; it seemed to him that he was hearing music for the first time in his life. Behind the music being created in his presence he sensed the world of Mind, the joy-giving harmony of law and freedom, of service and rule. He surrendered himself, and vowed to serve that world and this Master. In those few minutes he saw himself and his life, saw the whole cosmos guided, ordered, and interpreted by the spirit of music. And when the playing had come to an end, he saw this magician and king for whom he felt so intense a reverence pause for a little while longer, slightly bowed over the keys, with half-closed eyes, his face softly glowing from within. Joseph did not know whether he ought to rejoice at the bliss of this moment, or weep because it was over.

The old man slowly raised himself from the piano stool, fixed those cheerful blue eyes piercingly and at the same time with unimaginable friendliness upon him, and said: "Making music together is the best way for two people to become friends. There is none easier. That is a fine thing. I hope you and I shall remain friends. Perhaps you too will learn how to make fugues, Joseph."

He shook hands with Joseph and took his leave. But in the doorway he turned once more and gave Joseph a parting greeting, with a look and a ceremonious little inclination of his head.

Many years later Knecht told his pupil that when he stepped out of the building, he found the town and the world far more transformed and enchanted than if there had been flags, garlands, and streamers, or displays of fireworks. He had experienced his vocation, which may surely be spoken of as a sacrament. The ideal world, which hitherto his young soul had known only by hearsay and in wild dreams, had suddenly taken on visible lineaments for him. Its gates had opened invitingly. This world, he now saw, did not exist only in some vague, remote past or future; it was here and was active; it glowed, sent messengers, apostles, ambassadors, men like this old Magister (who by the way was not nearly so old as he then seemed to Joseph). And through this venerable messenger an admonition and a call had come from that world even to him, the insignificant Latin school pupil.

Some words of the Music Master to Joseph –

". . . Each of us is merely one human being, merely an experiment, a way station. But each of us should be on the way toward perfection, should be striving to reach the center, not the periphery. Remember this: one can be a strict logician or grammarian, and at the same time full of imagination and music. One can be a musician or Glass Bead Game player and at the same time wholly devoted to rule and order. The kind of person we want to develop, the kind of person we aim to become, would at any time be able to exchange his discipline or art for any other. He would infuse the Glass Bead Game with crystalline logic, and grammar with creative imagination. That is how we ought to be. We should be so constituted that we can at any time be placed in a different position without offering resistance or losing our heads."

"I think I understand," Joseph said. "But are not those who have such strong preferences and aversions simply more passionate natures, others just more sober and temperate?"

"That seems to be true and yet it is not," the Master replied, laughing. "To be capable of everything and do justice to everything, one certainly does not need less spiritual force and élan and warmth, but more. What you call passion is not spiritual force, but friction between the soul and the outside world. Where passion dominates, that does not signify the presence of greater desire and

ambition, but rather the misdirection of these qualities toward an isolated and false goal, with a consequent tension and sultriness in the atmosphere. Those who direct the maximum force of their desires toward the center, toward true being, toward perfection, seem quieter than the passionate souls because the flame of their fervor cannot always be seen. In argument, for example, they will not shout and wave their arms. But I assure you, they are nevertheless burning with subdued fires."

"Oh, if only it were possible to find understanding," Joseph exclaimed. "If only there were a dogma to believe in. Everything is contradictory, everything tangential; there are no certainties anywhere. Everything can be interpreted one way and then again interpreted in the opposite sense. The whole of world history can be explained as development and progress and can also be seen as nothing but decadence and meaninglessness. Isn't there any truth? Is there no real and valid doctrine?"

The Master had never heard him speak so fervently. He walked on in silence for a little, then said: "There is truth, my boy. But the doctrine you desire, absolute, perfect dogma that alone provides wisdom, does not exist. Nor should you long for a perfect doctrine, my friend. Rather, you should long for the perfection of yourself. The deity is within *you*, not in ideas and books. Truth is lived, not taught. Be prepared for conflicts, Joseph Knecht – I can see they have already begun."

". . . To be candid, I myself, for example, have never in my life said a word to my pupils about the 'meaning' of music; if there is one, it does not need my explanations. On the other hand, I have always made a great point of having my pupils count their eighths and sixteenths nicely. Whatever you become, teacher, scholar, or musician, have respect for the 'meaning', but do not imagine that it can be taught. Once upon a time the philosophers of history ruined half of world history with their efforts to teach such 'meaning'; they inaugurated the Age of the Feuilleton and are partly to blame for quantities of spilled blood. If I were introducing pupils to Homer or Greek tragedy, say, I would also not try to tell them that the poetry is one of the manifestations of the divine, but would endeavor to make the poetry accessible to them by imparting a precise knowledge of its linguistic and metrical strategies. The task of the teacher and scholar is to study means, cultivate tradition, and preserve the purity of methods, not to deal in incommunicable experiences which are reserved to the elect – who often enough pay a high price for this privilege."

Joseph the pupil becomes Joseph the teacher.

At the time, his greatest ambition had been to be a good pupil, to learn, receive, form himself. Now the pupil had become a teacher, and as such he had mastered the major task of his first period in office: the struggle to win authority and forge an identity of person and office. In the course of this he made two discoveries. The first was the pleasure it gives to transplant the achievements of the mind into other minds and see them being transformed into entirely new shapes and emanations – in other words, the joy of teaching. The second was grappling with the personalities of the students, the attainment and practice of authority and leadership – in other words, the joy of educating. He never separated the two, and during his magistracy he not only trained a large number of good and some superb Glass Bead Game players, but also by example, by admonition, by his austere sort of patience, and by the force of his personality and character, elicited from a great many of his students the very best they were capable of.

In the course of this work he had made a characteristic discovery – if we may be permitted to anticipate our story. At the beginning of his magistracy he dealt exclusively with the elite, with the most advanced students and the tutors. Many of the latter were his own age, and every one was already a thoroughly trained player. But gradually, once he was sure of the elite, he slowly and cautiously, from year to year, began withdrawing from it an ever-larger portion of his time and energy, until at the end he sometimes could leave it almost entirely to his close associates and assistants. This process took years, and each succeeding year Knecht, in the lectures, courses, and exercises he conducted, reached further and further back to ever-younger students. In the end he went so far that he several times personally conducted beginners' courses for youngsters – something rarely done by a Magister Ludi. He found, moreover, that the younger and more ignorant his pupils were, the more pleasure he took in teaching. Sometimes in the course of these years it actually made him uneasy, and cost him tangible effort, to return from these groups of boys to the advanced students, let alone to the elite. Occasionally, in fact, he felt the desire to reach even further back and to attempt to deal with even younger pupils, those who had never yet had courses of any kind and knew nothing of the Glass Bead Game. He found himself sometimes wishing to spend a while in Eschholz or one of the other preparatory schools instructing small boys in Latin, singing, or algebra, where the atmosphere was far less intellectual than it was even in the most elementary

course in the Glass Bead Game, but where he would be dealing with still more receptive, plastic, educable pupils, where teaching and educating were more, and more deeply, a unity. In the last two years of his magistracy he twice referred to himself in letters as "Schoolmaster", reminding his correspondent that the expression Magister Ludi – which for generations had meant only "Master of the Game" in Castalia – had originally been simply the name for the schoolmaster.

Joseph comes to understand the greatness of his Master.

I stayed about an hour or an hour and a half with the old man, and I cannot communicate to you what went on between us or what was exchanged; certainly no words were spoken. I felt, after my resistance was broken, only that he received me into his peace and his brightness; cheerful serenity and a wonderful peace enclosed the two of us. Without my having deliberately and consciously meditated, it somewhat resembled an unusually successful and gladdening meditation whose subject might have been the Magister's life. I saw or felt him and the course of his growth from the time he first entered my life, when I was a boy, up to this present moment. His was a life of devotion and work, but free of obstructions, free of ambition, and full of music. It was as if by becoming a musician and Music Master he had chosen music as one of the ways toward man's highest goal, inner freedom, purity, perfection, and as though ever since making that choice he had done nothing but let himself be more and more permeated, transformed, purified by music – his entire self from his nimble, clever pianist's hands and his vast, well-stocked musician's memory to all the parts and organs of body and soul, to his pulses and breathing, to his sleep and dreaming – so that he was now only a symbol, or rather a manifestation, a personification of music. At any rate, I experienced what radiated from him, or what surged back and forth between him and me like rhythmic breathing, entirely as music, as an altogether immaterial esoteric music which absorbs everyone who enters its magic circle as a song for many voices absorbs an entering voice. Perhaps a non-musician would have perceived this grace in different images: an astronomer might have seen it as a moon circling around a planet, or a philologist heard it as some magical primal language containing all meanings.

Every so often Knecht found time for a brief visit to the aged former Music Master. The venerable old man, whose strength was now visibly ebbing and who had long since completely lost the habit of speech, persisted in his state of serene composure to the last. He was not sick, and his death was not so much a matter of dying as a form of progressive dematerialization, a dwindling of bodily substance and the bodily functions, while his life more and more gathered in his eyes and in the gentle radiance of his withering old man's face. To most of the inhabitants of Montepoort this was a familiar sight, accepted with due respect. Only a few persons . . . were privileged to share after a fashion in this sunset glow, this fading out of a pure and selfless life. These few, when they had put themselves into the proper frame of mind before stepping into the little room in which the Master sat in his armchair, succeeded in entering into this soft iridescence of disembodiment, in sharing in the old man's silent movement toward perfection. They stayed for rapt moments in the crystal sphere of this soul, as if in a realm of invisible radiation, listening to unearthly music, and then returned to their daily lives with hearts cleansed and strengthened, as if descending from a high mountain peak.

Joseph's pupil Tito reflects on his teacher . . .

By the time they bade each other good night, Tito was in excellent spirits and had made some good resolutions. Once again he had found this Magister Knecht very much to his liking. Without using fancy language and going on about scholarship, virtue, the aristocracy of intellect, and so on, as his schoolteachers were prone to do, this serene, friendly man had something in his manner and his speech that imposed an obligation and brought out your good, chivalric, higher aspirations and forces. It could be fun, and sometimes you felt it as a badge of honor, to deceive and outwit the ordinary schoolmaster, but in the presence of this man such notions never even occurred to you. He was – why, what exactly was he like? Tito reflected on this, trying to determine what it was about this stranger that was so likeable and at the same time so impressive. He decided that it was the man's nobility, his innate aristocratic quality. This was what drew him to Knecht, this above all. He was a nobleman, although no one knew his family and his father might have been a shoemaker. He was nobler and more aristocratic than most of the people Tito knew, more aristocratic than Tito's own father. The boy, who highly prized the patrician instincts and traditions of his house and could not forgive his father for having broken with them, was for the first time encountering intellectual aristocracy, cultivated nobility. Knecht was

an example of that power which under favorable conditions can sometimes work miracles, overleaping a long succession of ancestors and within a single human life transforming a plebeian child into a member of the highest nobility. In the proud and fiery boy's heart there stirred an inkling that to belong to this kind of nobility, and to serve it, might be a duty and honor for him. . . .

From Hermann Hesse, *Magister Ludi*, trans. Richard and Clara Winston (New York: Bantam, 1972), pp. 41-44, 68-69, 107-08, 218-19, 238-39, 256-57 and 387.

References

1. Fugue: a polyphonic composition in which a short melodic theme is introduced by one voice or part, and then successively taken up by the other voices or parts in a continuous interweaving.

Biography

Born in 1877 in Calw, on the edge of the Black Forest, Hermann Hesse was brought up in a missionary household where it was assumed that he would study for the ministry. Hesse's religious crisis (which is often recorded in his novels) led to his fleeing from the Maulbronn seminary in 1891. After being expelled from high school, he worked in bookshops for several years – a usual occupation for budding German authors.

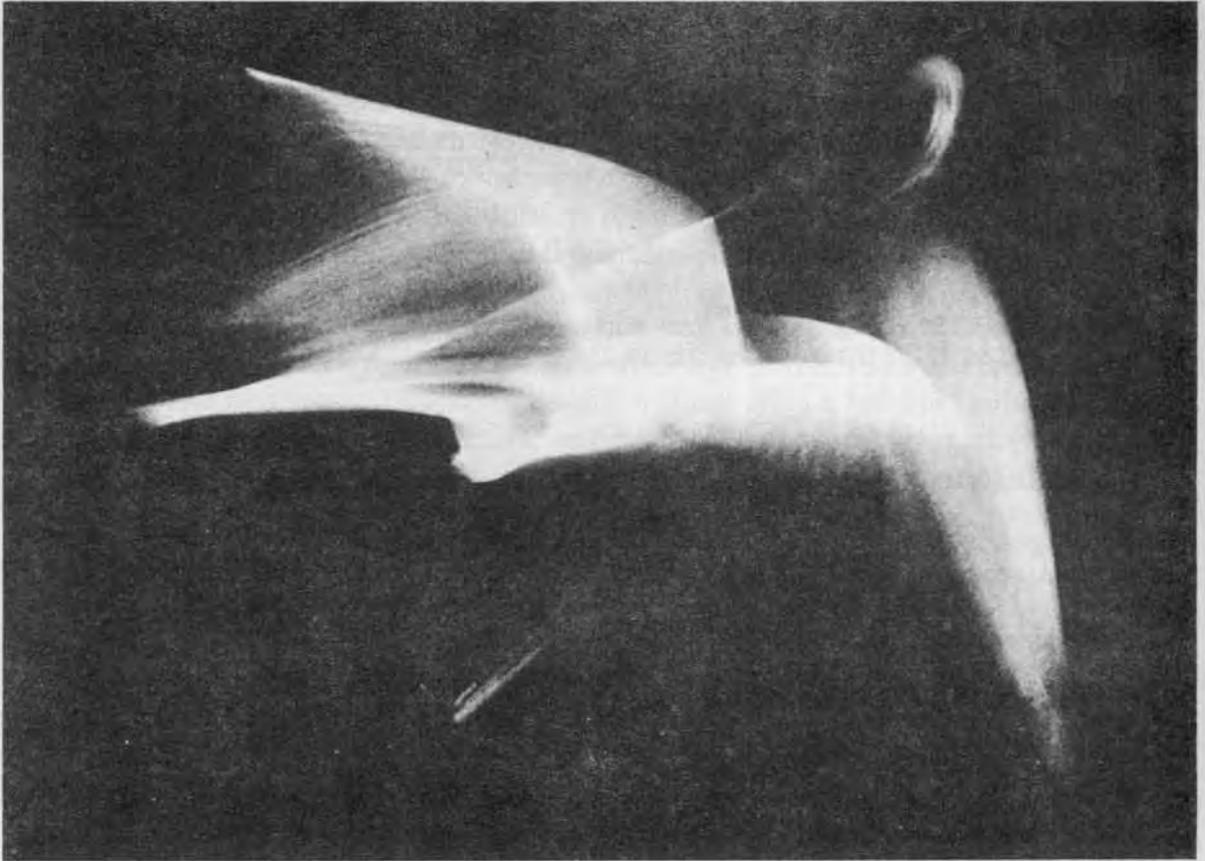
His first novel, *Peter Camenzind* (1904), describes a youth who leaves his Swiss mountain village to become a poet. This was followed by *Beneath the Wheel* (1906), the tale of a schoolboy totally out of touch with his contemporaries, who flees through different cities after his escape from school.

World War I came as a terrific shock, and Hesse joined the pacifist Romain Rolland in antiwar activities – not only writing antiwar tracts and novels, but editing two newspapers for German prisoners of war. During this period, Hesse's first marriage broke up (reflected or discussed outright in *Knulp* and *Rosshalde*), he studied the works of Freud, eventually underwent analysis with Jung, and was for a time a patient in a sanatorium.

In 1919 he moved permanently to Switzerland, and brought out *Demian*, which reflects his preoccupation with the workings of the subconscious and with psychoanalysis. The book was an enormous success, and made Hesse famous throughout Europe.

In 1922 he turned his attention to the East, which he had visited several times before the war, and wrote a novel about the Buddha titled *Siddhartha*. In 1927 he wrote *Steppenwolf*, the account of a man torn between animal instincts and bourgeois respectability, and in 1930 he published *Narziss and Goldmund*, a story dealing with the friendship between two medieval priests, one contented with his religion, the other a wanderer endlessly in search of peace and salvation.

Journey to the East appeared in 1932, and there was no major work until 1943, when he brought out *Magister Ludi* (*The Glass Bead Game*), which won him the Nobel Prize in 1946. Until his death in 1962 he lived in seclusion in Montagnola, Switzerland.



Jonathan Livingston Seagull

Introduction

*You need to keep finding yourself, a little more each day, that real, unlimited Fletcher Seagull. He's your instructor. You need to understand him and to practise him.*¹

A great secret of learning is expressed in these words spoken by Jonathan Livingston Seagull to his pupil, Fletcher Seagull. It is a universal dictum, for almost every profound and meaningful tradition, be it of East or West, forms itself around this basic question: "Who am I?" Answering this question is the very object of education. It is this simple but essential quest that forms the essence of Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Richard Bach's symbolic story of the search for perfection, freedom and love.

1. Richard Bach, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* (London: Pan, 1973), p. 92.

Richard Bach is a former US Air Force pilot and has written three books on the mystique of flying. However, celebrity and fortune came to him with a book of which he insists he is not the author but the amanuensis. Bach recounted to an interviewer from the National Observer (26 February 1972) what happened one night while he was taking a solitary walk. "I heard, behind me and to the right, a very logical clear voice – not my own, but a male voice – which said, 'Jonathan Livingston Seagull'." He hurried home, somewhat unnerved, and asked the voice to elaborate. "Bang, it was like being in a motion-picture theatre." The story poured out, until the point when Jonathan is ostracized by the flock. Then it ended abruptly "like fireworks gone cold in the sky". Bach filed away the story and forgot about it until one morning, eight years later, he awoke to find the visionary "movie" unreeling again. In this and in two subsequent instalments coaxed from the "voice", the story of Jonathan Livingston Seagull was completed. Bach dedicated the book to "the real Jonathan Seagull who lives within us all". Therein lies the universal appeal of his story for young and old alike: it recognizes no barriers of age, of social or educational background; transcending the mind's limitations, it touches an inner chord with an invitation to the true understanding of freedom, perfection and love. As Ernest K. Gann¹ says, "I suspect all of us who visit the worlds of Jonathan Seagull will never want to return." And science fiction writer Ray Bradbury writes, "Richard Bach with this book does two things. He gives me Flight. He makes me Young. For both I am deeply grateful."

Bach's portrayal of Jonathan as a rebel in quest of that elusive perfection which requires him to break traditional barriers is, in fact, the picture of a student in search of deeper meaning and deeper knowledge.

Most gulls don't bother to learn more than the simplest facts of flight – how to get from shore to food and back again.²

Jonathan Seagull is a restless student who wants to go beyond the fixed limits of his flock. "Why, Jon, why?" his mother asked. "Why is it so hard to be like the rest of the flock, Jon?"³ But Jonathan is bent on seeking out the extraordinary in the face of tremendous odds. He provides an example of a worthy student who pursues the path of perfection at the risk of losing the material security which would be his were he to accept the ordinary. Jonathan

1. Author of *The High and The Mighty*.

2. Richard Bach, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 14.

says that for "One who has touched excellence in his learning",¹ the ordinary laws that govern the mediocre do not apply. His experiments with high-speed flying are examples of innovation, of constant experimentation and, above all, of daring initiative. . . .

*He was flying now straight down, at two hundred fourteen miles per hour. He swallowed, knowing that if his wings unfolded at that speed he'd be blown into a million tiny shreds of seagull. But the speed was power, and the speed was joy, and the speed was pure beauty.*²

Throughout this story, the call is of challenge, of adventure, of discovery, of realization.

*How much more there is now to living! Instead of our drab slogging forth and back to the fishing boats, there's a reason to life! We can lift ourselves out of ignorance, we can find ourselves as creatures of excellence and intelligence and skill. We can be free! We can learn to fly!*³

How valid these thoughts are in the context of our lives!

After the ordeal of experimenting on himself, we find Jonathan in a state of total humility. He says to himself, "But I want no honours. I have no wish to be leader. I want only to share what I've found, to show those horizons out ahead for us all."⁴ Jonathan continues his progression towards higher and higher realms of perfection, until Jonathan the student is ready to be transformed into Jonathan the teacher.

*For in spite of his lonely past, Jonathan Seagull was born to be an instructor, and his own way of demonstrating love was to give something of the truth that he had seen to a gull who asked only a chance to see truth for himself.*⁵

The qualities of love and patience Jonathan imbibed from his own teachers, Sullivan and Chiang, form the foundation of the teacher in Jonathan. Chiang speaks to his students, guiding and " . . . exhorting them never to stop their learning and their practising and their striving to understand more of the

1. Ibid., p. 25.

2. Ibid., pp. 25-26.

3. Ibid., p. 27.

4. Ibid., p. 34.

5. Ibid., p. 61.

*perfect invisible principle of all life."*¹ *The evolutionary process of learning finds a lucid exposition in Sullivan's words:*

*Do you have any idea how many lives we must have gone through before we even got the first idea that there is more to life than eating, or fighting, or power in the Flock? A thousand lives, Jon, ten thousand! And then another hundred lives until we began to learn that there is such a thing as perfection, and another hundred again to get the idea that our purpose for living is to find that perfection and show it forth. The same rule holds for us now, of course: we choose our next world through what we learn in this one. Learn nothing, and the next world is the same as this one, all the same limitations and lead weights to overcome.*²

*Painstakingly, Jonathan seeks to guide his students on the path of self-discovery and self-realization: "Break the chains of your thought, and you break the chains of your body, too. . . ."*³ *The perfect teacher in Jonathan begins to emerge: "Every hour Jonathan was there at the side of each of his students, demonstrating, suggesting, pressuring, guiding."*⁴ *For he could now understand Chiang's words: "Heaven is not a place, and it is not a time. Heaven is being perfect."*⁵

The wisdom found in Jonathan Livingston Seagull is remarkably applicable to today's world. For example, when Fletcher asks Jonathan how he could manage to love a mob of birds that had tried to kill him, Jonathan replies,

*"You don't love hatred and evil, of course. You have to practise and see the real gull, the good in every one of them, and to help them see it in themselves. That's what I mean by love"*⁶

The following passages, moving accounts of the role of a good teacher and a good pupil, are simple and beautiful expressions of perennial principles of teaching and learning.

1. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

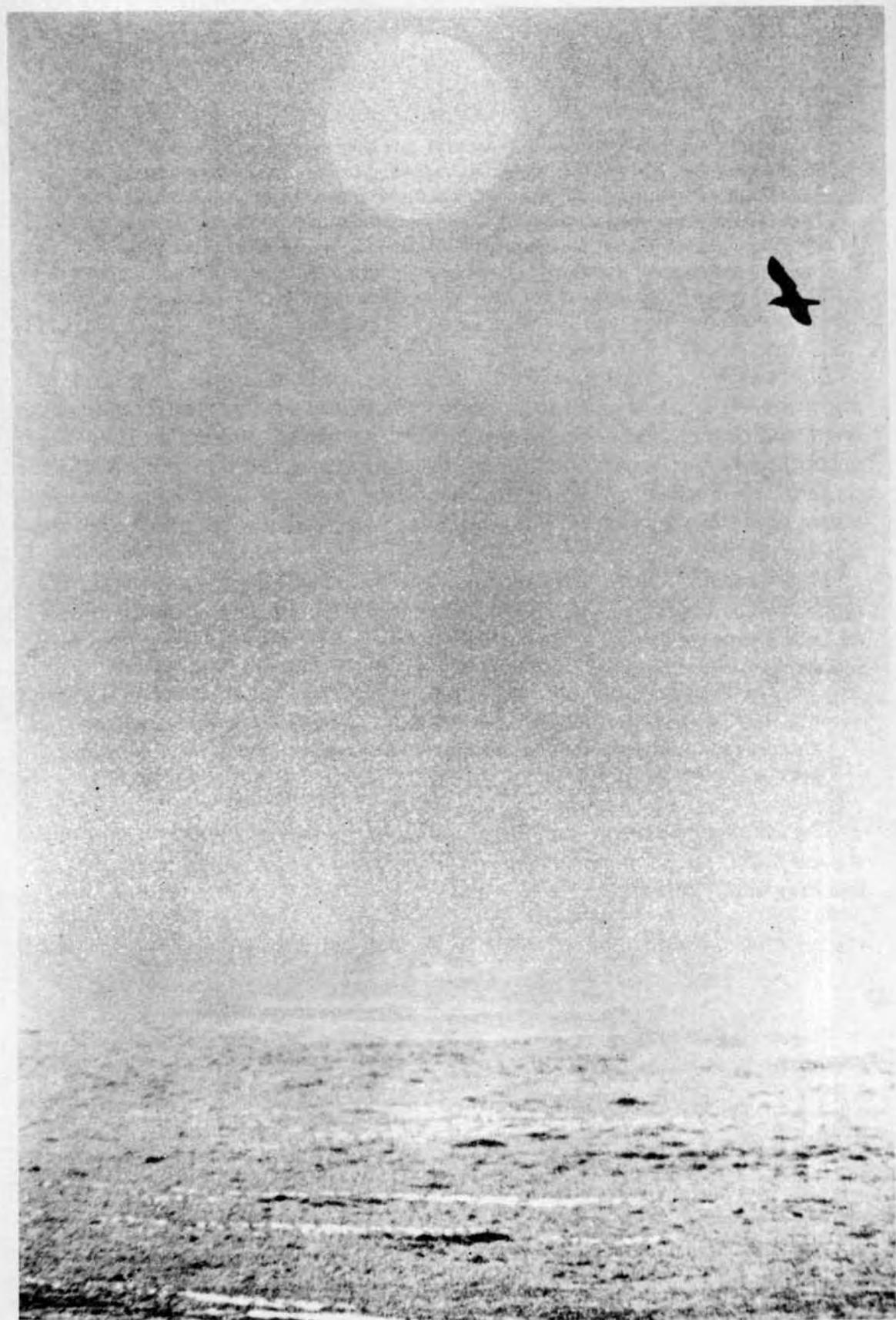
2. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

3. *Ibid.*, p. 77.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 79.

5. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 91.



It was morning, and the new sun sparkled gold across the ripples of a gentle sea.

A mile from shore a fishing boat chummed the water, and the word for Breakfast Flock flashed through the air, till a crowd of a thousand seagulls came to dodge and fight for bits of food. It was another busy day beginning.

But way off alone, out by himself beyond boat and shore, Jonathan Livingston Seagull was practising. A hundred feet in the sky he lowered his webbed feet, lifted his beak, and strained to hold a painful hard twisting curve through his wings. The curve meant that he would fly slowly, and now he slowed until the wind was a whisper in his face, until the ocean stood still beneath him. He narrowed his eyes in fierce concentration, held his breath, forced one . . . single . . . more . . . inch . . . of . . . curve. . . . Then his feathers ruffled, he stalled and fell.

Seagulls, as you know, never falter, never stall. To stall in the air is for them disgrace and it is dishonour.

But Jonathan Livingston Seagull, unashamed, stretching his wings again in that trembling hard curve – slowing, slowing, and stalling once more – was no ordinary bird.

Most gulls don't bother to learn more than the simplest facts of flight – how to get from shore to food and back again. For most gulls, it is not flying that matters, but eating. For this gull, though, it was not eating that mattered, but flight. More than anything else, Jonathan Livingston Seagull loved to fly.

This kind of thinking, he found, is not the way to make one's self popular with other birds. Even his parents were dismayed as Jonathan spent whole days alone, making hundreds of low-level glides, experimenting.

He didn't know why, for instance, but when he flew at altitudes less than half his wingspan above the water, he could stay in the air longer, with less effort. His glides ended not with the usual feet-down splash into the sea, but with a long flat wake as he touched the surface with his feet tightly streamlined against his body. When he began sliding in to feet-up landings on the beach, then pacing the length of his slide in the sand, his parents were very much dismayed indeed.

"Why, Jon, *why?*" his mother asked. "Why is it so hard to be like the rest of the flock, Jon? Why can't you leave low flying to the pelicans, the albatross? Why don't you *eat?* Jon, you're bone and feathers!"

"I don't mind being bone and feathers, Mum. I just want to know what I can do in the air and what I can't, that's all. I just want to know."

"See here, Jonathan," said his father, not unkindly. "Winter isn't far away. Boats will be few, and the surface fish will be swimming deep. If you must study, then study food, and how to get it. This flying business is all very well, but you can't eat a glide, you know. Don't you forget that the reason you fly is to eat."

Jonathan nodded obediently. For the next few days he tried to behave like the other gulls; he really tried, screeching and fighting with the flock around the piers and fishing boats, diving on scraps of fish and bread. But he couldn't make it work.

It's all so pointless, he thought, deliberately dropping a hard-won anchovy to a hungry old gull chasing him. I could be spending all this time learning to fly. There's so much to learn!

It wasn't long before Jonathan Gull was off by himself again, far out at sea, hungry, happy, learning.

The subject was speed, and in a week's practice he learned more about speed than the fastest gull alive.

From a thousand feet, flapping his wings as hard as he could, he pushed over into a blazing steep dive toward the waves, and learned why seagulls don't make blazing steep power-dives. In just six seconds he was moving seventy miles per hour, the speed at which one's wing goes unstable on the upstroke.

Time after time it happened. Careful as he was, working at the very peak of his ability, he lost control at high speed.

Climb to a thousand feet. Full power straight ahead first, then push over, flapping, to a vertical dive. Then, every time, his left wing stalled on an upstroke, he'd roll violently left, stall his right wing recovering, and flick like fire into a wild tumbling spin to the right.

He couldn't be careful enough on that upstroke. Ten times he tried, and all ten times, as he passed through seventy miles per hour, he burst into a churning mass of feathers, out of control, crashing down into the water.

The key, he thought at last, dripping wet, must be to hold the wings still at high speeds – to flap up to fifty and then hold the wings still.

From two thousand feet he tried again, rolling into his dive, beak straight down, wings full out and stable from the moment he passed fifty miles per hour. It took tremendous strength, but it worked. In ten seconds he had blurred through ninety miles per hour. Jonathan had set a world speed record for seagulls!

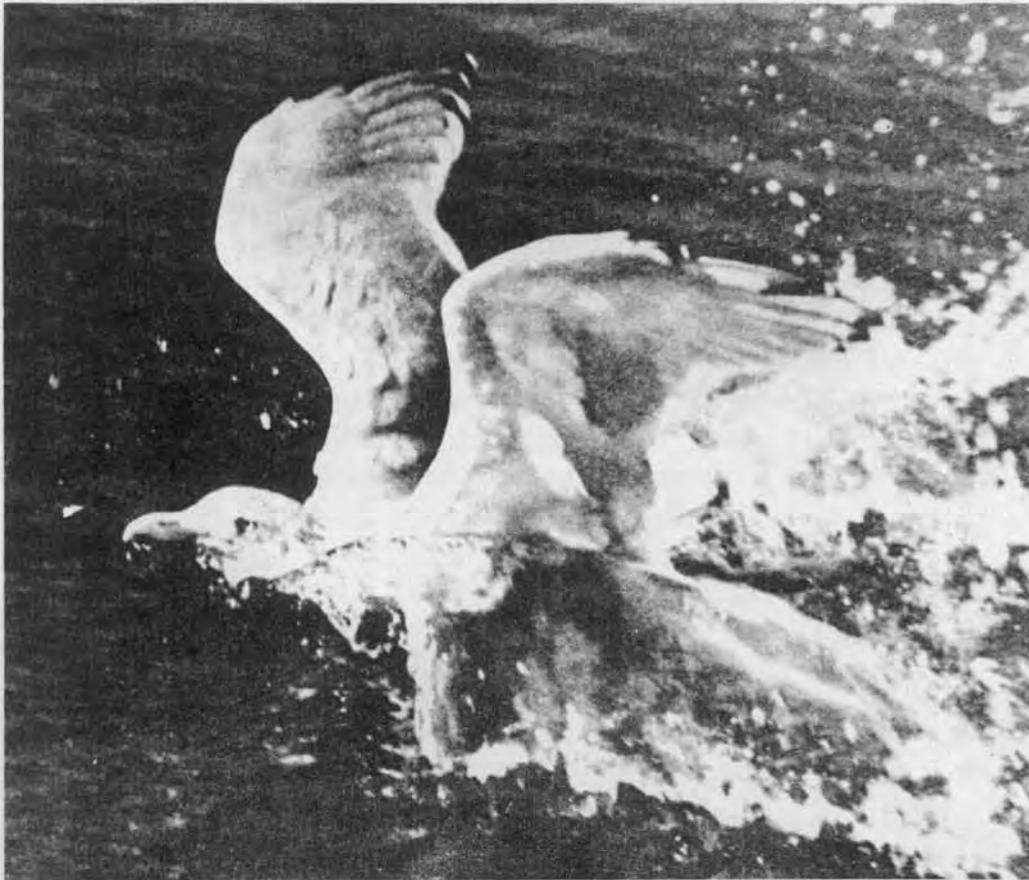
But victory was short-lived. The instant he began his pullout, the instant he changed the angle of his wings, he snapped into that same terrible uncontrolled disaster, and at ninety miles per hour it hit him like dynamite. Jonathan Seagull exploded in midair and smashed down into a brick-hard sea.

When he came to, it was well after dark, and he floated in moonlight on the surface of the ocean. His wings were ragged bars of lead, but the weight of failure was even heavier on his back. He wished, feebly, that the weight could be just enough to drag him gently down to the bottom, and end it all.

As he sank low in the water, a strange hollow voice sounded within him. There's no way around it. I am a seagull. I am limited by my nature. If I were meant to learn so much about flying, I'd have charts for brains. If I were meant to fly at speed, I'd have a falcon's short wings, and live on mice instead of fish. My father was right. I must forget this foolishness. I must fly home to the Flock and be content as I am, as a poor limited seagull.

The voice faded, and Jonathan agreed. The place for a seagull at night is on shore, and from this moment forth, he vowed, he would be a normal gull. It would make everyone happier.

He pushed wearily away from the dark water and flew toward the land, grateful for what he had learned about work-saving low-altitude flying.



But no, he thought. I am done with the way I was, I am done with everything I learned. I am a seagull like every other seagull, and I will fly like one. So he climbed painfully to a hundred feet and flapped his wings harder, pressing for shore.

He felt better for his decision to be just another one of the flock. There would be no ties now to the force that had driven him to learn, there would be no more challenge and no more failure. And it was pretty, just to stop thinking, and fly through the dark, toward the lights above the beach.

Dark! The hollow voice cracked in alarm. *Seagulls never fly in the dark!*

Jonathan was not alert to listen. It's pretty, he thought. The moon and the lights twinkling on the water, throwing out little beacon-trails through the night, and all so peaceful and still. . . .

Get down! Seagulls never fly in the dark! If you were meant to fly in the dark, you'd have the eyes of an owl! You'd have charts for brains! You'd have a falcon's short wings!

There in the night, a hundred feet in the air, Jonathan Livingston Seagull – blinked. His pain, his resolutions, vanished.



Short wings. *A falcon's short wings!*

That's the answer! What a fool I've been! All I need is a tiny little wing, all I need is to fold most of my wings and fly on just the tips alone! *Short wings!*

He climbed two thousand feet above the black sea, and without a moment for thought of failure and death, he brought his forewings tightly in to his body, left only the narrow swept daggers of his wingtips extended into the wind, and fell into a vertical dive.

The wind was a monster roar at his head. Seventy miles per hour, ninety, a hundred and twenty and faster still. The wing-strain now at a hundred and forty miles per hour wasn't nearly as hard as it had been before at seventy, and with the faintest twist of his wingtips he eased out of the dive and shot above the waves, a grey cannonball under the moon.

He closed his eyes to slits against the wind and rejoiced. A hundred forty miles per hour! And under control! If I dive from five thousand feet instead of two thousand, I wonder how fast . . .

His vows of a moment before were forgotten, swept away in that great swift wind. Yet he felt guiltless, breaking the promises he had made himself. Such promises are only for the gulls that accept the ordinary. One who has touched excellence in his learning has no need of that kind of promise.

By sunup, Jonathan Gull was practising again. From five thousand feet the fishing boats were specks in the flat blue water, Breakfast Flock was a faint cloud of dust motes, circling.

He was alive, trembling ever so slightly with delight, proud that his fear was under control. Then without ceremony he hugged in his forewings, extended his short, angled wingtips, and plunged directly toward the sea. By the time he passed four thousand feet he had reached terminal velocity, the wind was a solid beating wall of sound against which he could move no faster. He was flying now straight down, at two hundred fourteen miles per hour. He swallowed, knowing that if his wings unfolded at that speed he'd be blown into a million tiny shreds of seagull. But the speed was power, and the speed was joy, and the speed was pure beauty.

He began his pullout at a thousand feet, wingtips thudding and blurring in that gigantic wind, the boat and the crowd of gulls tilting and growing meteor-fast, directly in his path.

He couldn't stop; he didn't know yet even how to turn at that speed.

Collision would be instant death.

And so he shut his eyes.

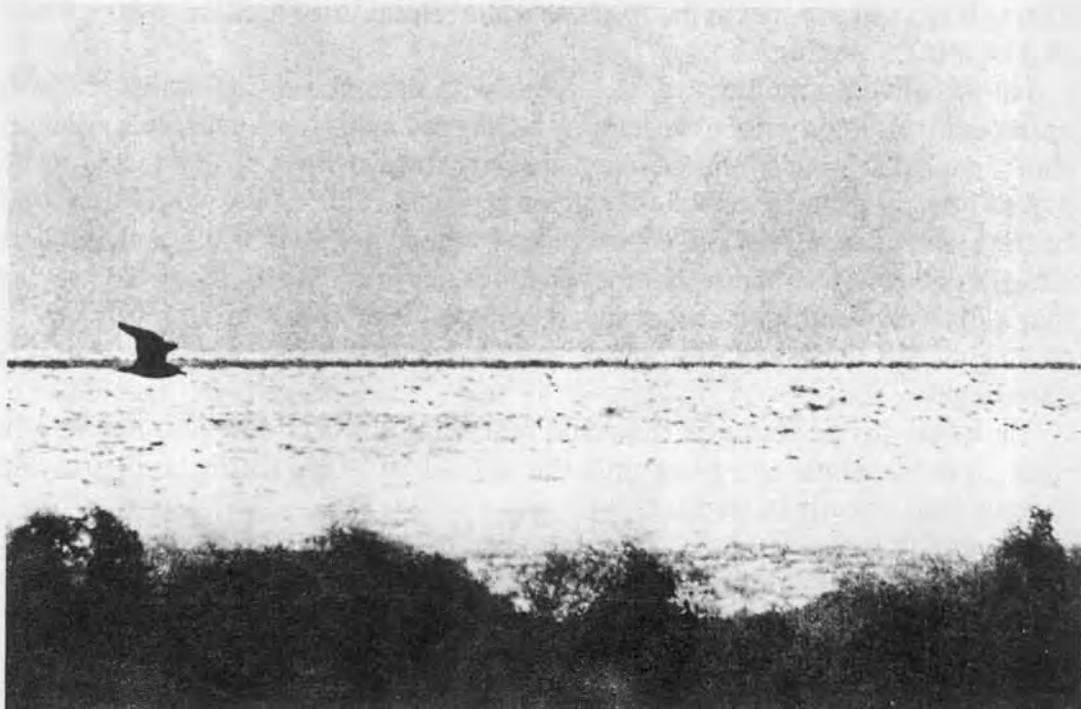
It happened that morning, then, just after sunrise, that Jonathan Livingston Seagull fired directly through the centre of Breakfast Flock, ticking off two hundred twelve miles per hour, eyes closed, in a great roaring shriek of wind and feathers. The Gull of Fortune smiled upon him this once, and no one was killed.

By the time he had pulled his beak straight up into the sky he was still scorching along at a hundred and sixty miles per hour. When he had slowed to twenty and stretched his wings again at last, the boat was a crumb on the sea, four thousand feet below.

His thought was triumph. Terminal velocity! A seagull at *two hundred fourteen miles per hour!* It was a breakthrough, the greatest single moment in the history of the Flock, and in that moment a new age opened for Jonathan Gull. Flying out to his lonely practice area, folding his wings for a dive from eight thousand feet, he set himself at once to discover how to turn.

A single wingtip feather, he found, moved a fraction of an inch, gives a smooth sweeping curve at tremendous speed. Before he learned this, however, he found that moving more than one feather at that speed will spin you like a rifle ball . . . and Jonathan had flown the first aerobatics of any seagull on earth.

He spared no time that day for talk with other gulls, but flew on past sunset. He discovered the loop, the slow roll, the point roll, the inverted spin, the gull bunt, the pinwheel.



When Jonathan Seagull joined the Flock on the beach, it was full night. He was dizzy and terribly tired. Yet in delight he flew a loop to landing, with a snap roll just before touchdown. When they hear of it, he thought, of the Breakthrough, they'll be wild with joy. How much more there is now to living! Instead of our drab slogging forth and back to the fishing boats, there's a reason to life! We can lift ourselves out of ignorance, we can find ourselves as creatures of excellence and intelligence and skill. We can be free! *We can learn to fly!*

The years ahead hummed and glowed with promise.

The gulls were flocked into the Council Gathering when he landed, and apparently had been so flocked for some time. They were, in fact, waiting.

"Jonathan Livingston Seagull! Stand to Centre!" The Elder's words sounded in a voice of highest ceremony. Stand to Centre meant only great shame or great honour. Stand to Centre for Honour was the way the gulls' foremost leaders were marked. Of course, he thought, the Breakfast Flock this morning; they saw the Breakthrough! But I want no honours. I have no wish to be leader. I want only to share what I've found, to show those horizons out ahead for us all. He stepped forward.

"Jonathan Livingston Seagull," said the Elder, "Stand to Centre for shame in the sight of your fellow gulls!"

It felt like being hit with a board. His knees went weak, his feathers sagged, there was a roaring in his ears. Centred for shame? Impossible! The Breakthrough! They can't understand! They're wrong, they're wrong!

"... for his reckless irresponsibility," the solemn voice intoned, "violating the dignity and tradition of the Gull Family ..."

To be centred for shame meant that he would be cast out of gull society, banished to a solitary life on the Far Cliffs.

"... one day, Jonathan Livingston Seagull, you shall learn that irresponsibility does not pay. Life is the unknown and the unknowable, except that we are put into this world to eat, to stay alive as long as we possibly can."

A seagull never speaks back to the Council Flock, but it was Jonathan's voice raised. "Irresponsibility? My brothers!" he cried. "Who is more responsible than a gull who finds and follows a meaning, a higher purpose for life? For a thousand years we have scrabbled after fish heads, but now we have a reason to live – to learn, to discover, to be free! Give me one chance, let me show you what I've found ..."

The Flock might as well have been stone.

"The Brotherhood is broken," the gulls intoned together, and with one accord they solemnly closed their ears and turned their backs upon him.

Jonathan Seagull spent the rest of his days alone, but he flew way out beyond the Far Cliffs. His one sorrow was not solitude, it was that other gulls refused to believe the glory of flight that awaited them; they refused to open their eyes and see.

He learned more each day. He learned that a streamlined high-speed dive could bring him to find the rare and tasty fish that schooled ten feet below the surface of the ocean: he no longer needed fishing boats and stale bread for survival. He learned to sleep in the air, setting a course at night across the offshore wind, covering a hundred miles from sunset to sunrise. With the same inner control, he flew through heavy sea-fogs and climbed above them into dazzling clear skies . . . in the very times when every other gull stood on the ground, knowing nothing but mist and rain. He learned to ride the high winds far inland, to dine there on delicate insects.

What he had once hoped for the Flock, he now gained for himself alone; he learned to fly, and was not sorry for the price that he had paid. Jonathan Seagull discovered that boredom and fear and anger are the reasons that a gull's life is so short, and with these gone from his thought, he lived a long fine life indeed.



They came in the evening, then, and found Jonathan gliding peaceful and alone through his beloved sky. The two gulls that appeared at his wings were pure as starlight, and the glow from them was gentle and friendly in the high night air. But most lovely of all was the skill with which they flew, their wingtips moving a precise and constant inch from his own.

Without a word, Jonathan put them to his test, a test that no gull had ever passed. He twisted his wings, slowed to a single mile per hour above stall. The two radiant birds slowed with him, smoothly, locked in position. They knew about slow flying.

He folded his wings, rolled, and dropped in a dive to a hundred ninety miles per hour. They dropped with him, streaking down in flawless formation.

At last he turned that speed straight up into a long vertical slow-roll. They rolled with him, smiling.

He recovered to level flight and was quiet for a time before he spoke. "Very

well," he said, "who are you?"

"We're from your Flock, Jonathan. We are your brothers." The words were strong and calm. "We've come to take you higher, to take you home."

"Home I have none. Flock I have none. I am Outcast. And we fly now at the peak of the Great Mountain Wind. Beyond a few hundred feet, I can lift this old body no higher."

"But you can, Jonathan. For you have learned. One school is finished, and the time has come for another to begin."

As it had shined across him all his life, so understanding lighted that moment for Jonathan Seagull. They were right. He *could* fly higher, and it *was* time to go home.

He gave one last long look across the sky, across that magnificent silver land where he had learned so much.

"I'm ready," he said at last.

And Jonathan Livingston Seagull rose with the two star-bright gulls to disappear into a perfect dark sky.

[Jonathan continues his process of learning in the new place that he takes for "Heaven". He soon "saw that there was as much to learn about flight in this place as there had been in the life behind him. But with a difference. Here were gulls who thought as he thought." He wonders why there are not more of them, and his instructor, Sullivan, explains: "The only answer I can see, Jonathan, is that you are pretty well a one-in-a-million bird. Most of us came along ever so slowly. . . . But you, Jon, learned so much at one time that you didn't have to go through a thousand lives to reach this one."

Afterwards, he is initiated by the Elder Gull, Chiang, who ". . . Instead of being enfeebled by age . . . had been empowered by it; he could outfly any gull in the Flock, and he had learned skills that the others were only gradually coming to know." Jonathan realizes that "this world isn't heaven at all" and learns from Chiang, "Heaven is not a place, and it is not a time. Heaven is being perfect." He tells Jon: "You will begin to touch heaven, Jonathan, in the moment that you touch perfect speed. And that isn't flying a thousand miles an hour, or a million, or flying at the speed of light. Because any number is a limit, and perfection doesn't have limits. Perfect speed . . . is being there." Jonathan learns with him to vanish and appear at will, at any distance. "The trick, according to Chiang, was for Jonathan to stop seeing himself as trapped inside a limited body . . . The trick was to know that his true nature lived, as perfect as an unwritten number, everywhere at once across space and time." Later, Chiang himself goes away for good, after giving to Jonathan a last admonition: "Jonathan . . . keep working on love."]



As the days went past, Jonathan found himself thinking time and again of the Earth from which he had come. If he had known there just a tenth, just a hundredth, of what he knew here, how much more life would have meant! He stood on the sand and fell to wondering if there was a gull back there who might be struggling to break out of his limits, to see the meaning of flight beyond a way of travel to get a breadcrumb from a rowboat. Perhaps there might even have been one made Outcast for speaking his truth in the face of the Flock. And the more Jonathan practised his kindness lessons, and the more he worked to know the nature of love, the more he wanted to go back to Earth. For in spite of his lonely past, Jonathan Seagull was born to be an instructor, and his own way of demonstrating love was to give something of the truth that he had seen to a gull who asked only a chance to see truth for himself.

[Jonathan's instructor, Sullivan, is doubtful about his idea of going back to the Flock. But, Jonathan does go back and finds Fletcher Lynd Seagull, another young Outcast.]

Fletcher Lynd Seagull was still quite young, but already he knew that no bird had ever been so harshly treated by any Flock, or with so much injustice.

"I don't care what they say," he thought fiercely, and his vision blurred as he flew out toward the Far Cliffs. "There's so much more to flying than just flapping around from place to place! A . . . a . . . *mosquito* does that! One little barrel-roll around the Elder Gull, just for fun, and I'm Outcast! Are they blind? Can't they see? Can't they think of the glory that it'll be when we really learn to fly?"

"I don't care what they think. I'll show them what flying is! I'll be pure Outlaw, if that's the way they want it. And I'll make them so sorry . . ."

The voice came inside his own head, and though it was very gentle, it startled him so much that he faltered and stumbled in the air.

"Don't be harsh on them, Fletcher Seagull. In casting you out, the other gulls have only hurt themselves, and one day they will know this, and one day they will see what you see. Forgive them, and help them to understand."

An inch from his right wingtip flew the most brilliant white gull in all the world, gliding effortlessly along, not moving a feather, at what was very nearly Fletcher's top speed.

There was a moment of chaos in the young bird.

"What's going on? Am I mad? Am I dead? What is this?"

Low and calm, the voice went on within his thought, demanding an answer. "Fletcher Lynd Seagull, do you want to fly?"

"YES, I WANT TO FLY!"

"Fletcher Lynd Seagull, do you want to fly so much that you will forgive the Flock, and learn, and go back to them one day and work to help them know?"

There was no lying to this magnificent skilful being, no matter how proud or how hurt a bird was Fletcher Seagull.

"I do," he said softly.

"Then, Fletch," that bright creature said to him, and the voice was very kind, "Let's begin with Level Flight. . . ."

Jonathan circled slowly over the Far Cliffs, watching. This rough young Fletcher Gull was very nearly a perfect flight-student. He was strong and light and quick in the air, but far and away more important, he had a blazing drive to learn to fly.

Here he came this minute, a blurred grey shape roaring out of a dive, flashing one hundred fifty miles per hour past his instructor. He pulled abruptly into another try at a sixteen-point vertical slow roll, calling the points out loud.

"... eight ... nine ... ten ... see-Jonathan-I'm-running-out-of-air-speed ... eleven ... I-want-good-sharp-stops-like-yours ... twelve ... but-blast-it-I-just-can't-make ... thirteen ... these-last-three-points ... without ... fourtee ... *aaakk!*"

Fletcher's whipstall at the top was all the worse for his rage and fury at failing. He fell backward, tumbled, slammed savagely into an inverted spin, and recovered at last, panting, a hundred feet below his instructor's level.

"You're wasting your time with me, Jonathan! I'm too dumb! I'm too stupid! I try and try, but I'll never get it!"

Jonathan Seagull looked down at him and nodded. "You'll certainly never get it as long as you make that pullup so hard. Fletcher, you lost forty miles an hour in the entry! You *have* to be smooth! Firm but smooth, remember?"

He dropped down to the level of the younger gull. "Lets try it together now, in formation. And pay attention to that pullup. It's a smooth, easy entry."

By the end of three months Jonathan had six other students, Outcasts all, yet curious about this strange new idea of flight for the joy of flying.

Still, it was easier for them to practise high performance than it was to understand the reason behind it.

"Each of us is in truth an idea of the Great Gull, an unlimited idea of freedom," Jonathan would say in the evenings on the beach, "and precision flying is a step toward expressing our real nature. Everything that limits us we have to put aside. That's why all this high-speed practice, and low-speed, and aerobatics . . ."

. . . and his students would be asleep, exhausted from the day's flying. They

liked the practice, because it was fast and exciting and it fed a hunger for learning that grew with every lesson. But not one of them, not even Fletcher Lynd Gull, had come to believe that the flight of ideas could possibly be as real as the flight of wind and feather.

"Your whole body, from wingtip to wingtip," Jonathan would say, other times, "is nothing more than your thought itself, in a form you can see. Break the chains of your thought, and you break the chains of your body, too. . . ." But no matter how he said it, it sounded like pleasant fiction, and they needed more to sleep.

It was only a month later that Jonathan said the time had come to return to the Flock.

"We're not ready!" said Henry Calvin Gull. "We're not welcome! We're Outcast! We can't force ourselves to go where we're not welcome, can we?"

"We're free to go where we wish and to be what we are," Jonathan answered, and he lifted from the sand and turned east, toward the home grounds of the Flock.

There was brief anguish among his students, for it is the Law of the Flock that an Outcast never returns, and the Law had not been broken once in ten thousand years. The Law said stay; Jonathan said go; and by now he was a mile across the water. If they waited much longer, he would reach a hostile Flock alone.

"Well, we don't have to obey the law if we're not a part of the Flock, do we?" Fletcher said, rather self-consciously. "Besides, if there's a fight, we'll be a lot more help there than here."

And so they flew in from the west that morning, eight of them in a double-diamond formation, wingtips almost overlapping. They came across the Flock's Council Beach at a hundred thirty-five miles per hour, Jonathan in the lead, Fletcher smoothly at his right wing, Henry Calvin struggling gamely at his left. Then the whole formation rolled slowly to the right, as one bird . . . level . . . to . . . inverted . . . to . . . level, the wind whipping over them all.

The squawks and grockles of everyday life in the Flock were cut off as though the formation were a giant knife, and eight thousand gull-eyes watched, without a single blink. One by one, each of the eight birds pulled sharply upward into a full loop and flew all the way around to a dead-slow stand-up landing on the sand. Then as though this sort of thing happened everyday, Jonathan Seagull began his critique of the flight.

"To begin with," he said with a wry smile, "you were all a bit late on the join-up . . ."

It went like lightning through the Flock. Those birds are Outcast! And they have returned! And that . . . that can't happen! Fletcher's predictions of battle melted in the Flock's confusion.

"Well, O.K., they may be Outcast," said some of the younger gulls, "but where on earth did they learn to fly like that?"

It took almost an hour for the Word of the Elder to pass through the Flock: Ignore them. The gull who speaks to an Outcast is himself Outcast. The gull who looks upon an Outcast breaks the Law of the Flock.

Grey-feathered backs were turned upon Jonathan from that moment onward, but he didn't appear to notice. He held his practice sessions directly over the Council Beach and for the first time began pressing his students to the limit of their ability.

"Martin Gull!" he shouted across the sky. "You say you know low-speed flying. You know nothing till you prove it! FLY!"

So quiet little Martin William Seagull, startled to be caught under his instructor's fire, surprised himself and became a wizard of low speeds. In the lightest breeze he could curve his feathers to lift himself without a single flap of wing from sand to cloud and down again.

Likewise Charles-Roland Gull flew the Great Mountain Wind to twenty-four thousand feet, came down blue from the cold thin air, amazed and happy, determined to go still higher tomorrow.

Fletcher Seagull, who loved aerobatics like no one else, conquered his sixteen-point vertical slow roll and the next day topped it off with a triple cartwheel, his feathers flashing white sunlight to a beach from which more than one furtive eye watched.

Every hour Jonathan was there at the side of each of his students, demonstrating, suggesting, pressuring, guiding. He flew with them through night and cloud and storm, for the sport of it, while the Flock huddled miserably on the ground.

When the flying was done, the students relaxed on the sand, and in time they listened more closely to Jonathan. He had some crazy ideas that they couldn't understand, but then he had some good ones that they could.

Gradually, in the night, another circle formed around the circle of students – a circle of curious gulls listening in the darkness for hours on end, not wishing to see or be seen of one another, fading away before daybreak.

It was a month after the Return that the first gull of the Flock crossed the line and asked to learn how to fly. In his asking, Terrence Lowell Gull became a condemned bird, labelled Outcast; and the eighth of Jonathan's students.

The next night from the Flock came Kirt Maynard Gull, wobbling across the sand, dragging his left wing, to collapse at Jonathan's feet. "Help me," he said very quietly, speaking in the way that the dying speak. "I want to fly more than anything else in the world . . ."



"Come along then," said Jonathan. "Climb with me away from the ground, and we'll begin."

"You don't understand. My wing. I can't move my wing."

"Maynard Gull, you have the freedom to be yourself, your true self, here and now, and nothing can stand in your way. It is the Law of the Great Gull, the Law that Is."

"Are you saying I can fly?"

"I say you are free."

As simply and as quickly as that, Kirk Maynard Gull spread his wings, effortlessly, and lifted into the dark night air. The Flock was roused from sleep by his cry, as loud as he could scream it, from five hundred feet up; *"I can fly! Listen! I CAN FLY!"*

By sunrise there were nearly a thousand birds standing outside the circle of students, looking curiously at Maynard. They didn't care whether they were seen or not, and they listened, trying to understand Jonathan Seagull.

He spoke of very simple things – that it is right for a gull to fly, that freedom is the very nature of his being, that whatever stands against that freedom must be set aside, be it ritual or superstition or limitation in any form.

"Set aside," came a voice from the multitude, "even if it be the Law of the Flock?"

"The only true law is that which leads to freedom," Jonathan said. "There is no other."

"How do you expect us to fly as you fly?" came another voice. "You are special and gifted and divine, above other birds."

"Look at Fletcher! Lowell! Charles-Roland! Are they also special and gifted and divine? No more than you are, no more than I am. The only difference, the very only one, is that they have begun to understand what they really are and have begun to practise it."

[The crowd of gulls watching Jonathan and his students grew larger every day, coming to question, to idolize, to scorn. But Jonathan had patience and love. Even when an attempt was made to kill him he had no hatred for his attackers. His sole interest was to learn and to teach . . . and to learn.]

"I don't understand how you manage to love a mob of birds that has just tried to kill you."

"Oh, Fletch, you don't love that! You don't love hatred and evil, of course. You have to practise and see the real gull, the good in every one of them, and to help them see it in themselves. That's what I mean by love. It's fun, when you get the knack of it.

"I remember a fierce young bird, for instance, Fletcher Lynd Seagull, his name. Just been made Outcast, ready to fight the Flock to the death, getting a start on building his own bitter hell out on the Far Cliffs. And here he is today building his own heaven instead, and leading the whole Flock in that direction."

Fletcher turned to his instructor, and there was a moment of fright in his eye. "*Me* leading? What do you mean, *me* leading? You're the instructor here. You couldn't leave!"

"Couldn't I? Don't you think that there might be other flocks, other Fletchers, that need an instructor more than this one, that's on its way toward the light?"

"*Me*? Jon, I'm just a plain seagull, and you're . . ."

". . . the only Son of the Great Gull, I suppose?" Jonathan sighed and looked out to sea. "You don't need me any longer. You need to keep finding yourself, a little more each day, that real, unlimited Fletcher Seagull. He's your instructor. You need to understand him and to practise him."

A moment later Jonathan's body wavered in the air, shimmering, and began to go transparent. "Don't let them spread silly rumours about me, or make me a god. O.K., Fletch? I'm a seagull. I like to fly, maybe . . ."

"**JONATHAN!**"

"Poor Fletch. Don't believe what your eyes are telling you. All they show is limitation. Look with your understanding, find out what you already know, and you'll see the way to fly."

The shimmering stopped. Jonathan Seagull had vanished into empty air.

After a time, Fletcher Gull dragged himself into the sky and faced a brand-new group of students, eager for their first lesson.

"To begin with," he said heavily, "you've got to understand that a seagull is an unlimited idea of freedom, an image of the Great Gull, and your whole body, from wingtip to wingtip, is nothing more than your thought itself."

The young gulls looked at him quizzically. Come on, they thought, this doesn't sound like a rule for a loop.

Fletcher sighed and started over. "Hm. Ah . . . very well," he said, and eyed them critically. "Let's begin with Level Flight." And saying that, he understood all at once that his friend had quite honestly been no more divine than Fletcher himself.



No limits, Jonathan? he thought. Well, then, the time's not distant when I'm going to appear out of thin air on *your* beach, and show you a thing or two about flying!

And though he tried to look properly severe for his students, Fletcher Seagull suddenly saw them all as they really were, just for a moment, and he more than liked, he loved what it was he saw. No limits, Jonathan? he thought, and he smiled. His race to learn had begun.

From Richard Bach, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, (London: Pan, 1973), pp. 13-47, 53-54, 55, 58-59, 61, 64-65, 75-83, and 91-93.

Biography

Richard David Bach, reportedly a direct descendant of Johann Sebastian Bach, was born in Oak Park, Illinois, USA, on June 23, 1936. He grew up in California. In 1956 he quit college to join the United States Air Force. In 1959, when his duty was over, he left the Air Force and joined the Air National Guard so that he could fly jet fighters on the weekends while otherwise living as a civilian.

During the 1960's Bach lived in a chronic state of financial emergency, trying to support both his growing family – he had married Bette Jeanne Franks in 1957 – and his most indispensable possession, a private plane.

He did some charter piloting; some barnstorming through the Midwest, offering plane rides at three dollars a head; and occasional odd jobs, from delivering telephone books to selling jewelry. He tried to become an airline pilot but, as he recalls, failed the "image" test ("how you shine your shoes and tie your necktie"). He sold scores of articles to *Flying Private Pilot*, *Air Facts*, *Soaring*, and other magazines, but his complex poetic style cut him off from the more lucrative reportorial assignments that he tried to promote for himself.

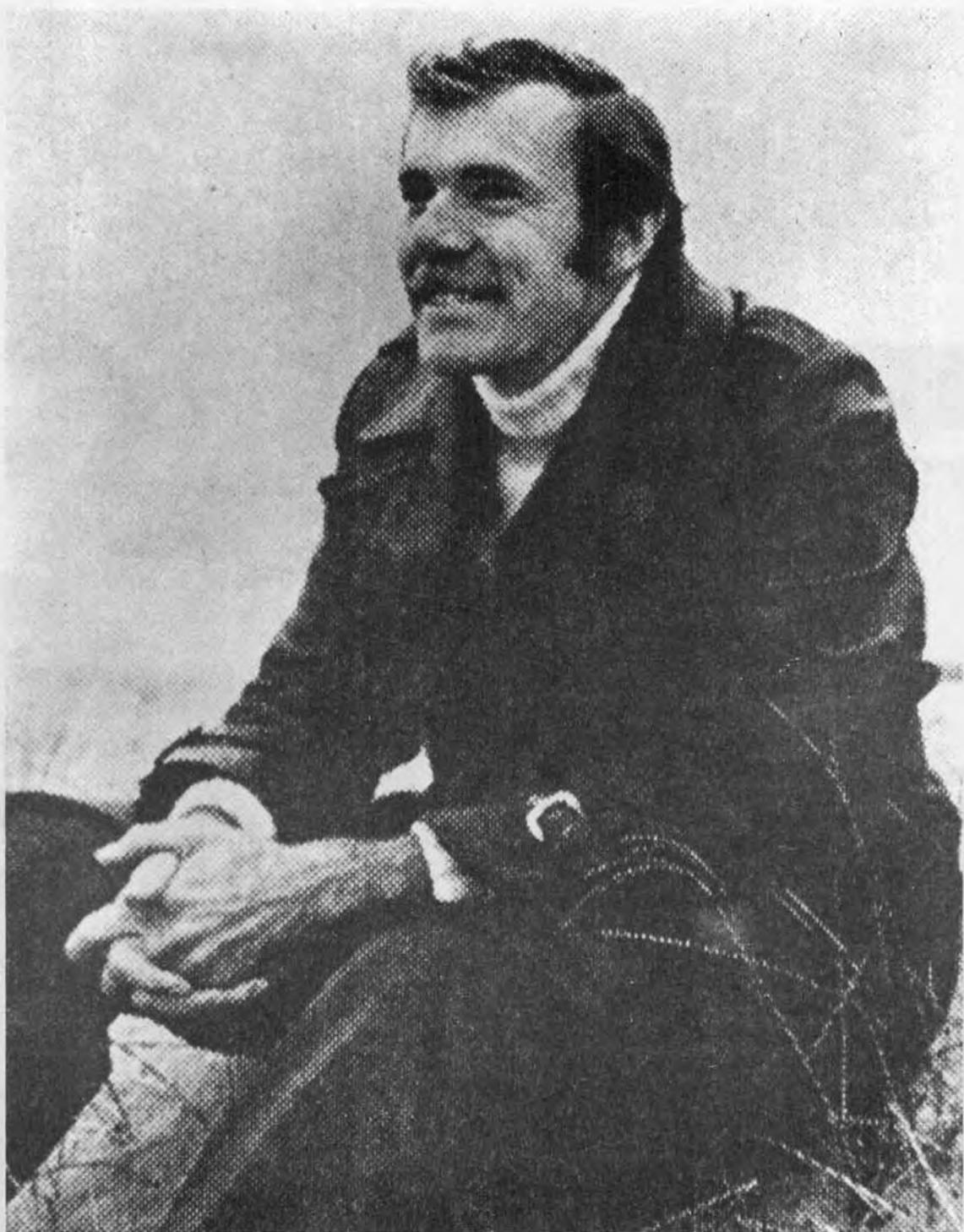
Out of a tour of active duty with the Air National Guard, in 1961 and 1962, came Bach's first book, *Stranger to the Ground*, an imaginative recreation of a jet pilot's thoughts and experiences during a flight from London to Chaumont, France in bad weather. Selection for condensation by *Reader's Digest* books contributed to the success of that book. Less successful commercially were his second and third books: *Biplane*, an account of a cross-country trip in his open-cockpit 1929 Parks P-2A; and *Nothing By Chance*, a chronicle of his experiences barnstorming, 1920's-style. In both books a stream-of-consciousness technique accommodated both Bach's romantic approach to flying and his attention to technical detail.

Meanwhile, the genesis of *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* had been in process since 1959. It was first published piecemeal for nominal fees in *Private Pilot* and *Soaring* in the late 1960's. At that time Bach was at his nadir, living in a trailer with his wife and children, without a car (it had been repossessed), feeling himself to be a failure. Then a senior editor at Macmillan who was unaware of the manuscript but who had admired Bach's *Stranger to the Ground*, sent him a routine note asking if he had any new work in hand. The rest is history. "Fate had turned my card over," Bach observed to Shana Alexander of *Newsweek* (July 9, 1973).

In 1972 *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* was selected for distribution by the Book-of-the-Month Club and for condensation by the *Reader's Digest* books, and Avon Books paid more than \$1,000,000 for the paperback rights. There are translations in a dozen languages, and a film version.

Tall and rangy in appearance, Richard Bach has a bushy moustache, a crinkly smile, and a slightly bemused expression. Shana Alexander in her *Newsweek* article described him as "a courteous and serene man." When asked if he himself is Jonathan Livingston Seagull, Bach replied, "No, I'm still way back there, flapping like crazy toward freedom."

From *Current Biography Yearbook*, ed. Charles Moritz (New York: H.W. Wilson Company, 1973).



- Richard Bach -



Paulo Freire

Critique of the Teacher-Student Relationship in the "Banking" Concept of Education

Introduction

At the very least, education implies change. At its highest, education implies rapid evolution, revolution or transmutation. The greater the perception of present inadequacies and imperfections, the greater the spur for radical change or transmutation. The stage through which we are passing in human history is marked by crises in which the perception of human inadequacies becomes increasingly acute. We are dissatisfied with ourselves, both individually and collectively. If we define justice as Plato did, as a state in which everyone occupies his proper place in a social organization, then the whole world is in a state of injustice. Things, events, and men are not where they ought to be. In such circumstances, education must be a process of total revolution and transmutation.

Education is fundamentally what takes place in the body, mind and heart of the pupil; what happens in the pupil depends largely on the teacher-pupil relationship; this relationship determines and is determined by the educational system; and the educational system is overwhelmingly determined by the economic, social and cultural relations in human society. An imperfect society cannot hope to provide a just educational system, right relationships between teacher and pupil and valid pedagogical processes. It is equally true that imperfect human beings cannot create a perfect society, and so long as human beings continue to remain within the narrow grooves of their present limited consciousness, we cannot hope to create a just society. The revolutionary process, therefore, must operate both within the educational system and outside it. An awakened teacher and an awakened pupil can participate in this revolution by revolutionizing their own relationships and processes of teaching and learning.

There is widespread oppression in the world. It aims at conquest; its methods of action are manipulative; it invades individuals and groups and inhibits creativity and expression. Oppression aims at preserving itself; it perpetuates the division of the oppressor and the oppressed; it resists any revolutionary movement advocating dialogue, co-operation, unity, humanization, and spiritualization. In the teaching-learning process, oppression tends to perpetuate the status quo. It advises teachers to teach and pupils to learn, while opposing the processes of education where teachers become learners and where students can teach their own teachers. It opposes the dialogic character of the teaching-learning process.

Paulo Freire's book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed, is a stimulating exposition of the phenomenon of oppression in our educational system and society and the manner in which this oppressive action can be reversed and defeated. Freire criticizes the present concept of education, calling it the "banking concept", where knowledge is a gift bestowed by those considered knowledgeable upon those who are not. "Banking" education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings and minimizes or annuls the creative power of pupils. It reacts almost instinctively against any educational experiment which stimulates the critical faculties. Freire points out that oppressors manifest interest in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, but not the oppressive situation itself.

The educator's role in "banking" education is to regulate the way the world "enters into" the student, to "fill" the students with deposits of information considered as true knowledge.

"Banking" education is "necrophilous" – a word which Freire explains by quoting the following passage from Erich Fromm's The Heart of Man:

While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. . . . Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object – a flower or a person – only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. . . . He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life.¹

The process of humanization, on the other hand, is a process of liberation, and authentic liberation is not merely another "deposit" to be made in men.

1. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 50-51.

Freire says, "Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it. Those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination (propaganda, slogans – deposits) in the name of liberation."¹

Freire advocates "problem-posing" education, the creation of dialogic relations between teachers and pupils. He says, "Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow."²

Freire makes it clear that problem-posing education is revolutionary and futuristic in character. ". . . it affirms men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future."³

Freire is not merely an armchair philosopher but a radical who, having known poverty and hunger and oppression first-hand, evolved his educational methods while teaching illiterates in Latin America. Pedagogy of the Oppressed is not the result of thought and study alone, but is rooted in concrete situations observed during the course of his highly original and successful educative work. Freire is a great lover of humanity and a seminal thinker whose influence may result in fundamental changes in our educational system. Towards the end of his preface to Pedagogy of the Oppressed, he says: "From these pages I hope at least the following will endure: my trust in the people, and my faith in men and in the creation of a world in which it will be easier to love."⁴

We present here Chapter II of Pedagogy of the Oppressed, a scathing criticism of contemporary teacher-student relationships and an insightful call for change.

1. Ibid., p. 52.

2. Ibid., p. 53.

3. Ibid., p. 57

4. Ibid., p. 19.



A careful analysis of the teacher-student relationship at any level, inside or outside the school, reveals its fundamentally *narrative* character. This relationship involves a narrating Subject (the teacher) and patient, listening objects (the students). The contents, whether values or empirical dimensions of reality, tend in the process of being narrated to become lifeless and petrified. Education is suffering from narration sickness.

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration – contents which are detached from reality, disconnected from the totality that engendered them and could give them significance. Words are emptied of their concreteness and become a hollow, alienated and alienating verbosity.

The outstanding characteristic of this narrative education, then, is the sonority of words, not their transforming power. "Four times four is sixteen; the capital of Pará is Belém." The student records, memorizes and repeats these phrases without perceiving what four times four really means, or realizing the true significance of "capital" in the affirmation "the capital of Pará is Belém," that is, what Belém means for Pará and what Pará means for Brazil.

Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize mechanically the narrated content. Worse still, it turns them into "containers", into receptacles to be filled by the teacher. The more completely he fills the receptacles, the better a teacher he is. The more meekly the receptacles permit themselves to be filled, the better students they are.

Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and "makes deposits" which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. They do, it is true, have the opportunity to become collectors or cataloguers of the things they store. But in the last analysis, it is men themselves who are filed away through the lack of creativity, transformation, and knowledge in this (at best) misguided system. For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, men cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry men pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry. The teacher presents himself to his students as their necessary opposite; by considering their ignorance absolute, he justifies his own existence. The students, alienated like the slave in the Hegelian dialectic, accept their ignorance as justifying the teacher's existence – but, unlike the slave, they never discover that they educate the teacher.

The *raison d'être* of libertarian education, on the other hand, lies in its drive towards reconciliation. Education must begin with the solution of the teacher-student contradiction, by reconciling the poles of the contradiction so that both are simultaneously teachers *and* students.

This solution is not (nor can it be) found in the banking concept. On the contrary, banking education maintains and even stimulates the contradiction through the following attitudes and practices, which mirror oppressive society as a whole:

1. The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
2. The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
3. The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.
4. The teacher talks and the students listen – meekly.
5. The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
6. The teacher chooses and enforces his choice, and the students comply.
7. The teacher acts and the students have the illusion of acting through the action of the teacher.
8. The teacher chooses the program content, and the students (who were not consulted) adapt to it.
9. The teacher confuses the authority of knowledge with his own professional authority, which he sets in opposition to the freedom of the students.
10. The teacher is the subject of the learning process, while the pupils are mere objects.

It is not surprising that the banking concept of education regards men as adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would

result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. The more completely they accept the passive role imposed on them, the more they tend simply to adapt to the world as it is and to the fragmented view of reality deposited in them.

The capacity of banking education to minimize or annul the students' creative power and to stimulate their credulity serves the interests of the oppressors, who care neither to have the world revealed nor to see it transformed. The oppressors use their "humanitarianism" to preserve a profitable situation. Thus they react almost instinctively against any experiment in education which stimulates the critical faculties and is not content with a partial view of reality but is always seeking out the ties which link one point to another and one problem to another.

Indeed, the interests of the oppressors lie in "changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them" (Simone de Beauvoir in *La Pensée de Droite Aujourd'hui*) for the more the oppressed can be led to adapt to that situation, the more easily they can be dominated. To achieve this end, the oppressors use the banking concept of education in conjunction with a paternalistic social action apparatus, within which the oppressed receive the euphemistic title of "welfare recipients". They are treated as individual cases, as marginal men who deviate from the general configuration of a "good, organized, and just" society. The oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, which must therefore adjust these "incompetent and lazy" folk to its own patterns by changing their mentality. These marginals need to be "integrated", "incorporated" into the healthy society that they have "forsaken".

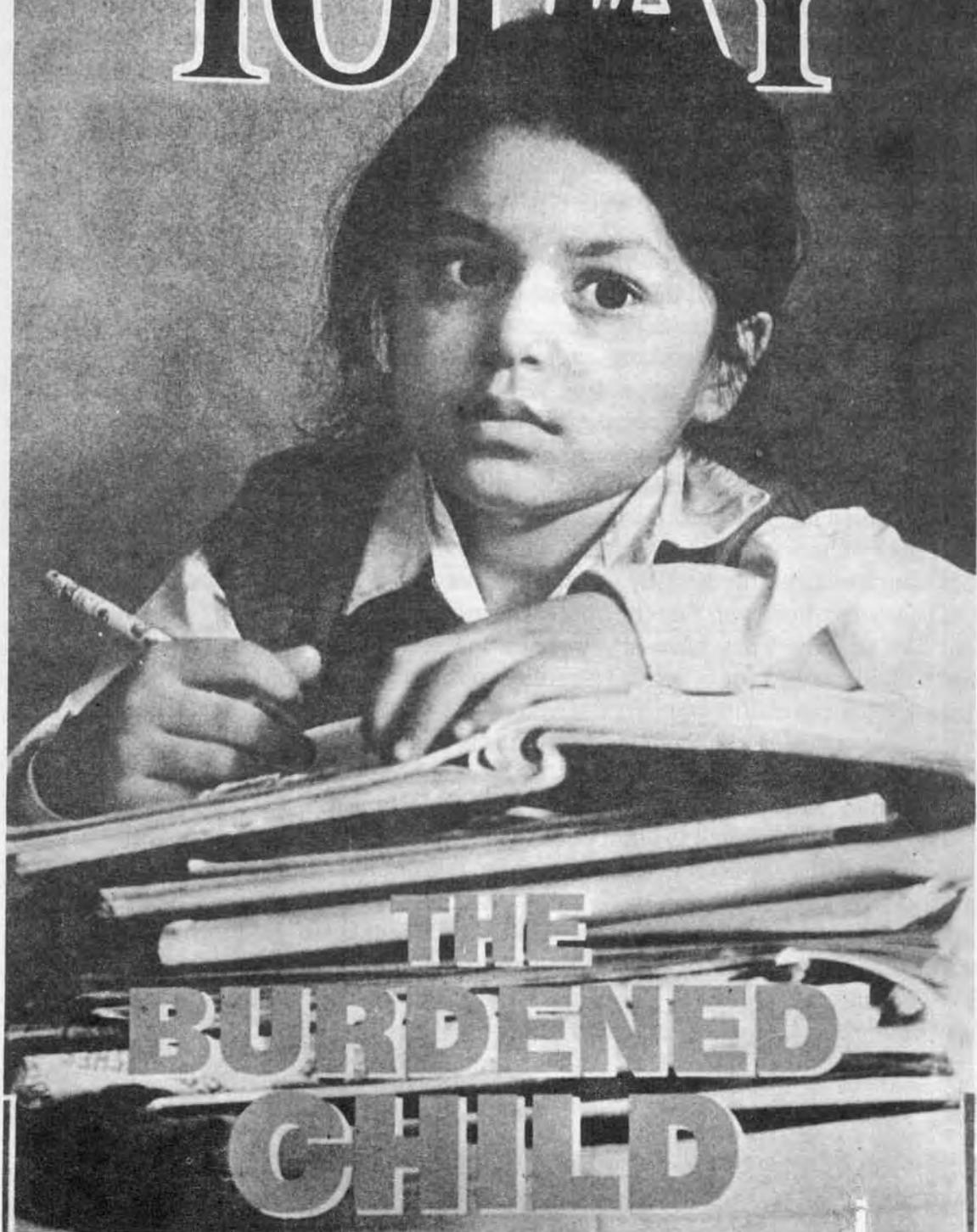
The truth is, however, that the oppressed are not marginals, are not men living "outside" society. They have always been inside – inside the structure which made them "beings for others". The solution is not to "integrate" them into the structure of oppression, but to transform that structure so that they can become "beings for themselves". Such transformation, of course, would undermine the oppressors' purposes; hence their utilization of the banking concept of education to avoid the threat of student conscientization.

The banking approach to adult education, for example, will never propose to students that they consider reality critically. It will deal instead with such vital questions as whether Roger gave green grass to the goat, and insist upon the importance of learning that, on the contrary, Roger gave green grass to the rabbit. The "humanism" of the banking approach masks the effort to turn men into automatons – the very negation of their ontological vocation to be more fully human.

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NOVEMBER 30, 1967

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Those who use the banking approach, knowingly or unknowingly (for there are innumerable well-intentioned bank-clerk teachers who do not realize that they are serving only to dehumanize), fail to perceive that the deposits themselves contain contradictions about reality. But, sooner or later, these contradictions may lead formerly passive students to turn against their domestication and the attempt to domesticate reality. They may discover through existential experience that their present way of life is irreconcilable with their vocation to become fully human. They may perceive through their relations with reality that reality is really a *process*, undergoing constant transformation. If men are searchers and their ontological vocation is humanization, sooner or later they may perceive the contradiction in which banking education seeks to maintain them, and then engage themselves in the struggle for their liberation.

But the humanist, revolutionary educator cannot wait for this possibility to materialize. From the outset, his efforts must coincide with those of the students to engage in critical thinking and the quest for mutual humanization. His efforts must be imbued with a profound trust in men and their creative power. To achieve this, he must be a partner of the students in his relations with them.

The banking concept does not admit to such a partnership – and necessarily so. To resolve the teacher-student contradiction, to exchange the role of depositor, prescriber, domesticator, for the role of student among students would be to undermine the power of oppression and to serve the cause of liberation.

Implicit in the banking concept is the assumption of a dichotomy between man and the world: man is merely *in* the world, not *with* the world or with others; man is spectator, not re-creator. In this view, man is not a conscious being (*corpo consciente*); he is rather the possessor of a consciousness; an empty "mind" passively open to the reception of deposits of reality from the world outside. For example, my desk, my books, my coffee cup, all the objects before me – as bits of the world which surrounds me – would be "inside" me, exactly as I am inside my study right now. This view makes no distinction between being accessible to consciousness and entering consciousness. The distinction, however, is essential: the objects which surround me are simply accessible to my consciousness, not located within it. I am aware of them, but they are not inside me.

It follows logically from the banking notion of consciousness that the educator's role is to regulate the way the world "enters into" the students. His task is to organize a process which already happens spontaneously, to "fill" the students by making deposits of information which he considers constitute true knowledge.¹ And since men "receive" the world as passive entities, education

should make them more passive still, and adapt them to the world. The educated man is the adapted man, because he is more "fit" for the world. Translated into practice, this concept is well suited to the purposes of the oppressors, whose tranquillity rests on how well men fit the world the oppressors have created, and how little they question it.

The more completely the majority adapt to the purposes which the dominant minority prescribe for them (thereby depriving them of the right to their own purposes), the more easily the minority can continue to prescribe. The theory and practice of banking education serve this end quite efficiently. Verbalistic lessons, reading requirements,² the methods for evaluating "knowledge", the distance between the teacher and the taught, the criteria for promotion: everything in this ready-to-wear approach serves to obviate thinking.

The bank-clerk educator does not realize that there is no true security in his hypertrophied role, that one must seek to live *with* others in solidarity. One cannot impose oneself, nor even merely co-exist with one's students. Solidarity requires true communication, and the concept by which such an educator is guided fears and proscribes communication.

Yet only through communication can human life hold meaning. The teacher's thinking is authenticated only by the authenticity of the students' thinking. The teacher cannot think for his students, nor can he impose his thought on them. Authentic thinking, thinking that is concerned about *reality*, does not take place in ivory-tower isolation, but only in communication. If it is true that thought has meaning only when generated by action upon the world, the subordination of students to teachers becomes impossible.

Because banking education begins with a false understanding of men as objects, it cannot promote the development of what Fromm, in *The Heart of Man*, calls "biophilily", but instead produces its opposite: "necrophily".

While life is characterized by growth in a structured, functional manner, the necrophilous person loves all that does not grow, all that is mechanical. The necrophilous person is driven by the desire to transform the organic into the inorganic, to approach life mechanically, as if all living persons were things. . . . Memory, rather than experience; having, rather than being, is what counts. The necrophilous person can relate to an object – a flower or a person – only if he possesses it; hence a threat to his possession is a threat to himself; if he loses possession he loses contact with the world. . . . He loves control, and in the act of controlling he kills life.

Oppression – overwhelming control – is necrophilic; it is nourished by love of death, not life. The banking concept of education, which serves the interests of oppression, is also necrophilic. Based on a mechanistic, static, naturalistic, spatialized view of consciousness, it transforms students into receiving objects.

It attempts to control thinking and action, leads men to adjust to the world, and inhibits their creative power.

When their efforts to act responsibly are frustrated, when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, men suffer. "This suffering due to impotence is rooted in the very fact that the human equilibrium has been disturbed", says Fromm. But the inability to act which causes men's anguish also causes them to reject their impotence, by attempting

... to restore [their] capacity to act. But can [they], and how? One way is to submit to and identify with a person or group having power. By this symbolic participation in another person's life, [men have] the illusion of acting, when in reality [they] only submit to and become a part of those who act.

Populist manifestations perhaps best exemplify this type of behaviour by the oppressed, who, by identifying with charismatic leaders, come to feel that they themselves are active and effective. The rebellion they express as they emerge in the historical process is motivated by that desire to act effectively. The dominant elites consider the remedy to be more domination and repression, carried out in the name of freedom, order and social peace (the peace of the elites, that is). Thus they can condemn – logically, from their point of view – "the violence of a strike by workers and [can] call upon the state in the same breath to use violence in putting down the strike" (Niebuhr's *Moral Man and Immoral Society*).

Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression. This accusation is not made in the naïve hope that the dominant elites will thereby simply abandon the practice. Its objective is to call the attention of true humanists to the fact that they cannot use the methods of banking education in the pursuit of liberation, as they would only negate that pursuit itself. Nor may a revolutionary society inherit these methods from an oppressor society. The revolutionary society which practises banking education is either misguided or mistrustful of men. In either event, it is threatened by the spectre of reaction.

Unfortunately, those who espouse the cause of liberation are themselves surrounded and influenced by the climate which generates the banking concept, and often do not perceive its true significance or its dehumanizing power. Paradoxically, then, they utilize this very instrument of alienation in what they consider an effort to liberate. Indeed, some "revolutionaries" brand as innocents, dreamers, or even reactionaries those who would challenge this educational practice. But one does not liberate men by alienating them. Authentic liberation

– the process of humanization – is not another "deposit" to be made in men. Liberation is a praxis: the action and reflection of men upon their world in order to transform it. Those truly committed to the cause of liberation can accept neither the mechanistic concept of consciousness as an empty vessel to be filled, nor the use of banking methods of domination (propaganda, slogans – deposits) in the name of liberation.

The truly committed must reject the banking concept in its entirety, adopting instead a concept of men as conscious beings, and consciousness as consciousness directed towards the world. They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of men in their relations with the world. "Problem-posing" education, responding to the essence of consciousness – *intentionality* – rejects communiqués and embodies communication. It epitomizes the special characteristic of consciousness: being *conscious of*, not only as intent on objects but as turned in upon itself in a Jaspersian "split" – consciousness as consciousness *of* consciousness.

Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information. It is a learning situation in which the cognizable object (far from being the end of the cognitive act) intermediates the cognitive actors – teacher on the one hand and students on the other. Accordingly, the practice of problem-posing education first of all demands a resolution of the teacher-student contradiction. Dialogical relations – indispensable to the capacity of cognitive actors to cooperate in perceiving the same cognizable object – are otherwise impossible.

Indeed, problem-posing education, breaking the vertical patterns characteristic of banking education, can fulfill its function of being the practice of freedom only if it can overcome the above contradiction. Through dialogue, the teacher-of-the-students and the students-of-the-teacher cease to exist and a new term emerges: teacher-student with students-teachers. The teacher is no longer merely the-one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in their turn while being taught also teach. They become jointly responsible for a process in which all grow. In this process, arguments based on "authority" are no longer valid; in order to function, authority must be *on the side of freedom*, not *against* it. Here, no one teaches another, nor is anyone self-taught. Men teach each other, mediated by the world, by the cognizable objects which in banking education are "owned" by the teacher.

The banking concept (with its tendency to dichotomize everything) distinguishes two stages in the action of the educator. During the first, he cognizes a cognizable object while he prepares his lessons in his study or his laboratory; during the second, he expounds to his students on that object. The

students are not called upon to know, but to memorize the contents narrated by the teacher. Nor do the students practise any act of cognition, since the object towards which that act should be directed is the property of the teacher rather than a medium evoking the critical reflection of both teacher and students. Hence in the name of the "preservation of culture and knowledge" we have a system which achieves neither true knowledge nor true culture.

The problem-posing method does not dichotomize the activity of the teacher-student: he is not "cognitive" at one point and "narrative" at another. He is always "cognitive", whether preparing a project or engaging in dialogue with the students. He does not regard cognizable objects as his private property, but as the object of reflection by himself and the students. In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students – no longer docile listeners – are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. The teacher presents the material to the students for their consideration, and re-examines his earlier considerations as the students express their own. The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of the *doxa* is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of the *logos*.

Whereas banking education anaesthetizes and inhibits creative power, problem-posing education involves a constant unveiling of reality. The former attempts to maintain the *submersion* of consciousness; the latter strives for the *emergence* of consciousness and *critical intervention* in reality.

Students, as they are increasingly faced with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world, will feel increasingly challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge. Because they apprehend the challenge as interrelated to other problems within a total context, not as a theoretical question, the resulting comprehension tends to be increasingly critical and thus constantly less alienated. Their response to the challenge evokes new challenges, followed by new understandings; and gradually the students come to regard themselves as committed.

Education as the practice of freedom – as opposed to education as the practice of domination – denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from men. Authentic reflection considers neither abstract man nor the world without men, but men in their relations with the world. In these relations consciousness and world are simultaneous: consciousness neither precedes the world nor follows it. "*La conscience et le monde sont formés d'un même coup; extérieur par essence à la conscience, le monde est, par essence relatif à elle*", writes

Sartre. In one of our culture circles in Chile, the group was discussing (based on a codification) the anthropological concept of culture. In the midst of the discussion, a peasant who by banking standards was completely ignorant said: "Now I see that without man there is no world." When the educator responded: "Let's say, for the sake of argument, that all the men on earth were to die, but that the earth itself remained, together with trees, birds, animals, rivers, seas, the stars . . . wouldn't all this be a world?" "Oh no," the peasant replied emphatically. "There would be no one to say: 'This is a world'."

The peasant wished to express the idea that there would be lacking the consciousness of the world which necessarily implies the world of consciousness. "I" cannot exist without a "not I". In turn, the "not I" depends on that existence. The world which brings consciousness into existence becomes the world *of* that consciousness. Hence the previously cited affirmation of Sartre: "*La conscience et le monde sont formés d'un même coup.*"

As men, simultaneously reflecting on themselves and on the world, increase the scope of their perception, they begin to direct their observations towards previously inconspicuous phenomena. Husserl writes:

In perception properly so-called, as an explicit awareness [*Gewahren*], I am turned towards the object, to the paper, for instance. I apprehend it as being this here and now. The apprehension is a singling out, every object having a background in experience. Around and about the paper lie books, pencils, ink-well and so forth, and these in a certain sense are also "perceived", perceptually there, in the "field of intuition"; but whilst I was turned towards the paper there was no turning in their direction, nor any apprehending of them, not even in a secondary sense. They appeared and yet were not singled out, were not posited on their own account. Every perception of a thing has such a zone of background intuitions or background awareness, if "intuiting" already includes the state of being turned towards, and this also is a "conscious experience", or more briefly a "consciousness of" all indeed that in point of fact lies in the co-perceived objective background.

That which had existed objectively but had not been perceived in its deeper implications (if indeed it was perceived at all) begins to "stand out", assuming the character of a problem and therefore of challenge. Thus, men begin to single out elements from their "background awarenesses" and to reflect upon them. These elements are now objects of men's consideration, and, as such, objects of their action and cognition.

In problem-posing education, men develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. Although the dialectical relations of men with the world exist

independently of how these relations are perceived (or whether or not they are perceived at all), it is also true that the form of action men adopt is to a large extent a function of how they perceive themselves in the world. Hence, the teacher-student and the students-teachers reflect simultaneously on themselves and the world without dichotomizing this reflection from action, and thus establish an authentic form of thought and action.

Once again, the two educational concepts and practices under analysis come into conflict. Banking education (for obvious reasons) attempts, by mythicizing reality, to conceal certain facts which explain the way men exist in the world; problem-posing education sets itself the task of de-mythologizing. Banking education resists dialogue; problem-posing education regards dialogue as indispensable to the act of cognition which unveils reality. Banking education treats students as objects of assistance; problem-posing education makes them critical thinkers. Banking education inhibits creativity and domesticates (although it cannot completely destroy) the *intentionality* of consciousness by isolating consciousness from the world, thereby denying men their ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human. Problem-posing education bases itself on creativity and stimulates true reflection and action upon reality, thereby responding to the vocation of men as beings who are authentic only when engaged in inquiry and creative transformation. In sum: banking theory and practice, as immobilizing and fixating forces, fail to acknowledge men as historical beings; problem-posing theory and practice take man's historicity as their starting point.

Problem-posing education affirms men as beings in the process of *becoming* – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality. Indeed, in contrast to other animals who are unfinished, but not historical, men know themselves to be unfinished; they are aware of their incompleteness. In this incompleteness and this awareness lie the very roots of education as an exclusively human manifestation. The unfinished character of men and the transformational character of reality necessitate that education be an ongoing activity.

Education is thus constantly remade in the praxis. In order to *be*, it must *become*. Its "duration" (in the Bergsonian meaning of the word) is found in the interplay of the opposites *permanence* and *change*. The banking method emphasizes permanence and becomes reactionary; problem-posing education – which accepts neither a "well-behaved" present nor a predetermined future – roots itself in the dynamic present and becomes revolutionary.

Problem-posing education is revolutionary futurity. Hence it is prophetic (and, as such, hopeful), and so corresponds to the historical nature of man. Thus,



it affirms men as beings who transcend themselves, who move forward and look ahead, for whom immobility represents a fatal threat, for whom looking at the past must only be a means of understanding more clearly what and who they are so that they can more wisely build the future. Hence, it identifies with the movement which engages men as beings aware of their incompleteness – an historical movement which has its point of departure, its subjects and its objective.

The point of departure of the movement lies in men themselves. But since men do not exist apart from the world, apart from reality, the movement must

begin with the men-world relationship. Accordingly, the point of departure must always be with men in the "here and now", which constitutes the situation within which they are submerged, from which they emerge, and in which they intervene. Only by starting from this situation – which determines their perception of it – can they begin to move. To do this authentically they must perceive their state not as fated and unalterable, but merely as limiting – and therefore challenging.

Whereas the banking method directly or indirectly reinforces men's fatalistic perception of their situation, the problem-posing method presents this very situation to them as a problem. As the situation becomes the object of their cognition, the naïve or magical perception which produced their fatalism gives way to perception which is able to perceive itself even as it perceives reality, and can thus be critically objective about that reality.

A deepened consciousness of their situation leads men to apprehend that situation as an historical reality susceptible of transformation. Resignation gives way to the drive for transformation and inquiry, over which men feel themselves in control. If men, as historical beings necessarily engaged with other men in a movement of inquiry, did not control that movement, it would be (and is) a violation of men's humanity. Any situation in which some men prevent others from engaging in the process of inquiry is one of violence. The means used are not important; to alienate men from their own decision-making is to change them into objects.

This movement of inquiry must be directed towards humanization – man's historical vocation. The pursuit of full humanity, however, cannot be carried out in isolation or individualism, but only in fellowship and solidarity; therefore it cannot unfold in the antagonistic relations between oppressors and oppressed. No one can be authentically human while he prevents others from being so. The attempt *to be more* human, individualistically, leads to *having more*, egotistically: a form of dehumanization. Not that it is not fundamental *to have* in order *to be* human. Precisely because it *is* necessary, some men's *having* must not be allowed to constitute an obstacle to others' *having*, to consolidate the power of the former to crush the latter.

Problem-posing education, as a humanist and liberating praxis, posits as fundamental that men subjected to domination must fight for their emancipation. To that end, it enables teachers and students to become subjects of the educational process by overcoming authoritarianism and an alienating intellectualism; it also enables men to overcome their false perception of reality. The world – no longer something to be described with deceptive words – becomes the object of that transforming action by men which results in their humanization.

Problem-posing education does not and cannot serve the interests of the oppressor. No oppressive order could permit the oppressed to begin to question: Why? While only a revolutionary society can carry out this education in systematic terms, the revolutionary leaders need not take full power before they can employ the method. In the revolutionary process, the leaders cannot utilize the banking method as an interim measure, justified on grounds of expediency, with the intention of *later* behaving in a genuinely revolutionary fashion. They must be revolutionary – that is to say, dialogical – from the outset.

From Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1985), pp. 45-59.

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1. This concept corresponds to what Sartre calls the "digestive" or "nutritive" concept of education, in which knowledge is "fed" by the teacher to the students to "fill them out". See Jean-Paul Sartre, "Une idée fondamentale de la phénoménologie de Husserl: l'intentionnalité", *Situations I*.
2. For example, some teachers specify in their reading lists that a book should be read from pages 10 to 15 – and do this to "help" their students!

Biography

Paulo Freire was born in Recife, Brazil, the centre of one of the poorest and most underdeveloped areas in the Third World. As the economic crisis in 1929 in the United States began to affect Brazil, the precarious stability of Freire's middle-class family gave way and he found himself sharing the plight of the "wretched of the earth". He came to know the gnawing pangs of hunger and fell behind in school because of the listlessness it produced. It also led him at the age of eleven to make a vow to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that other

children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing. As he grew up, it became clear to him that one of the main reasons for chronic poverty and the "culture of silence" around it was the educational system. As he studied and experienced the world of education, he applied the insights of many contemporary thinkers and philosophers, such as Sartre, Mounier, Erich Fromm, Louis Althusser, Martin Luther King, Ché Guevera, Unamuno and Marcuse. But he arrived at his own prescription for education, which seeks to respond to the concrete realities of Latin America.

In 1959, Freire presented his philosophy of education in his doctoral dissertation at the University of Recife. Later, he worked as Professor of the History and Philosophy of Education in the same university. His radical methods were widely used in literacy campaigns throughout north-east Brazil. But the old order began to consider him a threat, and he was jailed immediately after the military coup in 1964. Released seventy days later and encouraged to leave the country, Freire went to Chile, where he spent five years working with UNESCO and the Chilean Institute for Agrarian Reform in programmes of adult education. He also acted as consultant at Harvard University's School of Education, and worked in close association with a number of groups engaged in new educational experiments in rural and urban areas.

Although Freire began his career as a Brazilian educator, in the course of a few years his thought and work spread from north-east Brazil to the entire continent, and made a profound impact not just in the field of education but on the overall struggle for national development. Today, the work of Paulo Freire is being gradually acknowledged even in the United States.

Freire has written many articles in Portuguese and Spanish, and his first book, *Educação como Prática da Liberdade*, was published in Brazil in 1967. In 1970, *Cultural Action for Freedom* appeared as the English translation. In this book, he pointed out that learning is not a matter of memorization and repetition, but of reflecting critically on the very processes of reading and writing, and on the profound significance of language itself. In this book he outlined the principles which underlay his highly original and spectacularly successful method of teaching literacy, which sought to challenge the basic concepts that dominated education and culture in the slums and villages of Latin America. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was first published in Great Britain by Sheed and Ward in 1972.

Many people today are writing and thinking about education in radical terms. Ivan D. Illich for instance, in *Deschooling Society* argues that school is one of the major means by which the status quo is preserved. He points out that school is not only inefficient in terms of education, but also profoundly divisive. Everett Reiner, in his book *School is Dead* argues that for most people schools are "institutional props for privilege". He sees as an urgent priority a consideration of alternatives in regard to the content, organization and finance of education and in regard to the very concept of education itself, its nature and possible functions in a future society. UNESCO has spearheaded a radical programme of education in its publication *Learning to Be*. There are other important and radical trends in the educational field today. Against this background Paulo Freire can be considered one of those radical thinkers whose influence may ultimately bring about fundamental changes in our educational system. Freire combines a compassion for the wretched of the earth with intellectual and practical confidence and personal humility.



The Mother

To Parents, Teachers and Pupils

Introduction

The Mother was born in Paris on February 21, 1878, in a very materialistic, upper middle class family. She completed a thorough education of music, painting and higher mathematics. A student of the French painter Gustave

Moreau, she befriended the great Impressionist artists of the time. She later became acquainted with Max Theon, an enigmatic character with extraordinary occult powers who, for the first time, gave her a coherent explanation of the spontaneous experiences occurring since her childhood, and who taught her occultism during two long visits to his estate in Algeria.

In 1914 she visited the city of Pondicherry, which was at that time a French colony, in South India, and met Sri Aurobindo. She returned permanently to Pondicherry in 1920 via Japan and China, and when Sri Aurobindo "withdrew" from outer contact in 1926 to devote himself to the "supramental yoga", she collaborated with him and at the same time organized and developed the Ashram.

The Mother is the author of several books. Prayers and Meditations and On Education are her short but important books. She presided over the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in which hundreds of students studied. The Mother herself taught classes, and her talks to the children constitute a series of nine books entitled Entretiens or Questions and Answers. She also wrote stories and short plays which were staged under her direction. Her plays are symbolic and bring out through meaningful dialogues a profound message.

In 1958, eight years after Sri Aurobindo's departure, she in turn withdrew to her room to come to terms with the problem of evolution. From 1958 to 1973, she slowly uncovered the "Great Passage" to the next species and a new mode of life in matter, and narrated her extraordinary exploration to her closest confidant, Satprem. This tremendous document of 6,000 pages in thirteen volumes is called Mother's Agenda. It is a document of experimental evolution, and goes to the heart of the question of our times. For, whatever the appearances, mankind is not at the end of a civilization but at the end of an evolutionary cycle. Are we going to find the passage to the next species . . . or perish? In 1968, Mother founded Auroville and declared in its Charter that its aim was, inter alia, to be a site of perpetual education and youth that never ages.

We present here a few extracts from the Mother's book On Education. The selected extracts give valuable insights into what parents and teachers should do in regard to education and children. They also give valuable advice to those who are seeking the discovery of the true self and to achieve higher and higher degrees of perfection.



The Science of Living

(To Know Oneself and Control Oneself)

An aimless life is always a miserable life.

Everyone of you should have an aim. But do not forget that on the quality of your aim will depend the quality of your life.

Your aim should be high and wide, generous and disinterested; this will make your life precious to yourself and to others.

But whatever your ideal, it cannot be perfectly realised unless you have realised perfection in yourself.

To work for your perfection the first step is to become conscious of yourself, of the different parts of your being and their respective activities. You must learn to distinguish these different parts one from the other, so that you may find out clearly the origin of the movements that occur in you, the many impulses, reactions and conflicting wills that drive you to action. It is an assiduous study which demands much perseverance and sincerity. For man's nature, specially his mental nature, has a spontaneous tendency to give a favourable explanation for whatever he thinks, feels, says and does. It is only by observing these movements with great care, by bringing them, as it were, before the tribunal of our highest ideal, with a sincere will to submit to its judgment, that we can hope to educate in us a discernment which does not err. For if we truly want to progress and acquire the capacity of knowing the truth of our being, that is to say, the one thing for which we have been really created, that which we can call our mission upon earth, then we must, in a very regular and constant manner, reject from us or eliminate in us whatever contradicts the truth of our existence, whatever is in opposition to it. It is thus that little by little all the parts, all the elements of our being, could be organised into a homogeneous whole around our psychic centre. This work of unification demands a long time to be brought to some degree of perfection. Hence, to accomplish it, we must arm ourselves with patience and endurance, with a determination to prolong our life as far as it is necessary for the success of our endeavour.

As we pursue this labour of purification and unification, we must at the same time take great care to perfect the external and instrumental part of our being. When the higher truth will manifest, it must find in you a mental being supple and rich enough to be able to give to the idea seeking to express itself a form of thought which preserves its force and clarity. This thought, again, when it seeks to clothe itself in words must find in you a sufficient power of expression so that

the words reveal the thought and not deform it. And this formula in which you embody the truth should be made articulate in all your sentiments, all your willings and acts, all the movements of your being. Finally, these movements themselves should, by constant effort, attain their highest perfection.

All this can be realised by means of a fourfold discipline the general outline of which is given here. These four aspects of the discipline do not exclude each other, and can be followed at the same time, indeed it is better to do so. The starting-point is what can be called the psychic discipline. We give the name "psychic" to the psychological centre of our being, the seat within of the highest truth of our existence, that which can know and manifest this truth. It is therefore of capital importance for us to become conscious of its presence within us, to concentrate on this presence and make it a living fact for us and identify ourselves with it.



The Mother on the Ashram Sportsground

Through space and time many methods have been framed to attain this perception and finally to achieve this identification. Some methods are psychological, some religious, some even mechanical. In reality, everyone has to find out that which suits him best, and if one has a sincere and steady aspiration, a persistent and dynamic will, one is sure to meet in one way or another, externally by study and instruction, internally by concentration, meditation, revelation and experience, the help one needs to reach the goal. Only one thing is absolutely indispensable: the will to discover and realise. This discovery and this realisation should be the primary occupation of the being, the pearl of great price which one should acquire at any cost. Whatever you do, whatever your occupation and activity, the will to find the truth of your being and to unite with it must always be living, always present behind all that you do, all that you experience, all that you think.

To complete this movement of inner discovery, it is good not to neglect the mental development. For the mental instrument can be equally a great help or a great hindrance. In its natural state the human mind is always limited in its vision, narrow in its understanding, rigid in its conceptions, and a certain effort is needed to enlarge it, make it supple and deep. Hence, it is very necessary that one should consider everything from as many points of view as possible. There is an exercise in this connection which gives great suppleness and elevation to thought. It is as follows. A clearly formulated thesis is set; against it is opposed the antithesis, formulated with the same precision. Then by careful reflection the problem must be widened or transcended so that a synthesis is found which unites the two contraries in a larger, higher and more comprehensive idea.



A story-day in the Mother's class for children

Many exercises of the same kind can be undertaken; some have a beneficial effect on the character and so possess a double advantage, that of educating the mind and that of establishing control over one's feelings and their results. For example, you must never allow your mind to judge things and people; for the mind is not an instrument of knowledge – it is incapable of finding knowledge – but it must be moved by knowledge. Knowledge belongs to a region much higher than that of the human mind, even beyond the region of pure ideas. The mind has to be made silent and attentive in order to receive knowledge from above and manifest it. For it is an instrument of formation, organisation and action. And it is in these functions that it attains its full value and real utility.

Another practice may be very helpful for the progress of the consciousness. Whenever there is a disagreement on any matter, such as a decision to take, or an act to accomplish, one must not stick to one's own conception or point of view. On the contrary, one must try to understand the other's point of view, put oneself in his place and, instead of quarrelling or even fighting, find out a solution which can reasonably satisfy both parties; there is always one for men of goodwill.

Here must be mentioned the training of the vital. The vital being in us is the seat of impulses and desires, of enthusiasm and violence, of dynamic energy and desperate depression, of passions and revolt. It can set in motion everything, build up and realise, it can also destroy and mar everything. It seems to be, in the human being, the most difficult part to train. It is a long labour requiring great patience, and it demands a perfect sincerity, for without sincerity one will deceive oneself from the very first step, and all endeavour for progress will go in vain. With the collaboration of the vital no realisation seems impossible, no transformation impracticable. But the difficulty lies in securing this constant collaboration. The vital is a good worker, but most often it seeks its own satisfaction. If that is refused, totally or even partially, it gets vexed, sulky and goes on strike; the energy disappears more or less completely and leaves in its place disgust for people and things, discouragement or revolt, depression and dissatisfaction. At these moments one must remain quiet and refuse to act; for it is at such times that one does stupid things and in a few minutes can destroy or spoil what one has gained in months of regular effort, losing thus all the progress made. These crises are of less duration and are less dangerous in the case of those who have established a contact with their psychic being sufficient to keep alive in them the flame of aspiration and the consciousness of the ideal to be realised. They can, with the help of this consciousness, deal with their vital as one deals with a child in revolt, with patience and perseverance showing it the truth and light, endeavouring to convince it and awaken in it the goodwill

which for a moment was veiled. With the help of such patient intervention each crisis can be changed into a new progress, into a further step towards the goal. Progress may be slow, falls may be frequent, but if a courageous will is maintained one is sure to triumph one day and see all difficulties melt and vanish before the radiant consciousness of truth.

Lastly, we must, by means of a rational and clear-seeing physical education, make our body strong and supple so that it may become in the material world a fit instrument for the truth-force which wills to manifest through us.

In fact, the body must not rule, it has to obey. By its very nature it is a docile and faithful servant. Unfortunately it has not often the capacity of discernment with regard to its masters, the mind and the vital. It obeys them blindly, at the cost of its own well-being. The mind with its dogmas, its rigid and arbitrary principles, the vital with its passions, its excesses and dissipations soon do everything to destroy the natural balance of the body and create in it fatigue, exhaustion and disease. It must be freed from this tyranny; that can be done only through a constant union with the psychic centre of the being. The body has a wonderful capacity of adaptation and endurance. It is fit to do so many more things than one can usually imagine. If instead of the ignorant and despotic masters that govern it, it is ruled by the central truth of the being, one will be surprised at what it is capable of doing. Calm and quiet, strong and poised, it will at every minute put forth effort that is demanded of it, for it will have learnt to find rest in action, to recuperate through contact with the universal forces the energies it spends consciously and usefully. In this sound and balanced life a new harmony will manifest in the body, reflecting the harmony of the higher regions which will give it the perfect proportions and the ideal beauty of form. And this harmony will be progressive, for the truth of the being is never static, it is a continual unfolding of a growing, a more and more global and comprehensive perfection. As soon as the body learns to follow the movement of a progressive harmony, it will be possible for it, through a continuous process of transformation, to escape the necessity of disintegration and destruction. Thus the irrevocable law of death will have no reason for existing any more.

As we rise to this degree of perfection which is our goal, we shall perceive that the truth we seek is made up of four major aspects: Love, Knowledge, Power and Beauty. These four attributes of the Truth will spontaneously express themselves in our being. The psychic will be the vehicle of true and pure love, the mind that of infallible knowledge, the vital will manifest an invincible power and strength and the body will be the expression of a perfect beauty and a perfect harmony.

Education

... The majority [of the parents], for various reasons, take very little thought of a true education to be given to children. When they have brought a child into the world, and when they have given him food and satisfied his various material wants by looking more or less carefully to the maintenance of his health, they think they have fully discharged their duty. Later on, they would put him to school and hand over to the teacher the care of his education.

There are other parents who know that their children should receive education and try to give it. But very few among them, even among those who are most serious and sincere, know that the first thing to do, in order to be able to educate the child, is to educate oneself, to become conscious and master of oneself so that one does not set a bad example to one's child. For it is through example that education becomes effective. To say good words, give wise advice to a child has very little effect, if one does not show by one's living example the truth of what one teaches. Sincerity, honesty, straightforwardness, courage, disinterestedness, unselfishness, patience, endurance, perseverance, peace, calm, self-control are all things that are taught infinitely better by example than by beautiful speeches. Parents, you should have a high ideal and act always in accordance with that ideal. You will see little by little your child reflecting this ideal in himself and manifesting spontaneously the qualities you wish to see expressed in his nature. Quite naturally a child has respect and admiration for his parents; unless they are quite unworthy, they will appear always to their children as demigods whom they will seek to imitate as well as they can.

With very few exceptions, parents do not take into account the disastrous influence their defects, impulses, weaknesses, want of self-control have on their children. If you wish to be respected by your child, have respect for yourself and be at every moment worthy of respect. Never be arbitrary, despotic, impatient, ill-tempered. When your child asks you a question, do not answer him by a stupidity or a foolishness, under the pretext that he cannot understand you. You can always make yourself understood if you take sufficient pains for it, and in spite of the popular saying that it is not always good to tell the truth, I affirm that it is always good to tell the truth, only the art consists in telling it in such a way as to make it accessible to the brain of the hearer. In early life, till he is twelve or fourteen, the child's mind is hardly accessible to abstract notions and general ideas. And yet you can train it to understand these things by using concrete images or symbols or parables. Up to a sufficiently advanced age and for some who mentally remain always children, a narrative, a story, a tale told well teaches much more than a heap of theoretical explanations.



PASCAL, The Mother, Auroville 1987



The Mother

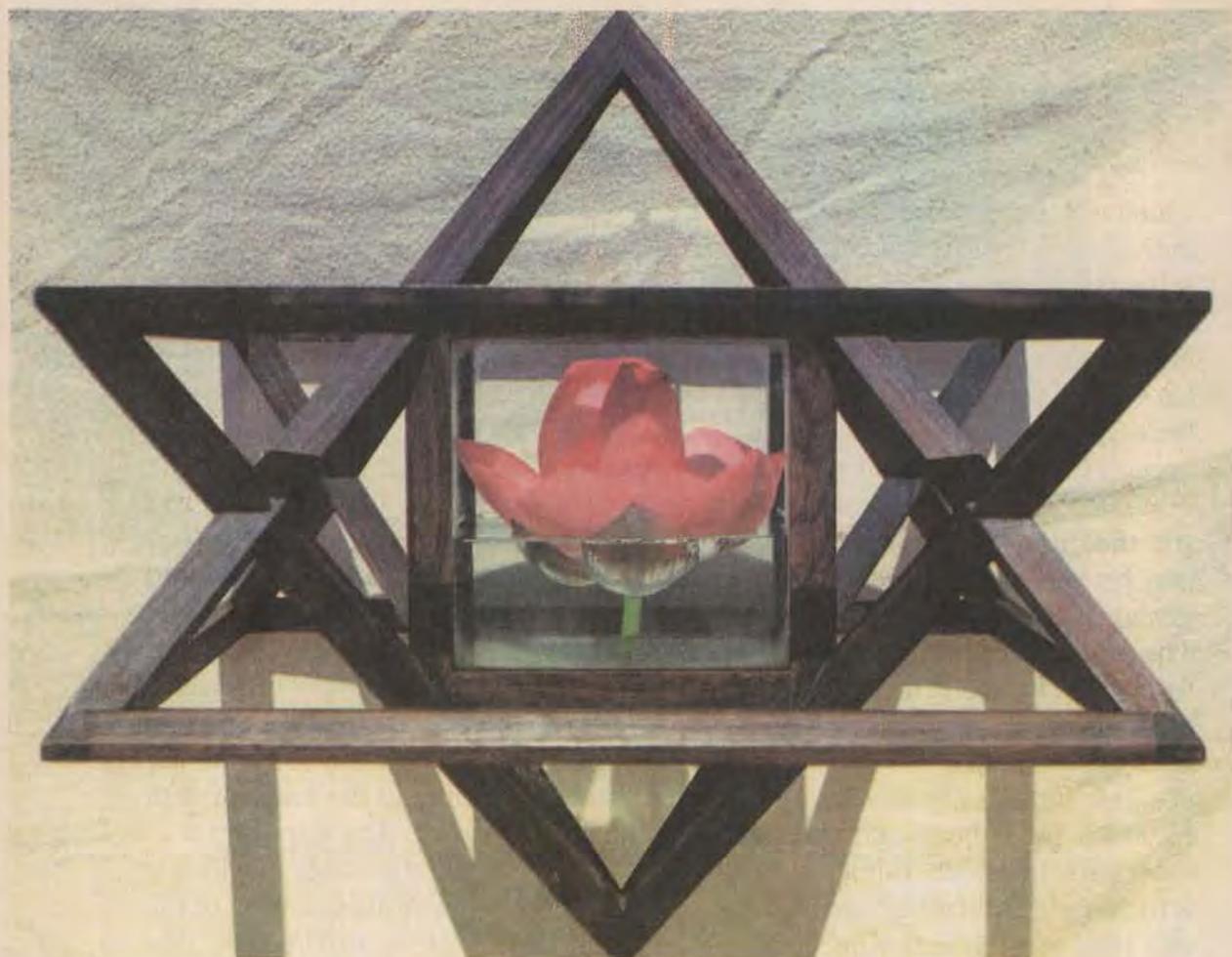
Another pitfall to avoid: do not scold your child except with a definite purpose and only when quite indispensable. A child too often scolded gets hardened to rebuke and no longer attaches much importance to words or severity of tone. Particularly, take care not to rebuke him for a fault which you yourself commit. Children are very keen and clear-sighted observers: they soon find out your weaknesses and note them without pity.

When a child has made a mistake, see that he confesses it to you spontaneously and frankly; and when he has confessed, make him understand with kindness and affection what was wrong in his movement and that he should not repeat it. In any case, never scold him; a fault confessed must be forgiven. You should not allow any fear to slip in between you and your child; fear is a disastrous way to education: invariably it gives birth to dissimulation and falsehood. Only an affection that is discerning, firm yet gentle and a sufficient practical knowledge will create bonds of trust that are indispensable for you to make the education of your child effective. And never forget that you have to surmount yourself always and constantly so as to be at the height of your task and truly fulfil the duty which you owe your child by the mere fact of your having brought him into existence.

Psychic and Spiritual Education

... The three lines of education – physical, vital and mental – deal with that which may be defined as the means of building up the personality, raising the individual out of the amorphous subconscious mass, making it a well-defined self-conscious entity. With psychic education we come to the problem of the true motive of life, the reason of our existence upon earth, the discovery to which life must lead and the result of that discovery: the consecration of the individual to his eternal principle. This discovery very generally is associated with a mystic feeling, a religious life, because it is religions particularly that have been occupied with this aspect of life. But it need not be necessarily so: the mystic notion of God may be replaced by the more philosophical notion of truth and still the discovery will remain essentially the same, only the road leading to it may be taken even by the most intransigent positivist. For mental notions and ideas possess a very secondary importance in preparing one for the psychic life. The important thing is to live the experience: for it carries its own reality and force apart from any theory that may precede or accompany or follow it, because most often theories are mere explanations that are given to oneself in order to have more or less the illusion of knowledge. Man clothes the ideal or the absolute he seeks to attain with different names according to the environment in which he is born and the education he has received. The experience is essentially the same, if it is sincere; it is only the words and phrases in which it is formulated that differ according to the belief and the mental education of the one who has the experience. All formulation is only an approximation that should be progressive and grow in precision as the experience itself becomes more and more precise and coordinated. Still, if we are to give a general outline of psychic education, we must have an idea, however relative it may be, of what we mean by the psychic being. Thus one can say, for example, that the creation of an individual being is the result of the projection, in time and space, of one of the countless possibilities latent in the Supreme Origin of all manifestation which, through the one and universal consciousness, is concretised in the law or the truth of an individual and so becomes by a progressive growth its soul or psychic being.

I stress the point that what I have said here in brief does not profess to be a complete exposition of the reality and does not exhaust the subject – far from it. It is just a summary explanation for a practical purpose so that it can serve as a basis for the education with which we are concerned.



ROLF, The Integral, Auroville 1987

It is through the psychic presence that the truth of an individual being comes into contact with him and the circumstances of his life. In most cases this presence acts, so to say, from behind the veil, unrecognised and unknown; but in some, it is perceptible and its action recognisable; even, in a few among these, the presence becomes tangible and its action quite effective. These go forward in their life with an assurance and a certitude all their own, they are masters of their destiny. It is precisely with a view to obtain this mastery and become conscious of the psychic presence that psychic education has to be pursued. But for that there is need of a special factor, the personal will. For till now, the discovery of the psychic being, the identification with it, has not been among the recognised subjects of education. It is true one can find in special treatises useful

and practical hints on the subject, and also there are persons fortunate enough to meet someone capable of showing the path and giving the necessary help to follow it. More often, however, the attempt is left to one's own personal initiative: the discovery is a personal matter and a great resolution, a strong will and an untiring perseverance are indispensable to reach the goal. Each one must, so to say, chalk out his own path through his own difficulties. The goal is known to some extent; for, most of those who have reached it have described it more or less clearly. But the supreme value of the discovery lies in its spontaneity, its genuineness: that escapes all ordinary mental laws. And this is why anyone wanting to take up the adventure, usually seeks at first some person who has gone through it successfully and is able to sustain him and show him the way. Yet there are some solitary travellers and for them a few general indications may be useful.

The starting-point is to seek in yourself that which is independent of the body and the circumstances of life, which is not born of the mental formation that you have been given, the language you speak, the habits and customs of the environment in which you live, the country where you are born or the age to which you belong. You must find, in the depths of your being, that which carries in it the sense of universality, limitless expansion, termless continuity. Then you decentralise, spread out, enlarge yourself; you begin to live in everything and in all beings; the barriers separating individuals from each other break down. You think in their thoughts, vibrate in their sensations, you feel in their feelings, you live in the life of all. What seemed inert suddenly becomes full of life, stones quicken, plants feel and will and suffer, animals speak in a language more or less inarticulate, but clear and expressive; everything is animated with a marvellous consciousness without time and limit. And this is only one aspect of the psychic realisation. There are many others. All combine in pulling you out of the barriers of your egoism, the walls of your external personality, the impotence of your reactions and the incapacity of your will.

But, as I have already said, the path to come to that realisation is long and difficult, strewn with traps and problems, and to face them demands a determination that must be equal to all test and trial. It is like the explorer's journey through virgin forest, in quest of an unknown land, towards great discovery. The psychic being is also a great discovery to be made requiring at least as much fortitude and endurance as the discovery of new continents. A few words of advice may be useful to one resolved to undertake it:

The first and perhaps the most important point is that the mind is incapable of judging spiritual things. All those who have written on Yogic discipline have said so; but very few are those who have put it into practice and yet, in order to

proceed on the path, it is absolutely indispensable to abstain from all mental opinion and reaction.

Give up all personal seeking for comfort, satisfaction, enjoyment or happiness. Be only a burning fire for progress, take whatever comes to you as a help for progress and make at once the progress required.

Try to take pleasure in all you do, but never do anything for the sake of pleasure.

Never get excited, nervous or agitated. Remain perfectly quiet in the face of all circumstances. And yet be always awake to find out the progress you have still to make and lose no time in making it.

Never take physical happenings at their face value. They are always a clumsy attempt to express something else, the true thing which escapes your superficial understanding.

Never complain of the behaviour of anyone, unless you have the power to change in his nature what makes him act thus; and if you have the power, change him instead of complaining.

Whatever you do, never forget the goal which you have set before you. There is nothing small or big in this enterprise of a great discovery; all things are equally important and can either hasten or delay its success. Thus before you eat, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the food you will take brings to your body the substance necessary to serve as a solid basis for your effort towards the great discovery, and gives it the energy of persistence and perseverance in the effort.

Before you go to bed, concentrate a few seconds in the aspiration that the sleep may restore your fatigued nerves, bring to your brain calmness and quietness, that on waking up you may, with renewed vigour, begin again your journey on the path of the great discovery.

Before you act, concentrate in the will that your action may help, at least not hinder in any way, your march forward towards the great discovery.

When you speak, before the words come out of your mouth, concentrate awhile just long enough to check your words and allow those alone that are absolutely necessary and are not in any way harmful to your progress on the path of the great discovery.

In brief, never forget the purpose and the goal of your life. The will for the great discovery should be always there soaring over you, above what you do and what you are, like a huge bird of light dominating all the movements of your being.

Before the untiring persistence of your effort, an inner door will open suddenly and you will come out into a dazzling splendour that will bring to you

the certitude of immortality, the concrete experience that you have lived always and always shall live, that the external forms alone perish and that these forms are, in relation to what you are in reality, like clothes that are thrown away when worn out. Then you will stand erect freed from all chains and instead of advancing with difficulty under the load of circumstances imposed upon you by nature, borne and suffered by you, if you do not want to be crushed under them, you can walk on straight and firm, conscious of your destiny, master of your life.

And yet this release from all slavery to the flesh, this liberation from all personal attachment is not the supreme fulfilment. There are other steps to climb before you reach the summit. . . .

From *Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on Education* (Pondicherry: 1982) pp. 89-95, 97-99 and 121-27.



A number of books have been used for the preparation of this publication, most of which are mentioned in the bibliography or reference section of each chapter.

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At one time it was thought that the child was a plastic material that could be moulded mechanically according to the designs of the parents or the educator. This gave rise to teacher-oriented education. This situation, however, is rapidly changing. With the advent of progressive movements, such as those pioneered by Montessori and others, education is now tending to be child-oriented. This has also led to a re-thinking of the role of the teacher, and some of the ancient and medieval teachers who practised child-centred or learner-oriented education are being increasingly appreciated. The wisdom of the past and contemporary thinking seem to be converging on several common points that underline the characteristics of good teachers and good pupils.

A good teacher accepts his work as a trust given to him by his station and its duties. He recognizes his own importance while acknowledging its relativity. He suggests but does not impose, he is a friend and a philosopher and a guide; he does not arrogate to himself vain masterhood. Inspired by humility, he looks upon himself as a child leading children.

The journey of the good pupil is difficult and there are tests on the way that he must pass in order to enter new gates of progress. In this journey, sooner rather than later, he comes to learn how to learn, and he employs the principles of learning to educate himself. Sooner rather than later, he comes to learn how to control himself, and he employs the principles of discipline to achieve self-possession and self-mastery. Sooner rather than later, he comes to know his own nature, his psychological make-up, his inclinations, his own strengths and weaknesses, and he employs the principles of self-enlargement to discover his wider self, and ultimately his highest unegoistic psychic and spiritual self, and the means by which the light and power of the self can be made manifest in the physical world.

On such an important and controversial subject as the teacher and the pupil, there cannot be identity or agreement of views. The present book is a compilation of certain selected ideas and accounts from different epochs and different cultural backgrounds. Selections are in a variety of forms. In fact, the compilation is a bouquet, somewhat colourful and hopefully interesting. It might turn out to be instructive to some teachers and pupils – and also to some parents. Some educational thinkers and philosophers may also find here some material that could stimulate their thought.