

Growing Up Sane – Understanding the Conditioned Mind

Are we driving ourselves crazy
trying to be sane?

“The traditional approach to solving the problems of relationship, because it is based on trying to live according to what we think life should be, is the cause of suffering and not the cure.”

“The action we think will free us from conflict is the very action that keeps us in bondage.”

“The act of nonviolence that is based on the ideal is itself violence.”

• From GROWING UP SANE –
Understanding the Conditioned Mind

GROWING UP SANE is concerned with bringing about a sense of order and integrity in thinking and action through creating insight into what cultivates intelligent and ethical behavior.

GROWING UP SANE looks at our relationships and the social institutions we have produced that mold behavior to see what influence these structures have had on the development of the young person. Going beyond these structures, this book examines the Myth of the Individual, delving into the roots of our disorder to look at the fundamental source of conflict – the paradoxical “knot” – within the psyche itself.

This book is not only for the parent or teacher concerned with the education of the young person, but is also for anyone seriously interested in understanding what it means to live a sane and intelligent life.

Growing Up Sane
Understanding the Conditioned Mind

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Man hates something in himself . . . he cannot win over himself unless he kills every individual. The self-hate which goes so closely in hand with self-love is . . . the symbol of man's eternal, bitter warfare with himself.

Excerpt from an interview with John Steinbeck

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FOREWORD

It is with some reservation that I share the forthcoming observations, but I feel it is absolutely necessary to enquire into what it means to live a truly intelligent and sane life.

I am in no way asserting that I am altogether free of the general condition of humanity, free from conditioning or the destructive influences thought has created. As I write this book, it seems as if the opposite is true: that I am a representative of the insanity that is mankind! Enquiring into these matters throws one's own conflict and violence in relationship into bold relief.

To aim for the root of the problem of relationship creates a sense of urgency to change, but not change through time. Time is not a factor. It seems that either one experiences clarity and, hence, understanding immediately – or one does not.

Perhaps many of you may have read books like this one, and may compare it to similar texts. Rest assured that the observations here, stimulated in part by reading other books and listening to others, are nonetheless original. *Original* does not imply that I have invented them or that they have been discovered by me alone, but rather that they are real and firsthand. The observations as presented are easily discernible, and are intended as catalysts for others in their own enquiry.

The danger in writing about this subject is that it is easy to intellectualize, create solutions, and set up ideals, which then become method. This book does not offer conclusions, formulas, or answers; it is not a way to accumulate knowledge about the subject of violence. This book does not call for logical solutions but for *direct perceptions*. It offers *observations* and random collections of insights, which straightforwardly ask factual questions – questions that, by their nature, hold the intellectual or educated mind in abeyance and direct the mind to actually *see* the question that is being asked. Please understand that I am not trying to write the complete

history of psychological thinking on these matters; this is the position of the academician. I am only offering a book with simple observations and some questions on the problems of relationship, the psychological roots thereof, and the social structures thus created. These observations are meant to stimulate enquiry; therefore, in writing these observations, I do not need to go into great depth on each subject. The important thing is to let these observations awaken perception and develop the capacity for insight and enquiry, so that we can intelligently meet the challenges of an insane society and be free of its destructive influences. These observations are not criticisms, opinions, or judgments. The social structures that thought creates can emanate either from intelligence or ignorance, insight, or conditioning. The task here is to fundamentally examine each observation, to see the exact substance. By examining, by enquiring, the mind becomes alert, active, and intelligent.

It is important to approach these complex problems simply, slowly, and with great care. We are conditioned to assume that we cannot understand these problems ourselves, to believe that only an authority figure – the psychologist, priest, or politician – can answer them. This myth prevents us from exploring. We imagine that the problems are far too complicated for the average person to comprehend. I have found that anyone serious enough to give attention to these matters can understand and go beyond them, and that authorities have made the understanding of relationship complex in order to sustain authority. Seeing these truths shattered some basic myths that I carried and has allowed exploration of relationship and myself. Once past the initial barriers, I continued to explore in the same uncomplex, straightforward manner, observing simply the facts of my life, the life of mankind.

As I enquired, I began to understand the problems of relationship, and to see that solutions could be found by exploring the nature and structure of the conditioned mind. I began to recognize the neurotic, knot-like, convoluted patterns of thinking, which have been

unquestioningly programmed into us from birth, resulting in the kind of thinking that causes a habitual destructive reaction to living. In understanding the conditioned mind, I realized that the connection between conditioned thinking and the structures it creates in society produces this destructive pattern in the world. At the same time that I became aware of the relationship between the brain and how thinking patterns the structures in society, I became aware of how these structures reinforce neurotic thinking. By holistic understanding, I began to see the roots of the unconscious influence of conditioning within the human psyche, and as I examined the mechanical nature of society's institutions, I became aware of the deeper parts, the psychological underpinnings. I saw how thought created conditioning in order to change behavior. The structure of thinking is comparative by nature, which is as functional in living as it is in technology. However, in the field of relationship, measurement, comparison, or judgment causes conflict. This rather simple insight uncovered the roots of conflict and violence in relationship. I understood that there was a possibility that man could be free of the destructive influence of conditioning – not just free of the influences of a particular conditioned outward structure, but free of conditioning itself, inwardly. I saw that the fundamental structure of the brain is not unique to me but is common to all people. Conditioning is a universal factor in human beings, and the need to address the problems generated by conditioning is a universal issue. The task, therefore, is to understand conditioning, be aware of how it functions in the brain, and cease habitual, unconscious reactions.

It is very difficult to be aware of conditioning, because we are that conditioning. We may easily see the outward, social structures created by conditioned thinking, but to view the division within the psyche that produces conflict is paradoxically difficult. The root of the problem is the very I who is looking at the problem. That is why it is so important not to intellectualize, nor to create solutions for the "I" to ponder. This creates more of the endless maze of

problem-solving processes that thought has conjured in trying to end the problems thought has created.

I am not asserting anything at this point, or in the rest of this book. I am not asking anyone to believe in anything. On the contrary, it is important to question belief. I only request that these simple observations, mostly stated in the form of questions, be viewed as working hypotheses or challenges to examine the structure and nature of thought – without resorting to authority. And to see where thought has a place in sane living and how, in the form of conditioning, thought creates the destructive problems of relationship. I think it is vitally important in education to help young people understand the totality of their thinking, not only to educate them academically, but also psychologically. In doing so, we will help create sane integrated human beings, mature people capable of questioning intelligently the condition of mankind.

“Be patient towards all that which is
unsolved in your heart
and try to love
the questions themselves.”
- Rilke

INTRODUCTION
The All-American Boy

Dreaming the Impossible Dream

He was an Eagle Scout at the age of twelve, an altar boy at the local Catholic Church, pitcher on the church/ school baseball team, a newsboy with the biggest route in town. "Why, Charlie, he was a nice little boy. And he made a handsome man . . ." He was tall, broad-shouldered, a marine with a crew cut, an architectural engineering student, married to the Queen of the Fair of Needville, Texas, "a nice, uncomplicated sort of guy," fond of children, a Scoutmaster. "Why, I remember last summer when he had to go away, my son cried because Charlie would not be around."

August 1966, in the forenoon of a blazing day, a blond, husky young man strolled into a hardware store in Austin, Texas, and asked for several boxes of rifle ammunition. As he calmly wrote a check in payment, the clerk enquired with friendly curiosity what all the ammunition was for. "To shoot some pigs," the man replied. At the time, the answer seemed innocent enough, for wild pigs still abound not far from the capital. That morning, Charles Whitman bought guns at two more stores and carried this arsenal to the observation deck of the limestone tower that soars 307 feet above the University of Texas campus. From this tower, Austin's tallest edifice, the visitor commands an extraordinary view of the 432-acre campus, with its green mall and red tile roofs, and of the entire capital, ringed by lush farmland. Whitman had visited the tower with his brother ten days before and had taken it all in. Today, though, he had no time for the view; he was too intent on his deadly work.

Charles Joseph Whitman, twenty-five years old, stepped out onto the observation deck of the twenty-seven-story limestone tower of the University of Texas campus. From this dizzying vantage point, the young man

gazed down on Spanish-style buildings, their terra cotta roofs shimmering in 98-degree midday heat. Ant-like figures strolled along Guadalupe Street, the four-lane avenue that Texas University students call “The Drag.” Whitman aimed along the sights of a .30-caliber semi-automatic carbine, and fired. Methodically, he began shooting everyone in sight.

Ranging around the tower’s walk at will, he sent his bullets burning and rasping through the flesh of those on the campus below, then of those who walked or stood or rode as far as three blocks away. By lingering perhaps a moment too long in a classroom or leaving a moment too soon for lunch, they had unwittingly placed themselves within Whitman’s lethal reach. The figures on the drag scattered. Whitman fired again and again, and a hundred times more, before a fusillade of bullets from a police revolver and three shotgun blasts put an end to his life. The ninety-seven-minute orgy of violence had claimed the lives of his mother, his wife, twelve strangers, and an unborn baby. Before he was himself perforated by police bullets, Charles Whitman killed fourteen people and wounded thirty-one – a staggering total of forty-five casualties.

Charles Joseph Whitman, an outstanding student of architectural engineering at the University of Texas, the All-American Boy, seized his grisly fame as the perpetrator of one of the worst mass murders in recent U.S. history.

Like many mass murderers, Charles Whitman had been an exemplary boy, the kind that neighborhood mothers hold up as a model to their own recalcitrant youngsters.

Charles J. Whitman was a man who carefully hid himself behind a sunny face of good nature and warmth. Scores of people were fond of him, but probably only one really knew him well. She was married to him, and she was dead.

When the dead Whitman was brought down from the tower on a cart, his friends were incredulous. A slight, thoughtful boy named Gary Boyd, who had shared classes

with Whitman, said, "That's not the Charlie Whitman I knew. When he got up there he was somebody else."

Boyd was right. The Charlie Whitman he knew did not exist. Boyd saw Whitman as "a real all-American boy." He was big, strong, handsome, neat, hardworking. He was pleasant to be around and interesting to talk with. He spoke ill of no one – except occasionally his father – and he tried to speak well of many people. His grades were excellent. He enjoyed civic work, loved his wife, admired his professors, and seemed to have no enemies.

But he was also a nervous man. He bit his nails to the quick and perspired "rings of sweat on the coldest days." He was a meticulous perfectionist. He worked on engineering projects with passionate intensity, but did not care for engineering, nor did he intend to remain in it.

Charles Whitman was reared to be a good and exemplary young man. He played the part well. Yet, as the news articles point out, under all that goodness he was "oozing with hostility," had terrible headaches, and lived in "fear of his violent impulses." On the surface, he personified the ideal young man, the kind of person most parents would like their child to emulate. He was accepted and regarded as the epitome of the image of success . . . yet, he went berserk!

Why did this young man go insane? What drove Charles Whitman to methodically shoot, wound, or kill, a total of forty-five people? What pressures and influences in his life drove him to this desperate end? The intent of this book is to examine these issues: the societal influences, the pressures that shape our personality and view of life, what goes into the making of the all-American child. This enquiry investigates the basic assumptions, beliefs, and myths which mold character in young people, influences used on children in an effort to raise responsible and sane people – the same influences that have, paradoxically, brought about results opposed to their intention.

This author puts forth the hypothesis that Charles Whitman's education, and the totality of the influences in which he was reared, shaped his character in such a way

that the outcome was a logical extension of his upbringing. The structures that influenced his behavior – being a man, the family, education, religion, the community and nation – all played a part in creating his future and, eventually, his demise.

This book does not focus on the particularly sad life of Charles Whitman; it is not a psychological case study of a “mass murderer.” Its real subject is the general education of all young people, not only in the rearing of the all-American child, but in rearing young people worldwide. The pressures to which Charles Whitman succumbed are pressures that all children face to some degree. Most children cope with social pressures and grow up to lead relatively normal lives. Very few people go to the extreme that Charles Whitman did. Some go insane, removing themselves psychologically from reality by retreating into dreams of a better world or living the agony of their internal horrors. Some of us just go along with our lives as if nothing is wrong, and some find solace in beliefs and structures created to give security. Different people cope in different ways in order to live in an insane world.

The intent of this book is to find out what, fundamentally, causes insanity and global turmoil in the world in which we live, thus creating the possibility of ending it at its root – and to explore the general structures that influence behavior or mold character in self-destructive ways. From this general overview, the enquiry leads us to investigate the specific psychological structure of the root of our discontent. In order to lay the foundation for this enquiry, we must first look at some basic premises: the structure of thought, the nature of conditioning, and the process of enquiry.

(Please Note: This book primarily uses “he,” “him,” or “his” to denote *human being* and is not intended to assert male superiority. Using “he/she,” “him/her,” or “his/hers” continually is obviously awkward, and there is not yet a satisfactory term in English that encompasses

both genders. I apologize to the reader who is offended by this usage and suggest that we look at how conditioning has affected the development of our language – and how language affects our attitudes.)

I

THE STRUCTURE
of
THOUGHT

THE BASIC ALIENATION
OF MAN

Presenting a critique of thought is a precarious process. We tend to intellectualize what is being said, interpreting it according to our own particular brand of conditioning so that it aligns with what we already know – which is memory, the past. A critique or observation must be an actual perception of the movement of thought, in retrospect or – more importantly – at the moment it occurs. In observation there is understanding; we see the thing for what it is, not through analysis but through reality. The danger in analyzing thinking is that we are separate from it: the analyzer and the analyzed. Being separate, we think we can act on thinking that the problem is “out there.” Then it becomes easy for us to lose contact with what we have created, and to deny our relationship with conflict in the world and with the social ills of mankind. Being separated, the brain is isolated, caught in a maze of deceptive, convoluted thinking. Our brain tries to create solutions to problems it created in the first place.

Consequently, we need to be very careful in giving a critique of thought. And, as stated in the Foreword, what is written here is not in any way paraphrasing anyone else, nor is it a clever interpretation of anyone’s thinking. It is a critique based on the direct observation of the mind of the author, a mind that is the human mind, essentially and fundamentally the mind that is everyone’s.

This critique is presented briefly, simply, and is to the point. As long as the reader uses the words as a mirror to observe his or her mind, then he can see beyond this book, and observe what is actually taking place in the mind.

By observing the mind, we begin to understand it’s functioning. First, thinking organizes, then it remembers, compares, measures, and judges; out of this process thought has produced technology and science, which labels, analyzes, and synthesizes the world around it. Obviously, this is a necessary function contributing to mankind’s survival. In creating technology, thinking builds upon itself in a seemingly endless, open-ended process. Knowledge produces more knowledge, which in

turn creates more, and so on.

In science and technology, the comparative nature of thinking creates progress. But what happens when this comparative instrument of the mind is used in the psychological realm to change behavior?

Observe the following example of how thought works: A person is overeating and the mind observes that he has overeaten. In the first moment of perception, there is only that unadulterated observation. Then, in a millisecond, thought enters and creates the judgment, “overeating is bad.” The thinker separates himself from the rest of thought and, by so doing, creates the “I”: the doer, the evaluator, the judger. It is the I that judges what is seen, and labels the fact as good or bad, desirable or undesirable. Judgment is not only a cognitive interpretation but also an emotional reaction. Thought and emotion combined lend greater substance, force, and impact to the judgmental process. In other words, it *feels* real. That is why it becomes imperative to eliminate the undesirable quality; the stronger the emotional reaction, the greater the imperative.

Therefore we can observe that thought as the I judges fact, and by emotional association brings pressure to change what is perceived. Now, how does this change occur? We can observe that thought compares and measures, which is its function. If we are observant, we can see that thought, through the mechanism of comparison and judgment, creates the ideal, which is usually the opposite of the quality that is originally observed. (This process happens so quickly that we need to slow down thinking to observe what is happening.)

If a person is fat, the ideal is to be slim or, in other words, beautiful (which has other connotations such as sexy and desirable). So we see that thought has created judgment, a feeling of discomfort, and an ideal. In the example of body weight, thought next tries to determine the way to become thin and desirable. The obvious way is through diet and/or exercise. The more a person dislikes the way he is, the greater the desire to attain the ideal. The energy generated in this desire for the ideal is termed

motivation. We are motivated in this case to become slim, slender, and beautiful.

Now, let's look at what can happen next in the logical knot-like process of thinking. When we come to the next meal, thought regards food with resistance. It may say, "I am fat and undesirable. I want to be slim, beautiful, and desirable. Food will make me fat (an overgeneralization); therefore, food is bad. I am bad if I eat food because I will become fat, and therefore undesirable. So I must not eat; I must diet. If I eat very little and exercise a lot, I will attain my goal quickly." The problem is that we never attain the ideal image of who we think we should be. The ideal, like a carrot dangled in front of the horse, is always just one step away from being realized. The ideal is always in the future.

There is a compounding problem in this logic: Thought moves from the specific example of not liking to be fat to the association that I am bad if I want to eat. This personality evaluation affects a person's total outlook and, in turn, creates a negative self-image.

By trying to change behavior through judgment or comparison, we find many ideals to emulate. Films, magazines, television all create ideals, and advertisements reinforce this craving for the ideal.

In the case of overeating, we observe that we approach food with resistance and create a "logical" way to deal with it; that is, diet and exercise. But linked to resistance is attachment, the other side of the coin. So we are caught between resisting and being attracted to food. We are caught between hating the way we actually look and craving to look the way we think we should. At this point we can either try to become what we are not by starving ourselves and exercising strenuously, or we can live with the pain of being fat. Some of us, after frantically trying to diet and exercise, give up and resign ourselves to being pleasantly plump.

Can we find another way? If we observe the way thinking works, we see that the above solution brings conflict and unhappiness. Once we understand this, we refrain from judging or creating an ideal to follow. So,

where are we? What is thought doing now that it has realized the folly of judgment and ideals?

There is a pause; thought does not immediately react. What happens in this pause? Thought is quiet; it waits in a state of cautious alertness. What arises in this waiting, or cautious alertness? Waiting, thought acts as a mirror, reflecting in the mind's eye what it sees, without evaluation; thoughts are displayed nonjudgmentally as if on a reviewing screen. It may rerun a scene from the past. At this point, thought can observe itself. In the example of overeating, thought can review the meals eaten that day. The mind's eye may see that we were distracted in some way. Perhaps we were involved in self-criticism or caught up in an idealized self-image, so that we were not aware of what we were eating and therefore overate unconsciously. Perhaps we were distracted by trying to impress the company at the meal and, consequently, overate. If we overeat unconsciously over a long period of time, we do not experience the sensation of feeling full; our sensitivity to the natural sense of well-being is overridden. If we allow this reviewing process to occur, we begin to see situations, which cause overeating. The cause was inattention; we were eating unconsciously because we were distracted. Now, to assert that attention is the solution to the problem is very dangerous. This solution then becomes the method, and we fall back into the original "logic" of judgment and ideals.

Using thinking to review a particular event in retrospect helps us understand what actually occurred. This reviewing process does not involve judgment or create any ideal behavior to follow; hence, there is no conflict between what we are and what we want to be. So thinking can be used either in a destructive or a nondestructive way, in a healthy or unhealthy way.

A more direct way is seeing in the moment what is happening. This is not thinking or remembering; therefore, it is not in time. Seeing in the moment requires no effort – by effort, I mean the process of becoming through judgment and ideals.

By using thinking to review a situation, we begin to

see what actually happens at the moment of occurrence. By thinking nonjudgmentally, we learn when we were inattentive in the moment. But we need to move beyond retrospect into the actual moment, to observe firsthand the immediate occurrence. Looking in the moment, the now, we discover what is happening. In the example of overeating, we observe each mouthful, and we become sensitive to the body's need for nourishment. We notice how thought immediately wants to react, and we do not become trapped by this. By not reacting out of neurotic needs, we are intelligent. Therefore, we eat and exercise naturally and not out of reaction.

The example of overeating is a simple and typical one. It shows the basic structure that creates psychological conflict by a method that creates an ideal. Approaching behavior with judgment is hurtful and painful. This pain or hurt is the "I" who is the creator of the ideal. The emotion reinforces the sense that I, the judge, am real. The I needs to avoid looking at what I does, in order not to experience the hurt and pain of its own judgment. But when we observe without judgment and without the "judge," the associated personal emotional reaction is eliminated. Therefore, observation becomes nonpersonal and is not painful.

We can see that thinking itself is not bad. We must be careful not to judge the judger or to judge thinking! Thinking objectively, that is, nonpersonally, can be instrumental in the healthy understanding of a problem. Yet, to achieve this nonpersonal thinking is difficult, because thought has been conditioned to judge. The puritanical, fundamentalist approach to life, with its harsh approach to changing behavior through judgment, has been trained into us. When judgment ceases, thought can naturally flow from moment to moment. But when judgment begins, we fall into action and reaction, and all the conflict this creates.

Reaction to overeating is one example of the conflict the judgmental method produces in the psychological realm of changing behavior. This book presents many examples of the conflict this basic process creates in the

various structures of society, and traces this process to its roots in the individual psyche. The intention of the observations shared is to show the relationship between unhealthy thinking and its manifestation in social ills – that social conflict has internal psychological roots.

This book presents the hypothesis that social problems have their structural roots in the way we think, and in who or what the thinker is.

II

THE NATURE of CONDITIONING

THE UNWILLING SUSPENSION OF DISBELIEF & THE POWER OF SUGGESTION

Understanding what is meant by *conditioning* is important if we are to investigate the influences that shape the mind. To be conditioned means to have a fixed image of self and life, and thus a prejudiced, static belief system with foregone conclusions about how things should be. Conditioning is the process of inculcating values into a receptive mind. It is the outcome of the power of suggestion. When a child is told something over and over, or sees his parents acting in a particular habitual way, the child forms a view of how life is. This view is reinforced by surrounding and supporting conditions. An obvious example is racial prejudice. When a child grows up in a culture with particular habits and customs, the child's mind becomes accustomed to acting habitually and holding certain attitudes. The child becomes conditioned. He is conditioned because the cultural mode is an automatic reaction to stimuli. If a child has also been told, overtly or subtly, that his culture is superior to another, this orientation becomes part of the child's narrow worldview. The narrow view becomes prejudice, as it is an unconscious habitual reaction. The child has an image of himself as superior to others. This view of self separates the child in his relationship with the rest of the world, and in that division conflict is inevitable.

So the mind develops images of how things are. Associated with these images are feelings and emotional responses. Feeling gives vitality to the image, and a greater sense that the image is really the way things are outside the mind – in reality.

Life is ever changing, but the image remains fixed. Therefore, to uphold the image we must disregard reality and all the variations that go on in life's constant unfoldment. We try to force reality to fit into fixed conclusions, the static image.

This process of conditioning starts at a very early age. A prevalent aspect of conditioning is in regards to gender: The boy is wrapped in a blue blanket, the girl in pink; the boy is treated as a leader, aggressive and strong, while the girl is groomed for her more passive role. It is true that boys and girls are different, naturally. But, we are

conditioning children to behave in a socially determined and predictable manner.

How we are conditioned is a rather simple, straightforward matter. The mind acts in a conditioned, programmed way to punishment and reward. The rather cruel experiments on animals performed by the Russian behavioral psychologist, Ivan Pavlov, demonstrated the fundamentals of conditioning. (His experiments showed that animals, dogs in this case, could be conditioned to salivate even when there was no food presented to them. In the beginning, each time food was given to the dogs, he rang a bell. Eventually, when he rang the bell but gave no food, the dogs responded by salivating as if food were present.) It is relatively easy to condition animals to do what we want. Every circus attests to this conditioning through the use of reward (usually food) or punishment (deprivation or a whip). Conditioning in animals is easy to see; with humans, it is a remarkably similar process. An interesting study filmed for television illustrates the effects of conditioning on children and shows clearly what is meant by conditioning. It demonstrates how easy it is to condition children, how little it takes, and how devastating it can be.

This film about a school in a small midwestern town in the United States was shown in the late 1960s or early '70s. The teacher, a middle-aged woman, expressed that she was tired of the usual methods to teach children about holidays. Like many teachers, for years she had been making decorative holiday displays for her students (9-, 10-, and 11-year-olds), but this year at Thanksgiving she wanted to do something different.

She felt that the children had plenty to be thankful for: food, shelter, health, and many qualities that were taken for granted. This Midwestern town in which the children lived had its share of prejudice against Indians and, since Indians are an integral part of the Thanksgiving celebration, she decided to work with the theme of prejudice. Perhaps she was choosing this quality of life to be thankful for: not having to personally suffer the anguish of prejudice.

The television crew had apparently been in the classroom for some time before the teacher started the experiment, as she and the students didn't seem to notice or be bothered by the filming. All the action was spontaneous; nothing was rehearsed, and the children had been told nothing beforehand. (This experiment is being recounted through memory, so this might not be the actual wording used or sequence of progression.)

One day the teacher, Mrs. Smith, as we will call her, asked the children, "What are we celebrating today?" And the children dutifully responded, "Thanksgiving, Mrs. Smith." She asked, "Isn't today a day to give thanks?" And the children dutifully responded, "Yes, Mrs. Smith." Then she asked another question: "What can we be thankful for?" The children responded to this with various ideas, most of which were standard images children are expected to value. Mrs. Smith then asked the children, "Do you know what prejudice is?" "Yes, Mrs. Smith," the children chimed in unison. Knowing that the children really did not understand prejudice, that they really had not experienced prejudice themselves, she decided to try a simple experiment to show the children what it was really like to be a victim of prejudice.

She asked the class if they would like to try an experiment, like a game, and naturally the children agreed. She asked the students what differences there were, if any, among the children in the class. One child said that some of the children had blue eyes and some had brown. Mrs. Smith then declared that it was a special day, for she realized that children with blue eyes were superior children to those with brown eyes. Blue-eyed children were going to have special privileges: They were allowed extra time at recess and they could drink at the fountain first. She then asked all the blue-eyed children to come to the front of the class because they were special; all brown-eyed children had to sit in back. She passed out armbands to the blue-eyed children to put on the brown-eyed children's arms, just to make sure that everyone could see the difference between the two. The blue-eyed children gleefully put the bands on the

dismayed brown-eyed children.

At this point, Mrs. Smith went about her usual day, doing math, reading, and so on. At one point in the morning of the first day (the experiment lasted two days), she tested the blue-eyed children, the “superior” ones, with math flash cards. The blue-eyed children quickly and accurately responded to the cards, better than they had ever done before. At one point in the testing, Mrs. Smith stopped to ask the children why they felt they were doing so well. One child said, “We feel good and we feel smart.” Another mentioned something about feeling superior, how feeling this way made him do well. Mrs. Smith listened but did not comment, and continued testing. She tested the next group, the brown-eyed children, in the same way with the same cards. It was apparent by the body language alone that there was a marked difference between the two groups: The brown-eyed children sat slumped over in their chairs, looking sad and listless, while the blue-eyed group was energetic, full of answers, sitting actively on the edges of their seats, hands waving excitedly!

The brown-eyed children did poorly on the testing. They seemed apathetic, disinterested, and distracted. When asked by their teacher why this was so, they complained angrily about their “inferior” plight, the fact that they were only brown-eyed and had to wear armbands. Mrs. Smith said little and went on about the business of teaching.

After recess that same morning, the whole class gathered together. Mrs. Smith was trying to find out about a fight that had occurred on the playground. After asking a few questions, it turned out that one of the blue-eyed boys had hit a brown-eyed boy. Mrs. Smith asked the blue-eyed boy, in front of the class, why he had done this. “Because he is brown-eyed,” he said rather sheepishly. Other fights broke out at lunch.

The next morning Mrs. Smith greeted her students as usual. Then she told them that she had an important announcement to make. She said that she had made a mistake the day before by telling the class that blue-eyed

children were superior and brown-eyed children inferior; the opposite of this was actually the truth. It is hard to describe the expressions on those children's faces. The blue-eyed children looked shocked and a bit afraid; the brown-eyed children looked joyous! Mrs. Smith then asked the brown-eyed children to come to the front of the class. She also asked them to take off their armbands and put them on the blue-eyed children, which they did with much glee.

Later that morning, Mrs. Smith tested each group in the same math skills as the day before, using the same equations. The first group, the blue-eyed, had lost their former energetic response. They sat glumly back in their chairs in a stupor. They did poorly, when only yesterday they had done so well. Mrs. Smith asked them why they thought this was happening. They said that they felt tired, disinterested, and distracted. The second group, the brown-eyed children, eager to answer the questions, were full of energy, happy, and performed well on the math test. When asked by the teacher how they felt, they said that they were happy now knowing that they were superior.

As the day came to a close, Mrs. Smith gathered all the children in a circle and sat with them on the floor. Looking seriously at them all, she said, "The past two days were difficult, weren't they?" The children replied in unison, "Yes, Mrs. Smith!" She then asked, "Do you now know what prejudice is?" "Yes, Mrs. Smith!" the children said with great feeling. "Do you want to take off those silly armbands now?" she asked. "Yes, Mrs. Smith!" and they literally tore them off and threw them into the wastepaper basket.

It is difficult to describe how touched the children were by all that had happened. Mrs. Smith started to sing the song, "High Hopes," and the children joined in. The camera went around the circle, focusing on each child; the intensity of those two days shone on their faces. One little girl was half-crying, half-laughing.

It was obvious that those children knew, not only intellectually, but also with their entire being, what prejudice felt like. She had taught them a lesson that they

would probably never forget. By her simple brief experiment, she had shown how easily children can be influenced and how powerful suggestion is; in other words, she had clearly demonstrated the dangers of conditioning. In only two days, Mrs. Smith had taken an average group of happy children and made them unhappy, sullen, distracted, and vengeful. Can you imagine what happens to children in the usual 12 years of education, and add to that the influences of religion, the family, and nation? Mrs. Smith had demonstrated the power of authority to control and manipulate the lives of others. (I was told that Mrs. Smith was fired from her job in that small Midwestern American town, and lost her credential to teach children.)

Psychologists have named this conditioning process *behavior modification*, a cold, clinical word that means what it says. Human beings, like other animals, are susceptible to conditioning; however, the rewards and punishments are different. The psychologist, Carl Rogers, refers to one strong element in conditioning as “conditions of worth”: To condition a child to act, as you want him to, love is often used as the motivating factor. “I love you if . . .” is the stimulus for control.

Obviously, children need guidance and limitation. It is *how* we demonstrate guidance and limitation that is in question here. There are many intelligent ways to help children discover values for sane and healthy living, and sometimes a parent must enforce rules for correct behavior. We must not confuse this with conditioning.

If a person becomes conditioned and acts out of an ideal model of what he thinks he should be, that person is living in the past, locked into programmed patterns of behavior. The intelligent person is alive, active, alert mentally and physically, and responds freshly to the challenge of each moment. Kindness and goodness are not conditioned qualities; they come naturally from a real sense of affection, from the natural response to living.

III
THE PROCESS
of
ENQUIRY

CREATING THE CONDITIONS
FOR LEARNING

Before we investigate the structures that thought has created, it is important to understand how we approach problems.

We have all been educated to various degrees. Some of us have read many books, studied what others have said about relationship, psychology, education, spiritual matters, religion, philosophy, and so on. We have become quite knowledgeable in many areas; perhaps we are too educated. Can we put aside this knowledge so that we can look afresh? Knowledge is the past, stored in memory. Observation is in the present, in perception. Enquiry is the ability to explore in the present while temporarily suspending one's knowledge, opinions, and past reactions.

Enquiry is a journey into the unknown, into the present moment. It is looking directly and simply at living, to see what living is – not what its purpose is or what it should be, but actually looking at our private, inner, hidden life. This life is the fact; what life should be is theoretical and unreal. Projecting what life should be creates conflict between what it actually is and what we want it to be, or what we want to become. In order to perceive the actual truth of life, one cannot intellectualize. Enquiry leads to the simple and straightforward observation of commonplace realities in everyday living. In this process lies the question and the answer, the fact and the understanding of the fact.

Several years ago I was a professor of psychology at the community college and university levels. This gave me an opportunity to explore with others the condition of our lives, looking at what we are doing to create insanity in the world. In teaching, I encountered a fundamental resistance, a double bind that prevented real enquiry. Now I am writing this book on growing up sane. I am still teaching and wondering what will happen to this book, how it will be used. Will I become an authority? I think that if this book is read with the aim of enquiring into life and observing the endless movement of daily living, readers will be fascinated by the constant revelation of it all. But I am reminded of what happened when I taught psychology – the resistances, the conditioned attitudes hindering learning – and yet this is an echo from the past. I hold remembrances in abeyance, yet I am cautious, wondering. I do not put myself above the reader for I, too, have been conditioned to resist, to think I know it all.

I want to share these observations written to a friend while I was teaching psychology:

“There is something I would like to share with you. It has to do with teaching . . . I have found lately that teaching is becoming a burden and I have felt the urge to leave. But before I react, I want to look at, observe, what is happening to make me feel this burden. What I am seeing first is that I’m teaching. What I mean by this is that I’m trying to define the class and its activities by what I think the students need or by what I feel they expect of me. But there seems little, if anything, real in that – it usually feels very uncomfortable, contrived, and there is resistance. Perhaps it might be different if I were teaching biology, but to teach psychology – that is, to teach someone about who they are – seems arrogant and impossible. I do not think I can teach another anything in this regard. And who am I to teach another?”

“I came to class last week prepared to teach but I felt a great pressure of resistance within me. So I stopped and frankly shared with the class what I was feeling – that I no longer wanted to teach. What I feel most comfortable doing (which I have done in the past, but currently feel guilty about) is to just be there in that room as a learner. What I mean is that when I come to a situation with interest, with a genuine movement of enquiry, something happens which I call learning – and that is in the moment, although it can get carried over. What feels natural is when I come together with others, with whatever moves me for that moment – something that happened that day or an issue that is alive in my life or, even better, what happens between us in that room – then, that feels important, real. It seems to me that reality is our curriculum. This means that we are all involved in the movement of reality and, if there is to be discovery, each person has to do his own work, his own seeing, understanding, and learning. Then I feel there is real sharing, learning. There is no division between teacher and student.

“But I feel that there exists in me a resistance to learning together: I should “teach” – after all, I’m getting paid to teach. And there is resistance in others (the ‘students’) because of their conditioning. I should teach them (my conditioning), and they want me to be “the teacher” (their conditioning).

“In being a student, there is a destructive resistance – call it a double bind: two opposing conflicting forces. It goes like this. The student wants the teacher to teach and he may feel lost if the teacher does not fill this role. The student, at the same time, does not want to

be taught, to be told what to learn, how to learn, and so on. So, the classroom becomes the scene of a strange and conflicting relationship, and there is no real learning – unless someone stops and questions this relationship. I remember doing this as a graduate student – stopping in class and questioning the process, the so-called learning relationship. I remember the tremendous resistance from the teacher, and even more from the other students, to looking at what was occurring. Few people really want to know that they are prisoners of conditioning. Few want to see the false, dead, conditioned roles we play out day after day, year after year. It frightens us when someone questions, for then we have to look and see that we have not been living fully.

“So I find myself in this place, in a relationship that is determined by conditioning. I am questioning that. When I question this relationship in class, I find yet another resistance – a third resistance. (1) I want to be taught. I need that structure – to be told what to do, how to think, but (2) I do not want to be taught, and (3) I do not want to look at all this, at the reality of the other resistances. (As a side note: I have been called judgmental and negative when speaking about these observations on relationship. Perhaps this is a part of our defense, a part of the third resistance.) So, I find myself in a strange situation, for if I teach, there is not much learning; if I do not teach, there is resentment; if I question what is, then people leave the class!

“At first students may enter into the questioning because the teacher seems to be asking for this. (He is still teaching, so I will play student.) This attitude most often turns into a polite silence and then students show up less and less, until they no longer come at all. When we meet outside of class, there is usually a polite embarrassment and fumbling of excuses or apologies, and then the feeling of relief in getting back to our distracted routine – and we really never meet.

“So, last week when I came to class, I said that I could no longer teach, but that I felt there could be learning. The only thing I could do was to be honest. And then I became silent and listened to them, half in the hope that I had been heard. I have a feeling I will see less of them. Maybe not. Yet, when people leave each semester, I always wonder what they wanted. And sometimes I feel the pain that we never really met.”

IV
STRUCTURES
in
MOLDING CHARACTER

BASIC INFLUENCES

Conditioning starts when a child enters the world. The boy, the man-child, is favored in most cultures over the girl, the woman child. Is this a carryover from more primitive times when the division of labor put the man in the position of hunter because of his more powerful physical structure? Perhaps the male innately has this hunting tendency, and the female the natural inclination toward homemaking, since she is the bearer of children. But what about conditioning, the positive reinforcement of roles and programmed behavior? What is natural and what is socially determined?

What is the actual relationship of man and woman? It seems that the male dominates through the intimidation of physical strength. And the female has her own dominance, a psychological domination. Is it that each is trying to dominate the other? Is it that each is afraid of the other, afraid of being controlled?

What is love between a man and a woman? Is there sexual exploitation? Does each have an image to fulfill? Is it traditional that she must serve his needs sexually? Does she use sex as a way to manipulate him because his sexual needs seem greater than hers? Has this changed now that women have become more aggressive? Is there real affection in this? Can man and woman live without images of what they should be for each other? Can either be free of the roles they have been taught to play? He is traditionally the person who works out in the world, bringing home money for the family. He is the head, the authority. She typically stays in the home, caring for the house, food, children. Her role is to support him, serve him and their children. Are these functions chosen intelligently? Is there a natural disposition for these roles? There is a need for a division of labor, to fairly divide the chores and tasks of living together and raising a family. Are these natural responsibilities, or conditioned reaction? Might the male naturally gravitate toward a more involved fathering of the children and responsibility for housekeeping? Perhaps the female would be more suited to a vocation outside the home. But isn't all this obvious and simple?

Why do we fight against the opposite sex, blaming him or her for our assumed role? The man is conditioned to regard woman and himself in a certain way, and the woman reacts adversely, but the female, who is also conditioned, primarily raises the man-child! Why can't we observe our fears and openly, affectionately, enquire into our conditioned attitudes without blaming? Most couples live in conventional, conditioned relationships, which lack communication or the exhilarating feeling of mutual freedom. Is it possible to approach each other with intelligence and affection, going beyond the confines of conditioning?

There are people of the same sex who share a full relationship of living together. The word homosexual is a word meaning love of the same sex. A great deal has been written about this relationship, but we are not interested in any psychological, sociological, or historical perspective. We are simply asking some basic questions and looking at this for ourselves.

If a man loves a man, or a woman loves a woman, and they live together as a couple, is this immoral? Is this a moral question? Religious leaders have traditionally condemned this relationship, and the condemnation brings fear, hate, and reaction. Can we suspend any judgment so that we can enquire?

Is a homosexual relationship one of love, or is it a reaction based on hurt or fear of the traditional heterosexual relationship? Or is there something else that brings like gender partners together? Is it biological attraction? Is it needed for self-approval? Raising these questions does not imply that there is something wrong with the homosexual relationship. We only aim to understand whom we are by looking at this relationship, or any relationship, to see if it is intelligent. We must suspend judgment so as to enquire. Judgment accomplishes what it is structured to do: It compares and measures. When thought tries to change behavior, it labels a behavior as bad, and then creates an ideal of goodness to attain. This is the beginning of conflict, the foundation of violence. So there is no judging or moralizing; that is, creating an ideal based on a reaction to immoral behavior. Here we are only interested in understanding.

Is “masculinity” particular to men? Is “femininity” particular to women? Or is masculinity and femininity shared qualities? Do human beings exhibit gender traits according to the particular challenges of living? We need to question the assumption that a man is a man – and a woman, a woman.

OBSERVATIONS ON LOVE

What is love? Love has so many meanings: I love my wife, or my husband; I love my dog; I love to watch television; I love to eat sweets; I love to hike. And now the word love has been popularly portrayed as the symbol of a heart, as in “I love New York” or “I love Cocker Spaniels.”

What is love's relationship to suffering? We suffer because we are caught, unaware, in the conflict of ideals. We seek relief from that state through merging ourselves with another, in forgetting for a moment the anguish of our daily lives. Is this relief from suffering, love?

Is love the fulfilling of another's needs? Is love wanting to get married and have children? What are the myths of love? When a couple join and live together, is this love?

Is love a product of thought?

Can love be something quite simple and unassuming? Is love so complex that we need to expound on its implications in psychological or sociological dissertations? Can we directly observe the simple everyday facts of what love is, or is not? When we define what love is, are we creating an ideal to conform to? Is this producing further conflict? Is this the wrong approach? What is not love? Can we look at that which is called love to see the appropriateness of the term in each case? Finding out what love is not, is this not love?

If we are to look at what love is not, we need to examine jealousy, fear, envy, resentment, and hate – qualities that prevent love.

What is jealousy? We feel this emotion in the body as a sensation, a sickly feeling. Our loved one is attracted to, or getting attention from, someone else. We fear losing the person we love and try to contain them by limiting their behavior. Is this love?

How does jealousy come into being? Is it through comparison? We think that someone else is better looking, more desirable, than we are and that our mate will want that. So, jealousy is born in comparison, in thought. When there is no such thought, is there jealousy?

Is love envy? When we look at what someone else has, such as a beautiful house or car, does our mind covet that? Why do we envy? Is it because we have been deprived of beautiful things, or is it that the mind has been conditioned through magazines, films, television, and commercial advertisements to feel that the other person has what we want?

Can we love when there is fear? It seems that fear pervades most of human relationship. We fear losing our mate, our children, our job, and our sanity. We fear disease, old age, and death. We fear the dark, strangers, planes, elevators, and animals. We are plagued by phobias. To analyze the entire myriad fears would take years. Is it possible to understand *fear itself*?

What is fear – not a particular fear, but fear itself? How does it come into being? What sustains it? Can there be freedom from fear?

What is the relationship between fear and thought?
When one gets hurt, either physically or psychologically,
what happens to that hurt? Is it captured by memory to
be projected in the future and, if so, what does this do? If
there is no memory of hurt, is there fear?

Where does resentment come from? Is resentment anger that we are holding? And does anger that is fixed, locked, become hatred? Hatred seems to be a conclusion: thought caught in a narrow channel, directed towards something that hurt us. Can love exist when the mind is locked in the past?

What is romance? Is it a conditioned, idealized, image of love? Is romance sentiment? Is love sentiment? What is the difference between love and romance? Is it significant to find out what love and romance are, or are these questions merely semantic?

A person grows up and falls in love, then wants to get married and rear children. Has anyone questioned this automatic view? Are we afraid to question, for we may have to stand alone? Are we afraid that if we really look at what love is, we will be lonely, unloved? Isn't there love only when one is truly alone?

OBSERVATIONS ON THE FAMILY

We come into this world with parents and, perhaps, brothers and sisters. This biological situation, called a family, is a fact, a biological fact. We are dependent in early life for care, protection, nutrition, clothing, shelter, and education; it is the responsibility of parents to give their children these basic necessities of life. It is the responsibility of the child to make the best of these givens and to contribute to the family at the level he can, by doing chores and helping with the daily tasks involved in living together. The family unit is dependent on each member upholding his part. When one person isn't responsible or does not cooperate, the whole family suffers. There is a natural and intelligent cooperation and dependency within this structure. When structures are based on intelligence and affection, there is a natural willingness to cooperate. So, why is there so much strife within the family? Why is there disrespect on the part of children towards parents? Why do parents so brutally enforce authority and domination over children? Do we really want to find out, or are we so accustomed to conflict that it has become the norm?

The family often becomes an isolated unit, locked together, creating an unhealthy dependency based on fear, survival, and the extension and preservation of the self. We cannot imagine living outside the seeming security of the family structure, so we are caught in a false allegiance to it. The family can then become a means of mutual exploitation. Perhaps in some tender moments, the fears are forgotten and there is a feeling of harmony and well-being . . . and for all too brief a moment, one feels the love of all humanity.

Is it possible for the family to enquire together into this relationship, the dynamics of living together, without fear of losing the security one has built up in the mind? It is so much easier to live without fear, to live a sane life. We have made life so terribly complex through our fears. And yet life is really such a simple affair when there is intelligence and sensitivity.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE COMMUNITY

The influence of the community is something to consider. Again, our intention is not to criticize. Social structures have a place; they are indispensable for organizing activities for living. We are only trying to determine if a particular structure is conditioning behavior out of fear. When we examine the general influences in our lives, the influences that mold character and development, we see conditioning at work. Our intention is to be free through understanding the influences that structures create, and how they are played out in daily life.

Organizationally, the community, like the family unit, is intrinsically healthy. It serves the purpose of making sure that the basic economic and social requirements of people are met. But are there needs that go beyond the simple requirements of living? Why do we divide ourselves into various groups, each with its own particular idiosyncratic style? Do we seek identity with others according to our own brand of conditioning? How does this affect us?

There are many groups in the community. In America there are many familiar community-oriented groups that have their counterparts in other cultures. Two that particularly influence children are Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. These organizations teach useful skills that young people need, and expose them to the beauty of natural life. They also help children understand how to get along socially, teaching skills that promote courtesy, kindness, and the like. All this is important in rearing children, but is there a subtle ideal created in the process of Scouting? When a child has misbehaved, what helps him to understand his behavior? Is the child pressured to be good, to live according to the dictates of the ethics he recites when pledging to be a Scout? Is goodness a process of understanding or conditioning? When a person repeats, over and over, a quasi-mystical ceremony

that he will be “brave, clean, reverent, kind” and so on, does this promote intelligence, or does it encourage conformity? What impressions are made when a young person is dressed in a militaristic uniform and initiated into a fraternal organization? Young minds are impressionable and fragile. What is society attempting to do through these organizations? Do we believe that children cannot be good without repetitive influence? Are we trying to instill character? What is our view of children? Do we understand that they have the innate capacity to be intelligent, or do we view them as basically ignorant and in need of an ethical education? And what about the adults who dress up in semi-military outfits and act as leaders? What attracts adults to enact ceremonial rituals that influence young people? Is it a tribal instinct that has not been fulfilled?

To be successful, we are asked to believe in ourselves, to develop an image of becoming somebody. This image is one of confidence, and of knowing. The people who are successful in life seem to have developed this affectation, the façade of a person in control. But isn't this an empty and hollow presentation? Why is it so important to cultivate this image, this personality? The game of politics, from elementary school through the Presidency, is largely a personality contest. Wasn't the class president the most popular person in the class, and the one "most likely to succeed"? And we all want to be like that – popular, successful, approved of, and accepted. Why do we need to be accepted? What is the self that desires approval, to be somebody? Do we understand the danger of wanting to be successful?

Education is one of the greatest influences on the mind of a young person, alongside that of his parents and religion. The formal education of a child lasts from the early age of four or five to the age of eighteen or longer if he attends college. It is obvious that a young person needs to learn about mathematics, reading and writing, science, technology, nutrition, and the arts. In cultivating intelligence and sanity, a liberal arts education is valuable; these influences will shape the mind, hopefully in a way that develops the capacity to question and investigate knowledge. What we are concerned about here is the hidden curriculum, the socialization that goes on in classrooms, such as the coercion of a child to salute and pledge allegiance to a flag, a nation, and a particular cultural perspective. The social pressures to conform reinforce this unquestioning allegiance. Blind conditioned conformity is the antithesis of intelligence.

Can we educate the child to be free from fear, free from the constant pursuit of pleasure and the avoidance of pain, free from authority in psychological matters so he can think and act clearly, free from personal ambition and the need to become someone or something?

Can we educate the child in an environment of genuine security, with the freedom to explore without censure, bribery, or punishment?

Can we allow the child to feel creative discontent, to question the way things are, and to bring about necessary changes in the quality of life?

Can we create schools that help the child find out what he loves to do in life?

Can we help the child understand the whole spectrum of knowledge, ranging from the technological to that which has entered the field of relationship? Can we examine, with the child that thinking which creates social ills and conflicting solutions to problems that thinking has created?

What a joy it is to be with people who are intensely interested in exploring conditioning and understanding that which brings about intelligent relationship! There can be no greater work for the educator than dedication to this exploration.

A school can be a vital place for real learning and living; that is, learning and living that creates a sense of well-being, sensitivity, and intelligence. Unfortunately, most education today either reinforces old ways of fitting into the existing society, or it provides lip service to reform. A school can be a learning center where people seriously investigate their lives, and radically change destructive patterns.

If we seriously examined conventional education, we might be perceived of as a threat to that established order. Perhaps this makes us too timid to look. Perhaps, like children, we are afraid we might be called into the Principal's office, so we continue to go along with what we suspect is destructive. Or is it that we don't know what to do? What holds us back? What distracts us from seeing and acting on what we see? What imagined punishments does thought conjure up that prevent us from action?

Isn't there an urgent necessity for change, not to merely reform education, but to radically transform it? Radical means at the root. What *is* the root of the problem?

What is the hidden curriculum in our schools? What are we teaching our children between the lines? For example, when we teach them history, what is our intention? What are students supposed to extract from this subject? Some teachers say that we study history so we can learn from our mistakes. But do we? What can we gain from a political/sociological perspective of human relationship?

When we teach through rote memorization, what are we doing to the child's mind? When tested, does the child answer based on an interested and intelligent understanding of the subject matter, or does he give answers based on what the teacher wants to hear, thus satisfying authority?

There is resistance to learning about ourselves. Why do we tenaciously hold on to our positions in life, our slim vantage points? How and why has education conditioned us to seek security in the products of thought?

Can we teach children about the art of living? We are primarily concerned with teaching academic skills that will help students get a good job and become specialists. But what about life itself? Isn't it important to teach children those skills that will help them understand relationship, and how to survive and cope with the stress of living? Educators maintain that this is a duty of the church, but churches create conflict by moralizing: An ideal is imposed and judgment inflicted. Parents assert that they are too busy to educate the child; they want to leave it up to the professionals. The authority of the administrator, the school board, and the parent, however, regulates the professionals. So who is going to educate the child to be a sane and intelligent person?

Why is “success” so important? Why has education stressed material and personal success above and beyond the other aspects of living? Have we ever asked this question of ourselves and not immediately sought an answer?

Does education help the child to look at life directly without preconception? What is the place of knowledge in living? Can it be destructive? Are educators interested in these questions? Or are these philosophical issues that have no place in our schools?

What are the real basics in education? Most conventional educators feel that the three Rs (reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic) are the foundation of education. But knowledge by itself, without a deeper appreciation of the beauty of life, without aesthetic sensitivity, is founded only on thought, which by its very nature is fragmentary. Isn't perception the real basis of education, the ability to see without prejudice, without distortion?

Can we sit in a schoolyard full of children playing and feel LIFE – that great energy that is seemingly endless and full of passion? What happens to that life after education? Without energy or real passion, we cannot bring about change. How are we going to bring about the necessary energy? What prevents us from being alive?

The most destructive aspect of education is that it teaches the child to become “someone.” This desire creates conflict in the world, emerging as competition with resultant individualism and nationalism. Fragmentation has its roots in self-belief; self-belief has its roots in fear. And fear, self-belief, and fragmentation breed violence.

How can we bring about a new education for our children when we are holding onto the past? We are the products of our education. Can there be an ending of what we know, an emptying of the content of our consciousness, a holding in abeyance of our opinions about how life should be so that we can look anew at what education actually is?

How can teachers see what is essential in education? Do they deeply feel the need for change? Feelings are not sentiment, but a direct connection with living. When this connection is lost, teachers become committed to education, a game of the intellect. Commitment becomes a form of pleasure that produces sorrow. Real commitment is born of the heart and comes naturally when we are in direct contact with the reality of life. Commitment born of thought breeds the arrogance of self-righteousness. It breeds a dangerous conclusion, a dogmatic stance that locks consciousness into a point of view and prevents intelligence.

The house is on fire and we ask how to put it out.

Why do educators endlessly discuss the definition of education or the definition of learning? Why has education become so difficult, so far removed from the reality of everyday life?

Mostly, children are sheltered from the realities of living and are not allowed to watch adults – their teachers and parents – deal with the challenges of relationship. We do not allow children to see us as people. They sense our struggle and become anxious about it. They hear our arguments but do not know what causes them. These problems of relationship should be part of a living curriculum, a curriculum that helps children understand the process of problem solving.

Education cannot be based on theory or on someone's philosophy. If it is, then the theory or authority becomes more important than the child's welfare. If education is based on someone's theory, then educators lose their initiative to discover what learning is. We can easily follow the ideal because it sounds so appealing on paper. In practice, it becomes rote and stale. Education must be based on life and not on a theory about life.

Traditionally in our society, academic excellence has been a method to encourage young people to compete for the best colleges, the best jobs, and so on. Can academic excellence be the principal foundation of a school and, at the same time, sustain the essence of self-understanding? The necessary abilities to think, write, communicate clearly and intelligently; the scientific and technological skills needed for survival; and academic subjects such as history, psychology, sociology, literature, and art can demonstrate to the student how people have created the society in which we live. Academics can mirror realistically who we are and, if we look carefully, we will know what has occurred. By doing so, we create the possibility of freeing ourselves from the conditioned conventions of society. In this way, students can become intelligent, rather than conditioned by knowledge. If people are serious, everything becomes a tool for self-discovery. Academic excellence does not become a problem if we keep the whole issue of relationship in view.

Education is not only technological and academic; it involves the total life of the human being. In order to live responsibly, we need to understand our relationship to the whole of humanity and to nature. Educating children, therefore, should include an appreciation of the forces of the natural world, and the healing and life-giving properties contained therein. Children also need to know about simple, everyday skills for survival, and skills – such as weaving, pottery, and other crafts – that involve the combination of hands and mind. Education is so often imbalanced in its concern for traditional academics over the general well-being of the child.

We talk about the necessity of having an educated mind, and many people feel this means to be steeped in a classical understanding of the world; that is, to be educated in knowledge, in the cultural, historical sense. Knowledge has a place in the fields of science and technology, but academic subjects have been taught in ways that confuse our perception, conditioning us to view life in a particular way. Academics need to be presented in ways that enlighten us to the actual condition of the world, to the fundamental issues of violence in relationship.

Academics contain the story of mankind, and mirror who we are and what we have created. If we have a fundamental understanding of living that demonstrates the roots of our discontent, then the information we absorb about the world, and the maze of views scholars present, are in perspective. Without this fundamental perspective, we can easily get lost in a sea of confusion – the confusion being the world as it is. Can knowledge be integrated with understanding; can learning reflect insight? The educated mind has no conflict with the advancement of knowledge in the pursuit of technological achievement, because there is no contradiction therein. In the educated mind, knowledge enhances relationship; there is understanding of where knowledge is constructive and where it causes breakdown in relationship.

True learning can only take place when there is an understanding of the difference between the content of knowledge and its structure.

Why do we force the child to learn? Why do we battle with the student? Have we created the right environment for learning? There is a traditional division and tension between teacher and student. Can school be a place where the teacher and student explore their relationship to the world together? Can they discover the importance of understanding the influences that have conditioned their thinking, and be free of them? When a teacher asserts his authority over a student, forcing conformation to an established pattern of thinking, that teacher is destroying the student's natural sense of intelligence and ability to think independently. The child senses something is wrong and rebels, or conforms out of fear. Can we refrain from forcing the minds of children to conform, to fear? In order to do this, the educator has to be free of the need to condition the child, free to explore his own motives in educating children. To create an educational environment that is harmonious requires intelligence and the absence of fear.

Understanding conditioning is fundamental to a total education; that is, understanding how the brain gets caught in past knowledge that is fixed. Why aren't we addressing this in the classroom and at home? Is it that we do not understand this urgent challenge, that we are mesmerized by all the various distractions we have created in our confusion? What keeps us from coming into direct contact with conditioning and actually seeing it? Is it fear of discovering what we are because we have judgments about it? Is it that we have images that we are other than what we are, images that are in conflict with our actual lives? Do we lack energy because of a mismatched image, a role that we are trying to fill? Is it that we want to avoid the pain we feel, so we create distractions in an attempt to experience pleasure?

The real work of a school is in understanding the limitations of knowledge, understanding how knowledge creates the self and how the self creates structures in society that produce conflict. Observing the roots of self, of knowledge, of thought as the “me” – and the educational, political, and religious structures created by thought – has a tremendous effect on relationship. The existing structure cannot hold up under such scrutiny. The intent of education is to examine the whole of life, to be aware of the relationship we have to each other and to the world, to understand what this relationship is and upon what it is founded. Then we can act with integrity, with undivided attention, in bringing an end to the problems of living.

What is the place of religion in our lives? Has it produced intelligent relationships between people? What is the fundamental structure of religious practice? Does the conventional approach of religious practice produce order and well-being in society, or does it paradoxically create disorder and suffering? Is there a difference between religious practice and the religious mind? Can we examine these questions without reaction, without agreeing or disagreeing? What we are interested in is the actual function of religion, not what it should or should not be. We are interested only in seeing reality, not in living in illusions, hopes, or beliefs about reality.

The view that humans are born in original sin is a strongly held idea. This view creates the belief that a child is innately immoral and, therefore, in need of moral education; thus the need for establishing the ideal and a way to enforce standards. All this creates conflict, which is violence. It seems that the very process of creating goodness brings about its opposite.

How does goodness come about? How do we rear well-mannered young people without destroying their initiative and without creating the conflict of the ideal?

The definition of religion (quoted from the American College Dictionary) is: “The quest for the values of the ideal life, involving three phases: the ideal, the practices for attaining the values of the ideal, and the theology or world view relating the quest to the environing universe.” Also: “Recognition on the part of man of a controlling superhuman power entitled to obedience, reverence, and worship.” It appears that what we call religion, under the guise of peace and brotherhood, actually creates violence and fragmentation. Can we observe for ourselves to see if living according to “religion” is a self-destructive process? By living according to an ideal, we create the image of perfect behavior, often personified by a cultural hero such as Christ or Buddha. But to live the ideal we must first judge what we are. If we are greedy, lustful, or arrogant, this is perceived to be bad or evil. And then the opposite is conceived – the ideal of good. The process of attaining the good negates the bad, but the bad is ourselves, what we actually are. The good is what we think we should be, but it is what we are not. So, in order to completely live the illusion of what we should be, we must completely negate or destroy ourselves. To be completely good is to completely eliminate the bad, and there we have the glorified struggle between good and evil, or God and the Devil.

The Christian religion is founded on suffering, its primary images being those of agony and torment. Apparently in an effort to alleviate human misery, religion promises redemption through living according to its dictates. Paradoxically, suffering is compounded by the imposition of ideals.

Why do we fear death? Is death the unknown? Why do we fear the unknown? Or, when we fear death, are we fearing what we have been conditioned to believe as real?

Religious leaders, like master psychologists, manipulate thought until a person becomes trapped in his own convoluted thinking. The use of guilt and redemption is one example. We feel guilty, which involves the mind's capacity to remember, then judge our actions, and finally fix that judgment in the mind. This is called conscience. We are then reminded by the mind that certain actions we have taken are bad and we feel the pain of that. But we do not know how to relieve ourselves of that remembrance. The religious leader asserts, "Confess your sins and He, through my transmission, will forgive you." And we believe this because we have not looked at how thought works. Can we see how ignorance creates authority and how authority robs us of the energy to look for ourselves?

Some people think that there is a God, a force that pervades all beings, uniting everyone in a harmonious whole. Is this wishful thinking? The fact is, we are divided, isolated, and therefore not in harmony.

All thought is a fantasy.

Thought is not reality.

Religious belief creates self-consciousness, guides behavior, and acts as the authority in decision making. This is conscience, the internal recognition of right and wrong concerning actions and motives. According to traditional religious thinking, it is this faculty that should determine the moral quality of our decisions. To understand the quality of our actions, we must measure the action, comparing it to a standard of right or wrong based upon conclusions from the past, upon belief. However, observation allows us to understand our actions without judgment and comparison. Observation is immediate insight; it is the quality of learning that is intelligence. This learning is not based on ideals, however noble, but on understanding the fact. Understanding through observation is learning firsthand; it is grasping the essence of reality immediately, without interpretation based on belief or the authority of another. Belief is secondhand information that has become fixed in the mind, masquerading as truth. It depends upon leaders who act as interpreters for those beliefs, and leaders each have their own system of interpretation, their own idiosyncratic way of disseminating information according to their cultural and social conditioning. When we act from belief, we create the conflict of ideals, and the conflict of living according to the dictates of inward or outward authority. When one acts from observation, from learning that emanates from insight, then we are free, intelligent, and creative.

Guilt has been used in religion as a motivating factor. When we have done something that does not measure up to the standard of correct behavior, and then guilt becomes active. We suffer the memories of our wrong actions and, if we are of a certain religious persuasion, seek forgiveness. We confess the deed, which is a sin, according to the moral codes of our accepted belief system, to an authority – the interpreter, the one who knows. This giving of authority denies our own intelligence, the understanding of a problem through insight.

Do ideals create their opposite? Does the saint create the sinner, and the priest creates the derelict? Does the system of capitalism, of individual gain through competition, create the welfare state? Does the worship of goodness, of God, create destruction and evil?

Judgment prevents understanding for it creates the illusion that change can be brought about through ideals.

Man's search for the Divine has become a form of narcissism, creating images of the ideal world ruled by a personification of the Self as Deity. Religious art depicts our wildest desires of wanting to be what we are not.

Is religion a reflection of the world's confusion? When we enter the church, temple, or mosque, are we subjected to influences that hypnotize the mind, creating a house of mirrors? The idols, the images of suffering and salvation, the personification of our fears and hopes – are these the creations of the confused mind in search of security and justification? It has been wisely said, “All is vanity.”

Does it takes years to understand that religion is fundamentally a destructive process? Can we see this simply, immediately, through our own observation? Do we have to read books and consult with authorities to find the truth of this? Can we enter the church or temple and, upon seeing the confusion, move away from it? Can we see the danger? If we can see the danger of religion and conditioned thinking, can we act immediately, as if confronting a dangerous animal? What traps us in the confusion? Can we see the truth or falseness in what is being said? Or are we still undecided? Perhaps we are personally reacting to what is written, believing that it is opinion.

Can we examine this book without forming conclusions, without arguing or asserting our views? Can we look at the practice of religion as if for the first time, without the prejudice and identification of our conditioning?

Is religion based on authority, on the belief that someone or something knows what is right for us and can tell us what to do? Is religion a form of craving to be good? Is that a form of pleasure? Is moral training immoral because it is based on desire? Is traditional ethical action destructive because it is based on ideals? Is religion a form of self-flattery since it rewards us for the desire to be what we think we should be?

The Christian religion is founded on Christ suffering for our sins. But, in actuality, who is suffering? Psychologically, what is the entity that suffers? Doesn't suffering come about through the comparison of ourselves with a symbolic figure such as Christ? Christ is the model of perfection and we are not that, so therefore we are lacking; we suffer because we do not measure up to the ideal. The ideal is always a statement of future expectation, and there is disappointment and frustration in not being able to obtain the unobtainable. Isn't it thought in the form of self-image that causes suffering? To project need into what is called "God" is hiding from fact in thoughts that the mind has conjured up because it is afraid.

We are told to have faith and hope. But what are faith and hope? Isn't faith holding onto a belief, no matter what happens? And hope is wishful thinking, expecting problems and suffering to end sometime in the future. We do not see that we are the makers of our suffering and that faith and hope only reinforce and maintain suffering. The action we think will free us is the very action that keeps us in bondage.

Why do we pray? What is prayer? We think we are speaking to someone or something who will save us from suffering. We repeat arcane words that we hope will perform some miracle that will radically change the way we live. But we are actually contributing to the confusion, entwining ourselves in an endless maze of convoluted, self-destructive thinking.

Why do we think of suffering as *our* suffering? Is suffering personal? What makes it personal? Is it the condition of the whole of mankind? Is suffering something in the world, or is it an outcome of the way we think? Are we the helpless victims of uncontrollable forces, or do we generate our pain? What is our responsibility in understanding suffering?

Is the biblical story of the Garden of Eden a metaphor for the destructive nature of knowledge and belief that destroys innocence and brings forth self-consciousness? Aren't belief and self-importance an extension of man's desires? Do we renounce life in favor of the desire to perpetuate the self? Why do we need to believe in anything?

Is there a difference between the established practice of religious worship and the nature of a religious mind?

What is the nature of the religious mind? Is it one that is conditioned, steeped in ritual and belief? Or is it a mind that is free to discern, to see into the heart of things – a mind that is clear, balanced, integrated, and sane? Does the religious mind create ideals to live by? Does it conform to the ideal? Is it full of self-pity, the sorrow created in self-hatred? Does it seek security in the projection of its own fears?

Can we understand the need to cultivate a religious mind, a mind free of conditioned thinking, a mind concerned with understanding life as a whole? Our minds are steeped in dogma, in assertions about the right way to live. We impose our particular brand of morality upon the impressionable young mind. Can we see the danger of this?

How can we educate children to be kind, sensitive, and well-mannered without using force or coercion? Religious education is vitally important to our growth, yet it has become an ominous tool of conditioning. Can we, instead, nurture the religious quality so the mind can remain intelligent, alert, and enquiring? This quality is essential to sane living.

What does it mean to be American, Russian, African, English, or Mexican? We are born in different geographical parts of the globe, and into a political world, divided by custom. And with this we inherit a psychological world that identifies with the political fragment. This is not illusory or theoretical: It is a fact of our everyday lives.

In culture we create hierarchy. At the top of this pyramidal structure we place God, with each culture having its own particular view of God. Then on down the chain of command. In the Western world, we have the saint or mystic; the priest who acts as interpreter of God and the saints; the king/queen or President; the teacher; the business person; sports person; laborer; etc. For people to live and work together, organization is absolutely necessary for order, efficiency, and survival. But why have we become so identified with the status that each level brings? Why do we want to feel superior to the next group? Why do we want to climb the ladder to be on the top?

So, we have the class structure: the king/queen, the aristocracy, the upper-middle class, the middle class, the working class, the lower class or peasants, and the outcasts. Honestly, with which do you identify? Why? Aren't these divisions destructive, creating conflict individually and collectively? Haven't wars been started over these structures, each group collectively identifying with a particular rung on the ladder, each tenaciously holding on to its position in life? And don't we all wear, overtly or subtly, the costumes of our class, the look of our station in life?

When we force the child through punishment, reward, or intimidation to unquestioningly repeat a series of words pledging allegiance to a flag representing our political fragment, are we denying that child's intelligence? Could young men just out of high school kill men, women, and children in war if this type of conditioning did not indoctrinate them? Conditioning, blind allegiance, and unquestioned faith are occurring at the moment the child puts his or her hand over the heart and speaks those terrifying words.

What does patriotism really mean? We reward heroic acts and prize patriotism. We believe that peace comes through patriotism and honor the memory of past war heroes in the name of peace. But isn't the opposite created? Holding on to the past creates the past in the present and future! This memory is fear and we protect ourselves by hiding behind barricades and developing a strong defensive stance with tanks and guns. But isn't this need for defense created inwardly by fear of past wars? This need is then manifested outwardly as nationalistic military defense, creating boundaries around me, my people, my country. The greater the memory, the greater the fear and, hence, the greater the defense. And we all participate! Inwardly we hold on to our fears and, in so doing, isolate ourselves from other human beings, projecting our fears outwardly. "They" become the enemy. The Americans fear the Russians, the Russians fear the Americans; the Arabs fear the Israelis, the Israelis fear the Arabs; and so on. We must see that the solution to preventing future wars by honoring the memory of past wars and war dead creates wars! The very act of prevention is itself the cause. And the ones we honor, the patriots, are the most desperate, confused, and highly conditioned, believing fervently in the nation and culture above all else.

Fear and the need to defend, as manifested nationally in the armed forces, are rooted in the divided individual psyche. The real work is to see this connection, to go to the heart of the matter and free ourselves. Political reform, like all social reform, only temporarily changes behavior. It will reappear again in another form having the same basic characteristics, the same intent.

What is the place of economics in relationship, in the organization of activities of people living together? Money is a convenient means of exchange. Before money, there were other currencies: gold, precious stones, etc. And before this, we bartered: a lamb for a goat. If we were free of fear, economics would have a very small place in living. But because we are fearful, divided and, hence, in a state of conflict, economics has taken a central position in life.

Have you ever really looked at a sample of your nation's currency? Have you ever compared it to a bill of similar value from another country? What happens when you look at your country's money? What feelings does it evoke; what sensations does the body experience? Then look at the other bill, the one from another country. Do you get the same sensations? Tear yours in half. What happens then? Tear the other in half. What is the difference in feeling? Give both to a very young child and watch what happens. Has the mind been conditioned in its response to those pieces of paper? How many millions of people have died because of this conditioning? Is this sane?

What is the intelligent way to regard economics? There are sufficient basic necessities on the earth for everyone, but nations stockpile food supplies while people starve. Some say this enhances the economics of the country. The fact is: People starve and there is plenty.

Maintaining a healthy economic balance of food, clothing, and shelter requires intelligence. Is it intelligent to have many children in an area that is burdened economically? Should we consider the whole when deciding whether to conceive offspring? We give birth to children to extend the family lineage, or because we assume parenthood as part of our cultural role, or for entertainment. We need to carefully consider the global implications of bringing more children into life.

Can we look simply at this thing called politics – what it actually is, not what it should be? The only way to understand something is to approach it as it is, factually, not to create an ideal. We can understand large problems by approaching them as if they are small; to understand small problems, we can approach them as if they are large.

What is the need for politics? The educated person, the scholar, the political scientist, may consider this question childish, naïve, and oversimplified. This reminds one of the story about the emperor who wore no clothes. The only one who asked why was a child.

Does the politician understand relationship? Does the politician understand what causes conflict in our daily lives? Can the politician solve social problems? Or, by the very fact of his authority, is he sustaining them? If the politician cannot answer basic human questions, who can?

Why does each nation have its heroes? Why are heroes necessary? Do countries have heroes because they want an ideal image for their people to emulate? Is emulation of a hero who exemplifies virtuous behavior necessary in the education of young people? Are leaders attempting to create behavior that conforms by presenting us with an ideal to imitate? Is the hero real or do we create him?

Why do we need to compete? Some people say that competition is necessary in order to achieve the best results. This speaks poorly of the ability of people to produce products because they love what they are doing, because they are craftspeople. Competition is a waste of human energy, for it endlessly duplicates consumer products. To produce a good car, we do not need to create hundreds of models, each one intended to be the most successful, each one in danger of failing financially. Captains of industry draw up battle plans for marketing products. We are at war commercially and the generals are presidents of companies. Why? Mature human beings are in fierce rivalry over toothpaste and bottles of colored sugar water!

Avoiding taking responsibility for our problems, we create fairy tales of kings and queens, princes and princesses, gods and goddesses who will somehow save us from ourselves. We create grand pageantry, great pomp and circumstance, to glorify our dependency on leaders who tell us what to do.

The height of illusion is the actor as president. The politician is the one with the winning personality who can, like an actor, project himself into the mind of the public as a confident, capable administrator of the national business. But it is all illusion: the image of success, the rhetoric, and the psychobabble that the politician invents. Like the high school valedictory, words are sounded that seem important but are only empty ideals.

We are living in a dream, an illusion of an ideal world – and, in doing so, we are destroying ourselves. Each group has become identified with the particular ideal of the country in which they live. Idiosyncrasy of belief further isolates people, even though they are collectively identified under one flag. When expectations are not met, we become depressed, cynical, frustrated, lonely, and more and more isolated. The ideal is always in the future, never to be realized, because it is only a thought and not reality. Like the horse, we are forever chasing the carrot, never being able to enjoy its flavor because it is always just out of reach.

Fragments emanate from within because we are fundamentally divided. This fragmentation is manifested outwardly as nationalism, my country against yours. We identify with the fragment and, in so doing, perpetuate conflict in the world. Then the mind invents a means of becoming whole – another ideal, producing more conflict. The United Nations is our means of bringing fragments together, to unite divided groups into one harmonious world. However, the very name United Nations is an oxymoron, a contradiction in terms. How can human beings resolve conflict when each is identified with a particular fragment? Only when each person understands the cause of division within and ends it can there be a united world.

To say there is no way to stop violence in the world is an extreme form of egotism because it asserts that I *know* there is no way, which is a conclusion based on not being able to attain the ideal of nonviolence personally.

V

THE MYTH
of
THE INDIVIDUAL

THE ROOTS OF DISCONTENT

After looking at the general structures thought creates, we return to the source: the individual psyche. Our enquiry will now pursue essential questions relating to the individual, from whom the structures of society emanate.

What is the individual? Is the individual essentially different from other individuals, and separate from other people? We have observed that the individual has been conditioned by various influences – the family, the community, the nation, the culture, religion, and education. Almost everything that thought creates has the capacity to condition.

The individual's mind, then, is a composite of influences – a collection of beliefs, assumptions, and myths that direct and control behavior. We have observed that conditioning is the habitual reaction to a prejudged program of behavior. The individual is conditioned and not free.

We began this book by enquiring into the structures in society that influence behavior. We now see that the individual, psychologically, is that conditioning; in other words, consciousness is the totality of our conditioned reactions based on the past. Thus, the human is isolated in a prison of conditioning, the content of his own consciousness.

There is group content, national and cultural class content, religious and educational content. So the individual is the content of his consciousness, and he identifies with the group when the collective shares a common factor. Yet each person is alone in his own content, no matter how hard he tries to make the connection to others outside himself. People join religions, give allegiance to nations, and create political parties. Now each group is distinct, each nation divided from the rest, each religion developing its particular way of thinking – a world divided at every level. This continues because each person remains fundamentally divided within himself.

Let's move deeper into the individual and examine this isolation. One way would be to analyze the content of consciousness. One could start with a sociological or anthropological study to discover what makes up the individual or group of individuals, to determine why they do what they do. This would move into a psychological study to determine the psychic influences that affect behavior.

Now, it might take a lifetime to analyze all the data, sociologically or psychologically. Scholars have, for thousands of years, dedicated themselves to the study of the human in this way, and perhaps there is a place for this type of study if we already have a fundamental understanding of the human being. However, we are looking at the individual in a more mechanistic way, structurally. We see that the individual is the content of his particular conditioned consciousness, and that this content is isolating. Trying to bridge this gap of isolation by identifying with similar conditioned consciousness as a group creates a more powerful separation and, hence, more fragmentation, further conflict, and increasing violence.

The individual at his psychological foundation is a collection of influences. This conditioned content freezes life into fixed images and static perspective, ignoring shifts and changes in reality or forcing reality to conform to expectations. This content is the substance of the ego or self.

The word ego or self has been used in psychology to mean different things according to different perspectives. In Behavioral Psychology, psychologists are generally interested in modifying the ego/self; in Analytical Psychology, psychologists are interested in analyzing the ego/self; in Humanistic Psychology, the interest is in enhancing the self. The fourth force in Psychology is Transpersonal. Some see this as a catchall for all other parapsychological or spiritual/psychological studies; others have a more fundamental view that Transpersonal Psychology means going beyond the personal, the ego or self. Perhaps we can look for ourselves at what is called ego/self – not through the eyes of the psychologist, nor through the eyes of a practitioner of any Eastern religious practice. Can we look clearly at what this ego/self actually is, what makes it up, what it does, and how it sustains itself? Can we actually observe its movement directly, not through any system of thought, and immediately have insight into its workings? This means putting aside our conditioning and looking as if for the first time.

If we were automobile mechanics, we would be able to observe the mechanics of the internal combustion engine, to see what makes it work and what causes it to break down. Observation of the engine would bring insight. If the carburetor is faulty and gasoline is not getting through, our perception through observation allows us to right it; we look, we see, we understand and, in that understanding, there is action and correction. Can we look at the mind, this collection of conditioned reactive thoughts, as if we were looking at the mechanisms of an automobile engine?

Let's look at the general nature of thought, observe its movement, its subtleness, the way it operates in the psychological realm. In examining the nature and structure of thought, we will be examining how the individual functions, and the roots of discontent.

What is thought? The brain observes something, and this event is labeled and stored in memory as information to be recalled when necessary. The brain holds images of what it observes, forming mental constructs of the world, but these mental constructs are formed by the brain and are not the world.

The psychological realm is “me,” the “I,” the “self,” or the “ego.” Self-image is built up over time through accumulated experience; our family, culture, religion, and education all contribute to this construct within the mind. So the self, or me the individual, is the past – a collection of information based on time, on experience. This observation can aid us in understanding the psychological conflict that is within each person causing individual pain and suffering, and expressed outwardly as social and global suffering. Are we beginning to understand the connection between inward conflict and its manifestation as outward conflict – that they are one and the same movement?

Let us continue to look at the structure of thought, to lay the foundation for enquiry into its root. The basic construct of the self, the me, or the ego is accumulated knowledge stored in the mind as thought. Therefore, the self, the me, or the ego, being constructed of thought, is thought itself. So, the self or ego, constructed through time as experience, is open-ended, as thought is a process and not conclusive. To find anything secure in thought as the self is to find only a shadow of security.

We seek security in thought, not only in the outward products of thought such as money, position, fame, church, and nation, but also inwardly as “me.” Having confidence in ourselves means that we have a belief or image of self that we can trust.

If I am a collection of thoughts, which are open-ended and changing, how can there be security in that?

As we observe thinking as the I, me, or self, we are not trying to solve anything or find answers to a problem. We are observing that which is enquiry, putting aside thinking about the brain to actually look at it. Does looking, or observation, have its own effect on what is observed? Isn't this a very important question?

Let us focus again on the structure of thought as a tool of measurement. We have seen that what we call me or the self is a collection of conditioned thoughts. Now we will look more closely at what the brain does with this conditioned collection. We are concerned with how this problem is approached.

Observing thought, we have seen that what we call the individual is a history of conditioned thinking, a collection of experiences that by its very nature isolates one person from another. Can we observe that this me, this individual self, is also the entity that tries to solve this problem of the conditioned self – that the me is both the problem and the effort to solve the problem?

Thought, as we have seen, is a means of comparison, measurement, and judgment. And thought is in time – the comparison of yesterday, today, and tomorrow. This is its nature. When thought enters the psychological realm, it does what is its nature to do; that is, it measures, compares, and judges.

We have seen that thought, which involves judgment, comparison, and measurement, has played a central part in our efforts to change behavior, creating great conflict and suffering. The brain or thought sets up a basic conflict between bad and good, between the fact of what is and the illusory ideal of what should be. The logic of this process is that the good, the ideal, should win out over the bad, which creates a fundamental division within the brain.

Take any psychological problem and watch how thought deals with it. What do we actually see?

Can thought, which is in time, change behavior? Or can behavior change only in the moment, instantly? Does thought create the conflict of effort, of willpower, of trying to become what we are not?

Are we beginning to see the core of the conflict? Do we actually see the structure of thinking itself? Do we now see the importance of a critique of thinking, and the significance of investigating its movement? If the content of consciousness is a collection of conditioned myths and beliefs, what happens when we see this? Can we observe that there is an activity to bridge the gap, to do something about this situation? Can we begin to see the fundamental divisive process?

Can we observe that this ego, self, or what we call I, has separated itself from the rest of thinking as if there were two entities: a thinker (I) and thoughts (it)? When there is observation, what is revealed is that thought is divided at its root into what we might call the thinker and the thought, the analyzer and the analyzed. Let's use "the thinker" and "thoughts" as labels to continue this enquiry. Any names would do; the description is not the thing.

It is important to see how we observe. Let's take fear, for example. I am separate from fear and therefore capable of doing something about it through suppression and conformity in favor of the ideal of fearlessness. But this is an illusion, that I am separate from fear. If we observe carefully without judgment, we see that I *am* fear – the I is fear; they are one and the same. To say I am different from fear sets up the I as the entity that will end fear. But if I am fear, how can I do anything about myself? The I creates the problem and then it thinks it can solve the problem it has created, which only generates more conflict and confusion.

I am sorrow. Thinking of myself as separate from sorrow,
I want to end it, and I create a vicious, self-destructive
circle of never-ending sorrow.

So as we look, we understand that the brain is observing itself in the process of thinking, and that it has divided itself into thinker and thoughts. Now, is this basic division the root of our discontent? Let's look more carefully. What is the cause or need for this division? Observing, we see that the thinker intends to bring about a change in behavior through willpower. Willpower is the process of attempting to influence thoughts and the products of thoughts. This process seems logical because we assume that thinking about thinking can end the problems that thinking creates.

The brain observes that thought is neurotic and creates conflict because it is isolated in its conditioned content. This conflict is painful and unwanted. The thinker then attempts to act on itself through thought in order to bring about change by sublimation, resistance, or rationalization. But the question is: “Can thinking end its dilemma by this process, or is it creating further division and conflict?” In the attempt of thinking to end itself, the mind has created a fundamental conundrum, a knot that leads to all sorts of crazy thinking and behavior.

This fundamental division of the separate thinker capable of acting on thought is at the root of psychological conflict. The harder the thinker tries to end thought, the greater the struggle and conflict. This struggle is played out in religion, a structure created by the mind that gives force and intensity to this basic dilemma. It is important to see that what happens on the surface level as religion happens also at the root, as the thinker trying to change thought.

We have now seen the dilemma of the thinker acting on thoughts, a process that fundamentally creates division and conflict. Can we see that this process has created social problems by generating structures to solve the basic problems of relationship that only cause more suffering? Can we see the connection between the root and the surface structures that this basic division has manifested?

Fundamental conflict in the psyche creates outward structures that reinforce conditioned thinking that in turn maintain the basic conflict.

If the creation of the thinker creates division and conflict, and if thinking does not bring an end to the conditioned content of consciousness, then what can end this basic conflict?

Thought cannot divide itself. The duality does not exist, because the thinker is thought; they are one and the same. There is only thinking, the continuous flow of thoughts, with the illusion of a separate thinker capable of controlling thoughts. The problems created in society by this basic division are built on a false assumption – that the thinker can solve the problems of thought. This basic assumption *is* the problem.

What, then, can bring an end to the problems that thought has created by dividing itself in this way? Taking the simple example of the auto mechanic who sees the problem and acts, aren't we now seeing our (mechanical) problem as that of thinker divided from thought? And in seeing this, what happens? What does thought do when there is a realization that the thinker cannot act on thought, that thought is not capable of dividing itself and, therefore, is not separate, but rather is a whole, continuous process? Does thought attempt to answer this question? What is the state of mind that observes the truth of this dilemma? What is the quality of this mind? What effect does observation have when it comes into direct contact with the fact, with reality? What is intelligence?

VI
KNOTS

CREATING THE DOUBLE BIND

A knot is a mental tangle of words that leads nowhere, creating an impasse in action, driving a person crazy. Synonyms are: conundrum, tangled web, whirligig or merry-go-round, bind. Knots seem logical, as if they can be solved, leading to clearer action. In fact, they are confusing, a puzzle with no solution. As we have discussed, this type of thinking needs to be seen for what it is if we are to be free.

“The Enlightenment Knot”

or

“Inaction That Leads to Inaction”

Start: He is enlightened and therefore must know
Everything
So he is always right.
I am not enlightened because I know I do not know
everything
so I am always wrong.
How can I ask the right questions to an
enlightened person
when whatever I say will be wrong.
So all I can do is listen
to the enlightened person who is always right.

What I can do is to think about what
the enlightened person says – and –
enquire into it with others
enquire into it with others
enquire into it with others

But I cannot enquire into it with others
because to see what the enlightened
person is saying I would have to change.
And to change I would have to acknowledge
my imperfection
and who wants to do that?

Being with an enlightened person
I do not see what I should see
because he sees what I cannot see.
Therefore I have to give up what I do see
because what I do see is just my ego
and we all know that ego is bad.

So what I can do is to think about what
the enlightened person says – and –
enquire into it with others

enquire into it with others
enquire into it with others

But I cannot enquire into it with others
because I do not see what I should see
because he sees what I cannot see.
And since he is perfect
and therefore always right
I am imperfect
and always wrong.

Since the enlightened person is never wrong
and therefore perfect –
and since I am imperfect
and therefore never right –
the enlightened person must be good
because to be good is to be perfect.
And since I am not perfect
I must be bad
because I do not know what is right.

Since I do not know what is right
and do not see what I should see
because he sees what I cannot see
I could be crazy.
So I must act as if I do see
because I do not want to be wrong or bad or crazy
because feeling wrong and bad and crazy is painful
– and who wants to feel that!

So I must become proper (right)
and wear the proper (right) clothes
and say the proper (right) thing
and go to the proper (right) school
and have the proper (right) job
and marry the proper (right) person
and raise the proper (right) children
to grow up and live proper (right) lives
to grow up and live proper (right) lives
to grow up and live proper (right) lives

But to act proper (right)
I must never let other people know
that this is just an act
because if people found out
that this was just an act
they would see that I am not really right.
They will think I am imperfect
unenlightened wrong and bad.

And since feeling imperfect
unenlightened wrong and bad feels painful
I must be very careful not to divulge
who I really am
because who I really am is
someone they would not like.
So I put on an act in order to be right
and I do what the enlightened man does
and be what the enlightened man is.
But I cannot even let myself know
that this is an act
because to do so would be painful and hypocritical
and no one wants to be a hypocrite.
So I forget that I am deceiving myself
and I forget to remember
that this is just an act
because I do not want people to dislike me.

I want to be like the enlightened person
because he is free and at peace
and everyone likes him.
I want what he has
because I have not got what he has.
But I can never have what he has
because I have not got what he has.
He is perfect and never wrong
and therefore good.
And I am imperfect and never right
and therefore bad.

So I try to be good
because I do not want to be bad.
But the harder I try to be good
the more I have to deceive myself.
And the more I deceive myself
the greater the conflict
between what I actually am
and what I pretend I am.
But what else can I do?
I really do not want to be bad wrong
unenlightened or imperfect.
So in order not to feel bad wrong
unenlightened or imperfect
and since I want to be like the enlightened person
but I am imperfect
I can only act like the enlightened person
and be proper (right).
To be proper is not to see what I do see
and to see what I should see.
But only the enlightened person sees what
I cannot see.
So what can I do?
So what can I do?
So what can I do?

What I can do is think about what
the enlightened person says – and –
enquire into it with others
enquire into it with others
enquire into it with others

Start: He is enlightened and therefore must know
everything . . .

“The All-American Boy Knot”

I am a boy
I am born in a country called America
Because I am born in a country called America
I am an American – an American boy

To be an American boy I must be good
Being good means I must love my country
 I must love my God (the American God)
 I must love success
In order to show I love my country
 God
 Success

I must salute the flag
 serve in the armed forces
 worship in church
 be an “A” student

So if I salute the flag
 serve in the armed forces
 worship in church
 am an “A” student

It means that I am Good

Trying to be good is hard work
The harder I try the harder it gets
for the harder it gets the harder I need to try
to get what I need but cannot get
because the harder I try the harder it gets.

People tell me I am Good
because I do all the things They tell me to
which is what goodness is
But They also tell me I was born in original sin
and am therefore really bad
That is why I need to become good
and why They will save me
from being bad
because I was born in original sin

If I am actually bad because I was born in original
sin
and therefore need to be good
I must try even harder
I will be good in all the ways They tell me to
for I don't want to go to Hell
and that is what They tell me I will do
if I am not saved from original sin

I don't want to go to Hell
I want to be saved
So I will try even harder to be good
but the harder I try the harder it gets
because I just cannot seem to be as good
as They want me to be
as I want me to be

I'm just not trying hard enough to be good
like They want me to be
like I want me to be
so I will try harder to be good
because I do not want to be bad
and go to Hell

In order to be really good
I must not be bad
if I am bad
I must get rid of that badness
which is me
So I must try very hard to be the best
and get rid of me who is the worst
So I will try very hard to be good

So I must try harder to be
all that They want me to be
and get rid of that badness which is me
but the harder I try the harder it gets
for the harder it gets the harder I need to try
to get what I need but cannot get because
the harder I try the harder it gets

So in order to be perfectly good
I must be
 Brave
 Kind
 Trustworthy
 Clean
 and Reverent

Now that I am perfectly good
because I have tried very hard
and am brave kind trustworthy clean and reverent
and have been the best soldier
 the best church leader
 the best student
 the best father and husband
 the most outstanding community leader
I need to live in a world that is perfectly good for
it is not enough for me alone to be perfectly good
(I have been told that I am the all-American
boy/man
because I have lived up to what
They have told me is perfectly good
That means that I will not go to hell and be
Damned
But if i am so perfectly good why do i feel so bad?)

But others will not try to be as good as me
so they must be bad
So I must save them from their sins
just like I was saved
And made perfectly good

But they who are bad do not want to be saved
and be perfectly good like me
So since they will not try I must do it for them
but it takes so long to be good
and is so very hard

Since they will not let God or me help them

I must act as God's Helper
and get rid of their badness, which is (d)evil
and save them from going to Hell

but how can I be perfect
since only God is perfect
Even His Son was flawed
and He really tried very hard to be good
So I must be fooling myself that I am good
So I must actually be bad which is what They told
me all along
because I was born in original sin and really never
can be good
So I only tricked myself into believing that I was
good
and could be saved

So if I who tried so hard to be good am actually bad
in comparison to Him Who is Perfectly Good
what are they who have never tried to be good?
They are certainly not worth saving because they
never really tried
and did not suffer like me who tried so very hard to
be perfectly good
like Him because They wanted me to

So I must try to make them try to be
good like Him
for to try is better than not trying
Then they will suffer like me
trying to be like His Son
who tried so hard for His Father
and suffered for all of us trying to be perfectly
good
like His Father wanted Him to be

So I must save them
by making them suffer like me
and like His Son who tried so hard to be perfectly
good for His Father

who is perfectly good
But we are bad and sinners
because we were born in original sin and can
never be perfectly good
and can never be saved

And they have never really tried to be good like me
and Him
nor have they suffered like me and Him
Therefore they must really suffer for their sins
of being born in original sin
and never really trying to be good like me and Him
So I must act for Him who is His Son who suffered
like me
and punish them who have never suffered like the
both of us

But to punish them is a sin
So I must pretend not to punish them who need to
be punished for their sin
of never really trying to be good like me who
suffered so much
because I tried so hard to be good like Him who
suffered so much

To want to punish them is bad
so I feel bad
for wanting to punish them who are bad
for not trying to be good like me

So I must confess my sin of wanting to punish them
who are bad
for not trying to be good and suffering like me and
Him
But I am not worthy of being saved
and I hate myself for being bad
because I can never be good
for only He is Good
And in comparison I am not Good
so I must be evil

If I am evil I must be of the Devil
and am therefore really bad
And if God is all Good and I can never be
I must be bad and evil
and the work of the devil
because I was born in original sin and could never
ever be good
even though I tried so very hard to please Them
who thought I was bad
even though They knew that I could never be
Ad infinitum ad infinitum ad infinitum

VII

OBSERVATIONS
On
WRITING THIS BOOK

Isn't it simple to observe living, looking without fear at the facts of our daily lives? Why have we so complicated the natural ability to understand ourselves? People may disregard a book like this by thinking that it is not scholarly, or that the author does not have the proper credentials. Or they may say, "How can the author simplify the complexities of life into brief, seemingly random observations?"

I hesitated for years from writing simply what I saw because I felt intimidated. How could I, a nobody, see such things? When I listened to academicians, psychologists, or religious and political leaders, their imposing stature and authority swayed me. As I matured, I realized that these people did not really understand their lives. They knew how to put forth the *image* that they understood, but when I got to know some of them personally, I saw that many were full of confusion, greed, or self-centeredness. I found this hypocrisy everywhere. Why do we pretend to be what we are not?

Can we start from this point: being a nobody; asking simple, straightforward, childlike questions; suspending opinions and educated views? It does not work to assert our observations as law, dogma, and conclusions to argue over. Can we take these observations as a starting point and see if there is truth in them? Can we continue to enquire together without prejudice, and use this enquiry to create conditions wherein children develop as responsible human beings? (Responsible being the ability to respond and act intelligently – not out of reaction or fear, but out of understanding.)

We have looked at a few of the major structures that influence behaviors. Obviously, there are many other influences that mold character, that condition. For example, it is obvious that if the average child by the age of 18 (according to statistics) has watched 25,000 hours of television, viewing 20-30,000 murders and 500,000 commercials, then that child has been strongly influenced by the media! The intention of this book is not to formulate a complete study of the social ills of humanity, but to start the process of enquiry. As enquiry is

awakened, it takes on a life of its own, creating its own impetus for further enquiry. As we see that we live in fantasies and images we have created about life, the question arises, "Can there be a movement without thought that is intelligent, alert, and not conditional?"

The brain is caught in the momentum of conditioning and, like a great river, it rushes on with tremendous force. It is somewhat like driving a car for days on end. After we stop, we still feel as if we are driving; when we close our eyes, we still see the road. The momentum of traveling remains active in the brain.

There is a momentum in society that generates frantic daily activity. The child gets swept up into its force and, like a leaf in a torrent, gets carried away. The structures in society generate this momentum and the brain generates the structures; the brain has conditioned the structures and is conditioned by them. How is this pattern to be broken? How do we, being conditioned, break the grip of this pattern that is in the brain itself?

Do we need to completely remove ourselves from society and let the road-weary mind unwind? Or can we, standing, as it were, in the center of the rushing rapids, create an island amidst the confusion? Observing the direction this book has taken, I see that there is no other choice. Either we become endlessly caught in the current through unconscious, conditioned behavior, or we step out of it. Like standing in the eye of the hurricane, there is a possibility that we will be able to live sanely in an insane world. And perhaps this small center will create the energy for others to step out of the torrent. It seems that this is all we can do, not because we are expecting results but because it is intelligent and sane.

AFTERWORD
Where Do We Go From Here?
Preparing the Learner

If we as adults who live and work with children see the necessity of aiding young people to understand themselves, then we must create situations where these children can learn about the totality of their lives. Many educators have told me over the years that they are overwhelmed with the pressures of getting young people into college, that all their time is taken up in preparing the child academically. It is true that, in order to get a young person into a good college so he can secure a high-paying job, the teacher and parent must put pressure on the child to study conventional college preparatory coursework. However, it is important to understand what we are doing when we make such a decision for the child. We have to ask ourselves some basic questions about priorities, such as: "Do I want my child to be a sane and intelligent human being, or is it more important for him/her to compete for a better job, more money, and security?" Can we create an education that not only prepares children technologically and academically in the most excellent way, but also helps them to fundamentally understand themselves and relationship?

There is nothing very complicated about all this. Either we will continue to educate young people traditionally, or we will change the way we educate our children to produce truly intelligent, educated human beings. The educated person will understand that economic competition is destructive. He/she will seek out what he really loves to do in life, rather than the high-paying job. He will find an inner security, unlike his counterpart who is educated to maintain the status quo or to become personally wealthy and important. He will not stand for a mediocre life of routine, mindless repetition. Educated to creatively challenge the conditions of life, he will be active, exciting, interesting, and a contributor to life.

We are at a critical juncture. We have the power to turn toward total destruction, or creativity. In moving creatively in the education of children, we need resources that a teacher or parent can use to aid children in understanding themselves. Without self-understanding, emphasis on academic skills produces an intellectually bright person capable of creating great conflict in the world. Many scientists and inventors, skilled scholastically but unintelligent about relationship, have developed devastating killing technology.

The intention of this book is to generate interest in producing a complementary curriculum – a resource book of activities that young people and their teachers can learn from together. I see that it is absolutely necessary to create such a curriculum, not as a method but rather as a mirror that demonstrates how the process of thought works. Activities will illustrate how the brain becomes conditioned, what structures it creates to maintain this conditioning, and how it develops destructive ways of solving the dilemmas it originally generated. Without this basic understanding of the process of thought and the structures it creates, the child will become enveloped in, and carried away by, the momentum of conditioning.

Can we, then, create educational environments with intelligent curriculums for promoting both academic excellence and self-understanding? Are we really interested in rearing our children to be healthy, sane, and responsible human beings? Someone has to start!

About the Author

Terrence Webster-Doyle was Founder and Director of three independent schools and has taught at the secondary, community college, and university levels in Education, Psychology, and Philosophy. He has worked in Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and has developed counseling programs for teenagers. He has earned a Masters Degree in Psychology, and a doctorate degree in Health and Human Services. He also has been awarded a 6th degree black belt in Karate, and has studied and taught the martial arts for over 40 years. He has also produced numerous conferences and workshops on New Directions in Education. He was the Director of The Shuhari Institute, a Center for Transpersonal Studies, Director of the Atrium Society, and Co-director of the Atrium School whose intent is to explore psychological conditioning.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Atrium Society concerns itself with fundamental issues, which prevent understanding and cooperation in human affairs. Starting with the fact that our minds are conditioned by our origin of birth, education, and experiences, Atrium Society's intent is to bring this issue of conditioning to the forefront of our awareness. Observation of the fact of conditioning, becoming directly aware of the movement of thought and action, brings us face-to-face with the actuality of ourselves. Seeing who we actually are, not merely what we think we are, reveals the potential for a transformation of our ways of being and relating.

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-New Jersey State Bar Foundation

...To name only a few