

## **Growing Up Sane –** Understanding the Conditioned Mind

Are we driving ourselves crazy  
trying to be sane?

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***“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.

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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**

Terrence Webster-Doyle

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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

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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

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*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

































































































































































































































































































































































































