PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATION does not yet include in its curriculum one of the most exciting subjects known to man: the subject of his own inner life—his own feelings, reactions, and desires. To an astonishing degree, educators seem to operate upon the assumption that everything worth learning lies outside the learner. Geography, spelling, arithmetic, reading are largely concerned with what's "out there." The ideal pupil sits quietly and memorizes what is presented to him. To be sure, good teachers do let him ask questions about the material, but woe unto the child who daydreams, changes the subject, refuses to learn, or pits his will against the teacher. Such a child is considered to have something wrong with his head. Send him to the psychologist and get his inner thoughts exorcized. Get him fixed up so that he can get down to the real business of education—that of mastering the externals. (The situation reminds me of an old joke. A teacher noticed a pupil staring out the window. "What are you doing?" asked the teacher. "I'm thinking," replied the child. "Well," said the teacher, "stop thinking and get down to work.")

Most educators have successfully warded off the great majority of insights emanating from the field of psychoanalysis. Freudian concepts such as the unconscious, the id, and the ego have seemed almost mystical and even embarrassing to the average teacher. Even John Dewey's emphasis upon integrating education with the child's personal experi-

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ence has appeared to many educators to be founded, at best, upon elusive philosophical verbiage or, at worst, upon a belief in anarchy and chaos for the child.

Let me illustrate why I believe that the failure of educators to acknowledge and develop their pupils' awareness of their intra- and inter-personal life has exceedingly serious consequences for individuals and for civilization.

Not so long ago I participated with sixty other people in an intensive workshop on "How to Manage Conflict," sponsored by the National Training Laboratory at Bethel, Maine. The participants were all highly-educated, middle-aged adults in leadership positions in education, industry, business, religion, etc. Each came professing a desire to learn how to analyze conflict situations, to learn about research results, and hopefully to develop a theoretical model for working through conflicts at home and on the job. Two kinds of training experiences were offered: the "T" group in which individuals spent several hours a day in small groups examining how they felt about themselves and each other; and planned theory sessions about concepts of conflict diagnosis and remedy.

Which type of experience would you suppose we preferred? Overwhelmingly, we preferred the "T" group where we could have the exciting experience of exploring our personal problems and our reactions to each other. Every time the "T" group program was interrupted for a session on conceptualization, many of us expressed anger and irritation. Worse, when we got to the theory sessions, we didn't or couldn't listen—after which we complained that the theory sessions were too boring. Here was a situation in which people came apparently motivated to learn on a conceptual level, but whose interest in self-awareness was overriding—even to the point of obliterating interest in concepts. Toward the end of the second week, however, when we were well saturated with our self-absorption, interest in theory sessions began to return. Perversely, many of us left the lab complaining that we hadn't had enough theory sessions.

I often observe the same phenomenon in the classroom. Imagine yourself watching a teacher and children working on a problem in math. Now the teacher is called out of the room.
What do the children do? They quickly grasp the chance to do what they really want to do. They start interacting with each other, exploiting their stolen moments together with guilty glee. On the other hand, I have seen a few classrooms which were organized around the assumption that pupils are people—people with inner needs who need much opportunity for interpersonal action and reaction. In these classes, children are more apt to continue with their work despite the teacher's absence.

To what extent does our educational system's denial of the need to explore interpersonal relations actually defeat the schools' most avowed purpose, which is to develop cognitive competency?

The supporters of the non-authoritarian forms of education have long argued that dealing with interpersonal relations is important in order to bring about the democratic group structure necessary for productive work. This appeal has not been very effective. Teachers believe that they can get children to do productive work well enough without going to the trouble of creating democratic interaction patterns. Then there are the mental health experts like myself who argue that self-awareness is necessary for good health and that suppression and repression lead to later emotional illness. Educators are somewhat sympathetic to this argument; so they hire psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers to help mend those children who reveal signs of emotional illness. A few schools have even gone so far as to offer for study a chapter or two on mental health in a hygiene book. Some high schools even offer a separate course on human relations. The course lasts until some community group labels it a frill—and then away with it! Thus, the great majority of our classrooms still reject the inner world.

Now, the question is: what is there in the field of general semantics which might influence more educators to acknowledge the importance of the inner world? As I see it, general semantics proposes simply that the inner world exists just as surely as the outer world exists, that the two worlds can hardly
be separated at all, and that denying the existence of any aspect of man’s being is irrational and unscientific. Nothing impresses us educators so much as the obvious necessity, especially nowadays, for being rational and scientific. Furthermore, general semantics offers no propaganda about what should be going on in that inner world, or what must be done about it, and so prescribes no value judgments about what is good or bad—thus freeing educators from much feared controversy.

Even more persuasive is the revelation that much of what goes on in the so-called inner world is language. We talk to ourselves a good part of the time. We keep telling ourselves all kinds of things, ranging from the realistic to the ridiculous, and we respond to our inner talking with corresponding emotions and actions. Now, if language is what is going on inside the heads of people, then surely that comes within the province of educators—if only to make sure the grammar is correct. And, traditionally, educators are intensely interested in teaching children the art of communication. General semantics offers a model of the communication process which promises to result not only in greater self-awareness but also in better compositions and recitations. Use of the general semantics model requires awareness of each individual’s unique input apparatus, his abstracting system, his choice of symbols, plus awareness of these same factors in the receiver of his communications. All of this seems to be highly desirable. Berger’s and Livingston’s research studies have already provided evidence that general semantics training, even with no lessons in grammar, can result in significantly improved English compositions and critical reading skills.¹

But the gains to be derived from the general approach to the communication process far exceed that of improved compositions and recitations. At the workshop on conflict management, I was deeply impressed by the extent of human misery related to exceedingly poor ability to communicate. So many people wailed, “But I just can’t get through to him,” and it was true.

A minister told the group that he had been counseling

people in his parish for thirty years, yet was unable to have any real communication with his wife. In despair to the point of divorce, she forced him into a marriage counselor's office. The minister said that there he was confronted with the fact that he simply did not know what his feelings were about important matters, that he was often a poor judge of other's feelings, and that most of his interactions with people failed to connect with central emotional issues. This revelation was so devastating that he had a brief period of mental disorganization. Fortunately, the breakdown was followed by three years of hard work in which he and his wife managed to learn about themselves enough to create an adequate sense of rapport with each other.

Two men in our group became so angry with each other that they nearly came to physical blows. Each man said he thoroughly disliked the other. Pete despised Bill for being what he called an insensitive clod who, despite his utter ignorance of what was going on in people around him, still felt entitled to tell them what to do. Bill felt enraged at Pete for what he felt to be all his silly jokes, his enigmatic remarks, his refusal to follow simple directions, and his spouting of philosophical references that nobody else had ever heard of. After much analysis, it became clear to all of us that the two men were functioning at very different levels of complexity. Neither, however, was initially aware of how different people can be. Each wanted to mold the other to fit his own needs. Finally, after painful exploration, each came to acknowledge his own style, perceive that of the other, and to respect the differences.

It is my contention that whereas low awareness of interpersonal processes can be the effect of neurosis, it is more often the effect of barren education. Just as a baby doesn't distinguish between a sparrow and a duck until some differences are pointed out, man cannot automatically differentiate among his feelings of jealousy and fear, anger and anxiety. This takes learning and practice. And the learning endeavor must be endowed with legitimacy and importance.
Need I add that awareness training encompasses much more than discriminating among shades of feeling. Even a small child with his power of self-reflexiveness is capable of learning about his own sensory system, his subliminal perception, intuitive evaluation, dreams, and even extrasensory perception. He can learn about what we call his filtering process; that is, his own needs, goals, beliefs, and attitudes. Certainly, he can learn about language and how he uses it to abstract and to symbolize what is going on within him.

Last year I had the opportunity to work with fifth graders and to observe first graders. I noticed that the little ones could tell when they were happy or very mad—but that's about all. Without training, they often experienced anger when fright might have been more appropriate, or just vague "upset" when placed in situations ordinarily arousing envy or aggressiveness. The fifth graders were only somewhat more sophisticated about their feelings. Both groups of children responded delightedly and well to training in these areas.

One of the greatest pleasures I had with the fifth graders was teaching them to notice that events between two people occur in chains or sequences. For example, I once had to separate two boys about to assault each other. I asked them, "What set off this fight?" "He tripped me," cried Billy. "What happened just before that," I asked. Both stared at me blankly, and then John offered, "Before that I was home for lunch." Apparently the boys had little memory for the events immediately preceding their fight. But with a little help, using techniques of role play, they recalled the sequence. The boys recognized that before Billy had tripped John, John had taunted Billy. This taunting was preceded by John's observation of Billy passing a note to John's girl. And in the middle somewhere there were feelings of jealousy, as well as anger at the girl for giggling over the note. I might add that when the boys recognized this sequence of events, they had to laugh at themselves for the irrelevancy of fists as a way of coping with their problem. Incidentally, the teacher, who had a proclivity for confronting youngsters with the demand, "Why did you do that?" and drawing blank or absurd responses,
began to realize the kind of help children need in order to answer the question "why."

I cited the preceding example not primarily to illustrate how children can be taught—that is another huge topic—but to stimulate imagination on what kind of world we might produce if only people were more aware of the event sequences preceding their impulses. To too large an extent, the average man on the street is living in a fools' world as he reasons, "I hit him because he tripped me" or "We bombed them because they piled up missile bases."

There is another problem which plagues mankind and which thus far defies solution or relief—that of crime and disorder among ourselves. Could any sophisticated person doubt that the educational process includes the goal of producing a decent and orderly citizenry? But is it possible (1) that the educational process may be actually helping to create the problem, (2) that it needs help in coping with it, and (3) that general semantics can contribute? It is my belief that one of the most important concepts general semantics has to offer is that of the interdependence of men. This concept, if worked into the methodology and curriculum of the schools, could be of enormous value in developing an honest and orderly citizenry.

First, let me share my perception of how children think about ethical matters. In an effort to find out why children think they ought to be "good" and not "bad," I asked them: "Why do you think people shouldn't hurt each other, steal, or litter the streets?" Most of them said, "Because you'll get punished" or "Somebody might catch you." A few said, "You shouldn't do those things because they aren't right." Or "My parents taught me to behave properly." Teen aged youngsters often cited the Golden Rule. Or they listed religious prohibitions by saying, "The laws of God forbid such behavior."

How do educators help children to think as they do? They are not allowed to use the direct religious approach (except in private schools), but they are free to use the principle of punishment and reward. Children are threatened and actually punished for anti-social behavior. They are also given
habit training in good behavior by frequent opportunities to practice the right thing. And there is much use of group pressure to attain conformity. Teachers say in one way or another, "Nobody will like you if you behave like that." Occasionally the concept of cooperation is spelled out, although when teachers say, "I want you to cooperate," they usually mean, "I want you to obey."

But modern life is still ridden with crime despite the power of the parent, the teacher, the boss, the law, or the Lord to punish, despite righteousness and the Golden Rule, group pressure and habit training. None of these seems sufficiently powerful to provide a substantial base for moral behavior.

In our laboratory on conflict management, we adults participated in a dramatic exercise designed to teach us that cooperative behavior based upon mutual trust is the kind of behavior which results in the greatest advantage for everybody. To accomplish this, the faculty divided us into pairs and then instructed us to play the game called "Prisoner's Dilemma." The game, which requires the partners to guess each other's moves, is set up in such a way that eventually both members of the pair discover that competitive aggressiveness results in a loss, or minimal gain, for both participants. The lesson turned out to be very impressive. I was one of the loudest in promulgating the virtues of cooperation.

Then we were instructed to play the game a second time. This time the exercise consisted of having groups of four people oppose each other. Each group of four had to reach a consensus on every move to be made in playing the other team. I found myself grouped with three people with highly moral backgrounds. Right from the beginning we all proclaimed, "We know already that the only way to win this game is to cooperate with the other team. We'll be trustworthy and play it straight down the line." At this point, I decided to play the role of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. I suggested, "Let's build up a lot of trust in the other group by cooperating all the way until the last move. Then we'll double-
cross them. That way we'll win the most money." All three professed to be horrified by my perfidy. But in the end they all agreed to the double-cross, for I was able to find a way to corrupt each one of them. My method with the first man was simply to shift categories. I suggested to him that we were not playing out a way of life, we were just playing a game. With the second man, I succeeded by building upon his feelings of self-pity. I pointed out that cooperation usually turns out to be a sucker's game. The aggressive characters are the ones who get ahead in the world. We "good guys" are forever left holding the bag. I suggested that he might enjoy being on top for once in his life. He agreed. The third man was tougher to corrupt. Nothing I argued could make him go against his conscience, he said. But the turning point for him was the moment that he interpreted something the other group did as a violation of trust. He got very angry with them, and in his righteous indignation, he insisted that they ought to be punished.

Frankly, I was surprised at how easily the principle of cooperation could be dissipated. Of course, when my friends found out that I had maneuvered them like that, they ganged up on me, tossed me into the lake and nick-named me Lucy, short for Lucretia Borgia. But finally we all sat down and had a long talk. Our object was to define some principle which might better fend off temptation and demoralization.

General semantics provided for us a more substantial principle: that human beings are interdependent. Biologically and socially, we are not separate from each other. We cannot be independent of the labors of our forefathers, because of our capacity for time-binding. We benefit from each other's productions. We cannot live without each other. Our group surmised that the principle of cooperation when seen only as an expediency—that is, as a temporary means to an end—is insufficient to prevent corruption. But the principle of cooperation when seen more broadly as a way of life consonant with mutual survival and mutual benefit may prove to be much less open to dissuasion.

From my observation, the great majority of schools are
organized so as to deny the principle of interdependence. Much of school life seems to be built upon the principle of independence and mutual isolation. For example, what are teachers teaching children when they call for recitations with the preface, "Now Johnny, I want to hear what you have to say. Don't anybody else help him!" Homework is given out with the admonition: "Make sure it's your own work." Exams are given with children separated as widely as possible. Punishments are severe for those who either give or receive help. I realize that a purpose of this isolation is to enable the teacher to evaluate and rank her pupils. But every day? And at such a cost?

By basing classroom procedures upon the reality that human beings are interdependent, teachers could help children appreciate each other's value, thus laying the groundwork for healthy and cooperative behavior. Instead, the typical educational system is fostering a sense of isolation, independence, and competitiveness, which lays the groundwork for neurosis and anti-social behavior. In most schools children are broken up into age groups. Older children are isolated from younger children, and they rarely get an opportunity to be helpful to them. They miss their chances to perceive important individual differences and to learn to adapt to them with skill and mutual respect. What they do learn is to feel impatient with "those little kids who can't do it right" or to feel envy and resentment of "those big kids who think they're so smart." I am aware that grouping children by chronological age enables the teacher to deal with a smaller range of ability and knowledge, but the social learnings which accrue, or fail to accrue, seem much more important to me. I would like to see children in mixed groups helping each other at every opportunity.

One of the biggest barriers to having children act out their interdependence in school is the concept that the only valid sources of knowledge in school are the teacher and the book. In extra-curricular life, it is important for people to use as many resources as possible. When children are observed in
the playgrounds or their club houses, they seem naturally to prefer learning from each other.

But the concept of man's interdependence needs acknowledgment in the school curriculum. It is true that social science lessons often point out the reciprocity of nations in trading goods, but often the inference is drawn that countries which can produce the widest range of goods for themselves are the "best" countries and that countries which are more dependent are somehow "inferior." History lessons often omit the significance and essential relationship between earlier contributions and our present way of life. It is not enough to learn about the fascinating tools and customs of past civilizations. It is more important to demonstrate that what was done in the past was part of an evolutionary process, a process from which we are all the beneficiaries or the victims. Everything we do in the present will likewise enhance or destroy those who come after us. With many lessons of this kind, I believe children would have a real chance to emerge from school with a realistic sense of responsibility.

There is one other suggestion I would like to make. Let us use our educational system to emphasize the fact that we are all dependent upon the contributions of all kinds of men. Too much time is given in schools to lionizing the rare hero, the great leader, the extraordinary inventor, the artistic genius. What are the contributions of ordinary men, even of the damaged and the retarded? Do our school children realize that without them there could be no great heroes—that without followers there could be no leaders; without pupils, no teachers; without neurotics, no therapists?

General semantics has a great contribution to make toward freeing the human race to be fully human. I believe our educational system can and will increasingly use general semantics toward that end, because general semantics has features which make it highly acceptable to educators. It is academic enough for the most bookish scholars, scientific enough for the most critical rationalists, and realistic enough for the most down-to-earth pragmatists.