THE HUMANE LEADER
Edgar Dale
EDGAR DALE


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THE HUMANE LEADER

By Edgar Dale
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of Humaneness</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sense of Gratitude</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Courtesy</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appreciation as a Learned Response</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing a Sense of Empathy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Necessity of Communication</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Necessity for Growth</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Road to Maturity</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Purpose of the Humanities</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humaneness: A Matter of Self-Discipline</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Live in the Present</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practice, Practice</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What Does the Future Indicate?</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signs of Decline</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indications of Strength</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humaneness Can Begin in the Classroom</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

As a teaching profession, we have been more concerned with the minds of our students than we have with their hearts, more concerned with their intellect than we have with their emotions. We examine intellectual growth more than we examine growth in values. We have emphasized what students know but underemphasized a concern for what they deeply care about, their attitude toward life, their zest for living.

The trend toward more humane attitudes in the school is evident in the recent practices of friendly, informal sharing of ideas and feelings in the classroom—both among students and among teachers. Team teaching and team learning are no longer viewed as a polite form of cheating. We are helping each other and trying to help children help each other. And why not? When we commit ourselves to doing something important of a civic or social character, we ask what we can do for and with others.

The Importance of Humaneness

To become humane we must shift from me-centered thinking to we-centered. The word “human” means “related to mankind.” “Humane” means “related to man’s tender and compassionate feelings.” Here we have both the universal and the specific. Interestingly enough, human and humane were the same words until early in the nineteenth century. But do we work in schools and colleges to build a humanity that relates us to all mankind and a humaneness that relates us tenderly and compassionately with other people?
A SENSE OF GRATITUDE

In this world, however, we don't have to build everything; some things come to us as gifts. Indeed, the most important things in life are often unplanned outcomes, unexpected bonuses. The humane life is a serendipitous life.

Learning to appreciate the many gifts of life is a vital phase of humaneness. A sense of gratitude should recognize not only what has been given to us by parents, grandparents, and teachers but also by all those in the past who now touch our lives through the difficult and perhaps courageous acts they performed. The sensitive, humane person is able to appreciate the mutuality that transcends the generations and relate that mutuality to his own times. Gratitude is the interest that we pay on unmet obligations.

The root meaning of gratitude comes from the Latin "gratiae," which means "thanks." It is closely related to the words "grace" and "gracious." Gilbert Chesterton, the English author and critic, said that he organized his life around the idea that we should take things with gratitude, not take them for granted.

Yet we often take things for granted. We take for granted the idea that every child should have an equal opportunity to develop his potential. We take for granted the idea that every person reaching eighteen years of age should have the right to vote. We take for granted that the store where we buy will not run out of goods. We take for granted that a country's constitution will be flexible enough to meet needs unpredicted by its authors 190 years before.

The young today take for granted their right to criticize their
government, their college, and their church. They do have this right but with it goes an obligation to be aware of the great discipline which was required to provide these institutions. We need the mature criticism described by Henry James: “To criticise is to appreciate, to appropriate, to take intellectual possession, to establish in fine a relation with the criticised thing and to make it one’s own.” (What Maisie Knew.) We have little need for sophisticated irresponsibility.

We emphasize our rights under the Constitution without understanding how these rights were developed. They grew out of a revolution, out of the devotion of a struggling army led by George Washington, a man who certainly experienced the ingratitude of many of his countrymen. “These are the times that try men’s souls,” wrote Thomas Paine. “The summer soldier and the sunshine patriot will in this crisis shrink from the service of his country.”

And they did shrink. Writing about Valley Forge, George Washington said, “The want of clothing has occasioned them [the soldiers] to suffer such hardships as will not be credited but by those who have been spectators.” Major General Nathaniel Greene complained: “A country overflowing with plenty are now suffering an Army, employed for the defense of everything that is dear and valuable, to perish for want of food.” At the end of the war Washington told his officers: “I have grown gray in your service and now find myself growing blind.”

In taking things for granted, we fail to understand the thoughtfulness, the grueling labor, the resistance to fatigue, the indifference, and the bitter, unfair criticism which every great movement or challenging new idea involves. The inventor gets the patent suits while the following generation gets the benefits. The price tag for excellence is high. It requires time, patience, and sometimes a great deal of money to keep your eye on a distant goal, hanging on after you felt you must let go. A self-imposed discipline is the price paid for excellence.

I have asked hundreds of teachers to recall the praise they received during the year. Nearly all found it difficult to think of many examples. One teacher said, “Do you mean the one honest compliment I got or the one I fished for?” Teachers are not
likely to receive an excess of praise. Students and parents are taking teachers for granted, not with gratitude.

I once asked a group of businessmen whether they regularly praised their deserving employees. They admitted that they did not. They found it difficult to give praise, were embarrassed in doing it. One manager said that he had asked another employee to act in his behalf to praise a second employee. These employers were unschooled in the fine art of giving praise; they had not learned to express gratitude graciously.

We think hard about how to reply to an undeserved censure, but spend little time in reflecting on how to receive or give praise graciously. Furthermore, some employers or administrators say, “Well, my staff knows they are doing a good job without my telling them. If I don’t criticize a man for his mistakes, he knows that I like what he does.” The logic is not only inverted but unsound. Praise is not the absence of criticism. Unexpressed gratitude is no gratitude at all. Why do we withhold praise from those who so richly deserve it? “The applause of a single human being is of great consequence,” said Samuel Johnson to Boswell, who had read to him a letter of congratulation.

Perhaps the coin of praise has been devalued, debased. “They would just think I was soft-soaping them in order to get more work done,” said one businessman. But when we are praised do we usually think it is phony, calculated? I think not. There will never be a surfeit of deserved praise. Gratitude never has been and never will be overproduced. The demand will always exceed the supply.

**Courtesy**

Courtesy is the younger brother of gratitude. Gratitude is courtesy grown up. Habitually discourteous children do not become grateful adults. Children may not feel like writing the polite notes which gifts and hospitality require. But parents who want grateful children can help them learn that a good society and a good home require certain civilities. And one of these civilities is the habit of acknowledging gratitude.

This lack of sensitivity to benefits received through the efforts of others is demonstrated in the underfinancing of churches, col-
leges, and voluntary agencies. Attendance at most colleges has increased the income of its graduates, yet it is difficult for alumni associations to get graduates to express their gratitude in kind, in financial terms.

Plautus once wrote: “When you drink from the stream, remember the spring.” We unceasingly reap fruit from seeds we did not plant. Samuel Butler said: “Buffon planted, Erasmus Darwin and Lamarck watered, but it was Mr. [Charles] Darwin who said, ‘That fruit is ripe,’ and shook it in his lap.” We shall always harvest crops that other people planted, but we need not take the fruits of others’ efforts for granted. We can take them with gratitude.

There is a difference between gratification and gratitude. To be gratified is to be pleased with something that has happened to you. It is me-centered. We become calculating men and women, alert and sensitive to every opportunity to get and keep a special advantage. Gratitude, however, means to be thankful; it means a gracious, sensitive acknowledgement of what has been received. It is we-centered, carried on in a mood of mutuality. “Think” and “thank” are words with a common origin.

Appreciation as a Learned Response

Psychologist William James once said, “The deepest principle of human nature is the desire to be appreciated.” If this is true, could we then link a sense of gratitude with this desire to be appreciated? We are grateful for being appreciated and being appreciated gives us a sense of gratitude.

The problem of appreciation is certainly an important one educationally. Indeed, one of the commonly stated objectives in schools today is “an appreciation of the worth and dignity of every human being.” How easy it is to say, and how hard it is to do. How can we develop persons who can really appreciate their fellow men?

The kind of appreciation I am talking about can be defined as follows: “An appreciative person is sensitively aware of the worth of other people and overtly expresses his gratitude with approval.” This sounds a bit formal. Perhaps we can say more
simply that appreciation is “judging with thanks.” How well do we do it? Here are some examples.

For a good many years Mrs. A. B. Wendt was a teacher at West Liberty State College in West Virginia. One day after her retirement she received a letter from William L. Stidger, a noted minister who was one of her former students. It was a letter of appreciation, or as he called it, “a thanksgiving letter.” Mrs. Wendt’s reply, in the feeble scrawl of an old woman, began thus: “My dear Willie... I can’t tell you how much your note meant to me. I am in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely and like the last leaf of fall lingering behind... You will be interested to know that I taught school for fifty years and yours is the first note of appreciation I ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning and it cheered me as nothing has in many years.” Think of it—a teacher for fifty years and no one bothered to say “thank you.”

One day I walked into the office of a jeweler who had done a good deal of work for me. I told him that the watch I had bought from him was working fine. The jeweler beamed and said, “You know, you are the first person in my whole life who ever came in and told me that his watch was running fine. The only people who talk to me are those who tell me their watches are out of order. I get all of the bad news about watches and none of the good.”

I was talking about appreciation with a noted agricultural specialist who has saved farmers in one state millions of dollars through his research and active work in the field. I asked, “How many letters have you received from farmers thanking you for these services?” He said, dryly, “I cannot remember one.”

Some people maintain that lack of appreciation is something new: the modern child or the modern adult is not appreciative as children and adults were fifty or a hundred years ago. Some say we rush around so fast today that we don’t have time to talk to people, to write them letters, to speak the appreciative word or do the appreciative deed.

Unfortunately, the failure to appreciate is an age-old problem. You will remember that one day, when Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, He passed through a certain village. Ten lepers who had heard of His healing powers came to see Him. They
stayed at the proper distance for lepers and cried out to Him for mercy. The Biblical account goes:

And when He saw them, He said unto them, Go shew yourselves unto the priests. And it came to pass that, as they went, they were cleansed. And one of them, when he saw that he was healed, turned back, and with a loud voice glorified God, and fell down on his face at His feet giving Him thanks. And Jesus answering said, “Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine?” [Luke 17: 11-17]

Here are some puzzling questions about this lack of expressed appreciation: Why don’t students write “thank-you” letters to their respected teachers? Why don’t we send flowers to people who are well instead of when they are ill? Why don’t we send letters thanking legislators for voting for a bill instead of not writing them at all or when we are “burned up” about something? How many people have written to television stations thanking them for their excellent programs? Why is depreciation seemingly so much easier to produce than appreciation?

I can think up hard questions but the answers are equally hard. Certainly we parents struggle to get our children to write the bread-and-butter hospitality notes. We also prod them with the question, “Well, what are you going to say to the nice lady who gave you the very lovely book?” And the child dutifully repeats, “Thank you very much for the nice present.”

Will this produce appreciation? How far can the form move ahead of the substance? As long as the spirit of thankfulness is there, we can help with a proper way of expressing it. But if the mood is completely absent, form and manners are of little use. Yet we must not neglect helping our children and our students put their appreciations into suitable form. Words will flow the second time a bit easier than the first.

How do we get people and pupils to practice appreciation? We might make a start with teachers. Instead of feeling sorry because we have run-of-the-mill students, let’s reflect that the students may have the same notion about their instructor and that all of us must make the best of it. Perhaps we have not put our students in positions where they can show their true worth.
In general, people are smart about the things they think are important and which they have had a chance to experience.

One day I was walking through the Hocking Hills of Ohio with a boy of sixteen who had finished school at about the fourth-grade level. He named the various species of trees as we walked along—locust, poplar, white pine, red pine, beech, oaks of various kinds, wild cherry, walnut. The wild cherry and the walnuts looked alike to me and I asked him how he told the difference between them. He replied, "I look at them."
I am sure he thought my question a stupid one. I am sure, too, that this boy never had a chance to show in school that his "W.I.Q." (woods intelligence quotient) was probably higher than that of his classmates and teacher. Certainly the appreciative teacher should learn to appreciate his students.

Students, too, need to be sensitively aware and learn to express their gratification and approval to their parents and teachers. There are many opportunities to practice this judgment and approval. There could be a note of appreciation to the parents who helped with the school party, who drove their cars to the museum. There might be some notes to last year's teachers. Study trips should be followed by a note of appreciation to the public official, the farmer, the factory which was visited. These would be real letters, not the mechanical formal ones we write for practice so that we can write real letters later.
DEVELOPING A SENSE OF EMPATHY

As we plan the teaching of gratitude and appreciation we must see these values on a life-long scale. All of us are at some point in our journey along the road to maturity. Some find the prospect ahead pleasing and challenging, some are at a plateau, others find the road impassable and the view both fearful and bleak.

The route ahead to maturity is not always easy to travel. It means experimenting with wider and wider personal relationships, receiving occasional rebuffs. It means mastering ideas, concepts, impersonal facts. It means developing a skillful balance between dependence and independence, learning when you should go it alone and when you should work with others. It means neither overvaluing nor undervaluing conformity or non-conformity, but knowing when each is most desirable.

Some persons never achieve a well-defined, responsible, mature selfhood. They never quite know who they are, what they are here for, never seem to take charge of their own lives. They look for a mother, a father, a big brother to lean on, to tell them what to do, what to think. “Who am I?” is a question they often face with puzzlement.

Some, worried about anonymity, brooding over facelessness, over the prospect of being a nonentity, become assertive, arrogant, belligerent. They are the compulsively ambitious, the totalitarians, the hard-shells with a mission. They seem unable to learn by experience, being unwilling to fully trust other people.
The Necessity of Communication

Why is it so hard to communicate with other people, to share ideas, insights, and feelings with them? Why don’t excellent, tested ideas move easily into the minds, hearts, and conduct of people? Given the will and ability to gain new experience, the problem, though difficult, can be solved. Some persons are not enlightened chiefly because they have not read enough, discussed enough, practiced enough. Give them time and they will make it. They know that knowledge is vast and that they can never be well informed in all fields. But they are confident that they can get their ignorance better organized.

But time does not help those who are unwilling or unable to learn from experience. The bright, able man who bored even his best friends by talking too much when he was thirty, may still talk too much at forty and at fifty. People wonder why he can’t keep his mouth shut and his ears open. Why the compulsive necessity to talk, talk, talk? Why can’t he get into the shoes of his listeners and discover why they avoid him?

We see similar examples in panel discussions. The speakers sometimes seem unable to get into the minds and spirits of their audience or each other. They may get under their skins but never into them. They are engaging, not in an educational conversation, but in a series of interrupted monologues. All talk; none listen. There is much intellectual preening but little exchange of ideas, limited intellectual transactions. There is no slipping into the other fellow’s shoes to see how he is reacting to your argument and to find out how his argument feels when you try it on.

The danger of assuming a coldly intellectual stance is that we may then see teachers and students only as brains, as purveyors and receivers of facts, but not as living, breathing persons. The intellectually oriented person may teach what he knows (and this may be a lot), but he may fail to teach what he is. Virgil said, “Many of these things I saw, and some of them I was.” Students want to know what their teacher saw, but they also want the kind of communion that comes from knowing what he was and is. They want the teacher’s humanity to shine through, they want to see him as a human being who feels joy and pain just as they do.
We need a common realization that many people, indeed most people, either have had pain, are now in pain, or will have pain. It may be the pain of not making ends meet, the pain of the loss of loved ones through death or other separation, the pain of seeing children grow in directions that parents consider sterile or even disastrous, the pain from enduring insults, indignities, and joblessness because of race, the pain of discovering that, in school, your children are dropping farther and farther behind white children.

To develop the humane qualities of comradeship and friendship among all people is to share both painful and joyful experiences. If we feel we have little in common with other people, then our problem is to create mutuality. Everyone knows something worth communicating to someone else. He knows his own courage and his own fears, his own unselfishness and his own greed, his affection for others and his dislikes. We all crave attention, but in order to get attention we must give attention. The teacher wants the attention of children so she can teach them something. The children want the attention of the teacher so that they can teach something, their own joys and sorrows. Mutuality is a cooperative enterprise.

To become humane is to discover our own power and to learn how to develop it fully. It is inhumane to classify people so that they mistakenly believe they are less able than they really are. Classification should help people learn how to realize their potential. But classification may also become rigid and inflexible, and thwart growth. We all suffer from hardening of the categories.

English literature is filled with references to people and their "proper station in life." On this point H. G. Wells says in Tono-Bungay:

In that English countryside of my boyhood every human being had a "place." It belonged to you from your birth like the colour of your eyes, it was inextricably your destiny. Above you were your betters, below you were your inferiors, and there were even an unstable questionable few, cases so disputable that you might for the rough purposes of every day, at least, regard them as your equals.

We cannot communicate, cannot become increasingly humane,
unless we hold something in common with others. The extent of our communication is a measure of this commonality. Potential is realized only as we work with others to make it so. We have overemphasized the individualistic "What's in it for me?" philosophy. Social growth comes when we ask, "What's in it for us?" and act accordingly. We desperately need an inclusive society, but our habits and customs are too often those of an exclusive society. "The worst sin toward our fellow creatures," said George Bernard Shaw, "is not to hate them, but to be indifferent toward them."

**The Necessity for Growth**

The world changes when people do not accept the places assigned to them. Their rebellion gives them a chance to regain their lost humanity, to become fully humane. But it is only a chance, and it must be seized and acted upon.

To become humane we must grow a little bit every day, become a little more mature. No person would try to prevent his kitten from becoming a cat, his puppy from growing into a dog. But we do try to prevent children from becoming adults. True, there are some actions that are too hazardous for children, require too much responsibility, demand a maturity they do not yet possess. But let us encourage their moving toward the upper limit of their maturing powers.

Parents whose children get into serious trouble sometimes say, "We gave him everything that his mother and I never had." But they didn't give him understanding. Furthermore, parents should realize that when they try to "buy" the love of their children, they never get their money's worth. To grow into humanity, children and young people need increasing responsibility. To develop humane, compassionate people we must do fewer things for them and more things with them. We must help them earn their life.

**The Road to Maturity**

Prejudice and intolerance are clearly characteristics of the immature self. We want a way of life for ourselves which we are
not willing to share with others. Here, too, self-understanding of the operating mechanism is the beginning of possible change. Miriam Allen deFord has said that cruelty is the child of defective imagination, of the inability to put oneself into another’s skin.

How easy it is to assume that other people are just like us and would react as we do to the same situation. How often we say, “If I had been in his shoes, I wouldn’t have done it that way.” We forget that in his role we would have done what he did.

Arthur Jersild points out that “To perceive the significance of problems in the lives of others one must be able, at least to some degree, to recognize and face the implications of corresponding problems in one’s own life.” Why don’t we learn that you earn the right to speak by listening?

Some of this learning comes naturally through the normal give-and-take of living. The little girl pulls her brother’s hair and he howls. Mother says, “She doesn’t understand that it hurts.” Minutes later the little sister yowls and the boy explains to his mother, “Now she understands.”

Later we learn, contrary to the old saw, that we are hurt not only by sticks and stones but by names too. The names hurt both the one who utters them and the one who receives them. One is learning the sadistic pleasure in wounding; the other is having his confidence and trust in himself endangered. The latter one may even assume that he deserves to play the mean and degrading role assigned to him. Many slaves accept servitude.

One does not quickly discover what hurts other peoples’ feelings. Some hurts are unintentional but some are planned. We may enjoy cutting people down to our size—where they cannot look down on us or overlook us. This has been going on for some time and it is not likely to stop soon. We could, however, know why we are doing it and not wrap ourselves in a mantle of righteousness when all we are doing is getting even.

The essence of humaneness is the thoughtfulness and sensitivity to put ourselves in the shoes of other people and to let them get into ours. We must realize that today we live in an unfinished world which is undergoing basic reconstruction. The shape of things to come will be determined not only by the events and conditions surrounding us, but also by our own will, our own
creativity. What we think of ourselves and others, therefore, is supremely important.

Speaking of slavery, Abraham Lincoln said, "If all earthly power were given to me, I should not know what to do about it." He continued: "The southerners are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist among them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist among us, we should not instantly give it up."

"He jests at scars who never felt a wound." Yet how can we in the United States, most of us who have never gone without food, or shelter, or education, or protection from disease, enter imaginatively into the lives of those who constantly live at the edge of the abyss? Empathy is learned.

Certainly, there is folk wisdom available on this problem. Publius Syrius said two thousand years ago: "We are interested in others when they are interested in us." Yet even here we must raise a warning. We find that some people are interested in us as means, not as ends. They see us as customers, members of their organizations, not as friends and equals.

When people treat us as friends, they may treat us better than we deserve. They do not expect gratitude but are not surprised if it comes. Friendship is immeasurable; we can't keep books on it. Friendship thrives simply because only in generosity of mind and spirit can we sense how the other person feels.
THE PURPOSE OF THE HUMANITIES

Perhaps, then, the most important ingredient in the education of man or child, teacher or preacher, worker with hand or worker with brain, is the ability to enter sympathetically and imaginatively into the lives of others. Empathy is called for—the ability to identify with other people. Unless we can put ourselves in the place of the other persons who differ from us in age, sex, education, wealth, race, or nationality, we shall not become fully human. Our growth will have been blocked on a plateau of immaturity. Only rarely will we show gratitude and appreciation.

Can this spirit be taught to children, young people, and adults? It seems to me that the central purpose of the study of the humanities should be to help people become more humane. Indeed, a person might be an excellent scholar or able student, yet still lack the human touch.

Sometimes the gap between persons is bridged by more firsthand experience. As we grow older, we acquire the experience which enables us to be aware of the concerns of other people. But some experiences can only be entered into vicariously, through the imagination. Certainly the experiences of the past are of this kind. Louis Gottschalk describes this attempt at empathy:

"Historical-mindedness" requires the investigator to shed his own personality and to take on, as far as possible, that of his subject in the effort to understand the latter's language, ideals, interests, attitudes, habits, motives, drives, and traits. This may be hard to do and the historian may rarely succeed in doing it thoroughly, but the obligation upon him is obvious if he is attempting to understand and impartially judge rather than to criticize others' acts and personalities.
Literature is another way of entering into the lives of others. The writer creates a universal character, a person more real than reality. As we re-read The Adventures of Huck Finn, we see that it is more than an adventure story, more than a pleasant escape into a world where you “lazy around” most of the day. Mark Twain enables us to live imaginatively in the lives of Huck and “Ole” Jim, while he portrays a story of love and affection. Mark Twain’s Jim is a seeker of freedom, a loving father, a trusted friend.

Jim, a father, is sad when he remembers how he slapped his four-year-old daughter when she did not do what he asked—only to find out a few minutes later that scarlet fever had made her deaf. He is glad when Huck is safe, but is ashamed of Huck’s trick to fool him into thinking that he dreamt that Huck was gone. Huck says: “I didn’t do him no more mean tricks, and I wouldn’t done that one if I’d a knowed it would make him feel that way.”

To put ourselves in the shoes of others is to make it common. In short, it is a realistic definition of communication. And whether we are communicating through reading or with persons present, our aim is a warm and human dialogue, a conversation among equals. Such conversation does not promise a quick end to “mean tricks,” but it is a long step on the road to maturity.
HUMANENESS: A MATTER OF SELF-DISCIPLINE

We can call for appreciation, gratitude, and empathy but what do you do to get it? Clearly it is a matter of self-discipline.

I define self-discipline as the organization of one's time and talent to produce intended results. Basic to all discipline is the habit of deferred gratification. There is a big difference, however, between that deferred gratification which comes from self-imposed discipline and that which is externally imposed. Deferred or postponed gratification is acceptable if the learner sees that the means he is using are closely related to the end to be achieved. To lose sight of the goal is to lose the meaning of the self-imposed discipline.

It should be pointed out, too, that civilized men set certain standards in regard to the nature of gratification. John Stuart Mill has said, "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."

I have asked many teachers and college students to estimate the percent of their potential which they are using. Rarely does this figure average over 70 percent and many say that they are using 50 percent or less. Perhaps we should be satisfied to work at 60 to 70 percent of our potential, but few people are. They feel they have latent creative abilities, hidden powers that they don't know how to release or harness. They may be saying, openly or subtly, "Please help me."

What do they lack? First of all, they have not subjected themselves to the discipline of self-examination. Socrates said
that the unexamined life is not worth living. Central in this examination is a look at purposes, values, and goals. How do we now spend our first-rate energy? How do we exercise our options and our choices? Are we fulfilling the high promises we once made to ourselves and others? And if we aren't, why don't we?

Many persons run into difficulties at this point. Some find the present intolerable and the future fearful; they nostalgically wish to return to the past. They want to go home again. Others reject the past, resent the present, and hopefully anticipate an utopian future where the ills of the past and present will miraculously vanish. They want to live where "every day is Sunday and Sunday is Christmas."

**Live in the Present**

Obviously we can neither ignore the past nor fail to plan for the future. But it is the discipline of living in the present that makes the future at the least tolerable and at the best highly inviting. It requires us to make our past experience and future hopes relevant to our present condition. Discipline enlarges the meanings of the past and the future to facilitate living in an expanded present. It is knowing where we came from, where we are now, and planning where we are going. We are the sum total of all our experiences, good and bad. Our past and present experiences shape our future.

The discipline of self-examination requires guidance, and sometimes the skilled diagnosis of an expert. Certainly parents and others can provide some of this guidance. Teachers have learned to diagnose the scholastic skills of children and young people, but they often do not help them adequately to diagnose their ambitions, their fears, their hopes, their social competencies, their humaneness.

If we knew where youngsters wanted to go, we could help them map the route to get there or to judge the desirability of getting there. And if they were confused and bewildered, we could offer some inviting alternative paths for their careful consideration. I am thinking not only of vocational goals but also of those competencies which comprise the good life.
Practice, Practice

A second discipline to which we can subject ourselves is that of the guided practice which leads to competence. There is a big difference between wishing to do something and willing to do it. Self-discipline is necessary to master the competencies needed in a free society.

Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne have subjected themselves to the discipline of guided practice. Dan Sullivant said of them in the New York Times (August 19, 1968):

From first rehearsal to final curtain—and the couple played several of their hits more than a thousand times in New York and on the road—their goal was perfection, and neither allowed the other to forget it. Each criticized the other’s performance sharply. Not only to perform well but to keep up that high level of performance for a thousand appearances is indeed the result of disciplined effort.

Katherine Hepburn said in an interview reported in Look magazine for August 5, 1968: “I can’t understand actors who learn their lines approximately. I’m a demon about that. . . . I learn them exactly, word for word, no well’s, but’s. If it’s a good script, it means a writer has sweated over every part of it, and a single word change can throw everything.”

A disciplined person counts the cost of reaching a goal in terms of time, energy, money, the things one must do without. Yet think of the thousands of adults who bought records to learn a foreign language and soon gave up. To learn to speak a foreign language acceptably probably requires at least 600 hours. This is two hours a day for 300 days, an unlikely expenditure of time without strong motivation or highly gifted teachers. Many wish to speak a foreign language, few will it. They lack the necessary self-discipline.

Share

It is likely that the most important of all disciplines is that of sharing. It cannot be learned without rigorous self-discipline. It is a mature ability, since it means that we must understand other people. Sharing is a key ingredient in all communication. It
means that one must be imaginatively and creatively able to exchange roles with another person. Further, we can’t share our thoughts with others unless they are able and willing to share their ideas with us.

For example, how do you explain or share with others what it means to be forced to live in the slums, even though you can afford to live elsewhere? What did it feel like over the years to be the last hired, the first fired? What did it feel like to have your children go to the poorest schools, have the poorest teachers, the least adequate buildings and equipment? Happily, in recent years these situations have markedly improved. The disadvantaged learner, from nursery school through college, will increasingly secure the help necessary to remedy his weaknesses. But we still have a long, long way to go.

Holden Caulfield, the sixteen-year-old leading character of Catcher in the Rye, desperately wanted to share conversations with other persons, but he could do so only with his ten-year-old sister. He said: “What really knocks me out is a book that, when you’re all done reading it, you wish the author that wrote it was a terrific friend of yours and you could call him up on the phone whenever you felt like it.” And then he adds sadly, “That doesn’t happen much, though.” Holden Caulfield wanted to “call old Thomas Hardy up. I like that Eustacia Vye.” What are the disciplines involved in having a good conversation with other people—agemates and others? Of appreciating others and being appreciated in turn by them?
WHAT DOES THE FUTURE INDICATE?

As we think about the future we must also ask what the future setting of disciplined activity will be. Until the 1900s, every generation in the United States faced the hard discipline of raising food, providing clothing and shelter. The farm furnished the in-escapable discipline which comes from the methodical caring for animals, the harvesting and sale of crops when they ripened. People were compelled by the situation to accept the discipline of farm chores. Every child was part of a cooperative enterprise where work and play were shared. Today there are few such chores for boys and girls. Adjusting the thermostat is no substitute for splitting wood, firing the stove with anthracite coal, taking out ashes. The moral equivalent of milking a cow has not yet been invented. Family duties may be prescribed but they do not have the meaning of the adult-like chores performed on a farm. Today’s “chores” may involve little more than doing one’s homework, a necessary activity but not one in which the whole family shares.

We are making a small beginning with high school courses which involve part-time jobs, such as distributive education. Many colleges provide cooperative education. Western Reserve University’s College of Medicine starts the young doctor on his career by attaching him in his first year to a doctor and to a family whose medical needs he follows closely. Increasingly, tutorial and other assistance is given to inner-city children by high school and college students.

Our difficulty today is not that youth are irresponsible but that they have not been given enough opportunities to be re-
sponsible. Increasingly, we are setting up learning teams for teaching each other. Perhaps they could be given an opportunity to create new recreational and instructional opportunities. They could act as curators in small museums, help build roads and facilities in our parks, serve as assistants in hospitals, run their own small businesses. They could be given real responsibility to improve the curricula of our schools and colleges. To be responsible is to respond actively and thoughtfully.

Gunnar Myrdal, the distinguished sociologist, pointed out in *Asian Drama, An Inquiry Into the Poverty of Nations*, that the grave weakness of some underdeveloped countries is that they lack the self-discipline to make best use of aid from developed countries. Societies usually are destroyed not because of danger
from without, but because of weaknesses within. To murder a society one needs only to reduce the opportunities for rigorous self-discipline. Such discipline is a matter of values, of setting priorities over long periods of time.

The undisciplined view is illustrated in a fable by the Russian poet Krylov about a pig who ate his fill of acorns under an oak tree and then started to root around the tree. A crow sitting in the oak tree remarked, “You should not do this. If you lay bare the roots, the tree will wither and die.” “Let it die,” replied the pig. “Who cares as long as there are acorns?”

The disciplined view is illustrated in Arthur Koestler’s Age of Longing, in which he has Monsieur Anatole say:

Do you know how long it took to make the Place de la Concorde into that miracle of landscape planning that it is? Three centuries, my friend. . . . To build perfection out of so much ugly detail, you must have a vision that embraces centuries, which digests the past and makes the future grow out of it; in other words, you must have continuity.

**Signs of Decline**

When we read of the fall and decline of a nation or a civilization, disturbing questions arise. During the critical years of decline did the leaders sense their lessened power and prestige, their increasing decadence, the “failure of nerve?” Or did they look about and say in prideful arrogance: “We never had it so good”?

What are the stigmata, the discernible evidences of the decline of a society? The first place to look would be at its values, the goals its members prize and give priority to, the activities to which they give their greatest energy, the best years of their lives. How can a nation tell when it has lost its sense of self-confidence, the once jaunty air of daring and pioneering, its concern for the “huddled masses yearning to be free”? When ingratitude, depreciation, and cynicism have become endemic the danger signals are up.

One of the easiest criticisms that can be made of a society by its enemies, and sometimes by its friends, is that it is materialistic. The term is usually undefined, which makes the argument lively but limits the value of the criticism. Have we now in the
United States shifted to the philosophy of the greatest goodies for the greatest number? Few would seriously maintain that it is a bad thing to have a surplus of cotton, wheat, or soy beans. Or that it is undesirable to feed and clothe our neighbor at home or across the sea out of our surpluses. Or that abundant medical materials, such as penicillin and vitamins, should be distributed where they are scarce. The issue, however, lies deeper.

The social critic is undoubtedly pleased at the sharing of these material goods with those who lack them. But he might also observe that our close and devoted attention is no longer on those material goods which satisfy important personal and social needs but rather on the symbols of these goods, not on quality but on quantity. Pointed criticism is leveled against the love of money as an end but not as means. Ruskin tells this story in his essay, "Ad Valorem":

Lately in a wreck of a Californian ship, one of the passengers fastened a belt about him with two hundred pounds of gold in it, with which he was found afterwards at the bottom. Now, as he was sinking—had he the gold? or had the gold him?

Is the following comment by newspaperman Emile Gauvreau (1891-1956) valid today?

I was now definitely a part of that strange race of people aptly described.... as spending their lives doing work they detest to make money they don't want to buy things they don't need in order to impress people they dislike.

Bernice Fitz-Gibbon, advertising and merchandising consultant for Seventeen magazine, commented at a fashion clinic for the "back-to-school fashion concept":

Your fashion department is the wooing chamber. Get the teen-age fly to come into your parlor and little by little the web will be spun. Then when the girl marries you haven't lost a customer. You've gained a gold mine.

Miss Fitz-Gibbon called the teen-age girl "a woman with means" with "a passion for possession," and urged retailers to go after the teen tycoons, not in the sweet by-and-by, but in
the much sweeter now-and-now. What a bitter epitaph for a world in ruins: They had a passion for possession.

**Indications of Strength**

I have noted some weaknesses in our national and individual values. But what positive, countervailing values strongly persist? What widely held values still serve as indicators of high national purposes?

We in the United States have been in the forefront of those nations dedicated to human dignity and to the worth and self-fulfillment of individuals. Our magnificent public school system symbolizes our past success in pursuit of this ideal and our future commitment to it.

Over the years the public schools have taken an ill-assorted group of pupils and equipped them with that consensus which makes us “one nation indivisible.” Although marred by our national failure to meet our obligations to black children and to other economically disadvantaged children, devoted parents and teachers have labored to build the common schools needed in a democracy.

Today our national needs have changed. The national consensus of the governed is still a necessity. But now our great need is for uncommon schools designed to develop inventiveness, innovation, the imaginative pioneering spirit, and a spirit of gratitude and appreciation.

What are we waiting for? Many are not waiting. They have been active in voluntary organizations which have critically and thoughtfully promoted the kinds of ideals and values which make our nation free and responsible. However, our need is not for more coercion, more scolding and finger pointing, more manipulating, or more vague admonitions to do our duty. What we need are creative plans for the renewal of dynamic living on our planet and an indication of where we fit into those plans. First of all, we must make up our minds whether we wish to use the machine or have the machine use us.

Nearly every large American city is being choked to death or forced to make huge expenditures of funds to accommodate auto traffic. At the same time, our mass methods of transportation,
the railroad and the city bus systems, are financially starved to death. Isn’t our social and technical inventiveness up to this challenge?

Are the American people now using television to further our national purpose, to bring a sense of the reality of the world to our 200 million citizens? Or do we use it primarily for entertainment, for fantasy, for purposes antithetical to the building of an informed consensus? The burning issue on commercial television seems to be how to take the shun out of perspiration. We use our precious air waves to promote gentle toilet paper, to have trivial products advertised by otherwise intelligent persons. Will America be saved by better dog and cat food? Is gas on the stomach the basic health problem of the future?

One person can’t save the world, but with good planning and cooperation he could save one small part of it. Certainly we still remain free to praise the values we accept and criticize those we reject. We can protest deceptive packaging, deceptive advertising, indecent motion pictures. We can praise and appreciate excellence wherever it appears. If we wish to be responsibly informed persons, no one is stopping us from reading newspapers and magazines, viewing serious television programs, discussing these experiences with our friends. If we really care about developing schools and colleges which can meet the needs of today and the deluge of tomorrow, we can use our voice and our vote to see that they are adequately financed. We can become much more sensitive to the choices we are making day by day. We can choose the artistic and avoid the banal.

But to act responsibly we must have a commitment to values, and this is how we vote for the kind of society which we want to flourish. How much do we really want world law and order. How much do we want to help all the people be at their best physically and mentally? How much do we want to rescue old people from lives of bitter solitude? Are we deeply committed to giving hope and a sense of personal value to that forgotten fourth of pupils who do not even now graduate from high school and who are swelling the ranks of the unemployed? Do we really prize active participation in community, national, and international life? Or do we fit Emile Gauvreau’s description noted earlier?
HUMANENESS CAN BEGIN IN THE CLASSROOM

If we believe that the schools do have a responsibility to contribute to the humaneness of our society, how can we begin in the classroom? Humaneness, of course, begins with the teacher himself. All the textbooks, memos from the administration, and inservice workshops will have little effect if the teacher is not committed to humane values. The teacher must ask himself if he prizes the characteristics of a humane person. Does he make a conscious effort to understand himself and others? If he does, he will already have the most effective teaching technique—example.

Whether or not his school has formally incorporated humanities into the curriculum, the humane teacher will use techniques which introduce his students to a sense of appreciation, an openness to other viewpoints, and an empathy with others. He will encourage the student to put himself in other’s shoes, to walk a mile in those shoes. In science classes, he may help the student see the early discoverers of penicillin and anesthetics as persons, in historical perspective—the magnitude of their scientific breakthroughs, the opposition they faced, the loneliness of their struggles.

Relentlessly, the humane teacher will encourage students to look at both or many sides of every controversy, to see the gray in a seemingly black or white issue, to probe many opinions before taking a position.

The humane teacher considers his students as individuals, and important ones. He gets to know them and lets them know he is interested in their hopes and fears.
The humane teacher will weigh his actions and procedures for their possible impact on the student’s self-image. A teacher may do things which cause children to think ill of themselves, to lack self-confidence. A first-grader is glum and unhappy about school. Her mother discovers that the children have been divided into three reading groups—the freights, the automobiles, and the airplanes. Her daughter knows what it means to be a freight car, but the teacher isn’t sensitive to the child’s sensitivity. It’s bad enough to be a slow reader, but why rub it in? This reaction was unlike that of the boy who after school burst happily into his mother’s room and said: “What do you think, Mother? I’m the brightest kid in the dumb section.”

The humane teacher is not a bystander in school affairs. He accepts committee membership, he is open to innovations. He tries to communicate with parents and other citizens. He listens sympathetically to the thoughtful criticisms leveled by individuals and the media. The humane teacher studies proposals for curriculum reform—special education, career education, compensatory education, inquiry learning, simulation, and sensitivity training. There is much talk today about personalized instruction, and this may occur both in a group and in a one-to-one situation. This situation is well described by the term “individualized group instruction.”

The charge of curriculum irrelevance used by young people may be met in part by introducing more informality to the usual formal school setting. Able instructors, knowledgeable in their subject areas, may question their ability to establish this kind of informal, personal relationship with all or most of their students. The ability to be humane, appreciative, grateful, empathetic, self-disciplined may be a rare quality but it can be learned.

It is critically important to develop a sense of humanity throughout the school or college and the educational profession. There is no single way to assure that each teacher will be sensitive to his student’s feelings or that the student will have similar sensitivity. But if we believe in it, we can turn our steps in this direction. We can take to heart a comment by Plato: “What is honored in a country is cultivated there.”
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