

Contents

Adventure Ways

The following journeys, providing you take any of them to the outer limits of your capabilities in a self reliant manner, can take you along the road to truth and beauty, freedom and happiness.

- UP A MOUNTAIN OR DOWN A RIVER
 - ACROSS AN OCEAN OR ALONG A COASTLINE
 - ACROSS THE WILDERNESS OR ALONG THE OUTDOOR WAY
 - THROUGH THE AIR OR UNDER THE SURFACE OF THE EARTH
- Your success is determined by your efforts and not by results, and you may come to realise that the most important journey is the journey inwards.

Mumfack, C.
 The Adventure Alternative (1984/2000)
 Chapter 1-5

Foreword	6
Preface	8
Acknowledgements	9
Introduction	11
1. Adventure	19
2. Skills Learning: Stage II	25
3. Safety	32
4. Frontier Adventure	38
5. Misadventure: Stage IV	41
6. The Instinct for Adventure	46
7. Towards the Development of a Philosophy	54
8. To Develop an Awareness of, Respect and Love for Self	58
9. Mental Development	63
10. Emotional Development	68
11. Vitality and Integrity	74
12. Unselfishness and Compassion	78
13. Humanity and Courage	85
14. Physical Development	93
15. The Natural Environment	98
16. The Holistic and Balanced Approach	106
17. A Concept of Maturity	115
18. In Pursuit of Happiness	120
19. The Universal Quest	128
Appendix A - Safety Principles	137
Appendix B - Bibliography	140
Index	147

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Foreword

heights of Everest or the empty, storm-swept coast of Alaska, there is a vast satisfaction and fulfillment to be found in the outdoors. This book delves not only into the philosophy of adventure but a philosophy for life itself.

*Chris Bonington
Hesket Newmarket*

Colin Mortlock is more than an outdoor educationalist. He is a leading and pioneering adventurer in his own right both in the field of mountaineering and also long distance sea canoeing. In addition he is a thinker and has brought to outdoor education a stimulating, at times controversial, yet very expansive approach to this field.

Colin is an educationalist in the very widest sense. He does not want to place adventure in the outdoors into a tidy little compartment but rather, in his regard for life as a whole as a constant educative process, sees what significance the search for adventure can have on not only broadening mind and body but also in helping us have better, happier and certainly more fulfilled lives.

He grasps and understands the fact that adventure in its very essence has a real element of risk. It is the mastery of this risk that provides one important ingredient in the satisfaction and value of the adventure. Colin Mortlock has helped and encouraged many hundreds of youngsters to discover in themselves abilities and potential that they never realised they could have. Paradoxically, in allowing youngsters to develop their full potential and through this expose themselves to a level of risk which they were able to understand and harness, he was probably also giving them a safer introduction to the outdoors than is given in a much more supervised and heavily controlled environment by many outdoor educationalists who, through the very fact of their cocooning, all too often fail to arm the student against the reality of danger that so many of the adventure-orientated activities must inevitably have. Nearly everyone has a seed of adventure within them waiting to germinate. Colin Mortlock recognises that the level of adventure to which each person might want to aspire is very different in every individual. Reaching towards this feeling of adventure, be it the unknown of a Lakeland hill or some sheltered coastal water, the

Preface

Writing this book has been rather like preparing for my first expedition. I now know that, perhaps like any skill, the skill of writing can only be acquired by a considerable amount of hard work over a long period of time. I have been particularly conscious also, of the difficulty of even beginning to coherently define some of the deeper values implicit in the wilderness journey. There have been occasions when I have felt that it was unrealistic to attempt such a book, especially at a time when I was substantially involved practically in the outdoors. So little appears to have been written in this area, however, that it has seemed necessary to make a start.

The book is in two main sections. The first six chapters are concerned with establishing a broad framework of levels of adventure as well as emphasizing the importance both of the quality of the experience and of the possibilities of adventure being instinctive. Subsequent chapters develop a personal philosophy of the potential values of these experiences. Whilst the ideas are essentially from personal experience I have made extensive use of quotations from more authoritative sources. The people whose writings I have used, have inspired me by their own experiences. I hope they also add support to the idea that the key human virtues are crucial to any satisfying lifestyle, and that the outdoor journey in particular has considerable potential in this respect.

Colin Morlock

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Introduction

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Colin Morlock

There is something delightfully simple in a spontaneous decision to go into the outdoor environment and tackle some form of adventure. It would seem reason enough that it was both enjoyable and satisfying. Certainly as a young rock climber these were my reasons, and I felt no compelling urge to enquire further. Mountaineering as a way of life seemed to be a worthy ideal.

It was with this attitude that in 1960 I first taught secondary schoolboys for a period of three months, in order to earn some money to climb in the Himalayas. As a selfish young man I was convinced that I would never be, and did not want to be, a teacher. I was both surprised and pleased therefore, to find young town lads responding with great enthusiasm to my climbing circuits and commando courses in the gymnasium. Official views of what I was doing, as an unqualified temporary teacher, were somewhat confusing. The local Adviser was appalled by my misuse of equipment, whilst a visiting Inspector was so impressed that he made a film and suggested that I qualify as a teacher! So enjoyable was the physical work with the youngsters that I took them out on gristone to climb. Their abilities were impressive and matched only by their obvious delight in the sense of freedom and challenge of the activity. Two of them joined me in the Lake District for a week's climbing. It was difficult to believe their performance. At the age of 14 and in shoes, they confidently followed me up many climbs of the Very Severe and Extremely Severe grades. At the end of the week I pointed out the line of a Very Severe route on Castle Rock of Trieman and told them to lead through. I then walked down to the campsite. That week was my first real introduction to the capabilities of the younger generation.

Five years later, in 1965, when leading a schoolboy expedition to Arctic Norway, my awareness of adolescent potential was considerably extended. I had taken a party of 30 boys, sixteen to nineteen

years old, from Manchester Grammar School, to a relatively unexplored and rugged mountain area. The specific aims of the expedition were, in the first instance, to climb as many peaks as possible in an area of 100 square miles. The expedition was then to split up and undertake exploratory work ranging from white water canoeing and rock climbing to botanical and geological surveys. The hidden aim of the trip was to find out just how capable were young people in a wilderness environment after a year of progressive training. To this end, the adults with the group were kept to a minimum: myself, my wife (with responsibilities for the scientific work and the catering) and a Doctor. With the expedition working for six weeks, in up to seven small groups, and with an environment that was both hazardous and somewhat remote, there was ample scope for accidents. Perhaps there was an element of luck in that the only such incident was a badly sprained ankle which occurred at Base Camp. What was pleasing was that, despite much bad weather, the practical objectives of the expedition were achieved. This included climbing all the peaks within the specified area. I returned to Britain more than ever convinced about young people's capabilities. They had all been in serious outdoor situations and responded as self-reliant young men.

The next six years at the Woodlands Outdoor Centre in Wales led to an extensive development in my thinking. Unlike the Manchester experience, the Centre catered for a very wide range of intelligence and abilities, as it was used by all the secondary schools from Oxford. Apart from learning that the desire for adventure was likely to be instinctive and that, for educational purposes at least, adventure should be developed as a progressive concept, I found I was deeply impressed by the attitude of most of the adolescents who came for a fortnight of challenge. Not only did they quickly tend to treat the Centre as home during their stay, but they were generally prepared to face up to the problems of fear and discomfort. On winter courses, for example, canoe capsizing drill was often a bitterly cold experience, especially without wetsuits! Many other adventure activity groups would also return from days out, both cold and wet, as well as tired and hungry. Determination and courage were characteristic qualities of these young people in these type of situations. Groups also often displayed compassion to any member who might not have much skill but who was prepared to make a great effort. Opting out from a challenge was unusual as it was not traditional within the life of the Centre.

12

I became so impressed, if not inspired, by their generation and the potential of this type of experience as paid their education, that I eventually called a meeting in North Wales to consider the formation of an Outdoor Association.¹ I particularly hoped that such a body would encourage the development of outdoor adventure 'to meet the needs and abilities of young people'.² From this meeting there eventually emerged what has since become The National Association for Outdoor Education.³ At the same time I found myself writing and lecturing on the need for young people to adventure.

During this period I found considerable opposition to the adventure concept, not least from those who were in responsible positions in Outdoor Education. This opposition was particularly strong amongst the Wardens of Centres, the Advisory Service and the Inspectorate. Somehow the ideas of adventure, fear, physical hardship and discomfort were considered to be inappropriate, and were largely unacceptable as a major aspect of education through the outdoors.⁴ In essence my views were seen as narrow, fanatical and dangerous: criticisms that were seldom made face to face. Almost inevitably, and accelerated by the Carington tragedy and the fatal incidents in winter in North Wales to young people, the concept of Outdoor Education was developed. By combining outdoor activities with environmental and field studies, educational and academic respectability were achieved. Equally, and very conveniently, fundamental questions concerning adventure, self-reliance and self-development by young people, were largely ignored. It was a subject too dangerous and too radical to bring into prominence.

Ten years of further work with young people and within a community project based in the Lake District⁵ strengthened my view both on the broad values of the outdoors as well as of the adventure approach. After the six intensive years working with thirteen to fifteen year olds at the Woodlands Centre, I found my time taken up mainly with boys and girls up to the age of thirteen. The questions in my mind at that time were concerned with whether this young adolescent age group would both enjoy and cope with exciting adventure pursuits such as white water canoeing, rock climbing and survival, in winter as well as summer. If these activities were relevant, then there were serious doubts in my mind concerning possible strength, endurance and exposure problems. There also lurked the more positive thought that there was a

13

possibility that through progressive training, self reliance might be achieved by the age of 12 or 13 – at least in the form of summer expeditions.

With the help of experienced outdoor teachers, who were on my Course at the College,⁶ my queries and doubts were answered in a most positive way by the young people involved. I had quite simply underestimated their capabilities. There was no doubt that adventure was relevant to this tender age, that they could acquire considerable levels of skill, and that, not least, they had the courage and determination generally to face up to fatigue and discomfort, cold and fear. In addition, various summer expeditions by them through the hills and down rivers without adults, showed they could work as groups efficiently and be self reliant. The sight of a thirteen year old girl kayaking a grade IV rough river World Championship course with a fleeting smile on her face, remains vividly in my memory. Although the occasion was in a slalom competition, it was nevertheless the epitome of adventure: the journey with a degree of uncertainty with a premium on self reliance.

More importantly, close involvement over five years with some of these youngsters, and their almost daily involvement in the outdoors, has convinced me of the possible deeper values to be gained from such an approach. As young people they seem to be very mature for their age. They tend to accept the need to work hard regularly if they wish to find success in what they do. Their determination is undeniable when they are prepared to kayak regularly early in the morning before school throughout the winter.

Most pleasingly they generally recognise that it is the effort that counts rather than the results, and on weekends away they tend to work and act as a team. Actual success in terms of results, or in representing their country, has not led to arrogance as one might possibly expect. Fears concerning possible deterioration in their academic work at school have also proved groundless. It would seem that they can cope positively with a lifestyle of 'work hard, play hard, and don't mess about'.⁷

Whilst working with this particular group, and with more diverse community groups, has given me a great deal of satisfaction, I could never accept that any form of teaching should replace my own need for adventure. Unlike being at an Outdoor Centre, working from a College gave me the vacation time to expedition, and opportunities were taken both abroad and in Scotland. Most of these experiences were by sea kayak on remote coastlines. Much of my thinking has

been inspired from some of these, and earlier adventures in the mountains.

Other experiences have also broadened my views of the values of the self-reliant journey. In particular there were the backpacking and camping expeditions by the family round various islands in Northern Britain.⁸ With a wife, who is a keen naturalist, and three young daughters who are diverse in temperament, age and abilities, the expedition challenges were of a different order from my own personal ventures. Instead of the close presence of danger, as with small boat journeys on the sea, there was the challenge of whether the family could find enjoyment and satisfaction from the backpacking and camping in what, at times, was a harsh environment.

Like Sir Edmund Hillary, I found these journeys infinitely rewarding. Back at home there seemed few occasions when the family were all together. Either my wife or I were often out in the evenings and weekends, at meetings, lectures or involved with activities. At the same time, two of the daughters were either involved with homework or their own interests. The contrast with our outdoor journeys was extreme. Having left the car on the mainland, our life became one of simplicity. We would backpack for about eight hours each day, and then camp with evenings on the beach. The essence of these journeys was a return to basic living, with a common objective that required us to work together, play together, and help each other. My awareness respect and love for the family increased, as did my knowledge of the environment. As a family we all felt that we had gained greatly from these experiences.

My work during this period was mainly concerned with running Courses for experienced teachers.⁹ On a year's Course it was possible to both share a variety of adventure experiences and to discuss their possible values. With students coming from America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as from Britain, it was normal to have wide ranging discussions on the outdoor experience. Significantly perhaps, despite the sometimes great diversity of ideas, the basic concept of adventure was never seriously questioned. I suspect that almost anyone who is involved teaching adventure activities to young people, subconsciously and instinctively knows that what he or she is doing has significant value beyond that of learning skills.

The opportunity to explore further the relevance of the values implicit in the wilderness experience came with an invitation to give

a lecture at an International Conference in Australia in 1981.¹⁰ I had decided to speak on the state of British Outdoor Education and it seemed necessary to take a careful look at the state of Western Society and its education systems as essential background. The evidence I found was very disturbing and seemed to underline the essential need for adventure as a central part of the education of young people. As Solzenitsyn found, Western Society is dominated by a lack of courage and ego-centred trivia.¹¹ It defines progress as increased security and a greater ease of living, and by an increase in the Gross National Product. If, as would seem reasonable, mankind is searching for happiness, then this type of 'progressive' society is obviously in very serious difficulties. Figures for suicide rates, mental illness, drug abuse, divorce, crime and vandalism are both very high and increasing throughout Western Society. The time honoured human qualities so essential in any civilization are largely ignored, unless they are convenient, or increase the power or status of the people or country involved. Instead of integrity, dishonesty and deceit are rampant throughout all layers of society.¹² Instead of humility, arrogance is commonplace. Instead of self-reliance, the Welfare State approach has led to a great deal of irresponsibility. It is normal for people to evade responsibility for their actions if at all possible. It is convenient to pass the responsibility either on to someone else, or to some committee. In a similar way, emphasis on individual freedom has led to an attitude of 'I'm alright Jack', and an evasion of responsibilities as a member of society. Selfishness and apathy concerning the future of mankind are typical attitudes. These disturbing trends of modern man and 'the nuclear age' are of course unacceptable to many people. If one looks beyond government and multi-national corporations, and into the lives of many individuals, then one will find the universal values, or at least some of them, are still very much in evidence. As a society Britain, for example, still places courage as something of special importance. Compassion and unselfishness too are reflected in the myriad of caring and helping organisations. There are also many bodies concerned with the protection of the natural environment and its wildlife.

An increasing number of people have rejected the trend of modern materialism and, in a variety of ways, developed alternative lifestyles and ideals more attuned to men as part of nature. This 'New Age' movement¹³ is beginning to attract media attention in much the same way as the Green movement in Europe.¹⁴

It is difficult not to be highly encouraged by the amount and extent of voluntary work, and the increase in alternative lifestyles, it does seem however, that in practice, they are almost totally peripheral to the political juggernauts that ruthlessly exploit both the earth and less fortunate human beings. None of the major political parties, in terms of their actions, appear to be prepared radically to change direction away from the aims of a higher standard of living.

The same comment can be made generally about the education system, which will always tend to reflect the aims of the society. Increased security and ease of living by way of examination 'success' is still the tradition, despite at least 20 years of attempts to change this system. The result can be seen in most secondary school classrooms around the country: boredom and restlessness rather than vitality and enthusiasm. When the bell goes for the end of the school, there tends to be a swift and joyous exodus. Education has finished for the day and the adolescent can relax and really live! And then of course for many, there is the endless homework – usually a tedious chore that is often done with resentment and without enthusiasm.

The effect of this traditional approach to secondary education is not only to stunt the growth of many young people but, in their eyes at least, to brand a majority of them as academic failures. Many of them know that in practice, school is often only concerned with the numbers of examination passes. Nothing else appears to matter. The resultant damage to such adolescents must be enormous. Not only do they tend to lack self confidence and vitality, but they will tend to treat any form of education in later life with contempt.

As recognised by many scientists and philosophers, the world is now at a crisis point in its history. The greed of selfish materialism by the advanced nations, has led to huge problems both within those societies, and in terms of providing sufficient resources for the health and well-being of the entire human race. If it is accepted that there is a duty to try and safeguard the happiness and well-being of the entire human race, then it is obvious that there must be a radical change of attitude by modern societies. Almost from the dawn of history, outstanding men and women have shown the way by the qualities they have displayed. These include COURAGE: COMPASSION: DETERMINATION: INTEGRITY: HUMILITY and SELF RELIANCE. Such qualities, and associated ones, should be openly recognised within society as of supreme importance, and

Adventure

way beyond those of physical or intellectual excellence, important though these are in themselves.

At the same time as endorsing the value of these qualities, modern man must avoid at all costs, the temptation to be greedy and selfish. All his actions should be based within the following broad framework:-

To try and develop, to the best of his ability,
AN AWARENESS OF, RESPECT FOR, AND LOVE OF
SELF balanced against
AN AWARENESS OF, RESPECT FOR, AND LOVE OF
OTHERS balanced against
AN AWARENESS OF, RESPECT FOR, AND LOVE OF
THE ENVIRONMENT

This means, in effect that modern man will reject the arrogant concept that he can conquer Nature. Instead, he will accept not only that he is part of Nature, but that, as its supposedly most advanced form of life, he has a huge responsibility for the happiness and well-being of ALL forms of life.

The great message of twentieth century biology is that all human life, and indeed all life, has an essential unity; and that all forms of life share a common ancestry, and use the same genetic code. In the same way, all human beings have common needs – for food, shelter, security creative self-expression, and the freedom to explore ideas. If the human species is to continue, then each individual needs to face up to the tremendous problems of the modern world, and to act according to his conscience. Hope and optimism can give us the strength of mind, along with the acceptance that our earth, divided against itself, cannot stand; and that war is not the answer. A world without frontiers must be the aim of modern man. First, however, he must learn to cross the frontiers of his own mind and discover something of his enormous potential for constructive and expanding activities rather than self destruction. My experiences have led me to believe that the adventurous and self-reliant journey in the natural environment, can provide him with an opportunity to discover himself.

To adventure in the natural environment is consciously to take up a challenge that will demand the best of our capabilities – physically, mentally and emotionally. It is a state of mind that will initially accept unpleasant feelings of fear, uncertainty and discomfort, and the need for luck, because we instinctively know that, if we are successful, these will be counterbalanced by opposite feelings of exhilaration and joy. This journey with a degree of uncertainty in the 'Wilderness' may be of any length in terms of distance or time; in any dimension – above, on or below ground or water.

It may be climbing up a ten foot slab covered with large holds or the biggest and steepest rock face in the world.

It may be canoeing down the easiest or hardest rapid in the world, or the shortest or longest river.

It may be sailing on a lake or across an ocean.

In all cases you, the person in the situation, are being challenged to the best of your abilities. If you have given of your genuine best, and either overcome the challenge or retreated with dignity through skill and experience rather than luck alone, then you have had one of the greatest experiences of your life. You have had a 'peak experience' with feelings almost indescribable and beyond those common to normal and routine living. Ultimately life is about feelings, those that are concerned with the joy of living, rather than the anxieties of modern existence.

It is your first rock climb. You are a complete beginner, and the older you are, the more likely that you have doubts and inhibitions (such is the paradox of maturation!). The instructor has briefed you and the rest of the group on the climbing communication calls and safety arrangements. Your helmet has been adjusted and you are

tied on to the blunt end of the rope.* The instructor quickly leads up the 100 foot rock face making it look easy, belays at the top, and calls down for you to begin climbing. The others wish you luck as you tentatively start up the rock. Your boots, and movements generally, feel clumsy, but as the holds appear, which seemed invisible from below, you gradually gain both height and confidence. At 40 feet the rock becomes more difficult, and you only get up the next section because the instructor both encourages you and explains how to use the holds. You manage quite well, but immediate enjoyment is somewhat spoilt by the feeling that this is becoming serious – the rope looks incredibly thin, and those jagged and menacing boulders at the foot of the climb look a long way down.

At 80 feet you reach a crisis point. The rock steepens. You can't see any good handholds above and your arms are feeling tired. If you could, you'd stop the experience right now, and go back to horizontal living. Your mind is a jumble of thoughts: 'What if I ask for slack and climb back down? But that would mean reversing that bit at 40 feet and I might fall off. And anyway what would my mates below say? It's alright for them, they're not up here. Still, they'll have their turn!' You listen to the instructor telling you how to do the next few moves and that you should relax because you're quite safe. 'Safe! I don't feel safe and anyway it's alright for him, he's a climber'. You still can't see how to do the next section and you feel anger. 'Why am I doing this? It's crazy. I'll just stop here and he can rescue me.'

The battle rages within you. You look again at the problem. 'Yes, maybe if I move up left on that hold, I can reach this good hold he's talking about'. Your positive thoughts just win out; you keep your fear in check (just!), and with a tense 'tight rope!' you start moving upwards. Almost unbelievably the 'thank God' hold arrives, the crisis point vanishes, and soon you arrive on the top – shattered, amazed, overjoyed and exhilarated all in one crowded moment. The ground and your friends look a long way down, but now the distance doesn't feel hostile. You feel great and sit back to enjoy watching the rest climb. You are aware that the view from the top is superb.

As the others climb, you notice their reactions. Some find the

*The blunt end refers to the end of the rope used by those who follow up a rock climb. The leader used the sharp end of the rope. The different terminology for the rope ends is concerned with the implications of falling off.

who climb easy, and don't appear to have experienced your exertion. Others find parts of the climb so hard that when they finally reach the top, they appear more relieved than exhilarated. One lad falls off, is held on the rope, and then eventually retreats to the ground. He doesn't seem happy at all with his climbing experience.

The next day you can go canoeing. You've been told that the instructor is a fanatical white water canoeist, who has been on TV. As you're not keen on cold water, you're apprehensive even at breakfast time. This is considerably increased when he takes the group to a rapid on a river, and says the group will canoe down the rapid. 'He must be mad – we've never canoed before – and those waves are all white and the current looks really fast'. Again, reluctantly, but somehow excited, you put on a crash helmet and buoyancy aid and listen intently on what to do, especially if you capsize. Thankfully you're not the first one to go and you note, with relief, that the two before you seem to be smiling when they reached the pool at the foot of the rapid, and they didn't capsize!

You sit in your canoe and seem to be a tight fit. Dismal thoughts well up about, 'What if I capsize and can't get out?' You're very tense as you push off – this isn't enjoyable and the noise of the rapid sounds horrid. You haven't time to think much – you're moving down swiftly and spray is hitting you in the face. There's a sudden and sickening jolt, the canoe tips, and in a flash you're upside down and terrified – trapped, and the water is unbelievably cold. You fight to get out, but your legs are stuck in the boat. Through your panic, you remember dimly, instructions about dog paddling to get your nose above the water to breathe. As you do this, your legs come free and you're floating down the river. The instructor is by you. You grab the end of his boat and are soon at the bank – soaking wet, cold and, above all, relieved that you're still alive. No enjoyment, no exhilaration, just relief and acute discomfort from the cold. You note that others who capsize have similar reactions, whilst others who don't, obviously seem to have really enjoyed the experience. One lad, who has canoed before, doesn't seem affected in any way by the experience, although he obviously enjoys the capsize of the others.

In the afternoon, after a hot shower, you canoe on flat water. You learn some of the skills of boat handling, and manage not to capsize again. You are pleased with what you have learnt, but somehow the session wasn't as exciting and certainly didn't compare with rock

climbing.

Twenty years of putting people of all ages in these adventure situations, in a wide variety of activities, and noting their reactions and comments, has led me to believe that there are four broad stages discernible in any outdoor journey. The person involved, whether he is a beginner or the most experienced of performers, would seem to be in one of these stages at any particular moment on a journey:

STAGE ONE: PLAY

This is the level in the activity in which the person is working or playing considerably below his normal abilities. He has minimal involvement, therefore, in terms of emotion, skills, mental control and concentration. Fear of physical harm is absent. His response to this level of activity will range from 'pleasant' and 'fun' to 'boring' and a 'waste of time'.

STAGE TWO: ADVENTURE

The person feels in control of the situation, but is using his experience and abilities to overcome a technical problem. Fear of physical harm is virtually absent, because the person is in control. If fear does exist, it lurks beneath the surface, because although he knows he is in control, he may still be in a potentially dangerous, or strange, environment.

An adult deliberately sets himself a problem as a personal challenge which with effort, and barring incidents, he feels he can overcome with satisfaction. He has deliberately not pitched his challenge too low to the 'playing' stage, because he instinctively knows it will bring minimal reward. On the other hand he has deliberately not set his challenge too near his personal limitations. He knows that to do this, is to court the likelihood of physical harm should a mistake ensue or bad luck intervene.

In pupil terms, this is the level where the teacher tends to work in SKILLS LEARNING. The pupil can apply himself, as the problem set is a challenge to his technical abilities in particular. He is not disturbed by feelings of boredom and lack of involvement, nor by the psychological stress of the next stage.

This stage is of crucial importance as preparation for any demanding journey.

STAGE THREE: FRONTIER ADVENTURE

This is the stage beyond, and often just beyond, stage II. The person has fear of physical harm, or physical or psychological stress, and no longer feels complete master of the situation. He feels, however, that he can, with considerable effort on his part, and given luck, overcome the situation without accident. He accepts that his skills are about to be tested. He is conscious of a definite degree of uncertainty as to the outcome, and feels, as it were, poised on a knife edge between success and failure. If he succeeds, he has experienced what I would term 'frontier adventure'. He has found himself in a situation which becomes firmly etched upon his mind – perhaps forever. He has feelings of satisfaction, if not elation, about the result. The degree of satisfaction and pride is proportional to the scale and intensity of the experience.

STAGE FOUR: MISADVENTURE

This is the final stage – when the challenge is in any way beyond the control of the person. In ultimate form the result is death, but between death and serious injuries on the one hand and frontier adventure on the other, there are various degrees of both physical and psychological damage. It is possible and indeed not infrequent in practice to experience misadventure without any form of physical injury. In mild examples, the reaction will be one of immediate dissatisfaction and self-rebuke, because the person has been in an adventure situation in which he has acquitted himself badly. The classic case of this type is the person trying, or being made to try, something that involves a degree of technical skill, or degree of control over his fear, that is beyond his abilities. Paradoxically in many mild cases of stage IV, the learning experience may be of great value to the participant. Fear, however, can easily be of an extreme nature in misadventure. Where it leads to panic and terror it is unjustifiable in educational terms.

In the examples given at the start of the chapter, the climbing experience would be stage I for the instructor, stage III for those who had to battle up the climb, and who reacted with immediate feelings of 'that was great'; stage IV for the person who fell off and retreated; and stage I and II for those who got up easily, and weren't worried by the height. In the canoeing example in the morning session, those who capsized were very likely to be in stage IV during the capsize; stage II or III if they were 'gripped up', but managed successfully; and stage I for the lad who had done it all before. The

afternoon session was likely. have been mainly stage II with stage IV in first time capsize.

There are some important general comments to be made about the stages of adventure:

- Each stage is extremely broad, especially stage III
- On a journey or during an experience, a person may go through several or all the stages, perhaps several times. The order of the stages will depend upon when the problems occur during the journey.
- The 'Play' Stage (I) is concerned with minimal feelings and involvement.
- The Adventure Stage (II) is concerned with positive and satisfying human feelings progressing in intensity to the peak experiences of the Frontier Adventure Stage (III). The positive feelings of stage II, and especially stage III, are of the type that make life feel worth living, and are potentially available to almost anyone.
- The Misadventure Stage (IV) is concerned with immediate negative and disruptive feelings.

Stage II – Skills Learning and Adventure

In the 'first adventure' examples of the preceding chapter, it will be noted that the performers were more or less complete beginners, and yet were able to experience the peak experience feelings of stage III. This was providing that the challenge made big demands on them, which they were able to handle – both in psychological and in physical terms.

The 'perfect' beginner session by an instructor will ensure that all the group experience stage III, and avoid both the boredom of stage I, and the negative reactions likely from stage IV. The instructor who can do this deserves respect, for he may well need a whole range of different challenges within each activity in order to meet the requirements of each individual adventure threshold – especially in a mixed ability group, as is common in Centre work. He may also have time and the environment working against him. In introductory abseiling, for example, one group member may need a 150 foot free abseil to reach stage III, whilst another may find a 10 foot slab abseil evokes the same feelings. Similarly, certain activities are particularly difficult in this respect. Hill walking, being a group activity and featuring movement that youngsters had done since very young, can be a considerable problem. A radical approach, such as carefully selected solo or small group unaccompanied walks, may be necessary. It may be worth noting that, without adults present, a cow in a field, or climbing over a gate, can be stage III for some youngsters.

However, no matter how difficult provision of stage III might be, it is essential to try and provide it for each beginner as an introduction. Failure to do so can have the following result:

- If the introduction is stage I, then it may convince him that the particular activity is no more adventurous than football or hockey.
- If the introduction is stage II, it may convince him that the

activity is not particularly exciting.

- If the introduction is stage IV, then it may convince him that the activity is too frightening for him, and never to be repeated.

At this introductory level, it is acceptable for the beginner to experience stage III because the danger is 'apparent' rather than real. In the rock climb, for example, the instructor has selected a suitable climb and area where, even if the beginner falls off, he is safely held on the rope. Similarly in the canoeing situation, the capsizing should at worst be only an unpleasant experience without any chance of drowning. There is no justification whatsoever for real danger situation with beginners. Paradoxically, however, neither is there any justification for stopping development by a beginner who, having had a stage III introduction, decides he wants to pursue that activity. Indeed there is a strong case for all youngsters to have to do some form of self-reliant journey as a CENTRAL part of their education.

To stop at the introductory stage is to say that the realities of life are to be avoided. The leaders of western society may aim for greater security and greater ease of living, but there can be no doubt that modern society is full of dangers - many of them are unnatural, insidious and the direct result of a modern lifestyle. Young people need to be equipped to meet such dangers such as mental illness, neuroticism, alcoholism, drug abuse, as well as the likely long term consequences of a slothful existence. They need to have faced up to natural dangers and to have developed sufficient maturity, self-reliance and a set of positive human values that will stand them in good stead in the serious problems they are likely to face in adult life. The skills learning commitment of stage II, and the peak experiences of frontier adventure can make a vital contribution in this direction. The Duke of Edinburgh Award Expedition Scheme, and the Outward Bound concept, can be seen as positive steps in the right direction although both fall short in providing the range and level of activities that really meet the needs and abilities of many of the younger generation.

Once the young person, or any beginner, has found the adventure journey of his choice, then he needs to set his sights on both short and long term goals. If it is climbing, then the short term goals could be to learn competently to lead one pitch rock climbs that will challenge his capabilities, but which can be protected; and secondly to follow multi-pitch climbs in the major rock areas of Britain. His long term goals could be climbing with his peers in the Alps, and,

ultimately, expeditions to the more remote mountain ranges of the world.

In a similar way the canoeist can aim, in the short term, to be efficient on white water river journeys in Britain - journeys which will tax his abilities. In the long term he can aim to kayak the bigger and more serious rivers of the Alps, and ultimately, perhaps to expedition down rivers in the Andes or Himalayas. Alternatively he may opt to go in for rough water competition.

In both and similar examples from other types of adventure, the aims are to become self-reliant in the execution of journeys which consistently and progressively tax the performer in proportion to his levels of experience and ability. This process can and should continue to the point where the most experienced and most capable humans tackle the hardest and most dangerous problems within each adventure activity. Society rightly applauds the ultimate adventurers and is deeply saddened when, inevitably, some do not return. Indeed, one might be tempted to note that the great adventure journeys of mankind - both those that have succeeded and those that have failed - have made a very significant contribution towards inspiring people to realise the magnificent potential of the human being.

To return, however, to our committed beginner. He, or she, has to spend a great deal of time learning all the relevant skills, within the context of stage II, as preparation for stage III peak experiences. Deciding which are the relevant skills, and the learning of them, is highly complex, and yet crucially important if the performer is to perform at maximum capability levels efficiently and safely. There can be little doubt, however, that unless all the relevant skills are learnt efficiently, and that means performing them in stress situations - then the results are most likely to be misadventure rather than a peak experience. Once it is realised that situations can, and do, occur which seek out the weaknesses in the skills armoury of the performer, and that the strength of a chain is in its weakest link, then learning all the skills, and especially those in which one is weak, becomes essential.

Two personal examples might illustrate the point. As a climber who was very fit and climbing at Exceptionally Severe standard I tackled what was then a Hard Very Severe route in North Wales.¹ It should have been an adventure experience well within my capabilities. In practice, it became a very frightening stage IV and taught me an obvious lesson, luckily without the injuries I deserved.

The main part of the climb was 120 foot vertical corner requiring hand jam techniques. I could not hand jam efficiently, had always disliked it (because I was no good at it), and was used to laybacking as an alternative, as I was fairly strong. Any climber knows that the latter technique is very strenuous, whilst jammings tends to be less strenuous and, crucially, often allows 'resting'. This gives the balance necessary to place running belays, thereby safeguarding against possible falls. As I climbed up I attempted to jam, rest, and place protection. Each time I did so I felt insecure, felt I was losing strength, and thus decided to move on by laybacking, in the hope of less strenuous resting positions. I didn't find them, and as I moved further and further up the corner, I realised that I had no protection and was rapidly running out of strength. My fears drastically increased into a stage IV situation, and it became a question of whether I could 'solo' sufficiently quickly up the top half of the corner, before I fell off through exhaustion. That I just managed to do so was in no way due to skill, but to luck and determination. I deserved to fall off because I lacked an essential skill for that type of climb.

The other example concerned canoeing when, as a comparative beginner, I took an even less experienced friend and tackled a gorge in central Wales, in very high flood.² Unbeknown to us a highly experienced group who knew the river well and whom we passed on the road to the gorge, had decided it was impossible if not suicidal! Once round the first bend of the river, we were into the foaming gorge and totally committed. Just in control, and very much into stage III, I was eventually hit by a massive side shoot of water, which turned me over. As I went over, I knew that I had to eskimo roll. Failure to have done so would have greatly increased possibilities of drowning as the river went down through the trees and stoppers, and I would have been entirely at the dictates of the river. Unfortunately, although my rolling in a swimming pool was efficient, it was very unpractised in rough rivers. Luckily I just managed to roll – in time to see my friend capsized by the same piece of water. He came out of his boat, and I managed to rescue him, although we finally located his boat another mile downstream. Again my lack of a particular technical skill: efficient rough river rolling – which should have been practised in safe situations – had not only nearly led to disaster for me, but could also have placed my friend, who was younger and for whom I felt responsibility, in a similar situation.

In brief, these examples I made serious errors of judgement, which produced unjustifiably dangerous situations, unjustifiable cause for escape from them was more a matter of luck rather than skill. Certainly the reactions were those of relief, rather than satisfaction. The skills required for any self-reliant adventurous journey can be roughly categorized into four broad sections:

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- (i) as required by each activity in terms of efficient movement and resting – and particularly concerned with balance and rhythm,
- (ii) the efficient use of relevant equipment to aid movement and resting and to be used for emergency situations.

FITNESS SKILLS

- (i) the specific fitness demanded by a particular activity,
- (ii) general cardio-circulatory fitness,
- (iii) body conditioning to the relevant stress environment.

HUMAN SKILLS

Development of a very positive attitude to all aspects of the skills learning, including:

- (i) Determination, self-confidence, patience, concentration, self-analysis,
- (ii) self-reliance,
- (iii) the ability to both follow and lead efficiently.

ENVIRONMENTAL SKILLS

The development of awareness of the qualities and hazards of any specific environment.

There is no easy road to the acquisition of all these skills, and almost inevitably some skills are likely to be comparatively weak. The gifted teacher will be able to help the learner, particularly in those areas of weakness. Basically the aim is to develop and hone all the skills as tools required for the stage III journey. Constant repetition in progressively more demanding situations is essential. At all times, however, there should be a safety framework for the learner. Failure to provide it, will mean the learner will learn very inefficiently because he is unduly anxious.

The approach of the learner is critical at all stages. In simple terms, if he is tense, then he will neither perform nor learn efficiently. This tenseness may even be subconscious. In other

words he may feel he is relaxed in the learning situation, but in practice his poor performance is due to subconsciously being tense. The modern development of organisations, like 'The Inner Game'³ and the 'Sporting Bodymind'⁴ seem specifically aimed at ensuring that learners of all degrees of competence, are genuinely relaxed in order that they may develop skills and perform as efficiently as possible. The approach of these organisations had highlighted a critical problem in learning, and not least in adventure activities, where inevitably, at times, there is a high degree of emotional stress.

To give an example, it is not uncommon to find beginner canoeists unable to grasp the principles of basic boat handling on white water. The techniques required can be easily understood but the learner constantly capsizes. Sometimes this is simply because the learner is subconsciously tense, although he says he is not worried about capsizing. An approach that can be dramatically effective in such a situation is to forget all thoughts of developing the technical skills, and allow the learner to capsize as often as he likes. Providing he has a high determination to learn, then eventually (and it may take several sessions) his body will become relaxed in that environment whether above or below the surface. Once this has been achieved, then the technical skills can often be rapidly developed. The paradox of life emerges again, in that the learner who capsizes the most in initial sessions could well eventually become a star performer. The art of relaxing and yet concentrating at the same time is vital not only for skills development, but for when those skills are tested on an adventurous journey.

The whole process of skills learning, which must start from a base of psychological relaxation, has as its aim, to be 'at one' with the challenging environment, and to flow with it. The act of climbing, canoeing, sailing, and so on, should become as fluent as walking down a road. A very great deal of progressive practice is necessary, and ideally, (and at the risk of being called a fanatic!) almost daily practice in some aspect of the skills may be necessary, if the performer is to reach anything like his true potential. The growth in popularity of climbing walls, for example, has led to startling improvements in performance because of the ease of access of the facility for many climbers.

Although hard work is unavoidable if real progress is to be made, it should be obvious that enjoyment and satisfaction are essential

during the learning process – at least for most of the time! Before moving on to Stage III, Frontier Adventure, and the consequent testing of the acquired skills, it is necessary to look at safety.

Safety

'A SHIP IN HARBOUR IS SAFE,
but that is not what ships are for!'

THE FRAMEWORK

The first consideration of the teacher is to ensure that his pupils are as free as possible from physical or psychological harm during the activity. If an accident happens, he has to be sure that he can face himself, the pupil, or the parents, or the coroner, by knowing that he was justified in being in that place at that time, and that he had taken all sensible precautions for that journey.

Those responsible for Outdoor Pursuits must be able to decide whether a particular situation is basically **SAFE** or **DANGEROUS**. If it is the latter, then distinction must be made between the two factors that have made it dangerous:

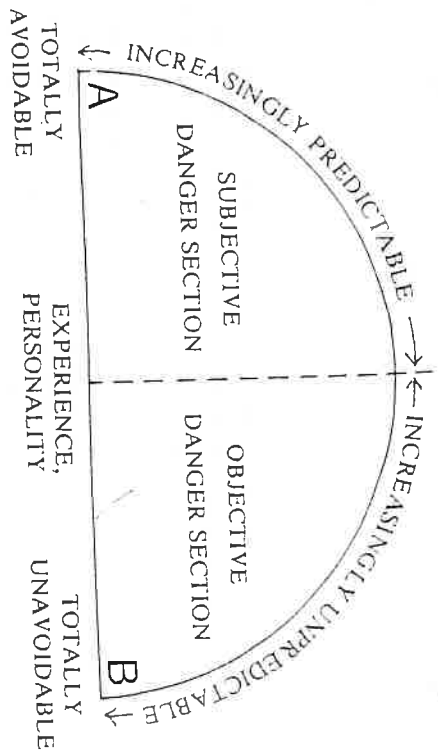
FACTOR ONE: SUBJECTIVE DANGER

FACTOR TWO: OBJECTIVE DANGER

Subjective danger is that potentially under the control of the human being, such as the correct choice and use of equipment needed, and the correct selection of the journey to meet the requirements of the party in terms of safety.

Objective danger is that over which the human being has no control e.g. avalanches, blizzards, floods, storms, exposed situations.

Work with young people, who are beginners, will be in the subjective danger sector. In effect this should mean that, although they may feel the journey or experience is dangerous, in reality there should be a minimum of danger because the instructor has taken all the appropriate safety precautions. These may be termed situations of apparent danger. As the beginner becomes more experienced and self-reliant, the challenges can justifiably contain an increasing amount of objective danger. No particular age can be recommended at which a young person should be allowed to take on journeys containing objective dangers. Indeed, adolescents who have been properly and progressively trained are already leading



With reference to the diagram, beginners will be working at the left end of the base line AB. Committed experts will be taking on the challenges at the right end of the base line.

exposed and serious rock climbs, and tackling flooded white water rivers.

It is true that no amount of expertise can hide the fact that Outdoor Pursuits are potentially dangerous and accidents can happen to anyone. Human frailty apart, there is always a place for both bad and good luck. There is no doubt, however, that most accidents are the result of subjective danger, including the taking of a school party into an unjustifiable situation of objective danger. Most accidents, therefore, are avoidable.

Despite its fundamental importance, safety is not the reason for taking part in Outdoor Pursuits. Safety is the essential framework. Without proper concern for it, this form of education is untenable.

GENERAL COMMENTS

Of all the aspects of Adventure Education, the subject of safety and young people is the most emotive and contentious. In many countries in the western world, young people are still not allowed to become self-reliant on adventurous journeys as part of their

education. Britain is probably an exception in that it does allow this type of education, albeit in a somewhat negative manner, with its masses of safety rules, regulations and certificates.

In essence the problem revolves around serious accidents to young people in adventure situations. Unless young people are banned from such journeys, it is inevitable that there will be accidents, because human beings are not perfect, and because of the unpredictability of Nature. Even the most experienced of adventurers recognise the need for luck. Risk is as basic to adventure as competition is to sport, but the stakes are normally higher. The question becomes, what level of risk is acceptable for a young person? I have already mentioned that for beginners there should be virtually no real danger. This is common sense, and relevant to any age. Herein perhaps lies the way forward to solving this difficult question. The level of risk should depend entirely upon the competence and experience of the performer, rather than the artificial device of imposed age limits. The latter approach, as used by the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, for example, where boys and girls may not start their bronze expeditions until they are fourteen, is wrong. In the same way, Local Education Authorities that use their Outdoor Centres primarily for the thirteen to fifteen age range, rather than younger age groups, is probably a mistaken policy.

There is a marked tendency in modern society for adults to consistently underrate and under-value the general capabilities of the young generation. The tendency may well be, at least in part, for reasons of convenience. Whatever the reasons, young people in the seven to twelve year old age range, for example, can be surprisingly capable. It also happens to be the ideal age to acquire many of the outdoor skills. In working with this age range, I have been very impressed, to such an extent that I believe that the development of Outdoor Pursuits in this country has been severely handicapped by concentration on the 13 to 16 age range.

First, there can be little doubt that the seven to eleven year olds are ideally suited to acquiring many of the technical skills. Compared to older adolescents, they are usually uninhibited and their sense of balance tends to be better. Secondly, qualities of attentive listening, determination, perseverance, and the ability to put up with fear and discomfort, can also easily compare favourably with older age groups. Indeed these type of necessary human qualities may well be more a characteristic or otherwise of a

particular person, rather than a particular age group. Thirdly, the top end of this age range – the 11 to 12 year olds – can learn to work efficiently together to the point where they can undertake self-reliant expeditions in hazardous environments, over a period of days.

Society, of course, would want hard evidence before it would accept self-reliant journeys by such young people. Even then it would be highly unlikely that it would be allowed as a formal part of education. Indeed many educational organisations are still unhappy about 16 year olds leading rock climbs, or canoeing and sailing expeditions. I cannot provide much hard evidence but I feel strongly that all the signs are evident that the 11 to 12 year olds, suitably trained, can be self-reliant in almost any adventure type of activity. Here are some of the indications:

ROCK CLIMBING: 12 year old boys and younger have been soloing gristone climbs up to Hard Very Severe standards. Youngsters of similar age have been leading adults on multi-pitch climbs in Wales and the Lakes up to Extremely Severe standards. Sixteen year olds climb together in the same areas up to the same standards.

MOUNTAINEERING: School expeditions to the Himalayas and other mountain ranges, have included peaks climbed without adults.

HILL WALKING: 11 and 12 year olds have completed self-reliant expeditions in the Lakeland fells in poor weather in summer. (The progress of these groups was carefully monitored by teachers who kept out of sight of the youngsters during their journey.)

CANOEING: Three years ago I had a group of 10 boys and girls aged 12 to 13 years, who completed a 100 mile river expedition carrying all their food and equipment. This group had been canoeing for two years and managed the expedition without problems, despite bad weather and the river in spate. Six of this group of local youngsters are now at international level in slalom and white water racing, not because they have exceptional ability, but rather because they have had the opportunities and have worked very hard. They take winter canoeing and grade IV rough water in their stride.

A glance at the sporting achievements of this group also indicates the tremendous potential of their generation – not just in skills acquisition – but in terms of human skills such as determination and surprisingly perhaps, endurance. Marathons have been run by as

young as 9 year olds; a 12 year old has swum the Channel; another has completed the Haute route on ski; 16 year olds have qualified as glider pilots and have sailed solo round the world. These are surely the ideal type of experiences we would want young people to have, if they are ready for them. This is particularly true if young men are expected to be sufficiently mature to fight for their country, as happened in the Falklands War.

The reader may well be critical of my encouragement of such a young age group being involved in genuinely dangerous journeys. Without the experience of the last five years I would not have put forward this view. During these years I have seen local youngsters mature remarkably as a result of adventure experiences, and this includes one of my own daughters. There have been times when I have felt an almost intolerable degree of stress, because I have been responsible for the group, the river has been in a dangerous condition, and I could not control either the performance of the youngsters in the situation, or the river. At such times I have had to take an optimistic view, as well as mentally rehearse all the emergency actions. The young people concerned have been ready for the particular experience, they knew the dangers, as did their parents. In such circumstances, it is easier to cancel the journey but that would be the wrong decision.

The one occasion where I felt the danger to be totally unacceptable was unexpected. It happened at a Division III slalom event in Northern England, where the river was in full spate and the rescue facility was inadequate. A 15 year old girl became stuck in her kayak in a stopper* in the centre of the river, without any form of rescue available. ** That she didn't drown was due to luck. In competitions of this kind, of course, such situations should never arise. That it did was another reminder that serious situations can, and do, occur at unexpected times.

In summary, concerning safety, self-reliant adventurous journeys should be accepted for any age group, in any activity, providing that:

(i) they have been properly trained by someone who is suitably experienced, and who is aware that accidents can happen anytime.

(ii) all those concerned with the intended journey are aware of the

* the stationary wave at the foot of a fall in the river bed

** the canoeist on rescue duty was 50 metres downstream rescuing the previous competitor. Frogmen rescuers were not provided and the incident was about 20 metres away from the nearest river bank.

of parents and their implications (This must include the young-
 themselves, their parents, and the official if any
 organisation involved).

At the same time those involved should know that society in general and its leaders, are concerned with increased security and ease of living. In other words there is a general attitude of 'if there is an accident then in no way do I accept the responsibility.' In part this is due to the anxiety caused by a media cult which makes massive headlines out of incidents to the young in the outdoors. Finally, that even if a young person is ready for serious adventure, then the parents are understandably under serious pressure. They, hopefully, want to allow the youngsters to participate, but like everyone else they do not want accidents. Providing there is a general awareness of what is involved, courage perhaps is an appropriate word in such circumstances. Faint-hearted bureaucrats who are totally removed from the outdoor experience, and who have no concept of its value in helping young people grow up, should have no powers in these matters.

Frontier Adventure

The peak experience of stage III is rather like going through a door into another world, which is altogether more magnificent and more indescribable than normal living. Once through that door, other doors beckon, if you have the key to them. Peak experience – living on the edge of life – and understanding the process – may well hold some of the answers to the riddle of human existence. Feelings of freedom and wonder, happiness and exhilaration, are typical reactions. Opposite feelings, if one is still alive, are typical reactions if one goes over the edge into stage IV. As with everything else, the human being is subject to the balance of Nature.

The 'feeling great' reaction of stage III is, in essence, due to overcoming a challenge that had seemed almost impossible. As one's experience and skill develops, one realizes that life is, or should be, a succession of peaks and hollows, and that each peak surmounted must be followed by a higher or more difficult peak. The spectrum of stage III is extremely broad, and in terms of human potential, very exciting. The problems, however, in staying on the adventure road, and tackling increasingly more difficult challenges, are innumerable. The way forward is not always obvious, and can be frustrating.

In the first instance, there is the problem of the approach of the performer in his first frontier adventure. He may have worked hard in his stage II skills learning, and feels ready to take on the challenge. He tackles the problem prepared to fight his way through. Although he may well have seen experts in action, he probably has not noticed that, almost regardless of their particular activity, they seem to make even hard challenges look easy – they seem to have great rhythm, and to flow rather than fight. Even if he has noted their rhythm and grace, he will likely not feel that it is, in any way, relevant to him as a comparative novice. Yet his approach

is critical.

If he fights the challenge, then he is likely to be tense – almost by definition. Tenseness is not conducive to rhythmic and efficient performance. Instead of fighting he needs, to develop the 'relaxed performance' of the expert. In its truest sense, this type of concentration will only usually come after years of hard work and awareness. It is the hallmark of the master craftsman, or expert, in anything. It will help the beginner, however, if he can realize that his performance is dependent on his emotions and mental powers, as well as his technical and physical abilities. All need to be working together with a quiet self-confidence, if he is both to perform efficiently and feel 'great' as a result. Pure relief after a challenge is an indication of going too far, taking on something too difficult, where luck has played an undue part – a mild stage IV situation rather than a peak experience.

In the second instance, there is the problem of finding the appropriate stage III situation for the experience of the person. Although one can decide approximately what that challenge should be, the outdoors cannot be regulated to suit the specific requirements of the individual. If I want a particular type of vehicle then it is likely I can find it. If I want a particular level of adventure in a particular activity, then this can be really difficult. Rock climbing is probably one of the easiest activities in which to find a suitable level, but even here there can be problems. Quite apart from the weather playing havoc with the condition of climbs, there are problems with whether the grading of the climb suits your individual abilities. A low grade route can sometimes appear much harder because it is not your style of climbing, and vice-versa. Similarly the question of protection arises. The guidebook description may not be helpful in this respect. Even when it is helpful, there may still be problems of whether you are carrying the appropriate equipment; whether you can find the places in which to use it; and whether you have the skill to rest sufficiently to set it up properly.

Other adventure activities can be worse by a significant degree. In canoeing on white water rivers, for example, a single rapid can vary between easy and safe to very difficult and dangerous – dependent on the level of the water. Between the two, there can be a whole range of difficulties according to river level. And contrary to what might be expected, sometimes, both difficulty and danger can increase with a decrease in water. Similarly an easy grade I river

Misadventure: Stage IV

may become lethal in space, particularly for the unwary.

In the third instance, the problem of finding one's limit. It very often seems to have been reached quickly! It might be true to say that the great explorers and adventurers are people who have gone well beyond what they thought were their limitations; that they are people who are unusual in the sense that they have persevered when most people would have given up. It is far too easy to accept what appear to be our limitations. If the will is strong enough, then those limitations can often be overcome. For example, if I appear to have reached my rock climbing limit of leading at 5C* then, subject to my physical potential, I can go further if I am prepared to work at it. This work may be in a variety of ways, and is certainly going to take a great deal of effort and hard work. If I am sufficiently determined, then I will probably improve. Interestingly, even if I do not go on to lead 6A (or whatever) I will still have benefited greatly from my efforts, providing I can see that it's the quality of the effort, rather than the result, that is really important. Captain Scott may have made grave technical errors, but his efforts, and those of his team, were nothing short of heroic, and that is far more important than who was first to the South Pole.

If one can sustain the ambition of the increasingly more difficult adventure journey, then the rewards can be immense, if undefinable. A stage of extreme Frontier Adventure can be reached, which could be described as the equivalent of going beyond the sound barrier, and truly being in harmony with the great outdoors, and flowing with the environment. For this to happen seems to need many years of hard work and a great deal of commitment, as well as a deep empathy with one's surroundings. To be totally at peace within a storm, on the edge of one's life, where all your experience and abilities are being taxed to their utmost, must be one of the ultimate experiences. At such times, man may feel that he is both 'atom and God', that he is an indivisible part of the harmony of Nature; and that before and after the experience are totally irrelevant. The beauty of these moments in time are indescribable. They are available to any human being who makes sufficient effort.

*Footnote: Rock climbing grades range in ascending order of difficulty from 1 to 7 with subdivisions of A, B and C. The hardest climbs currently in Britain are in the 7A category. (1983)

Like adventure, misadventure is a state of mind. Unlike adventure, the immediate reactions are essentially negative rather than positive. At one extreme the result is death or serious injury. At the other extreme, are feelings of relief that one has escaped any serious consequences from a situation that was unduly stressful and more demanding than one had conceived at the onset of the journey. The enjoyment, satisfaction and euphoria that can arise from adventurous experiences are replaced by negative feelings of 'Thank goodness that's over', or, 'I'll never do that again', or, 'God, I was lucky'.

In a way, misadventure expresses the uncertainty of Nature. It is always a possibility on any outdoor journey and can occur at any time, especially perhaps at unexpected moments. When it occurs, one's fears are suddenly intensified and flood to the surface, even if only fleetingly. On a rock climb, for example, an unexpected hold breaking off, or a crucial running belay detaching itself, can transform a stage I, II, or III situation, where enjoyment or satisfaction are high and everything is under control, into a situation where, at very least, the feelings are highly unpleasant and to be removed as soon as possible.

Obviously such situations, if they become frequent, or are particularly extreme, will tend to result in the performer giving up that style of journey. His confidence becomes severely impaired and his reactions so negative, that he sees no point in continuing with those type of experiences.

To a degree, however, the misadventure experience can be a most valuable teacher. The reality of what happens can make an indelible mark on the mind of the performer. It can prompt honesty and open-mindedness. It can break down a rigidity of thinking and alter attitudes, especially when the experience is constructively reviewed. Nature teaches in a much more powerful way than a

human teacher, and should be used where appropriate. A good example might be the teaching of the danger of trees in fast currents on rivers, to canoeists.

It is not easy to make the canoeist really aware of this danger, which can occur on the easiest of rivers, because the situations tend to look harmless. Whilst he can quickly pick up the necessary skills to avoid the danger, he is unlikely to be aware of the urgency in the situation should a mishap occur. One successful method I have found was to insist that the performer deliberately capsized against a tree in a current. I had chosen a tree and river which I knew I could handle from a bank position. Unsurprisingly, the group concerned did not enjoy the experience, but they were under no illusions about the dangers involved, and as a result would become safer teachers.

The group concerned were learning to become teachers of a particular style of adventurous journey and therefore had high motivation. From that standpoint, using a stage IV deliberately was justified. The same situation with a group of beginners would probably have had such a traumatic psychological effect, that it would have put them off canoeing as a form of journey, and would have been quite unjustified.

There are times, however, when stage IV can, and should, be used with great discretion, even with beginners. I remember a large lad on a Centre Course who was disliked by most of his peers because he tended to be both arrogant and a bully. The group were traversing a steep slab with strict instructions not to go more than six feet above the beach. (They were all moving untroped). He decided to ignore the instructions, and soon was ten feet up and stuck. He declared he could not move up, or down, or sideways. Eventually, in a state of panic, he fell off, and I fielded him at the bottom. His ego was severely bruised. For the rest of the Course, he followed all instructions carefully as he was not keen on encountering another of the laws of Nature!

Beyond the necessary safety conditions that are an essential part of both education and work with beginners of any age, there is a fascinating paradox. In the world of the advanced adult performer, stage IV can have great rewards. I am not recommending that extreme misadventure be sought out, as there is no doubt that it tends to be both very frightening and fraught with dire consequences. It can however, act as a trigger to maximum performance and effort which in itself is either exhilarating or felt to be very worthwhile – at least in retrospect. In a way this type of stage IV has

the effect of heightening the awareness to acute levels, with corresponding increased performance, providing it is not beyond the breaking point of the control of the performer. This breaking point may be much further away than one thought. It seems to depend both on the inner strength of the individual and what is at stake.

From personal experience I remember two particular incidents vividly, although they were many years ago. One was on the River Usk in South Wales. Several more experienced friends had urged me to join them on a winter trip with a 10 foot flood on the river. I went reluctantly, as I was frightened about the dangers, yet I didn't want to appear to be a coward. As expected, the river was going like a train, and I started behind everyone else, in a highly tense state, which meant my performance was tense. The first obstacle – a long fall into a large stopper – had me so gripped that I capsized at the top. As I went over, I was in severe stage IV. To come out of my boat at this level of water made survival a question of Russian roulette, rather than skill. I managed to eskimo roll, and from that point on I was sufficiently relaxed to kayak efficiently through the more difficult sections. Stage IV became extreme stage III, and it became a tremendous experience.

The other incident concerned the first British ascent of the North face of the Dent d'Herens (*voie Welzenbach*) with Wilfred Noyce and Jack Sadler, an American.¹ At the top of the initial ice slope. As we were untroped, and the 400 foot slope disappeared into a large bergschrund, I had big problems, especially as I was almost totally unskilled in the art of ice axe braking! Motivation was of the highest order, however, and I eventually stopped and then rejoined the others. What was interesting, on reflection, was that for the rest of that long day, and despite some very difficult and dangerous sections, I was sufficiently relaxed both to perform efficiently and to lead. Once again stage IV had led to a significant reduction in my personal tension.

In both instances, however, my survival instinct was of the utmost importance to me. I didn't want to die, or to hurt myself. Much more experience, over twenty years, in the outdoors, and especially of solo journeys has changed my attitude to death. I would agree with the German philosopher, Schopenhauer who said that, 'The most important thing in life is to die at the right time'. If one dies doing a journey in the environment that one loves, and has given every ounce of one's efforts, then that is one of the right times to

depart, and one may approach peace, rather than terror. At this extreme, death may be felt as the greatest of misadventures, and therefore a totally negative experience, but as the opposite, Robert Service, described death as the last great adventure.² Frank Smythe described it as 'not to be feared' and 'the supreme experience' and 'climax of life'.³ Both men were deeply experienced in outdoor living. I have also spoken to several people, who have thought they were dying on wilderness journeys – in very large surf; falling off big mountains; and in one case, washed off a sea cliff. Their reactions went from initial intense fear to 'a feeling of peace', and 'like a white light after the blackness.'

These people survived to describe their reactions. Captain Scott's party didn't, but perhaps its tragedy was more apparent than real. When the rescue party found the bodies, the face of Dr. Wilson expressed peace and contentment. If one accepts that it is effort that counts, and that happiness comes from doing what one loves, then death in itself need not be viewed as the ultimate horror, at least for the nature person. The spirit of the human being has long been recognised as being stronger than the body, and who is to say what happens to the spirit?

Alongside the magnificence of spirit of Scott and his team, I would like to end with thoughts on another Polar explorer – Sir Ernest Shackleton. In one sense his epic journey, from the crushing of his ship in the Antarctic ice, to the escape by open boat to South Georgia was a desperate misadventure. It may have broken his spirit. Before he walked across South Georgia, he said 'I will never take another expedition',⁴ a clear statement, perhaps, that he had gone beyond what he could psychologically take. It was not many years later that he died as a comparatively young man, probably in part the result of all the stress he had been through. Yet there can be no doubt that his spirit was magnificent. Few explorers have displayed such superb commitment and in such an outstanding manner, to the safety of all those in their care. He literally spent years ensuring the safety of all those he left behind on Elephant Island. When the job was done, perhaps that was the right time to depart.

The paradox of stage IV is clearly seen in some of the great writings. Confucius remarked, 'A man who understands the Gods of Nature in the morning, may die without regret in the evening'. The great statesman, Dag Hammarskjöld said, 'Do not seek death. Death will find you. But seek the road which makes death a

fulfillment'.⁵ And the final word from one of the giant poets of the world, John Muir, 'The rugged old Norseman spoke of the HELMGANG – home-going. So the snow-flowers go home... when they melt and flow to the sea, and the rock ferns, after unrolling their fronds to the light and beautifying the rocks, roll them up close again in the autumn and blend with the soil'.⁶

The Instinct for Adventure

When I was young my friends weren't bored or idle or particularly poor; but we still took it out on the rolling stock of the Midland railway'.¹

Thirty years of involvement with adventure in the outdoors has convinced me, that not only is there an instinct for adventure in the human race, but that failure to provide suitable outlets for this instinct in the younger generation, has made a marked contribution to the sickness of western living.

As a young man I had perhaps the typical view that some boys, and a much smaller number of girls, are naturally adventurous. If anyone at that time had told me that all young people had a yearning for excitement, risk and challenge, I would have dismissed it as poppycock. There seemed countless examples, from my own schooldays, of young boys who appeared to want nothing to do with adventure of any kind.

Running an L.E.A. Outdoor Centre for six years for one English city (Oxford), forced me to accept that it was likely to be an instinct. All the secondary schools from the city – a considerable cross-section of boys and girls, from all manner of backgrounds, and with a wide variety of intelligence, physical abilities and otherwise – used the standard fortnight Courses at the Centre, throughout the year. Many, perhaps the majority, came not because they liked adventure activities (of which they generally had no experience, except for camping), but in order to have a bit of fun away from school and 'normal' living. Many of them, both in appearance and ability, would never be described as likely adventurers. In particular, perhaps, there were the overweight boys and girls, who trembled even at the thought of rock climbing or caving.

In the first year of the Centre, the standard programme was to offer a first week of introductions to as wide a variety of adventure activities as the local environment allowed – camping, hill walking,

river canoeing, caving, rock climbing, an assault Course, and Field Studies. For the second week pupils opted for any one of these activities (except the assault course), which was then pursued, culminating normally in a three day expedition away from the Centre.

Generally this second week was very successful, as most youngsters were both learning skills and taking on challenges in the activity they had particularly enjoyed doing. There was always one group, however, who seemed to be less adventurous and opted for Field Studies. The latter were provided because there was Authority pressure not to do just adventure activities. In talking to the youngsters, and through questionnaires it became obvious that, generally, Field Studies was unpopular, and that this particular group also wanted to do something 'adventurous'. What happened in practice was that, in the evenings, the Field Studies group tended to find themselves listening to the no-doubt exaggerated stories of the youngsters who had been involved in a range of 'high' adventure. As a result, they felt, by the end of the Course, that they were really missing out. For most of these youngsters, Field Studies could not compare in terms of excitement.

Eventually, because I was concerned that we provided high consumer satisfaction within the adventure ethos of the Centre, we dropped Field Studies.² In its place came a 'General Adventure' group. The activities within this group were extremely varied but, hopefully, all adventurous, with simplicity of equipment and a low emphasis on skills. Coastal traversing became very popular, which might include swimming, jumping off sand dunes, traversing low lying cliffs above water. Inland dinghying down rapids in spare in winter proved equally popular. Above all, perhaps, gorge walking became a favourite. Indeed, to such an extent that it became a standard activity for all Course pupils. In those days it was an unusual Centre activity, and because it was unconventional it attracted much criticism of 'messing about', by the more conventional Centres. It is pleasing to see that it is now a standard, and accepted, activity in Wales, the Lakes and elsewhere.³

In many ways it is the epitome of the adventurous journey, as expected by the younger generation. Having now taken whole classes of junior schoolchildren on gorge walks – in winter and poor weather, as well as summer – it is an obvious way to see the instinct for adventure surfacing in the whole class. A good gorge is not only atmospheric in its environment, with no views of other human

existence or of paths, but it c provide a whole range of basic skills challenges at varying levels difficulty sufficient to suit everyone. Balancing, jumping, swinging, swimming, route finding, crawling, sliding can all be involved. Everyone can have fun and excitement, and the whole group, with staff, can work together and finish soaking wet or covered in mud. Discomfort and fear can be overcome by feelings of enjoyment and satisfaction.

In an attempt to monitor the work of the Woodlands Centre, questionnaires were completed over a period of two years by all Course pupils. This involved about 600 adolescent boys and girls from all the secondary schools within the city. Every attempt was made to try and ensure honest answers. Each pupil, for example, completed the form alone, and they did not have to put their name on them. The collated results were of considerable interest to the staff. As expected, activities such as gorge walking generally proved far more popular than hill walking. 94% expressed a desire to return to another course in the summer, and this figure dropped to 71% for a further winter course. In reply to the question, 'Have you had to think carefully and frequently during the fortnight?', 92% felt this to be the case. It would seem that mental effort was a marked feature of this Adventure Course. The link between two other questions was also interesting. Replies to, 'What was your most enjoyable moment?', and 'What was your most frightening moment?' had a high correlation. In many instances the same experience provided both the most fear and the most enjoyment and satisfaction. This particular result was a key element in the development of the concept of the stages of adventure. As far as an instinct for adventure is concerned, this was perhaps contained in the question, 'Would you like to continue any of the Outdoor Pursuits when you return to Oxford?' A massive 96% of those 600 young people said 'YES'. No scientific proof certainly, but it tended to strongly support what we, the staff, felt.

The presence, or otherwise, of this adventure impulse can also be seen in urban equivalents of the gorge walk. Apart from the development of adventure playgrounds, the free choice of adolescents at school in a Physical Education period, can be most revealing. With a number of secondary and junior school classes, as a PE teacher, I would give the youngsters free choice of activity, for the final part of the lesson. Despite a wide variety of possibilities within the schools concerned, there was one favourite that never ceased to be the most popular. This was 'Pirates'. All the equipment

in th anasium was used (or misused) to construct a jc y, or journeys, with a degree of uncertainty. Again, climbing, l eising, jumping, hanging, and particularly swinging, were all involved. A good swing from one object to another is the essence of an exciting challenge - complete commitment with a degree of uncertainty.

Later in life, I remember watching my youngest daughter, aged two, display the same instinct in a fascinating way. She had just become interested in building bricks. If I built the bricks much higher than herself, then she ran away to seek the security of her mother. She was frightened that the bricks would fall down and crash as they hit the floor. At first I was amazed, until I realised that if I was her, then the brick tower might look formidable. What was interesting, was that although she ran away, she couldn't hide her instinct for excitement. She would peep round the door to watch the building. Eventually she built her own tall towers, and would then knock them down with obvious excitement, but still with a trace of fear. I would have said that during this process, she went through all the stages of adventure but in order of IV, II, III, II, I.

Whilst it may not be difficult to persuade the reader of the existence of this adventure urge in young people, it may be much harder to convince them that it also, therefore, exists in the adult population. For a start, the number of adults that actually engage in high risk activities, despite being on the increase, is very much a minority. The number of people involved, can be increased by including activities of low risk, like walking and back-packing, which involve a journey in the outdoors with a degree of uncertainty. This is totally acceptable as adventure is a state of mind, and whilst serious accidents may seem unlikely, nevertheless the essential ingredient of fear or apprehension as to whether the challenge can be overcome, can still be present. Indeed, in the more demanding types of back-packing and similar activities, the degree of discomfort and hardship can be seen as equivalent, in some way or other, to short sharp attacks of fear common in the high risk activities. John Hillaby, for example, must express the experience of many solo walkers in his description of traversing the wilder peaks and glens of Western Scotland, and the inevitable adventures.⁴ Similarly the grandmother, Mrs. M. Carter, writing in the 'Great Outdoors' of her 100 mile walk, reflects typically both on the foot suffering involved and the fears of whether she can complete the journey.⁵

The case for an adult adventure drive can be strengthened by

further circumstantial evidence. With western society aiming at making both life more secure and increasingly comfortable, what better way of appealing to the lazy side of man than by offering him a wide variety of armchair adventuring. High risk, dare-devil adventure – of both socially and non-socially acceptable types, occupy a great deal of television time. Films too, or at least many of the big box office variety, are of the same type – outer space productions, sharks and Bond films spring to mind. Lectures on key modern adventure epics also attract large audiences of the man in the street. All such examples, from Kojak and Grand Prix motor racing to the climbing of Everest and racing across oceans, have a common base of excitement and challenge.

Big business in America, and more recently in Britain, has realized that it too can cash in on the adventure instinct. The great American Theme Parks started in 1955, and amongst their attractions are thrill rides. In one of these parks is a roller coaster which contains a 75 foot loop the loops, with 'the longest corkscrew and biggest loop in the world'. In another park, in Florida, there is a high wire which people can have a go at, on safety ropes. In a third park, the theme is water and includes an artificial Grand Canyon, with dinghy rides complete with big rapids.⁶ It has been calculated that 70 million Americans a year pay to have a go on one of these big thrill rides!⁷

In Britain, the same trend is being followed. John Broome has spent £8 million developing the Alton Towers complex in Staffordshire, to include Brian's first double corkscrew roller coaster and the world's biggest log flume. Attendances have grown fivefold in 18 months and he hoped for at least two million visitors in 1982.⁸

One might be tempted to note in passing, that aims of money making typically debase an experience.⁹ This type of activity is certainly adventure, but artificial, as the performers take no responsibility for their actions. The experience is virtually totally safe, and reduces adventure to a 'cheap' thrill. Much more respect is deserved for those like backpackers, who seek adventure of a much less immediately exciting nature but at least in the natural environment. It is again important circumstantial evidence to note that a study by the Countryside Commission revealed that two thirds of the British population took their annual holiday in outdoor environments.

There would also appear to be an important link between

adventurous impulses and the large and increasing scale of anti-social adventure – delinquency, vandalism, crime, and flouting the traditions and rules of Authority generally. Much of this behaviour, whether by adults or young people, must be in part at least, because of the need in people's lives for excitement and challenge. Not all people are satisfied with the vicarious adventure provided by T.V. and films. Having been chased by a policeman in my youth, I can still remember the surge of adrenalin and the feeling of success, when I managed to escape! Many criminal and anti-social acts have an obvious challenge and can both involve fear and excitement. With all her experience at the National Children's Bureau, Dr. Kellmer Pringle observed the fundamental need for 'new experiences'.

'The more uneventful and dull life is, the more we become bored, frustrated and restless. This is shown clearly by the contrast between the eagerness, alertness and vitality of normal babies whose life is filled with new experiences and challenges; and the aimlessness and boredom of the adolescent with nothing to do and nowhere to go. In seeking – legitimately – for the excitement of new experiences, where few are to be found or attainable, the forbidden, risky or dangerous are liable to acquire an aura of daring and excitement. What may start as a lark – an expression of high spirits and the desire for adventure – can turn into vandalism and violence. This happens all the more readily, the longer and the more pervasive the boredom and frustration of their lives.'¹⁰

Research by Dr. Sol Rosenthal in America has also indicated the likelihood of a common emotional base for the human need for excitement and challenge expressing itself in anti-social as well as socially acceptable forms. In two studies he compared the physical and mental reaction of 700 individuals engaged in wilderness challenge activities to 600 university students who had been involved in demonstrations and rioting. The degree of well-being and euphoria in each group as a result of their experiences was found to be similar, with the differences insignificant.¹¹ The tragedy is that societies such as America and Britain are suffering increasingly because they provide neither adequately challenging and inspiring systems of education nor sufficiently suitable outlets for adventure – such as outdoor sports.

As usual, Nature can help provide the answer as to whether there is an instinct for adventure in the human race. Jacques Cousteau

made the following observation, 'The more time I spend observing Nature, the more I believe that man's motivation for exploration is but the sophistication of a universal instinctive drive deeply engrained in all living creatures.¹²

I would totally agree with him. Urban man may regard climbing, canoeing and the like as extravagant and ridiculous activities, and certainly unjustifiable as a part of education. In reality these activities – done in a self-reliant manner at challenging levels – are both completely natural and essential to the future of society. (The international development and popularity of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Outward Bound movement with their emphasis in practice of such 'expeditions', illustrate the point.)

All living things perhaps, gain their independence by testing their ability to be self-reliant. Most species have to explore in order to test their effectiveness in an environment. Exploration is a quest for, or the investigation of, this new environment – usually made in order to extend the frontiers of existence. It is a journey into the unknown made by a living thing using all its resources. The more intelligent the species, the greater will be its ability to direct and evaluate the exploration.

Exploration and migration are instinctive aids to survival shared by all living things, even the plants. Migration literally means to journey from one place to another. Many fish and birds have a natural impulse to do this with the change in seasons, as a means of survival. Man also may migrate – taking up a new way of life in another part of the planet or in a nomadic sense, where the seasonal journeys of such tribes are even more akin to those of other migratory animals.

What is important to realize is that the migration of a living thing does not only involve a journey by definition, albeit an enforced one, but that the journey will include dangers and challenges. The dangers to birds, fishes and animals are totally real, and many die because they cannot cope. Dr. Baker, in his fascinating analysis of 'The Mystery of Migration' says

'Migration takes time, uses energy, and is dangerous. Before migrating all animals whether consciously or instinctively weigh up costs against the benefits, and, on that basis, decide on which route to take and when to leave.'¹³

In essence then the human race does have an instinct or impulse for adventure and exploration. There is an inbuilt drive to journey with a degree of uncertainty. The problem of Western man is to

reduce the anti-social journeys and challenges in which he can opt out of his proper responsibilities. This can best be done by making the self-reliant adventure journey in the outdoors a fundamental part of the education of all young people. Radical proposals of this kind are essential if education in the secondary schools is to make any real contribution towards solving the problems of the world, and make the world a better place to live in. A healthy society, if it is to progress, must have people, including the younger generation, working on all frontiers that offer possible positive outcomes.

