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WE CAN DRAW NEARER

POETRY is oracular. The sources of its truth, therefore, are subjective. And in our time, what is subjective has no authority, no certainty. What we want, or are told to want, are the undeniable facts. Yet today there are individuals, some of them poets, who regard the "undeniable facts" as speculative as dreams and visions of the night. It is at once a releasing and frightening thought. How can we be sure? And if we cannot be sure, how can we avoid making terrible mistakes? The only reply to this question is that in our world of devotion to objective facts we have already been making terrible mistakes.

So now there are those who are returning to poetry, or something like poetry. Writing prophetically on this subject something over forty years ago, Harold C. Goddard, in an introductory chapter to his two-volume study, *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, said some useful things:

> Poetry, the elemental speech, is like the elements. Its primary function is not to convey thought, but to reflect life. It shows man his soul, as a looking glass does his face. There hangs the mirror on the wall, a definite object, the same for all. Yet whoever looks into it sees not the mirror but himself. We all live in the same world, but what different worlds we see in it and make out of it: Caesar's, Jesus', Machiavelli's, Mozart's—yours and mine.
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> The oracle remains the type of purest poetry. Oracles are *ambiguous* (a very different thing from obscure). They are uttered, as the world seems to be made, to tempt men to meet them halfway, to find in them one of at least two fatally different meanings. Life or death hangs on how they are taken. "The Lord at Delphi," says Heraclitus, "neither speaks nor conceals, but gives a sign." Dreams have the same Delphic characteristic. So does poetry.
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> To our age anything Delphic is anathema. We want the definite. As certainly as ours is the time of the expert and the technician, we are living under a dynasty of the intellect, and the aim of the intellect is not to wonder and love and grow wise about life, but to control it. The subservience of so much of our science to invention is the proof of this. We want the facts for the practical use we can make of them. We want the tree for its lumber, not, as Thoreau did, to make an appointment with it as a friend. We want uranium in order to make an atomic bomb, not for the mysterious quality that gave it its heavenly name. When the intellect speaks, its instrument is a rational prose. The more unmistakable the meaning the better. "Two and two are four." Everybody understands what that means, and it means the same to everybody. But "Become what thou art"; "Know thyself"; "Ye must be born again"; "I should never have sought thee if I had not already found thee"; "The rest is silence": what do they mean? Will any two men ever exactly agree? Such sentences are poetry.

The truth in poetry—if it is poetry worth reading—has this character. Do we live in a world, then, where only guesses count? We know that this is not so. What Goddard says, for example, is much more than guesses. Yet he purveys no certainties. One could say, however, that there are some certainties of great importance behind what he says. He hopes that we will feel them and think about them.

That, one could also say, is the trouble with undeniable facts. You are not obligated to think about them. They have been "established" as certain and you have only to accept them. Well, look at the modern world and then ask yourself, "How many of the facts on which our world bases its decisions are really known to me?" And how many do I simply accept because they are! the conclusion of the Better Minds.? But this formulation, while useful, misses a basic point. A "fact," however impressive, does not of itself tell us when to use it and when to let it go. A fact does not reveal its changes of meaning in various circumstances. We are really lost in a wilderness of facts. We know this at least at times and may sigh and wish our authorities would behave themselves in a better way.

Thinking at another level, Goddard writes:

> We read a poem we love—at our risk. Though it may take its time about it, the world has a way of bringing up with a sharp jolt the man who attempts to substitute for its facts some private fancy. Fanciful interpretations of literature are doomed to as quick extinction. The text must be as sacred to the reader as his facts are to the scientist. He must discard instantly anything it contradicts. But he must be as ready to strike life into it, from his own experience, as a scientist must be fertile in hypotheses. And this is what the objective school of Shakespearean criticism forgets. How refreshing, when oppressed by the deposit of learning under which it sometimes threatens to bury Shakespeare, to remember a sentence of Emerson's: "A collector recently bought at public auction, in London, for one hundred and fifty-seven guineas, an autograph of Shakespeare: but for nothing a schoolboy can read *Hamlet,* and can detect secrets of highest concernment yet unpublished therein." What if that should cease to be true! What if someday the heart of Hamlet's mystery should be plucked out and whenever we went to the theater we can count on not seeing a new Hamlet as we do now but on seeing the one original 'end authentic Hamlet of "Shakespeare himself"! Would we care to attend the theater any longer? How right that Shakespeare's most masterly character should be his most baffling and protean one.

Goddard adds at the end of this chapter:

> So desperate at times appears the condition of our world that it seems as if only a miracle could save us. We forget that in art we have at hand the perpetual possibility of such a miracle. Art is given us to redeem us. All we are in the habit of asking or expecting of it today is that it should please or teach—whereas it ought to captivate us, carry us out of ourselves, make us over into something more nearly in its own image. This transubstantiating power of art is confirmed by all its greatest masters and masterpieces. Homer was a bible to the Hellenic world. Dante composed his *Comedy,* he said, to bring the miserable out of their wretchedness. Beethoven declared that those who listened to his music would be consoled. Dostoevsky wrote *The Brothers Karamazov* to rescue Russia from the bloodshed he saw impending. There are no higher authorities on art than these. But it is not enough that their names should stand like mountain peaks in the distance. We must approach them, or bring them near us, as individuals, that we may begin their ascent. It is not "Shakespeare," but your Shakespeare, my Shakespeare, our Shakespeare, who can save us. *"King Lear* is a miracle," wrote a young woman who had just come under its incomparable spell. "There is nothing in the whole world that is not in this play. It says everything, and if this is the last and final judgment on this world we live in, then it is a miraculous world. This is a miracle play."

The young woman might have said, "There is nothing in the world that is not in Shakespeare," since his plays do indeed cover the entirety of human nature, even though, like other poets, his wisdom is largely ignored. Take *Measure for Measure.* In this play the ruling duke of Vienna decides to appoint a deputy and himself disappear from view, although he actually returns in the guise of a friar to see what happens. What is his design? He wants to know how a man of poor character but good reputation will behave when power is placed in his hands. He was applying an ancient maxim: "Would you know a man? Give him power."

How long will it be before we recognize that the really good man will never accept power? Brooding over the uses of power, Goddard reflects:

> How, when men fail to keep the peace, shall their quarrels be settled, their misconduct penalized, without resort to personal violence? To that question the all but universal reply of the wiser part of human experience seems to have been: by law. In place of revenge—justice. Instead of personal retaliation—legal adjudication. "A government of laws and not of men": that is the historic answer of those peoples at least who have some freedom. And there is the imposing body of common and statute law to back it up. Trial by jury. Equality before the law. The advance of civilization that these concepts and conquests register cannot be overestimated. . . .
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> Recent history is little more than the story of the world's disillusionment with regard to this conclusion. The weakness of the syllogism lies in its major premise. "A government of laws and not of men." It sounds august. But there never was, there is not, and there never will be, any such thing. If only laws would construe, administer, and enforce themselves! But until they do, they will rise no nearer justice than the justice of the minds and hearts of their very human agents and instruments. . . . Disillusionment on this subject, if it comes at all,

> usually comes gradually. We cling to the older and more comforting notion here as we do to infantile ideas of God. When at last we realize that the blessings of the law (which cannot be exaggerated) are due to the wisdom and goodness of man, and its horrors (which also cannot be exaggerated) to his cruelty and greed, we have grasped the fact that law is just an instrument—no more good or bad in itself than the stone we use as a hammer or a missile—and we will never again be guilty of thinking of law and war as opposites, or of confusing peace with the reign of law. Whether the horrors of war are greater or less than the horrors of law may be debated.

"It is the law, not I, condemn your brother," says the deputy duke to Isabella, the sister of the condemned man. Claudio, the brother, has been fated to die in punishment for "anticipating the state of marriage with the girl to whom he was betrothed." Isabella comes before the deputy, Angelo, to plead for her brother's life, and is so received by the surrogate duke. But she is beautiful beyond compare, while chaste and virtuous, and about to enter a nunnery. The deputy conceives a passion for her and suggests that she give herself to him in order to save the life of her brother. Outraged, she demands that he free her brother instantly or she will tell all the world what he has proposed. But then the pseudo-duke, Angelo, reminds her that his "impeccable reputation" would protect him from any such charge, and she, knowing this to be true, goes to her brother to help him prepare for death.

> The scene between brother and sister (on which the disguised Duke eavesdrops) is one of the dramatic and poetic pinnacles of Shakespeare, and we scarcely need to except anything even in Hamlet when we say that few scenes in his works elicit from different readers more diametrically opposite reactions. Is Isabella to be admired or despised? Some think her almost divine in her virtue; others almost beneath contempt in her self-righteousness. You could fancy the two parties were talking about two different Isabellas. They are. There are two Isabellas.

When, at the end of the scene, Claudio pleads, "Sweet sister, let me live," she replies, "O you beast!" Thus delicate virtue exercises its power, and her brother is sent, so far as she knows, to his death. This is a play about power and no one comes out of it scot-free of blame. As Shakespeare says:

> . . . but man, proud man
> Dress'd in a little brief authority,
> Most ignorant of what he's most assur'd
> His glassy essence, like an angry ape,
> Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven
> As make the angels weep . . .

"Power," Goddard concludes, "is poison." This is quoted from Henry Adams, who said in his *Education—*

> Power is poison. Its effect on Presidents had always been tragic, chiefly as an almost insane excitement at first and a worse reaction afterwards; but also because no mind is so well balanced as to bear the strain of seizing unlimited force without habit or knowledge of it; and finding it disputed with him by hungry packs of wolves and hounds whose lives depend on snatching the carrion. . . . The effect of unlimited power on limited mind is worth noting in Presidents because it must represent the same process in society, and the power of self-control must have limit somewhere in face of the control of the infinite.

Later, Goddard muses:

> Revolutions by the downtrodden, abortive or successful, to regain their share of power have occurred throughout history. The world awaits a revolution by the powerful to gain relief from the insincerities to which their privileges and position forever condemn them. Thoreau staged a one-man revolution based on a kindred principle. If this is what it implies, *Measure for Measure* may yet be banned by the authorities. . . But no! It is as safe as the music of Beethoven. "The authorities" will never understand it.

At the end the real Duke returns to power and arranges everything for what we understand to be a happy ending. This is Shakespeare's stagecraft, but not his poetry. The bad people are lightly punished, their lives kindly rearranged by the Duke and there is happiness for all, or so it seems. Yet a comment by Samuel Butler in his NoteBooks is found by Goddard to seem a comment on the play:

> God is not so white as he is painted, and he gets on better with the Devil than people think. The Devil is too useful for him to wish him ill and, in like

> manner, half the Devil's trade would be at an end should any great mishap bring God well down in the world. . . . The conception of them as the one absolutely void of evil and the other of good is a vulgar notion taken from science whose priests have ever sought to get every idea and every substance pure of all alloy.
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> God and the Devil are about as four to three. There is enough preponderance of God to make it far safer to be on his side than on the Devil's, but the excess is not so great as his professional *claqueurs* pretend it is.

Measure for Measure, being about power and its rewards and penalties, is an unsavory play. One does not like it very much. As Goddard says:

> . . . I am not sure that honest readers do not find Barnardine the condemned murderer, the most delectable character in *Measure for Measure*—he who for God knows how long has defied the efforts of the prison authorities to execute him. We like him so well that we do not wish to inquire too curiously into his past. For my part, I am certain the murder he did—if he really did it—was an eminently good-natured one. "Thank you kindly for your attention," he says in effect, when they come to hale him to the gallows, "but I simply cannot be a party to any such proceeding. I am too busy—sleeping." Let him sleep.

In odd moments Shakespeare gives wisdom to fools and clowns and plays gently with powerless men like Barnardine. Does he really think that there could be a world in which men—and women—would reject the use of power and live simple, blameless lives? Speculation along such lines is not attractive because such people, if there were many of them, would amount to an almost unbearable reproach to the rest of us. Yet they would, if successful, radically change the world. Each one of us would then be on his own, with no one to tell us what to do, and no orders to take. Could we bear that?

Perhaps we could learn to bear it, along with learning never to blame anyone else for our troubles. This would surely be Utopia—or *Eupsychia*, as Maslow would have it.

Goddard thinks of such a state of affairs as at least a possibility. He says:

> If we do not want a world presided over by a thundering Jove—this play seems to say—and under him a million pelting petty officers and their understudies, and under *them* millions of millions of their victims, we must renounce Power as our god—Power and all his ways. And not just in the political and military worlds, where the evils of autocracy with its inevitable bureaucracy of fawning yes-men, while obvious to all but autocratic or servile eyes, may be more or less "necessary." It is the more insidiously personal bondages to power that should concern us first. Revolution against authority—as Isabella, for all her great speech, did not perceive, and as Barnardine did—begins at home Let men in sufficient numbers turn into Barnardines, who want to run no one else but will not *be* run by anyone, even to the gallows, and what would be left for the pelting petty officers, and finally for Jove himself, but to follow suit? There would be a revolution indeed. The more we meditate on Barnardine the more he acquires the character of a vast symbol, the key perhaps to all our troubles. Granted, with Hamlet, that the world is a prison. We need not despair with Hamlet. We may growl rather with Barnardine at all intruders on our daydreams, and learn with him that even in a prison life may be lived—independently. Why wait, as modern gospels preach, until we are out of prison before beginning to live? "Now is a time."

For the perceptive reader—one who understands poetry—such questions are raised again and again. How is Shakespeare able to do it? Goddard gives one answer, which we shall not attempt to improve upon.

> The main aim of a man's life, like the main aim of a work of art, is in the control of the Imagination, formerly known as the Will of God, or the will of the gods. "We who dwell on earth can do nothing of ourselves," says William Blake; "everything is conducted by Spirits, no less than Digestion or Sleep." But we can draw nearer such spirits when we sense their presence. "No production of the highest kind," says Goethe, "no remarkable discovery, no great thought that bears fruit and has results, is in the power of anyone, but such things are elevated above all earthly control." Yet we can take advantage of a wind we are powerless to create. Shakespeare himself gives signs of having recognized that fact.

REVIEW
TOLSTOY'S "ONE BIG THING"

LEO TOLSTOY was born in 1828, the son of a wealthy nobleman, and died when he was eighty-two, in 1910. As a writer he was one of the greatest, his chief works being *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* He is, however equally well known for his opposition to war and his devotion to nonresistance to evil, his rejection of the authority of government and all forms of organized religion, although he evolved his own personal faith based upon the teachings of Jesus. No doubt scores, if not hundreds, of books have been written about his literary genius and his pacifist convictions, many of them well worth reading.

To illustrate the scope and depth of Tolstoy's work we take from Isaiah Berlin's essay on Tolstoy, *The Hedgehog and the Fox:*

> There is a line among the fragments of the Greek poet Archilochus which says: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing. Scholars have differed about the correct interpretation of these dark words, which may mean no more than that the fox, for all his cunning' is defeated by the hedgehog's one defense. But, taken figuratively, the words can be made to yield a sense in which they mark one of the deepest differences which divide writers and thinkers, and, it may be, human beings in general. For there exists a great chasm between those, on the one hand, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think, and feel—a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which alone all that they are and say has significance—and, on the other side, those who pursue many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way. . . .

Tolstoy, Berlin thinks, "was by nature a fox, but believed in being a hedgehog," and that his genius consisted in both his honesty and his skill in combining these two qualities or drives.

We have for review a new volume, *Leo Tolstoy: Writings on Civil Disobedience and Nonviolence,* with an introduction by David H. Albert, and published by New Society Publishers (426 pages) at $12.95 in paperback. The same material, with virtually the same title, was issued in 1967 by Bergman Publishers. There may be one or two additions in the current volume, but essentially they are the same. There is no harm in this, however, since the Bergman book is doubtless out of print and the New Society people will give this material wide circulation. As David Albert, who is also a New Society editor, says in his concluding paragraph:

> In the final analysis, the heart of Tolstoy's challenge is to have us all strive to strip away pretensions: the liberal pretension that the public good can be built on the foundations of a murderous nation-state; the Christian pretension of the exclusivity of belief and revelation and of the embodiment of that belief in mystifying language and in corrupt and corrupting institutions; the peace advocate's pretentious search for an end to war through the creation of still more social and political institutions rather than through simply advocating the refusal to fight. But Tolstoy's doctrine is not essentially negative or renunciatory. From his childhood, Tolstoy marvelled at the profound mystery which lay at the periphery of human interaction, and it is here that we find the core of his abundant faith.

The first of Tolstoy's writings in this book is his reply to a young Dutchman, J. K. Van der Veer, who had sent to Tolstoy a copy of his letter refusing to be enrolled in the National Guard of Holland. The youth had said in his letter:

> I, who, if you please, am not a Christian, understand better than most Christians the commandment which is put at the head of this letter, the commandment which is rooted in human nature, in the mind of man. When but a boy, I allowed myself to be taught the trade of soldier, the art of killing; but now I renounce it. I would not kill at the command of others, and thus have murder on my conscience without any personal cause or reason whatever.

Tolstoy gives his wholehearted approval to the young man's decision. The best men in the world, he says, not only Christians but Mohammedans, Brahminists, Buddhists, Confucians, "look upon war and soldier with

aversion and contempt," and their "number grows hourly." Tolstoy says:

> Van der Veer says he is not a Christian. But the motives of his refusal and action are Christian. He refuses because he does not wish to kill a brother man; he does not obey, because the commands of his conscience are more binding upon him than the commands of men. Precisely on this account is Van der Veer's refusal so important. Thereby he shows that Christianity is not a sect or creed which some may profess and others reject; but that it is naught else than a life's following of that light of reason which illuminates all men. The merit of Christianity is not that it prescribes to men such and such acts, but that it foresees and points out the way by which all mankind must go and does go. . . .
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> Upon this refusal of Van der Veer like refusals must follow more and more often. As soon as these become numerous, the very men (their name is legion) who the day before said, "It is impossible to live without war," will say at once that they have this long time declared the madness and immorality of war, and they will advise everybody to follow Van der Veer's example. Then, of wars and armies, as these are now, there will remain only the recollection.

No one can mistake Tolstoy's words. He is against killing—every kind of killing. And he finds training others to kill the worst. "It is terrible to be a murderer oneself, but by cunning and cruel methods to reduce one's confiding brothers to this state is the most terrible crime of all." Addressing officers, he says: "And this you accomplish, and in this consists the whole of your service."

There is power in Tolstoy's words. Those who want to make peace, spread the idea of peace, should read Tolstoy and get others to read him. He shocks people into a realization of their own manhood, decency, and duty. There is a lot of talk about how to persuade people to put an end to war, but reading Tolstoy, in this book or almost any other by him, is a supremely effective means. Tolstoy was indeed a great man, but he was not a happy man. He was, as we say, "all too human." Read his *Last Diaries* (edited by Leon Stilman and published in 1960 by Putnam's) to see what he went through. But he knew "one big thing" and never ceased saying what it was.

Tolstoy declared a personal war against patriotism. He wrote:

> Obviously, to avoid war, it is necessary, not to preach sermons and pray to God for peace, not to adjure the English-speaking nations to live in peace together in order to domineer over other nations, not to make double and triple counter-alliances, not to intermarry princes and princesses, but to destroy the root of war. And that is, the exclusive desire for the well-being of one's own people; it is patriotism. Therefore, to destroy war, destroy patriotism. But to destroy patriotism, it is first necessary to produce conviction that it is an evil; and that is difficult to do. Tell people that war is an evil, and they will laugh, for who does not know it? Tell them that patriotism is an evil, and most of them will agree, but with a reservation. "Yes," they will say, "wrong patriotism is an evil; but there is another kind, the kind we hold." But just what is this good patriotism, no one explains. If good patriotism consists in inaggressiveness, as many say, still all patriotism, even if not aggressive, is necessarily retentive; that is, people wish to keep what they have previously conquered. The nation does not exist which was founded without conquest, and conquest can only be retained by the means which achieved it—namely, violence, murder. But if patriotism be not even retentive, it is then the restoring patriotism of conquered and oppressed nations, of Armenians, Poles, Czechs, Irish, and so on. And this patriotism is about the very worst; for. it is the most embittered and the most provocative of violence. . . .

"All just people," Tolstoy wrote, "must refuse to become soldiers." We are slowly recognizing that he is right. Tolstoy was certain that an end can be put to war in no other way. The material in the book under review is closely reasoned argument to show the futility of peace conferences and pacts among the nations as a means of ending war. As he said in reply to a question about a peace conference called by the Tsar: "The aim of the Conference will be, not to establish peace, but to hide from men the sole means of escape from the miseries of war, which lies in the refusal by private individuals of all participation in the murders of war."

> The most fearful evil in the world is hypocrisy. Not in vain did Christ, once only, show anger, and that against the hypocrisy of the Pharisees.
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> But what was the Pharisaic hypocrisy compared with the hypocrisy of our own time? In comparison with our hypocrites, those among the Pharisees were the justest of men and their art of hypocrisy was child's play, beside ours. It cannot be otherwise. All our lives, with their profession of Christianity, of the doctrine of humility and love, lived in an armed robber camp, cannot be other than one unbroken frightful hypocrisy. It is very convenient to profess a doctrine which has, at one end, Christian holiness and consequent infallibility, and at the other end, the heathen sword and gallows; so that, when it is possible to deceive and impose by holiness, holiness is brought into play, while, when the deceit fails, the sword and gallows are set to work. Such a doctrine is very convenient. But a time comes when the cobweb of lies gives way, and it is no longer possible to keep up both ends, one or the other has to go. This is about to happen with the doctrine of patriotism.

Indeed, patriotism is now waning fast, in these days of nuclear anxiety. Tolstoy probably expected its demise to come much sooner. And the folly of war is a hundred times more evident than in Tolstoy's day. All this, despite his nineteenth-century language, makes his voice that much stronger. But it is necessary to read him for his power to have an effect.

COMMENTARY
THE USES OF LOGIC

IT seems clear from what Goddard says in this week's lead article that there can be no understanding of the oracular nature of poetry without the exercise of the imagination. Grasp of "facts" does not require this, so that in a sense understanding and the use of facts involve no actual thought. Facts do not make the mind pregnant with discovery, and with only facts in the mind we cannot reach beyond them. Yet as the quotations given by Goddard show—"Become what thou art," and "Know thyself"—we continually hunger after meanings which reach beyond the facts.

The books that we return to again and again are books by writers that have some understanding of themselves. What does that mean? We hardly know, yet the books have a strange magnetism which violates the limitations of the mind. Read in, say, *Walden,* almost anywhere, and you are driven not to confidence but to wondering, and it is this wondering that we value, without fully understanding why.

What is civilization? Mostly, it is the institutional record of human attempts to use the mind to overcome the limitations of the mind. The attempts are plausible but in the long run they never work.

The books with wisdom in them—which we treasure and keep alive from generation to generation—are works which reveal the consistency of human failure, yet somehow give support to hope. These works appeal to us because they speak to intuitive longings as well as to our suspicion that the rational faculty cannot find measurements which apply to the measuring intelligence itself. This inaccessible character of the Delphic sometimes enrages the rational mind, as Goddard puts it:

> To our age anything Delphic is anathema. We want the definite. As certainly as ours is the time of the expert and the technician, we are living under a dynasty of the intellect, and the aim of the intellect is not to wonder and love and grow wise about life, but to control it. . . . We want the tree for its lumber, not, as Thoreau did, to make an appointment with it as a friend.

Yet the poet resists this harsh solution. He accepts hunger rather than finite satisfaction. And when the poet is a genius, as with Tolstoy, we tolerate him, admire him, but refuse to agree with him. We say that he may have told the truth but that the truth does not work for civilized humans. Humans want the facts to be on their side, but the facts always betray us into war, and therefore we must always be ready for war. How many more wars must we go through in order to recognize that being ready for war means making more war?

The hard logic of facts, accumulated over time, becomes the logic of self-destruction. But that aspect of our experience is not given consideration by "civilized" thinking. This was plain enough to Tolstoy, but it has not become plain to us. Instead we say, as William Forster put it:

> Civilized communities throughout the world are massing themselves together, each mass being measured by its force, and if we are to hold our position among men of our own race or among the nations of the world, we must make up the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual.

That, indeed, is where our "logic" has led us in the past. Will it be so in the future?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TIME FOR A CHANGE

IN a book titled *High School*, edited by Ronald Gross and Paul Osterman, published by Simon and Schuster in 1971, Theodore Roszak, in his contribution, asks, "how much of our educating proceeds from the assumption that the young must be *made* to learn?" He goes on:

> If we do not work from that assumption, then why is education ever anywhere a "problem"? A "problem" requiring mind, professional, specialized, full-time, and Herculean attention—and prodigious amounts of money?
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> If we do not work from that assumption, then why the compulsion? And I do not refer only to the legal compulsion of our lower grades, but to such forms of compulsion as military conscription, which has given us a male college population largely made up not of young scholars but of refugees seeking sanctuary in draft-deferrable occupations: the coercive process General Hershey once referred to as "choice under pressure." I speak too of the more subtle compulsions: the lure and the goad of jobs, status, licenses, and credentials.

This was written about eighteen years ago, but not much has changed. The names of people are different today, but the issues are largely the same. For this reason the good books are not dated, although these books seldom have a longer life than a popular novel. There is no area of our lives more heavily institutionalized than the "growing-up period," although if we look back two centuries or so we find that education was regarded as a natural process that needed no special attention. Schools came into being mostly from the need for instruction in technical subjects requiring a lot of math, and often foreign languages, and then, in time, the schools took over the teaching of the things one once learned from one's parents and the community. As Roszak says:

> Now it cannot be unknown to any informed person that in so-called primitive societies, as in many pre-modern civilizations, the whole of vast and profound cultures was easily and naturally transmitted from generation without the intervention of an educational establishment. Rather, the burden of cultural continuity rested on what Paul Goodman has recently called "incidental education": learning in the home, on the job, especially at play, by way of observation and imitation, now and then, here and there, from whoever happens to know, as and when the spirit moves—above all without fuss and bother.

Roszak recalls that Tolstoy said: "Every instruction ought to be only an answer to the question put by life," and adds:

> Water finds its level, the swallows flow south in the winter, children learn. It is just that simple. That is what Tolstoy knew, that is what the primitives knew. And so they could say, "Let them learn." Societies that trust their culture can let nature take its course, knowing that in their own good time—and usually very promptly—the children will come round and learn what looks interesting and important to learn, that indeed their young lives, unless stunted or sidetracked, are nothing but the inquisitive unfolding of potentialities.
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> But when a society begins to fear that its culture is not interesting or important to the young—that indeed its culture violates nature—then it concludes that education must be *made* to happen: must be organized strenuously into existence and enforced by professionals. And then we have much heavy talk about methods, discipline, incentives, discipline, inducements, discipline, the "crisis in our schools"—and discipline. We also have blue-ribbon committees, top-level conferences, exhaustive surveys, bold reforms, daring experiments, courageous innovations—and the educational establishment grows and grows.

To confirm all this we have only to consider what we—that is, most of us—know and use, in order to realize that it is almost entirely picked up from family, community, and on-the-job experience, and not taught to us in school. But this is true of genius as well as ordinary people. While we do not know what genius is, where it comes from, and how it is developed, we at least know that it is not learned in school. Albert Einstein, speaking in a letter years later of his experiences at the Gymnasium in Munich, said:

> When I was in the seventh grade at the Luitpold Gymnasium (and thus about fifteen) I was summoned

by my home-room teacher who expressed the wish that I leave the school. To my remark that I had done nothing amiss he replied only "your mere presence spoils the respect of the class for me."

I myself, to be sure, wanted to leave school and follow my parents to Italy. But the main reason for me was the dull, mechanized method of teaching. Because of my poor memory for words, this presented me with great difficulties that it seemed senseless for me to overcome. I preferred, therefore, to endure all sorts of punishments rather than to learn to gabble by rote.

Later, in the polytechnic in Zurich, where he spent four years, he described his experience in his "Autobiographical Notes":

One had to cram all this stuff into one's mind for the examinations, whether one liked it or not. This coercion had such a deterring effect on me that, after I passed the final examination, I found the consideration of any scientific problems distasteful to me for an entire year.

If we count Einstein as one who knew something about education, we might take seriously his remark, when he came to Princeton, that "There is too much education altogether, especially in American schools." Also his observation that "the wit was not wrong who defined education in this way: 'Education is that which remains, if one has forgotten everything he learned in school'."

We return to Roszak:

The now chronic top-to-bottom state of emergency in our schools does not exist because the educational establishment is not good enough and needs repair. The crisis is that the culture is not good enough. The educational establishment with all its compulsions, its disciplinary hangups, and—yes—even with its constabulary patrolling the corridors—all this exists in the first place only because of the insecurity of the culture.

Once we realize this, we can perhaps see that the feverish efforts of even good-hearted educators to inspire and motivate their students are as pathetic as the belated efforts of our Special Forces in Vietnam to win the hearts and minds of the very people they have degraded and brutalized. . . .

Speaking of our "free, public education," Roszak says:

We invented this quaint institution and we invest a special historical pride in it. We take it as an indisputable sign of social progress that we have built such colossal, affluent, and broadcast school systems. Until, at last, we begin to anticipate that education will soon become our largest "industry"—the major preoccupation of the society. Far from perceiving in this prospect the advanced cultural insecurity it betokens, we feel this is not only right but ideal. How better to use our wealth, our leisure, and our know-how than to train more teachers, build more schools, process more students? . . .

"The nation that has the schools," Bismarck observed "has the future."

Education as an adjunct of national power: a shrewd insight—one worthy of such a grim broker in blood and iron. But one did not have to be a Prussian aristocrat and militarist to accept the hard-bitten logic of Bismarck's argument. William E. Forster, who led the good fight for compulsory public education in Great Britain. . . . And here, very revealingly, is how Forster sized things up in 1870 in presenting his successful elementary-education bill to Parliament:

"Upon the speedy provision of elementary education depends our industrial prosperity; uneducated labourers . . . are for the most part, unskilled labourers, and if we leave our work-folk any longer unskilled, notwithstanding their strong sinews and determined energy, they will become overmatched in the competition of the world. . . Civilized communities throughout the world are massing themselves together, each mass being measured by its force; and if we are to hold our position among men of our own race or among the nations of the world, we must make up the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual."

"Note," says Roszak, "the telltale imagery of the argument. Education as mental steam engine; the school as brain-production factory." Today this argument would draw on "computer technics" but the argument would be the same. "Knowledge is power," said Francis Bacon more than three centuries ago, and we have only brought his argument up to date. Its fruit has been the nuclear weapons of the present. Surely it is time to change what we mean by education.

FRONTIERS

Today's Frontier

IN the Spring 1987 issue of *India International Centre Quarterly*—a journal with which we are now only becoming acquainted—the editor, Sima Sharma, introduces a dialogue between Edward Goldsmith, editor of the *Ecologist*, published in England, and Krishna Chaitanya, author of a number of books on culture, literature, and art. Their subject is "Survival and Modernity," their point being that unless modernity becomes something quite different, survival will not be possible. Toward the end of the discussion, Goldsmith says:

> . . . the reason why Darwinism originally caught on, as we all know, was that it fitted in very well with the developing paradigm of modernism. The modifications brought to it by Weissmann and Bateson, toward the end of the century, and by Julian Huxley, Gaylord Simpson and others in the nineteen-forties and 'fifties, have come to reflect, still more closely, this world-view of modernism, which we both regard as so destructive.
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> The mechanisms of evolutionary chance could not be mechanistic. Evolution is seen in terms of the functioning of two machines: a generator of randomness, on the one hand and a sorting machine, on the other. It sees living things as passive, in fact dead, in that they have to be "selected" by some external manager. For some reason, the undefined environment that does the managing is seen as alive. . . . no one, of course, has explained why it should be capable of selecting the "fittest" living things with such extraordinary discrimination, still less, why it should want to. . . . Natural selection, of course, is but a biological version of Adam Smith's "Invisible Hand," that undefined mystical force that serves to rationalize competition and aggression in the economic sphere.

Here Chaitanya remarks that Tom Bethell has shown that Darwin was much influenced by Adam Smith while he was formulating the Theory of Evolution. In general, one gathers from this dialogue that the modern world has for years been outgrowing its "modernity," and that assumptions which have for generations been taken for granted are now being called into question. Goldsmith says:

> Economic development cannot successfully combat poverty. First of all, we have never properly defined poverty. Is tribal man . . . we might ask, or an Indian living in Amazonia, poor? Clearly not, in the sense in which a slumdweller in Bombay is poor. Still less in the sense in which a man living in a North American slum is poor, one whose family and community have broken down; who has no beliefs, no religion, no identity and who spends most of the money he has on drugs and alcohol. Ivan Illich denies that development has eliminated poverty. All it has done is modernize it, and in America, modernized poverty is, in some ways, as bad as the poverty of an Indian slum-dweller. . . .
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> Consider that the average young man in the UK and the USA has a vocabulary of no more than a few hundred words, whereas tribal people have been known to possess vocabularies of more than 10,000 words. Unfortunately, social and cultural riches are not currently regarded as constituting wealth. I think it is Karl Polanyi rather than Karl Marx to whom we should turn for inspiration. He proposed a non-materialistic view of the world about fifty years ago.

At this point Chaitanya remarks:

> Talking about Polanyi, there are two things about him that I like. One is that he pointed out that the market economy is not going to redeem us, because the market economy goods move where they fetch the highest price, not where the needs are the greatest. Secondly, he pointed out that land cannot be regarded as just an economic resource. Land is natural, and it is basic to our existence.

And Goldsmith says:

> . . . when labor becomes a commodity then man himself becomes a commodity. For, as Polanyi notes, what is labor but another word for man—seen from the production point of view. And when land becomes a commodity then so does nature—since land is nothing else but nature. Now if you allow the market system to determine the fate of man and that of nature, both must inevitably be degraded and eventually destroyed, for their normal dynamics—that which enables them to survive and prosper is diametrically opposed to that which they must exhibit once subjected to the laws of the market. The market system is simply not a rational means of distributing resources within a natural system.

Chaitanya concludes:

> The enormous task ahead is a sacrificial endeavor. . . . But one definite conclusion that we, in our small way, seem to have arrived at is that the world is a continuum, a system, in a profound sense, not in the materialistic sense or in the sense of the physicist; that, as Lynn White said, the balance of nature is related to the balance in human nature.

And Goldsmith adds:

> As I have already said, I regard man as a fundamentally religious animal. He cannot survive in a religious vacuum. Indeed man is naturally religious. Marx got it wrong. It is materialism, not religion, that is the opiate of the people and in a materialistic and scientific age the only religion that appears to make sense is science.

Chaitanya here interjects: "Of course; but today's science seems to be scientism, not true science," and Goldsmith concludes:

> Today's science is unquestionably a religion. It promises a future life, a materialistic paradise from which all the problems that have beset man since the beginning of his tenancy of this planet, like poverty, disease and famine, will be eliminated. I remember, not long ago, a scientist actually telling us that science would eliminate death itself. Scientists are quite clearly priests. They wear special clothes to identify themselves as such, they speak a language of their own which other people cannot understand, the mathematical language, just as our priests speak Latin or Sanskrit or whatever—and they claim to be the only intermediaries between man and his vile deity—and thereby the only ones who can bring about the materialist paradise that the religion of science preaches.
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> What we need today is an ecological religion—one that makes it clear, above all, that if God created the world of living things, then its annihilation by means of science, technology and industry can only be the work of the devil. God, it must teach us, can only be served by helping him to reconstitute his creation.

It seems just to say that these two men—Edward Goldmith and Krishna Chaitanya—have supplied us with a clear account of the present-day frontier.