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WHAT ARE YOUR NEEDS?

IN the March-June *Ecologist* for last year, writing on Lewis Mumford, an Australian scholar, Grover Foley, in a few words summed up Mumford's outlook:

> The organic world knows limits, the machine does not. Mechanist science does not know when to stop, even if its outcome is the Hydrogen Bomb or a man-made plague.

To know when or where to stop is to sense the natural limits in the organic world. In physical dimensions a "right size" is reached by living things and they stop getting any bigger. Even species of animals respond to the need for limit, as when a diminished supply of food seems to exert a control over the reproductive impulse. These are broad and more or less obvious means of control, and there are no doubt much subtler limits to which living things respond as an expression of the balance of nature. The unit of growth of the chambered nautilus may be an example. Volumes could no doubt be written on this regulatory principle which operates throughout nature, and volumes *are* being written to show the effects on human beings and their communities of the lack of control our engineers and technologists exercise in the excessive growth of our machines, our systems of technology, and our organized institutions.

In *Where the Wasteland Ends* Theodore Roszak writes on this subject:

> In our time, the opportunity to live a life completely enveloped by the man-made and man-controlled has increased rapidly and enormously. We are in the way of suffering what can justly be called a cataclysm of urbanization. It was only in 1850 that England, the first industrial society, became as much as 50 per cent urban. Today, nearly 40 per cent of the world as a whole lives in urban areas; in another fifteen years, the figure will rise to over 50 per cent. In another fifty years very nearly 100 per cent of the global population will be living in cities of over one million, with the largest megalopolitan complexes totaling well above one billion residents. These supercities will merely be the integrated versions of what we call "urban sprawl": a Bosnywash stretching from Boston through New York and Philadelphia to Washington; a San Difranangeles running down the Pacific coast from San Francisco to San Diego. . . .
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> Agriculture today is largely a species of industrial mass production worked up off a soil that is little more than a chemical blotter. Increasingly, the business is swallowed up by conglomerate companies which clearly have no love or knowledge of farmcraft, but only perceive the land and its produce as so many profit and loss statistics in their ledgers. . . . Our eggs are pumped out of carefully dieted battery hens that never see the light of day. Our meat comes to us from factory farms where immobilized, fast-fatted cattle and pigs are fed by the time clock and scientifically tranquilized to hold down the often violent anxiety that comes of lifelong close confinement. These beasts we eat are all but a fabricated counterfeit; we do not even grant them the dignity of setting foot in the open air once in a lifetime. . . .

It seems no use to inquire here where we should have stopped in this development. Instead of reaching and passing a "stopping place," the whole system is wrong, as becomes evident from any way of looking at our lives. We see this from what Roszak goes on to say:

> The remnants of the natural world that survive in the experience of urban-industrial populations—like the national parks we must drive miles to see, only to find them cluttered with automobiles, beer cans, and transistor radios—are fast becoming only a different order of artificiality, islands of carefully doctored wilderness put on display for vacationers and boasting all the comforts of gracious suburban living. It is hard to imagine that within another few generations the globe will possess a single wild area that will be more than thirty minutes removed by helicopter from a television set, an air-conditioned de-luxe hotel, and a Coca-Cola machine. By then, the remotest regions may well have been staked out for exotic tours whose price includes the opportunity to shoot a tiger or harpoon a whale—as a souvenir of

> one's rugged vacation adventure. The natives will be flown in from central casting and the local color will be under the direction of Walt Disney productions. The visitors—knowing no better—will conceive of this charade as "getting away to nature." But in truth it will be only another, and a climactic aspect of the urban-industrial expansion.

One thing seems clear enough: If we humans are animals we are very bad animals, organisms which lack the ability even to imitate animals well. Animals are blessed by being subject to natural limitations, but we, being blessed—or cursed—with imagination and memory—find it necessary to set our own limits, and manifestly have no idea of what they should be. Instead we have what seem god-like powers, powers which we turn to diabolical ends. We say this, judging from our recent history. Our earlier history was different. In the distant past we were constrained by the heavy hand of custom, ruled by religious ideas of right behavior—ideas, however, which, with the development of reason and its technological applications, we eventually cast aside.

It is now plain enough that we do not understand ourselves. We see that our limits, whatever they are, must be voluntarily adopted.

Yet there is perhaps one clue that our species has given us—species here meaning the finest examples of human beings as well as the majorities which illustrate our confusion and ignorance in so many ways. How else do you explain a Socrates or a Plato? Every major race has had its quota of wise men, of exemplars of ideal human behavior, and we are obliged to ask, where do these rare exceptions come from? Neither heredity nor environment provides an adequate explanation, yet, generation after generation, they keep on appearing.

One thing seems evident: their development is not physical or biological. We can only call it intellectual and moral, and we have no generally acceptable evolutionary theory to account for their emergence.

Is there, then, a moral order in nature, or in the cosmos? This is a conception which our scientists have totally ignored, yet if we include in our history the past from the time of Buddha to more recent ages, the ideal of high moral development has had a number of embodiments. How shall we explain them? The only rational approach to the question lies in the Buddhist metaphysics which teaches the evolution of *Bodhisativas* through reincarnation—of individuals who commit themselves to a life of devotion to others, as teachers of mankind. And Buddhism we should note, is a godless religion—*Bodhisativas* are godlike humans.

In the present, however, we may find it more useful to look for good ideas instead of extraordinary teachers, since the age of religion is something we are now outgrowing, although with a great many false starts. We return then to Roszak, who has some useful things to say about overcoming the evils of industrialism. Toward the end of the book we have been quoting he writes:

> As for the selective reduction of industrialism, this requires a searching discussion of the meaning of work. Heavy industrial plant does save labor, and to reduce its presence drastically would mean doing a great deal more work in other ways. The great question is: how much work does industrialism save that we really need to have done at all and how much more does it do that we would rather have done on a handicraft or intermediate technology basis—for the sake of conserving other values?
>
> We have become so accustomed to the dreary notion that work must be exploitative, alienated drudgery, that it seems almost futile to raise that question now in public discussion. For most people, work is a bore and a burden; it is done for other people's profit and to other people's specifications. It is done for money, rarely for love. So of course everyone rushes to unload their labor on to the machines and the big systems. These in turn justify their existence by grinding out the swanky garbage which the official economics tallies up into a statistical mystery called "the standard of living." And the void that is left behind when the machines have taken over the drudgery that no one ever wanted to do in the first place is called "leisure"—a vacuum rapidly filled with cheerless, obsessive getting and

spending, with idiocies like pre-packaged tourism (the chance to make an international audience of oneself), or with pure boredom.

But where work becomes a personal project and is done in community, its character is wholly transformed. . . . Work can be the chance to innovate, fraternize, and serve. Its tools and patterns can be filled with transcendent symbolism. It can be a fulfilling expression of the personality. But we are a long way from that.

Just as we are a long way from realizing, as Lewis Mumford has for so long cogently argued, that the true object of political economy is plenitude, not plenty. An economics that does not, like the "biotechnics" of the living organism, balance itself by the standard of enoughness is bound to be maniacal. It has lost sight of the existential values which commodity values only exist to further. . . .

One nearly despairs of the possibility that our entrenched economics of alienation, greed, and anti-sociability will ever lose its authority over people's minds. But there is one way forward: the creation of flesh-and-blood examples of low-consumption, high-quality alternatives to the mainstream pattern of life. . . . And nothing—no amount of argument or research—will take the place of such living proof. What people must see is that ecologically sane, socially responsible living is *good* living; that simplicity, thrift, and reciprocity make for an existence that is free and more self-respecting.

Who can be expected to set such an example? If they are to have the impact on common practice that Roszak hopes for, they will need to be fairly numerous, at least a sizeable minority. We might call them in-betweeners, people who have begun to feel the need for a change, and have some idea of what ought to be done, and in their own way start doing it. Two generations or more ago these people would have become politically active in liberal or radical movements, but they now see the futility of political action without more fundamental changes in attitude and are working toward ecological reforms with bioregional objectives. They have become interested in sustainable forms of agriculture, renewable forms of energy, and cooperative enterprises of various sorts. Among writers they are represented by men like Wendell Berry and others of similar persuasion who enjoy a growing influence.

Writing sixteen years ago in *Where the Wasteland Ends*, Roszak characterizes the people who were then waking up to another way of life:

At least in outline, it is already becoming clear what sort of society people seek once they have broken the spell of the urban-industrial Reality Principle. We can see the postindustrial alternative emerging in a thousand fragile experiments throughout America and Western Europe on the part of the young and the no longer young: communes rural and urban; voluntary primitivism; organic homesteading; extended families; free schools; free clinics; handicraft cooperatives, community development coops, Gandhian ashrams neighborhood rap centers; labor gift exchanges. . . .

Almost without exception, these experiments blend into the tradition of anarchist socialism. There is nothing doctrinaire about the matter; probably few of those involved have ever read Kropotkin or Malatesta. They have no need to. Their anarchism is the healthiest kind: a natural, rebelliously personal response to the distortions of urban-industrial life and the technocracy, as spontaneous as the need to breathe free after airless captivity. . . .

But there is one more overtone that must be added to anarchist politics—I think the most important. Ours is becoming—against all the odds—an age of self-discovery and personal integration: the process Jung called "individuation." . . . For those who embark on this inner journey, anarchism becomes a natural tendency; it is the political style most hospitable to the visionary quest. The relationship is ancient and indisputable—the politics of eternity has always automatically become communitarian politics. We see this in the life and thought of the Taoist sages, every one of them is an anarchist outlaw. . . . The original Buddhists and Christians naturally constituted themselves as autonomous socialist communities. The same has been true of every contemplative school and mystery religion in history. The stronger the mystical sensibility, the stronger the longing for anarchist brotherhood and sisterhood. . . . The clear lesson of history is that whole and healthy people who have tasted the visionary splendors are a poor material for mass movements or armed collectivities. They simply have better things to do with themselves than play power politics. . . . Unless people remain obsessed with acquisitiveness, fixated on their selfish material needs, convinced of their own absolute incompetence and equally convinced of the technology's omnipotence, the artificial environment will begin to

dissolve like a house of sugar candy in hot water. The visionary commonwealth is in fact and by example exactly such a solvent of the social order.

What is the first lesson to be learned in order for this solvent to work? The answer is clear: we need to understand, in respect to things and conveniences, what is *enough.* Learning this, we could say, must begin in the cradle. The child needs to grow up without acquiring the habit of self-indulgence. In this way a sense of sufficiency at the physical level is developed, which may be transferred to other matters, especially if the older members of the family have developed the same habits of restraint. The young person who is surrounded by others who choose things worth doing with their lives is likely to be awakened by their example and to devote himself to similar activities. In this the solvent is again at work, producing a balance that cannot be obtained in any other way. The technocracy, as Roszak says, cannot be overthrown; "it can only be displaced, inch by living inch."

Are there any blueprints for replacing it? Considering this question, Roszak writes:

> A visionary commonwealth, then: a confederated community of communities.
>
> But what specifically would it look like, this bizarre postindustrial alternative? How exactly would it hang together and function?
>
> I think only a fool would pretend he could answer that question in any significant detail. Not that I haven't, in the privacy of my own head, done more than a little Utopian brainstorming about the world I think I see on the far side of the urban-industrial wasteland.
>
> About the proper mix of handicraft labor, intermediate technologies, and necessarily heavy industry.
>
> About the revitalization of work as a self-determining, non-exploitative activity—and a means of spiritual growth.
>
> About a new economics elaborated out of kinship, friendship, and cooperation.
>
> About the regionalization and grass roots control of transport and mass communication.
>
> About non-bureaucratized, user-developed, user-administered social services.
>
> About the relevance of women's liberation and extended families . . . to population balance.
>
> About labor-gift and barter exchange systems in the local economy.
>
> About the commune and neighborhood as a basis for personalized welfare services.
>
> About the role of neighborhood courts in a participative legal system.
>
> About the society-wide coordination of worker-controlled industries and producers' cooperatives.
>
> About credit unions and mutual insurance as an alternate to the big banks and insurance companies.
>
> About de-urbanization and the rehabilitation of rural life by way of an ecologically diversified organic homesteading.
>
> About non-compulsory education through free schools, folk schools, and child-minding co-ops.
>
> These and countless other tangled problems of decentralism and communitarianism have suffered my own amateurish efforts at social invention. And of course they have received some brilliant attention by far more gifted minds.

Moving toward his conclusion, Roszak says:

> Certainly it has been my experience that those who demand the complete blueprints of a postindustrial alternative are only looking for as many academic bones of contention as possible—and finally for an excuse to turn off and rest content with the conventional wisdom. They are not ready to change their lives and the most studied Utopian prospectus will not bring them around. . . .
>
> The great trick is to discover what it is that holds people fast to the status quo and then to undo the knots—perhaps even on a person-to-person basis.

Finally, he asks some questions which go to the core of the issue:

> What are you, and what do you want to become? What prevents you from becoming this other, better you? Why does change make you afraid? What are your true needs? *What are you in the world to do?*

REVIEW
"ISN'T IT FUN!"

IN what seems a most unlikely place—the "Readings" section of the March *Harper's*—we found a long extract from a "sermon" delivered by Wendell Berry at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine last November. His subject was the loss of pleasure or joy people now take in their work—by no means a new topic for him. His point is that we are not happy, that if we continue as we are we are not going to be happy, and that this is because we have allowed the equations of the economists to rule our lives. His further point is that in our present situation, winners are no better off than losers since both losers and winners are both breaking the laws of life. How long, one wonders, will it take for this truth to be generally realized? We are still all parts of one another, and those who think themselves winners discover that there is no pleasure in living in a world of defeat.

In this extract Berry begins by saying:

> As thousands of small farms and small local businesses of all kinds falter and fail under the effects of adverse economic policies, or live under the threat of what we complacently call "scientific progress," the economist announces pontifically to the press that "there will be some winners and some losers"—as if that might justify and clarify everything, or anything. The sciences, one gathers, mindlessly serve economics, and the humanities defer abjectly to the sciences. All assume, apparently, that we are in the grip of economic laws, which are the laws of the universe. The newspapers quote the economists as the ultimate authorities. We read their pronouncements, knowing that the last word has been said.

One way to recognize how little pleasure there is in present-day work is to notice that there is no way to escape the atmosphere of constant "selling." Think, for example, of the mail one receives every day, much more than half of it pretending to be interested only in the recipient, and that pretense so vulgarly obvious. If you open such mail, and a lot of the time you don't, you are usually embarrassed by the coarse nature of the appeal, which is made to sound as though the people who send it really want to do you a service, when you know that this is nothing but "sales talk." If you are offered something to read—a book or a magazine subscription—the samplings given are so casually sophisticated that you can hardly understand what is said, the implication being that if you buy this reading matter you too will soon become equally sophisticated and knowledgeable. Merchandise offered is at the same level of appeal, as though the old rule of setting the level of selling for twelve-year-olds had been made a law of marketing.

Berry points to the effect of all this:

> What the ideal of competition most flagrantly and disastrously excludes is affection. The affections, John Ruskin said, are "an anomalous force, rendering every one of the ordinary political economist's calculations nugatory, while, even if he desired to introduce this new element into his estimates, he has no power of dealing with it; for the affections only become a true motive power when they ignore every other motive power and condition of political economy."
>
> I would like to attempt to talk about economy from the standpoint of affection—or, as I am going to call it, pleasure, advancing just a little beyond Ruskin's term, for pleasure is, so to speak, affection in action. There are obvious risks in approaching an economic problem in a way that is frankly emotional—to talk about, for example, the pleasures of nature and the pleasures of work. But these risks seem to me worth taking, for what I am trying to deal with is the grief that we increasingly suffer as a result of the loss of these pleasures.
>
> It is obviously necessary, at the outset, to make a distinction between pleasure that is true or legitimate, and pleasure that is not. We know that a pleasure can be as heavily debited as an economy. Some people undoubtedly thought it pleasant, for instance, to have the most onerous tasks of their economy performed by black slaves. But this proved to be a pleasure that was temporary and dangerous. It lived by an enormous indebtedness that was inescapably to be paid, not in money, but in misery, waste, and death. The pleasures of fossil-fuel combustion and nuclear "security" are, as we are now beginning to see, similarly debited to the future.

Berry is trying to get us to realize the real pleasure we get from learning to do a job well. For this we must overcome the illusion that avoiding hard work is a way to enjoyment. The happiest people in the world are those who take pride in their work and do it well. We should add that the work needs to be worth doing—an activity that is in harmony with human needs and a natural part of the

ecology of the age. Yet it takes time for there to be a full realization of this ideal. As Berry puts it:

> For example, we now have in the United States many landscapes that have been defeated—temporarily or permanently—by strip mining, by clear-cutting, by poisoning, by bad farming, or by various styles of "development" that have subjugated their sites entirely to human purpose. These landscapes have been defeated for the benefit of what are assumed to be victorious landscapes: the suburban housing developments and the places of amusement (the park systems, recreational wildernesses, etc.) of the winners, so far, in the economy. But these victorious landscapes and their human inhabitants are already paying the costs of their defeat of other landscapes: in air and water pollution, overcrowding, inflated prices, and various diseases of body and mind; eventually, the cost will be paid in scarcity or want of necessary goods.

In short, our very powers are bringing home to us the unity of the world. We can no longer isolate ourselves from the far-reaching effects of what we do. We see this already in the realm of international affairs. We are instructed by the newspapers how the effects of our foreign policy—or the lack of it—creates problems around the world, problems which, sooner or later, have an effect on our lives.

Berry asks:

> Is it possible to look beyond this all-consuming rush of winning and losing, to the possibility of countrysides, a nation of countrysides, in which use is not synonymous with defeat? It is. But in order to do so we must consider our pleasures. Since we all know, from our own and our nation's experience, of some pleasures that are canceled by their costs, and of some that result in unredeemable losses and miseries, it *is* natural to wonder if there may not be such phenomena as net pleasures, pleasures that are free or without a permanent cost. We know that there are. These are the pleasures that we take in our own lives, our own wakefulness in this world, and in the company of other people and other creatures—pleasures innate in the Creation and in our own good work. And these are the pleasures that are most vulnerable to so-called economic progress.

He goes to a familiar figure for comment:

> "This curious world that we inhabit is more wonderful than convenient; more beautiful than it is useful; it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used." Henry David Thoreau said that to his graduating class in 1837.

Meanwhile—

> Our workplaces are more and more exclusively given over to production, and our dwelling places to consumption. And this accounts for the accelerating division of our country into defeated landscapes and victorious (but threatened) landscapes. . . .
>
> If I could pick any rule of industrial economics to receive a thorough re-examination, it would be the one that says that all hard physical work is "drudgery" and not worth doing. There are of course many questions surrounding this issue: What is the work? In whose interest is it done? Where and in what circumstances is it done? In whose company is it done? How long does it last? And so forth. But this issue needs to be re-examined by everybody, because it is personal. The argument, if it is that, can proceed only by personal testimony.

In raising these questions it is Berry's hope that we shall discover, more or less by accident, we enjoy doing hard work, that it makes for a satisfaction unobtainable in any other way. He is suggesting that this is normal human life and that the idea of avoiding work is a doctrine invented by salesmen who want us to believe that an abnormal life—a life without work—is something to be sought after by buying what they have to sell. The salesmen are assisted in their task by the fact that most of the work we do—the jobs that are offered to us—are indeed not worth doing and are easily seen as drudgery because doing them produces no satisfaction.

All this can be understood, and well understood, by one who has asked himself why he is here on this planet in company with other humans and in vital association with other forms of life.

Berry ends his "sermon" by relating how he took his five-year-old grand-daughter on a trip with a wagon and a team of horses to bring a load of dirt to spread on the barn floor.

> We completed our trip to the barn, smoothed it over the barn floor, and wetted it down. By the time we started back up the creek road the sun had gone over the hill and the air had turned bitter. Katie sat close to me on the wagon, and we did not say anything for a long time. I did not say anything because I was afraid that Katie was not saying anything because she was cold and tired and miserable and perhaps homesick; it was impossible to hurry much, and I was unsure how I would comfort her.
>
> But then, after a while, she said, "Wendell, isn't it fun!"

COMMENTARY
MAN'S HIGHER QUALITIES

THE basic idea that Theodore Roszak seeks to get across in the material quoted in this week's lead is briefly put in a single sentence: "an economics that does not, like the 'biotechnics' of the living organism, balance itself by the standard of enoughness is bound to be maniacal." He goes on with an explanatory comment: "What people must see is that ecologically sane, socially responsible living is *good* living; that simplicity, thrift, and reciprocity make for an existence that is free and more self-respecting."

In past years we have had religious codes which have advocated such behavior, but the grounds of belief have not been rational, and so, over the years, with the rise of rationalism, the beliefs have been contemptuously abandoned, with the practical result that our economics has, as Roszak says, become "maniacal." This is enough to show that our rationalism, while good in principle, has been woefully inadequate. How, then, can our powers of reason be extended to show how our economics might be ordered along the lines which Roszak later describes?

That is the great question. How shall we persuade ourselves of what is *right* to do in relation to the long series of questions that he formulates in what is quoted on page 7?

Our answers, we suspect, will turn on the replies we give to his last questions:

> What are you and what do you want to become? What prevents you from becoming this other, better you? Why does change make you afraid? What are your true needs? *What are you in the world to do?*

These are questions which come naturally to self-conscious beings for whom it is natural to wonder what they are here to do and sometimes to start in doing it. The implication of this human situation is that humans are a class of being or intelligence with a particular work to do. Fortunately there are writers, such as Theodore Roszak, who sense our need to inquire into such questions and to give expression to their feelings in the matter. William James was another such writer, as have been a wide variety of thinkers who have raised questions about the meaning of being human. Poets, too, have been similarly endowed, and for this reason may be regarded as important members of the human race.

The constraints of nature or some built-in instinct seem to exercise control of behavior in the animal kingdom, but humans are apparently required, by reason of their self-consciousness, to adopt their own constraints, and in rare cases this leads to high development such as obtained by a Christ or a Buddha. In other words, there are godlike potentialities in human beings, which seem to flower from century to century, setting an example for the rest of mankind. We might say, then, that here is illustrated the evolutionary possibilities of being human, and also the means by which individual humans may help other members of the species to reach the heights. In this way we gain instruction in the practical meaning of altruism and brotherhood, as the qualities which contribute to natural and complete human development. They are qualities which, at the level of everyday living, make possible the formations which Roszak proposes. They are qualities which bear out the meaning of the intuition that we are parts of one another, pointing to how we may live and work together in harmony and fellowship.

Such thinking gives reality to our metaphysical being as souls in evolution, in contrast to the material limits of our physical existence.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
VARIOUS THINGS

IN *Troubles of Children and Parents*, the author, Susan Isaacs, who in this book provides her replies to letters from parents, seems mainly to offer common sense, which is particularly valuable because she also gives illustrations. The following is an example:

> To begin with, a little thought will remind us that the child can only learn responsibility by having it. He learns to walk by trying to walk; he learns to swim by mere swimming; to dance by dancing. He can't learn by mere teaching in words, nor by the power of our wishes, but only by his own efforts corrected by his own experience. Even the best teaching in, for example, writing or . . . talking French, can only come home to him through his own effort and actual experience. This is equally true of social behavior. It is useless for us to say, "Be responsible, be a leader, not a follower," unless we translate this into real and concrete opportunity. We need to give him things to be responsible for. Even the young child can have the responsibility for the arrangement of his own toy cupboard, the spending of his own pocket-money (no matter how little that is), the choice of what to do in his playtime, of the playmates he will invite . . . of what he will do with his own pieces of garden, of the places he will go to on his afternoon walk. If we want him to learn to choose for himself we need to give him the chance to choose on as many real occasions as possible. . . . There are so many ways in which the child has to accept our views and arrangements, that when we give him choice and responsibility it should be a genuine gift. Such practical responsibility is a most valuable training.

One mother wrote in about her daughter, close to four years old, who shows "a tremendously strong will," making obedience a problem. A portion of Susan Isaac's reply follows:

> It is surely a mistake to think of your little girl's development merely in terms of obedience. It is splendid that she is so independent and able to do so much for herself, especially as her independence takes such a positive form, and is not mere defiance. It is quite different from a child who merely lies down and screams and says she won't. There is such positive drive towards skill and practical and social ability which is obviously going to make her a splendid person in later life. It seems a pity to underestimate the great value of all these positive characteristics of the child, and it is clear that when you tend to do so the effect upon the child is wholly undesirable.

We go to another book, Clark Moustakas' *Personal Growth*, for the account of Steve, a fourth-grade youngster who was bored in school.

> Steve spent nearly all of his time in the classroom noting, recording, and memorizing "facts" in various subject areas and listening to endless, dull lectures. What little excitement his teacher generated came from the exuberance she expressed when youngsters turned in "perfect" papers. Successful achievement in discrete subject matter, facts, and skills was the most important goal in school. To reach this goal, the teacher stuck faithfully to teachers' manuals, lesson plans, and textbooks. Each day was organized and structured like every other, and Steve was dead in school, numbed by the repetitive, uneventful activities and routines. Only the recess period enabled him to escape the monotony of the classroom and to give himself completely to football, basketball, or baseball.
>
> Although his life in school was one of indifference and boredom, outside of school he became fully absorbed in a number of interests. He was dedicated to search and inquiry and would exhaust himself in one interest until he was satisfied and ready to move on. An illustration of his dedication was his complete involvement in astronomy for about six months. While strolling along the seashore one night he really noticed the stars, as if for the first time. He sat on a rock and listened and watched until he was totally immersed in the sky. He was so fully engaged in the experience that he seemed to be in a trance.
>
> Some weeks later in school, in science class, the assigned topic was "planets and constellations." While his teacher moved in and out of this topic in the usual perfunctory manner, Steve's experience at the ocean was reawakened, and he stayed with the stars for the rest of the school year. His involvement was so evident that even his teacher caught glimpses of this special light, but she made no effort to respond. For a while his whole world was a world of sun and satellites and planets. In school he went

through the motions of completing assignments, but he was not actually there. His mind was exploring the heavens nearly all of his waking hours. He prodded and badgered his parents and the librarians for references, maps, telescopes, and trips to science museums and the local planetarium. For many, many weeks he could be seen nightly with telescope in hand, studying the constellations of stars and checking his reference books for seasonal changes. He began to understand the solar system, theories about its origin, the nature of auroras, comets, meteors, and eclipses; he knew, from his own enthusiastic research, details about each planet—size, shape, age, weight, distance from the sun and earth, and temperatures; he was especially caught up in the stars, and could differentiate constellations of spring, summer, autumn, and winter; and he was entranced for long periods with galaxies and magnitudes. . . . He immersed himself totally in this interest for a while, often exhausting his energies and stretching his capacities. He involved important people in his world in it, until he experienced a sense of fulfillment, a letting go, and was ready to move on to other interests and activities.

Now we go to still another book—*Education and the Modern Mind* by W. R. Niblett. This passage seemed well worth quoting:

The first necessity for writing well is that a person should have something to say: something that he very much wants to say, some subject in which he is really interested. When this is the case there is always hope that even a comparatively dull person will be able to write something worth reading. But children—and grown-ups too—are often not aware of how interested they really are in a great number of things. They are not in touch with the stores of fact, observation and experience which have been put away into unconsciousness by their own minds. . . . A familiar difficulty in writing is that words will not come even when we earnestly want them to do so; or, with a fluent writer, that the words which come arise from a superficial stratum of the mind. The preliminary to good writing is to find out what we have, and failure to do this is the underlying cause of many bad essays, descriptions, and stories—in a word, of much dull writing. . . .

The act of expressing experience is a creative act: it is indeed a continuation and completing of the experience itself. "How can I tell what I feel till I see what I say?" as André Gide used to ask. If a man is trying to paint he is not trying to reproduce in his painting something which is waiting complete in the mind to be reproduced; he continues the act of experiencing as he tries to convey it to the canvas. . . .

Learning to judge human character, learning how to sum up a situation, learning how to make friends—all are aspects of education. . . . Only part of any education is the product of deliberate and controlled arrangement. Much of the education of understanding will certainly take place out of the classroom altogether—a good deal of it, one hopes, in the home. . . .

There is this comment:

We chase far too readily a will-o'-the-wisp called "a certain minimum knowledge which every boy and girl should possess by the time he leaves school," forgetting that the test is not what he possesses—in some sense of the word—when he is examined in it at sixteen or eighteen, but what he possesses twenty or thirty years on from the day he left school behind. Has he got from his schooldays a sense of life's importance, an inkling that maintained, disciplined enthusiasms matter, that imagination, sensibility and depth are of greater value than wide information, that books ought to be used and read all through life, that "happiness" is not the goal?

It is not easy to get things of this sort down on paper. Mr. Niblett has done pretty well.

FRONTIERS

Land Trusts Are Multiplying

THERE is only one remedy that we know of for the fact that today only the very rich can afford to own their own homes, and for a farmer to start out owning his own farm is still more difficult—the remedy being through the help that may be given through what is known as a community land trust. The community land trust is a cooperative institution which is able to acquire land and hold it in trust, making it available to those who want to live on it and work the land with sound ecological practice. There is a sense in which the land trust is a modern return to the custom of the past when, as with the American Indians, a "stewardship" approach to the land was common practice. In Mexico the traditional *ejido* once prevailed, under which commonly owned land was worked according to "use rights." Speaking of present-day land trusts, Robert Swann has said:

> A trust can be used as a holding mechanism for all sizes and tracts of land. . . . Because large segments of land are held as a unit, the trust can utilize the greatest flexibility in planning, taking into account the entire region. . . . This flexibility permits both short and long range strategies which can include the modern technology of the large scale farm . . . while at the same time the trust can encourage and promote the new ecological fertilizers and farming systems to avoid the dangers of monocultures and pesticides. . . .
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> In short, the trustee concept is an activist approach to the problem of redistribution of resources, and while it is initially aimed at the land, as it grows and develops strength as a movement it can begin to reach out into other areas of resource management.

We now have a report based upon a newsletter by Chuck Matthei, of the Institute for Community Economics, with headquarters at 151 Montague City Road, Greenheld, Mass. 01301. Writing in the *Community Service Newsletter*, he speaks mainly of the unusual growth in the community land trust movement. He says:

> The record is very impressive. Three new community development loan funds came on line in 1987, and there are now 29 member funds in the National Association. . . . Nine new community land trusts acquired their first properties in 1987, in New Hampshire, Rhode Island, North Carolina, New York, New Jersey, and other states.
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> Established community land trusts are undertaking larger projects, and many new such trusts are getting off to faster starts than their predecessors. When you consider that only six of these community land trusts existed before 1980, and only ten developed between 1980 and 1985, the full momentum of this growth becomes evident. . . .
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> As of June 30, 1987, the member funds of the National Association of Community Development Loan Funds had $35 million under management, but that number has long been surpassed, because these funds have a median growth rate of 55% per year! The National Association has received a $1.5 million investment commitment from the Funding Exchange (a national association of progressive foundations) to launch a "Seed Fund" to provide capital to new loan funds, enabling them to build a track record and attract other investors. The Institute for Community Economics will play a key role in the initial management of the program. The National Association of Community Development Loan Funds, which is staffed by Institute people, is making rapid progress on a review program and a national "secondary mortgage market" in community investments.

There have been other developments:

> In 1987, Vermont and Connecticut became the first two states to establish, by acts of their legislatures, community land trust funding programs. And for the first time, in Waterbury, Conn., a community land trust is developing with substantial support and participation by labor unions. In Burlington, Vermont, the city employees' pension fund has made a $1 million investment commitment to a community land trust. The City of Syracuse, N.Y., supported the development of a community land trust with a $200,000 seed grant and donation of city-owned properties. An unprecedented number of towns and cities are encouraging or exploring Community Land Trust Development. On New York's Lower East Side, more than 100 families who are "rebuilding the ancient ruins" (Isaiah) by transforming abandoned buildings into beautiful cooperatives with their own labor, voted to deed the

land under their buildings into a common trust, to protect the affordability of these units forever.

I could go on and on but what all of this reflects, and gives rise to, is a new level of credibility and interest in these concepts and models that the Institute of Community Economics has pioneered. This interest was also evident in a recent series of four workshops offered by the Institute to introduce the community land trust model here in Massachusetts. Three hundred people attended—about one third of them public officials, and almost all significant actors in their communities. Not that everyone is convinced of the merits of community land trusts, but we are very much encouraged; and we'll keep trying to convince skeptics and convert the opponents, while we prepare for both the opportunities and struggles ahead.

. . . our attention is focused on how best to serve these growing movements. We're expanding our technical assistance field capacities, but, at the same time, we realize that we will not be able to provide the same level of on-site service to *all* of these new groups. So, we're beginning to design new programs to assist multiple groups. For 1988, we're planning introductory workshops in other areas, technical training seminars for community land trust staff and board members, additional national conferences, and a muchexpanded news service through a redesigned newsletter. We've just published a book-length loan fund development and management manual, and we're working on a book-length legal manual for community land trust development. We're planning to convene a task force to draft model public policies and we're drafting a concise statement of the definitive characteristics of community land trusts, similar in style and purpose to the Rochdale principles of the cooperative movement.

This rise in awareness and the spirit of cooperation is one of the few really encouraging signs of the times. Best of all, funds are becoming available. As Chuck Matthei says:

We're also expanding our ability to provide financial assistance to these groups, so that we can respond effectively to the growing number of loan applicants and the needs of larger projects. In 1987, the Institute for Community Economics Revolving Loan Fund has received $1,399,600 from 58 lenders, and placed $2,547,900 in a record 36 loans to community development projects, with more expected before the year's end. Cumulative lending to date now exceeds $7,558,500.

We are projecting $3 - 4 million in new loans to the Revolving Loan Fund for 1988, half from individuals, churches, and other organizations, and half from large institutional lenders. Already a large charitable institution has expressed interest in considering a $1 million investment, and a major national insurance company has indicated a willingness to purchase some mortgage loans originated by the Revolving Loan Fund, providing long-term financing at affordable rates.

We have not, Chuck Matthei says at the end, forgotten William Blake's reminder that "mercy has a human heart, and pity a human face."