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DOING AND BEING

IF the MANAS mail is any indication, the relations of the human being to the machines he has devised—including the "field" generated by their miscellaneous requirements, which we call the "technological society"—is by far the most engrossing question of the present. Its import is well put by D. G. Poole in a paragraph quoted in Frontiers for June 9:

> . . . the most intriguing and challenging aspect of the Cybernetic Revolution is that it compels new definitions, not only of an economic and social nature, but of man himself. One is compelled to ask, "Am I no more than an organic computer? —If the cybernation faculty of a human being were to be isolated and set to one side, what would be left?—Might there not be, after all, back of this performer-operator, this coping faculty of management, an authentic resident, a hidden and silent habitant whom we have characterized in the past with old-fashioned and little-understood terms such as 'soul' and 'spirit'—If there is a dimension of experience which is not 'doing,' and which might be termed 'being,' what is it and where is it?"

Now this, it seems to us, is exactly the sort of question that ought to be asked as central to nearly all humanistic withdrawals from the general enthusiasm for "technological progress." Yet the disturbing, to some extent puzzling, fact is that the implications of this question arouse only the people who ask it. There is a manifest feeling among the champions of technological progress that its critics are suffering from some kind of "failure of nerve." The brave new world of the machines, they assert, should call out the renewed enterprise of human beings, who may now gain incalculable benefits if they will only face up to the tasks which lie ahead. One articulate correspondent writes:

> My position may be made clear by saying at once that I think we are living in the greatest of all ages. I say this because man appears to have two goals in the course of his evolution. One is to engage in self-amplification to the limit of his powers and the other is to extend the limit of his powers for self-amplification by the genetic process of self-transcendence.
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> By amplification, I mean the extension and multiplication of our natural physical and mental capabilities. The process is wholly natural and it began to manifest itself when stones and sticks first were employed as tools. Electronic digital computers and nuclear-fission power generators are current manifestations of man's capacity for self-amplification.

By "transcendence," this correspondent means the improvement of the human stock through eugenic selection of the propagators of the race. Speaking of "a vision which would excite the vast majority of mankind to eagerly and voluntarily organize their thinking and their resources for a deliberately-undertaken expedition into the future," he says:

> I have suggested The Great Look Ahead, to be organized and programmed by colleges and universities in all lands in accordance with agreed-upon standards and materials. The group discussion method would be employed to involve local leaders everywhere in a progressive study of the changes now taking place, of changes foreseeable in the near and more distant future, of the character of the social and cultural evolution evidenced by these changes, of the reasonably predictable consequences, and of the adaptive measures necessary to ease essential transitions.

The obstacles to attainment of this ideal future are seen as the disturbances at a social level which commonly accompany all innovation, and the detrimental and even self-destructive effects which result from action without full awareness of the consequences. Here, our correspondent says, the criterion of being "natural" does not help. Nothing "unnatural" happens, he points out, when a herd of buffaloes stampedes to death over the high bluffs of the Missouri. By a parity of reasoning—

The electronic digital computer, with its miraculous capacity for performing a symphonic score of intricate calculations far faster than a man might wink at a secretary, is no less natural than the dam constructed by beavers on the upper reaches of the Yellowstone.

The smog-spewing automobile is plainly as natural as the birch bark canoe of an Iroquois. Natural materials have been used in both cases by natural animals of a certain natural species, *Homo Sapiens*, to achieve transportation, to amplify their capacity for getting about, for enhancing their natural mobility.

I do not dread the future, as so many do. I only dread the mindless resistance to ineluctable change, for out of such resistance come all the horrors of man's history. Revolutions, bloody and violent, are always caused by conservatives. . . . The more pressure applied to the boiler, the greater will be the ultimate explosion. So the way to deal with change is first to comprehend it and then to foresee its consequences and act accordingly, in anticipatory fashion.

It goes without saying that all change is not good change. But there is a general direction to evolutionary change involving man and his societies which cannot conceivably be escaped except at the cost of self-destruction. This is why I regard Ellul's attack (in *The Technological Society*) on technology as mistaken both in interpretation and general attitude. Technology isn't something recently introduced into society. I find myself looking back on my youth, when I was adept in various techniques of agriculture then current. I remember some very hot July days when I stumbled behind four straining horses dragging a heavy spike-toothed harrow over rough-ploughed ground. Each night I was barely able to get back to the barn, eat my supper after unharnessing and feeding the horses, and then collapse into bed like a dull beast. Relatively, the technology then being employed was in a state far advanced over that enjoyed by primitive man who, as Thomas Hobbes said, led a life that was "poor, nasty, brutish, and short."

Mankind has more personal and individual freedom today than ever before, in spite of technology's imposition of certain impersonal demands for synchronization and coordination. . . . I want to participate in it as an automatic component, as nearly as can be, so that I can be on my way and give my attention, not to transportation and survival, but to other aspects of contemporary life which are infinitely more in need of attention. . . . The basic reason alienation is so prevalent today is that the individual sees himself overwhelmed and hurled about by the cultural diastrophism which is reshaping the whole of mankind. How little he understands what is going on, or the enormous transformations taking place, is well reflected by the popularity of the wholly inappropriate label which Prime Minister Macmillan put upon the process: "The winds of change." What we are experiencing is no wind, it is a global diastrophism—volcanic, seismic, tidally titanic and continent-moving. The forces of science and technology are, without doubt, the main cause of this cultural diastrophism.

> The outcome is certain, unless we prefer suicide: The time is not far off when there will be a coalescence of cultures, when the state of the world will be *E Pluribus Unum.* This is no mystical assumption; it is an extrapolation of events already taking place, events which science and technology are compelling in spite of resistances arising out of opposing ideologies, religions, nationalisms, etc. . . . What is required of man, above all else, is the greatest enlargement of consciousness, in all directions, so that he may at all times be quickly aware of the consequences of his acts and move swiftly to maintain a healthful and harmonious ecology in which a true "reverence for life" is constantly expressed.

When Ellul accuses the scientists of "incredible naïveté" for thinking that "they will be able to shape and reshape at will human emotions, desires, thoughts and arrive scientifically at certain efficient, pre-established collective decisions," without resort to dictatorship, our correspondent replies by citing the bloodless Meiji Restoration of Japan in 1868 (following two hundred years of military dictatorship and feudalism), which in a single generation brought Japan to fourth place among the "great powers"; and he points, again, to Japan's recovery from the shambles of defeat in World War II, standing forth today as "a singular expression of what intelligence and common purpose can do for a wrecked nation with poor resources." He concludes:

> It may be that few other countries have Japan's capacity for self-change, for domestically-initiated adaptation to current global realities. However, all other countries are fully as capable of being transformed if enough help is offered by the

> technologically developed nations. Our first step in this direction is to make sure that the help is offered cooperatively and not competitively, that we join together in a representative teamwork operation to show and assist the under-amplified nations in the process of build-up to parity. It is not, by any means, only an economic task. Adoption of an advanced technology requires widespread cultural revision, alteration and re-orientation. Any normal individual, lifted as a just-born infant out of any culture on earth, can fit into the most advanced culture on earth with native ease. It is the individual shaped by a specific, unquestioningly accepted culture, who presents the problem. But there are ways, nevertheless, of doing the job within the context of any receptive culture. Therefore, the primary task is to create receptivity accompanied by enthusiasm and a lively vision of a richly rewarding future. Who could be really hopeless about a mission like that?

Without wishing to mar the splendid enthusiasm of this letter, we feel obliged to list some of the considerations which need attention, if the "mission" described is to have hope of fulfillment. There is first the matter of "self-amplification," in the usage of our correspondent. It means, he says, "extension and multiplication of our natural physical and mental capabilities." However, he names and discusses in an amplifying way only the technological amplification. What are the *means* of amplifying independent ethical awareness—the moral intelligence required to make all this external progress work for the common good? Guidance is to be obtained, it seems, from "colleges and universities in all lands in accordance with agreed-upon standards and materials." But what evidence is there that these educational institutions are equal to this high task? The confusions which the critics of the present use and influence of technology find most disturbing are practically apotheosized in the failures of higher education. The institutional resources of the technological society are not what our correspondent imagines. The universities are not oases of understanding in a bewildered world, but massively mechanized assemblages of students gathered in "lonely crowds." Nor is the increase of the power of self-amplification by eugenic means a soundly based expectation. The case for "breeding" better men is extremely weak, and seldom argued, today.

This writer seems to think that the contemporary critics of technology are opposed to labor-saving devices. But the serious criticism concerns rather the psychological and moral price that is exacted for these comforts and conveniences. The accounting in anomie and alienation, when spread out on the ledgers of men like Erich Fromm and A. H. Maslow, Lewis Mumford and Joseph Wood Krutch, is simply ignored. What is needed, apparently, is direct encounter with these ills through interpersonal relations with hungering youth, with the psychically troubled and disturbed, and with artists and other ill-adapted souls who find their hope of organic participation in a humane society varying in inverse proportion to technological progress. All these are deeply convinced that the vision which will keep the people from perishing is not a technological *tour de force.*

We still need an answer to the question of Mr. Poole: "If the cybernation faculty of a human being were to be isolated and set to one side, what would be left?" What part of man remains completely unnourished by either the prospect or the achievement of a technological paradise of any imaginable specifications?

Here we are calling, not for "answers," but for persistent pursuit of this inquiry, as by far the most relevant question that can be asked.

The remaining space available for this discussion is given over to a letter from another reader. This communication, it seems to us, makes specific application of the kind of awareness which must be present if the dialogue about technology is to bear fruit.

The June 2 MANAS prompts me to type out some of my own response to the "Technological Process."

On the Neutrality of machines: There is a subtle influence of the machine which enters and

invades our "attitudes, theories of progress and ideas of the good of man and how it is served" that is not examined in this article. I see this most clearly in the current attitude of "solution" orientation that comes directly from the electronic age of computers. A recent review of *The Secular City* (*Time,* April 2, 1965, p. 78) by the young theologian, Harvey Cox, illustrates this view with the quotation: "Life is a set of problems, not an unfathomable mystery." This "problem solution" orientation toward life is all about us and is one example of how the machine influences humans in a way that has nothing whatsoever to do with its practical use.

All the wisdom of the ages as revealed in great teachings emphasizes the inward struggle for self-knowledge as a way to transcend life, and yet, when that way is described, it is always in paradoxes—there is no promise of linear divisions that separate life into segments for us. In fact, one of the greatest hurdles to overcome in our own heritage—especially as found in the dogmas of Protestant theology—is the notion of a straight-line solution to the problem of living together. The first requisite of this approach is to draw a line dividing good from evil, righteousness from sin, or the saved from the damned. Surely we have enough historical evidence—of our own or of all men—to show that linear solutions never accurately map the real world.

Some examples from my field of astronomy illustrate the two kinds of approach to solving problems. Before the advent of computers that can perform menial operations at a rate faster than human calculators could imagine, astronomical calculations were completed basically by approximation methods or elegant solutions of theory. The complexity of these mathematical constructs was horrendously difficult and few minds were capable of reaching the summits of understanding them—only the "giants" such as Laplace or Euler or Poincaré could claim a grasp of this sort. Then, enter the machines, and sputniks, bringing far greater demands on the art of celestial mechanics in the space age. Today, the simplest of mathematical constructs afford engineers of modest training solutions which were not accessible even to the "giants" of yesterday. It is an axiom of computer techniques that the machine can handle simple linear equations—this is its forte—so, rather than build a theory of the motion of a planet to obtain accurate positions, the engineer can set up a few equations and let the machine run.

It's rather like teaching a child to develop some manual skill—say, for example, the art of archery. Before automatic bows and arrows, one had to develop precision through discipline and practice. With the machine, we no longer have this requirement. Instead, we tell the child: This device will shoot 500 arrows in the same time that you can fix your bow and pull the string. Therefore, don't worry about your aim—just hold it toward the target and push the button. The probability of one of the 500 arrows hitting the bull's eye is greater than 1 in 500, so don't strive for accuracy.

It is senseless, of course, to ask which way is better—both could be evaluated on any set of criteria one wants: economy, time, or goal. The question is not whether one is better than the other—the question is what, if anything, does the child who uses this automated technique lose when he no longer achieves personally the required skill through discipline?

One cannot know for certain the source or exact location of the spring which nurtures the human soul, but I suspect it has something to do with the place where *tension* is contained. Working with problems that have no ready linear solution has often resulted in new mathematics. The artist and the poet are always talking about creations bursting forth *only after* long periods of anguished containment. Certainly, every organic process known to man requires a period of hidden activity.

With the machine solutions, the necessity to contain the tension of no solution is removed—for

tension we substitute faith in our technical know-how, our ability to fashion larger banks of memory and faster rates of processing. The limits bounding problems adaptable to machines are always reached with size of storage, access rate to storage, or input and output processes. Whereas before machines, man accepted these limitations and went to work on solutions for finding a theory to contain the calculation, we today transfer our hope to the expectation of bigger and faster hardware. I suggest that it is this transference of attention—from inner to outer activity—that bothers the critics of the technological society.

Perhaps Mr. Harvey Cox is truly progressive when he argues that we must accept the reality that "Life is a set of problems, not an unfathomable mystery." But how can we know whether we are moving forward to increasing consciousness or merely misusing the machine as a way to "short-circuit" the inner experience of containment? If the machine is truly a neutral entity, then, in our new-found leisure, we shall have the time to be alone and struggle with this question.

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REVIEW
"MORALS" AND THE POPULAR NOVEL

GLENN GRAY'S *Harper's* article (May), "Existentialism on the Campus," gave one explanation of why conventional morality arouses instinctive revulsion in many young people: The ethics of patriotism and big business have led politics and the mass man into a soggy morass of half-values, so that questioning minds among the young turn away to look for what Prof. Gray calls "authentic individuality." Disregarding, then, the psychologically immature malcontents, it may be thought that hundreds and thousands of students are seeking to recapture a quality of life of which Joseph Campbell wrote: "The modern hero, the modern individual who dares to heed the call and seek the mansion of that presence with whom it is our whole destiny to be attuned, cannot, indeed must not, wait for his community to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding" For genuine involvement of the individual, morality requires a sense of honor and commitment—but to what? Not to the "dead icons" of the past, but to a view of life which generates deep personal conviction.

In this context, it is interesting to note that many of the popular novels which lead their protagonists into "immoral" situations are, in effect, morality dramas. These wanderings through erotic adventures, without bringing any concomitant growth or assumption of responsibility, are chronicles of dead-end lives. The man or woman who seeks success in conventional terms—in business, advertising, or entertainment—is portrayed as an idiot whose story, in the end, signifies less than nothing. Curiously, however, the most dissolute characters are sometimes shown to have moments of vision which disclose their failure as a flight from commitment. Stanley Kauffmann's *The Tightrope* (Avon, 1965) contains a typical example:

> In the long run it is the betrayal of myself that matters. Not that I'm going to be burned in any kind of hereafter hell.
>
> The point is that I gave my word. As unsatisfactory as I know marriage is, I promised. And I broke my promise—so often that the breaking became facile—and so have corrupted myself. If honor means anything—and how can the world live unless a word given is a word to depend on?—then a promise is to be kept. Whether or not you're smarter than the devisers of the promise. That's irrelevant. Virtue lies in honor; and corruption, discovered or not, lies in faithlessness.
>
> That's what it comes to, really. Not a matter of being true to the little woman or the marriage vows or the sanctity of hearth and home. What matters is that at the bottom of our civilization is or is not honor; a concept bigger than self and selfishness, and idea transcending the needs and impulses of the moment, refusing to believe that impulses are important simply because they're urgent. For myself, I have eaten up my honor. . . . In my own small part, civilization has suffered.

The Collector, by John Fowles (Dell, 1965), has passages which suggest ingredients of authentic morality. The "collector" is a psychotic who can feel no empathy for others, answering to the description (in *The Magic Years*) of Frieberg's "totally unattached" person. In this dialogue (reported in her diary), a twenty-year-old girl endeavors to reason with her demented captor:

> *Miranda.* Look, for the sake of argument, we'll say that however much good you tried to do in society, in fact you'd never do any good. That's ridiculous, but never mind. There's still yourself. I don't think the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament has much chance of actually affecting the government. It's one of the first things you have to face up to. But we do it to keep our self-respect and to show to ourselves, each one to himself or herself, that we care. And to let other people, all the lazy, sulky, hopeless ones like you, know that someone cares. We're trying to shame you into thinking about it, about acting. (Silence—then I shouted.) Say something!
>
> *Collector.* I know it's evil.
>
> *M.* Do something, then! (He gawped at me as if I'd told him to swim the Atlantic.) Look. A friend of mine went on a march to an American air-station in Essex. You know? They were stopped outside the gate, of course, and after a time the sergeant on guard came out and spoke to them and they began an argument and it got very heated because this sergeant

thought that the Americans were like knights of old rescuing a damsel in distress. That the H-bombers were absolutely necessary—and so on. Gradually as they were arguing they began to realize they rather liked the American. Because he felt very strongly, and honestly, about his views. It wasn't only my friend. They all agreed about it afterwards. The only thing that really matters is feeling and living what you believe—so long as it's something more than belief in your own comfort. My friend said he was nearer to that American sergeant than to all the grinning idiots who watched them march past on the way.

Again, in a discussion which is hopeless so far as the young man is concerned, the girl expresses the kind of hope on which the future of ethical awareness must depend:

M. Look, if there are enough of us who believe the bomb is wicked and that a decent nation could never think of having it, whatever the circumstances, then the government would have to do something, wouldn't it?

C. Some hope, if you ask me.

M. How do you think Christianity started? Or anything else? With a little group of people who didn't give up hope.

C. What would happen if the Russians come, then? (Clever point, he thinks.)

M. If it's a choice between dropping bombs on them, or having them here as our conquerors—then the second, every time.

C. (Check and mate.) That's pacifism.

M. Of course it is, you great lump. Do you know I've walked all the way from Aldermaston to London? Do you know I've given up hours and hours of my time to distribute leaflets and address envelopes and argue with miserable people like you who don't believe anything? Who really deserve the bomb on them?

C. That doesn't prove anything.

M. It's despair at the lack of (I'm cheating, I didn't say all these things—but I'm going to write what I want to say as well as what I did) feeling, of love, of reason in the world. It's despair that anyone can even contemplate the idea of dropping a bomb or ordering that it should be dropped. It's despair that so few of us care. It's despair that there's so much brutality and callousness in the world.

In respect to "morality," it is interesting to note how frequently contemporary writers turn to Nietzsche, the "immoralist," as one who sensed the eventual need for a higher, nobler—and psychologically valid—ethic. A little-known volume, *Existentialism and Indian Thought*, by J. G. Dutt (Philosophical Library, 1960), connects the inner longings novelists attempt to portray with the affirmative aspects of existential thought:

Nietzsche's vision was of a free, direct and disconnected nature. As against what he considered the fixities of Platonic and Christian tradition, he held to a doctrine of the diversity and ever-changing nature of truth, as also of moral ideas. He said: "It is with thinkers as with snakes: those that cannot shed their skins die." Every man must find his own virtue and his own categorical imperative.

COMMENTARY
RETURN TO IMMANENT JUSTICE

THERE is an interesting contrast between the moral intuitions quoted in this week's Review and the view of the world spoken of by the late Robert Redfield as common to "primitive peoples"—"in which the universe is seen as morally significant." This significance took the form of belief in "immanent justice"—

> "Immanent justice" is that retribution for my faults which I believe will fall on me out of the universe, apart from the policeman or a parental spanking. If I do what I know I should not do, will I, crossing the stream, perhaps slip and fall into the water?

Now the characters in the novels quoted in Review have a similar regard for the moral order in the universe, but they think of it differently. In the Kauffmann book, the man who had broken his promise is not cringing before the consequences that may overtake *him,* but is rather shamed because he has been faithless. He feels that he has *hurt* the whole, and this, you could say, is a better kind of belief in immanent justice than the one which rouses only personal fear of retribution.

The girl in *The Collector* feels an absolute necessity to act on the basis of individual integrity—"The only thing that matters is feeling and living what you believe."

Here we have intuitive-existential calls upon the individual to search his heart and be true to the best he knows, regardless of what the world does or is willing to tolerate. And you could say that they are expressions of the affirmative aspect of the deep, pantheistic ethic which, when systematically developed, gives a metaphysical basis for the idea of retributive justice—the decrees of Nemesis or a punishing fate. It was, perhaps, the negative character of this latter belief which made it weak and ineffectual in the face of the non-moral but dynamic universe of modern scientific thought. In any event, the result of the decline of the idea of immanent justice is well described by Prof. Redfield:

> Man comes out from the unity of the universe within which he is oriented now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character and becomes to him indifferent, a system uncaring of man. The existence today of ethical systems and of religions only qualifies this statement; ethics and religion struggle in one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man.

There is, then, a basic suitability in the renewal of moral awareness in terms of individual obligations to the whole. People in whom this feeling springs up begin to behave according to a high sense of duty; instead of taking flight from the long arm of cosmic retribution, they feel within themselves what the teaching of Immanent Justice must have meant, as affirmation of human potentiality, before the decay of ancient religious philosophy. Some threads of this meaning are conveyed in the account of the faith of the Hopi Indians, given in *The Hopi Way,* by Laura Thompson and Alice Joseph (University of Chicago Press, 1944):

> The Hopi conception of man as differentiated, in the universal system of mutual interdependency, through his role as an active rather than a passive agent in the fulfillment of the law, compels the active participation of the individual . . . at not only the physical but also the ideational and emotional level, and imposes on him a high degree of personal responsibility for the success of the whole and not just for one small part of it.

It is this sense of commitment *to the whole,* but *as an individual,* which is being reborn in the modern world, a transformation slowly taking place in persons who will no longer wait for their community "to cast off its slough of pride, fear, rationalized avarice, and sanctified misunderstanding." The signs of the change appear in literature, in the struggle to create a peaceful world, and in unnumbered and occasionally disclosed dialogues which awakening human beings hold with themselves.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EVOLUTION FOR THE FAMILY

MOST people used to know who their families were. In the old agrarian communities, the survival of each depended on the continuous cooperation of all. The family, large or small, basic or extended, was involuntary, clearly defined, and everybody's business.

Like many other facets of our lives, the family is today under new stresses. Like work and war, it is no longer an economic necessity. The family may be a social necessity only because we have not examined other possibilities. Whether it is a psychological necessity, we do not know. But we do know some of its psychological disabilities. Freud helped us break the yoke of dumb acceptance of people and conditions inimical to our well-being, if not our survival. It became fashionable (and right) to admit that many of our problems sprang from early family experiences. We have learned that the parent-child relationship is critical to both the psychic and physical health of the child; that we resent and seek escape from behaviour imposed upon us by other people against our personal choice, and that we can live, eat, grow and have a full experience without a family.

This new knowledge has caused many of us to feel severely threatened. We attempt to hold the family together along old lines despite this expansion of our understanding. Others of us have abandoned the ancient idea of family (*i.e.*, blood ties) altogether. In our fragmented, highly individualistic culture, many of us are accepting the notion that the family is dissolving as a social unity. In a way this is true. The old order where the child is held in psychological, if not physical, bondage until the parents die, is passing. But this doesn't necessarily mean that the family need dissolve. It means that its structure must be *chosen*—creating a voluntary family. How do we construct it?

First, we must recognize that we are in a stage of radical discontinuity with past cultural forms of family. We need to encourage this break with old patterns. If my understanding of human evolution is accurate, humanity appeared on earth as a radical mutation, a form of life which could not survive under old conditions. Therefore, it had to discover new resources, new modes of being. I think the family is in this stage of evolution now.

To create new, viable family conditions, we must first examine our relationship with our own parents. We who are children must try to discover where we are still neurotically dependent. If our parents cannot join us in this search for a new, more mature relationship, we must be forbearing, but we need not regress. Any change in the status-quo relationship can leave our parents feeling anguished and abandoned, can cause us to feel guilty and revert to old patterns. A difficult, delicate balance must be maintained. We must seek to be ourselves while endeavoring to be as considerate and comforting as possible.

We don't condemn a person who cannot comprehend the relativity theory—so we must not condemn our parents if they cannot understand the new relationships. Yet we cannot continue in the old, subservient pattern—doing so makes us hostile and insecure. We cannot come to our full flowering while we are burdened with feelings of our own inadequacy. I have seen grown men and women, some masters in their fields, become insecure, self-doubting, and hostile in the presence of their parents because the parents still doubt and disapprove their child. I have been such a child myself. This hostility springs from being thrust back emotionally into the dependent psychological condition.

In the beginning of our efforts to free ourselves, to establish a voluntary family relationship, the most we can do is be aware of what's happening to us at each encounter. Later, as our understanding increases, we become able to modify our responses—we learn we need be

neither hostile nor dependent. With our parents, as with our children, the goal is to become self-reliant, yet related.

We who are parents have to school ourselves to become flexible, experimental, and aware. We must try to divest ourselves of old expectations of family life: fixed loyalties, hierarchies, duty, and obligation. We must become open to what is really possible with each child and seek the relationship of equals with him.

Most parents of past generations did not realize there could be a relationship of equals with their children. The 1ong years of deciding for them, caring for them, and being responsible for them predisposed (and still does) most parents to continue in old ways. The history of parents is the history of people unable to trust the thrusts of their children toward independent judgment and unique decision.

I believe this is why we have accepted as "normal" the violent adolescent rebellion. "It's something everyone has to go through," we say, believing our children will return to our ways when they've passed "this stage." Coercive parenthood and the child's neurotic need for approval often had their way: the child submitted, lived a life of psychological self-deception, and never became his mature self. Often the rebellion, the compulsion to be different, stopped only when the parents died—if then.

I am not suggesting that in the ideal home there will be no rebellion. As the child approaches puberty, he must develop conditions harmonious to the survival of his own personality. He must advance and retreat, and often withdraw emotionally from his family to release himself from his dependency, to find his self-reliance. I am suggesting that this growth step can be taken with the understanding and approval of his parents. We must learn to celebrate our differences. This is the only way parents and grown children can have deep, meaningful, friendly relations with one another.

Here are some marks of an evolving parent: He does not consider his children promises of immortality for his own hopes and ideas, perpetuators of his dear, familiar world. He does not despair when his children disclose their own hopes and ideas, wanting a world that is different from his. He does not try to hold the children to his own doctrines and beliefs. He does not feel personally threatened if his children add to or reverse his visions.

The evolving parent is aware that maturity and development of individual potentialities are life's goals: Living is the goal of being. He actually covets this condition for himself and his children. He erases the rigid boundaries between generations and is able to look to his children for learning and insights. He thinks about his children, but he does not *expect* them to think about him. He seeks ways to approve his children, not ways to get their approval.

Kahlil Gibran wrote: "Give your children your love, but not your thoughts—for they have their own thoughts." For a long time this seemed a harsh instruction to me. I now interpret it: Don't try to force your thoughts and ideas on your children. Encourage them to have their own. This does not mean we parents need keep silent, for our thoughts are as valuable as theirs. But we must observe ourselves to learn whether we are presenting ourselves as unquestionable authorities of superior rank and experience.

Happily, a dialogue can go on between us if we are capable of expecting that our children have something to offer us. The dialogue is not possible if we line up our defences against their ideas and try to win victories for ourselves. This does not mean parents need become supine creatures with no confidence in themselves, doubting the validity of their considered judgments. We do not become our children's slaves, nor they ours. We are neither dependent nor independent. Hopefully, we can experience the relationship of self-reliant equals.

When does this voluntary relationship begin? As early as possible, though I think it's never too late to begin. Whenever we learn it is necessary and possible, we can experiment with it. While it's difficult to communicate on the deeper, more personal level after the children are grown, the opportunity to listen and to be keenly interested in the other is always there.

If our children do not communicate with us in words, we have to listen for the undertones, the incoherent longings. If there is little verbal communication between us, we must listen to the unsaid and try to respond to it. If we reflect on the substances of our conversations with our children, we may discover they are often meaningless. We play the same old record over and over. We might learn that we try to save face by hiding ourselves, fearing to take our children into our confidence, unwilling to expose our doubts and vulnerabilities. Our children need to know we're human and fallible.

I'm not suggesting we burden our children with ourselves, but that when we sense the time is right, we speak openly of our experiences. If they discover we all belong to the same species, seeking solution of similar problems, anxieties about their own feelings of inadequacy can be reduced. The parent who, at the right moment, can expose himself, his own failures and deviations, can become a true friend to his child.

Though the social situations we parents lived through are different from our children's, the appetites, longings, and the loneliness remain the same. So do the crises of identity, the search for integrity, the sloughing off of old skins of false guilts. The child needs to be free from anxiety about his parents. He needs to abandon the childish dependency on home and them. But the child—because of the early, inimitable intimacies with his parents—can be nourished by a continuing relationship.

One could wish it were voluntary all the child's life. It cannot be. But after he is grown and has developed his own interests, made his own friends, its depth and richness depends on its degree of voluntariness. Perhaps if we parents realize that we must continue to learn how to live, must continue to evolve and develop our latent potentialities, and that our children can help us accomplish this—a new era of friendship between parents and children can come into being. We may even be able to fulfill that fond hope of parents when the newborn child is laid in their arms. "May there always be love between us."

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FRONTIERS

The Satya Yuga-karis

TO one schooled in the Western tradition of libertarian ideals, there seems to be a curious contradiction, or omission, in the wisdom traditions of the Orient. The contradiction becomes the more marked because of the extraordinary psychological insight which the modern admirer of Humanistic psychology is able to discern in Eastern scriptures. For very nearly every acute perception of the modern psychotherapist, there is anticipation, in another vocabulary, and often complete with metaphysical foundation, in Upanishadic or Buddhist thought. Yet one looks in vain for currents of what we call "social thinking"—the leading ideas, that is, which have pervaded Western philosophy ever since the eighteenth century. The reader asks himself: How could these wise men of the East have failed to see what is so absolutely clear to us: the issues of the rights of man, the capacity and the obligation of free people to devise their own social forms, define and establish their own authorities, and to create, by political invention, the instruments that are needed to serve the common good?

You search the pages of the *Bhagavad-Gita* but find no slightest indication of thinking of this sort. Instead, institutions of ruling princes and hierarchy of social role and position seem as fixed and unchangeable as the stars. Moral issues, conceived in social terms, simply do not arise. The text is filled with subtlety, but only in terms of individual quest and fulfillment. The traditional relationships among men are never questioned.

There is of course one possible explanation—that the extreme corruption of hierarchical forms of social organization which in the West brought on a free-thinking, atheistic revolution, is not a part of Eastern experience, and that, therefore, this dramatic watershed in Western theory, dividing the evil past of kings and emperors from the glorious present of democracies and legislatures, has never existed at all in Eastern thought.

However, the key principle of democratic societies—the principle of *Equality*, as contrasted with the idea of degree, with corresponding differences in power and responsibility—is not absent from Eastern thought. This becomes plain in a paper by Prof. Joan Bondurant, lecturer in political science at the University of California. In this paper, "Traditional Polity and the Dynamics of Change in India" (published in *Human Organization*, Spring, 1963), Prof. Bondurant says:

> In the West, the search for the source of law appeared in a literature which is addressed to legalistic definitions of the sovereign and which challenges the doctrine of divine right. These questions did not arise—at least not until recent times—in India. Significant questions of another kind were raised, and these have something in common with Western thought. As is the case with the Western concept of justice and of natural law, the truly pertinent questions center upon subsidiary considerations: Who is competent to decide what is justice? Who is competent to determine what accords with nature? What is the character of authority?
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> Now if we go back through the thousands of years of texts, we find some answers from sources of Indian polity. As in Western thought, all too often the answers are determined on the basis of authority as judged by status. And so, in the Brahmanical literature, it is the Brahman in his role of preceptor who lays down the norms for human conduct. Today some orthodox Hindus—as represented by the Communalist Hindu political parties—argue for some such authority and against the current type of representative government. But in contrast, we find a remarkable number of social and political innovators pointing to Hinduism and asserting that nowhere else is there a degree of freedom so great as in the traditional Hindu structure. Redefining, reinterpreting, this group asserts that a new age—*satya yuga*—is now upon us and that this age is egalitarian. Vinoba has described his ideal society as one in which functions, qualities and positions are not hierarchical or divided between different categories of men. In a *Sarvodaya* society, he asserts, every individual will have to learn to combine in himself the qualities of a *brahman*, a *ksatriya*, a *vaisya*, and a *shudra*.

Now the essential meaning of these contentions depends upon the idea of *satya yuga*, or Golden Age. While we Westerners divide world history into two great periods—the time before and the time after *our* big revolution—the Hindus, like the ancient Greeks, have a scheme a little more complicated. They believe that the world of human affairs begins with a Golden Age. Then, some minor declines change it into a Silver Age, and this is followed, with further decline, by the Bronze Age. The worst period of all is the Black or Iron Age—*kali yuga.* This schema of world history has its effect on the interpretations of events. Just as Westerners have a very hard time believing that anything good could happen before their own revolutionary epoch transformed society from a "reactionary" and superstition-dominated culture to the liberal, technology-enlightened regime of the present, so the Indian who accepts the four *yugas* tends to think that during *kali yaga*—the present age—nothing much that is good can happen at all. Prof. Bondurant notes the effect of this belief on Indian political views:

> Each era carries with it a different kind of value system. Oftentimes this is put forward as descriptive, rather than prescriptive—for example, one hears in India that during *kali-yuga* (a sort of dark age in the cosmic cycle of time—often said to be our present day and age) social behavior is, in general, fallen, and degraded in standard, and the poorly endowed, or lowly in status, gain control. In *satya-yuga* (a golden age) others—those of higher status and of greater virtue—are in the ascendant and man's condition is of a different order. Here again, arising out of the classically fixed system of cosmic cycles, is to be found another element of flexibility: for the most significant question to raise is . . who is competent to decide when one age has come to an end and another has begun? The raising of *this* question carries, of course, extraordinary potential for the social and political leader.

(We should explain, here, that Prof. Bondurant is endeavoring to show that the traditional forms of Indian thought have extraordinary "flexibility" and can easily become host to innovation and constructive change. This flexibility she traces to its source in Indian religious philosophy—which is without rigidity and is endlessly fertile in possibilities for the independent mind. In India, Prof. Bondurant says, "The key to social revolution is to be found by noting the manner in which this spirit of freedom and speculation and creativity which characterizes the intellectual heritage of India can be and has been extended to the institutional structure.")

As to when a new age may be born—opening up new social possibilities—and how such a time may be recognized, Prof. Bondurant continues:

> The manner in which this question is answered from time to time is illustrated by a suggestive statement made by a contemporary Gandhian leader, Vinoba Bhave. Vinoba was addressing himself to a question about the distinctions between Communism, Communalism and Sarvodaya (Sarvodaya refers to what we may here call an ideal-type society developed along Gandhian lines). Vinoba said . . . that some persons had asked him how he could talk of *ahimsa* (*non-violence*) in this *kali yuga.* They believed that it might have worked in a *satya yuga* (golden age when truth prevailed) but that it could not be practiced effectively at present. Then Vinoba went on to say:
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> ". . . some people say that in *Satya Yuga* the State was not necessary and there really was no State at that time. There are others who say that there never was a *Satya Yuga* in human history but it will come at some subsequent date. So those who believe that there was a Satya Yuga are *Puranavadis* (those who believe in the Puranas). Those who believe that *Satya Yuga* will come at a later date are the Communists. And so these *Puranavadis* and Communists are both *Satya Yugavadis.* One says that there has been a *Satya Yuga* and the other says that a *Satya Yuga* will come. What do we say? We say that neither the past nor the future is in our hands. We have only the present in our hands and we want to bring *Satya Yuga* in the present. That is the only difference. The Puranist is a past-*Satya Yugavadi*. . . . but the Sarvodayite is a present-*Satya Yuga-kari*. Please note that I have not used the word *Vadi* but *Kari."*
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> The significance of this passage lies in the last sentence—for *vadi* means a believer in, an exponent of, and *kari* means a doer, or one who brings about the condition. We have here then, a clear and strong non-deterministic philosophy of history.

Thus the dream of a stateless society—which has clear egalitarian implications—is implicit in this reading of the idea of *satya yuga,* and the eighteenth-century idea of the basic competence of the individual to be a political unit equal to all others appears in Vinoba's proposal that in a *Sarvodaya* society, "every individual will have to learn to combine in himself the qualities of a *brahman,* a *ksatriya,* a *vaisya,* and a *shudra."* In any event, Joan Bondurant's paper is helpful in suggesting how the values of Western democratic political thought may be identified in a very different stream of culture and philosophy—one much older, more diverse in experience, and therefore with another kind of emphasis—which affords, it may be, greater compatibility with conceptions of social good that have been largely neglected in the West.