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THE PARA-PASTORAL IDEAL

WE have for review a book which accomplishes far more than we expected of it. *The Machine in the Garden,* by Leo Marx (Oxford University Press, 1965, $6.75), is not a history of the relation between men and machines, but a perceptive analysis of what men have thought about this question. As a whole, the book throws a bright light on matters which are being hotly debated, these days, partly as a result of the wide attention attracted by Jacques Ellul's controversial volume, *The Technological Society.* Ellul's most bitterly contested claim—which is in fact his central thesis—is the assertion that technology has created an autonomous system of the control of human behavior which operates in mindless disregard of moral canons and at ever-increasing distance from its original justifying assumptions.

It seems likely that Mr. Marx's work may perform the incidental service of making Ellul's book less of a failure. For it is unquestionably a failure in the sense that its passion and its pessimism combine to make readers unwilling to accept the force of his argument. The fundamental issue in all such undertakings is the good of man, and while the element of "science" is a kind of badge of admission which will get you into the forum of debate, the treatment of your contentions depends more on the moral acceptability of your conclusions than upon the "objectivity" of means used to reach them. It might as well be admitted that science and rationality are compliant tools of the model-makers of the good society, not paths to impartial discovery.

This is especially the case in the areas vaguely covered by the term "social science." Since there is no more agreement, in fact, among authorities, scientific or otherwise, concerning the nature of man, and his authentic good, than there is among theologians and ordinary people concerning the nature of "God," the application of a supposed scientific methodology in social studies which develop from unexamined or undisclosed assumptions about human beings becomes a pretentious if unintended fraud.

We don't admit this situation easily. It is difficult, after all, to give up the scientific "keys to the kingdom," and, on the other hand, a world-view so amply endowed with ambiguities provides endless opportunities for personal profit from practice of the sophistical arts. The obligations of taking a definite philosophical stand are morally exacting, its rewards subjective, and its consequences, in clarity, appreciated by only the few. Yet the world of serious discourse is beginning to suspect that the claim of being "scientific," in matters of human welfare, is a form of special pleading, with the result that honest humanists who expose themselves as simply literate and thoughtful people are getting larger and larger audiences, these days.

Mr. Marx, who currently teaches American and English studies at Amherst College, surveys the impact of technology on the pastoral ideal in America. He distinguishes the romantic escapism of longings to return to a "natural life" from serious efforts to comprehend the invasion of "machine" thinking and to control its effects. It comes as something of a shock to realize that very nearly all the subtleties of such questions were grasped and examined with some thoroughness more than a century ago, although without the *Götterdämmerung* desperation of the Triple Revolution. It was an argument, then, about what we want—not about what we've already practically got.

To report on the scope of Mr. Marx's study, we should have to take note of his beginning with Virgil's setting of the pastoral ideal in the

Eclogues and trace the polemics for and against the machine throughout the Industrial Revolution and up to modern ideas of "alienation" and Herbert Marcuse's *One-Dimensional* Man. The author finds rich material in the *Tempest,* in Thomas Jefferson, and includes informing samples of the rhetoric of defenders and early champions of material progress such as Tench Coxe, who made Newton's World Machine the archetype of the Technological *Mythos,* developing "the symbolic properties of the machine image—its capacity to embrace a whole spectrum of meanings ranging from a specific class of objects at one end to an abstract metaphor of value at the other." However, to get at the quality of this book, we can do no better than to quote some of Mr. Marx's comment on and citation from Thomas Carlyle. Marx points out that while Carlyle lacked the increasingly precise vocabulary of modern depth psychology, he was able to anticipate many of its insights:

> In "Signs of the Times," . . . Carlyle is reaching toward something like the post-Freudian view when he speaks of "mechanism" as stifling the "primary, unmodified forces and energies of man," or again when he sets the machine in opposition to the "mysterious springs of Love." That he appreciated the connection between the typical emotional crises of the age and industrialization becomes most obvious in *Sartor Resartus* (1833-34). This book, which Emerson read just before writing *Nature,* and which Melville read not long before writing *Moby Dick,* was to have an immense influence in America.

In a moment of total despair, Professor Teufelsdrockh exclaims:

> To me the Universe was all void of Life, of Purpose, of Volition, even of Hostility: it was one huge, dead, immeasurable Steam-engine, rolling on, in its dead indifference, to grind me limb from limb.

Some years earlier, Schiller, in his Letters upon the *Æsthetical Education of Man* (1795), had written:

> . . . having nothing in his ears but the monotonous sound of the perpetually revolving wheel, he [man] never develops the harmony of his being; and instead of imprinting the seal of humanity on his being, he ends by being nothing more than the living impress of the craft to which he devotes himself, of the science that he cultivates. This very partial and paltry relation, linking the isolated members to the whole, does not depend upon forms that are given spontaneously; for how could a complicated machine, which shuns the light, confide itself to the free will of man?

"Here," Prof. Marx comments, "Schiller is using 'machine' in the technological sense to represent a 'mechanistic' social system, the increasingly complex kind of society emerging along with the new machine power." Carlyle was soaked in Schiller and in 1829 he spoke of that time as "the Age of Machinery, in every outward and inward sense of the word." Marx shows that Carlyle had precise meanings for each of these senses, but that the "inward sense" particularly interested him. After quoting a passage illustrating the outward sense—"Our old modes of exertion are all discredited, and thrown aside. On every hand, the living artisan is driven from his workshop, to make room for a speedier, inanimate one"—Marx gives close attention to Carlyle's inward reading of the word "machine":

> What concerns him is the way the "mechanical genius . . . has diffused himself into quite other provinces. Not the external and physical alone is now managed by machinery, but the internal and spiritual also." Here "machinery" stands for a principle, or perspective, or system of value which Carlyle traces through every department of thought and expression: music, art, literature, science, religion, philosophy, and politics. In each category he detects the same tendency: an excessive emphasis upon means as against ends, a preoccupation with the external arrangement of human affairs as against their inner meaning and consequences. Although he is using the image of the machine metaphorically, he does not lose control of the distinction between fact and metaphor. In discussing the functions of government, for example, he admits that they include much that is essentially routine or mechanical. "We term it indeed, in ordinary language, the Machine of Society, and talk of it as the grand working wheel from which all private machines must derive, or to which they must adapt their movements."

Yet Carlyle, acknowledging the metaphor, goes on to say:

> Considered merely as a metaphor, all this is well enough but here, as in so many other cases, the "foam hardens itself into a shell," and the shadow we have wantonly evoked stands terrible before us, and will not depart at our bidding.

Mr. Marx says in summary:

> One of the remarkable things about "Signs of the Times" is the clarity and cogency with which Carlyle connects the machine as object (a technological fact) and the machine as metaphor (a token of value). In large part, his success is due to a tacit recognition of culture as an integrated whole. Like a modern anthropologist, Carlyle is attempting to make statements about an entire way of life, a complex which embraces all the behavior of Englishmen—their physical activities, their work, their institutions, and above all, their inner lives. In using the machine as a symbol of the age, he is saying that neither the causes nor the consequences of mechanization can be confined to the "outer" or physical world. The onset of machine power, he says, means "a mighty change in our whole manner of existence." This is the insight which would lead him to use the new word "industrialism," and it helps to explain why, from the beginning, the very idea of an industrial society as a unique phenomenon has been tinged by a strong critical animus. The machine represents a change in our whole way of life, Carlyle argues, because "the same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and in heart, as well as in hand." . . .
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> To say that men have grown "mechanical" in head and heart is to say that they now over-value those aspects of life which are calculable and manipulatable and, by the same token, that they neglect the whole sphere of the spontaneous, the imaginative—all that springs from the inner resources of the psyche: "the primary, unmodified forces and energies of man, the mysterious springs of Love, and Fear, and Wonder, of Enthusiasm, Poetry, Religion, all of which have a truly vital and *infinite* character. . . . "

After we have done justice to Carlyle by remarking that he did not see machines as inherently "evil," but sought for some balance in their modification of human life, we need to take account of the fact that there has not been very much progress in recognition of the force of his criticism. There may be two reasons for this. First, Carlyle is arguing from normative premises that are not universally felt. His organicism, his implicit ideas of the "natural" or truly human are not commonly acknowledged. And against his intuitive objection to the application of the machine principle to man was the boundless enthusiasm for "modern progress." As a writer in the *Scientific American* for August, 1847, exclaimed: "There appears to be something in the pursuit of mechanical invention which has a reaching up after our divine title, 'lords of creation.' . . . It is truly a sublime sight to behold a machine performing nearly all the functions of a rational being. . . ." And Timothy Walker, a young Cincinnati lawyer, reversed the familiar argument from design, arguing in reply to Carlyle: "When we attempt to convey an idea of the infinite attributes of the Supreme Being, we point to the stupendous machinery of the universe." Technological progress, notes Mr. Marx, is taken as evidence that "man is gaining access to the divine plan, a kind of gradual revelation."

With this kind of a confrontation, which still continues, although with less pretentious sanctions for Technology, it is no wonder that intelligible dialogue on the question is practically non-existent. The chosen people of the United States have going for them a great, enormously productive system of automated machinery that has simply *got* to work for the common good, if only for the reason that they are the most favored by Nature, have the best system of Government, are endowed with endless resourcefulness and self-reliance, and arose from sturdy Pilgrim stock with a Manifest Destiny that can hardly be contradicted by a few poets and essayists who suffer from failure of nerve. You just *fix* things to work better, that's all. *Exhort* the reactionaries who are fearful of change. People who are all that smart can surely find a way!

Now Jacques Ellul is a man with a very different theology, but he managed to write his book in a language which the technologists understand, even though they reject his

conclusion. He assembles for consideration what he regards as gross anti-human symptoms in the performance of the technological Utopia. He confronts its architects with their failure as a kind of *fait accompli*, adding a doomsday flavor that cannot possibly engage the sympathies of a nation of handymen and optimists. What he ought to have done, or perhaps is unable or unwilling to do, is to move his diagnosis back a few notches, to the problem as it was set by Carlyle. Back, that is, to the human community and to all those flowing, interdependent functions which exist underneath or behind the "mechanisms" of our Lockean psychology of government, our cash nexus system of meeting one another's needs, and our acquisitive theory of human fulfillment. In extenuation, we must ask: Could anyone possibly formulate the dynamics of a *living* society, as distinguished from one that is mechanized beyond recognition? Can we imagine, if we cannot yet realize or identify in history, a community which functions according to human instead of mechanistic principles, and which, therefore, has an identifiable autonomy that can be understood and studied as a vital system of human relationships, freed of invasion by utility devices and other adventitious aids?

After all, criticism without norms eliminates the possibility of measure in rational discourse. In such a situation, hunches, untested enthusiasms, and polemics which get their strength from denunciation of evil instead of from visions of good, displace all sober voices.

A model of an autonomous human community is, we suppose, asking too much. Only in the past ten or fifteen years, in the West, have we had even the beginnings of an account of autonomous individuals, together with the emergence of a psychology that at last takes man as given in experience, as contrasted with the old, mechanistic theories of human nature. How could we possibly jump from these slight beginnings to a humanistic social psychology?

It would probably sound like completely utopian dreaming to attempt to describe a human community based upon what A. H. Maslow would call *Eupsychian* principles, but what we can do more feasibly is to show from history how the distortions of our present social relationships and ideas about them came into being. For this we go to an article by Walter A. Weisskopf, of the economics department of Roosevelt University, which appeared in *Ethics* for January, 1965. Dr. Weisskopf's title is "Economic Growth and Existential Balance," and after describing the origins in Adam Smith and others of what he calls *GNP* (Gross National Product) *fetishism*, he says:

> The concept of growth [increase in individual and national wealth] reflects the value-attitude system of early capitalism before and during the Industrial Revolution. The terms "acquisitive society" (Tawney) or the *"civilization de toujours plus"* (the civilization of more and more [Bertrand de Jouvenal]) characterize this attitude. Max Weber has called it the "spirit of capitalism" and described it as a value system which elevates the acquisition of riches pursued systematically through hard work, frugality, and thrift to the dignity of a way of life and of an ultimate goal. In distinction from previous societies where the pursuit of wealth and hard work were considered as inferior activities and a curse, left to slaves, women, and inferior social groups, industrial society made the acquisition of wealth morally acceptable and considered it as a moral obligation. Economic thought justified this attitude by assuming that acquisitiveness and the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange in order to increase one's wealth is a basic human propensity. Here, a unique historical phenomenon, the acquisitive attitude, was interpreted as a universal human inclination. . . . Thus the ideas of economic growth on the individual and on the social levels are conceptualizations of the ethics of acquisition. In present discussions this origin has been forgotten because growth and acquisition have become accepted values. Growth is discussed not from the ethical-psychological but from the functional point of view. The pursuit of economic growth has been rationalized by arguments that it is necessary for full employment, for defense, for the increase in population, for the maintenance of the current economic institutions, whether it should be accepted as a basic economic value is hardly ever questioned.

Motivation, in this theory, Dr. Weisskopf proposes, comes from tension because of felt needs. Relief of tension comes with satisfaction of the needs. But, he points out, the "satisfaction" means little unless the tension exists. "Without hunger the intake of food is not pleasurable." This obvious, even "trite," truth, as Prof. Weisskopf says, is overlooked when it comes to an evaluation of economic acquisition and growth. Relief of primary needs has long since withdrawn to the background and substitute motives for acquisition are provided by stimuli of various sorts. As Dr. Weisskopf says:

> The ideology of "more and more" is still so strong that people are not aware of the fact that they are forced into more work and more acquisition by the socio-economic system rather than by their free inclination. However, the intensive advertising and the pervasive fact of artificial obsolescence are clear and present symptoms of this unconscious situation. Artificial obsolescence is the man-made correlate to physiological needs. Planned obsolescence replaces the emergence of physiological tension where no automatic tension arises. What firms and advertisers are doing is to create a hunger where nature has not provided for it. By changing styles of such articles as cars and clothes and by exploiting the desire for conformity and for avoidance of being different from the "other," they "force" people to develop a "need" for change. The same purpose is accomplished by the continuous development of new products. Once the new product is marketed, the pressure of conformity creates a need for it.

"Balance," in a situation of this sort, Dr. Weisskopf points out, is possible only after the relief of tension, so long as needs are considered to be basically physiological. Dr. Weisskopf comments and draws a conclusion:

> In order to have pleasure, pain and tension have to be artificially created. This was age-old wisdom of mankind until Western civilization buried it under its empirical, naturalistic approach. That sensual satisfaction requires ever more excitation, titillation, tension, and pain was known not only to the Hindus and Buddhists but also to the Greek philosophers. It was of course known to Christian thought from the fathers of the church to the Middle Ages. Only modern civilization has elevated physiological satisfaction to the dignity of an ultimate goal. . . . In modern Western civilization the center of life has moved toward the control and manipulation of nature and of the external world for the purpose of physiological need satisfaction. The entire scale of values inherited from Greek and Roman antiquity and from the Hebrew-Christian tradition has been reversed. . . . The dimension of ideas and ideals has been destroyed in industrial civilization and has become derivative of the economic and the biological. Therefore, life and economic activity, including the striving for continuous economic growth, exposed industrial man to the despair of meaninglessness which is so prevalent in our time.

Briefly, Dr. Weisskopf calls in his conclusion for a revolutionary reordering of values and ideas of need. He cites A. H. Maslow's "hierarchy of needs," which includes "the needs for mental safety in the form of a unifying world philosophy, the needs for loving and belongingness, the need for self-actualization in work." When it is realized that a change of this sort means a retraining of all the major "synaptic" connections in the socio-economic organism, and that an entire encyclopedia of slogans and shibboleths related to the distorted motives of our time must be erased from the memory of all but historians and antiquarians, we have no difficulty in seeing why Jacques Ellul regards the technological society, in its total cultural aspect, as a kind of autonomous juggernaut aimed for the ruin of mankind.

But Ellul, unlike Weisskopf, is a pessimist. No wonder he puts "divine intervention" among the possible rescue operations for the victims of the technological society, and then, as it seems to us, whittles the other remedies down to inadequate gestures or sentimental dreams. A better representative of the American spirit—it is this spirit, after all, which is largely responsible for the technological society, including its sins against the human spirit, and which will have to right the wrong—is Herman Melville, whose Ahab is indeed a symbol of the insane driving force of technological achievement. Leo Marx quotes a letter from Melville to Hawthorne:

> —In reading some of Goethe's sayings, so worshipped by his votaries, I came across this, *"Live*

> *in the all."* That is to say, your separate identity is but a wretched one,—good; but get out of yourself, spread and expand yourself, and bring to yourself the tinglings of life that are felt in the flowers and the woods, that are felt in the planets Saturn and Venus and the Fixed Stars. What nonsense! Here is a fellow with a raging toothache. "MY dear boy," Goethe says to him, "you are sorely afflicted with that tooth, but you must *live in the all,* and then you will be happy!" As with all great genius, there is an immense deal of flummery in Goethe, and in proportion to my own contact with him, a monstrous deal of it in me.
>
> H. MELVILLE
>
> P.S. "Amen!" saith Hawthorne:
>
> N.B. This "all" feeling, though, there is some truth in. You must often have felt it, lying on the grass on a warm summer's day. Your legs seem to send out shoots into the earth. Your hair feels like leaves upon your head. This is the *all* feeling. But what plays the mischief with truth is that men will insist upon the universal application of a temporary feeling or opinion.

Well, it is "all" there, you could say, in this letter by Melville. Implicitly, Maslow's hierarchy of needs is there, in what Melville believed was an order of some sort. Melville may at times have thought, but certainly does not say here, that the highest human consciousness is rooted in that "all" and that this is where any authentic psychology of man will have to begin. It is surely the source of all serious thinking about "value," and this is the reason, we feel confident, that Dr. Maslow's thinking—which has every bit as much Yankee practicality and awareness of the discontinuities of life at other levels, as Melville's had—is so rapidly catching on. It starts the distinctively human value hierarchy at the right place—*at the top.*

You could say, in oblique reply to Melville's letter to Hawthorne, that the "all" feeling must at least have its proper place in the scheme of motivation and value structure, and not be left out entirely, as it was in the abstractions of deficiency-need economic theory and the imagery of Acquisitive and Technological Man. You might claim—and we do claim, here that this individual awareness of universality, as a potentiality of all human beings, is the only real resource we have to lift us out of our present slough of satiety-cum-frustration. Dr. Maslow has done us the inestimable service of going within and behind the "pastoral ideal" and finding its roots in subjective reality. So instead of seeking a dreamy lost horizon of the American past, we can begin to redefine the "natural" life in more philosophical, more genuinely *durable,* terms.

REVIEW

EXISTENTIAL PSYCHIATRY

THE quotations from R. D. Laing, British psychiatrist, in "Children . . . and Ourselves" for March 10 launched this Department on a quest for other work by Dr. Laing, which ended in the discovery that his book, *The Divided Self* (Tavistock, 1959), was published in this country in 1960 by Quadrangle Books (Chicago, $6.95). Our belated request for a review copy was rewarded and we now have the problem of making a non-professional report on material which is obviously the fruit of long and intensive experience with schizophrenics. Our enthusiasm—not to say excitement—in reading this volume is based upon what we are able to understand. We have picked four places in the book for quotation. First, from Chapter One:

> This book attempts an existential-phenomenological account of some schizoid and schizophrenic persons. Before beginning this account, however, it is necessary to compare this approach to that of formal clinical psychiatry and psychopathology.
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> Existential phenomenology attempts to characterize the nature of a person's experience of this world and himself. It is not so much an attempt to describe particular objects of his experience as to set all particular experiences within the context of his whole being-in-his-world. The mad things said and done by the schizophrenic will remain essentially a closed book if one does not understand their existential context.

What Dr. Laing means here is illustrated soon after by a textbook case in which the author (Kraepelin, 1905) is discussing with students a patient who shows signs of catatonic excitement. Kraepelin says:

> The patient sits with his eyes shut, and pays no attention to his surroundings. He does not look up even when he is spoken to, but he answers beginning in a low voice, and gradually screaming louder and louder. When asked where he is, he says, "You want to know that too? I tell you who is being measured and is measured and shall be measured. I know all that, and could tell you, but I do not want to." When asked his name, he screams, "What is your name? What does he shut? He shuts his eyes. What does he hear? He does not understand; he understands not. How? Who? Where? When? What does he mean? When I tell him to look, he does not look properly . . . ."

This is only the beginning of a long tirade, ending in "quite inarticulate sounds." Kraepelin's comment is: "A1though he undoubtedly understood all the questions, *he has not given us a single piece of useful information.* His talk was . . . *only a series of disconnected sentences having no relation whatever to the general situation."* (Dr. Laing's italics.) Dr. Laing comments:

> Now there is no question that this patient is showing the "signs" of catatonic excitement. The construction we put on this behavior will, however, depend on the relationship we establish with the patient, and we are indebted to Kracpelin's vivid description which enables the patient to come, it seems, alive to us across fifty years and through his pages as though he were before us. What does this patient seem to be doing? Surely he is carrying on a dialogue between his own parodied version of Kraepelin, and his own defiant rebelling self. . . . Presumably he deeply resents this form of interrogation which is being carried out before a lecture-room of students. He probably does not see what it has to do with the things that must be deeply distressing to him. But these things would not be "useful information" to Kraepelin except as further "signs" of a "disease."
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> Kraepelin asks him his name. The patient replies with an exasperated outburst. . . . He shuts his eyes. . . . Why do you give me no answer? Are you getting impudent again? You don't whore for me (*i.e.*, he feels that Kraepelin is objecting because he is not prepared to prostitute himself before the whole classroom of students), and so on . . . such an impudent, shameless, miserable, lousy fellow I've never met with . . . etc.
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> Now it seems clear that this patient's behavior can be seen in at least two ways, analogous to the ways of seeing vase or face. One may see his behaviour as "signs" of a "disease" one may see his behaviour as expressive of his existence. The existential-phenomenological construction is an inference about the way the other is feeling or acting. What is the boy's experience of Kraepelin? He seems to be tormented and desperate. What is he "about" in

> speaking and acting in this way? He is objecting to being measured and tested. He wants to be heard.

Discussing the "incomprehensibility" of a schizophrenic's speech, Dr. Laing stresses the importance of remembering that there is a basic split in his being, "producing a disembodied self and a body that is a thing that the self looks at, regarding it at times as though it were just another thing in the world." He continues:

> Even when the patient is striving to tell us, in as clear and straight-forward a way as he knows how, the nature of his anxieties and his experiences, structured as they are in a radically different way from ours, the speech content is necessarily difficult to follow. Moreover, the formal elements of speech are in themselves ordered in unusual ways, and these formal peculiarities seem, at least to some extent, to be the reflection in language of the alternative ordering of his experience, with splits in it where we take coherence for granted, and the running together (confusion) of elements that we keep apart.

Now comes a particularly illuminating passage:

> Yet these irreducible difficulties are practically certain to be much increased, at least in one's first encounters with the patient, by his or her deliberate use of obscurity and complexity as a smokescreen to hide behind. This creates the ironical situation that the schizophrenic is often playing at being psychotic, or pretending to be so. In fact, as we have said, presence and equivocation are greatly used by schizophrenics. The reasons for doing this are, in any single case, likely to serve more than one purpose at a time. The most obvious one is that it preserves the secrecy, the privacy, of the self against intrusion (engulfment, implosion). The self, as one patient put it, feels crushed and mangled even at the exchanges in an ordinary conversation. Despite his longing to be loved for his "real self," the schizophrenic is terrified of love. Any form of understanding *threatens* his whole defensive system. His outward behavior is a defensive system analogous to innumerable openings to underground passages which one might imagine would take one to the inner citadel, but they lead nowhere or elsewhere. The schizophrenic is not going to reveal himself for casual inspection and examination to any philandering passer-by. If the self is not known it is safe. It is safe from penetrating remarks; it is safe from being smothered or engulfed by love, as much as from destruction from hatred. If the schizophrenic is incognito, his body can be handled and manipulated, petted, caressed, beaten, given injections or what have you, but "he," an onlooker, is inviolable.
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> The self at the same time longs to be understood; indeed, longs for one whole person who might accept his total being, and in doing so, just "let him be." But it is necessary to proceed with great caution and circumspection. "Don't try," as Binswanger puts it, "to get too near, too soon."

The case studies presented by Dr. Laing are all intensely interesting, making it possible to understand him when he says: "I am quite sure that a good number of 'cures' consist in the fact that the patient has decided, for one reason or another, to *play at being sane."*

Dr. Laing makes considerable use of literature for graphic description of pathologic states of mind, his principal sources being William Blake, Franz Kafka, and Jean-Paul Sartre. Finally, this book, *The Divided Self,* leaves the reader with a strong impression that Dr. Laing has deep compassionate regard for the victims of mental illness, and that he is able to identify with and understand the suffering individual within the strange mosaic of "symptoms" which such patients present to the outside world. You get a sense of profound truth from reading this book, mainly, we suspect, because it is a psychological study in which human beings are consistently regarded as *subjects,* not objects, or "things."

COMMENTARY
KEY TO THE KINGDOM

THE concluding paragraph (by Huston Smith) of this week's Frontiers gives a basis for understanding what happens to a society which proclaims the "highest ideals," but waits for the political process to bring them about.

The fact is that only the form of ideals can be realized by political action. A people can get together and compose a practically perfect constitution, but if they don't *use* its provisions as a means to individual enrichment, the virtue in the constitution leaks away. As Prof. Smith says, true individuality must be *won.*

Now the trouble with politics is that politicians seeking office are obliged by the temper of the people to seek the line of least resistance. The man looking for votes is endlessly tempted to let the people believe that *he* can win for them the quality of life they want. In any event, he does not talk to them about the struggles toward inner growth. The politician must compete with other politicians, and so, by the attritions of a common neglect, the law of individual effort is buried under exhortations of a more "practical" character. And when religion, in the name of far-reaching social responsibility, turns political in its means, there is nothing left of the conception of the good life as something to be privately won. This brings us, eventually, not a good life, but a condition of bankruptcy in both personal and cultural terms.

It is for this reason that we never cease from quoting men like Emerson and Thoreau in these pages. These two, along with some others, are exemplars of the capacity to generate a sense of meaning out of the raw materials of physical and social existence. This is the authentic individuality which must be won by sustained acts of the imagination, and without which, as Prof. Smith says, we never "in any fully human sense get born." It is hard to find intelligible language for the processes or ordeals of this achievement, and it is in the making of such a language that Emerson and Thoreau succeed so well, without resort to any of the clichés of the conventionalized (emptied of individual striving) spiritual life. They help to make it evident that while you may be able to rent a room in a politically constructed house of freedom, you can't *feel* or *enjoy* the good life that is supposed to become accessible there without forging, by your own effort, the key of vision that will open the door. Only by your own transcendental imaginings can you enter that gentle and generously proportioned world of the visions of other men. Awakening to the attractions of this invitation is the first step toward becoming fully human.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HOW CHILDREN FAIL

LAST week's discussion of the "goal-oriented failures" who emerge from conventional institutions of learning can be usefully extended by attention to John Holt's book of the above title (Pitman, 1964) . Just as one may, from a psychoanalytic point of view, learn a good deal about the attitudes which lead to "self-actualization" by studying the characteristics of "deficiency motivation," so an examination of failure in the classroom may indicate, by contrast, a proper definition of fulfillment through education.

Mr. Holt's foreword begins abruptly:

> Most children in school fail. Close to forty percent of those who begin high school, drop out before they finish. For college, the figure is one in three.
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> Many others fail in fact if not in name. They complete their schooling only because we have agreed to push them up through the grades and out of the schools, whether they know anything or not. There are many more such children than we think.
>
> But there is a more important sense in which almost all children fail: Except for a handful, who may or may not be good students, they fail to develop more than a tiny part of the tremendous capacity for learning, understanding, and creating with which they were born and of which they made full use during the first two or three years of their lives.
>
> Why do they fail?
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> They fail because they are afraid, bored, and confused.
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> They are afraid, above all else, of failing, of disappointing or displeasing the many anxious adults around them, whose limitless hopes and expectations for them hang over their heads like a cloud.

Mr. Holt and his colleague Bill Hull are but two of many elementary and high school teachers plagued by knowing that few students even begin to tap their actual learning capacity. But to say that excessive emphasis on "success," producing fear of failure, may block natural learning is only a point of departure. Allan Fromme, a psychologist who comments on *How Children Fail* in an introductory note, proposes that every teacher must become a psychologist, although not some sort of behavioral "engineer" who seeks to maneuver pupils into adjustment. In other words, there are basic questions to be asked and pondered, rather than answers to be found and worked into stultifying techniques of instruction. Dr. Fromme considers the eternal questions of the classroom to be briefly these:

> What actually happens when a teacher asks a child a question in the classroom? What *does* the child hear when he is called on? What does he feel? What does he think? What are his fantasies and wishes? What does he try to do? What kinds of habits is he developing? What effect does he have on the teacher? What does the teacher think and feel and do as he awaits the answer? Does he understand the meaning of the child's answer or see it merely as right or wrong? Does his relationship with the child have the intimacy ideally necessary for intellectual growth or is it a dull, contractual one which fosters *non*-learning as much as it does learning?

Mr. Holt holds that the schools of education, with their endless courses on "teaching psychology," introduce methods of covert coercion:

> We cannot have real learning in school if we think it is our duty and our right to tell children what they must learn. We cannot know, at any moment, what particular bit of knowledge or understanding a child needs most, will most strengthen and best fit his model of reality. Only he can do this. He may not do it very well, but he can do it a hundred times better than we can. The most we can do is try to help, by letting him know roughly what is available and where he can look for it. Choosing what he wants to learn and what he does not is something he must do for himself.
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> The reason is that there is no way to coerce children without making them afraid, or more afraid. We must not try to fool ourselves into thinking that this is not so.

It is a fallacy, therefore, to assume that there are "good ways" and "bad ways" to coerce children—"the bad ones mean, harsh, cruel, the good ones gentle, persuasive, subtle, kindly." Mr. Holt continues:

> The idea of painless, non-threatening coercion is an illusion. Fear is the inseparable companion of

> coercion, and its inescapable consequence. If you think it your duty to make children do what you want, whether they will or not, then it follows inexorably that you must make them afraid of what will happen to them if they don't do what you want. You can do this in the old-fashioned way, openly and avowedly, with the threat of harsh words, infringement of liberty, or physical punishment. Or you can do it in the modern way, subtly, smoothly, quietly, by withholding the acceptance and approval which you and others have trained the children to depend on or by making them feel that some retribution awaits them in the future, too vague to imagine but too implacable to escape. You can, as many skilled teachers do, learn to tap with a word a gesture, a look, even a smile, the great reservoir of fear, shame, and guilt that today's children carry around inside them. Or you can simply let your own fears, about what will happen to you if children don't do what you want, reach out and infect them. Thus the children will feel more and more that life is full of dangers from which only the goodwill of adults like you can protect them, and that this goodwill is perishable and must be earned anew each day.

Asked what she might think of a classroom which would be "a great smorgasbord of intellectual, artistic, creative, and athletic activities, from which each child could take whatever he wanted, and as much as he wanted, or as little," a sixth-grader remarked thoughtfully: "You know, kids really like to learn, we just don't like being pushed around." Mr. Holt likens the teacher-pupil relationship to that of the marital situation. While the latter depends upon a continuum in emotional intimacy, education requires an atmosphere of "intellectual intimacy." For a great number of reasons, some of them self-protective, not every teacher can or will accept the responsibilities of such intimacy. Certainly, we cannot pass resolutions requiring the practice of "intimacy" nor decree the requisite attitudes into existence. We can, however, contrast the teacher who feels mainly responsible to administration, status, and success conceptions in the community, etc., with one who feels primarily responsibility to the child.

In Mr. Holt's words, the "servant of the community" approach leads a teacher to become "like the managers and manipulators of news in Washington, Moscow, London, Peking, and Paris, and all the other capitals of the world." "We think it our right and our duty," he continues, "to say whatever will best serve our cause—in this case, the cause of making children grow up into the kind of people we want them to be, thinking whatever we want them to think."

But the children often know what is being done to them. One example of this came out of a spontaneous probe into children's reactions to conventional terms of endearment, meaninglessly bestowed by adults:

> [The discovery was made during a class] in Roman history. The time arrived in Rome when the mob gained political power, so that the ability to arouse and inflame the mob was a sure key to high office. The kids wanted to know how this was done. I said it was done mostly with names. They were skeptical; they wanted to know what kind of names would arouse a mob.
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> For answer, I asked them, "Well, what kind of names do you hate to be called?" We were off. Before the end of the period the board was covered with names. About half were what I expected, the usual ten-year-old insults—idiot, stupid, nuthead, fat slob, chicken, dope, scaredy-cat, etc. The rest surprised me. They were all terms of endearment.
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> It was quite a scene. There were all these bright-faced lively children, eyes dancing with excitement and enthusiasm, seeing who could most strongly express their collective contempt and disgust for all the names that adults might suppose they like most. Someone would say "Dearie—ug-g-g-g-gh!" Chorus of agreement. Someone else would say, "Honey—ic-c-c-c-ch!" More agreement. Every imaginable term of affection and endearment came in for its share. Why should this be?
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> They suspect and resent these terms of endearment because they have too often heard them used by people who did not mean them. Many adults do not like children much, but feel that they ought to like them, have a duty to like them, and they try to discharge this duty by acting, particularly by talking, as if they liked them. Hence the continual and meaningless use of words like *honey*, *dearie*, etc. Hence, the dreadful, syrupy voice that so many adults use when they speak to children. By the time they are ten, children are fed up with this fake affection, and ready to believe that, most of the time, adults believe and mean very little of what they say.

FRONTIERS

Philosophy—the Imperative Activity

As has been several times noted in these pages, the Humanist stance, while for a long time identified with a determined effort to avoid "metaphysics"—and hence most classical forms of philosophizing—is now becoming associated with existentialist affirmations of man's environment-transcending capacities. There is presently, in other words, a less constricted area where philosophy and psychology meet in our time: the humanistic psychologists, and some philosophers become psychologists, are now providing the materials for a fresh structure of value synthesis. Background themes for arousing the spiritual capacities of individual selfhood are seen in the function of mythology as a liberating force beyond theology, as in the works of Joseph Campbell, Joseph Henderson and Rollo May—while Herbert Fingarette's *The Self in Transformation* accomplishes lucid merging of the insights of psychoanalysis with principal areas of classic philosophic concern.

An article by Whitney J. Oates, "Philosophy as the Center of Liberal Education" (*Liberal Education,* May 1964), suggests the need for closing the gap between the ancients and the moderns in philosophy. Professor Oates writes:

> Liberal education will in many ways be facing its moment of truth in the remaining decades of this century. That moment of truth can be faced with maximum effectiveness by having liberal education give to philosophy the central position which is its due.
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> First, I want to make clear that I am using the term "philosophy" in its broad traditional sense which we have inherited ultimately from the Greeks of classical antiquity. This "philosophy," this "love of wisdom," connotes a discipline which is distinguished by the fact that it has no specific matter of its own, or to state it positively, it is legitimately concerned with all data available in human experience.

All of which provides a setting for the perspectives of Huston Smith in the same issue of *Liberal Education,* under the title, "The Humanities and Man's New Condition." Like Prof. Oates, Prof. Smith points out that what Glenn Gray calls (in the May *Harper's*) the contemporary student's need for "a compelling authority" cannot be made intelligible without suggestive redefinition of Plato's "just man imbued by the Idea of the Good"; for the man who has transcended ordinary fears and ambitions through personal convictions respecting truth and justice gives a personal demonstration of the meaning of such terms as "autonomous" and "self-actualizing." Prof. Smith suggests that this idea of psychological unfoldment is largely lacking in contemporary education:

> Speaking for the moment as father of children in and approaching college, I would pay tuition with a will for a humanistic education which held out promise of advancing them toward perfect freedom. But what *in fact* am I paying such tuition for? (I use this as a crude way of asking: What is the optimum we in the West now hope that humanistic education. can deliver?) Answers abound. The humanistically educated man or woman will be informed and able to think clearly. He will think for himself, and will have a sense of values. I pass over such answers, not because they are untrue but because they are provisional. They are proximate rather than final. I want to know what we think a person who has mastered these humanizing virtues—a person who *is* informed, who *does* think clearly and for himself, who *has* a sense of values—will find his life brought to.

Formal education, unfortunately, largely reflects a multitude of inadequate attitudes and opinions typical of contemporary culture. Prof. Smith continues:

> Man's environment used to be nature. And his task respecting this environment was to impose order upon it. The difficulties were enormous, but in the end man proved their equal. Society was effected; first the tribe, then civilization.
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> Times have changed, and today man's primary environment is not nature but society. The task this new environment poses for man is very different. Instead of having to order it, for society *is* order, his problem is to personalize it.
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> When man first built society it was like a home which sheltered him from the wilds. But it has

tightened to the point where it has become something of a trap. Within it man feels acutely uncomfortable. But he does not see why. Still thinking of society as his home, he scurries around dusting it here, mending it there, wondering why with all the care he lavishes on it he does not feel more at home in it. Meanwhile what he most needs is to have someone shout through to him: "That's not your home. That's a trap! You don't want to mend it; you want to get out!"

Perhaps I exaggerate. And by "get out" I certainly do not mean that man should physically withdraw from society or dissolve it back into a "state of nature"—that would do no more than return him to the condition which forced him to spend his energies bringing order out of chaos in the first place; it would simply start the cycle all over again. But I do mean to say that society has ceased to be an adequate home for the human spirit. Hence to those who persist in regarding it as their home the word must be: "You are facing in the wrong direction."

The reason, of course, is that society has become an impersonal mechanism and with its increasing complexity is growing more impersonal daily. This means that more and more our lives are consumed by role behavior, this being defined as behavior in which what counts is *what* is done, not *who* is doing it. As within roles persons are interchangeable—any number of persons could fill the role of bus driver or bank teller without affecting the character of the roles themselves—the more our lives are lived in terms of roles, the more our individuality idles, or rather never comes into being. Indeed, if we ever came to the point where we lived only our roles, we should have no individuality at all. It was Don Marquis who said that no number of five-year plans adds up to a millennium. Similarly, no number of roles can constitute a genuine person. When Quentin in Arthur Miller's new play *After the Fall,* announces: "I can't find myself," it is no wonder. Like so many in our time, he has no self to find.

At this point it is easy to see why an increasing number of writers declare the importance of "protest" movements. Many of the elements of rebellious thought are currently expressed by existentialists with an affirmative connotation—*i.e.,* getting *out* may be also a means of getting *into* a new region of evaluation and of finding a ground for authentic individuality. But the most interesting part of Huston Smith's development occurs in the judgment that "traditional society gave its members some individuality without allowing them to win much more whereas contemporary society gives its members almost no individuality and permits them to win a great deal." He adds:

> But they must win it—it will not be handed to them. And winning it requires two things: (1) firming up from amongst the myriad possibilities that open before a life today a core of personal identity, and (2) building around it a sphere of intimacy within which we can advance toward the meaning of our existence. In nature my body is the core of my life: in society this core is my person. Thus my person is to my social environment what my body is to my natural environment. But whereas my body is given, my person must be won. If I fail to win it, I never in any fully human sense get born; if I let my selfhood decline, I amputate my humanity or (if the case is extreme) commit "human" suicide though my body remain alive.