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# THE FAILURE OF THE ENVIRONMENT

I last saw Edward Bellamy, author of *Looking Backward*, on the afternoon of May 21, 1898.

He spoke of his social gospel like a seer and a saint. He said that raising the curse of poverty from society must become the transcendent objective of all men of good will. Youth would catch the vision first, he declared. He laid an especially heavy responsibility to aid in this holy cause upon those who by inheritance or natural endowment were fortunately placed.

Mr. Bellamy died early the next morning and left his wife, his little daughter and his thirteen-year-old son to mourn his passing and to contemplate the destruction of their own private world.

I, who was that son, would rather see my father come back from the shades than any other person I ever knew.

I should dearly love to analyze with him the social changes which had occurred in the last forty-seven years, many of which he so miraculously foretold. I should ask him whether he thought we would attain his Utopia as fast as he believed, and if, after observation of nearly fifty years of later human action and reaction, he still believed in the same Heaven. I should like to ask him how well or ill he thought we had accepted that *noblesse oblige* which he had imposed so solemnly upon us.

PAUL BELLAMY, May 22, 1945

THESE opening words of the Introduction to a 1945 edition (World) of *Looking Backward*, by Bellamy's son, add a personal poignancy to the questions which all men of good will ought to be asking themselves, these days. The poignancy is needed, too, for the questions are not abstract. They have to do with the obligations of individual men. They need the personal address, the same consecration and intensity, that Bellamy gave to the problems of his age. How shall we speak of these questions? In a phrase, we may call them evidences of the failure of the environment. In his life of Bellamy, Arthur Morgan pointed out that a catalog of the social legislation enacted during the twentieth century reads like a list of Bellamy's proposals. Yet we have anything but a Utopia.

Our problems, you could say, have not disappeared from being objects of legislation, but they have changed. They have become, you could say, *two-faced.* No one has made this plainer than Herbert Marcuse in his latest book, *One-Dimensional Man* (Beacon):

> Can one really distinguish between the mass media as instruments of information and entertainment, and as agents of manipulation and indoctrination? Between the automobile as nuisance and convenience? Between the horrors and comforts of functional architecture? Between the work for national defense and work for corporate gain? . . .
>
> We are again confronted with one of the most vexing aspects of advanced industrial civilization: the rational character of its irrationality. Its productivity and efficiency, its capacity to increase and spread comforts, to turn waste into need, and destruction into construction, the extent to which this civilization transforms the object world into an extension of man's mind and body makes the very notion of alienation questionable. The people recognize themselves in their commodities; they find their soul in their automobile, hi-fi set, split-level home, kitchen equipment. The very mechanism which ties the individual to his society has changed, and social control is anchored in new needs which it has produced.

What Marcuse seems to be saying is that the instruments and fruits of our material prosperity inhabit our psychic lives like some mechanistic Jekyll-Hyde obsession. It would be both cruel and unjust to say to Bellamy what Alfred de Musset exclaimed to Voltaire, many years ago, yet the point needs to be made. "Sleepest thou content, Voltaire?" the poet asked, challenging the iconoclasm of the great skeptic:

> Thine age they called too young to understand thee
> This one should suit thee better—
> Thy men are born!

> And the huge edifice that, day and night,
> thy great hands undermined
> Is fallen upon us. . . .

Rhetoric of this sort, turned against Bellamy, could only bring the anguished reply: "These are not 'my men'! Nor are the gross confinements and subtle self-deceptions which characterize your age of my design!"

Whose men, then, are they? That is the question for which the modern environment-makers have no reply.

In recent weeks MANAS has received some letters bearing on this problem. Following is a portion of one of them:

> It is so upsetting to read so many political and economic analyses that maintain a guaranteed income to the individual is the answer to so much in America today. It cannot be emphasized enough, as you say, that "the great mistake of present reformers . . . is that they are still defining human needs in terms of means instead of ends." That there is more than just the guaranteed income (or its equivalent) involved in the present problem areas of our culture has not been discussed by these economic planners. The first notice of this I have found is in your article and in *Liberation* (for August). Yet it is this aspect that needs the greater emphasis.
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> In repeated experiences of trying to assist individuals in dire need, I find that financial assistance fed and clothed them, but only left them unhappier than ever. It seemed to stimulate all their materialistically instilled wants. It is at this point that the conservative reacts violently and condemns the person in need. But it is understandable that the impoverished should acquire the same material wants as the rest of the population when his impoverishment is removed. Removal of the physical poverty is only a minute part of the whole problem. . . .
>
> The area of indecision for myself is related to my interrelation with those around me. I can do little about the economic planners and their grandiose schemes, but there must be a course of action when appeal is made directly or indirectly for help, or when one is cognizant that help is needed. And financial help is not the answer. But what can I expect of myself toward others when they must realize that the basic help for themselves is going to come from within themselves, and that no one else can remedy their personal isolation?

These questions seldom find their way into serious discussion for the reason that the answers—if answers exist at all—cannot be made into any form of social doctrine. The replies cannot be systematized. And if, as with Bellamy, or as with the sponsors of the Triple Revolution, you are attacking the problems of socio-economic reorganization in terms that seek a response from "those who by inheritance or natural endowment (are] fortunately placed," you couldn't make any use of the answers, even if you had them.

We have another quotation to offer—this one from Arthur Harvey's editorial in the Aug. 25 *Greenleaf*, which gives another view of the failure of the environmental approach. He writes:

> Leaving aside the matter of war, several social problems are getting worse. Consider the treatment of school children, of criminals, and of the elderly. Schools are growing larger and more impersonal, and the students less willing to learn or to accept discipline. Previously the conscientious parent could help his children learn at home, now addiction to television and the indifference or helplessness of parents leads more and more children to fall into the lax and selfish moral standards of a competitive mass culture. Of course crime increases, and society responds with more policemen, laws, and punishments. Marriage and sex relations seem to be exercised more casually and carelessly. Finally, elderly parents and relatives are no longer regarded as cherished members in most families.
>
> The response of people of liberal sentiments has been to vote more and more money for schools, prisons and mental institutions, and pensions. Very often those who run these government programs are honestly trying to help others. But paternalism of all kinds, which may let voters as well as officials feel that their moral duty is being fulfilled, is really unable to affect the causes of the trouble. The causes are all forms of avoiding an intimate concern for those around us. Formerly, the duty of one who witnessed a crime or injustice was supposed to be to intervene personally, even at the risk of one's life. Now, one's duty in such instances is supposed to be to notify a policeman—and sometimes even this is not done because people prefer to witness in real life dramas they have seen on television.

> We are, in fact, in the midst of a general moral collapse. Preachers even add to it by telling people that the Christian need not follow the Commandments of Jesus, all sins will be forgiven to those who *believe.* But in my opinion there are still more important reasons for a growing reluctance of people to make serious efforts to obey ethical traditions of kindness and self-sacrifice. Once a man has yielded to the temptation to let a machine do the work he is naturally fitted to do then his ability to discipline other selfish desires is weakened. As he becomes lazy, he also craves diversion, stimulation.
>
> As industrialization develops—both capitalism and communism are essentially forms of this same trend—the complexity of society becomes baffling. No one can say what is the moral quality of basic economic acts like buying clothes or accepting pay for work. The producer and the consumer rarely meet or ever want to, and no one knows whether justice governed the production and distribution of the things he depends upon.
>
> Now the intellectuals, especially the liberal ones, have concluded that basic economic relations among men must be removed from the realm of moral choice. In the complex modern society, the common man is unable to understand how the system works or even what is fair or unfair, except as it affects his immediate interest. Planning and running the economy is a job for specialists. In one breath they urge us all to vote (it doesn't matter how) because it is important to have everyone thinking that he is really deciding his own affairs. In the next breath they want to reduce the size of the General Court, for example, so that professionals and specialists will be more in control.
>
> All of this makes sense, in fact seems inescapable, if you once make the fundamental assumption that our modern industrial society is a good and inevitable way of life. "You can't turn back the clock," they say. But the odd thing is that you *can.* In New Hampshire alone there is land enough to support five or ten times the population in a primitive agricultural economy. The barriers are purely psychological. The only question is how far it is desirable to go in the direction of simplicity and manual labor.

What is Arthur Harvey saying, here? Well, one thing he is saying is that works without faith will not save us. Our works are an impressive monument; the technological plant of the United States commands the faith of most even of its victims; but the product, heaped up, pressed down, and running over, does not nourish.

Harvey is saying that we are skillful but self-betrayed alchemists. We have learned how to make gold, all right, but it is base metal still. It is a currency which has no value in the markets of human longing. He is saying that we must go back and make a new beginning, and try to learn what work is really for. He is saying that we have wasted our apprenticeship. He is saying that we had better prepare our souls for the dread encounter with the button-molder, for that is what we are waiting for, now.

The Triple Revolutionaries have another kind of faith. They are saying that we can still make our system work if we can manage a change of heart. The Big Machine, they say, is still a testament to human genius. We don't *have* to let it grind us up, they say. If only—they argue—we put our minds upon the things we ought to have learned while we were working so industriously these past hundred years, we can still salvage all the good things we have promised ourselves. We just have to "see" what is right, what ought to be done.

The Triple Revolutionaries are saying to the quarterbacks of all the First Teams in America—all the Chairmen of the Board, all the Chamber Presidents, all the men who have racked up the scores we have been so proud of, until now—that the time has come to change the signals and begin a new kind of play.

They are right, of course. The time *has* come. The problem is to put the pep talks into a language that the Teams can understand. The players will have to go back out there on the field and explain to one another that now we have Robots to carry the ball and even run interference—that this is the new way to Build Character and practice the American Way. We just don't know our own strength, and somehow we've done all the work that needs to be done. Life is now just one great big Spectator Sport—we'll all go up there to sit in the Stadium and start taking part in the Culture we've talked about all these years, but never had time for. We've been so busy.

Will this work? Well, it's *got* to work. And maybe it will. After all, Management has grown pretty smart, facing all kinds of New Problems in recent years. What you do is pick out men who are able to grapple with the facts and handle the public relations for a new kind of sales program. It's a matter of explaining to the people that Capitalism, for all the bad things said about it, has its doctrine of the Vicarious Atonement, too; they don't have to work any more; it's a kind of Socialism without Sin.

Well, this sounds like a sardonic reproach to the Triple Revolutionaries; in a way it is, but in another way it isn't. There is certainly a sense in which they are going to have to get their message across to the American people. Basically, they are saying that America—and the entire modern world—is faced by problems for which it is entirely unprepared; and the fact is that there is no way to explain such problems to people without sounding either ridiculous or visionary. You have a situation in which statistical reality does violence to moral tradition. To resolve such a situation, you have either to ignore the statistics or challenge the moral tradition.

There is another way of examining the problem, but this means that you stop looking at it in *social* terms. The objection to abandoning social analysis is that you take the problem out of the category of things you are able to do something about by familiar means. You say, for example, that true social *dilemmas* cannot be dealt with by social planning. You say that the social problems which confront the people of the modern, technological societies are problems which begin as qualitative realities in the private lives of human beings and assume quantitatively discernible proportions only in the behavioral profile of many millions. You argue, as we do here, that environmental manipulation will not really touch those primal qualitative realities, and that we have still to make the fundamental admission necessary to social health: we cannot do as a society what we have failed to do as individuals.

You can't manipulate social impoverishment. It has no substance. It is like trying to order the motion of particles in the last stages of entropic disorder. You have to have social capital before you can manipulate to any good effect. Where do you get social capital? It is the moral usufruct of individual excellence. So there we are, back on the farm with Arthur Harvey, relearning the secrets of the simple life.

This is a juncture of history when none of the half-truths of which we are sure, which have proved themselves in the past, seems capable of being applied, unless we are ready to settle for symbolic or token applications.

We have a letter from Ralph Borsodi (written some months ago) which offers more of this apparently inapplicable truth:

> What are the facts about man in terms of work? The facts are that some men have natures (for the moment let us lay aside why they have such natures) which make them want to work and others natures which make them prefer not to work. The classical distinction between them is that some are diligent and some are lazy. This is true not only of the poor and of the unemployed, but also of the employed and of the rich. This is just another way of saying that some men are, at any given time, unfortunate and some men fortunate. The problem is what should Humanitarians do about the diligent unemployed, who are unfortunate, and about the lazy unemployed, who are unemployed because they are lazy or because they demand jobs which they are incapable of performing.
>
> The sentimental approach is to put them in a march of demonstrators with placards such as one of those you describe approvingly: "If private industry won't give us work, we ask the government to do it." Realistically interpreted this means if private persons won't do it, make them (as tax payers) do it.
>
> Now what is the realistic way of dealing with this problem? I'd say the first step is to deal with it as Henry George did in *Progress and Poverty*. Unfortunately, most people deal with it sentimentally; they believe in charity, not justice.
>
> No man has the right to demand that another furnish him employment. Man being what he is, and the Earth on which he finds himself being what it is, he has only one right so far as work is concerned: To obtain a living by cultivating the Earth. He has no right to compel another, or to compel people as a mass, to furnish him employment. But he has a right, as George pointed out, to free and just access to the Earth. But to do all men this justice, we would have to take seriously the radical proposal that our whole

system of land tenure is grossly unjust, and that as not only George but Marx himself recognized, most of what might be called unjust poverty and unjust employment has its source in this gross, institutionalized evil.

I once had a talk with "Bill" Green at the time he was President of the American Federation of Labor. We were sitting together at a luncheon in Washington in the early days of Franklin D. Roosevelt and "The New Deal." I asked him: "Mr. Green, what do you think of organizing unions so that the workers would all have homesteads of their own, and so if they wanted to strike, could down tools for months without having to draw a cent in strike relief?" He thought for a minute and then replied:

"Mr. Borsodi, you must remember that I am a coal miner. We have a mining region in Alabama where all the miners are homesteaders, all of them are miners with farms of their own. None of the mines work the year round. Whenever the mine operators get an order for coal, they send a call out and get enough farmers who aren't busy to come in and fill their cars on their siding. Then the miners go back to their farms. And do you know, these men not only can thumb their noses at the mine operators, they also thumb them at us."

Let's do what Confucius suggested several thousand years ago; let's put first things first. . . . In a justly organized world, we would still have lazy and unemployable people, and we would still have the problem of what to do with them. But we wouldn't have the real heartbreak, which is what to do about the unfortunate employable and diligent workers. . . . Gandhi, though no Georgist, recognized that the problem of poverty in India wasn't that of massing people in cities, but of teaching them how to make a living from Mother Earth, and when they have no access to Earth, dealing with the problem of how to give it to them, as Vinoba Bhave has been wise enough to see.

RALPH BORSODI

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Borsodi's truths are truths which get ignored because they fit no orthodoxy or conventional view, or because the moment of historical opportunity for putting them to work seems to have been passed by. Access to the land? Who even gets to *see* the land, nowadays, much less have access to it? "Diligent," "lazy"—these words belong to a forgotten vocabulary.

Out of all this comes awareness of the impossibility of generalizing about what "has to be done." Of course, you can generalize in the sense that we have to push these questions back to a level where we can speak of them in terms of individual needs and individual responsibilities. You can bring in ideas of "self-actualization" and of "being yourself," but what you can't do is politicalize or make economic theories which have any kind of one-to-one relation with the problems of human beings at this level. For this is the level at which we are individually lost—and in odd moments, found.

The only sensible thing to do, quite obviously, is to say what we can and must say about human beings and their good, and keep still for at least a little while about corporate solutions for our emergencies. And then, when we have acquired a small amount of Emersonian *esprit de corps*, we may see what is required, socially, to keep it alive and make it grow. *Then* we ought to return to the "hard facts" of the Triple Revolution. But if we let the "facts" dictate our theories of human good, we shall be consulting no wisdom any deeper than the confusion which selected those facts to be our confining realities.

If we listen only to the hard facts, we may prove the Triple Revolutionists to be right on all counts. For if we insist upon handling our problems statistically instead of humanly, then we shall bow down to the gods of Quantitative Man and Collectivist Destiny. It was for such men that Thoreau composed his most awful judgment:

> When, in the progress of a life, a man swerves, though only by an angle infinitely small, from his proper and allotted path (and this is never done quite unconsciously even at first; in fact, that was his broad and scarlet sin,—ah, he knew of it more than he can tell), then the drama of his life turns into tragedy, and makes haste to its fifth act. When once we thus fall behind ourselves, there is no accounting for the obstacles which rise up in our path, and no one is so wise as to advise, and no one so powerful as to aid us while we abide on that ground. . . . For such the Decalogue was made, and other far more voluminous and terrible codes.

What will it take to reconcile us to the fact that we are men, and not accessories to machines or

conveniences to the proper function of an economic system? . . . Yes, of course, the technology of automation is supposed to put an end to all that, but will it? If it is so powerful in our lives as to make us ignore the fundamental need for self-discovery and self-reliance; if it can make us turn away from truths which are easily apparent in a primitive society having only primitive economic arrangements, what is this power but some kind of auto-hypnosis which takes the place of authentic thought about the meaning of being human? How can a machine make up for ignorance of ourselves? How can "leisure" as administered by the most benevolent of managers ever be more than a seventh hell of a seventh hell, if it comes only when men are driven away from their work—from work, moreover, they never loved, never truly sought for its own sake, and are glad to say goodbye to, now that the System will take care of everything?

And the System *will* take care of everything, if we find no better way. Thoreau was right. Some "more voluminous and terrible code" will get written, somehow or other, for men who deduce their social morality, not from the nature of man, but from the excellence of machines.

Well, that is one side of the picture. The other is Bellamy's loving vision of men in community, serving one another to their common good. Is this really possible? Or are the dread realizations of the twentieth century, of which Bellamy could not help but be ignorant, a comment on the shape to be assumed by all "total" societies? Bellamy once told B. O. Flower, editor of the *Arena:* "If I thought socialism would not insure full freedom for the individual and foster intellectual hospitality in the realms of ethical, scientific, and philosophical research, I should be the first to oppose it."

Where lay the ground of Bellamy's extraordinary optimism? In himself, no doubt. For the oppressive contracts made by the state with modern man did not really exist for him. The social life was for him a living reciprocity, an uncalculated symbiosis of naturally graded human relationships. The constitution and its order were rationalizations *after the fact,* not the creators of society. And if we could follow Bellamy's example in this, no doubt it would work for us, too.

Why is it so difficult to see that men who cannot make their own environment, and make it serve their freedom and their good, can never have either freedom or good? Why is it not self-evident that the best-laid plan for other men is always a plan for a prison, unless the plan is somehow in *their* minds as well?

# *REVIEW*
## ACHIEVING "EMOTIONAL MATURITY"

IT is difficult to say whether the "self-help" books are getting better because of accumulating psychological sophistication, or because of a new sort of writer—the psychologist who prefers to speak in everyday language rather than the professional tongue. Arnold Maddaloni's *To Be Fully Alive* (Horizon Press, 1964; $4.95) is not the work of a "professional" in the familiar sense, yet the author is a member of the New York Academy of Sciences and the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and his writings range from psychotherapy through philosophy to ethics.

Mr. Maddaloni is more a clarifier than an innovator. With personal directness, but without personal intrusion, he encourages his readers to combine elements of Stoic discipline, semantic analysis, and dedication with philosophic purpose. The introduction to *To Be Fully Alive* is contributed by Dr. Albert Ellis, with whom—together with his teacher Theodore Schroeder—Maddaloni should be chiefly identified. Dr. Ellis writes:

> There are two basic approaches to psychotherapy and the science of self-help: the philosophical and the psychological. The first and the older of these stems from philosophers, such as Aristotle, Plato, Epictetus, Spinoza, and Bertrand Russell, who have asked: "What, considering the nature of man, is human happiness, and how can we go about achieving it?" The second and newer self-help school stems from modern psychologists, such as Freud, Jung, Adler, Rank, Fromm, and Rogers, who have asked: "What are man's underlying psychological processes, and how can he help himself by intensive analysis and understanding of his own conscious and unconscious motives?" *To Be Fully Alive* is one of the relatively few self-help books that is firmly rooted in both these important streams of thought, and includes some of the best thinking of the philosophers and the psychologists.

At least on the basis of a first reading, MANAS is inclined to rate this book highly, not only for adult readers in general but also for instructors in psychology who might well adopt some of Maddaloni's clear ideas. It is almost certain that admirers of the work of the Overstreets will like this volume.

Here is a passage on the growing preoccupation with means of "relaxing tensions":

> 1. Accept the fact that tensions indicate inner imbalance. The realization that tension is self-produced or the product of inner conflict will be the first important step toward relaxation.
>
> 2. Being objective and realistic about life, but not fatalistic, will help one to accept the inevitable. If we do not expect everything to run smoothly, or to be done our way, we will be relieved of some of the responsibility we feel for the behavior of others. Obstacles and irritations are not catastrophes, and our recognition of that will strengthen our determination to overcome catastrophes when and if they do occur. Learning to absorb the minor shocks in life will prepare us for more dangerous ones.
>
> 3. Try to turn disadvantage into advantage with the awareness that one is never defeated, that in every reversal there is a lesson to be learned. Illness, for example, could create self-defeating despair, or lead to self-understanding and a more balanced life. We must question our basic assumptions, inquire into the values we hold dear. Not achieving social status, for example, may be a disguised blessing.

In his concluding chapter, Mr. Maddaloni quotes from Dr. Ellis' *A Guide to Rational Living* (Prentice-Hall, 1961 ) a list of "irrational ideals" which interfere with "wholesome and rational living." It seems an excellent "list" to reproduce, for it blends philosophical analysis with the demonstrable in psychotherapy:

> 1. You should challenge the belief that it is a dire necessity for you to be loved or approved by almost everyone for almost everything you do. . . .
>
> 2. Try to *do* rather than to do *perfectly*. . . . Be ready to accept failures as undesirable but not dreadful—as having nothing whatever to do with your intrinsic value as a human being.
>
> 3. Get rid of the idea that certain people are bad, wicked, or villainous and that they should be severely blamed or punished for their sins. . . . Learn to distinguish between an individual's being *responsible* for his actions (which he frequently is

and should be) and being *blamed* for these actions (which he never should be). . . . Never confuse an individual with his acts, a person who acts badly with a bad *person.*

4. You should reject the hypothesis that human unhappiness is externally caused. . . . Instead, you should realize that most of your own misery is created by your own irrational thinking. . . .

5. You should rid yourself of the idea that if something is or may be dangerous or fearsome, you should be terribly occupied with and upset about it. . . .

6. Short-range hedonism, or the insistence on immediate gratification, is a senseless philosophy. . . . Although acquiring a considerable degree of self-discipline may seem unduly difficult, in the long run the "easy" and undisciplined way is the harder and less rewarding way and is clearly self-sabotaging.

7. You should surrender the idea that the past is all-important and that because something once strongly affected your life it should do so indefinitely. . . . Continual rethinking of your old assumptions and re-working of your past habits can help eradicate most of the pernicious influences from your childhood and adolescence.

8. You should give up the notion that people and things should be different from the way they are. . . .

9. You should combat the idea that maximum human happiness can be achieved by inertia and inaction or by passively and uncommittedly "enjoying yourself." Make a definite attempt to become vitally absorbed in some persons or things outside yourself; and find persons or things in which you can honestly be absorbed for their *own* sake rather than for the sake of being socially approved. In devoting yourself to any field of endeavor, try to choose a challenging, long-range project or area of work. Force yourself, by specific acts of courage, to take risks, to act against your own inertia, to be committedly *alive.*

Mr. Maddaloni's own conclusion follows naturally:

The mature mind sees freedom and equality of opportunity as essential, but dependent largely on the quality of mind, the world being a reflection of the state of mind of its people.

These are but some of the fruits of the mature mind. The essential thing is that to be free from immature feelings, we must utilize the natural powers that exist within us. As we gain self-understanding, we also earn the right to help others. To be fully alive, therefore, is to increase our awareness and insights, to make full use of our knowledge, and eventually to help make this a maturer and saner world.

# *COMMENTARY*
## INTO THE INTERSTICES!

ON pages 7-8, the writer of our lead article says that the moment of historical opportunity for applying Ralph Borsodi's ideas "seems to have passed by." But there are individual families all over the country who are using his conceptions, following the example he set personally and described in what ought to be an epoch-making book—*Flight from the City;* and there are enough of these families and other people to support two monthly papers devoted to aspects of self-reliant, decentralist living—*A Way Out,* and the *Green Revolution,* both published by the School of Living, Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio (subscription for both, $6.00) .

A society with life in it—one not "closed"—is a society with numerous footholds in the interstices for people who are determined to institute change. We have that kind of a society. As Arthur Harvey says, there is a lot of room in New Hampshire for people who want to go back to the land. And the loose-jointed economics of the pluralist society of the United States has plenty of openings in it for innovation and "creative" individual reform. Contrary to popular—which means unimaginative—impression, you don't have to have a lot of money to start something new. Only the people who are doing what has been done before have to raise a lot of money for their projects.

Take for example innovations in the press. For many of the aspects of constructive change, the press is the heart of the matter. Harvey, we are positive, has no money—only a mimeograph machine; and prejudiced as we are against mimeo print, we read his paper because it is worth reading. With it Harvey is doing more good than all the sophisticated liberals who tell you that nobody can start a newspaper without five million dollars. For they are doing exactly nothing. (*Greenleaf,* Raymond, N.H., $2.75 a year, 22 issues.)

Then there is that extraordinary phenomenon—Lyle Stuart's *Independent,* which actually breaks even. The September issue has sixteen pages (tabloid size) of personal reporting on the editor's latest visit to Cuba, illustrated by splendid photography. Also a professional evaluation of stories on Cuba in the commercial press. Nobody gave Stuart a pile of money. He earned it and used it to prove something about newspaper publishing: There is an audience for independent papers in the United States. Sample copies of the Cuban issue are four for a dollar, from *The Independent,* 239 Park Avenue South, New York 3, N.Y.

A new and apparently successful publishing venture: The Los Angeles *Free Press* a weekly inspired by the achievements of New York's *Village Voice.* The *Free Press* was started by another man without money—Art Kunkin. This paper will never make Kunkin rich, but it has already enriched his community. Subscription is $5 a year for 50 issues—-send it to 8226 Sunset Boulevard, Hollywood 46.

The point we are trying to make is that the future really depends upon grass-roots efforts of this sort. However small and even ineffectual they may seem to be, they represent what health we have now, as a free society. What is this health? It is not measured by any of the familiar indices, but by the ingenious use men make of the freedom they already possess. This is the only way that freedom can be increased. Many good things in life are a matter of forms and arrangements—but *not freedom.* The forms of freedom can never be anything more than the track left by the acts of free men. It is these that we must cherish and support, while we are figuring out our own paths and regions of freedom.

Further, the acts of individuals make the only liberating force which can, in time, alter the direction of the Big Institutions. Precisely because of the apathy of the mass, a truly active individual exercises an influence far beyond the apparent potentiality of a single man. The appropriate ratio to consider, in such questions, may be similar to that between germ cells and somatic cells in all physical organisms. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves

FRONTIERS OF KNOWLEDGE

THE collected essays of Jerome S. Bruner, *On Knowing: Essays for the Left Hand* (Harvard University Press, 1962), are not primarily on formal education but three paragraphs are directly applicable to matters often considered here. Dr. Bruner writes:

> I believe that education is the fundamental method of social change. Revolutions themselves are no better and are often less good than the ideas they embody and the means invented for their application. Change is swifter in our times than ever before in human history and news of it is almost instantaneous. If we are to be serious in the belief that school must be life itself and not merely preparation for life, then school must reflect the changes through which we are living.
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> The first implication of this belief is that means must be found to feed back into our schools the ever deepening insights that are developed on the frontiers of knowledge. This is an obvious point in science and mathematics, and continuing efforts are now being instituted to assure that new, more powerful, and often simpler ways of understanding find their way back into the classrooms of our primary and secondary schools. But it is equally important to have this constant refreshment from fields other than the sciences—where the frontiers of knowledge are not always the universities and research laboratories but political and social life, the arts, literary endeavor, and the rapidly changing business and industrial community. Everywhere there is change, and with change we are learning.
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> I see the need for a new type of institution, a new conception in curriculum. What we have not had and what we are beginning to recognize as needed is something that is perhaps best called an "institute for curriculum studies"—not one of them, but many. Let it be the place where scholars, scientists, men of affairs, and artists come together with talented teachers continually to revise and refresh our curriculums. It is an activity that transcends the limits of any of our particular university faculties—be they faculties of education, arts and science, medicine, or engineering. We have been negligent in coming to a sense of the quickening change of life in our time and its implications for the educational process. We have not shared with our teachers the benefits of new discovery.

Some practical proposals which relate to Dr. Bruner's statement are set forth by Henry Murray in his essay, "Unprecedented Evolutions" *(Daedalus*, Summer 1961). Dr. Murray observes:

> We are returning, as many students of history have noted, to the chaotic state of morals and morale that prevailed in the Roman Empire just previous to its decline and fall. We are in the throes, it is generally agreed, of a period of transition, searching for a resolving symbol, or ideal. What could it be?
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> My own unhesitating answer, the only basic, positive proposal in this paper—obvious as the earth and yet scarcely communicable in any words available to me—consists of the multifarious phenomena included in a concept which, with serious misgivings, I shall term *synthesism. Synthesism* means an evaluative stress—at a certain stage of development, the greatest evaluative stress—on the production and continuation of a synthesis (combination, creation, integration, union, federation, procession of developing reciprocities or transactions) particularly of opposites (positive and negative, male and female, contrary or antagonistic entities, groups or principles).

At the conclusion of his paper, Dr. Murray proposes how education might lessen international tensions:

> Establish an anthropological, social science institute, as an adjunct of the State Department, devoted to the collection, interpretation, codification, and transmission of knowledge about the peoples of other countries, especially Middle Eastern, African, Indonesian, and South American: (1) to serve as a center, clearing-house, and coordinator of numberless independent enterprises of this class that are being carried on in the field and at home, under the sponsorship, most commonly, of a university: (2) to serve as a center of instruction and preparation for suitable young men—chosen after six months training—who, after learning the language and customs of the people of a particular country, would live there as *they* do for a period of years, fulfilling one helpful function or another. This could be facilitated by bringing to the institute, as informants and as teachers of the given language appropriate representatives of each country who would live with the American students in dormitories during their

> period of residence. This plan comes out of information I have received to the effect that hundreds of Americans involved in various foreign aid programs have not been sufficiently prepared linguistically, ideologically, or psychologically, to make the most of the opportunities that are offered them; to respect and win the respect of those with whom they live, to influence them in beneficial ways.

These suggestions supplement Dr. Murray's broad recommendation of a philosophy of "synthesism," and he is well aware that such programs will never be initiated except by men of wide philosophical awareness. The frontiers of knowledge need inward as well as outward expansion, and the conception of what a man is and of what he is inwardly capable is the essence of the educative enterprise. Dr. Bruner has an excellent passage on this point:

> It is patent that the view one takes of man affects profoundly one's standard of what is humanly possible. And it is by the measure of such a standard that we establish our laws, set our aspirations for learning, and judge the fitness of men's acts. It is no surprise, then, that those who govern must perforce be jealous guardians of man's ideas about man, for the structure of government rests upon an uneasy consensus about human nature and human wants. The idea of man is of the order of *res publica*, and, by virtue of its public status, it is an idea that is not subject to change without public debate. The behavioral scientist, as some insist on calling him, may propose, but it is the society at large that disposes. Nor is it simply a matter of public concern. For man as individual has a deep and emotional investment in his image of himself.

# *FRONTIERS*

## Challenge to Humanism

WITH a candor wholly consistent with its principles, the *Humanist*, magazine of the American Humanist Association, prints in its May-June issue a criticism of present-day Humanism in the form of a reader's explanation of why he prefers not to join the Association. It is part of the promise of the Humanist movement that it welcomes challenges of this sort.

Early in his discussion, this contributor, Gregory Armstrong, who is an editor with a New York publishing house, proposes that Humanism has not yet differentiated itself from the characteristic failures of the age. Like other humanitarian efforts, Humanism, he says, "seems to have become fatally infected with the kind of well-meaning impotence and ineffectuality which is endemic to idealistic organizations." Mr. Armstrong continues:

> As we all seem to realize without ever giving the climate of our modern society its proper name, we exist in the throes of a kind of nihilism. Our whole society waits without any genuine expectation, in this time of science and the cold war when everything conspires to convince the people of their insignificance, for some deliverance from its uncertain condition. They wait for something which can assume the role of the religions of the past, for something which can orient them in the modern world and for something which can make the fact of their humanity meaningful once more.
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> It is true that religion contends that it continues to perform this function, but in fact it seems to remain only for the lack of something to replace it and millions of people seem to continue to worship in almost complete awareness of its fraudulence, for whatever comfort this kind of half-conscious duplicity can offer.
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> This situation should not be a surprise to us, despite the emphasis that has been placed on the rewards of rationalism. Even apart from the evidence of our own senses, we know that man has been dedicated almost since the origin of his species to the essentially gratuitous act of discovering better reasons for his existence than the mere fact of man himself. We know that man has always believed in his gods in order to believe in himself. Our modern problem is that now, without his gods and in the presence of a massive scientific dissection of his soul, his body, his universe and his fate, in the presence of a myriad of disturbing, degrading facts about his nature, man's belief in himself is beginning to disappear altogether.

For the few words involved, Mr. Armstrong here offers what seems a remarkably accurate diagnosis. The third paragraph of the passage quoted above adds a kind of "dynamic" to Herbert Marcuse's idea of "one-dimensional man," or rather, it gives a hint as to the reason for the collapse into one-dimensional man. We are no longer able to provide those "better reasons" for our existence than the mundane ones which are factually before us, all the time. Mr. Armstrong proposes that we have always believed in gods in order to believe in ourselves, suggesting that modern skepticism has made such beliefs impossible. So there is this practical question: Can we do without gods? Or: Is there a kind of gods which Humanism can tolerate without compromise?

Obviously, answers of any use at all will depend upon clarifying what is meant by "gods." Let us eliminate a lot of problems and argument by taking the word "gods" literally—as a *plural* noun. This means forgetting about all the logical and moral difficulties created by the single omnipotent God of Theism. A polytheistic theory has many advantages over any form of monotheism.

But what is the content of "gods"? The simplest answer would be to say that gods are *creative* beings. They originate. They have identity as individuals. Do they err? Well, the Greek Gods did. Why, if the gods err, is their name filled with honorific distinction?

The hope of making short answers ends with this last question. You can say that the gods move and inspire by reason of their power, their magnificence, their nobility, their awareness of the transcendence in themselves—but the meaning of all such statements has to be spelled out at length.

In any event, the reasons we give for our admiration of the gods turn out to be anthropomorphic, since we honor in the gods what we also honor in men. Then we say that men with these qualities are god-like. So gods, on this basis, are a transcendent species of men. And of course, both gods and men are "creative."

Well a paragraph of rhetoric is not going to lift human beings from the one-dimensionality of the present, but what is at least possible is that thinking about the god-like in man may serve as an antidote to the "myriad of disturbing, degrading facts about his nature," on which we have been concentrating for a century or more, in the name of "objective reality."

There are various ways of making this point. In "Children" for last week, Joseph Campbell was quoted as saying:

> Wherever the poetry of myth is interpreted as biography, history, or science, it is killed. The living images become only remote facts of a distant time or sky. Furthermore, it is never difficult to demonstrate that as science and history mythology is absurd. When a civilization begins to reinterpret its mythology in this way, the life goes out of it, temples become museums, and the link between the two perspectives is dissolved. And our lead article of last week suggested:
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> For there to be a normative scale of human progress, its highest point has to be hidden in some kind of metaphysical distance. In antiquity, the highest norms were set by fabulous heroes . . . all "super-human," but their magnificent stature became by introversion the seed of an indomitable spirit in men. . . . The human world exists only in virtue of its transcending archetype.

Is there an archetype of greatness and transcendence which Humanists might accept? Could the objectionable features of supernaturalism be kept out of it? If we had to write out a systematic answer to these questions, we would probably reread W. Macneile Dixon's *The Human Situation,* to help generate the imaginative resources such an answer would require, and turn, also, to the works of A. H. Maslow, for an extension of a similar view of man, although in another direction and another conceptual vocabulary.

Mr. Armstrong puts his own recommendations in the form of a challenge. Humanism, he says, "can seize the opportunity presented by the obsolescence of religion and the confusion of modern man to become the universal faith of man, subsuming every other creed of man beneath it." He invites Humanism to some modern Labors of Hercules and other heroic enterprises:

> . . . it is not hard to identify the common enemies of humanity and not insuperably difficult to discover ways to combat them; to unmask the hypocrisies of political parties, the inevitable debasement of the truth that issues from any limited partisanship; to combat all the totalitarian forces that offer themselves so seductively to man; to combat all the destructive forces of irrationality; to fight against the excesses of our media of communication, to work against the inhuman uses of science, to work against capital punishment and the barbarism of our penal system and our mental institutions, to resist the idea that consumption is the only virtue; to work toward the humanization of man's daily work; to combat all the varied and increasingly subtle forms of psychological and social brutalities that assail man, to expose all the fraudulent panaceas that offer themselves so persuasively to man; to become a social and political force above party and bias, and to prepare the way for the new age and the new society which is to come. . . .

Apparently, the Humanists have real need of a "god" theory of human beings, or at least a half-god theory. It will certainly take men of godlike courage and persistence to carry out the program outlined by this writer.