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THE ART OF LIVING

> Nearly all our miseries in life come from our false notions of what is actually happening to us. Thus to judge events sanely is a great step toward happiness.
>
> STENDHAL

> There have never been people who know but do not act. Those who are supposed to know, but do not act, simply do not know.
>
> WANG YANG-MING

THERE is but one truly serious philosophical problem, and that is suicide."[1] So says Camus. On this point the modern Frenchman reflects Socrates' death-hour thought. The *Phaedo* finds Socrates discussing immortality with his companions. There is a sense of urgency in this discussion because the participants know that it will end in Socrates' death.

Socrates claims that anyone "who is properly grounded in philosophy" will be willing to die. "However, he will hardly do himself violence, because they say it is not legitimate."[2] Why? Camus answers: "In a sense, and as in melodrama, killing yourself amounts to confessing. It is confessing that life is too much for you or that you do not understand it."[3]

But suicide is possible in many forms. I do not mean the forms in which we may bring the life-functions of the body to a standstill—the bullets, poisons, or other methods we may use. That is but one form of suicide. We can commit suicide in other ways: we can kill the mind and the heart, while allowing the body to run out its days. Once we understand this elementary point, Camus' words become clear: the fundamental philosophical question *is* suicide.

Both Plato and Camus find suicide illegitimate. Camus' reason has already been given. Plato's view is obscure, but, hazarding an oversimplified guess, I think he too finds suicide a confession that life is too much for us. Yet for Plato such a confession is fruitless: life cannot be too much for us simply because we are life. I will leave the implications of this last curious statement to your own thought.

It is my view that the major function of education, especially the so-called liberal arts education, is the prevention of suicide in any form.

Less than twenty-five years ago, the first modern computer began serious operations. The reckless stream of data that threatened to bury those who contribute to it was transformed into a flood which promises to turn the earth into a gigantic file cabinet. But fortunately, the computer stores its own waters. This feat should give us cause to rejoice, for the computer has put us in the position to acquire and make use of the data we need for technological progress, including the technology of social behavior.

One might have guessed that the computer would have removed data from our minds and hands, leaving us to contemplate the metaphysical questions, which, whether we like to admit it or not, are the important questions for *homo sapiens.*

But as in any rite, the elevation of the computer, a profane Eucharist, has effected a transubstantiation which permeates our whole culture. The most curious feature of transubstantiation is that it involves us totally in the rite. Rather than being freed from data, we are plunged totally into them. Data have most marvellously been transformed—while remaining to all appearance mere data—into final truth and light.

The rather horrifying process I am referring to has been in the making for a long time, it is usually blamed upon science, because science is concerned with precision and detail. But this view is unhappy for two reasons: (1) Science is often delightfully "metaphysical," for the data of science

emerge from and are plugged into grandiose conceptions of the universe, *e.g.*, those of Newton and Einstein; and (2) it is a foolish error to assume that one who deals with metaphysical problems is necessarily imprecise. Such an assumption is merely a prejudice of the age.

The computer is the symbol of the process of immersion in data. This immersion is a kind of suicide.

The whole secular world is engaged in the form of suicide here briefly delineated; education has its own peculiar reflection of this suicide.

The child of three or four years is a questing organism. He has data pouring in upon him and delights in them, but he delights in them because of his impulse for explanations. "Why is the sun called the 'sun'?" "Why is grass green?" And that bane of Sunday school teachers: "Where did God come from?" By the time this same child is in college, he seldom asks such questions. Rather, he gathers data and grades and degrees. He has become part of the ritual.

While each discipline has its own unique data to transmit, the goal of education is—or ought to be—to teach people to think. That is why we say platitudinously that one's education never ceases, for no matter how well one thinks, one can think better. The data we transmit are but the tools of thought, and hence of secondary importance. Yet through a process psychologists commonly call "negative reinforcement" our educational institutions turn the mind of the child from reflection on data to the data themselves. We pretend that there are only data. The teacher who is more concerned that Johnny is neat and clean, that he has his math book open during the part of the day devoted to math, that he not disturb the others who are doing these "good" things, than whether or not Johnny is asking questions is an enemy of education. As the devil symbolizes that which we would root out of ourselves, such a teacher symbolizes what we must root out of education. That teacher is the devil simply because that teacher invites us to suicide.

To those who object that we produce geniuses in our colleges, I must reply that a careful examination of the facts will show that usually geniuses are geniuses in spite of—not because of—our educational system. In fact, one wonders how many geniuses we have ground into mediocre minds.

I have suggested that our focus in professional educational institutions has been in a direction which is inimical to those very educational goals we profess. It is incumbent on me to offer—if I may use an expression of the age—a visible alternative.

Superficial readers will find a rather paradoxical theme throughout Plato's works. While Socrates insists that virtue is the only worthwhile goal of human endeavor, he displays a tenacious scepticism of anyone who claims to teach virtue. Protagoras, for instance, makes such a claim in the dialogue bearing his name, but by the time the dialogue is finished, he has asserted the opposite view—that virtue cannot be taught.

What then can this mysterious virtue be? We find in the dialogue that each art has its own virtue: shoemaking, horse-training, ship-building, statesmanship, poetry—to use Socrates' own examples. "Virtue" here means "excellence." Although I cannot define excellence in these arts, I can recognize it. Now Socrates maintains that there is an art of living, but we should not conclude that the art of living is the genus of which the specific arts are species. Rather Socrates agrees with his near contemporary Confucius: the art of living should be pursued without special concern for pursuing the other arts, for to worry overmuch about, say, excellence in ship-building will be to detract from devotion to excellence in living. For Socrates, the man who pursues virtue in the art of living is the philosopher; for Confucius, he is the gentleman. The same notion can be found in a degenerate form today, for the gentleman is too refined to learn any practical art. Refinement is the gutted

hulk of excellence, left behind when Socratic virtue became pietistic conventionalism.

Educational institutions are not much concerned today with Socratic virtue. Indeed, one oft-avowed purpose of liberal arts colleges, and also primary and secondary schools, is the production—I use that word deliberately—of "good citizens" or "productive members of the community." But we must not confuse the virtue here sought after with Socratic virtue. This latter-day virtue is Puritanical virtue, that is, strict rule-governed behavior that conforms to an acceptable range of social behavior. Although there may be conventions of excellence, excellence is not achieved by dutiful adherence to conventions. The person who attains to excellence may not defy convention, but he has certainly transcended convention.

The only questions raised regarding primary and secondary schools are (1) Are pupils being made into good citizens? and (2) Are they being fed sufficient data? Seldom are these schools asked to give evidence of having shown their pupils how to think.

Colleges may be asked a third question: Are students being made enthusiastic about being good citizens and gaining data? Once again, little more is asked.

We already implicitly suggested why educational institutions are little concerned with Socratic virtue when we recalled that Socrates seriously doubted that virtue can be taught: experimental psychologists, especially those noted for a seemingly bizarre interest in rats, can best tell us how to do that. It is far easier to teach people to follow rules than it is to teach people what cannot be taught.

But my claim is that liberal arts colleges should be concerned with Socratic virtue. Concern with Puritanical virtue is a waste of energy, for a person can handle the question of conventional behavior within the context of the struggle to attain excellence. Nor do I have a grudge against data—I have already said that data are necessary tools for development of the individual. But I *do* have much against the focus colleges have on data. To take the tool for its purpose is to worship the idol while forgetting the divinity the idol represents. Even Einstein forgot data like the speed of light; he pointed out that he could find that datum in any encyclopaedia and hence had no need to clutter his mind with it: his mind had more important business than warehousing data.

The struggle felt in colleges today has a strictly academic side. Radical critics of colleges demand that courses be relevant. But relevant to what? After all, courses required in a major are relevant to that major and other courses are relevant to obtaining degrees. Of course, there are occasionally bad teachers and bad courses, but that is to be expected. What is this relevance that is being demanded? To my mind, the critics' reply is clear: relevance to life.

College spokesmen respond—and any educator may be a college spokesman—that students are not in a very good position to discern what is relevant. Colleges cannot attempt to be relevant to fad, momentary *mores* or adolescent fashion, for such an attempt to be relevant would end in a total failure to educate.

Both sides have a point. So long as we can distinguish between wise men and fools, I am willing to affirm in the face of currently popular cynicism that there is an art of living. Yet excellence in that art does not consist in catering to a passing life-style. We who educate must come to understand, however, that relevance to life is not necessarily relevance to Fortran 440 or relevance to degrees awarded on the basis of a quantitative analysis of memorized data. I side here with the often inarticulate, occasionally misguided; but basically sound impulse of the critic.

How does a college become relevant? How does a college teach the art of living? In attempting to answer these questions, which I take

to be one question, I believe that my comments apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to primary and secondary schools.

I realize that some people believe that the art of living is something like home economics. This prejudice results from two factors: (1) we have left the art of living to mushy sentimentalizers and sermonizers—that people like Dale Carnegie and Norman Vincent Peale have taken over the field is our fault, not theirs; (2) we have totally succumbed to the principle that only data and rules can be taught. Once we break free of the cynicism which pretends to justifiably dismiss the question of the art of living, we can see that home economics is closer to our standard curricula than it is to the art of living. We sophisticates dislike home economics because we find it absurd to receive credits and grades for meal-planning and baking bread. But I submit that this is not quite as absurd as receiving credits and grades for philosophizing or painting. Home economics centers on data and rules and consequently fits nicely into our present curricula.

The second factor I claimed contributed to a bad name for the idea of an art of living has some merit. That factor was belief that only data and rules can be taught. Socrates would agree, given the currently normal sense of the word "teach," for by "teach" we usually mean "convey data" and "explain rules."

So let us begin by admitting that the art of living cannot be taught—in this sense of "teach." What then are teachers to do?

The world would not come to an end if we stopped calling ourselves "teachers," although what we call ourselves is not important. An examination of the lives of great teachers, such as Confucius, Socrates and Plato, and an examination of the most interesting—if not entirely successful—modern teaching experiments, such as the Montessori system and Summerhill, reveal that the best teachers are not those who are data-givers and rule-mongers, but those who function as an occasion for learning. Every great teacher in history has used this method, be it the form of the contrary injunctions of Confucius, the crucially-timed noble silence of the Buddha, the non-dogmatic parable of Jesus, or the injunction "Know Thyself!" of Socrates. The philosopher, experimental biologist and inventor of analytic geometry, Descartes, knew this much. He counted his teachers as worthless because they taught only rules and data, but not how to think. So also Einstein; the fact he flunked high school algebra did not seem to *discredit him.*

To function as the occasion for learning is a far more difficult task than to teach data and rules. It demands that we forget our own egos and become sensitive to the individual student. Until we can say the right thing at the right time, until we can be silent at the right time, any teaching of the art of living will be by accident. Consequently, we will have to brush up on this subject a little ourselves.

The cynic will look at the average college student and say: "Do you really believe that that uninspirable creature contains his own mechanism for learning?" My answer is that after systematically eroding those mechanisms for at least twelve years, we cannot hold up the present college student as proof of anything except the failure of our own educational procedure. Look rather at the inquisitive three-year old. Clearly, our task is to preserve and help him make use of what he has, not to give him new mechanisms.

While I have outlined *in abstracto* the function of the teacher, I have not told the teacher how to perform this function. I can't. The reason why I can't will be clear after we discuss what the art of living consists in. But to put the matter succinctly, there are no rules to follow to be a good teacher. Hence the question "How to become a good teacher?" is the wrong question: it asks what cannot be given. It asks for data and rules. While such information may provide helpful tools, these are not the heart of the matter.

Now, in what does the art of living consist? While the issue has been illuminated in various

ways by Western writers from Plato to Robert M. Hutchins and Paul Goodman, I find the answer nicely expressed by the ancients—those people who supposedly did not know anything important—and by the Chinese ancients at that. I am speaking of Confucius and Lao-tse, both of whom lived roughly in the fifth century B.C.

Lao-tse was a keen observer of human behavior. He noticed that humans learn by imitation, and that creativity comes with successful imitation. I will not be a good artist, historian, computer analyst or what have you unless I master at least some techniques. Mastery of technique is the product of imitation, either imitation of others or of past performances of my own. But Lao-tse clearly saw that imitation was not enough. Something more is needed.

Lao-tse developed the concept of *wu wei.* The Chinese character for *wu* means "there is not" in the sense of "*il n'y a pas,"* and for *Wei,* "doing, making." The source of the whole of phenomenal existence for him was Tao; all things were modeled on and governed by Tao. But Tao was modeled on nothing: it was spontaneous. Hence spontaneity became an important notion for Lao-tse. Of course we moderns are a little suspicious of metaphysics. Let me translate Lao-tse's notion into psychological jargon: whether or not it is still metaphysics can be decided whenever we decide whether or not psychology is metaphysics. There is no denying that the human being is a product of his heredity and his environment. What has shocked those of us who believe in the dignity of man is just how much man is governed by his heredity and environment. So far Lao-tse man as a part of the phenomenal world is utterly at the mercy of that world. The well-springs of our being are beyond our control, or, to sound more clinical, the factors that are most crucial in moulding our character are beyond our control. Modern psychoanalytic theorists have hit upon the notion that freedom consists not in denying these formative conditions, but in accepting them and learning to act spontaneously within them. So again for Lao-tse: the spontaneous man is the wise, effective and adjusted man.

But how does one become adjusted? Lao-tse says "Tao invariably takes no action, and yet there is nothing left undone."[4] "Act without action. Do without ado."[5] This paradoxical injunction may boggle those of us who are not accustomed to delighting in paradox, but a simple example may help. There are two types of typists in the world: those who use the Columbus system, in which the fingers painfully search for a place to land, and those for whom typing is a second nature. Which group is most obviously engaged in activity? Those whose minds are on the text and not the typewriter engage, so far as typing is at issue, in "actionless action."

Take another example. Most of us learned how to drive a car. While learning, we had to remember where the brake was, remember the proper order in which gears are to be engaged, concentrate on the speed so that we would know when to shift, keep an eye out for traffic lights and signs, watch the road, keep an eye on the rear-view mirrors, watch for cars and pedestrians, etc. etc. But we no longer have to concentrate on such things: driving has become second nature and we drive far better without thinking about it than the learner who concentrates with such intensity that sweat pours off his brow. To drive as a master is to engage in actionless activity. When I get in a car, I don't have to do anything; I drive spontaneously.

When I reach for a cup of coffee I don't have to do anything. I want the coffee and my arm, hand, and mouth do what is necessary to bring the coffee to my taste buds.

But notice: all these skills had to be learned. The baby must learn even to reach, to co-ordinate hand and eye. To master such skills is to become capable of actionless action. When I have mastered them, Lao-tse would say I do them *wu wei,* spontaneously.

Confucius adds another dimension to the notion of *wu wei.* Not only do we need to act *wu wei,* but we must be *wu wei.* In the language of Confucius, one must take a stance. He said, "He who rules by moral force is like the pole-star, which remains in its place while all the lesser stars do homage to it."[6] All cultures with any astronomical inclinations have ordered the heavens around the pole-star. But the pole-star is not a bright, or otherwise unusual star. But its stance—its location—is such that the heavens are naturally organized around it.

Our personalities are our stances. On the face of it, many of us have miserable stances. If one has taken a firm stance, he will be *wu wei,* spontaneous, and hence not suffer neuroses and frustration. We are frustrated because our stance doesn't fit the world; we are neurotic because we haven't taken a clear and stable stance. We are not *wu wei.*

All this talk relates to the art of living most directly. The art of living consists in being and acting *wu wei.* And this, I suggest, is the primary concern of education: to take what the individual has and help him to become and behave *wu wei.*

The extraordinary sensitivity I am requiring of teachers is certainly a stiff demand. But we teachers are quite used to thinking of ourselves as special; I am only demanding that we live up to our own image.

So I suggest that it is time to stop worrying about credits, grading-systems, majors, programs, tests and papers, and start looking at students. These other trivial matters will fall into place once the student is seen.

To those who say that many teachers do what I here suggest, I can only answer, without malice and without gloating, that many teachers should not be teaching. Those who want to run a college like a factory should be working in factories.

What I have tried to do in this presentation has been to present a collage of considerations about education which are worth thinking about. Each point needs to be contemplated in depth. So my presentation is, if successful, only seminal. I hope that my collage is not simply chaos.

My use of both ancient and modern sources betrays my belief that insights have not occurred only in this century. Confucius said, "He who by reanimating the Old can gain knowledge of the New is fit to be a teacher."[7] Hopefully, I have tried to do a little reanimating.

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NOTES

1. Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays* (New York, 1955) p, 3.
2. Plato, *Phaedo,* p. 610 (Tredernnick translation).
3. Camus, p. 5.
4. *Tao-te Ching,* 37, Chan Translation.
5. *Tao-te Ching,* 63.
6. Confucius, *Analects,* II, 1, Waley translation.
7. Confucius, *Analects,* II, 11, Waley translation.

REVIEW

WHO CAN GO HOME AGAIN?

THIRTY years ago, the distinguished Harvard anthropologist, Clyde Kluckhohn, after reviewing hundreds of recently published papers in his field, reproached his colleagues by saying that he found almost no consideration of integrating theory. The research was largely devoted to the collection of facts, as though their interrelation and meaning had no importance. "To suggest," he said, "that something is theoretical is to suggest that it is slightly obscene." Science, he added, consists of knowledge as well as of information, and to stop with the accumulation of "facts" is "a form of intellectual cowardice."

This is more or less the counsel offered to Indian archaeologists by S. C. Malik in his monograph, *Indian Civilization—The Formative Period*, published last year by the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in Simla. Subtitled "A Study of Archaeology as Anthropology," this work describes the origins of archaeology in India, surveys its development, and after an account of the limitations of its methods proposes reforms in terms of the conceptual models of Western anthropologists. The book is addressed to a profession, not to the general reader. Dr. Malik's intention is to suggest approaches that will bring Indian archaeology to greater maturity as a branch of the social sciences; his hope is that by this means Indian archaeological research will contribute insights of enduring value to man's knowledge of man, becoming "able to relate itself to the present growth and understanding of life and to the nature of reality itself." In the present, Dr. Malik finds Indian archaeology "at a static 'intellectual' level because it continues to use 19th-century concepts, by a steady accumulation of data, and is too involved with chronology and taxonomic schemes."

Early in his introduction, discussing archaeology as essentially study of the past, he says:

> The approach to the problem of the past, as has been dealt with by students of philosophy, is governed by our perceptual conceptual and metaphysical reproductions of the external world. An examination of the metaphysical aspects of this problem is not possible in this context since these exist independently of any proofs.

Whether fruitful scientific inquiry can be pursued without deliberately sought metaphysical guidance is a question that needs consideration. One is reminded of the somewhat different reason given by William James for avoiding metaphysics in his *Principles of Psychology.* He decided to limit himself to "physiological psychology," he said, because "To work an hypothesis 'for all it is worth' is the real, and often the only, way to prove its insufficiency." He believed that psychology was still a very immature science, and that when its Galileo and its Lavoisier came along, "the necessities of the case will make them metaphysical." But James did not feel ready, himself, to demonstrate this necessity. He would rather make a beginning at illustrating the insufficiency of everything else.

Well, James's plan had plausibility, but it didn't work. There is a vast schism, today, in modern psychology, dividing the behaviorists from the humanistic psychologists, and even though this split is hardly twenty years old, in terms of open alignments, it is clear that the change has come more from deep and suddenly felt moral hungers than from an orderly and "logical" development of psychological science.

Might not this prove true, also, for other branches of science dealing with man? In Western science, at any rate, some curious "mutations" are now going on, and it is not too much to say that there are germs of a metaphysical inspiration behind them. Take for example the later work of Robert Redfield, a man whom Dr. Malik often cites as an exemplar of the practice of science. Pervading Redfield's book, *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (Cornell University Press, 1953), is a profound theme of comparison between the ancient and the modern world views. He shows that all the world, excepting only the modern Western nations, believed in the concept of "immanent justice," with extensive consequences in the way people lived their lives, while for modern man "the universe loses its moral character." He adds that today "ethics and religion

struggle in one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man."

Now this, of course, can be variously interpreted, but there is an essential warmth in Redfield, making the reader aware of the author's disenchantment with the vast separation from Nature accomplished by the "conquest" idea of knowledge and its alienating cultural effects. Today such symptoms of moral awakening are all about in the sciences. It is as though, in the middle of things, deep feelings of "insufficiency" are born in the most thoughtful among the specialists in research. They are like Prodigal Sons who hear, with increasing intensity, a far-off call to *come home.*

But where or what is "home"? All the maps have been changed and the old signposts are misleading. Nor can, say, Western historians go back to Augustine and Orosius. Their trained and impartial minds won't let them. "Tradition" is simply not good enough. Toynbee has his problems with the Christian heritage. The eighteenth-century critique still applies. But you can see from the books coming out each year and from scores of papers in semi-popular journals that an energetic revolution against "value-free" science is gathering strength.

How, one wonders, will Indian scientists begin to "go home" again? Curiously, they seem still to be looking to "the West," while Western scientists are themselves having long thoughts about "the East"! There is a sense in which Gandhi recognized India's need to find her own resources and met it in his conceptions of cultural reform and regeneration, and in his proposals for Indian education.

How might today's Indian scholars avail themselves of the Gandhian inspiration without throwing overboard what is of value in Western "objectivity"? Indeed, if we ask this, the real question becomes: What, in terms of timeless values, is the true contribution of European civilization? What of European influence should India jettison, while making clear what should be preserved?

There can be no immediate answer to such questions. We think of one work by an Indian social scientist, Sugata Dasgupta's *Social Work and Social Change* (Porter Sargent, 1968), in which the Gandhian influence is consistently discernible, along with the temper of scientific method. This seems one kind of "going home."

More overt is Vinoba Bhave's identification of today's Sarvodayites as *Satya-Yuga-karis*—pioneers who work to restore, to bring back the Golden Age. That, surely, is a "going home" in the classical sense.

It is evident from Joan Bondurant's detailed discussion of this idea that it is far more than a poetic allusion for Vinoba. In her paper, "Traditional Polity and the Dynamics of Change in India" (*Human Organization*, Spring, 1963), Miss Bondurant shows that Vinoba conceives the Sarvodaya movement as a revival of ancestral Indian tradition. She writes:

> . . . we find a remarkable number of social and political innovators pointing to Hinduism and asserting that nowhere else is there a degree of freedom so great as in the traditional Hindu structure. Redefining, reinterpreting, this group asserts that a new age—*satya yuga*—is now upon us and that this age is egalitarian. Vinoba has described his ideal society as one in which functions, qualities and positions are not hierarchical or divided between different categories of men. In a *Sarvodaya* society, he asserts, every individual will have to learn to combine in himself the qualities of the *brahman,* a *ksatriya,* a *vaisya,* and a *shudra.*

This is a dramatic example of the revival and reinterpretation of ancient truth now going on, quickened in its spread by the increasing excellence of modern communications and library facilities. If this learning from the past continues, the "modern" may eventually be represented by a new freedom from the "latest" opinions, even as it once meant freedom from yesterday's opinions. And then the question will be, in regard to the past philosophical conceptions: Are they only "data," or are they *both* data and inspiration?

COMMENTARY
RENEWAL OF THE QUEST

THE restoration of subjectivity to the sciences has an inevitably transforming effect on the way historical investigations are pursued. Among those who study ancient Eastern thought, the new spirit first became plain in the work of Heinrich Zimmer, whose scholarship has the breath of life in it. This current of influence was greatly expanded by Zimmer's editor, Joseph Campbell, whose books became a vital resource for anyone engaged in the revival of the quest for self-knowledge. Such works, joining with similar surges of philosophizing inquiry in other fields, make clear reply to the question which ends this week's Review. The inspiration found by modern man in ancient philosophy is already more important than the "data" it supplies to scholarship.

An interesting illustration of the importance of this question is provided by the recently published *Socio-Economic Change in India* (Affiliated East-West Press, New Delhi), edited by Charles P. Loomis and Zona K. Loomis. This volume reports on a seminar participated in by both Indian and Western scholars, considering Max Weber's views on the effects of Indian religion on social and industrial progress. All sorts of prickly problems arise. How much "objectivity" is in order? Did Weber *understand* Indian religion? Is industrialism the great thing that many people suppose it to be, and should it now be sought for India with the fervor of, say, its nineteenth-century European and American enthusiasts? The relativities raised by such a question seem inexhaustible. What would a man like Vinoba say about all this; or would he refuse to comment, and if so, why? The very ground of the conventional practice of the sciences is under suspicion today. Serious criticism cannot escape the responsibility of pointing this out.

As postscript to this week's "Children," we should add that Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three* is the first of a series of five wonderful tales about the mythical kingdom of Prydain. The last book, *The High King*, brings the cycle of Taran's wanderings to a climax and fitting conclusion. The symbolism of these stories rings true throughout and we confess to enjoying them fully as much, and perhaps more, than would younger readers.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TRUTH IN CHILDREN'S LONGINGS

THAT "memories of childhood are important emotional underpinnings of modern man's life, and are to be laughed away or disregarded at our peril and great loss," is the conclusion of a study made at M.I.T. some years ago, and reported by Grady Clay in his contribution to *The Subversive Science* (see MANAS for July 23, p. 2). The memories, in this case, were of scenes of the outdoor environment—grass, trees, hills, streams, woodsy places. These, the study suggested, are essential to a healthy life in later years, and the distortions which result when they are absent from childhood experience have hardly been measured. Modern real estate developments, the research went on to indicate, often seem designed to frustrate natural human longing, and today's city dweller, it also found, accommodates by feeling as though "a mild civic nausea were a normal burden of man's existence."

In the area of the external environment, human longing seems a natural measure of the good. Is this also true, one wonders, of the healthful mental environment? Years ago a psychologist discovered that children denied fairy tales and other forms of fantasy invariably invented their own—as though they could not survive without it. What does this tell us about children?

Or how, for example, should we regard the immense popularity of Tolkien's Ring books, a few years ago, capturing practically an entire generation of the young, and even some not so young readers? What long-denied hungers did the stories about the Hobbits satisfy?

"Escape" is an inadequate explanation. There is more to the theme of *quest* than getting away from it all. The invitation is rather for getting *to* something worth doing—like seeking the Golden Fleece, the Nibelungen Hoard, the Holy Grail. The Hobbits lived in a magical world, and children give up the magical world of childhood only by a decline into adulthood, involving paralysis of the imagination. Some day, perhaps, the adult world will regain its understanding of natural magic as belonging to a now lost plateau of human life. Already *synergy*, in the understanding of Ruth Benedict and A. H. Maslow, seems a close relative of some of the ancient beliefs in wonder-working. Synergy, of course, works according to rules; but then, so did ancient magic before it fell among thieves. Prayer was once invocation. Anyway, the magic in the world of the Hobbits was strictly according to rules. Its miracles came from knowledge of hidden laws, never from breaking them.

Frodo is a hero any child or young person can identify with. He moves from joyous fulfillment to ordeal, and is alone and not alone in his struggles just as we all are. His wise and strong friends have their troubles, just as ours do. Frodo gets help, but is also thrown back on himself. He feels quavery and unprepared, but he keeps going. He makes it—*just*. He has providential good fortune, but you feel that somehow it was coming to him and wasn't really luck. The habit of being friendly and useful will sometimes see a man through situations in which everything else goes out of control.

Well, the events in the world of the Hobbits all fit together to make a wonderful world of meaning—a light of meaning always shines through the trees, even in very dark forests. There are happy, ordinary times, too, for everybody, along with some very bad times. But no Hobbit is ever a *surd.* Nature and the world and other people are not alien presences, and life is not filled with a lot of senseless things that can never be understood. Things and events all play a part; everybody has a role; and some great drama is slowly working its way to the surface.

There is the excitement of the strange and unexpected, yet at the same time the reader has a profound sense of the order behind it all. There are beings with great but limited power for good,

and other "entities" who seem distillations of evil, but there are rules for everybody. People make their decisions according to their understanding or their ignorance of the rules. There isn't any supernatural power who can suspend the rules, to let people off from paying for their mistakes; everything is the way it ought to be.

A lovely book for children—not a new one—with similar appeal is Lloyd Alexander's *The Book of Three* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1964). Based, the author tells us, on Welsh mythology, it has the same sort of fascination as Tolkien's tales, but this story seems entirely original and shouldn't be compared with any other.

It is about a boy, Taran, who lives in an old kingdom under the care of a chubby oldster he doesn't quite appreciate until the end, when he finds out about the exploits of his balding guardian. Taran doesn't so much go looking for adventure; it comes after him, taking him away from his chores on the farm. He gets tangled up, bit by bit, with troubles and encounters that start out by seeming way over his head. Then common things get shined up into wonderful tools and weapons. The boy doesn't know his own strength, but a hidden identity makes its demands and courage and persistence gradually begin to show.

For some reason or other, the best stories involving quest always have the feeling of a medieval setting. Perhaps the symbolism is more effective because of the simplicity of those days. In his wanderings Taran meets a wise man:

> "Not asleep?" Medwyn asked. "A restless night is no way to begin a journey."
>
> "It is a journey I am eager to end," Taran said. "There are times when I fear I shall never see Caer Dallben again."
>
> "It is not given to men to know the ends of their journeys," Medwyn answered. "It may be that you will never return to the places dearest to you. But how can that matter, if what you must do is here and now?"
>
> "I think," said Taran longingly, "that if I knew I were not to see my own home again, I would be happy to stay in this valley."
>
> "Your heart is young and unformed," Medwyn said. "Yet if I read it well, you are one of the few I would welcome here. Indeed, you may stay if you so choose. Surely you can entrust your task to friends."
>
> "No," said Taran, after a long pause, "I have taken it on myself through my own choice."
>
> "If that is so," answered Medwyn, "then you can give it up through your own choice."
>
> From all over the valley it seemed to Taran there came voices urging him to remain. The hemlocks whispered of rest and peace; the lake spoke of sunlight lingering in its depths, the joy of otters at their games. He turned away.
>
> "No," he said quickly, "my decision was made long before
>
> "Then," Medwyn answered gently, "so be it." He put a hand on Taran's brow. "I grant you all that you will allow me to grant: a night's rest. Sleep well."

Somehow, this seems to have the essence of the book in it. Taran's friends watch and wait; they do for him what he will allow; what he has already become, they help him to fulfill.

FRONTIERS

A Practical Service

A NEW periodical, *Vocations for Social Change,* identifies itself with a statement in its eleventh (May-June) issue:

> Vocations for Social Change is a decentralized clearing house for persons struggling with one basic question: How can people earn a living in America in 1969 and ensure that their social impact is going to effect basic humanistic change in our social, political and economic institutions? Nobody has any "real" answers to this question, but many ideas are being developed out of people's experience. VSC helps to make these ideas available to the general public so that each person's individual search can be enriched.
>
> This newsletter is the main gathering point for the ideas that the VSC staff comes in contact with. Some of these ideas are descriptions of actual job openings with groups working for social change from a wide variety of viewpoints. Others are proposals for new projects that need help in getting started, descriptions of places where one can get an education in social change, and articles on topics related to working full time for social change. What all of these jobs, projects and ideas have in common is a concern for stimulating basic change in American institutions.
>
> Although one of our main purposes is informing people of jobs that are open around the country, we hope that you will read this newsletter with an eye to carving out a new role for yourself. Many more dedicated people are needed if we are to see significant social change in our lifetimes.

This newsletter is well designed, expertly edited, and packed with information (48 pages). It is published by a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation and has no regular subscription price, but institutions (schools, libraries, etc.) are asked to pay $15.00 a year, and those who benefit by getting jobs or finding employees are asked to contribute what they can. The emphasis is as the editorial quoted above suggests, with interest centering on peace, social reconstruction, and educational activities. Groups needing part- or full-time help are listed, and note is taken of new organizations coming into being—as, for example, the Technology and Society Committee (TASC) recently formed in San Francisco, which will endeavor to establish itself in research and development work unrelated to military purposes:

> The objective of the TASCFORCE's non-profit organization here would be to provide an organizational shell for researchers who have . . . non-defense-related contracts and who are contemplating leaving their company in disgust at the war work they are performing.

The May-June issue has an article by Frank Lindenfeld on how to start a "free school." All the typical problems are discussed, including legal requirements, organizational structure, and finances. There is a useful consideration of fund-raising for socially constructive projects and a list of new schools and groups engaged in educational research. Various unorthodox "service" institutions are described, with accounts of their activities and needs. There is impressive diversity among these, ranging from a center for counseling runaway youngsters to consumer co-ops and an experimental community based on Skinner's *Walden Two!*

Various summer projects for students are discussed, and the major centers for counseling conscientious objectors are listed. There is a section on national and regional groups working for social change, a list of publications devoted to intentional communities, with other sections on the theatre, radio, and the press.

As for the readers and supporters of *Vocations for Social Change,* we are able to report the independent testimony of a curriculum supervisor who was delighted by the quality of the people applying (through the newsletter) for posts which he needed to fill in his college.

At present, the scope of this journal seems confined to "cause," educational, and what might be called "salvage" activities. In time, its coverage will doubtless broaden to include the basic economic services of our society, which are surely as much in need of change and reform as the more obviously "social" undertakings. In one place the editors say:

> One of the VSC's goals is to get people thinking about the kinds of jobs they can create or secure. However, we know that our listings and articles can give you only partial knowledge of what the jobs are really like. Only person-to-person contact with people who have done full-time social-change work can do that.

In addition to "social-change" work, new forms of food production and distribution, construction and housing, and clothing manufacture will have to come about in time. Since these are primary economic necessities, providing them ought not to be neglected by socially-minded people. The roots of social change are in them, since they will have to be performed in *any* society. Here, the books of Ralph Borsodi and Arthur E. Morgan are foundational; also the current work of E. F. Schumacher on intermediate technology. There is also the problem of thinking about the kind of decentralization that might be possible in a technological society. Finally, there is the question of various "fringe" relationships with the existing economy—on which, after all, the most high-minded of social endeavors needing outside support must depend. When there is talk of fundraising, the concern is obviously with getting money from people who earn it on jobs in the existing society. A society that is to change for the better is bound to need people who will learn how to perform basic economic functions with another point of view, and who are able to develop pilot innovations within the existing framework, somewhat as the co-op movement did, a long time ago. One project described by *Vocations,* the Bay Area Liberty House, seems a step in this direction. The objective, as with other Liberty Houses around the country, is "to establish a broad marketing network for craft cooperatives in poverty areas."

What we are talking about, we suppose, is forms of enterprise intermediate between Clarence Darrow's lone wolf operating procedure and the hypothetical utopian callings of tomorrow. Darrow, it will be recalled, was a lawyer of extraordinary ability who earned good money from large corporations, then used the proceeds as means to serve the helpless and the oppressed. Today, many men work at exacting jobs and use their salaries to create new institutions—schools and other constructive enterprises that cannot be self-supporting at the beginning. The fact is that some businesses are better than others; some lend themselves to transition better than others. Today there are at least a few signs that a vast leavening process is under way, here and there even in business, and every viable organization and institution started with some vision and a will to work will have its constructive effect.

The address of *Vocations for Social Change* is Canyon, California 94516.