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THE HUMAN IMPERATIVE

NO one should strive for a perfect filing system, since it would too easily become a perfect interment system for useful ideas. A reasonably imperfect one, for example, such as ours, periodically requires sweeping reforms and new beginnings, with the result that unexpected discoveries are made. One such find, a book honoring Walt Whitman after his death, published seventy-seven years ago by Whitman's literary executors, Horace Traubel, Richard Maurice Bucke, and Thomas Harned, has in it a poem by Whitman on cities which seemed the right answer to the terrible questions which come to the reader of Richard Whalen's study of New York—*A City Destroying Itself.* In other words, the best thing to do, when the development of a city has gone as far wrong as Whalen thinks New York's has, may be to find out what cities really ought to be, and go to work on that, instead of attempting a lot of hopeless tinkering with so many complex ills. (It isn't that these ills should be ignored, but that there are always people who work hard and heroically on remedies, doing what they can, even though a better solution would be to start all over again.)

Whitman, then, wrote:

A great city is that which has the greatest men and women,
If it be a few ragged huts it is still the greatest city in the whole world.
The place where a great city stands is not the place of stretch'd wharves, docks, manufacturers, deposits of produce merely,
Nor the place of ceaseless salutes of new-comers or the anchor-lifters of the departing,
Nor the place of the tallest and costliest buildings or shops selling goods from the rest of the earth,
Nor the place of the best libraries and schools, nor the place where money is plentiest,
Nor the place of the most numerous population.

Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards,
Where the city stands that is belov'd by these, and loves them in return and understands them,
Where no monuments exist to heroes but in the common words and deeds,
Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place,
Where the men and women think lightly of the laws,
Where the slave ceases and the master of slaves ceases,
Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons . . .
Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority,
Where the citizen is always the head and ideal, and President,
Mayor, Governor and what not, are agents for pay,
Where children are taught to be laws unto themselves, and to depend on themselves,
Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs,
Where speculations on the soul are encouraged . . .
There the great city stands.

Well, if Whitman is right, and he most certainly is, then those who care about the cities of the future will give some attention to the production and fostering of such men, women, and children. And it seems obvious that this can hardly be done in the cities as they are today. Certainly not in the *big* cities. Now and then extraordinary men may emerge in such cities, but not because of the opportunities they afford for growth, but rather in spite of them. Such men, almost without exception, produce themselves.

This fact about unusual people, that they produce themselves, removes an extraordinary burden of responsibility from the shoulders of those who struggle to introduce environmental reforms. Their task, that is, is not absolute. Fine men and women are never entirely the product of their surroundings, although good surroundings will certainly help everyone to move in the right direction. Perhaps it is the general movement people are able to get going, rather than

particular, measurable achievement, that helps the most.

Where do the people who populate the cities come from? The answer is no secret. They come from smaller cities, towns, and rural areas, and often for discouraging reasons. Much of the migration to the cities is due to the economic decline of the rural areas and the small communities. The small communities, where certain students of social growth locate the seed-bed of society, are no longer places of health and promise. There is a good possibility that many of the obvious ills of the cities only exaggerate and reflect the decline of community around the country. So, if you want to help the cities, they may not be the best place to begin.

In *Community Comments* for January, 1958—another of our "finds" from refiling—in a brief essay, "What Can We Do That Will Count?", Arthur Morgan wrote:

> Here are two major social facts: first, the fundamental character of a person usually is formed very early in life; and second, those in position to influence events on a large or small scale tend intuitively to make over their world according to the patterns of their own characters.
>
> Whoever lives most wisely, normally and intimately with his children today probably will be among those whose pattern of life most influences tomorrow. Whether the world of tomorrow will be weak or strong, good or bad, slovenly or orderly, is being determined by the homes and intimate communities of today. It is primarily there, rather than in governments and institutions, that our fate lies. . . .
>
> There is one way above all others by which a pattern of good motive, attitude and judgment may be established in the early years. This is by the continued intimate association of children with good parents and with a good community. If the community leaves much to be desired, then it is all the more essential that intimate family relationships be maintained. It is the general experience of sociologists that even a quite imperfect family structure is better than none.
>
> Spiritual parentage in a community may be more important than biological. Persons, often without children of their own, who are true friends of the community, sometimes have more and better spiritual children than most natural parents.

Dr. Morgan now relates these primary influences to the larger social community:

> Neither government nor business nor any other human institution is impersonally administered. Men in authority try intuitively to make over their worlds to accord with their personal views of life. They see themselves as acting in accord with the real nature of things.
>
> "An institution is the lengthened shadow of a man." This is true, except that usually more than one man contributes to the result.
>
> Jay Gould, who in his day ruled the Western Union Telegraph Company and large railroad systems, corrupted everything he touched. The Bell Telephone System, as developed under Theodore Vail, had dignity and responsibility.
>
> Such influences of individuals can be observed in politics, religion and education. I recall, shortly before Hitler's assumption of authority, a successful American business man saying that his coming to power could do little harm because German society was so stable that no single man could have much effect on it.
>
> Traits of personal character which so influence and dominate institutions, both those which are wholesome and those which are negative, are chiefly products of early influences, especially of the home and of the immediate environment. Failure to take that fact into account is a chief cause of social ills.

Shortly after he resigned as one of the directors of the Tennessee Valley Authority, Arthur Morgan established in Yellow Springs, Ohio, his home, an organization called Community Service, Inc., devoted to the spread of information concerned with the welfare and rebuilding of the small community. This was about 1938. The organization still exists, now being headed by Griscom Morgan, Arthur Morgan's son, and continues in the sort of work it has been doing all through the years. It publishes *Community Comments,* providing valuable information to persons interested in community projects, answers inquiries, distributes excellent books on the subject of community, most of them

by Dr. Morgan, and from time to time undertakes the support of particular community projects, such as the defense of the tribal rights of the Seneca Indians, or the fostering and development of an educational rural community in India, "Mitraniketan." Another influential activity was the conduct of a class in community for students of Antioch College, which continued for many years. Mail, years later, from. these former students indicates the lasting influence of their studies of community while at Antioch. Dr. Morgan related what some of them said in *Community Comments* for February, 1958:

> This is being written at Christmas time, as the year 1957 nears its end. Among the Christmas cards received is one from California. We have repeatedly suggested that if one wishes a career in public life, and yet is concerned with community, a promising way to gain a strategic position in a community is to train under a good town or city manager, and then to get a position as a manager of a small or medium-sized community which has adopted the council-manager form of government. The Christmas card referred to is from an Antioch graduate and his wife. As I recall, he was not a regular member of the community class, but was a very interested auditor, attending without college credit. He has found a position under the manager of a small California city who he thinks, has a remarkably fine philosophy of life and of local government.

There were a number of other such cards that year, each reporting a different sort of engagement in community work. One came from the wife of a "family size" farmer, also in California, which had only the message, "See *Antioch Notes* for April 15, 1936." In that issue Dr. Morgan had written:

> Because farms must replenish the towns and cities, intelligent farm policy is not a class issue, but is vital to American civilization. . . . By intelligent planning we can still save and reinforce the vitality of American farm life, and thus strengthen the foundations of social well-being.

Elsewhere in this issue of *Community Comments* Reinhold Niebuhr is quoted as saying:

> The mechanically contrived togetherness of our great urban centers is inimical to genuine community. For community is grounded in personal relationships. In these the individual becomes most completely himself as his life enters organically into the lives of others.

In these issues of *Community Comments*, published in 1958, Dr. Morgan is dealing with values which were still characteristically neglected in the United States; indeed, they were being carelessly thrust aside. Today, when American parents wonder what they have done to "lose" their children, they might find some answers in back issues of this journal. In the January number there is the following:

> Educational hierarchies are bent on reducing contacts of young children with home and community by means of consolidated schools, commonly outside the home community, and by denying the place of family and community as chief agency for transmitting basic culture.
>
> This robbing children of home and community experience is not compensated for by any other fine relationships. Repudiation of normal friendly relationships between teachers and children commonly is extreme. Personal interviews with college freshmen from all parts of America disclose that in more than half the high schools evidence of high scholarship or of friendly relations with teachers is strongly resented.
>
> Another interruption of the basic cultural tradition is different from anything in all human experience. Radio and television invade the home with mediocrity, often with more intimate acquaintance than that between parents and children.
>
> As a still further break comes the custom of both husband and wife holding jobs outside the home. True, women should have full economic freedom. Before and after the rearing of children there are years of activity during which a woman should not be restricted by her sex in her occupational choice Moreover, a young woman should have economic competence; so that her marriage shall result from free choice, and not be an escape from economic insecurity.
>
> Yet such freedom is different from the attitude that it is more important to have two income-earners in the family than to have the best possible home environment for children. . . .

> To meet the difficult conditions of today and tomorrow such family and community living must be consciously purposeful, persistent and intelligent, overcoming powerful compulsions to conform to mediocrity. Such families and communities must be "in the world, but not of it", they must share the common life and fellowship, yet keep the pattern true.

A few years ago, writing in *Peace News* about urban renewal, Theodore Roszak remarked in passing that it wasn't the buildings that needed renovation, but the people. And this, it should be added, has as much application in "rich" neighborhoods as in poor ones. But human renewal is a mysterious affair. Arthur Morgan devoted his whole life to the study of the formation of human character, and at the ripe age of eighty it seemed to him most important simply to repeat, over and over again, certain simple truths, such as the fact that character is shaped in the home and by community relationships:

> Men have found no other dependable way. . . . Largely out of success achieved in personal transmission of such cultural traits as good will, brotherly love, honesty, courage, and sanity will emerge the future cultural leadership of mankind.
>
> Men and women quite generally have it in their power to choose this course, though sometimes only by heroic, intelligent, imaginative and persistent purpose can they largely succeed. It is not necessary to wait "for Congress to pass a law," or to get the support of an institution or a foundation before embarking on this, the greatest, but one of the least appreciated, careers of the ages.
>
> Youth is by far the best time to acquire the necessary discipline and pattern of living. If our days seem dull it is not because they have not presented live issues, but because we have surrendered to those issues without a fight.

In *The Community of the Future*, published by Community Service in 1957, Dr. Morgan has two chapters on the causes which lie behind the decline and death of civilizations and cities. It becomes plain that several of these causes are already fairly well advanced, today, in the great metropolitan centers of the modern world. It is also clear, if the past is any indication, that the hope of renewal lies only in the life of small communities and rural areas. Yet these, too, in America at least, are in serious decline. Perhaps it is a deep social instinct that has led so many of the young to take flight from the city and to attempt their own renewal on the land in loosely organized communes. These young are not "rural sociologists," but if there are such things as social instincts and spontaneous responses to the needs of human beings in general, then these migrations can be regarded as an expression of the social organism's determined quest for the conditions of health. There may be a basic *human* imperative, here, that will in time prove stronger than what we disconsolately term the "technological imperative."

Can there be cooperative relations and mutual support between the old and the new? Well, there ought to be. Intelligent men have been asking for options, alternatives, "new ways" of doing things for at least a generation, but have not done much in the way of offering suggestions or undertaking new courses. Now, as a kind of rebellious effervescence of the human spirit, rather wild and wonderful alternatives are taking shape before our eyes. In communities and schools, curious experiments are going on. Increasingly, the young are refusing to nourish the worst of existing institutions, and this, surely, is the best way to change them. Meanwhile, there is opportunity for the invention of new ways of supplying basic human needs—food, shelter, and clothing, and education. These are certainly primary among the "live issues" spoken of by Arthur Morgan.

REVIEW
"THE CREATIVE EXPERIENCE"

IT seems healthy to have some built-in resistance to intellectually fashionable subjects, since inquiries of the mind tend to lose their dignity by following the path of a "popular" trend. On the other hand, there are entirely natural changes in the direction of human wondering, so that what one objects to may be only the frothy, outer effect of some basic cultural reorientation.

All the talk, these days, about "creativity" seems a good example of this. A self-respecting man may prefer to be known as a plumber or a bricklayer in an age when the authors of jingles for television commercials explain that their work is "creative," and "self-expression" is often a showy way of hiding the emptiness of self.

But perhaps this sort of verbal froufrou is inevitable in a civilization which has been so much beguiled by its own external splendor. Material satiety doesn't bring a change in values, but only a more sophisticated sensualism. There seems no way to protect genuine innovations in thought from the packaging instincts of the popularizers and commercializers, who turn new ideas into clichés long before they are understood. Who, for example, catapulted Marshall McLuhan to fame? (He was willing enough.) It was the people in the environment-making business—mostly people who have something to sell. An article by Tom Wolfe back in 1965 explained the magic of McLuhan's initial appeal:

> There are currently hundreds of studs in the business world breakfast food package designers, television network Creative Department vice presidents, advertising media "reps," lighting fixture fortune heirs, smiley patent lawyers, industrial spies, we-need-Vision board chairmen, all sorts of business studs who are wondering if this man, Marshall McLuhan, . . . is right.

When this is the mood and tendency of the popular culture, it is no wonder that dadaism is having an angrier-than-ever revival, that some sculptors are preferring to build stone walls, that painters are becoming farmers and carpenters, and that genuinely creative people are one by one turning to the crafts, seeking mainly a quiet authenticity for their work.

This is not to suggest that there is no reality behind all the interest in creativity. Wherever there is perversion, there has first to be something real to pervert, and the rediscovery of the inward potentialities of human beings may indeed turn out to be the one development of importance for which the present may be remembered in future ages.

These, then, are preliminary thoughts provoked by a reading of *The Creative Experience* (Grossman, $13.95), a series of interviews with twenty-three distinguished scientists and artists, conducted by two psychologists, Stanley Rosner and Lawrence E. Abt. Among the scientists they talked to are Harlow Shapley, Bentley Glass, Noam Chomsky, Wilder Penfield, and Arthur Koestler. The artists include Merce Cunningham, Aaron Copland, Edward Steichen, and Selden Rodman. All these people, one knows or assumes, have made contributions to their fields which are in some sense original, and of value. The questions put to them were designed to elicit, if possible, some kind of pattern in the process of discovery. The project is not especially successful, yet the inquiries and replies make an often interesting and sometimes delightful book. What Paul Saltman tells about his life and work as a biochemist is sheer fun and pleasure for the reader from beginning to end. The story of Wilder Penfield is inspiring. Chomsky is always stimulating, no matter what he is discussing. Throughout, the book is salted with common sense, as would be any book put together with the help of such talented individuals. The following, for example, is on teaching mathematics, by Morris Kline:

> Teachers are anxious to get results which means usually to cover the prescribed contents of the courses and to get students to pass examinations. Of course the examinations are based on what was taught and so students merely hand back subject matter. The

> learning is usually rote, whether in the new mathematics or the old. Mathematics is recommended because it supposedly teaches people to think but as currently taught it does not. The professors are usually not concerned with pedagogy and since teaching how to think is far more difficult than presenting subject matter, it is the latter which receives the emphasis. The texts most widely adopted are either cookbooks of recipes or collections of theories and proofs.
>
> We have to get away from trying to cover content. At present every course has a fixed amount of content that is extensive so that the teacher has to keep hammering away at teaching content in order to cover the term's work. If we taught students how to think, it might be more profitable in the long run. But then the student might complete Calculus III without having learned how to handle partial differentiation, and that would seem tragic to the normal teacher because he is so accustomed to thinking in terms of content.

This seems to mean that if you want to be creative, you have to practice the virtues—courage, for instance. You don't let custom rule. And patience and an open mind apply in the sciences. Wilder Penfield says:

> I have the feeling that all you do is get the evidence and hold it and not make up your mind, realizing the danger of making a conclusion until you have the complete truth. Then you have a framework, and you don't make the answers synthetically; it may be some little thing that fits into it that makes you realize something you should have seen long ago. I think the only really creative part is preparing the back of the mind, if I can use that expression; assembling the evidence and putting it in the form of an hypothesis and having it there along with a lot of unanswered hypotheses.
>
> You don't remember the details, but you can remember a scheme, and then discovery is just by chance. And once it presents itself, you realize it fits. Then comes the momentary thrill, if you're looking for the thrill. That's the emotion. But the rest is hard work and good fun, of course.

An architect, Ulrich Franzen, was an American paratrooper in Germany at the end of the war. There he saw the nightmare of compulsive killing:

> I suddenly realized that anybody is capable, on an organized basis, of committing murder. I just cooled off forever on an ideological approach to life and I just concentrated on the human aspect of everything. For the first time I realized how dangerous people were, if they didn't stay close to their own humanity. And so, really right down the line I'm against all people who talk about systems. A lot of people hold the sceptre of technology as the great saviour of the housing problem. The technology is obviously a useful tool, but the basic problem I am convinced is a human one. It's perfectly apparent we don't need a new technology to put up decent housing. We just need the will to do it.

Oppi A. J. Untracht, an enamelist and teacher of crafts, who is said to have written the best manual there is on metalcraft, explains why he went into the crafts:

> I have become increasingly aware of the fact that Western man has been assigned the function of consumer of the products produced by industrial technology. His separation from the means of production or even a simple awareness of how things are made has created a sense of inadequacy in many. Even those who are involved with industry's technology tend to be specialists. Disposability has become an important feature of what is produced, and it is constantly emphasized. Our junkpiles attest to the lack of meaning feeling or value which we give to the objects around us.

Crafts seemed to Untracht the best means of establishing a counter-current to this dehumanizing effect.

In their concluding summary the editors remark that they undertook the study of the creative act on the assumption that the process was not a "mystical" one, but would be open to investigation. This seems a curious denigration of the mystical—as though, for serious inquiry, it amounted to some sort of ineffable ashcan. Conceivably, an understanding of the mystical would be the same as the understanding of the creative; in any event, there is certainly something vitally important common to both sorts of experience. Thinking in these terms might help to place the idea of "the creative" in a wider and less "cultist" perspective.

COMMENTARY
TRANSITION IS NOT UTOPIA

THIS week's lead article ends with the suggestion that inventing "new ways of supplying basic human needs—food, shelter, clothing, and education"—is a primary task of the present. Dieticians, ecologists, and educational reformers such as Ivan Illich (see "Children") would certainly agree. There are also, as we know, numerous spontaneous movements and activities already busy seeking such changes. Yet while the inspiration for these efforts is philosophical and moral, the obstacles are, or seem to be, mainly practical. James Hearne's discussion (see Frontiers) of what a modern craftsman must do to make a livelihood is a good illustration of this. Ours is no "primitive" society, so far as economic processes are concerned. It is not exactly heartening to a would-be craftsman to contemplate a life of making things to please the fancy or vanity of the idle rich.

The Liberty Outlets—stores which came into being to distribute the products of black peoples' producer coops in Mississippi—had a similar problem. Their hand-crafted leather totebags and other well-made articles sold well in shops for the Bohemian well-to-do, but the workers hoped rather to distribute these products among their own people—who, alas, could seldom afford them. Well, one solution proposed was to open two stores and try to meet the demands of both markets as well as they could. We haven't heard how this worked out, but it was certainly the right thing to try.

Obviously, the reconstruction of the thinking and economic processes of the advanced industrial countries is going to take some time, and the changes are bound to involve continuous relations between existing methods and the better ones to come differing adaptations and curious "mixtures" of past, present, and future. The *Whole Earth Catalog* is an interesting example of such mixtures. The magazine, *Vocations for Social Change*, is another. Books like Helen and Scott Nearing's *Living the Good Life* and Ralph Borsodi's *Flight from the City* are pioneering works which tell what resourceful people have actually done on the land. Arthur Morgan's life and writings are endlessly instructive in relation to the use of existing structures for the fulfillment of improved social ends. It is not impossible to use both the freedom and the economic facilities which now exist for this purpose. Many people have done it, are doing it today. There are difficulties, but they can be overcome by imagination, persistence, and a little daring.

Further, there are always people of the sort Morgan describes—people with "such cultural traits as good will, brotherly love, honesty, courage, and sanity"—who are making a fair living in conventional jobs. Such jobs can be created—by becoming, for example, a reliable auto mechanic that car-owners can trust. There are not too many of them. Such individuals can be the natural rank-and-fire hosts for change, when there are more of them.

A "system," after all, is only a system. It isn't a ruling principle any longer when enough people devise and establish cooperative means of by-passing its abuses and worst features. The transfer of energies and allegiance from an old system to a better scheme of relationships begins, like any other great change, in ways of thinking, then gradually works its way down into sensible practice. At the same time, old resistances to change weaken. Then other sorts of adaptation can begin. It is even possible that the sort of cities Walt Whitman talks about will some day come into being!

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TEACHING WITHOUT SCHOOLING

IVAN ILLICH, the former Catholic priest who heads the Center for Inter-Cultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, is now giving disciplined form to his criticisms of public education and to his proposals for radical change and reform. He is a systematic thinker and his capacity for powerful generalization is such that his influence will almost certainly grow. He issues his lectures and articles—which he calls "unfinished" work—in paperbound lithographed typescripts and reprints of already published material, inviting comment and criticism. The 1970 Summer Lectures given by Illich at the Center, which are now available, are also the basis for a four-month term of discussion of Alternatives in Education, which began this month in Cuernavaca and will continue through April. Participants in earlier meetings of this sort have included men such as Erich Fromm, John Holt, and Paul Goodman.

For identification it may be said that Illich was for a time rector of the Catholic University of Puerto Rico, but was asked to leave the island when he criticized a bishop who forbade all Catholics to vote for Gov. Luis Munoz Marin. He resigned from the priesthood after being called to Rome and subjected to inquisitorial proceedings concerning his objection to the part played by the Church and Catholic missionaries in Latin America in supporting and contributing to the spread of conventional goals of "affluence" and material acquisition. He has also maintained that stress on the importance of "schooling" could only generate feelings of unworthiness and inadequacy in the Latin American poor—who are the masses—and this criticism has since become the main plank in his attack on prevailing ideas of education. (These notes on Illich's past are based on an account which appeared in *Christianity and Crisis* for Aug. 4, 1969.)

To say that Ivan Illich is a systematic thinker means that his mode of analysis brings order to a great many independent and apparently unrelated facts. For example, the whole series of facts put together in careful compilation by Ivar Berg in *The Great Training Robbery*, in which the author exposes the pretense and falsity in the claimed relation between more education and increased productivity. Another fact is that while the infant schools of Britain make no fuss at all about teaching "reading"—it is not even a separate subject—the children all learn to read. "Reading" is not a special problem for these children. Illich is adamantly opposed to the artificialities and waste of the schooling process. In an article which appeared in the *New York Review of Books*, "Why We Must Abolish Schooling," he wrote:

> Equal educational opportunity is, indeed, both a desirable and a feasible goal, but to equate this with obligatory schooling is to confuse salvation with the Church. School has become the world religion of a modernized proletariat, and makes futile promises of salvation to the poor of the technological age. The nation-state has adopted it, drafting all citizens into a graded curriculum leading to sequential diplomas not unlike the initiation rituals and hieratic promotions of former times. The modern state has assumed the duty to enforce the judgment of its educators through well-meant truant officers and job requirements, much as did the Spanish kings who enforced the judgments of their theologians through the conquistadors and inquisition.
>
> Two centuries ago the U.S. led the world in a movement to disestablish the monopoly of a single church. Now we need the constitutional disestablishment of the monopoly of the school, and thereby of a system which legally combines prejudice with discrimination. The first article of a bill of rights for a modern humanist society would correspond to the first amendment to the U.S. Constitution: "The State shall make no law with respect to the establishment of education." There shall be no ritual obligatory for all.
>
> To make disestablishment effective, we need a law forbidding discrimination in hiring, voting, or admission to centers of learning based on previous attendance at some curriculum. This guarantee would not exclude performance tests of competence for a function or role, but would remove the present

> absurd discrimination in favor of the person who learns a given skill with the largest expenditure of public funds or—what is equally likely—has been able to obtain a diploma which has no relation to any useful skill or job. Only by protecting the citizen from being disqualified by anything in his career in school can a constitutional disestablishment of school become psychologically effective.
>
> Neither learning nor justice is promoted by schooling because educators insist on packaging instruction with certification. Learning and the assignment of social roles are melted into schooling. Yet to learn means to acquire a new skill or insight, while promotion depends upon an opinion which others have formed. Learning is frequently the result of instruction, but selection for a role or category in the job market increasingly depends on mere length of attendance.
>
> Instruction is the choice of circumstances which facilitate learning. Roles are assigned by setting a curriculum of conditions which the candidate must meet if he is to make the grade. School links instruction—but not learning—to these roles. This is neither reasonable nor liberating. It is not reasonable because it does not link relevant qualities or competences with roles—but rather the processes by which such qualities are supposed to be acquired. It is not liberating or educational because school reserves instruction to those whose every step in learning fits previously approved measures of social control.

It is Mr. Illich's intention to remove all the magical pomp from the propaganda about schooling. What people learn in school, he shows, is a tiny fraction of what they learn elsewhere—before, after, and outside of school. And instruction in a skill—which is what most people need to get jobs—does not require any ceremony or any surrounding "curriculum," but just someone who has the skill and some ability to teach it. Illich condemns the embedding of skill-learning in an elaborate curriculum as meaningless and wasteful, and the means of escalating the cost of education beyond any hope of equal opportunity for all. He gives examples of the efficiency of practical skill-learning outside the conventional school environment, accomplished at much lower cost. However, he anticipates much opposition to this common-sense proposal:

> Opportunities for skill-learning can be vastly multiplied if we open the "market." This depends on matching the right teacher with the right student when he is highly motivated in an intelligent program, without the constraint of curriculum.
>
> Free and competing drill instruction is a subversive blasphemy to the orthodox educator. It dissociates the acquisition of skills from 'humane" education, which schools package together, and thus it promotes unlicensed learning no less than unlicensed teaching for unpredictable purposes.

Of what we call "general education," he says:

> Just as skill instruction must be freed from curricular restraints, so liberal education must be dissociated from obligatory attendance. Both skill learning and education can be aided by institutional arrangement but they are of a different, frequently opposed nature. . . . Education in the exploratory and creative use of skills . . . cannot rely on drills. Education can be the outcome of instruction, though instruction of a kind fundamentally opposed to drill. It relies on the relationship between partners who already have some of the keys which give access to memories stored in and by the community. It relies on the critical intent of all those who use memories creatively. It relies on the surprise of the unexpected question which opens new doors for the inquirer and his partner.

Well, these quotations are only odd bits from a lot of rather rich material. We have been quoting from *Cidoc Cuaderno* No. 1007, issued by Centro Intercultural De Documentacion, Apdo, Cuernavaca, Mexico. No price is given, and we have no idea how this work is supported. But the positive proposals are certainly worth considering. Since they have little chance of being taken up by any government bemused by the "schooling" religion, the only way these reforms can be applied will almost certainly be by their gradual, voluntary adoption by small groups. Surely this is the way to begin. Illich needs reading two or three times to get the full impact of what he is saying.

FRONTIERS

Can Craftsmanship Compete?

MOHANDAS K. GANDHI envisioned a great revival of craftsmanship in India. He wished for a race of hardy, independent village workmen, capable of survival despite the great factories of Capitalism. Gandhi's dream was only imperfectly realized. Here and there, a village throbbed and hummed and prospered, but most of the Indian villages remained deeply sunken in torpor and despair. The dream of a revival of craftsmanship was realized in some cases with help from the despised mass-production system. A grant from the Ford Foundation helped Indian village shoemakers to improve the quality and styling of their product.

Other people besides Gandhi have yearned to see a revival of craftsmanship. The English artist Eric Gill wrote books pointing out the ill-effects of mass production and mass consumption upon the human race. In the philosophic sense, the *coup de grace* was given to the technological mythology by Frederich Georg Juenger in his book *The Failure of Technology*. Juenger and his publisher, Vittorio Klostermann, had lived close to the heart of the matter in the most advanced technological countries of Europe.

Anti-technological literature now enjoys a wider audience than ever before. There is an "Anti-Industrial Revolution" in progress. Many people undertake projects of craftsmanship as a hobby. Still others yearn to earn their livings far from the maddening assembly line. Of these latter, a few succeed while a great many more fail.

It should be understood that earning your *living* as a craftsman is entirely different from being an artsy-craftsy hobbyist. The hobbyist may work in a desultory fashion if he wishes; the professional craftsman must work hard all day long, every day. He may find it difficult to be much of a "philosopher"; he is a *working man.* It is possible sometimes to earn a living as a craftsman; but it is not altogether easy in an environment where the Machine has been striving for generations, often successfully, to eliminate every alternative to itself.

Gandhi decried the fact that the educated people neglected the villages and went to the cities to work. "Education" today is most unfavorable toward craftsmanship. Modern education is almost always *Bourgeois* education. The Bourgeois has a horror of working-class status and is quite often consumed with contempt for the working-class culture. Everything in the Bourgeois mentality yearns for *management;* the-Bourgeois wishes to direct the work of others, not to toil himself. Thus the Bourgeois educational system tends to develop a tribe with too many chiefs and not enough Indians. It is *Culture* rather than mere "education" which makes the arts and crafts thrive. The "rebel" against contemporary society often thinks of becoming a craftsman to escape it and at the same time support himself from it. He often fails. The mentality of the craftsman is not the mentality of the rebel. If you become a successful craftsman, you might indeed wind up as a modified *petit bourgeois.* When you set out to earn your living at craftsmanship, you enter the market economy. It is possible sometimes to thrive in the market place, but you must apply yourself assiduously and intelligently to the business at hand.

How can craftsmanship compete with enormously efficient machines?

Easily enough. The machines are mostly not very efficient at all. The "Scientific Progress" myth was promulgated by self-seeking power-grabbers. Technology is not an endless quest for efficiency; it is a quest for *power-organization.* It is a toll-gate installed for the purpose of collecting profits. Industrial production is sometimes notoriously inefficient. It often produces shoddy goods. Its distribution system is little short of highway robbery. The sharp brain can compete with mass production and often does. Our masses have been given a mental conditioning which discourages competition or opposition to the mass

production system. Once the real facts are laid bare, one sees how easy the thing is, or would be, if legal and cultural obstacles were removed.

In recent years there has been a big boom in small businesses in some industries long considered the sole preserve of mass production. The most notable case is the custom automobile industry in Southern California and over much of the nation. This is definitely a "small shop" industry and individual craftsmanship supersedes mass production. Yet it also works hand-in-glove with mass production, and uses many mass-produced parts. It started before World War II and began to expand enormously in the prosperous postwar years. In the beginning, the demand was for speed and the "hot rod" was the thing. Today there are many kinds of custom cars. There is the sleek custom job built for the wealthy customer; then there are the "kooky" cars. One may see a motorist driving an old-fashioned popcorn wagon, complete with gas-fired popper. There are also pie wagons and circus wagons. Every kind of automotive eccentricity may be indulged. Detroit could never go in for this kind of production. You could not "tool up" to mass-produce 1890-model popcorn wagons. Yet the vehicle almost certainly hides a mass-produced motor under its shiny red hood, which probably has sixteen coats of hand-rubbed lacquer on it. Some of the work on the vehicle may have been done by the owner, and some of it in a small shop specializing in this sort of thing. The custom car industry today is financially no joke. Its annual turnover is many millions of dollars. This industry was not founded by philosophers; but neither was it founded by cold-blooded business men. The owner of a business in this field is likely to be an enthusiast. He knows what the trade wants because he knows what he himself wants. He responds instinctively to a demand which he feels within himself and knows that others feel. Such men have generated a substantial industry which has a vast literature of its own as well as a huge annual financial turnover. Actually, these men are cut from the same cloth as Ettore Bugatti; they are in the same tradition as the custom builders who have served the demanding few ever since the automobile came into existence. Recently I visited a small auto shop in Southern California. The proprietor, who is also the chief mechanic, was busy removing the body from an elderly Rolls-Royce. The original body had been custom-built by H. J. Mulliner of London. It was now to be replaced with a new body. The mechanic said, "Sure, Mulliner is good, but he is just a guy who puts his pants on one leg at a time, just like I do."

Many people believe that craftsmanship was utterly crushed with the coming of the Industrial Revolution. This is not quite so. It simply moved upward into the luxury trades. The nineteenth-century English millionaire sold sleazy mass-production clothes to the masses, but he wore Harris Tweed himself. His boots were custom-made. His elephant-hunting gun was hand-rifled by a skilled craftsman and fitted with an exquisitely hand-carved stock. In the balmy days of English millionaires, the handicrafts prospered as never before. Nearly everything used by the rich was hand-made. Nearly everything used by the poor was machine-made. It may be noted, in passing, that the Industrial Revolution was not nearly as villainous as some people say that it was. It made England's Tight Little Isle support ten times as many people as it could feed with food grown on its land. Population pressure was a major factor behind the Industrial Revolution. Yet Frederich Georg Juenger has pointed out that Technology is not a vast, golden cornucopia which can dump a constant flow of wealth upon the heads of happy Mankind; rather, the coming of Technology resulted from already widespread need and want, from an already widespread desolation. Meanwhile, the rich readily recognized the superiority of handmade goods and bid the price of them out of reach of most people.

If you try to make your living at craftsmanship today, you may find yourself catering willy-nilly to the luxury trade. It takes a

bit of "moxie" to do this. If you can produce hand-made luxury goods of really superior quality, every luxury shop in Palm Beach will rise up and call you blessed. This, however, is not a business for dabblers. Your production must be thoroughly professional. You must study the market carefully. You must learn to deal with hard-bitten and skeptical owners of quality shops and mail-order houses. Marketing custom-made goods is a skill in itself. They are sold both in shops and by mail order. Do not think that you can run a little ad somewhere and sit back and wait for the money to roll in. Mail-order selling is also a skill.

You should of course read the books on philosophy, especially Eric Gill and Frederich Georg Juenger. After you have read them, lay them aside. Subscribe to *Popular Mechanics.* Therein you will find advertised the tools you will need for most trades. This magazine is also a pretty good advertising medium itself. Think carefully. Now you are a mechanic and a salesman. Keep quiet about the fact that you are trying to short-circuit some of the most vital aspects of the Bourgeois Economy. You are making an honest product for people who have the money to buy it. This is the way a craftsman makes his living. The craftsman claims for himself some of the prerogatives of which the machine-age working man has been stripped in a businesslike manner. This is a terrible heresy against the whole idea of "Scientific Progress." Don't agitate about this subject; keep quiet about it and bore from within.

We have lived through an age of "Democracy" (rule by the Middle Class), of "Liberalism" (the philosophy of the Middle Class), and of "Progress" (the tightening of the hold of the Middle Class upon society). We are surrounded on every side by the most poisonous sort of Middle Class humbug. We are stunted mentally by the Middle Class stranglehold upon education. The secret of success as a craftsman is to reclaim for yourself as a worker some of the functions which the Middle Class took away in order to enhance its stranglehold upon the worker. While you thus undermine the Bourgeoisie, remember that they are also your customers. They have money and many of them have enough taste to know and want a good thing when they see it. To whom can you sell a fine hand-made leather billfold for forty dollars?

You do not become a successful craftsman by the pursuit of a philosophic ideal, unless, of course, being a good mechanic and a good salesman has a philosophic aspect. There is a need for philosophers in this field, though, to spread ideas to offset the propaganda of "Progress," which more and more is being revealed as a downward plunge into the abyss. The advertising men have oversold "Progress" badly. No really responsible scientist or engineer will undertake to back up the claims which vulgar popular propaganda has made for "Scientific Progress." Unhappily, there appear to be many scientists and engineers who are not fully responsible in these matters, and who will turn themselves into impromptu ad men on occasion to further a falsely-based prestige for their trade. Don't fret about it. Forget it. Reality will expose these follies before too long. Get busy with your tools and produce and sell.

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