

## MEN AND THEIR TIMES

IN the first chapter of *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers*—a delighting and informative book—Carl Becker makes the reader aware of how much he is the child of his own times, and how little he can enter into the uses of reason and faith belonging to other periods of history. Becker does this with quotations from Thomas Aquinas and Dante, both extremely intelligent men, yet writers whose arguments have almost no meaning for the modern reader. We do not live in their universe, we cannot share their assumptions, and their ideas of orderliness and social organization seem to us but empty words. As Becker put it:

Edit and interpret the conclusions of modern science as tenderly as we like, it is still quite impossible for us to regard man as the child of God for whom the earth was created as a temporary habitation. Rather must we regard him as little more than a chance deposit on the surface of the world, carelessly thrown up between the ice ages by the same forces that rust iron and ripen corn, a sentient organism endowed by some happy or unhappy accident with intelligence indeed, but with an intelligence that is conditioned by the very forces that it seeks to understand and to control. The ultimate cause of this cosmic process of which man is a part, whether God or electricity or a "stress in the ether," we know not. Whatever it may be, if indeed it be anything more than a necessary postulate of thought, it appears in its effects as neither benevolent nor malevolent, as neither kind nor unkind, but merely as indifferent to us. What is man that the electron should be mindful of him! Man is but a foundling in the cosmos, abandoned by the forces that created him. Unparented, unassisted and undirected by omniscient or benevolent authority, he must fend for himself, and with the aid of his own limited intelligence find his way about in an indifferent universe.

What was Becker doing here? From his point of view, he was getting the reader ready to understand the philosophers of the eighteenth century, who are the subject of his book. The idea of "climates of opinion" is developed in this

first chapter, and Becker is concerned with showing how radically these climates change. We may notice, however, that he is able to discuss the alienation of modern man from the matrix of nature with remarkable serenity. How does he manage this? The answer is that he gave the lectures of which the book consists in 1931, when the "management" of the world still seemed fairly stable. That world was a comfortable place for a professor, and for most of his students as well. While terrible disruptions and downfalls were already in the making, the feeling of Western man that he could "cope" with very nearly anything that could happen was well established in both Europe and the United States. A man could calmly reflect that he didn't know what Aquinas was talking about, and be not at all troubled by the fact that once half the world took Aquinas' ideas very seriously, even as matters of life and death, and concerned with the destiny which reached beyond life and death.

Suppose Becker had been sufficiently prescient to anticipate that in forty years or so the men of the West would begin to lose faith in their power to "cope"? How would this have affected his historical studies? Would he have become more "involved"? We can hardly tell. He might not have written at all. Writers who grow aware of the fact that the climate of opinion in which they live may be just as ephemeral as the views of past epochs are generally at odds with their time. That is, they are selective in approving its achievements and goals. This was certainly true of Joseph Glanvill, a seventeenth-century Oxfordian who, while an enthusiastic advocate of science, wrote prolifically against scientific materialism. He is known today mainly for his advocacy of the reality of what we now speak of as psychic phenomena. Yet he was also the originator of the phrase "climates of opinion,"

which was picked up by Whitehead and given currency in our time. In his book, *Vanity of Dogmatizing*, Glanvill had written:

. . . they that never peep'd beyond the common belief in which their easie understandings were at first indoctrinated, are indubitably assur'd of the Truth, and comparative excellency of their receptions . . . the larger Souls, that have travail'd the diverse *Climates of Opinions*, are more cautious in their *resolves*, and more sparing to determine.

In an age which is coming apart at the seams, it is those who placed the greatest confidence in its beliefs who are the most shaken and given to despair. And even reformers often remain prisoners of the assumptions which underlie the failing institutions and social structures. Our own age is certainly one that is marked by many failures, yet the number of persons who are either willing or ready to examine its primary assumptions critically are still very few. Consider, for example, Ivan Illich's observations concerning attempts at educational reform, which represents an area of modern civilization where breakdown is almost universally acknowledged to be extreme. Last February, in an address before the American Educational Research Association, Illich said:

America's commitment to the compulsory education of its young now reveals itself to be as futile as the American commitment to compulsory democratization of the Vietnamese. Conventional schools obviously cannot do it. The free-school movement entices unconventional educators, but ultimately does so in support of the conventional ideology of schooling. And the promises of educational technologists, that their research and development—if adequately funded—can offer some kind of final solution to the resistance of youth to compulsory learning, sound as confident and prove as fatuous as the analogous promises made by the military technologists. I believe that the contemporary crisis of education demands that we review the very idea of publicly prescribed learning, rather than the methods used in its enforcement.

The dropout rate—especially of junior high school students and elementary school teachers—points to a grassroots demand for a completely fresh look. Increasingly, the classroom practitioner who considers himself a liberal teacher tries to escape

from school. The free-school movement, confusing discipline with indoctrination, has painted him into the role of a destructive authoritarian. The educational technologist consistently demonstrates the teachers' inferiority at measuring and modifying behavior. And the school administration for which he works, forces him to bow to both Summerhill and Skinner, making it obvious that compulsory learning cannot be a liberal enterprise. No wonder the desertion rate of teachers is overtaking that of their students. . . .

. . . it would be a grave mistake to interpret the current three-cornered controversy between the school establishment, the educational technologists and the free schools as the prelude to a revolution in education. This controversy reflects rather an agonizing stage of an attempt to escalate an old dream into fact, and to finally make all valuable learning the result of professional teaching. Most educational alternatives proposed converge toward goals which are immanent in the production of the cooperative man whose individual needs are met by means of his specialization in the American system: They are oriented towards the improvement of what—for lack of a better phrase—I would call the schooled society. Even the seemingly radical critics of the school system are not willing to abandon the idea that they have an obligation to the young, especially to the poor, an obligation to process them whether by love or by fear into a society which needs disciplined specialization as much from its producers as from its consumers and also their full commitment to the ideology which puts economic growth first.

Well, these are large generalizations, and, since ardent human beings are involved in all the processes under criticism, some of Dr. Illich's strictures may fall wide of the mark. Yet there is a way of taking the insight of what he says in terms of its broad intentions, which includes showing the horror with which almost everybody regards the loss of confidence in the chief assumptions of the existing society. What will the young relate to, if not a society *something* like the one we have now? The problem of educating human beings in terms of themselves, and not in relation to a single epoch of history—how can such a problem be defined? Can we even think of human beings apart from the attitudes and endowments obtained from the present epoch?

We are not, as Becker shows, able to think of Aquinas and Dante except as men whom we don't understand—who speak a language alien to our modes of comprehension. And if we set out to cross that abyss established by time, by becoming, say, neo-Thomists or something like that, what assurance have we that the effort would be worth while? Wouldn't we just cut ourselves off from our contemporaries?

But the idea of bridging the centuries raises the question: Are there, or have there been, men who did not dwell solely in their own times? Could there be a *lingua franca* of the human spirit which rises free of the confinements of historical epochs? Even if we had to read it as translated into the idiom of some particular epoch, such a transcendent form of communication would still exert a liberating influence.

There might be another way of getting outside the limits of our own time, without feeling altogether lost. Glanvill broke out of his in a way that earns our special respect. How did he manage to do it? Explanations of such men are difficult, but it might be enlightening to make a study of those who can now be recognized as individuals who understood their times by refusing to be submerged by them. There were for example a number of prophetic spirits in the nineteenth century who foresaw pretty clearly what is now happening in the twentieth. Among them were Carlyle and Amiel, Heine and Tolstoy. These men had something in common which made them more than children of their time. They are still worth reading, today.

But what happens to a man who is successful in stripping himself of the assumptions of his time? What can he put on, as the garb of his intelligence, instead? That is really the most important question. Some men, losing touch with their own times, collapse into insanity. A man has to have *some* body of ideas. Only very recently the very wheels of progress were said to be kept turning by the desire of men to be like other men. The reinforcement of that desire is still one of the

mainsprings of sales promotion. Yet our examples of men with insight suggest that no one who does not become at least partially free of his time is able to see what is wrong with it. Should we ever say flatly, then, that men are *made* by their times? On the other hand, it is obvious that much of what a man thinks himself to be comes from his times. In his book, *Education and the Modern Mind*, W. R. Niblett observes:

In the Middle Ages and even in Elizabethan times in England it was extremely difficult not to believe in witches. This was no matter of intelligence or lack of brains, for the average intelligence of our medieval ancestors was probably as high as ours. In the West, our respect for the law is the result of a long and painful experience and history. Our manners and our behaviour would seem odd to a South Sea Islander: but *we* find it natural enough to form queues; to raise our hats; to stand at attention as we sing "God Save the Queen"; to cheer at football matches but to remain silent in railway carriages. The rhythms of our speech are the results of an imitation so unconscious it is only with a real effort that we notice our own accent or our peculiar way of using a word. The authority of tradition and custom is a strong authority: it takes unusual individuality to challenge it. Brought up in a primitive society we should be primitive; brought up in a Communist society most of us would be Communists.

Jean-Paul Sartre, musing on the cruelty of the French to the Algerians, remembered how horrified Frenchmen were at the barbarism of the Nazis, who tortured members of the Resistance in order to obtain information from them. Then, when the French tortured the Algerians for similar purposes, Sartre asked whether to be either torturer or victim was purely a matter of historical accident. Would *any* nation torture, if it seemed "necessary" to do so? All this comes into the question of how much we are predestined to be what we are by our times.

But if we cannot outgrow our time, then we are indeed its victims. This may be a major paradox of being human—that the matrix of a man's times, in which he comes to maturity, or in terms of which he reaches what is common for other men, is never *good enough* by itself. It is

necessary but not sufficient. The individual must go beyond its uniformities. The provisions, the morality, the "rules" of the times are in their way like the conditions of "survival." Everyone needs to "survive," but merely surviving is by no means a way of human life. You can define life as survival, but not the good life. A man survives, *in order that*. . . . A man lives up to the level of his times in order to go beyond it. And change becomes the order of the day when even survival requires going beyond it.

For today, the "normal" tendencies of the times seem essentially destructive. Heretofore, as Mr. Niblett says, it has always taken "unusual individuality" to challenge the authority of the times—of tradition and custom—yet today, mere survival is beginning to require that it be challenged. And so the question arises: Where, on what, shall a man stand in order to challenge his times? There are various pragmatic answers, such as standing, or sitting, in jail, going to Canada, locating an island somewhere, or performing an inner emigration. But there are other answers, and better ones, perhaps, to be found in the thought of men who challenged their times when very few others felt the necessity to do so. Now there are many kinds of pressure to find an independent ground. But those who sought this ground by an inner compulsion—the men with "unusual individuality"—may speak a language less time-bound and less anxious than the speech of the desperate and the driven.

Conceivably, a language which can unite men of dissimilar historical epochs, which strikes so universal a note that it belongs to no special place or age, has been known to at least a few human beings. Such men would not be cast into irremediable despair when the age to which they nominally belong begins to crack or submerge, nor would they give way to intoxication from enthusiasm for a rising cycle of history. They might not be abashed by death, but would understand even this great transition. It was from reading an old book by Porphyry, a Neoplatonic

philosopher who was born at Tyre in 233 A.D., and who died in Rome seventy years later, that the idea of such a language suggested itself. It is a language of meanings rather than words. There is an exquisite passage on the soul and on death in a work by Porphyry, *Auxiliaries to the Perception of Intelligible Natures*, translated by Thomas Taylor and published in London in 1823 in the volume, *Select Works of Porphyry*. Much of Porphyry's language is difficult, as that of Plotinus is difficult, yet here and there in the works of both these writers are passages so luminous with philosophic content that the obscurity of the rest begins to seem more invitation or challenge than a barrier. In what they say there sometimes seems a certainty that could hardly be pretense. The passage we came upon is the following:

The soul is bound to the body by a conversion to the corporeal passions; and is again liberated by becoming impassive to the body.

That which nature binds, nature also dissolves; and that which the soul binds, the soul likewise dissolves. Nature indeed, bound the body to the soul; but the soul binds herself to the body. Nature, therefore, liberates the body from the soul; but the soul liberates herself from the body.

Hence there is a twofold death; the one, indeed, universally known, in which the body is liberated from the soul; but the other is peculiar to philosophers, in which the soul is liberated from the body. Nor does the one entirely follow the other.

Some seven hundred years earlier, in Athens, the idea of the soul as an independent intelligence in the human being was introduced to Greek thought by Socrates—or it came earlier, if we include the Pythagorean tradition and the teachings of the Mysteries as a part of Greek philosophy. But with Plato the idea of the soul as moral agent became a rational doctrine in Greek thought. By the time of Porphyry, who was the friend and disciple of Plotinus, who, in turn, had been taught by Ammonius Saccas, the founder of the Neoplatonic School, the conception of soul was well developed and formed the core of the transcendental psychology of the Platonic and Neoplatonic tradition. These conceptions were

very largely borrowed by Christian thinkers, especially by Augustine, and by medieval mystics such as Johannes Scotus Erigena, going to form much of the body of Christian thought concerning the soul, and Neoplatonism certainly contributed the structure of Dante's great work, and became as well the inspiration of the Revival of Learning in Florence. Neoplatonism played a similar part in the later philosophic reforms which the Cambridge Platonists of the time of Joseph Glanvill attempted to introduce.

The impressive thing about the Neoplatonic philosophers is the depth of their conviction concerning the reality of the soul as an independent intelligence. Soul was not for them a sentimental idea. They were austere men and disciplined thinkers. The Transcendentalist movement in European and American thought can be regarded as a great Neoplatonic revival. One has only to read Emerson and Bronson Alcott to see the truth of this. Leibniz, too, with his doctrine of the monads, belongs to this great tradition of transcendental philosophy, and Leibniz is the Western philosopher to whom modern psychical researchers turn when seeking a philosophic basis for theoretical explanation of the discoveries that have been made in this area of psychological investigation.

What is the pertinence of all this in the present? Increasingly, it is pointed out that the basic characterological flaws of modern civilization result from the lack of any coherent idea of who and what a human being is in essence. We are now experiencing the effects of this moral vacuum. It is important to realize that the dispute of the scientists who worked so efficiently to destroy Western man's faith in his traditional religion was not with the Greek philosophers of Platonic persuasion. Actually, both Copernicus and Galileo learned their first principles from the Platonists, for it was the Platonists who were the ancient mathematicians and astronomers. The war between science and religion was mainly a war forced upon scientific thinkers by theological

bigotry and by insupportable beliefs which invaded the field of science. Materialism grew out of the polemics of this war. Science need not be materialistic. If you study the modern theoretical physicists, you find warrant for calling them neo-Pythagoreans. There is nothing in authentic science to contradict the old Greek conception of the soul, the Platonic idea of an inner, immortal intelligence, struggling for recognition through the veil of physical sensuous life and all the preoccupations of the material "struggle for existence." Today the world is weary and worn-out from its denials of soul, and the battle against religious bigotry was won long ago. It is time to stop using the weapons of that struggle to stamp out belief in the spiritual nature of man.

## *REVIEW*

### SCIENTISTS ARE HUMAN

THE stature of Michael Polanyi as man and scientist is well illustrated in the collection of his essays published by the University of Chicago Press in 1969 under the title, *Knowing and Being*. Slowly this pioneering reformer of the philosophy of science is becoming known in the United States, but he should be much more widely read by contemporary writers. Radical thinkers especially could profit by his analyses of revolutionary theory founded on materialistic or positivist assumptions, for the implications of Polanyi's reform go far beyond the limits of formal scientific inquiry. As he points out, the scientific epistemology is very largely that of the modern world, which for more than a generation has looked to science for guidance as earlier ages looked to religion.

Polanyi brings the discipline of science into the area of introspection, reporting his observations and illustrating his conclusions with a clarity and rigor that help the lay reader to understand in human terms the spirit of impartial inquiry to which scientists are faithful and the standards they endeavor to maintain. MANAS first learned of the importance of Polanyi through A. H. Maslow, who found in this chemist turned philosopher a kindred spirit, and in some respects a "model," since Polanyi had reached conclusions in respect to the physical sciences that Maslow was arriving at in his critique of Behaviorist and Freudian doctrines. In the preface to his *Psychology of Science*, Maslow remarked that the achievements of Polanyi made it unnecessary for him (Maslow) to write a much larger volume.

Polanyi's major work, *Personal Knowledge*, was published in this country in 1958 by Chicago University Press. Its general thesis was first presented in *Science, Faith, and Society*, a brief essay published by Oxford University Press in 1945. The essays in *Knowing and Being* are all related to these earlier works, and also to the

study of cognition developed in *The Tacit Dimension*. The importance of Polanyi lies in the fact that for him moral ideas take on primary significance as the very foundation of knowledge. His work, therefore, is restorative of basic humanism in scientific and all other conceptions of knowledge. Many persons may easily admit that this is desirable, but the impact of his demonstrations can be realized only by reading him. (Readers interested in Polanyi's place in modern thought will particularly appreciate the Introduction in *Knowing and Being*, by Marjorie Grene, who is the editor.)

Polanyi is out to show the reality of a higher, unit-being or intelligence in man, not merely because he wants to, but because he finds this absolutely necessary in order to understand the nature, role, and works of human beings. He does not start with this postulate, but deduces its necessity from the facts of experience. All his work is closely argued, each sequence depending upon what has gone before, so that quotation is difficult; however, a paper expressing his differences with Sir Charles Snow on the subject of "The Two Cultures" illustrates his thinking concerning science and society. He argues that science had at first a liberating effect, which later turned pathological:

Science rebelled against authority. It rejected deduction from first causes in favour of empirical generalizations. Its ultimate ideal was a mechanistic theory of the universe, though in respect of man it aimed only at a naturalistic explanation of his moral and social responsibilities.

Set free by these principles, scientific genius has extended man's intellectual control over nature far beyond previous horizons. And by secularizing man's moral passions, scientific rationalism has evoked a movement of reform which has improved almost every human relationship, both private and public. The rationalist ideals of welfare and of an educated and responsible citizenry have created an active mutual concern among millions of submerged and isolated individuals. In short, scientific rationalism has been the chief guide towards all the intellectual, moral, and social progress on which the nineteenth

century prided itself—and to the great progress achieved since then as well.

Yet it would be easy to show that the principles of scientific rationalism are strictly speaking nonsensical. No human mind can function without accepting authority, custom, and tradition; it must rely on them for the mere use of a language. Empirical induction, strictly applied, can yield no knowledge at all, and the mechanistic explanation of the universe is a meaningless ideal. Not because of the much invoked Principle of Indeterminacy, which is irrelevant, but because the prediction of all atomic positions in the universe would not answer any question of interest to anybody. And as to the naturalistic explanation of morality, it must ignore, and so by implication deny, the very existence of human responsibility. It too is absurd.

Scientific rationalism did serve man well as long as it was moving towards its false ideals from a great distance. But this could not last. Eventually the truth-bearing power of its absurd ideals was bound to be spent and its stark absurdity to assert itself.

This is what happened in the twentieth century. Scientific obscurantism has pervaded our culture and now distorts even science itself by imposing on it false ideals of exactitude. Whenever they speak of organs and their functions in the organism, biologists are haunted by the ghost of "teleology." They try to exercise such conceptions by affirming that eventually all of them will be reduced to physics and chemistry. The fact that such a suggestion is meaningless does not worry them. Neurologists follow suit by asserting that all mental processes too will be explained by physics and chemistry. The difficulty of dealing with consciousness as an entity is eliminated by declaring:

"The existence of something called consciousness is a venerable *hypothesis*: not a datum, not directly observable. . . ." (Hebb). "Although we cannot get along without the concept of consciousness actually there is no such thing" (Kubie). "The knower as an entity is an unnecessary postulate" (Lashley).

The manifest absurdity of such a position is accepted by these distinguished men as the burden of their scientific calling. Neurologists, like all the rest of us, know the difference between consciousness and unconsciousness; when they deny it, they mean that, since it eludes explanation in terms of science, its existence endangers science and must be denied in the interest of science. Indeed, any neurologist who

would seriously challenge this bigotry would be regarded as a nuisance to science.

Polanyi's epistemology is the exact reverse of all this. Knowledge, he maintains, is what is known by human beings. Knowledge is not abstract, impersonal, a kind of parentless collection of "truth," but is the fruitage of lessons learned by intelligent beings who have purposes and who seek to know. Hearsay is not knowledge. Each man must recreate for himself the knowledge which others possess, for it to become real for him. Knowledge grows out of commitment, and is not to be obtained by any other means.

A valuable paper in this book is titled "The Structure of Consciousness." Polanyi starts out by saying that we practice two kinds of awareness. Suppose we have a friend who is suffering great pain. We see his face and we *read* there the fact that he is enduring pain. It is possible, however, to withdraw attention from the meaning of his contorted countenance, and to examine the mask of his face in itself, to study its lines and planes. Then we are no longer reading its meaning. This is like giving attention to the typography of a page in a book, instead of to the meaning conveyed by the writer. Or it is like thinking about the muscles of a dancer instead of the symbolism of his dance. If we try to explain to ourselves how it is that we are able to read a great deal of a man's thoughts from the expression on his face, we immediately get into difficulty. We know more than we can tell. The experienced physician's diagnosis is a similar art—he knows what is wrong but he can't say just how he knows. Something beyond the external evidence seems to be at work. This Polanyi calls "tacit knowing."

From this consideration of recognition processes, Polanyi turns to a critique of Behaviorism, which seems particularly valuable:

But what should we think then of current schools of psychology which claim that they replace the study of mental processes, by observing the several particulars of behaviour as objects and by establishing experimentally the laws of their

occurrence? We may doubt that the identification of the particulars is feasible, since they will include many unspecifiable clues; but the feasibility of the programme will not only be uncertain, it will be logically impossible. To objectivize the parts of conscious behavior must make us lose sight of the mind and dissolve the very image of coherent behaviour.

Admittedly, behaviourist studies do not reach this logical consequence of their programme. This is due to the fact that we cannot wholly shift our attention to the fragments of conscious behaviour. When we quote a subject's report on a mental experience in place of referring to this experience, this leaves our knowledge of that experience untouched; the report has in fact no meaning, except by bearing on this experience. An experimenter may speak of an electric shock as an objective fact, but he administers it only because he knows its painful effect. Afterwards he observes changes in the conductivity of the subject's skin which in themselves would be meaningless, for they actually signify the expectation of an electric shock—the skin response is in fact but a variant of goose flesh.

Thus a behaviourist analysis merely paraphrases mentalist descriptions in terms known to be symptoms of mental states and its meaning consists in its mentalist connotations. The practice of such paraphrasing might be harmless and sometimes even appropriate, but a preference for tangible terms of description will often be restrictive and misleading. The behaviourist analysis of learning, for example, has banned the physiognomies of surprise, puzzlement, and concentrated attention, by which Koehler described the mental efforts of his chimpanzees. It avoids the complex, delicately graded situations which evoke these mental states. The study of learning is thus cut down to its crudest form known as conditioning. And this oversimple paradigm of learning may then be misdescribed as it was by Pavlov, when he identified *eating* with an *expectation to be fed*, because both of these induce the secretion of saliva. Wherever we define mental processes by objectivist circumlocutions, we are apt to stumble into such absurdities.

We have hardly noticed Polanyi's political studies, in which he examines the effect of scientific mechanism and materialism on scholarship in the universities as well as on radical doctrine which moves in a nihilist direction. The work of this man has many dimensions, all of

which are important to those who would understand the dilemmas of modern civilization.



## *COMMENTARY*

### **KOINONIA PARTNERS**

A COMMUNE which might be regarded as a cultural link between the religious communities described by Charles Nordhoff (see *Frontiers*) and the numerous social experiments of the present is the one started in 1942 by Clarence Jordan and some friends near Americus, Georgia. They named the venture Koinonia Farm (Koinonia is Greek for Community). Jordan was both a Christian theologian and a trained agriculturalist. A recent pamphlet issued by the present members of Koinonia says:

The purpose of Koinonia Farm was twofold: first, to live together in community and witness, especially, to the Christian teachings on peace, sharing and brotherhood, and, second, to assist local farmers by introducing scientific farming methods. In the early years the community lived at peace with their neighbors, and made noteworthy contributions to the agricultural scene, particularly in poultry raising. But eventually they became the object of mounting hostility because of their witness against race prejudice. For years Koinonia withstood shootings, beatings, bombings, burnings and an economic boycott. A host of friends throughout the world helped Koinonia to survive the nightmare.

Clarence Jordan was a native Southerner gifted with courage, a strong sense of mission, much common sense, and a delicate sense of humor. As an interracial community in the deep South, Koinonia was bound to encounter great difficulties, and friends who followed its struggle to survive the ordeal of bombings and boycotts marveled at the persistence of these brave spirits. Today, while Clarence Jordan died in 1969, the members are expanding the work begun under his inspiration, and have organized Koinonia Partners, which offers portions of the 1400 acres of Koinonia Farm to families that want to work and live on the land. Crops already in production are peanuts, corn, and hogs. Truck gardening is under way, and other possibilities are being developed. There is also an industrial program, represented by Koinonia's pecan shelling plant, a fruit cake bakery, a sewing group, and a pottery;

and housing for new members is in progress. Financing is to become available through a fund to be used for loans (non-interest-bearing) to partnership participants.

The members conceive the entire undertaking as an application "of the radical ideas of the gospel message" of Christianity. A prime objective is to provide the dispossessed with an opportunity to reconstruct their own lives by their own labors in community. Copies of this pamphlet may be obtained by writing to Koinonia Partners, Route 2, Americus, Georgia 31709.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### SCHOOLS AGAINST NATURE

THE truth about public education is slowly getting around. If more people would read Tolstoy on the subject—who understood the issues quite well long before they reached the massive disaster stage we are now experiencing—it would get around more quickly, but Tolstoy's readers are helping to spread the word. The fact is that public education is not in behalf of the young, any more than the State serves the good of the people. This is the truth that is now becoming obvious.

Its latest embodiment is in the excellent collection of articles assembled by Ronald Gross and Paul Osterman in *High School* (Simon and Schuster, 1971, \$7.95), in which the insight of Tolstoy is strongly reflected. We shall here concentrate on one contribution, "Educating Contra Naturam," by Theodore Roszak, although there are several other writers who deserve attention. Contributors to this book include Edgar Z. Friedenberg, Jules Henry, Jonathan Kozol, and Herbert Kohl. There is an especially interesting account of her work at LEAP by Michelle Cole.

One of the ways in which the editors set the problem is by a brief sketch of high school education in the United States:

Benjamin Franklin founded the first American Academy in Philadelphia in 1751, and the Phillips Academies were founded in New England during the Revolutionary War. But only in the past fifty years have compulsory-education laws served as a kind of enclosure legislation to round up, herd, and process this disturbing group who hitherto had been left more or less free to find its own way of growing up.

As late as 1893 an important study committee reported that the chief purpose of free public high schools was ". . . to prepare for the duties of life that small proportion of all the children in the country who show themselves able to profit by an education prolonged to the eighteenth year, and whose parents are able to support them while they remain so long in school."

Yet, between 1890 and 1930, the academic high school became a comprehensive school designed to provide universal secondary education for "all American youth." Programs and purposes expanded while enrollments increased by an amazing 750 per cent compared with a national population expansion of only slightly more than 60 per cent. The resulting figures are familiar. Fifty years ago 35 per cent of American seventeen-year-olds were in school; today, the corresponding figure is more than 70 per cent. Ninety per cent of the young people between fourteen and seventeen are in school.

Schooling thus has grown in recent years from a privilege to a requirement for all.

Ten years ago it was possible for a great many Americans to remain complacent about and even proud of their high schools. During the sixties this became impossible. As Gross and Osterman briefly remark: "By 1970 serious student disruptions had occurred in two-thirds of all city and suburban high schools and in more than half of all rural schools." Why? The answers given are usually complex, but briefly, it is evident that the schools were doing to the young things they did not believe in and did not want done to them. What was being done?

What *are* the schools, in functional terms? They are a vast employment agency through which the young qualify for work places in our society. "The basic function of the schools," says Colin Greer, "is as the primary selector of the winners and losers in society." Education in high school doesn't have any high and ennobling purpose. It is the place in which you learn to fit into the existing system. As Arthur Jensen pointed out in his controversial article on hereditary factors in intelligence:

When psychologists came to propose operational counterparts to the action of intelligence, or to devise measures thereof, they wittingly or unwittingly looked for indicators of capacity to function in the system of key roles in the society. . . . Our argument tends to imply that a correlation between IQ and occupational achievement was more or less built into IQ tests, by virtue of the psychologists' implicit acceptance of the social standards of the general populace. . . . the concept of intelligence arose in a society where high status accrued to populations involving [vocabulary and symbol manipulation] in large measure, so that what we now *mean* by intelligence is something like

the probability of acceptable performance (given the opportunity) in occupations varying in social status.

The artificiality of all these roles is making the older generation miserable, but older people don't know what is wrong, while as Paul Goodman shows in *Growing Up Absurd*, the young, having a fresh and unprejudiced outlook, find these roles generally unacceptable. Increasingly, they regard schooling in the same way that they look upon conscription for war. This is the situation which Theodore Roszak confronts with his analysis:

. . . when a society begins to fear that its culture is not interesting or important to the young—that indeed its culture violates nature—then it concludes that education must be *made* to happen: must be organized strenuously into existence and enforced by professionals. And then we have much heavy talk about methods, discipline, techniques, discipline, incentives, discipline, inducements, discipline. We also have blue-ribbon committees, top-level conferences, exhaustive surveys, bold reforms, daring experiments, courageous innovations—and the educational establishment grows and grows and grows.

Let us postulate a law: the less secure the culture, the larger the educational establishment. All of us readily recognize that a society in need of heavy policing must be in serious trouble—for the laws have surely lost their power to command respect. Similarly, a society that professionalizes and anxiously aggrandizes its educational establishment—its cultural cops—is also in serious trouble, for the culture has surely lost its capacity to command interest and involvement. The now chronic top-to-bottom state of emergency in our schools does not exist because the educational establishment is not good enough and needs repair. The crisis is that the culture is not good enough. The educational establishment, with all its compulsions, its disciplinary hang-ups, and—yes—even with its constabulary forces patrolling the corridors—all this exists in the first place only because of the insecurity of the culture.

Once we realize this, we can perhaps see that the feverish efforts of even good-hearted educators to inspire and motivate their students are as pathetic as the belated efforts of our Special Forces in Vietnam to win the hearts of the very people they have degraded and brutalized. Within the context of coercion all efforts to ingratiate are vitiated from scratch.

Throughout this paper, Roszak quotes key passages from Tolstoy. There are probably various sources for this material, but one that we can recommend is *Tolstoy on Education*, edited by Reginald Archambault and published in 1967 by the University of Chicago Press. This book contains various articles on education which Tolstoy contributed to the magazine he published in connection with his school at Yasnaya Polyana, including polemical engagements with the defenders of the educational orthodoxy of his time. The following is quoted from Tolstoy by Roszak:

No one has ever thought of establishing universities on the needs of the people. . . . The universities were founded to answer certain needs, partly of the government and partly of higher society, and for the universities was established all that preparatory ladder of educational institutions which has nothing in common with the needs of the people. The government needs officials, doctors, jurists, teachers, and the universities were founded in order to train these. . . . It is generally said that the defects of the universities are due to the defects of the lower institutions. I affirm the opposite: the defects of the popular . . . schools are mainly due to the false exigencies of the universities.

Roszak comments:

The words are as telling in the age of the multiversity as they were a century ago. Yet how easily we have come to accept the assumption—almost as if it were printed on every dollar our schools receive (for, in effect, it is)—that education exists not to debate but to serve the preordained national priorities. How nicely it simplifies everything to define the good student as he who gets the grades that get the job—a deferential simplification that, incidentally, takes on no greater ethical complexity even if the pigmentation of the students who are pressed into service becomes as various as the rainbow.

The challenge of this indictment is frightening, since it involves taking seriously the idea of a school without walls—the great world outside, where, for countless generations, children obtained their education, painlessly and happily, without it being anything of a "problem." But for that to work for us, we shall have to have a different kind of world—one that is safe and kindly for children, and others.

## *FRONTIERS* "A Massive Awakening"

COMMUNES are nothing new. A book published ninety-six years ago—*Communitistic Societies of the United States*, by Charles Nordhoff—has at its beginning a map of the United States showing by symbols the distribution of various settlements around the country. While there were only eight societies, there were a total of seventy-two communes, the oldest of which had been in existence for eighty years, and the youngest for twenty-two. They were all, no doubt, very different from the communes of today, yet they had in common with the present social experiments one basic quality. They were, Nordhoff says, "a mutiny against society." This book is still the best one to read about past efforts at communal living. The author visited and lived for a while in nearly all the communities he writes about, making his book a first-hand report. (Hillary House put Nordhoff's book back into print in 1961.) There are other good books, of course. One that should be consulted is *All Things Common*, Claire Hutchet Bishop's study of the French Communities of Work, which were remarkable achievements in communal living begun right after the conclusion of World War II.

Nordhoff regards the presence of religious conviction as essential to success in intentional community, but "religious" here has a very broad meaning. The belief of the Icarians in communal communism seemed to him to qualify as a religion. The members of the communes of the French Communities of Work had a similar view. One of the qualifications for joining was a "spiritual interest," which could be either religious feeling in the familiar sense or a strong political conviction.

The movement to find a better life in communal living seems to emerge in great historical waves. The present wave in this direction, for example, has tidal dimensions. In an article in the *Saturday Review* for April 24, Herbert A. Otto, who is chairman of the National

Center for the Exploration of Human Potential (La Jolla, Calif.), reports the findings of a trip around the country in which he visited thirty recently established communes. He finds that the current "mutiny against society" is well on the way to becoming an "alternate life-style." As he says:

Over the past few years, the commune movement has grown at an unprecedented and explosive rate, and there is every indication that this is only the initial phase of a trend that is bound to have far-reaching implications for the function and structure of our contemporary society. Some traditional institutions are already beginning to feel the impact of this explosive growth.

The commune movement has passed far beyond its contemporary origins in hippie tribalism and can no longer be described as a movement for youth exclusively. There are a rapidly growing number of communes composed of persons in their mid-twenties to upper thirties. A source at the National Institute of Health has estimated that more than 3,000 urban communes are now in operation. This figure closely corresponds to a recent *New York Times* inquiry that uncovered 2,000 communes in thirty-four states.

Certain common viewpoints, almost a *Weltanschauung*, are shared by members of the contemporary commune movement. First, there is a deep respect and reverence for nature and the ecological system. There is a clear awareness that 70 per cent of the population lives on 1 per cent of the land and that this 1 per cent is severely polluted, depressingly ugly, and psychologically overcrowded. Commune members generally believe that a very small but politically influential minority with no respect for the ecological system or the beauty of nature exploits all the land for its own gain. Surpassing the credo of conservationist organizations, most commune members stress the rehabilitation of *all* lands and the conservation of *all* the people. . . .

A strong inner search for the meaning of one's own life, an openness and willingness to communicate and encounter coupled with a compelling desire for personal growth and development, are hallmarks of the movement. A strong anti-materialistic emphasis prevails; it decries a consumption-oriented society. In many communes, what does not fit into a room becomes community property. A considerable number of communes aim for the type of self-sufficiency through which they can exist independently of "the system."

Dr. Otto lists the various types of communes he visited, classifying them by what seemed to him their major interest. There are, he says, Nature communes, Craft communes, groups devoted to mystical and religious inquiry, and politically motivated communes. Others are devoted to art, teaching, service, and some to neighborhood development. Others have a more bizarre or unconventional intent. In general, Dr. Otto says: "Interestingly enough, communes with transcendent or spiritual values are the most stable and have the highest survival quotient." He discusses the various problems encountered, such as the question of "authority," drug use, lack of privacy, and difficulties with conventional neighbors. Economic stability is being achieved by some:

Many of the communes that have got under way this past year or are now being organized are beginning on a sound financial basis. This trend appears to be related to the strong influx of people in their mid-twenties, early or mid-thirties and beyond. These individuals have financial reserves or savings and are, for the most part, successful professionals and businessmen with families.

Dr. Otto regards the communes of the present as "passing through certain developmental stages," and not the pattern of the future as yet. "We are dealing," he says, "with a massive awakening of the awareness that life holds multiple options other than going from school to job to retirement." Potential in this movement, he thinks, may be the processes involved "in the regeneration of our social institutions." Family, he suggests, gains new meaning in the light of these experiments.

His article is developed around a detailed account of one commune located not far from a college town in southern Oregon, started by a woman in her forties who retired from a successful business in order to help the young people—students she met while they lived in some of the extra bedrooms in her home. At present there are thirty-eight members of this commune, five of whom have exceptional building skills.

The commune is now in its second year, with a number of one-room dwellings erected on the land, all simply but neatly furnished and kept. The founder calls it a "nature commune"—located on a tract of a hundred and fifty acres, watered by half a dozen springs and three streams, with mixed forest. Eight of the number are children; and sixty-five per cent are young men. The only building on the land when it was purchased was a large barn—now used for kitchen and dining, with the loft made into the library. "To feed the commune, there is a kitchen list. Two members are chosen daily to provide food and help prepare it. Farmers bring fruits and vegetables, which they barter for home-baked bread." Dr. Otto concludes with a quotation from the founder, who said:

"Older people point their finger at the commune instead of helping. I want some people with money to get involved. Where are the parents of these kids? Many of them come from well-to-do homes. Why am I so alone in all this?"