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MATRICES OF CHANGE

THE present is an age of hope and of longing—of transition, as we say—but also an age of "watching" and identifying classification. We have Kremlin watchers and Peking watchers, politician watchers and celebrity watchers. We have commissions for watching industry and Nader task forces for watching the commissions. We read what the watchers say about what is going on, about what needs correction, and make sporadic efforts toward doing what they recommend. In a way, the elaboration of these numerous scenes and levels of modern life has been made intensely engrossing, and we are advised that the complete spectacle represents our modern "awareness," which sets us apart from less sophisticated times.

In the *American Scholar* for last Autumn Sonya Rudikoff generalizes concerning the scholarly side of this tendency, writing about culture watchers:

> Even to talk knowingly of popular culture shows how much separates us from the past. . . . That we can contemplate cultural artifacts which are not to our own taste, nor even intended to be, that we are aware of doing so, and that we are able to do so while suspending personal evaluation and discrimination are further permutations of an already complex matter. Primitive peoples do not examine their own or anyone else's social structure, and rock fans do not scrutinize their own role in popular culture. Only anthropologists speak of a people's mores, or ethos, or rituals, and only intellectuals analyze culture. The discussion of such matters at an advanced stage of intellectual and social development can even be considered a kind of luxurious artifact itself. . . .

The extent of this spectator analysis of culture may be a measure of what happens to heightened self-consciousness when positive and constructive activities are all in the hands of highly trained specialists, leaving the rest of us with little to do except observe, classify, and complain:

> That troubled and troubling preoccupation with the entire culture, and the role of popular culture within or outside it, was contagious in the late forties and throughout the fifties. A census of the books, articles, panel discussions, symposiums, and other confrontations with the subject would probably amaze us. And it was then that the profusion and confusion of terms developed. "Kitsch" was a new term for a new phenomenon of public entertainment, it was not exactly mass culture, not high culture, not folk culture, but a distorted, debased battening on advanced culture. No longer the striving toward perfection or the expression of sweetness and light, culture now seemed clamorous for ranks and hierarchies, forgetting that it once sought "to do away with classes," as Arnold had said.

Having noted the diversities of culture thus examined and judged, Miss Rudikoff asks:

> Did all the distinctions matter, the frequently windy abstractions and definitions, the precisions and niceties of identification, the connoisseurship not of artifacts but of sensibilities? Why really should anyone care? It does matter of course, although there are more important things beyond it.

Exploration of the "more important things beyond it" is of course the vital consideration, but this is far from being a familiar activity. The failure of strong effort in this direction may be the clearest evidence of what is wrong with our times. Is there a particular area of our culture where the symptoms of this failure are visible in high relief?

The arts are at once a show-case of human sensibility, of concern, and of direction. Never have the arts been more self-conscious, more given to psyche watching, or more consistently without a guide. In a generalizing essay of particular excellence, Alfred Alvarez wrote in the (London) *Times Literary Supplement* for March 23, 1967:

> The artist is not "alienated" he is simply lost. He lacks altogether the four traditional supports upon which every previous generation has been able, in one degree or another, to rely: religion, politics, national cultural tradition, reason. . . .

> The machinery of communications and publicity is now so efficient that we go through styles in the arts as quickly as we go through socks; so quickly, in fact, that there seem no longer any real styles at all. Instead there are fashions, Idiosyncrasies, group mannerisms and obsessions. . . . Artists usually talk of their alienation in a world without values with a sob in their throats. This seems to me as inappropriate as the tone of those protest songs about nuclear weapons, where the singer invariably manages to imply that the H-bomb has been invented solely to get at *him.* As I see it, the failure of all traditions and beliefs is not an excuse for the failure of the arts, it is their greatest challenge—or irritant. It simply entails a new emphasis.

Mr. Alvarez concludes:

> . . . the obvious truth is that the more subjectively exposed the theme, the more delicate the artistic control needed to handle it. . . . the genuine artist does not simply project his own nervous system as a pattern for reality. . . . What sets the contemporary artist apart from his predecessors is his lack of external standards by which to judge his reality. He has not only to launch his craft and control it, he has also to make his own compass.

Why should we expect this of the artist? Because, says Mr. Alvarez—

> He is what he is because his inner world is more substantial, variable and self-renewing than that of ordinary people, so that even in his deepest isolation he is left with something more than mere narcissism.

What is that "something"?—or, again, the "more important things beyond"?

Writing about contemporary poetry in the *Hudson Review* (Spring, 1975), Wendell Berry seems to muse over this question. He begins by considering both the poet's isolation and his narcissism:

> There is apparently now some widespread feeling among poets themselves that they are of a different kind, hence have some special explaining to do. . . . One of the oldest doctrines of the specialist-poet is that of the primacy of language and the primacy of poetry. He has made virtually a religion of his art, a religion based not on what he has in common with other people, but on what he *does* that sets him apart from them. For poets who believe in this way, a poem is not a point of clarification or connection between himself and the world on the one hand and between himself and the reader on the other, nor is it an adventure into any reality or mystery outside himself. It is a seeking of the self in words, the making of a word-world in which the word-self may be at home. . . .
>
> It may be argued, as Mr. Ransom does, that this emphasis was in some sense forced upon poets by their peculiar isolation in a society dominated by specialists of more practical kinds. But this way of looking at language and poetry also completes and enforces the isolation of poets, not just within a sort of literary ghetto or sub-ghetto, but within themselves. . . .
>
> The world that was once mirrored by the poet, has become the poet's mirror. This explains, I think, the emphasis on personal terror and the fear of death in much recent poetry. When the self is one's exclusive subject and limit, reference and measure, one has no choice but to make a world of words. And this gives to one's own suffering and death the force of cataclysm.

Let us remember what Shelley said in "A Defence of Poetry." Poets like to repeat this defense, and they ought to repeat it, since it is essentially true. Poets, he declared, are "the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present." This meant, for him, that they are "the unacknowledged legislators of the world."

In short, poets are the culture-makers of today and tomorrow. They are not merely "victims" of existing culture; as poets, they are responsible for it.

What happens when scholars become culture watchers, artists celebrators of their twitching nervous systems, and poets inhabitants of private word-worlds? At the beginning of his latest book, *The Nature of the Beast,* Milton Mayer looks at the actual content of what, in another sense, is a contentless culture—a culture left to aimless exhibitionism by scholars, artists, and poets. He is talking, as it happens, about the schools, but schools are foci of the culture:

> Look at the general disorder of our time. When most men have less than a hundred dollars a year and the per capita expenditure on war in "peacetime" is fifty, what is there that intelligence can tell us? When the most knowledgeable (and therefore the richest) societies, with the longest history of civilized institutions, lead the world in suicide, insanity, alcoholism, divorce, crime, and delinquency, what critical need have they (or, for that matter, the least knowledgeable societies) of knowledge? What is it the Communist needs to *know* who wants free elections in Mississippi but not in Germany, or the anti-Communist who wants bases ninety kilometers from Russia but not ninety miles from Florida?
>
> The sovereign faith in education is everywhere in the world established now. What for Jefferson was the keystone of the democratic arch has become the keystone of the democratic and the nondemocratic arches. If we can find a way to make use of universal education in the universal crisis, it would seem that we should do so. We would not make any such demand of bingo or tap dancing or swinging on the old front gate; we may make it of education because everywhere education is the great public enterprise.
>
> We pedagogues have been willing to exploit the enterprise without examining its premise that the more of it there is the better off we shall be. Our trade secret consists in our being supposed to have a secret when we haven't. What we have is a skeleton in the multi-purpose closet in the form of an unexamined premise.
>
> The public pressure that fills the schools with junk is irresistible because we have nothing to resist it with. Why shouldn't driver training be compulsory? Driving is a moral problem, which the public thinks, mistakenly, can be solved by teaching. So, too, when the Russians launched their *Sputnik:* Out went the new humanities, in went the new technologies, and up when the preprofessional preparation of technicians. Why not? Had the schools been doing anything whose high purpose would justify their going on doing it? The Russians presented a moral problem—the *evil* of Communist success—and the American people wanted it solved. The schools stood ready to hand.

Mr. Mayer is exactly right. "The public pressure that fills the schools with junk is irresistible because we have nothing to resist it with." He means that we have left the schools without content, being preoccupied with other things. Who is responsible? Everybody. But if everyone is responsible, no one is responsible. Poets and artists, then, become symbols of everybody, as they ought to be, and as they sometimes, in their most useful personifications, are. That was Blake's understanding of art and poetry. Poetry is the act of creation.

As for the scholars who study "culture," Miss Rudikoff suggests how they might change their ways:

> But what is this popular culture about? Is it confined to a series of discrete artifacts corresponding to the artifacts of high culture but appealing to a different public? . . . If so, it contradicts the egalitarian impulse that [approaches] popular culture in a spirit of generosity and welcome. The spirit is certainly admirable and worthy; too long has the discussion of popular culture been marked by meanness snobbery, and an unduly fastidious obsession with niceties of taste, staging confrontations of sensibility as if they were moral crusades, pitting Liberace against Mozart, Peggy Lee against Adelina Patti. . . . Still, charity does not require foolishness the superstars of popular culture are out of their class in these posed contests, these polarizations. Perhaps the popular culture needs to be conceived of quite differently, as rather the entire texture of life that supports these artifacts and superstars, not merely the isolated instances of themselves.

How shall we look at "the entire texture of life"? That, surely, is what is needed. We have plenty of books on the subject, some of them brilliant, many of them useful. But is there a way of looking at the entire texture of life which becomes more than just "looking"—which will make a beginning at giving the schools some strong stuff that will resist, of its own dynamism and purpose, the endless flow, schoolward, of *junk?* Can we find people who are doing things with "high purpose" that justifies "going on doing it," no matter what?

These, alas, are very old questions, so old, perhaps, we have forgotten how to ask them. They are the cry, the hunger, the demand for illumination, for inspiration—for an order, first, of subjective experience with an intensity which

produces, second, objective consequences that lead to the shaping and pursuit of an entire way of life.

What we are asking for is some sort of "therapeutic leap" in behalf, not of a single patient, but a sick society. Wanted is a kind of "peak experience" that will light a way to better communities, smaller cities, more conscientious officials, less warlike states. And so on.

What do we know about this sort of inspiration? We know that it comes, but not in response to plaintive invitation. The wonderful in human life is always framed by unpredictable spontaneity. It is as Plato—and after him many others—said. High inspiration "must come rather after a long period of attendance on the subject itself and of close companionship, when, suddenly like a blaze kindled by a leaping spark, it is generated in the soul and at once becomes self-sustaining." Plato would write little more. He knew better. He understood the futile tendency to try to mechanize—order up a command performance of—"creativity." He left such desperate indulgences to a later age when books on creativity would be appearing almost every day.

It is impossible—impossible for us, at any rate—to "will" illumination. What we can do is make lattices hospitable to light. We can do this through deliberate application of our intelligence and energies. We would like to have the spread of a beneficent creativity among us—so that we and others will be moved to act for the common good. The Neoplatonists, interestingly, thought about this need, although they gave creativity another name—they called it the influence of the gods. How can we have it? they asked. How can we deserve it? they also asked—something not often included in our queries. Iamblichus, who was their instructor in these matters (known as theurgy), told them to practice purifying disciplines. If they could succeed in this, he said, the gods might come, or make themselves somehow felt. But the gods could not, he warned, be summoned. Make yourself into the sort of individual a god might be willing to inhabit. A stern proposal. This is what the Platonic and old Hermetic teachers meant by "magic"—the sort of magic in which alone they were interested.

When Gandhi talked about service to the Indian villages by the Satyagrahis, he meant the same thing. When the alchemists talked about changing base metals into gold, they meant the same thing.

There are many sorts of purifying disciplines—disciplines for poets, artists, scholars, and others, specialists or simply human beings—but at root they are all the same. They involve creating a framework, a theater, for the higher faculties (the gods) to come into play; they involve cleaning the windows and polishing the mirrors through which the creative intelligence—the soul—looks out and in. It is the shaping of a well-constructed matrix through which energy can flow to high human ends. There are many ways to begin. Some people start out by planting trees. Others do it by renewing—not "beautifying"—the landscape through other means. Once there was a man who came to this country from Colombia. He was two things, an agronomist and an actor. After acquiring some inspiration from the Campesino Theatre group that worked with Cesar Chavez, he went to New York and in East Harlem began a dramatic activity with youth—both blacks and Puerto Ricans—he found on the streets. He taught them to write their own plays and act in them. After a couple of years they played for audiences all over New York, then across the country. They even managed to get a small building—falling apart—but they redecorated it and gave plays for the neighborhood people. They used to visit around in the tenement apartment houses. The members of the troupe—all in their teens—decided to learn trades, too. During their friendly calls to local people's apartments, they would notice what needed fixing a little plastering, a little electrical work. They had learned how, so they did it. The idea was to

show increasingly apathetic families how they could help themselves. If a teen-age actor could fix a broken window, so could the man who lived there. The landlords, of course, never fix anything in those places. The subject didn't come up. The Colombian also tried to start a roof garden and fire-escape garden club in Puerto Rican Harlem.

These are token examples, unlikely examples, probably, for getting ready for inspiration. But you never know. Henry George was wandering through an impoverished, depression-blighted city one day in freezing midwinter, when an idea came to him about what to do. There was in him a matrix, ready for the idea, so he put it to work. How do you get ready for great ideas? Brooding, working, studying the area of need, Plato said.

What about preparations for, or in, the mind? Well, we are all filled with vagrant feelings about "reality"—feelings looking around for some conceptual home. Conceptual structure helps to provide order and priority for these feelings. It subjects them to inspection. It projects feelings on a conceptual screen to see where they go, what they will lead to. This way we learn which feeling to strengthen and which to discard.

What are your first principles? Socrates asked. Applying the Dialectic, he helped others to select the best principles, useful for their own needs and the needs of the people. Nobody who was wise pretended, really, that "concepts" contain the Truth, but suggested that the right concepts are those making an environment where the truth can penetrate, move around, give off sparks.

The individuals who try to make frameworks for the illumination of the common good all seem to do a certain kind of thinking—thinking which relates to human welfare—and not just deficiency needs, but Being-needs as well. Sometimes these persons have extraordinary "presence," and are able to move other men to devotion and hard work. Nobody knows just how this happens, or how to plan for it, but many know that it does happen, and that the world would become a far better place if it happened more often. Doing well and consistently what we already know how to do is no doubt the secret behind all this. Doing it for others, for ourselves as a part of the "others," brings moral power and a wider orifice to admit the transforming inspiration.

It may never come, of course—not in the way we expect it. The gods are protean. But the good people do preparing for it is never wasted. The frameworks they have devised need not be deserted as empty shrines. A good framework for inspiration always has some practical utility. It doubles in role, as inviting process and beneficent act. A fire on a mountain-top gives light and heat as well as being an invocation to the gods.

We have a fine honorific vocabulary for talking about both the gods and inspiration, yet it seems a good idea to keep those words to ourselves. One shouldn't use sacred words one hasn't digested the meaning of; and, quite possibly, when they are perfectly understood, more helpful ways of speaking will occur. Not exposing the words of one's private, mystic code—the symbols of longing and the promise of fulfillment—keeps them from becoming self-deceptive; prevents them from being put in the place of the actual work of building a frame.

REVIEW
UNLESS THEY PHILOSOPHIZE

THIRTY-FIVE years ago, Prof. H. H. Price, who taught logic at Oxford University, contributed to the British journal *Philosophy* (October, 1940) an article on telepathy and clairvoyance—on the general area of what is now called extra-sensory perception, or ESP—which still seems the best brief summation of the questions and issues involved. Early in this paper he wrote:

> . . . those who say that the study of supernormal phenomena may safely be left to the experts, and is none of the philosopher's business, seem to be deceived by a false analogy. For in this field there *are* as yet no experts in the sense intended, the sense in which we speak of experts in Physics or Chemistry or Physiology. All we can say is that some people are more familiar with the facts and others less. When once a science has established itself, by devising some comprehensive hypothesis which will unify all the phenomena within its field, even though in a provisional manner; and when, consequently, it has been able to formulate with tolerable clearness the questions it wishes to ask, and has devised a reliable experimental technique which can be trusted to provide the answers—once all this has been accomplished we can draw a sharp distinction between the people who are experts in that science, who understand and practice the technique of it, and the philosophers who are not. But Psychical Research is not yet in this happy position. What is more, it will never be in it, unless philosophers lend a hand, or—what comes to the same thing—unless Psychical Researchers do some philosophizing for themselves.

After giving some illustrations, he adds:

> The moral I wish to draw is only this: in the early stages of any inquiry it is a mistake to lay down a hard-and-fast distinction between a scientific investigation of the facts and philosophical reflection about them (or, if you like about the terminology in which they are formulated). At the later stages the distinction is right and proper. But if it is drawn too soon and too rigorously those later stages will never be reached.

Prof. Price's outlook seems appropriate for attempting to evaluate any serious book on psychic research, and it applies well to the just-published volume, *The Psychic Realm: What Can You Believe?* (Random House, 1975, $8.95) by Naomi A. Hintze and J. Gaither Pratt. Quite evidently, these authors would agree that the subject of paranormal psychic experience ought not to be left to experts. Mrs. Hintze is avowedly a non-expert. She is simply an imaginative, intelligent person, a successful novelist and writer who wonders what meanings may lie behind psychic experience. Prof. Pratt, the co-author, has worked in the area of parapsychology for some thirty-five years, starting in 1937 as a graduate student at Duke University with the Parapsychological Laboratory headed by J. B. Rhine. Together these two have written a book which informs the reader in broad terms of what has happened in psychic research since its beginnings in Western thought—since, say, the report of the London Dialectical Society Committee in 1870, which declared that the phenomena investigated were deserving of more serious attention than they had received. But to say, "in Western thought," is somewhat misleading, since there has been "psychic research" of some sort as far back as history goes—inquiries not *entirely* different from the kind pursued today. This seems important to recognize, especially at a time when the confident assumptions of various applications of scientific method are being eyed with some suspicion. One may question a scientific assumption while still participating in the more general assumption that "modern knowledge" is really the only reliable knowledge that exists.

King Croesus of Lydia, who lived in the sixth century B.C., as Prof. Price relates, sponsored a deft piece of psychic research by setting a problem for a number of allegedly clairvoyant oracles of his time. They had to guess what he was doing on a certain day. One of them did—the oracle of Delphi—and the answer provided in this case was precise: the king on that day cooked the flesh of both a lamb and a tortoise in a brazen pot, and the Oracle exactly specified both ingredients and

utensil. However, Croesus' next query to the Oracle brought the usual ambiguous answer.

This seems to be the general picture of psychic research—a lot of confusion and ambiguity along with *something else.* The indefinable "something else" is responsible for the continuing interest in the subject of the supernormal. The confusion and ambiguity are responsible for wariness and neglect. The range of human response to happenings with these ingredients is inevitably wide. At its upper levels, psychic experience overlaps with mystical insight and religious inspiration, while obsession and insanity lie at the other extreme; and a vast aggregate of very ordinary material fills the middle spaces. Years ago, after some personal research, the English scholar, C.E.M. Joad, reached a melancholy conclusion—"If ghosts have souls, they certainly have no brains"—which sums up the views of many who are more interested in the sense of communications than in their mode of transmission.

But the idea of ghosts, or of survival, remains attractive for a variety of reasons. A "philosopher," for example, might argue that if death releases the soul from the body, and if the soul has any sort of choice as to what it will do next, only the not-so-bright souls would stay around earth to spend their energies "haunting" people. And if, then, we wonder about the souls that find better things to do, large questions concerning the laws or possibilities of immortality emerge—the idea of rebirth enters the picture—and matters of psychic "anatomy," such as the soul's subdivisions, must be considered. Manifestly, a philosopher of the sort able to give order and discipline to such inquiries is needed. Where shall we look for such a guide or instructor? Not someone to tell us what to believe or disbelieve, but to suggest possible alternatives, along with reasons for considering them.

This is hardly what Naomi Hintze and Gaither Pratt set out to do. There is a "philosopher" in each of them, since they are humans, and this undoubtedly colors what they say, but they wrote this book not as an exploration of transcendental possibilities, but rather as a catalog of the classes of "facts" in psychic research as presently pursued. There are chapters on telepathy, precognition (seeing the future), poltergeists, healers, extraordinary communications through mediums ("Patience Worth"), and memories of past lives or incarnations. Mrs. Hintze looks at the variety of psychic phenomena—she went around personally and listened and saw, responding, so far as we can tell, with common sense. This is better, perhaps, than making a my-mind-is-made-up expert's report. She has formed no prejudices, has no theories to defend. Prof. Pratt's approach is that of an open-minded scientist with a lot of experience in the field. He, too, seems openminded; he practices the professional skepticism which a scientist is supposed to practice, and this comes out as another sort of common sense. These writers, in short, do not make you uncomfortable with their presuppositions, implicit or exposed.

The only thing wrong with the book—if it is a fault—is that you get the feeling that a well-composed survey like this one could come out every year, be read by an intelligent, interested audience, and after another hundred years we would *still* know very little more about psychic phenomena and the supernormal than Croesus found out twenty-five hundred years ago. The writers, in short, do not go out on any philosophical limb of theory.

There may be an explanation for this. Prof. Pratt explains that for twenty-five years he has been sampling the annual crop of popular books on parapsychology, and that usually they left him with "a bad taste and an empty feeling." This is a way of saying that these books generate glamor at the cost of impartial reason and scientific caution.

Neither denial nor a blind embrace are called for by psychic phenomena, in Prof. Pratt's view. He concludes his introduction:

> We hope to speed the change of some of these attitudes. We do not hope to convince the rigidly skeptical. If your mind refuses to consider that which has not been proved beyond the shadow of all scientific doubt, then "ten angels swearing" (to borrow from Abraham Lincoln) would not convince you of the reality of psi experience.
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> But if you have an open, adventurous mind—and this we feel to be the truly scientific mind—our book may raise some interesting questions about a world that is all around us, and only just beginning to be explored.

This seems to imply that our age knows more about psychic exploration than the cultures of other periods. The implication is questionable. Modern investigators may *have* to pursue such questions in their own way, but the vast literature of the subject shows that there have been many individuals who had control over psychic capacities far beyond the resources of the modern medium—and control, after all, is the best evidence of scientific knowledge. But this issue is too large to be argued here. Under review is a book which admits as canons of acceptability only the present techniques of somehow "objectifying" psychic abilities or wonders, so that knowledge of them may be identified as "public truth." Suffice it to say that this was not the canon of certainty adopted by ancient experts. Their idea of knowledge did not depend upon an academic consensus.

COMMENTARY
FOUNDATIONS OF SCIENCE

IN his article on ESP in *Philosophy* (see Review), Prof. Price went considerably beyond a "defense" of the role of philosophy, suggesting that metaphysical thinking lies at the root of scientific hypothesis. Even physics has debts to philosophy:

> At the time when it was first put forward, the atomistic philosophy of Leucippus and Democritus was a piece of pure metaphysical speculation. But it turns out to have been a crude anticipation of some of the most important conclusions of modern science.

Prof. Price adds:

> Another instance, perhaps, is Schopenhauer's metaphysics of "the Will," which anticipates some of the discoveries of Psychoanalysis. We must not be too proud, then, to take what hints we can from the theories of speculative metaphysicians.

The claim with regard to physical theory has the support of Robert A. Millikan. In *Electrons, Plus and Minus* (1935) he remarked that the Greek atomists had worked out "almost all the qualitative conceptions of the atomic and kinetic theories . . . thousands of years ago." After quoting the principles of Democritus from Tyndall's summary, he said:

> These principles with a few modifications and omissions might almost pass muster today. The great advance which has been made in modern times is not so much in the conceptions themselves as in the kind of foundation upon which the conceptions rest.

Prof. Price has another example:

> Consider the history of Non-Euclidean Geometry. During the nineteenth century a number of Non-Euclidean Geometries were worked out by Pure Mathematicians. They were worked out as mere speculations in a purely deductive manner. No student of Physics supposed that they had any application to the physical world. But in the last thirty years it has turned out that Non-Euclidean Geometry does have the most important applications to the physical world.

So, Prof. Price suggests, similar applications of metaphysics may prove crucial to understanding the phenomena of psychical research. He draws on the *Monadology* of Leibniz and Bertrand Russell's *Our Knowledge of the External World* to show how much conceptions such as the monads and the world-soul might help to explain both clairvoyance and telepathy.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
ON LIBERTARIAN EDUCATION

THE concluding passage of Joel Spring's *A Primer of Libertarian Education* (Free Life Editions, 41 Union Square West, New York, N.Y. 10003, $3.95 paperback) is as follows:

> What must be sought in the future is a system of education which raises the level of individual consciousness to an understanding of the social and historical forces that have created the existing society and determined an individual's place in that society. This must occur through a combination of theory and practice in which both change as people work for a liberated society. There should not be a blueprint for future change, but, rather, a constant dialogue about means and ends. Education should be at the heart of such a revolutionary endeavor.

The sources of ideas suggested for developing education of this sort are William Godwin, Max Stirner, Francisco Ferrer, Ivan Illich, Wilhelm Reich, Paulo Freire, A. S. Neill, and Paul Goodman. While Tolstoy and John Dewey have some attention, there is no mention of either Plato, Gandhi, or Arthur Morgan—three thinkers who gave lifelong attention to the question of how human character is formed. The reason for these omissions may be the conviction of the author that if effective large-scale changes in education are to take place, the socio-economic structure of society must be altered either first or concurrently. These three do not represent "revolutionary thinking" of the sort regarded as necessary. Even radical educational theorists seem to Mr. Spring weak in this area:

> The one major shortcoming of radical educational theorists has been their failure to deal with the reality of existing educational systems and how their theories might be implemented. For instance, it is fine for A. S. Neill to establish a model like Summerhill, but Summerhill has little meaning unless it can be implemented throughout society. Neill was never very helpful about strategies one might use to convert an entire educational system to that model. The failure of many free schools in the 1960's was a direct result of not making a concrete assessment of the political workings of public schooling and developing strategies to confront and change that system. Many of these schools just languished outside the system without money or power. What this means is that if radical pedagogy is to be made part of a radical movement, it can not act as if it were creating a new educational system in a vacuum. Strategies must be developed to confront the political realities of the existing educational establishment.

Conceivably, the failure of radical educational theorists "to deal with the reality of existing educational systems" is a natural result of honest uncertainty as to how to *apply* "radical educational theory" successfully on a mass scale. Converting "an entire educational system" to a radical model could hardly avoid using the structures and authority of the State—and surely it is obvious that radical education and any sort of State authority are a contradiction in terms. Gandhi declared that education would have to be made independent of the State. Moreover, large-scale systems involve bureaucracy, and the filters of bureaucracy typically reduce excellence to mediocrity and mediocrity to antihuman practice. Perhaps Mr. Spring means that the existing educational establishment should be confronted by a spreading and militant libertarian *esprit de corps.* The excellence of primary education in England, today, is said to have resulted from the fact that there is *no* system-wide plan of education: local heads and teachers use their imagination and help to develop independence and self-reliance in the children. This, at any rate, is the report of American observers.

Indeed, it is a question whether anyone now knows, except by some few illustrations, how to really accomplish Freire's goals—"education which raises the level of individual consciousness to an understanding of the social and historical forces" of the time. A man like Freire may be able to do it, through indefinable insight and strength of character, but eager imitators would in all likelihood fall back on predetermined answers and formulas, and that in itself would be the end of radical education. The American imitators of Neill, at any rate, were not notably successful, and Neill once complained that the influx of American children was ruining his school!

Question: Ought one to select as canons for education only the views of individuals who seem to

be in harmony with current political programs for the reconstruction of society along libertarian or democratic socialist lines? Are their Utopian goals sufficient to validate their theories?

There is certainly good reason to *listen* to the radicals. Curiously, a former speech writer for Barry Goldwater, Karl Hess, was quoted recently in the *Nation* to illustrate the difference between the ideologues of the Right and those of the Left. On the Right, he said—and who would know better?—"they are simply job holders looking for bigger houses, better cars, and a secure retirement. If there are exceptions that I overlooked, I apologize. I simply can't think of any." Then he adds:

> But the left persists. With people who have worked all their lives for union democracy and will never stop. With people who have worked all their lives against war and will never stop. With people who have worked all their lives to bring the poor from the impoverishing programs of the welfarists into the world of real self-reliance and who will never stop. With the people who have fought entrenched privilege all their lives and will never stop.
>
> And to this I will swear: I do not personally know an active persistent person on the left who is in for the money the glory or the personal power. On the right I know scarcely anyone who was not.

He adds, however, this qualification:

> There are, of course, prima donnas on the left and, from time to time there emerge the entertainers of the left who rise up as great monsters threatening the peace of the countryside and giving the audience luscious thrills and chills or scrawling political obscenities on the walls like wild kids trying to shock the old folks. They come and they go and everyone knows who they are and what they are.

There are certainly things to be learned from Ivan Illich and A. S. Neill—from all those who give their lives to teaching and helping to liberate minds, but we need to know far more about how human character is shaped before an attempt is made to *systematize* libertarian education. Whose assumptions will you adopt about the child? Those of Socrates in the *Meno?* Those of Bronson Alcott? Those of Arthur Morgan in *The Long Road* and his various works on the influence of the small community as "the seed-bed of society"?

To what extent should the musings of Ortega on the rarity of truly self-reliant students come into the picture? These differences exist among students, and perhaps the best way to understand them would be to collect material on all the autodidacts one can find out about. Autodidacts, after all, are individuals who have been able to make themselves relatively independent of the authorities of their time. They have demonstrated in their lives some of the qualities that will be required of many more human beings for ordering and preserving a "liberated society."

The case against public schools as conditioners and shapers of the minds of children to conformity to the status quo is well established. It is a case which shows the need for education made free of the motives and assumptions of bureaucratized, state-controlled education. The criticism of existing education rests on historical fact. But the advocates of a system of radical education do not have a similar case for what they propose—indeed, we hardly know what they propose, except in terms of speculation, utopian abstractions and goals. The moral strength of the case for such a large-scale change is really the wholly admirable quality of the motives of radicals—as demonstrated again and again in their self-sacrificing lives and heroic determination through history. These motives are the reason for *listening* to the radicals—the motives are matters of history, as Karl Hess briefly shows. But the evidence stops there, so far as "systems" are concerned.

What is not history—what is not settled at all—is how to alter human character. We do not know much of anything about how it is done. We know what is bad for the young, but little of what is good. We know that there are mysteries involved in the awakening of the young to vision, commitment, independence, and the high obligation of service to others. There is some reason to think that the individuals who understand these mysteries best are precisely those who find themselves constitutionally unable to "program" what they are able to do. Declaring against what ought not to be done is comparatively easy, but this is not the same thing as designing a system of education.

FRONTIERS

The Ring of Truth

THERE is, we are bound to think, the real truth about the relationships between man and nature—the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, as we say—yet when we set out to mark this truth for identification and adoption, we usually get on paper only a particular resonance of its ring. For example, here is a statement by John Seymour, English writer-farmer, in *Resurgence* in the fall of 1974:

> The only way nowadays we are going to get men and women to labour on the land is to give them land, or allow them to buy it. Either in cooperative groups or as individuals the owner-cultivator must come back into his own. "Make a man the owner of an acre of desert and he will turn it into a garden—make a man tenant of an acre of garden and he will turn it into a desert," said Arthur Young, and never was a truer thing said.

What Arthur Young says does indeed have the ring of truth. Even if you've never had a hoe in your hand, you agree. There is a sense, however, in which this is the second time around for that resonance of truth—that particular echo of "Natural Law."

The shaping of the attitudes of Americans toward the land may be briefly traced with a few quotations. In his *Ancient Life in the American Southwest* Edgar Hewett says:

> The European brought to the Indian world (America) a densely materialistic mind developed by ages of experience in human society that could have no other destiny than that which has overtaken it. It was a racial mind formed by immemorial strife in a restricted environment—an environment which fostered distrust, war, destruction, armament for offense and defense.

Then, from Arthur M. Schlesinger's essay, "What Then Is the American, This New Man?":

> The fact is that, for a people who recalled how hungry and ill-clad their ancestors had been through the centuries in the Old World, the chance to make money was like the sunlight at the end of a tunnel. It was the means of living a life of human dignity. In other words, for the great majority of Americans it was a symbolism of idealism rather than materialism.

In the *William and Mary Law Review* (Summer, 1974), Lynton K. Caldwell gives historical perspective on the idea of land-ownership in America:

> In America the great opportunity lay on the frontier, where land was free from the traditional encumbrances of communal, seignorial, or royal authority. The possession of land conferred security, economic freedom, and social status, and the settler in America developed a deep hunger for ownership of land such as he could never have hoped to satisfy in the Old World. As an owner of land, he owed no obligation to neighbor or posterity, and very little to the state.
>
> Freed of the vestigial constraints of feudalism, the landholder in America developed a tenacious attitude toward unfettered rights of private land ownership. Most important of these was the right to treat land as a commodity—to buy, to sell, to speculate, and, under the right of ownership, to take from the land whatever might be of value.

Again from Arthur Schlesinger:

> Even in his principal occupation of growing food, the [American] farmer encountered harsh criticism from foreign visitors because of his practice of wearing out the land, his neglect of livestock and his destruction of forest resources. But Old World agriculture was based on a ratio of man to land which in the New World was reversed. It was as natural for the American farmer to "mine the soil" and pass on to a virgin tract as it was for the European peasant to husband his few acres in the interest of generations unborn. Not till the opening years of the twentieth century, when the pressure of population dramatized the evils of past misuse, did the conservation of physical resources become a deliberate national policy.

The present situation is aptly summed up by Dr. Caldwell in his *W & M Law Review* paper:

> The conventional concept of "ownership" in land is detrimental to rational land use obstructive to the development of related environmental policies, and deceptive to those innocent individuals who would trust it for protection. A new conceptual basis for land use law and policy is required to reconcile the legitimate rights of the users of the land with the

> interest of society in maintaining a high quality environment.

How should we study this problem? Should we say that existing circumstances dictate a change in the conception of "rights" in relation to land? We may have to say this, no matter what else we do, but saying it to some effect it may require us to reinterpret the primordial emotion Arthur Young identified: "Make a man the owner of an acre of desert and he will turn it into a garden."

What is the feeling behind this practical verity? Can it be understood in terms other than ownership in "fee simple absolute"? What processes of psychological change must be under way before those other terms can become commonly acceptable?

What is "materialism," anyway? Is it most usefully defined as the practice of turning into a moral absolute one isolated ring of truth—a single reading of "Natural Law"—to the exclusion of other readings? Would this mean that only at a higher level can conflicting readings become aspects and confirmations of each other?

In his discussion of solutions, Dr. Caldwell says:

> The composite picture of land ownership rights in the United States is anything but consistent. The basic deficiency in the law of land ownership lies in the inadequacy of its philosophic foundation. It is difficult to build a logical case for, or against, a body of law which has grown, virtually ad hoc, in response to pressures and events.

Ironically, Americans take the greatest pride in their *ad hoc* propensities and skills. We are determined pragmatists; our young insist upon "relevance"; our thinkers—most of them—demand *data*, not philosophy.

Increasingly, the problem appears to be the need to work through and exhaust the meaning (moral emotion) behind the idea of ownership, and to free ourselves from its grip. Dr. Caldwell gives a clue as to where such redefinition may take us:

> The ownership concept as it developed in the United States emphasized the rights of personal possession but suggested no attitude of responsibility to the public or to posterity. Beyond the law, however, there has been recognition of an ethical concept of stewardship. Although the roots of this attitude, which at times assume a semi-religious or mystical character, are ancient and multicultural, its assumptions regarding man as belonging to the totality of nature are more consistent with reality as revealed by science than are the technical principles of judicial logic evolved in response to the exigencies of economics and political power.

Chapter 12 of Wendell Berry's *Hidden Wound* illuminates this idea as it is found embodied in the lives of human beings.