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OUTSIDE—LOOKING BACK

THE world of modern reaming and scholarship—which has been largely shaped and tempered by the modes of scientific inquiry—seems to be undergoing a distinct change of direction. For several centuries the object of scientific investigations has been to provide order and certainty to our knowledge of the natural world, but now these efforts are being turned to another purpose—the understanding of ourselves. The processes of nature, it is suggested, are only the external side of learning, not the substance of the knowledge we seek. This new spirit parallels the intent of the medieval alchemists, for whom transmuting lead into gold was only an external exercise; their real undertaking was the transformation and refinement of themselves.

The recent reflections of leading physicists and cosmologists seem plainly of this character. The reason why a book like *The Nature of Scientific Discovery* (Smithsonian Institution, 1975) has attracted such wide attention is that it deals, essentially, with the nature of man. The principal contributors to this volume propose that the inadequacy of scientific conclusions concerning the constitution of "matter"—that is, of the ever divisible particles believed to make up atoms—and uncertainty about the origin of universes and systems of worlds may be due to lack of understanding of the part played in scientific knowledge by the human mind. It is even being asked whether the mind plays a part not only in accounts of what the world is like, but also in the actual construction of the world. Such questions threaten the very foundations of what is deemed scientific knowledge.

A similar intellectual tropism is evident in the content of scholarly journals. After centuries of neglect, the goal of self-understanding is openly affirmed as fundamental in both literature and the human sciences. Two articles in the Summer *American Scholar* reveal this concern. "Practical and Visionary Americans," by Quentin Anderson, is a study of American cultural life as a hardly concealed struggle between two competing conceptions of selfhood: the visionary, transcendental self—all-inclusive, grand, an access to the universal aspect of Being—versus the ambitious, acquisitive, get-things-done self which has animated and controlled the external affairs of American life.

Mr. Anderson chooses Emerson, Thoreau, and Whitman as writers who gave this struggle articulate voice. Emerson, for example, declared:

> The height of culture, the highest behavior consists in the identification with the universe, so that when a man says I hope, I find, I think he might properly say the human race finds or thinks or hopes. And meanwhile he shall be able continuously to keep sight of his biographical ego,—I have a desk, I have an office, I had an ague,—as rhetoric or offset to his grand spiritual Ego, without impertinence or ever confounding them.

All that Emerson wrote, Mr. Anderson suggests, is dialogue between these two "selves":

> He found himself split: a minor, necessary, and limiting Ego dealt with the world subject to reciprocally determined relations with others; the "grand spiritual Ego" carried on the business of incorporating all reality. He was related to people on two planes. His upper story knew others under the bleak and impersonal conditions of shared vision he called "friendship"; his lower story lived at home and in the town. Henry James's wry remark about Emerson's New England that it was "a society in which introspection—thanks to the want of other entertainment—played almost the part of a social resource," is more than a joke. Both Emerson's wife Lidian, and Margaret Fuller recorded their painful efforts to obtain a recognition that only a man with a less fractured ego could have given them. Yet Emerson was busy proffering a model to Americans and found a warm response. He told his audiences that they could not marry or vote or fight or make a

> living without denying their fullest, most valuable selves, and they listened with attention and pleasure. If they were glad to be told of the kingdom within were they equally glad of the attack on the fabric of their collective lives?

The fact of the matter is that we cannot do without these world-deniers! We may ridicule them from time to time, declare them misleaders of the young, subverters of common sense, and ignore them as wasters of our valuable time, yet we return to puzzle over what they say again and again, as though they were the caretakers of lost secrets. Their eccentricities and apparently fractured egos may be a small price to pay, if an age without visionaries turns into an age bent on self-destruction. We must have these people, even though we find it difficult to understand them. Indeed, they have some difficulty explaining themselves. Yet a thread of mantic insight runs through their visionings, and while we may not feel able to enter avenues that seem fashioned only by transcendental rhetoric, leading, as some poets claim, to another sort of life, we want the portals to remain open. We may need them some day. (But what if they always swing closed to men in flight?)

Emerson, who had his hour of recognition, is by no means forgotten. And as Quentin Anderson says:

> Three-quarters of the way through the twentieth century the most admired of these visionaries, Thoreau and Whitman, remain audible voices. By contrast, the practical men, the effectual agents in the only kind of history we know how to write, seem as hard for us to imagine as they were for Henry James. When the practical and the visionary appear in conjunction the fact confounds us.

What in us is nourished by the fantastic, the wonderful, the splendidly and insistently paradoxical? Emerson did his best to say, even though such utterances have little defense against hardheaded criticism. Mr. Anderson continues:

> The opposition between the practical—or domestic—or acquisitive—self, and the world-embracing self, sounds, given the range of Western tradition, like very thin stuff: provincial, adramatic, ahistorical. But it is worth recalling that Nietzsche admired Emerson. He could surely see the hidden hammer with which Emerson worked. That hidden violence provoked a glee in his audience of which they were not openly aware. It subverted the terms of the world of common sense in the act of using them. Two sentences from the opening of Emerson's *Nature* are illustrative: "But to a sound judgment the most abstract truth is the most practical. Whenever a true theory appears it will be its own evidence." A double process is at work here: the world of common sense is being denied—its very universe of discourse appropriated; and the sufficiency of the self is being affirmed. The negations sweep clear the space that the affirmations then occupy. Emerson's prose was a dazzling achievement; its shifting lights scattered the image of a man carrying away the world's language and its very terms for its values—"love," "prudence," "friendship"—into a region in which they no longer stood for relations between actual persons. That language and those values were seized for the use of a company of incipient gods not yet assembled, the Americans we ought to become.

This seems a sufficiently provocative way to set the problem. These gods for whom Emerson spoke, when no longer merely "incipient," would surely understand the contradictions between the practical and the ideal, would know how to resolve them. Yet our still strongly practical sense of the way things *ought* to be breaks out in revolt: Why should we have to live in a world in which all these contradictions are a "natural" state of affairs? The very notion seems an affront. For centuries we have measured our progress in terms of the elimination of ambiguity, and these people would have us embrace it as the stuff of real existence!

But what if man is somehow a mix of the finite and the infinite? What if this is the root contradiction which produces all the others? What, indeed, if the radii of self-awareness vary widely in their reach, from individual to individual, depending upon which aspect of the self is uppermost or most naturally functional? The great variety of human expressions which seem so different in content, yet all having the ring of truth, might have full justification from this way of considering the nature of man.

The best arrangement, quite possibly, would be to conduct our affairs on the finite stage of life as well as we can, but always with awareness that some "incipient" godhood may be waiting in the wings. It is at least conceivable that elements of the timeless may make an entrance now and then. This might be a not too extravagant reading of the expression, "open world," by which liberal thinkers set such store.

When is a god no longer incipient? When one is a fully conscious container of both the finite and the infinite? Of course, no "being" could contain the infinite, yet, conceivably, a self-conscious being is able to think of himself as having an infinite aspect and to act accordingly. What else could Spinoza have meant by speaking of an order of life *sub specie æternitatus?*

The other article in the Summer *Scholar* is "The Lure of the Primitive" by George Woodcock. This writer's point is that back in the good old days of common sense in anthropology we thought we knew what "primitive" meant, but now we are apologizing for our presumption. More and more, workers in this field are recognizing that the real reason we study ancient or "primitive" peoples is in the hope of finding some light on ourselves. As Mr. Woodcock says: "Not very long ago 'primitive' suggested the crude, the unlettered, the superstitious, the bestial. Today is carries overtones of the pristine and unspoiled. It even suggests an age in man's development that fostered special wisdoms—wisdoms that, in the crisis of our civilization, we might well endeavor to regain." The idea is that cultural anthropology really comes alive for us only as part of the humanities. The Canadian scholar, Northrop Frye, has said that Frazer's *The Golden Bough* is "more a book for literary critics than for anthropologists," that poets can enrich their understanding from Frazer, and that "critics can learn more from him about how the human imagination has responded to nature than from any other modern writer."

Among present-day anthropologists, Lévi-Strauss is one who admits that the motive behind such research is the quest for self-knowledge. Speaking of his encounters with the Indians of the Americas, he said: "I cherish the reflection, however fleeting it may have now become, of an era when the human species was in proportion to the world it occupied, and when there was still a valid relationship between the enjoyment of freedom and the symbols denoting it." Musing on the appeal of Lévi-Strauss's *Tristes tropiques*, George Woodcock says:

> No true anthropologist, of course, and equally no true artist, lives under the illusion that the past can or should be recovered. That kind of naive longing is outside the sense of kinship that attracts him to primitive cultures and primitive man. . . . In striking passages that many modern artists might be tempted to apply to themselves, Lévi-Strauss remarks that anthropology arose in response to the remorse of Western Europe, which "forced it to compare its image with those of different societies in the hope that they would show the same defects or would help to explain how its own defects had developed within it." He sees the anthropologist's role as "an attempt at redemption" and the anthropologist as "the symbol of atonement."

The artist, Mr. Woodcock says, "also uses what he learns from primitive societies for purposes of self-knowledge." He is intent upon finding—

> the grand outlines of what is universal in the human consciousness. Insofar as art is utopian in character and intent, it is so in the awareness it gives us of a community of myth and symbolism and hence of significant forms, the one indubitable universal commonwealth where Shakespeare lives beside Homer, where Picasso and the cave painter of Lascaux are equal citizens.

Mr. Woodcock concludes:

> Thus in the contemporary Western world the lure of the primitive appears in dual form: in a pointless nostalgia for peoples and ways of existence that our greed for land and resources has destroyed, as it has irrevocably destroyed whole animal species; and in a positive desire to find out what is common to all societies, what illuminates our modern selves with light sent from pasts and distances we shall never

visit. In the latter sense, the experiencing and recording of primitive societies, the discovery and appreciation of primitive artifacts have already enriched our existence. They may still assist us on the way to a society that will be moderately just and equal, yet, unlike all socialist societies up to the present may be free as well, and, to slightly misquote Lévi-Strauss, "in proportion to the world it occupies."

Interestingly, an essay by Stanley Diamond, "The Primitive and the Civilized," published in the current *Tract* (No. 18), lists the qualities and traits of primitive societies in a way that makes of their collective behavior a precise diagnosis of virtually everything that seems wrong with modern civilization. After reading it, one may fall into melancholy wondering: What *good* is our acutely critical self-consciousness, our capacity for objectification and clear diagnosis, since it adds so much guilt to our impotent condition? What is the value, the meaning, the *purpose* of our highly individualized consciousness, which also seems responsible for so much that is wrong with the modern world?

This may be the most important question we can ask ourselves, even though a serious attempt to answer it is likely to drive us into regions far beyond the competence of any of the sciences—to the Emersonian heights o£ mystics and metaphysicians—where those who use in other ways the very capacities now before the bar deal intuitively in metaphor and analogy, hinting at resolutions that can hardly be put into words.

But let us look at Mr. Diamond's account of the leading characteristics of primitive societies. Most impressive to people whose lives are dominated by the impersonal customs of monetary exchange and other requirements of the market economy is the fact that primitives find little use for *money:*

> Indeed, the major emphasis in most forms of primitive exchanges seems to be on giving, and this may be accompanied by attitudes ranging from hostile to the generous. As Barnett states of the Indians of the Northwest coast: "Accumulation in any quantity by borrowing or otherwise is, in fact, unthinkable, unless it be for the purpose of immediate distribution." We can conclude, then, that in primitive society, there is no morbid individual anxiety about the fundamental right or opportunity to work as a peer among peers; this is simply not at issue. The expectations of food, clothing, shelter and work are not juridical because they are unexceptionable. The rights and duties involved are completely customary. The basic economic structure functions rationally. . . .
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> The multitudinous occasions for law that we are familiar with in civilization, for example, commercial rights, governmental levy and bureaucratic function, simply do not occur in primitive society. As Tylor put it, "one of the most essential things we can learn from the life of rude tribes is how society can function without policemen to keep order."
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> . . . that curious aspect of alienation that arises in all political societies, the division between "we" and "they," the citizen versus constituted public authority, does not develop. The people and the militia, the people and the tradition are for all practical purposes indistinguishable. . . . society to the primitive is apprehended as a part of the natural order, as the backdrop against which the drama of life unfolds. It is sanctified by myth, revealed in ritual, and buttressed by tradition. The social network is perceived as a more or less permanent arrangement vis-à-vis each other. Since the basic needs for food, clothing, shelter and, as we shall see, personal participation are satisfied in all primitive cultures in a socially non-exploitive manner, revolutionary activity is, insofar as I am aware, unknown. . . .
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> . . . the primitive rituals are creative in the reduction and cultural use of anxiety arising out of a variety of existential situations. Birth, death, puberty, marriage, divorce, illness—generally speaking, the assumption of new roles, responsibilities, and psychological states, as these are socially defined and naturally induced—serve as the occasions for the ritual drama.
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> These experiences can be perceived as a progressive spiritualization of the person throughout the life cycle. . . . The primitive realization of the person can be termed *individuation,* and it is the antithesis of ideological individualism. Ideological individualism is a reflection of what Redfield calls *individualization;* the latter is a symptom of civilization and denotes the increasingly mechanical separation of persons from each other, as a result of the shrinkage and *replacement of primitive, organic ties by civil collective connections.* The pathological loneliness, the schizoid character that Sullivan

identified as a prevailing pattern in American life and as the substratum of psychoses is the corollary of civilized individualism.

Prof. Diamond's psycho-philosophical analysis is of particular interest. Primitive people, he says, are incapable of Platonic generalizations. They are Nominalists, in that all general ideas are buried in experience, never abstracted. Yet the saving reality for the primitives is that the general ideas are nonetheless embedded in their lives through communal function. They are not conceptualized but have a *living presence.*

This makes the central problem for modern man, as Prof. Diamond sees it—"to help conceptualize contemporary forms that will reunite man with his past, reconcile the primitive with the civilized, making progress without distortion theoretically possible." Having before us the example of the paradigms of primitive societies—so successful in their way—"What better place is there to begin than with the rational devolution of bureaucracy, the common ownership and decentralization of the basic means of production, for which we have the techniques at hand and for which we must develop the apposite social imagination?"

The prescription seems unavoidable. But for the "social imagination" here spoken of, we may need the help of an Emerson or a Plato, not to speak of Buddha and the Upanishads, as visionary resources for the concepts that will be required.

REVIEW
SHOWING WHAT IS POSSIBLE

THOSE who live in the American Southwest are naturally attracted to adobe construction, and people everywhere react with immediate pleasure to homes that other people have built for themselves in response to individual needs, capacities, and dreams. *Mud Space & Spirit* (Capra Press, Santa Barbara, $7.95), by Virginia Gray and Alan Macrae, with photographs by Wayne McCall, combines these interests by giving an account of seventeen adobe homes scattered over some 5,000 miles of the Southwestern desert. These are indeed "organic" dwellings. The justification for this over-used adjective is that these houses were not so much "constructed" as made to grow. In his foreword the publisher, Noel Young, remarks: "Clay yields to pressure in building as it does in pottery. Some of the houses I saw were giant pots with fireplaces resembling urns and high vases." Some of the fireplaces and interiors illustrated in this book recall the sweeping grace of the giant baobab trees of Africa, as though they had sprung up out of the earth, shaped and nurtured by a collaborating human imagination.

For those who know the work of Hassan Fathy, this book may bring to mind his *Architecture for the Poor* (University of Chicago paperback), which tells at length about the town he built out of mud brick to give new homes to a community of seven thousand people. The mud of Egypt, like the adobe soil of much of the American Southwest, is free. It is also the most logical building material for regions where trees are scarce and lumber is costly. In the case of the Egyptian village Fathy built, there was a return to design and construction principles that are thousands of years old. The methods of using adobe chosen by the owner-builders who figure in *Mud Space & Spirit* are various, but they also represent ingenious recovery of old ways of doing things. Noel Young says:

> These people adapt and yield to nature in ways most of us have forgotten, if we ever knew. Their relation with the House is symbiotic. Adobe serves as long as it is lived in. Abandoned, it will slowly settle back into earth. Each year's wash from the weathering walls must be scooped up and used to heal them. Man and earth, keeping each other alive.

This is not a how-to book, but an introduction to a temper, an attitude in relation to dwellings. It is also an account of how the qualities of community spontaneously flow into action, helping to accomplish things that would be very difficult for individuals working alone. This is the report of Dennis Culver, a painter and musician:

> I scratched a circle on the ground, then a friend came with his tractor and we went around and around and dug part of it back into the hill. I didn't have materials or know anything about building but another friend dropped by who'd just finished pouring foundations for a house, and he said, "Let's get it on." In two days we poured the footings—about two feet deep and eighteen inches wide—right into the ground.
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> The rock foundations above the footings took a long time since I was working mostly alone. Once I started laying adobes it went faster. A friend taught me how to make the adobes and there's good soil here. I just had a long pile of dirt and I'd make a volcano or dish shape in it and pour in fifty-five gallons of water, some asphalt and straw. I shovelled the mud into wood forms to make bricks and let them cure in the sun. Because the stone foundations are high and the space is open, I needed only seven hundred bricks.
>
> I started straining mud for the mortar, taking out all the rocks. The first course alone took me two days. Then it rained the next day. So this guy who builds fireplaces came by and said, "Hey, are you interested in getting those walls up?" We forgot about the rocks and dumped two hundred gallons of water into a pile of dirt and began making mortar. Soon people were crawling all over, coming around the walls handing me bricks. It really went up fast.

This may sound pretty haphazard and informal, but when you look at the pictures of the house it seems very finished and solid.

An addition to Virginia Gray's home in Santa Fe was designed as a pottery work room:

> I wanted curving walls and space up high, an eerie. I made a number of fretful sketches, never satisfied with any of them, until I realized it was more important to get something done than seek perfection. Rather than plan the new room in detail, I simply located the fireplace and doors and got started, giving leeway for spontaneity during the building.
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> I hired friends to help—one with a genuine feeling for adobe, and another for wood. We rented a small skiploader and scooped a shallow hole in no time at all. That gave us dirt for all the bricks. As the walls went up we left spaces for windows and turned these into bed-sized window boxes. When we reached ceiling height it became obvious that the trunklike chimney inspired radiating vigas [peeled pine logs used as beams], like the branches of an umbrella tree.
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> Eight or ten of us, plus three small children, put our muscle and our imagination into the building. The friendships developed became more important than the construction. One of these new friends was Alan Macrae, who became a partner in this book.
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> Working with space and adobe is a very familiar experience for anyone who has ever been a potter. A pot, however, once fired becomes hard and brittle, while adobe stays malleable. Changes in my life brought changes to my house. We change together.

Driving through Mesa Verde, John McGowan, a city engineer, stopped to look at an ancient pit house that was being excavated by archæologists. He began with a clay model of a pit house for himself, drew some plans, then started in, making a dwelling part beneath and part above the earth. A system of radiant heating is being converted to solar power. The above-ground structure is molded with a wood skeleton:

> We gathered almost all the wood from the forest: pine vigas, aspen posts and latillas [aspen poles laid across the beams to form ceilings]. They're free—all you need is a permit from the Forest Service.
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> This would be an expensive house to buy, but anyone can build a house like this without being wealthy. All you need is determination.

Someone may object that you need a lot more than determination—that these are all pretty special people with unusual resources (and at least *some* money) who knew how to locate an environment allowing them freedom, and who could make a living there.

The comment is appropriate; these are unusual people; but who else is ready and willing to break out of the shackles of conventional living, able to say goodbye to the elaborate requirements of being homeowner and resident in a modern American city or town? Innovators are by definition unusual people, pathfinders, trail-breakers. They are people whose competences are transferable and who gladly learn how to do new things.

But this, someone will say, is no solution at all for the multiple problems of the mass society. Right again. But the *central* problem of a mass society is the lethargy it engenders, locking people into conditions of dependence. Most planning on a mass scale accepts the lethargy as "natural," and this acceptance is absolutely certain to keep the people of the mass as they are—victimized, unadaptable, unfitted for individual effort and responsibility. The real remedy for this situation lies in the dramatic example of individuals who have never submitted to the passivity induced by mass living conditions, and who demonstrate various alternatives. After such individuals show what is possible, what can be done, a little planning on a somewhat larger scale may become possible. The main objective of planners should be to create grids which are open to independent action—which interfere as little as possible with the emerging play of human resourcefulness.

It might be salutary for community planners to begin to regard themselves as in some ways social psychotherapists whose task is to restore the conditions under which oppressed and fading individuality will have opportunity for renewed expression. The idea would be to adapt to characteristic weaknesses no more than is necessary, and always in a temporary fashion.

Every good physician does this. Crutches, while necessary, are not symbols of a good way of life.

Yet in an age where specialization and mass manipulation have established vast fields of relationships which enforce dependency and passivity, intermediate stages between pathology and health may be required. This calls for considerable insight on the part of planners. Hassan Fathy seems an ideal illustration of a planner who saw the real needs of people whose lives had been distorted for generations. The town he built in Egypt was for a community of grave robbers—some seven thousand people who had supported themselves by stealing from the ancient tombs near Thebes and selling what they dug up to tourists and dealers. The government hired Fathy to build them a new town, away from the Theban cemetery.

How, he asked himself, would these people support themselves when they could no longer rob graves? He modeled the educational side of his plans around crafts workshops in which the young would learn ceramics and weaving. He found teachers who discovered that teenagers skilled in faking scarabs easily learned how to make attractive pots and other things out of clay. Other youngsters developed into natural weavers, and he located an outlet for their fabrics in a Paris firm ready to take the output of the town. It goes without saying that the Egyptian bureaucracy ruined the project, but the town Fathy built stands as a testament to what might have happened, and meanwhile he is attempting to carry out a similar project on a smaller scale, completely independent of political sponsorship. The point, here, is that what the people described in *Mud Space & Spirit* are doing opens the way for planners like Fathy. They are showing what is actually possible for human beings with spunk, originality, and persistence. This may prove the only real "movement" that needs encouragement and support, since nearly all other good things remain beyond reach without these qualities.

COMMENTARY
SCIENCE AND SOCIETY

YOU could call the "Looking Back" series that comes out in *Environment* from month to month mission-oriented sociology. These articles help to explain why our civilization is able to feel so righteous and progressive while doing so many cruel and destructive things. In *Environment* for July/August, Julian McCaull traces the private property, free enterprise credo of American business to Herbert Spencer, noting that by 1903 some 369,000 copies of Spencer's works had been sold in the United States. Spencer's "survival of the fittest" (a phrase Darwin admired and used in *The Descent of Man*) became the foundation of business morality. Science, as Northrop Frye has said, can enter the life of society only in some form of myth, and the Spencerian rule was no exception. In one of his Sunday school addresses John D. Rockefeller repeated it in full mythic grandeur, adding a theological endorsement:

> The growth of a large business is merely a survival of the fittest. . . . The American Beauty rose can be produced in the splendor and fragrance which brings cheer to its beholder only by sacrificing the early buds which grow up around it. This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working-out of a law of nature and a law of God.

But Spencer's idea that *everybody* needs freedom got dropped out of the myth. As Mr. McCaull says:

> One can only conclude that many people imperfectly understood what they read in Spencer. . . . The iron constraints which organized business was able to exert on industrialism and upon labor caused despair to Spencer, who, as he aged, became increasingly pessimistic about what had seemed the bright hope of industrialism.

If you read Spencer's *The Man Versus the State* (Caxton, 1945), you easily see why the author became a champion of freedom; and then, if you read Oliver Wendell Holmes' dissenting opinion in the Lochner case (1903), in which the Supreme Court held that New York could not make it illegal for bakers to work more than 60 hours a week or ten hours a day, you understand why Spencer became a synonym of reaction. If we are even to get free of the rule of slogans, this sort of understanding of our past seems basic. A prophetic soul, Holmes declared in his dissent: "A constitution is not intended to embody a particular economic theory, whether of paternalism . . . Or *laissez faire.* . . . The Fourteenth Amendment does not enact Mr. Herbert Spencer's *Social Statics."*

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A SAD STORY

IN a memoir about his early life (*Annals of Innocence and Experience*), Herbert Read quoted from Coleridge some counsel that Read adopted as a personal rule: If you want to write, arrange your affairs so that you don't have to depend upon your writing for a living. Get some kind of a job that allows you a little freedom—say, three hours a day—and write without expectation of material compensation. The rule served Read well, but many people would say that the idea of doing what you care most about for nothing is too dreamy or utopian to be taken seriously.

Well, looking at the world today, and at educational institutions in particular, it no longer seems extreme to say that quite possibly the only effective remedies are utopian.

Reading Gail Thain Parker's article, "While Alma Mater Burns," in the September *Atlantic* recalled Coleridge's advice. There seems an urgent need for at least some application of his idea. From what Mrs. Parker, recently president of Bennington College, says about higher education in America, the present years of economic pinch are exposing for all to see the disgraceful condition of its institutions. Determination to hold their well-paying jobs is making professors resistant to any idea of curriculum reform. Mrs. Parker says:

> As things now stand academic humanists spend months arguing over whether they would be reduced to an ignominious position vis à vis "other people's students" were they to offer introductory courses not designed to channel undergraduates into their own departments. Anyone might reasonably wonder why it is nobler to teach a handful of dispirited English majors than to make hundreds of intelligent future nurses want to read ten good books a year for the rest of their lives. Unfortunately the threat of unemployment may be too great to permit faculty members to entertain the idea of abandoning curricular structures that require someone in each of their specialties. And the threat of underenrollment makes it difficult for even the most self-critical teachers to advise students about structuring independent majors or transferring to very different kinds of schools.
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> Personal welfare and survival seems the only issue at stake. During the late sixties and early seventies, professors discovered just how easy it was to disguise self-interest (even from themselves) by means of the new rhetoric of "constituency rights." Instead of defining colleges and universities in terms of shared educational purposes, the ideologues of constituency rights conceived of each institution as a congeries of essentially hostile interests. . . . It was in the sixties for example, that faculty members began to claim total immunity from the scrutiny of deans or presidents (to say nothing of trustees) by proclaiming a democratic faith in the sanctity of being judged solely by their peers. The elaborate systems of collegial review that were the expression of this faith have proved disturbingly vulnerable to pressures serving to obscure the need to judge individual merit. Faculties and their personnel review committees are increasingly dominated by the new sentimentalists, who feel that only a murderer would give a colleague a negative review, or the new Social Darwinists, who believe each negative review represents a victory for the race of survivors. Neither group is primarily concerned with quality of mind; both do their part to lend credence to the new legalism, according to which everyone is a case, has a case, or, at the very least, tries to make one.

At Bennington, Mrs. Parker reveals, the professors argue about such things as whether Black Music belongs inside or outside of the (White) Music Division, which of two teachers of philosophy should prevail in the recruitment of a third, and whether a college with only six hundred students needs a costumer. To disagree with the partisans in such issues, the former president says, "is to be vulnerable to charges of racism, anti-intellectualism, or, worse still, failure to understand the requirements of the creative spirit."

The acids of this writer's criticism may be exaggerated and selectively applied for effect, yet the case she makes hardly collapses for lack of evidence. There seems small possibility of concern for education—which always rests on mutual trust—in such institutions as she describes. Where economics has first consideration and

where adversary tactics make policy, what protection is left for *teaching*, the most delicate and vulnerable of all human relationships?

We come back to Coleridge's rule as the only solution. Making a living is one thing—a necessary and sometimes interesting pursuit—but it is not the same as growth in mind and understanding. Education can be neither bought nor sold, and it is mutilated by both pretense and corruption when money is made its most important requirement.

This is one region of disillusionment. A related area becomes evident from an article in the September *Progressive*, by Daniel Spitzer, who says:

> Hundreds of Ph.D.'s throughout the country are combing institutions of higher learning in search of employment. . . . The vast majority in such disciplines as philosophy history English, and foreign languages will remain unemployed or underemployed. . . . There are seven applicants for every faculty vacancy in philosophy, according to a conservative estimate. . . . In 1973, not even one historian of every six managed to find an academic post. . . . Philosophy and history are not exceptions; the job market in academia is little better—perhaps even worse—in most of the arts, humanities and sciences. . . . The average number of new faculty hired every year is now about 15,000; it is expected to decline to fewer than 5,000 in the 1980's. By 1985, there will be 40,000 scholars competing for that relative handful of positions, and a recent report from the National Board on Graduate Education predicts that in the next decade possibly only one out of every ten Ph.D.'s will find work as a college professor.

Apparently, there have been some careless calculations concerning the need for scholars and the universities have been over-producing Ph.D.'s for something like a generation. The educational planners were warned more than ten years ago, but no one paid much attention, being, like some others "authorities," completely bemused by the "illusion of perpetual growth." Meanwhile, the professors holding good jobs have reason to feel uneasy:

> An uncertain future faces even those few who manage to secure a full-time faculty appointment. Most contracts are of one to six years' duration, and when the question of tenure or renewal arises, the experienced professor may be let go because he has become "too expensive." It is a matter of simple coldly calculated mathematics: Institutions feeling the economic repercussions of diminishing enrollment, inflationary costs, and reduced external funding know they can pick up a talented mint-new Ph.D. for a song. Throwing the experienced professor back on the glutted market may well earmark him for unemployment and professional oblivion. Ironically, his years of teaching experience may hinder his chances of obtaining another faculty position: Although he might be willing to work for a beginner's salary, most institutions presume he is too expensive for them, and they know they can find someone cheaper.

What is the basic reason for all this confusion in education? Apart from its linkage with "jobs," and the subjection of those who teach to the pressures resulting from large-scale institutionalization, there is the central fact of the general cultural breakdown of certainty with respect to meaning and purpose. The modern world is obviously in painful transition. Institutions tend to be shambles of indecision at such a time. Their stability depends upon cultural consensus and a common faith. Renewal can come only through independent vision, to which, for a long period, most institutions will remain unable to respond.

FRONTIERS

When No News Is Good News

THE really valuable theoreticians—writers such as Karl Polanyi (*The Great Transformation*) and George Cabot Lodge (*The New American Ideology*)—have demonstrated by historical and social analysis the maladjustments and discontinuities which result when the market economy dominates society as a "philosophy of life." But theoreticians are commonly ignored. For their ideas to take hold and exert a noticeable effect on human behavior, examples of better ways of thinking, feeling, and acting are needed at the everyday level.

This means examples of (apparently) ordinary people who live good lives in almost complete indifference to the cash nexus. They think about money, but only when necessary, and never as a matter of course.

Two years ago, two young people living in Santa Cruz, Calif., started an organic garden on a 15" x 30" terraced plot. They grew enough to feed themselves and had some produce left over to sell through the health food stores. When prices dropped to the point where it seemed silly to deal with these stores, they decided that it would be more sensible simply to give their excess food to people who needed it and couldn't pay for it. But when they approached welfare agencies with their gifts of food, they were told that these agencies had no means of distribution. They weren't set up for giving food to people who need it. They issue checks.

So the couple, Kristina Mailliard and Gary Denny, gave a party, inviting old people. They got word around that there would be a free barbecue for anyone over sixty. Miss Mailliard told a *Los Angeles Times* (Aug. 23) reporter:

> We asked people to bring stuff from their gardens to give away and we got other people to donate food for the barbecue.
>
> About 400 elderly people showed up and they started taking food. It was laid out for everyone but people started stashing it away in their coats and purses.
>
> We learned that these people were actually hungry and we realized that just doing this once a year was not going to solve the problem.

To put this sort of help on an orderly basis, they organized the Grey Bears, Inc., and soon had 200 elderly members (at $1.00 dues a year) who would all receive weekly food sacks. Kristina Mailliard and Gary Denny persuaded various local growers to donate their surplus, once it was understood that Social Security did not allot enough money for adequate food for the elderly. Eventually, as the demand for food began to exceed the supply, the growers explained that far more surplus than warehouses could accumulate was available out in the fields, left on the ground after picking and harvesting, where normally it would be plowed under. So—

> The Grey Bear members decided to go to the fields to pick their own, after the regular harvest is completed. Every week the group calls local growers to find where to send its crews of senior citizen "gleaners." The vegetables they get are usually artichokes, brussels sprouts, lettuce, cabbage, and cauliflower. Sometimes they are in perfect condition, sometimes they have insect damage or other defects. From time to time, when the group picks more of a certain crop than it can use, it trades with similar groups in neighboring counties for added variety—apricots, nectarines and plums from Santa Clara County.

The *Times* writer remarks that a few months ago the Grey Bears knew nothing about picking vegetables, but now, in two hours a week, crews of oldsters collect enough food to supply goo members. A concluding irony is that the two young founders are now so busy with organization work and expanding services for older people that they have no time for a garden of their own!

But this, you could say, is the way it goes in a highly institutionalized society where communities have had to give way to the processes of the market economy. To restore community, all sorts of ingenious plans and bridging devices are required. The final working out of this effort, in

view of the dimensions of the need, amounted to an invented partial community, designed to supplement and correct the malfunction of the market society.

But it ought to be the other way around! The institutional functions should exist simply to extend or assist natural community relationships in which welfare would never be called "welfare" or even thought of in such terms. Care and help to the elderly would be spontaneous, natural, and universal, as in traditional societies of the past. In other words, so long as stories such as this one about the Santa Cruz Grey Bears make good and heartening "news," we have a long, long way to go.

Another example of the inherent inadequacy of institutional services is found in the reforestation needs of Southern California, where the pine forests are losing somewhere around fifty thousand trees a year as a result of air pollution. While forestry research has produced the knowledge that some trees are more smog-resistant than others, the actual replanting proceeds at a snail's pace—far behind reforestation requirements—simply because the regular and frequent watering of seedlings until they are established is not possible for the Forest Service with its presently curtailed budget. There are dozens of examples of this situation. Public agencies are at the mercy of political pressures and inconstancies, so that services which have become crucial to human and environmental welfare may be either suddenly stopped, starved out of existence, or not even begun. Meanwhile people seldom even think of performing these services themselves. Moreover, they don't know how. Since their transfer to big government, such individual duties or functions of a natural life have died away.

How can this be changed? Only by strong compensatory efforts by individuals. In order to save the California forests, Andy Lipkis, a college student, a few years ago started the California Conservation Project. With the help of thousands of school children, the student-administrators of this project are replanting the San Bernardino Forest (where the toll of smog is greatest) at the rate of about five thousand trees a year. These trees *survive* because the children water them every week. You could say that the children are making possible effective application of the knowledge developed by scientific forestry research. You could also say that when a tree-planting project like that of Andy Lipkis is no longer "news"—when such activities have become a natural part of community life—then public agencies like the Forest Service will be able to function quite effectively as managerial—knowledge-producing and counseling—bodies, instead of being expected to do what must remain impossible without wholehearted and intelligent public support.