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RELEASE FROM ANACHRONISM

THERE is no confinement more paralyzing to the human spirit than clutching circumstances which are held to be *unique.* When men imagine that neither their accomplishments nor their frustrations have precedent in history, they are indeed victims of the egocentric predicament. Locked in a proud conceit, even their despair is self-flattery, since it rejects the hope to be found in past regenerations of the human spirit. Betrayed by vanity into impotence, almost to moral suicide, a modern man will sometimes say: "What other men have done to save themselves will never work for me. Look! My manacles are shaped by forces they never knew."

This is no more than emasculating nonsense. Yet it is shallow enough in depth and has a simple remedy, or one that would be simple if we could escape from the delusion that we are the fallen great. We are hardly great. The fallen great retain their dignity. We are captives of our own narcissistic jargon, of an overweening pride in a century or two of mechanical inventiveness which has given a certain flair to the periphery of life.

But how shall men so lately filled with *hubris*—we call it "euphoria"—convince themselves of this? The retaliations of an outraged nature may help. And the angry revolts of men cast as peons throughout long centuries may frame a forum for the self-criticism which must come before self-recognition. But first of all, and with only these external encouragements, the men of our time must find the strength to declare themselves *equal* to transforming the ugly present—to uprooting poisonous growths which have done their nastiest work by perverting even the idea of self-knowledge. A man who will not know himself can never recover from his bad habits, since he imagines them to be good. Self-knowledge means encounter, however slight at the beginning, with that core of human reality which lies hidden in every man, but also seems, when it is looked for, to have its roots outside both time and space.

For man, if he is a being of the dignity we claim, must have such resources, although in rude and changing reduction by the circumstances of the physical world; and also in the reductions which we fabricate. Will this man now define himself by what he *is,* or accept his dwarfed image as reflected in the world of all those reductions? Will he deny the inward sting of his own eternity by studying encyclopedias filled with information about his mortal forms, the reflexes of his body and all the restraints of his environment? Are his human possibilities exhausted by self-pitying rhetoric, or can he move to a stage where better dramas are performed by men who at last suspect the undying hero in themselves?

Thus far there have been only a few tentative readings, and no rehearsals at all.

How shall we learn the courage to be ourselves? It is an open secret that men must be self-teachers in this. A man with only another man's words to guide him will not get far. His posture of self-reliance is a fraud, and its crumpling will spoil the hopes of those engaged in their own diffident attempts.

Yet, paradoxically, there is some learning possible from other men. There is an orchestral strength in the work of all those who found out what the human condition means by knowing the being who is confined, and gaining some intimations of the underlying cause. Such men seem to have written in a kind of a cipher, but its obscurity may not be in them or their work. It may be in ourselves. The reading of such works—to say nothing of the writing—is very nearly a lost art. Our powers of perception have been made blind by preoccupation with the toys of

technology—the wonders of the superficial present. The past, we tell ourselves, was dark and ignorant. Its pedestrian ways imposed confinements we have left far behind. Even the language of the past has grown distant in meaning, and its echoes can hardly relate to our "modern" sense of reality. The speech of the ancients gains only a humble antiquarian presence in our busy days.

Maybe the men of the past *were* different from ourselves. But different in what? Different in what they held dear? Well, what we hold dear is dissolving before our eyes. Values, values—have we any left at all? How then were the men of the past different in anything that counts? Some of them led lives of struggle which did not end in ignominy. They died, of course, but some of them met death without fear. And they had bravery and integrity to balance their weaknesses. At any rate, some of them did. Comparisons, though odious, are occasionally instructive. Whose chivalry does our technological prowess supplement or increase? It is true that when we turn to history for instruction, we recall minorities and extraordinary men. We point to pacemakers and example-setters. But we do this also for today. The quest for excellent models is an ineradicable instinct. To recognize that the masses are shaped in their behavior by men of powerful character is no contempt for the masses. There are differences among men, and the modern apathy toward archetypal forms of human excellence has left us with spurious and hateful models: we know what they are, now so well defined by the rejections of the intelligent young. And whose contemptible plans have shaped the oppressions of the modern world? Ignore Prometheus and you get Hitler. A Marxist manual on the dialectics of history does not change the realities of human life, although it may bring blindness concerning what ought to be done, and who is able to do it for a start.

When you teach, you teach the noble potencies, or you make men that never become men. When you dramatize, you exercise the means to vision, or you exhibit only a variety show of melancholia. How from individuals to societies these patterns of suppression and failure are extrapolated may be unclear, but *how else* will you explain the condition of the modern world? The man with clever, mechanistic, non-human explanations of what we endure is no wise benefactor. He is a fool who fools fools. Take away a man's burden of moral responsibility and you destroy his only resources for doing good. What endless lies we tell to one another, in the name of scientific explanations of the problems of mankind! They are all human problems, and they have only human solutions.

We have no choice but to stand up and say this to ourselves. There is nothing else left to do. There has never been anything else to do, but only now, in the lurid glow of past and future Armageddons, have we gained the light to know it. A man may deliberately diminish himself until, at some crucial moment, he discovers that he is indeed *self*-diminished, and then he has no longer any sly alternative—he must stop this stupid borrowing against his human destiny or die.

We turn now to material which has had a part in the reflections thus far—a copy of Harold C. Goddard's *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press Phoenix paperback, two volumes, 1965, $1.95 each). Two of Shakespeare's plays deal directly with the problem of power: *Measure for Measure* and *King Lear*. One usually thinks of power as presenting different problems for the men who have it and those who do not. But actually *knowing* power requires insight which transcends these polarities of possession. Shakespeare shows that a man with no power can become free of its evil just as well as the man who, having power, sees through its inhuman propensities. From here on we borrow from Mr. Goddard, who seems able to turn everything Shakespeare wrote into profound commentary on the present. In the chapter on *Measure for Measure*, he writes:

I am not sure that honest readers do not find Barnardine, the condemned murderer, the most delectable character in *Measure for Measure*—he who for God knows how long has defied the efforts of the prison authorities to execute him. We like him so well that we do not wish to inquire too curiously into his past. For my part, I am certain the murder he did—if he really did it—was an eminently-good-natured one. "Thank you kindly for your attention," he says in effect, when they come to hale him to the gallows, "but I simply cannot be a party to any such proceeding. I am too busy—sleeping." Let him sleep. Let anyone sleep to his heart's content one who puts to rout Abhorson. He has earned his nap.

Like Falstaff, Barnardine tempts the imagination to play around him. No higher tribute can be paid to a character in a play, as none can to a person in life. The fascination he has for us—he, and, in less degree, the rest of the underworld of which he is a member—is partly because these men and women, being sinners, have some tolerance for sin. And some humor, which comes to much the same thing. *Judge not:* they come vastly nearer obeying that injunction (of which *Measure for Measure* sometimes seems a mere amplification) than do their betters. Never will anyone say of them as Escalus says of Angelo: "my brother justice have I found so severe, that he hath forced me to tell him he is indeed Justice." They are not forever riding the high moral horse. They make no pretensions. They mind their own business, bad as it is, instead of telling, or compelling, other people to mind *theirs* or to act in *their* way. It is a relief to find somebody of whom that is true. "Our house of profession." No, Pompey is wrong. It is not the establishment to which he is bawd and tapster, but the main world, that better deserves that name. For everybody with power—save a few Abraham Lincolns—is, *ipso facto*, professing and pretending all day long. "I am convinced, almost instinctively," says Stendahl, "that as soon as he opens his mouth every man in power begins to lie, and so much the more when he writes." It is a strong statement and Shakespeare would certainly have inserted an "almost" in his version of it, but there are his works, from the History Plays on, to show his substantial agreement with it. Why does Authority always lie? Because it perpetuates itself by lies and thereby saves itself from the trouble of crude force: costumes and parades for the childish, decorations and degrees for the vain and envious, positions for the ambitious, propaganda for the docile and gullible, orders for the goosesteppers, fine words (like "loyalty" and "cooperation") for the foolishly unselfish—to distract, to exhort awe, to flatter and gratify inferiority, as the case may be. Dr. Johnson ought to have amended his famous saying. Patriotism is only one of the last refuges of the scoundrel.

This is far from being contempt for man. It is only contempt for the devices of man when he burdens himself—all too willingly—with power. What can we, who are without power, do about all this? We are but spectators, horrified and apparently helpless. But we are not helpless. The devices of the powerful must always rely upon human weakness. The crimes of organization would be impossible without the collaboration of the organized. Well, what must a man do when confronted with a barefaced lie? First of all, he must refuse to believe it—and refuse, also, to pretend to believe it. A vast wickedness throughout the world is disarmed when a lie falls on rejecting ears. But he who tolerates a lie puts spokes in the Juggernaut's wheel, and one day it will crush him.

The wonder of Mr. Goddard's book is that he makes us see that the vision of Shakespeare is no less a searchlight on the present. From this scholar we learn that the idiom of power does not change. The mushy places in human nature which power finds and colonizes have not changed. And courage and human dignity—still the only keys to being human—have not changed, either. The old truths are still true. Today, any truth comes hard, most of all the truth we need. We don't *want* to believe this truth, because it discounts to almost nothing the shrill certainty of our present beliefs. Yet it is truth, and once we begin to recognize it, there's no ignoring its meaning, which invades our reluctant sight like a stain spreading on a carpet. But that is because of the way we feel.

For Shakespeare this truth marches to the almost super-human harmony of his imagination. It blusters, laughs, finds gorgeous apparel in his speech, and loiters in low neighborhoods. It teems, shouts, swings, and weeps its presence into our hearts. If you are a man like Mr. Goddard, who spent his life washing away world deceptions with their solvents, the truths of Shakespeare

jump up everywhere. And they never lack relevance:

> The effect of power on those who do not possess it but wish they did, Shakespeare concludes, is scarcely better than on those who do.
>
> And here is the deepest reason—is it not?—why we prefer the "populace" in this play to the powers-that-be. The vices of the two ends of "society" turn out under examination to be much alike. But the lower stratum has one virtue to which the possessors and pursuers of power, for all their pretensions, cannot pretend: namely, lack of pretension. Here is a genuine basis for envying the dispossessed. Revolutions by the downtrodden, abortive or successful, to regain their share of power have occurred throughout history. The world awaits a revolution by the powerful to gain relief from the insincerities to which their privileges and position forever condemn them. Thoreau staged a one-man revolution based on a kindred principle. If this is what it implies, *Measure for Measure* may yet be banned by the authorities. . . . But no! it is as safe as the music of Beethoven. "The authorities" will never understand it.

King Lear gains majesty for even the careless reader under Mr. Goddard's tutelage. And we must never call it just *Lear,* he tells us, for Lear is a *king,* and the responsibilities of kingship are the heart of the play. To be a king is to see your own being in the visage of the humblest man of the realm, and this King Lear had to learn by perilous and maddening ways.

> Lear, at the beginning of the play, possesses physical eyesight, so far as we know, as perfect as Gloucester's. But morally he is even blinder. He is a victim, to the point of incipient madness, of his arrogance, his anger, his vanity, and his pride. Choleric temperament, a position of absolute authority, and old age have combined to make him what he is.

It is his own determined ignorance which conspires against him, for it finds embodiment in others similarly vulnerable. Not until he is out on the dark moor, alone with his blind, vagabond guide, does his ignorance begin to dissipate because he sees what is happening in his land.

> The lightning has struck in his soul, and it is at the very moment when he cries "my wits begin to turn" that he thinks for the first time of someone else's suffering before his own.
>
> Come on, my boy. How dost, my boy? Art cold?
>
> he cries to Poor Tom. More and more from that moment, the tempest in Lear's mind makes him insensible to the tempest without. Increasingly, he sees that madness lies in dwelling on his own wrongs, salvation in thinking of the sufferings of others:
>
> Poor naked wretches, wheresoe'r you are,
> That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
> How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
> Your loop'd and window'd raggedness defend you
> From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
> Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
> Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
> That thou may'st shake the superflux to them
> And show the heavens more just.

Many of us would like to play lightning bolts to a proud Lear's submission, but cannot handle the cosmic voltage well. And the destiny in human awakening is seldom consciously guided by another hand. We hardly know by what it is guided, but only that it comes. We cannot abolish the selfishness in tyrants so long as their power seems desirable to other men. But there are ways to disarm them, by unbelief in their pretenses and a civil disobedience to criminal rule. Our weakness is neither in our stars nor in our technology, but in ourselves. So, back to *Measure for Measure* and Mr. Goddard's reading:

> If we do not want a world presided over by a thundering Jove—this play seems to say—and under him a million pelting officers and their underlings, and under *them* millions of their victims, we must renounce Power as our god—Power and all his ways. And not just in the political and military worlds, where the evils of autocracy with its inevitable bureacracy of fawning yes-men, while obvious to all but autocratic or servile eyes, may be more or less "necessary." It is the more insidiously personal bondage to power that should concern us first. Revolution against authority—as Isabella, for all her great speech did not perceive, and as Barnardine did—begins at home. Let men in sufficient numbers turn into Barnardines, who want to run no one else but will not *be* run by anyone else, even to the gallows, and what would be left for the pelting petty

officers, and finally for Jove himself, but to follow suit? There would be a revolution indeed. The more we meditate on Barnardine the more he acquires the character of a vast symbol the key perhaps to all our troubles. Granted, with Hamlet that the world is a prison. We need not despair with Hamlet. We may growl with Barnardine at all intruders on our daydreams, and learn with him that even in a prison life may be lived—independently. Why wait, as modern gospels preach, until we are out of prison before beginning to live? "Now is a time."

Approximately three hundred years before the twentieth century, *Measure for Measure* made clear the truths that it has taken two world wars to burn into the consciousness of our own generation: that Power lives by Authority and that Authority is always backed by two things, the physical force that tears bodies and the mental violence that mutilates brains.

Enough—enough, that is, for now. These are matters that are bound to go on and on. Other men besides Shakespeare have known about the things which go on and on, but few have written about them so unforgettably. His wisdom breaks out of time. As a recent writer declared, Shakespeare was a biographer of the Royal Self—the self of man—which must go on and on, because of the immortal stuff of which it is made.

REVIEW
A RESPONSIBLE READER

WHAT is a literary critic? He is a man who, when he is successful, rescues works of literature from the presumptions of other literary critics. This, at any rate, is one impression gained from reading F. R. Leavis' *Anna Karenina and Other Essays* (Pantheon, $5.95). It is, we suppose, brash of a reviewer with no literary pretensions to be impatient with Mr. Leavis and wish that he would get *excited* about some book he really likes. He is so monumentally calm, and exquisitely precise—no one balances his judgments with little qualifying parentheses more than he—and you wonder if he has any secret enthusiasms or loves. Then, of course, you find that he does, but reveals them in his own utterly controlled way. He is an exceedingly careful man devoted to preserving the criteria of the important and the good in literature.

It becomes plain that Mr. Leavis knows what he is about, and that you can learn from him. In time you realize that his great contribution to the reader is to drive him back to fine books he has read too quickly. Mr. Leavis has a close-grained certainty about his opinions, and you are likely to admit it is an earned certainty. But you can't help wishing that he could work in a freer atmosphere, with fewer thickets of wordy, erroneous opinion to be cleared away. For then you could go with him on walks without encountering so many dust storms. But he does make you see what a careless reader can easily miss.

Take John Bunyan's *The Pilgrim's Progress.* Just the thought of that moralistic allegory will bring some readers a preliminary discomfort. But Mr. Leavis shows how foolish it is to dispose of people like "the Puritans" with a few critical abstractions. He asks:

> How could an imagination possessed by such a creed create a humane classic, for Bunyan's "puritan classic" is that. He of course, with that paradoxical security registered in the way in which the pilgrim having escaped from the Slough of Despond, has still Doubting Castle, Giant Despair, and so many hazards of the same significance in front of him, had—as Johnson [Samuel Johnson, who was a High Church Tory] had not—the assurance of being one of the Elect. But it is hard to think of that relation to the sectarian exclusiveness of his polemical and damnation-dispensing theology as conducive to a generous creative power.
>
> Yet the creative power is beyond question there in *The Pilgrim's Progress.* It is so compelling there that, through reading after reading, one remains virtually unconscious of the particular theology—remains so even when one could, if challenged, offer a fair account of the detailed doctrinal significances of the allegory in which the intention of this is given. Here and there, perhaps, one retains a faint sense of knowing some reason for entering a kind of protest. . . . But the clear if paradoxical truth is that one's sense of a religious depth in the book prevails with such potency that particular theological intentions to be elicited from the allegory don't get much recognition for what they doctrinally are, or if noticed and judged to be incongruous, don't really tell. That is, in considering *The Pilgrim's Progress,* we have to recognize that we do very much need the two words "theological" and "religious." Bunyon's religion, like his art, comes from the whole man. And the man, we can't help telling ourselves as we reflect on the nature of the power of his masterpieces, belonged to a community and a culture, a culture that certainly could not be divined from the theology. The next step—one that follows necessarily in a critical appreciation of *The Pilgrim's Progress*—is to recognize the force of the obvious truth that seventeenth-century Puritanism considered in the context of English life from which in the concrete it was inseparable looks very different from an abstracted Puritanism, in our sense of which an account of its theological characteristics predominate.

Here, one suddenly realizes, is a man practicing the *Humanities.* Mr. Leavis is discerning how the high qualities of being human may shine through the disguises of distinctly anti-human beliefs.

In the sixteen essays in this volume (first published in 1933), Mr. Leavis undertakes various tasks, usually simpler than winning appreciation for John Bunyan. There is rescue of D. H. Lawrence from an editor who tries to prove him "cruel" with lines taken from private correspondence; the defense ends with an

exquisite explication of the delicacies of a letter by Lawrence honoring Rupert Brooke at the time of his death. There is also a critique of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to show that in this book Lawrence was not true to himself. This discussion appears in a wry review of the London court proceedings to brand the book obscene, which failed, but not, Mr. Leavis feels, for the best reasons. As he puts it:

> For the experts did not mean by their testimony that *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, in giving us something that violates Lawrence's own essential canons as an artist, serves as a foil to his successful and great art, and in that way may be used as an aid to its critical appreciation. The book should be current as an unquestioned literary classic—this was essential to the case for the Defense.

Here, no doubt, is one more demonstration that what can be won through the gross measures of the courts for either art or morals is not worth much.

Mr. Leavis shows that really good novelists contest on other battlefields, and that their art is to be understood in existential rather than moralistic settings. On the question of the "moral" of Conrad's *The Shadow-Line*, he writes:

> I don't think the tale is a simple enough kind of thing to have what can be called a "moral," or the ordeal a simple enough kind of thing to have an easily summarizable outcome or significance. . . . A refusal to accept the loss of the "intensity of existence," to acquiesce in "life-emptiness"—the young mate's throwing up his berth is certainly that. . . . He is possessed, in fact, by a state like that of Lawrence's characters when they find themselves faced with the question: What for? Has life, has *my* life, no more meaning to it than is promised by a continued succession of days like those in which I have passed out of youth, beyond the shadow-line? Can I conceivably be fulfilled in a mere *career*—days passing as they pass now, with the prospect of professional advancement to make up for what is lost and gone? Is *that* the meaning of life—*my* life? Is *that* living? Questions such as these suggest the young Captain's state—a state that is potently communicated to us. Of course, when in so miraculous a way the command comes to him—and it is wonderful how we are made to feel the miraculousness, for him, against that accepted day-to-day ordinariness of everything for other people which has been evoked as a background to the ordeal—when the command comes to him he is filled with exaltation. . . .
>
> But we know better than to see anything final in this. It gives us, so to speak, a piece of thematic material, and we know we have to watch what happens to it as the dramatic poem develops.

Here, Mr. Leavis is defending Conrad against the charge of contrived melodrama. He succeeds, we think, by revealing the book to be a rite of passage, intense in imaginative power, and certainly not subject to the criticisms of a man who counts its exciting scenes to reach the quantity involved in "melodrama."

At the center of the title essay is a searching consideration of D. H. Lawrence's comment on *Anna Karenina:*

> "Why, when you look at it, all the tragedy comes from Vronsky's and Anna's fear of society. . . . They couldn't live in the pride of their sincere passion, and spit in Mother Grundy's eye. And that, that cowardice, was the real 'sin.' The novel makes it obvious, and knocks all old Leo's teeth out."

Mr. Leavis disagrees:

> Why aren't Vronsky and Anna happy in Italy? Why don't they settle down to their sense of a solved problem? They have no money troubles, and plenty of friends, and, if happiness eludes them, the explanation is not Mrs. Grundy or Society at any rate in the simple way Lawrence suggests. All this part of the significance of Anna Karenina Lawrence ignores; he refuses (for I think it *is*, at bottom, that) to see the nature of the tragedy. And this is a serious charge, for the book gives the compelling constatation of a truth about human life. The spontaneity and depth of Vronsky's and Anna's passion for one another may be admirable, but passion—love—can't itself, though going with estimable qualities in both parties, make a permanent relation. Vronsky, having given up his career and his ambition for love, *has* his love, but is very soon felt to give out (and it is marvellous how the great novelist's art conveys this) a vibration of restlessness and dissatisfaction.

This is a book which needs working on to be enjoyed.

COMMENTARY
PROJECTS, NOT PROBLEMS

BROWSING through an imposing report "by Princeton University for the American Institute of Architects"—its subject: "A Study of Education for Environmental Design"—we came across a passage that has a pretty discouraging effect. Right at the beginning—at the end, that is, of the Introduction—the Report states:

> When Joseph Hudnut was Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design he compiled a list of all the courses in the Harvard catalog that a well-rounded designer ought to take. The result was a twenty-year-long program. Clearly, we must take some measure of the human resources available when we devise new educational policies. The most critical issue faced in this study was finding a way to realistically match the almost infinite need for knowledge and skill with an optimistic view of the finite human resources available.

This is an excellent illustration of the point of the first paragraph of this week's lead article. Obviously nobody in the environment-making trade—from Leonardo to Christopher Wren—*ever* had problems like the ones designers face today! It's much the same in other branches of learning—certainly so in medicine, and probably even in literature.

Well, the report goes on bravely to tell about "the unprecedented diversity of new programs that are needed if we are to be able to develop the teams of well-educated individuals who can work together wisely and effectively to design a more humane environment."

A bit intimidated by such amazing self-confidence, we looked quickly through the report for reference to Buckminster Fuller—after all, if you set out to do the impossible, you ought to get an expert to help—but he wasn't mentioned. Come to think of it, Fuller would probably cut the educational budget to the bone and send all those graduate students to drafting tables at Southern Illinois, to work on his World Resources project. They could be much more poorly occupied.

Let's go to more sophisticated branches of learning—literary political theory will do. Goddard quotes (page 2) from Stendahl: "I am convinced, almost instinctively, that as soon as he opens his mouth every man in power begins to lie, and so much the more when he writes."

A vast wave of simplificatian could sweep through the modern university if all the teachers had to paste *that* in their hats for remembering at tenure time. You could ask them, "Do you truly agree with Stendahl, or, with the more moderate version by W. Shakespeare?" The ones without faith could have no jobs. That is, they couldn't get jobs in any reputable seat of learning where Shakespeare is studied and understood, although maybe one of those large, corporate organizations Clark Kerr wrote about in *The Uses of the University* would let them do scientific technology in a branch service station—you know, the places with the sign over the door: "Give up____, all ye who enter here." You can put what you like in the blank, but it has to be good.

This would be a religious test, of course, and we don't believe in that. But if the Government can ask an eighteen-year-old boy whether or not he's "sincere" in not wanting to pour napalm on babies, it ought to be all right to ask a full-grown professor whether he thinks Shakespeare knew the truth about the corruptions of power. And if he says, "Look, we moderns can't do without power; don't you *read?",* nothing very drastic is in order—you just hand him over to the secular arm, which seems to have an inexhaustible need for such people. (Good pay, too, down there.)

What ought to be done, then, as any working designer can see, is to declare a general moratorium on learned discussion of the problems of Education. We need to let them all go. This won't happen, of course. Too many of the professional problem-solvers like their work; they get to go to important conferences and stay at the best hotels; and there isn't the slightest possibility that the demand for their services will diminish. But the fact is that only people who are

themselves living fruitful, productive lives, and doing this no matter what is wrong with the world, can contribute anything constructive to education. The good life has to be lived by people who teach, and this is probably too much of a strain for most of those already contending with the dilemmas of academic existence. So there won't be any dramatic new beginnings in formal education, or any place else on the tightly institutionalized scene. The new beginnings will get under way in some kind of "underworld" area—outside, that is, the mainstream of institutional self-defeat—in places like Synanon, maybe, where education gets its content from actual human capacity and existential need, and not from the pressures of an impossible curriculum.

It might help some if the Harvard Graduate School of Design would simply junk its entire twenty-year program and distribute to its students copies of *Walden, Architecture without Architects* (Museum of Modern Art), and McNeish's *Fire Under the Ashes* (the life, to date, of the Italian architect, Danilo Dolci), and then send them to places like Watts, along with a few carpenters, electricians, and plumbers. It would also be a good idea to expose them to tapes of Bucky Fuller's lectures, just to keep the project in gear with high technology, which is bound eventually to filter into anything effective in regenerated design for the whole country.

The most encouraging thing about American civilization is its sloppy, loose-jointed articulation, its wide-open spaces, and a brand of practical freedom which is still untouched by any of the ideological manias. There is *room* for new beginnings in the United States. Some ingenuity is needed, but Americans patented ingenuity long years ago. And in education, the new beginnings will need, first, the sudden realization that at issue is the sovereignty of human beings, not the sovereignty of the institutions which have resigned us to all the intolerables of present-day life. In the middle of a lecture on design education, Robert Jay Wolff said in 1948:

> What is this need that we feel so deeply and which we have so carelessly ignored? Actually it is easily defined. It is the need of a complex organism, the human organism, to maintain itself in health and vitality; to avoid self-destruction and to seek, therefore, the conditions of peace; to strive for certain standards in the conduct of life so that it may reproduce its kind without fears. It is finally the need for happiness and the creative power that human happiness generates.
>
> Against these simple and basic demands stands an environment largely antithetical to them, an environment composed of social, psychological and physical elements which exist for every reason but the one of satisfying these demands. The gap between what we have and what we need is great. But if we do not lose sight of either, knowing and never forgetting the full meaning of what we have and striving within the limits of our field of design for the furtherance of what we need, then we can be sure that we will not be immobilized by the inertia of perpetual negative acceptances. Without this understanding the teacher's profession places itself in the cynical safety of office-holding.

The talented young—and there are a lot of them—don't need twenty years of courses. They need mainly places to work where they won't be interfered with by people who can tolerate an environment largely antithetical to the simple and basic needs of human beings. If no one has imagination enough to point to where such places exist, the designers will have to wander around for a while, something like the hippies, looking for them. And if these places turn out not to exist at all, then they will have to be invented. What else is creativity for? Dolci is especially good at this.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE FIRST COMPUTER

IN a wonderful little book by James Baldwin—published years before the present author of that name was born—the writer explains to his audience of boys and girls: "Nearly all the stories are true, and there are not more than three or four that might not have happened."

This earlier James Baldwin wrote stories from history and myth for children. He wrote *Fifty Famous Stories Retold, Thirty More Famous Stories Retold,* and other such books. It is the "Thirty More" book that we want to tell about.

How did we come across this modest volume put out by the American Book Company in 1905? Its discovery resulted from the desperation of a printer. Years ago, when this printer was the father of a little girl, an important customer ordered a catalog of current children's books. The catalog listed *hundreds* of these books, with a short sketch of the contents of each, and it was published *twice* a year. The printer wanted a book of stories for his little girl, but the catalog offered only frustration. It contained so many titles. Which ones are really good? He couldn't find out, and he didn't trust the neat little summaries in library journals.

So he turned his back on all modern progress in books for children and managed to remember his own childhood delight in Mr. Baldwin. There may be better children's books, he said, but Baldwin's books are good, and I grew up with his stories. So his library borrowed from another library, and he got a clean if ancient copy of *Thirty More,* and then some others by him, too. So there was this little Baldwin Renaissance around the house.

Thirty More has a tale of Roger Bacon which turns out to be unforgettable. It is one of the three or four that "might not have happened," although one must keep an open mind, these days.

Roger Bacon was a wise man whose life spanned the thirteenth century. He wasn't as famous as contemporaries like Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas, but according to an old encyclopedia he ought to have been. He was one of the founders of modern science and a great advocate of the experimental method. He had plenty of trouble with the bureaucrats of his time, and might have been treated much worse by the scholars at Oxford if he hadn't been an old school chum of the Pope. He made science out of even such unpleasant experiences—we would call it social psychology. In the first part of his *Opus Majus* he lists the four causes of error in the pursuit of knowledge. A contributor to our (eleventh edition) *Britannica* says:

> These are, authority, custom, the opinion of the unskilled many, and the concealment of real ignorance with pretence of knowledge. The last error is the most dangerous, and is, in a sense, the cause of all the others.

The name of this story is "Friar Bacon and the Brazen Head." At this time Bacon was already in trouble with the authorities. He had set off a little gunpowder for the Oxford scholars and they put him in a dungeon for practicing the black arts. After the Pope ordered his release, telling the monks at Oxford to stop abusing a man who understood the forces of nature, Roger Bacon found a place to live and work in an old monastery tower nearby. There he did experiments and wrote them up. Another friar, Bungay, who sometimes helped him, got hold of an old Arabic manuscript which told how to build a talking machine in the form of a human head. It would have elaborate clock works and was to be made of brass.

So Bacon melted up all the brass he could find—old ornaments, sword hilts, and kettles and plates—and finally cast the head. It had a splendid if brassy visage, judging from the drawing in the book. But could Bacon really recover the lost science of *theopoea.?* He put in the required coils and springs, arranged for the eyeballs to move and for smoke to issue from the

nostrils—all very impressive, but would the brazen head *talk?* On the basis of the manuscript, he thought it might:

> "It is strange, very strange," said he to Bungay, "but I believe it can be done."
>
> "What!" cried Bungay, "can lifeless brass be made to speak and tell secrets that have been hidden from the wisest of men?"
>
> "So says this manuscript," answered Bacon, "and here are careful directions for making an instrument that will give the dead metal a tongue"; and he translated them again for his friend.
>
> "The thing seems not unreasonable," said Bungay.
>
> "Let us try it," said Bacon.

Well, they labored together for seven years, and then, after the head was oiled, wound, and dosed with strange chemicals, the hour for turning it on arrived. But being an old-style computer, it had a slow, craft-like rhythm—no instant technology then. They had to wait until it was ready to speak, so they took turns staying up. For a whole month it remained silent. Then Bungay got sick and went home, leaving Bacon alone with the head.

For five days Bacon watched without sleep. Then he conceived the idea of giving his youthful servant, Miles, instructions to wake him up the minute the image did anything besides sit there on its pedestal. Miles agreed and Bacon slept.

Would it talk or wouldn't it? We can't go on with this story without giving away the ending, but the book is pretty hard to find. This Miles, then, was young enough to feel pretty smart, and when, a few hours later, the brazen head lit up and to a low thundering background gasped, *"Time is,"* he only shrugged. Anybody knows that, he thought. I won't bother the Friar. Maybe something more important will happen. It did. A few minutes later the thunder was louder and the head spoke more clearly: *"Time was!"*

Miles, however, was now quite cocky and remained unimpressed. He knew yesterday was a fact. Let Friar Bacon get his rest.

But soon even greater noises came. The floor swayed, lightning filled the room; the head trembled, seeming to rise from the pedestal, and the voice cried in a thunder—

"TIME IS PAST!"

Then the brazen head fell to the floor and shattered in a thousand pieces.

His seven years wasted, Bacon abandoned computer design, according to the story. The wild sounds had awakened him and he rushed into the room, but too late to make adjustments in the head that would allow its priceless wisdom to be heard. Some kind of programming, obviously, was required. It is said that Bacon took up alchemy.

Well, a variety of morals might be drawn. A child will wonder what the head was going to say, while a parent would probably explain that *of course* it couldn't really say much of anything.

We just don't know.

FRONTIERS

Why Is There No Voltaire?

WHAT are the legitimate certainties, and how are they obtained?

It seems clear that the authorities to which men commonly refer gain their eminence from an intellectual rather than a moral discipline. The flight from moral questioning is a characteristic pattern in externally impressive civilizations, which dignify this escape from responsibility as a kind of epistemological "rigor"—a common ostentation of modern professionalism. In such circumstances, morals cannot be reborn except in terms of conformity, which isn't moral at all. The systematic requirements of a conforming society have been shaped by the neglect of moral issues in their very origins.

If self-questioning makes a man uncomfortable, it is not difficult to develop flourishes of intellectual style to cover up personal moral embarrassment. In time, façades of this sort achieve impressive structure, with superficial levels of function and obligation, so that the young can be led through all this by a shallow educational process which never once raises the question of what a man ought to do, of himself, without being told.

In all such societies, the problems of moral choice and direction are handled by an elite, to whom the assumption of responsibility for other men's moral decisions finally seems entirely "natural." We print below a letter from Prof. Louis J. Halle, of the Geneva Institute for Advanced University Studies, in which the ground and consequence of such pseudo-certainties are explored.

Dr. Eugene Rabinowitch referred to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, which he edits, as "part of the conspiracy to preserve our civilization by scaring men into rationality." (Quoted from the September 1946 issue by Urs Schwarz in *American Strategy: a New Perspective*, New York, 1966, p.68.)

I leave aside the question whether scare makes men rational—except to note that it produced McCarthyism. I have been impressed for years by the assumption of scientists that they are in possession of the truth, which is unknown to other men, and that their problem, consequently, is to open the eyes of others to it. This confidence in their own achievement of the truth led many of them from 1945 on to issue a series of *ex cathedra* pronouncements on international politics that could, even at the time, be regarded as uninformed and unrealistic, and that have since been proved so. The excuse some would give is that they had to scare the ignorant into rationality. So they used their authority as scientists to propagate views that had no basis in such authority. I think that, in fact, they were naïve when it came to the understanding of politics and believed what they said.

There are elements of sin in this. There is the sin of *hubris*, and also the allied sin of contempt for the ordinary mortals from whom these scientists distinguished themselves. (I have had at least one physicist with burning eyes tell me that the men in government who were at grips with the terrible problems of nuclear weapons—men whom I knew well as former colleagues—had no idea how powerful those weapons were, and had no understanding of international politics.) It is also the sin of clothing themselves in false authority on grounds of their responsibility to save the world.

If one took Bertrand Russell's public pronouncements on politics over the past three score years and ten (all delivered as the Lord delivered the tablets of the law to Moses), and if one accepted the general judgment that he is the greatest philosopher of the twentieth century, what conclusion would one have to come to about philosophy in the twentieth century? Here there can be no questioning his wrongness because his pronouncements, always extreme and *ex cathedra*, contradict one another decade after decade.

(How many people remember today how he once advocated that the United States proceed to attack the cities of Russia with atomic bombs?) Do you suppose that, in the utilization of that wonderful capacity for logic which his brain represents, he has ever said to himself: since I have always been wrong by the test of what I thought and said later, might I not be wrong now?

It takes great confidence in one's own rightness to advocate a course of action that must entail a searing death for millions of men, women, and little children.

I might add that, having in middle-age come into the academic world from the dilemmas of government, I have been constantly impressed by the confidence of my fellow professors in their own knowing. This form of *hubris* is the chief occupational hazard of a profession that entails the constant communication of knowledge from on high to those who are too young to question and criticize.

The example of Socrates, who knew his own ignorance, has been honored but not followed in the twenty-four centuries that have since elapsed.

Basically, I am not at all cynical. But I am cynical about those who make a public profession of being wise men.

Why is there no Voltaire in our day to expose them?

The answer may be that he would not find a publisher.

LOUIS J. HALLE

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There are, it seems clear, two kinds of objectivity. There is the formal objectivity required by science, in its study of the patterns and dynamics of the external world; but there is also the objectivity of the moral intelligence—illustrated by the questions of Mr. Halle.

It is just possible that the deep disturbance of the times comes, ultimately, from a general stirring—an inchoate, writhing longing—of renascent moral intelligence in the human race. Old-style moralists who follow outworn external disciplines try to cash in on the phenomena, and to organize the energy, of this awakening. They cannot really succeed, for the reason that genuine moral intelligence cannot be dragooned or put out on loan. It is not a resource that can be exploited by "somebody else." So these hackneyed attempts to produce "moral awakening" do not work. They abort. Perhaps we can now say that the genuine moral energy of the present will never be siphoned off into social forms inherited from the past. But if we do, we ought to add that it is virtually impossible, today, to speak with any confidence about the social structures of the future. These will have to be constructed by men of far greater maturity than ourselves.