

UNTUTORED LONGINGS

IT was not so very long ago, as history goes, that the people of the United States felt themselves joined by a common confidence in both their heritage and their future. They were sure that they were on the Right Track, and while much remained to be done, there were few theoretical problems. The tasks were plain enough, and their fulfillment was simply a matter of the continued collaboration of ingenious and energetic men, using the opportunities provided by a generous geography and a providential course of events. Men proved themselves not so much by their dreaming as by their practical action.

Few Americans speculated about a Promised Land. They had it. Such dreaming was no longer hypothetical. Americans had no need to write essays on Utopia, since it was unfolding before their eyes. A people chosen by Destiny felt no constraint to question the fortune which gave them many natural advantages. They simply thought of themselves as an instructive example to all the world.

It may be difficult, now, to remember the warm and undeniably wholesome unities which pervaded American life in the years just before World War I. While a Heine or a Tolstoy or an Amiel might sense the contradictions stirring beneath the European scene, as Thoreau and Whitman felt a dark ugliness in the forces that were shaping the future of the New World, to be an American in those days, except for a small segment of dissent, meant to share in the general optimism. The word "Establishment" would hardly have occurred to anyone as a name for institutions which mirrored ideas that most people took for granted. While the contradictions were real, and the dissenters acutely intelligent men, Americans had won too many practical successes to listen to serious criticism. In his cultural history of the years of sudden disillusionment

(1912-1917), *The End of American Innocence*, Henry F. May sums up the mood of America in 1912:

. . . most of the custodians of culture prophesied that America would prove able to deal with the immigrant flood, the vulgar plutocracy, the rising materialism of the middle class, the attacks on sound education, and the many incomprehensible vagaries of the youngest generation. Within democracy but under the leadership of its proper guardians, idealism would be strengthened and culture spread through the land. Naturally such a victory would demand the strenuous effort which was a central ingredient—perhaps the most surely surviving ingredient—of the Puritan heritage.

When we encounter this bland vision in the year of beginning cultural upheaval, when we remember that every article of the standard creed was being sharply attacked, when we remember that young men had long been reading Marx and Nietzsche, that Veblen and Shaw and Mencken had loosed their arrows, we have a sense of double vision. To explain the complacency of the still dominant custodians of culture, we must look at their power in strategic terms. Obviously, their ideology was buttressed in places by conspicuous class interest. Exclusiveness was not really part of their purpose, and when it became rigid and narrow, it helped prepare the way for its overthrow. For the time, though, it seemed to make them stronger within their own constituency; some kinds of innovation coming from some kinds of people could be condemned without a hearing. In 1912, the champions of moralism, progress, and culture still retained a hold on nearly all the strategic centers of cultural war, on the universities, the publishing houses, the weightier magazines, and most of the other centers of serious opinion. This led to something like a Maginot psychology; those centers were to prove less solid than they looked.

If we jump from the end of World War I to the present—a mere fifty years—we realize that these bastions of confidence, while not completely gone, have lost all suggestion of euphoric moral certainty. Righteousness is no longer good humored. The economic growth we were so

proud of has turned into calculating commercial aggression. Manifest Destiny, which once had a lining of good-doing intentions, now involves the techniques of counter-insurgency and international police functions—tendencies in obvious and painful contradiction to the lingering nostalgia of the old American Dream. The moral anomalies of the national Prohibition law, which blurred the distinction between lawless "operators" and men of independent spirit, were soon followed by the tensions of the Great Depression, and then came the second great war, bringing psychological consequences yet to be measured. In the *American Journal of Psychiatry* for September, 1947, William C. Menninger called attention to the growing confusion. In civilian life, he said, the psychiatrist—

attempted to understand and treat abnormal reactions of persons to normal situations. In military life he attempted to understand and treat the normal reactions to an abnormal situation. One might seriously question if our world condition does not now place us in a continuously abnormal situation to which we are having normal reactions, even though these by all previous standards are pathological. To such a turbulent world, one might legitimately ask, what is a normal reaction?

This was written not quite thirty years after 1918. Today, after another twenty years, with two more wars (Korea and Vietnam) to shred the already torn fabric of the American dream, a writer in *Trans-action* for November has no difficulty in accounting for the distrusts and protests of the younger generation. It is now necessary to recognize that there is little or nothing in the experience of the young to make them share in the expectations to which many of their parents still cling:

. . . the experience of Hitler and World War II has induced in the older generation not wisdom or insight, but rather an incapacity to assess the true character of the current world situation. Older generations not uncommonly romanticize the impressions and loyalties of their own youth. The Roosevelt years may have been years of "the politics of joy" when America was the center of the ethical universe. Today, such an expression sounds as

willfully ignorant to many young people as the continued insistence of papal authorities that the earth was the center of the universe must have sounded to Copernicus and his followers.

The student generation is not a generation of "romantics," a charge often hurled at them. The older generation that waves the flag, that sees America as a country of manifest destiny saving the world for democracy—they are the romantics. The younger generation is by contrast a generation of realists who are not willing to kill and be killed unless the cause is unmistakably honorable. In this perspective, the issue is not what is wrong with the younger generation in trying to overturn established institutions, but what is wrong with the older generations in trying to conduct business as usual.

The point of this quick rehearsal of the events and changes since 1912 is the fact that we can no longer do without utopian dreams. We no longer have the excuse of claiming that America is the Promised Land. Little or nothing in our present way of life will sustain such claims. The pastoral ideal—which had its swan song in Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*—has been eliminated as a refuge for disenchanting urbanites by the economics of industrial farming. The notion of the American Century, which was *Life Magazine's* version of Manifest Destiny, must now be understood as the prospect of continuing the Cold War throughout all eternity. The promise of advanced technology—heralded as a means of freeing us all from the drudgery of work and releasing "creativity"—is still in the stage of computer mysticism and the threat of technological unemployment. And if the moon-probing spectator sports of scientific and engineering experts is a sample of that promise, the common man will be given little chance to express his creativity with clever new machines. Any extra tax money is being used up by scientific space hot-rodders whose interests lie, not in human beings, but in planting a flag on a dead and sterile planet.

Of what stuff, then, can the dreams of the future be made? We are the inheritors of a civilization developed by one kind of very resourceful men, but their abilities are not

serviceable for the qualities—qualities, not things or material arrangements—that we find so lacking in our lives. Just possibly, we are going at the problem in the wrong way. We long for "community," but think of it as some kind of product that we must learn how to design and then to manufacture, when what we value in community is not its product-aspect at all, but the state of mind which has community as one of its consequences.

It well may be that in order to create community, we ought not to start out with attempts at practical designs, but simply strive to enrich the imaginative resources of human existence. Arthur Morgan, who has devoted his life to pondering the mysterious ingredients of community, wrote *Nowhere Was Somewhere* (Chapel Hill, 1946) to show that nearly all utopian conceptions can be traced to some historical achievement. He has this to say about the dynamics of social change:

While imitation and adaptation have been the chief resources of utopians and social innovators, they have not been the only methods by which progress is achieved. For long periods men may improve their lot by accumulations of slight changes in the way of doing things. Then come combinations of great need and creative genius, to bring about fundamentally new ways of meeting these needs. The utopian in a measure realized this. Instead of endeavoring to bring about a good society by an accumulation of small modifications in existing custom, he endeavors to appraise the long-range needs and possibilities of men and, free from emotional attachment to the past, undertakes to design a radically new way of social life which will meet those needs and fulfill those possibilities. Yet often this strikingly new way was not an original idea of the utopian, but was suggested by the example of some actual society.

Today as never before this fundamental analysis and radically new design is necessary. . . . Society today is more in a state of flux than at any time since empire and feudalism, several thousand years ago, began to supplant the small, largely isolated communities which had been the habitation of man perhaps from his earliest days on the earth. This present intensity of flux probably will not continue indefinitely. Society will crystallize into relatively

stable forms, with new or old designs. Ability to use atomic energy enormously increases the necessity for adequate social design, though it does not equally contribute to our capacity to create that design.

It is helpful to read Dr. Morgan's *Nowhere Was Somewhere*, and his other books on community, to get acquainted with the social forms that in the past have consistently embodied the qualities of community. But it may now be more important to give thought to the kind of people *able* to live in the kind of communities we would admire. For we need people who can be the causes of community, and not samples of its beneficent influence. It should take no great persuasion to show that a vast ingenuity is required, today, of those who would realize some of the elements of community in their lives. The raw materials of the project hardly exist in recognizable form.

We have, then, to begin to make community out of a mutilated and polluted landscape, and to be prepared for discouragements, since what we accomplish may not show in significant ways for twenty-five or fifty years. We make no apology, then, for changing the subject—for turning to the study of a man with absolute convictions. For to gain the strength to do what must be done, we shall probably have to live by certain absolutes. Bland measures and patient compromises will hardly serve us in our present straits. How, for example, would a person longing for community translate into present possibility the recommendations of Thoreau? In a small book called *Excursions*, published in 1866, he wrote of the foliage of trees—"Willows for spring, Elms for summer, Maples and Walnuts and Tupeloes for autumn, Evergreens for winter, and Oaks for all seasons." He spoke of the services of trees to human community:

A village needs these innocent stimulants of bright and cheering prospects to keep off melancholy and superstition. Show me two villages, one embowered in trees and blazing with all the glories of October, the other a merely trivial and treeless waste, or with only a single tree or two for suicides, and I shall be sure that in the latter will be found the most

starved and bigoted religionists and the most desperate drinkers. Every washtub and milkcan and gravestone will be exposed. The inhabitants will disappear abruptly behind their barns and houses, like desert Arabs amid their rocks, and I shall look to see spears in their hands. They will be ready to accept the most barren and forlorn doctrines,—as that the world is speedily coming to an end, or has already got to it, or that they themselves are turned wrong side outward. They will perchance crack their dry joints at one another and call it a spiritual communication.

What has this to do with community? Everything and nothing must surely be the answer, as, paradoxically, with all else essential to good human life. We make too many contracts, draw too many plans, concerning matters that cannot possibly be directly planned for or arranged.

Thoreau was not much of a man for social intercourse. Yet a community would be vastly richer for his presence in it. He was a man who could nourish community by drinking at other springs:

I think [he said] I cannot preserve my health and spirits, unless I spend four hours a day at least,—and it is commonly more than that,—sauntering through the woods and over the hills and fields, absolutely free from all worldly engagements. You may safely say, A penny for your thoughts, or a thousand pounds. When sometimes I am reminded that the mechanics and shopkeepers stay in their shops not only all the forenoon but all the afternoon too, sitting with crossed legs, so many of them,—as if the legs were made to sit upon, and not to stand or walk upon,—I think that they deserve some credit for not having all committed suicide long ago.

So often one hears the condescension that Thoreau was not a "practical" man. Meant, however, is that it would hardly do to imitate him. But this is the habit of people who find it difficult to consider the ways of others except for either imitation or rejection. Thoreau was a man who never knew the impulse to imitation. Makers of community will have somehow to learn this rule of inner independence. Community will never survive a sect of imitators, nor can it thrive on any literal readings of directions for leading a natural life. One might even say that the best texts for

authentic community would be those declaring apparently unrelated excellences. Thoreau celebrates *wildness*—"in wildness is the preservation of the World"—and wildness is not by common-sense measures a natural member of community's family of virtues. But our common sense is not Thoreau's universe of discourse:

In short, all good things are wild and free. There is something in a strain of music, whether produced by an instrument or by the human voice,—take the sound of a bugle in a summer night, for instance,—which by its wildness, to speak without satire, reminds me of wild beasts in their native forests. It is so much of their wildness I can understand. . . .

I love even to see the domestic animals reassert their native rights,—any evidence that they have not wholly lost their original wild habits and vigor; as when my neighbor's cow breaks out of her pasture early in the spring and swims the river, a cold gray tide, twenty-five or thirty rods wide, swollen by the melted snow. It is the buffalo crossing the Mississippi. This exploit confers some dignity on the herd in my eyes,—already dignified. The seeds of instinct are preserved under the thick hides of cattle and horses, like seeds in the bowels of the earth, an indefinite period.

Any sportiveness in cattle is unexpected. I saw one day a herd of a dozen bullocks and cows running about and frisking in unwieldy sport, like huge rats, even like kittens. They shook their heads, raised their tails, and rushed up and down a hill, and I perceived by their horns, as well as by their activity, their relation to the deer tribe. But, alas! a sudden loud *Whoa!* would have damped their ardor at once, reduced them from venison to beef, and stiffened their sides and sinews like the locomotive. Who but the Evil One has cried, "Whoa!" to mankind? Indeed, the life of cattle, like that of many men, is but a sort of locomotiveness; they move a side at a time, and man, by his machinery, is meeting the horse and the ox halfway. Whatever part the whip has touched is thenceforth palsied. Who would ever think of a *side* of any of the supple cat tribe, as we speak of a *side* of beef?

Thoreau is unmistakably a member of the community of life, which may be a prerequisite for evolving human community. The wildness he speaks of may be but a partial reflection of an

ancient freedom, lost long since by man, and to be regained only by a new kind of learning from nature. But Thoreau writes in a cipher. He shows the fruit but does not tell the process of the learning.

Community is the magic generalization of our time. It resonates with secret meanings, strong in the tones and undertones of the men we wish to be. Thoreau wrote obliquely of community, in strictures and ironies, and gave it negative definition by walking away from what were to him the rude and careless denials of a natural life. He found the community he wanted by courting essences remote from familiar human affairs. Yet his intense alliances generated the field of his community with life. No doubt the communities of the future will come into being in somewhat the same way.

REVIEW

THE CULTURAL CENTRIFUGE

THREE years ago, in the *American Scholar* (Winter, 1965-66), Storm Jameson spoke of the nihilism of literary forms in which human behavior is considered apart from human intentions. People, she said, became no more than "a kaleidoscope of moods, and communication between them little more coherent than a conversation on crossed telephone wires; to pass judgment on their acts, thoughts, feelings, is senseless or impossible." Miss Jameson added:

This irrational philosophy lays an ax to any intelligible vision of reality, so that by an ironic paradox the New Novelists devalue man, rob him of his identity, as fatally as does the most menacing product of technology.

Then, concerning writers whose main purpose seems to be to excite revulsion and disgust, she wrote:

An attack on conventions—which can be gay and salutary and life-giving—begins to shock me when it becomes an attack on our self-respect and decent self-love. The roots joining a literature of self-contempt and self-hatred to the worlds of Belsen and Auschwitz run underground, but they run.

These are texts which may serve to introduce Erich Kahler's new book, *The Disintegration of Form in the Arts* (Braziller—cloth \$5.00, paper \$2.95). Not many voices are raised, these days, in behalf of the arts as forms of "an intelligible vision of reality." It is difficult, perhaps, in the face of so many ingenious novelties, to declare that even highly sophisticated ways of denying content or communication in the arts are likely to be either trivial or pathological, but if no one is willing to suggest this, then art criticism becomes another instance of the treason of the clerks.

Mr. Kahler's book is considerably more than an examination of the arts. These three lectures are concerned with the modern exhaustion and despair of the inner life, leading to actual display of the resulting impoverishment in contemporary art. The first lecture deals with the idea of form,

which takes shape from the human intention of the artist. Classically, this intention is to locate universal content in some particular, and to make the relationship visible:

The true artist reaches beyond the phenomenal level, the surface level, on which both, the usual and the unusual, the exceptional and the non-exceptional take place; he drives an occurrence or a situation into a depth of intensity where it is every human being's concern and potentiality. (The commonly "usual," "non-exceptional" is by no means coincident with the humanly universal; it is more often its very opposite, a specific peripheral conventionality, like a ritual, a national custom, a class standard, a fashion.)

Art enriches through the use of analogy and metaphor; it relates what was unknown to the known, making the unknown partly known; and since it "operates on the frontier of the expressible," a living art is always finding thresholds of the new. But in the present, novelties of form outrun original discovery or intention, and the cult off delight in external variety sometimes fails to distinguish between enjoyment of art and a species of intoxication. Hence such popular slogans as "The medium is the message."

The celebration of form is a kind of "art for art's sake" indulgence which leads to the disintegration of form itself. It now has no vision to sustain it. As Mr. Kahler says:

In all previous transformations of society, the breaking up of old forms of existence and conception was immediately linked with the creation of new forms; it was, in fact, partly at least, produced by this creative process. Today, however, the processes of disruption by far outstrip those of new consolidation, indeed the creative processes themselves cannot help producing disjunction. . . . I want to mention one principal factor, and this is the purely functional character of technology which enables it to grow on and on, unimpeded, according to its own self-propelling rationale, and so to outgrow the capacity of human control. "Mechanization takes command," as Siegfried Giedion has proclaimed; it has taken hold of our very existence and of the human mind. Accordingly, any person who still uses organic terms, who raises demands of an organic nature, of a comprehensively *human* nature, who speaks of

wholeness, coherence, form, is *eo ipso* considered a romantic reactionary.

Erich Kahler is one of the few men of our time whose background in both the arts and literature is sufficient to make this charge ridiculous. His book is filled with illustrations of the modes of the disintegration of form, taken from literature and painting (there are thirty plates of works by modern artists, from Picasso to Jackson Pollock and Jasper Johns). Here we can do little more than repeat some of his conclusions. In one place he quotes Nathalie Sarraute and Hans Richter:

"Modern man," she says, "body without soul, tossed about by hostile forces, was ultimately nothing else but what he appeared from outside." The despair of gaining a firm stand in the unconscious and of casting an anchor in the immense chaos of our world had its share in turning artists back to the presentation of the crudest surfaces of things, to pure, immediate materiality. "It looks," Hans Richter, a former Dadaist writes, "as if people today needed the instantly palpable material object to hold on to as a confirmation of their presence in the world; as if man could find himself substantiated only through his contact with his five senses, since in him all is broken up and uncertain. An inner void seems to force him outward, an urge to convince him of his existence by way of the object, because the subject, man himself, got lost. . . ."

Increasingly, the promotional organs of society imply that "really living" comes only from touching or playing with material accessories, while even the rebellious young rely on the artificial magic of strobe lights and "dress-up" ingenuities. Technology lends itself to carnival techniques, while avant-garde mixes of electronic innovation give the authority of "art" to delirium and Saturnalia. Mr. Kahler charts the fundamental change:

The overwhelming preponderance of collectivity with its scientific, technological and economic machinery, the daily flow of new discoveries and

inventions that perpetually change aspects and habits of thought and practice, the increasing incapacity of individual consciousness to cope with the abstract anarchy of its environment, and its surrender to a collective consciousness that operates anonymously and diffusely in our social and intellectual institutions—all this has shifted the center of gravity of our world from existential to functional instrumental, and mechanical ways of life. At the same time the hypertrophy of functional rationalization has produced an overcompensating irrationality, reversing to the bodily concrete or spiralling to the absurd. Hence the products of the avant-gardes display a strange blend of erratic imaginative vagaries with technological and pseudo-scientific aspirations. Fragments of unconscious and sensory experience are in a ghostly manner treated with an exactitude derived from rational consciousness and information.

Another diagnosis:

For a long time, human communication could be seen shifting from a discourse between centers of inner life, that is between people as human beings, to dealings between their functional peripheries, their occupational concerns.

What this means, in practical terms, is the transformation of the civilization of dialogue into a culture shaped by unambiguous signs and "directions." Dealing between the "functional peripheries" of people means manipulating and programming one another, not communication. Meanwhile, for experts in scientific manipulation, "original reason and functional rationality have become sheer opposites." Examples are plentiful:

Scholars and scientists, who in their research control most intricate rational operations, may be seen sometimes lacking all sense of reason when faced with issues of general human import. Those 600 medical, or rather anti-medical scientists at Fort Detrick in Maryland who prepare the most devilish kinds of genocide, the physical and chemical engineers who work on the refinement of nuclear weapons, the military planners, the "think tanks" who have calculated all rationally foreseeable circumstances and tell us that, given adequate protective measures like getting used to spending our lives in fashionable caves, not the *whole* nation would perish in a third world war, but only a mere 60 to 100 million people—such experts, if confronted with the

question of broadly human implications would answer, with the pride of their professional amorality:

"These matters exceed our competence; what we are concerned with are purely technical, rational problems." Limitation to strictly specialistic concerns has become a foremost intellectual virtue, and thus technical rationality serves universal potentialities which human reason must regard as patent madness and as monstrous crimes against humanity.

So, again, we have not "two cultures" but one, and that one is aimed in the wrong direction. The externalization of reality afflicts the arts and literature as well as the sciences. The value of Mr. Kahler's book lies in his comprehensive cultural diagnosis, indicating the common responsibility of all men for what has gone wrong with the world. What is lacking is an "intelligible vision of reality."

COMMENTARY

RELIGION "RIGHT-SIDE UP"

WE draw on the reflections of a thoughtful Englishman as a means of avoiding the dilemmas of a "Christmas Day editorial." Something over thirty-one years ago, Col. T. B. Luard contributed to the *Hibbert Journal* (for April, 1937) an answer to the question, "Why I Do Not Go to Church." The discussion is critical and scholarly, yet voices longings felt by many. In one place, he says:

That there is a religious life, independent of dogma, a continuous and creative experience of illumination and regeneration, a searching test of sincerity and faith, that leads to a growing fulness of life, men and women of every age have borne witness. But we hear little of that difficult adventure in Church. Instead we are offered access to supernatural channels of "Divine grace."

A little later, he writes:

Let us indeed return to religion, clergy and laity together; for the revival will be a test for clergy as well as laity. Their part is to get down to realities that underlie tradition, to lead the laity in giving creative expression to the inner unity that is more deeply rooted in us than our diversity of dogmatic belief. But it is manifestly impossible for them to do so if they are bound to reconcile the development of their thought with an ancient and elaborate system of doctrine, while the laity are free to follow their own judgment. The clergy must be freed from the dead weight of the creeds and Articles. Consider their position with regard to the educated laity. No longer armed with an infallible book, and unable with dignity to press claims to supernatural authority and supernatural powers which few of the laity admit, they need, if they are to be our spiritual leaders—experts in the life of spirit—to be men, not only of wide learning and broad humanity, but also of deep spiritual insight and experience; above all, we expect them to be men of unquestionable sincerity and candour, . . . The fundamental religious issue of the day is not the Divinity of Jesus but the spiritual nature of man.

This seems an excellent call for return to religion, if it is realized that the requirements listed for "spiritual leaders" amount to abolition of a

professional clergy. What serious man could pretend that he had qualified?

But the statement of the "fundamental religious issue" seems exactly right. It corrects what may be the worst offense of organized religion—focussing the attention of believers on an authority and power outside themselves. Not what they must do, as men of purpose, but Whom they must get in touch with, to be saved from eternal punishment and to obtain an eternal reward, has been the big issue in historical religion in the West. The expression of human potentiality depends upon the idea of self. The militant atheism of Western history has few parallels elsewhere in the world, and ought to be regarded as a desperate rejection of the low estimate of man offered by conventional religion. Philosophical pantheism or even polytheism is preferable by far to an anthropomorphic monotheism which drains both the world and man of divine potentiality.

John A. Hutchison, professor of philosophy and religion at the Claremont Graduate School, made some suggestive observations along this line in the *Blaisdell Institute Journal* for last June. After noting the Existentialist's insistence on a first-hand account of human identity, he proposed that the actual content of the great religions is more concerned with man than with "God." And it is man's nature—his *spiritual* nature, as Col. Luard put it—that needs to be understood. Speaking of the scriptures of the high religions, Dr. Hutchison said:

In many of these sources such as early Buddhism the idea of deity is declared to be extraneous, and in some, such as Jainism, it is specifically denied. Where the idea of deity enters, as in the monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is with reference to the human situation.

. . .

If this evidence is accepted, then it follows that the interpretation I am offering you does not turn religion upside down, but just the opposite, turns it right-side up. If time permitted I would like to argue that in the modern West, roughly since the enlightenment, there has been a massive misconception of religion as a hypothesis concerning

a remote being called God whose dwelling is just beyond the reach of our furthest telescope. Theists accept this hypothesis and atheists and skeptics reject it; but significantly they agree, and I would say mistakenly, in the primary meaning or reference for religion. I would call this the fallacy of the Head Spirit (I am tempted to say the Head Spook) Out There.

With religion turned "right-side up," as Dr. Hutchison says, Christmas might come to typify the rebirth and self-discovery that religion meant to Col. Luard:

The more we study the consciousness of the age in which Christianity took shape, the more we realize how various and how old was the religious experience that it absorbed. . . . For this diverse experience was more than vision. Followed up into life it led to a sense of new vitality and power which whether it was described as "the grace of God" or "the god within," as "gnosis" or being "in Christ," was surely the same initiation into the life of spirit, the same incipient realization of the eternal Creator Self Incarnate in the universe, the Way the Truth and the Life.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

A SUBJECTIVE EXAMINATION

[This is a portion of a recent paper by Noel McInnis, who teaches at Kendall College, Evanston, Ill.]

IT was only a year ago that I took sufficient courage to deliberately adopt a set of subjective goals for my instruction. I decided last fall that my students should develop four behaviors as a result of my course:

- (1) Increased ability to perceive interrelationships across disciplinary boundaries;
- (2) increased ability to establish human relationships;
- (3) increased autonomy (self-reliance, independence, individuality, etc.); and,
- (4) increased self-affirmation (self-esteem, sense of self-worth, etc.).

Assuming that the ability to perceive relationships across boundaries would be facilitated by my refusal to establish any boundaries, and assuming that the ability to develop autonomy would be facilitated by an atmosphere of freedom, I turned my class over to my students—totally and completely. I announced that I would assign no reading, require no papers, and give no examinations. If the students wanted to read, they would choose their reading assignments. If they wanted to write, they would write as the spirit moved them. If they wanted to be examined, they would have to devise their own examinations. Furthermore, they would decide what to do with the class sessions. And at the end of the semester, they turned in their own grades. The only criterion the student would have for grading himself would be his self-evaluation of how well he utilized this opportunity to learn free, somehow converting his conclusions into an "A," "B," "C," "D," or "F." (The students had all sorts of trouble with this grading system. One of them said, "But you see, there are no valid objective criteria for establishing a grade." To which I

responded, "Beautiful! Now you understand *my* problem.")

The most significant pedagogical insight derived from this experiment was my totally new perspective on the evaluation process. I overcame the objectivity bind, which might be defined as the compulsion to attempt greater and greater degrees of objectivity as one becomes more and more aware of the subjectivity inherent in any objective system of measurement. I overcame this bind merely by the discovery of a means of assessing subjective behavior. This discovery was the result of my doing two things that most teachers probably would never think of doing: I prepared a purely subjective examination, and then I took my students' answers at their word.

The examination consisted of 14 questions:

- (1) What has this experience done for me?
- (2) What have I done for this experience?
- (3) How am I different as a result of this experience? Why?
- (4) What have I learned from this experience? Both generally and specifically? What contributed to this learning?
- (5) What questions have I become aware of as a result of this experience? Why?
- (6) What conclusions have I drawn as a result of this experience? Why?
- (7) Have I developed new interests as a result of this experience? How? Why?
- (8) Have attitudes toward others and myself been affected by this experience? How? Why?
- (9) To the best of your knowledge, have the interests and attitudes of others in the group been affected by this experience? How? Why? Please use specific examples.
- (10) Has this experience affected my other coursework? How? Why?
- (11) Has this experience affected my relations with others outside the group? How? Why?
- (12) Has this experience affected my manner of living? How? Why?
- (13) What has prevented this experience from being more effective for myself and for others?
- (14) How would I improve this experience?

The purpose of asking so many similar questions was to elicit a greater depth of response from the students.

The two major criteria which determine the accuracy of a reactive behavioral measurement (one in which we are getting a response from the person being measured) are the honesty of the person being measured and the validity of the examination itself (i.e., does it measure what it sets out to measure?). Since the only "right" answers on a truly subjective examination are the honest answers of the person who is taking it, it is quite unlikely that one can cheat on such an examination without being detected by someone who already knows him. And since I had communicated to no one, including my colleagues, what my objectives in the course were, there really was no way that any of my students could tell me what I wanted to hear. Honesty of response on my exam was therefore essentially assured. The examination validated itself, not because of any quantitative assessment but by virtue of a pattern of behavior reported in most of the responses. The students consistently reported certain types of reaction to the course which indicated that to some degree (and the degree, of course, is unmeasurable) they had attained some or all of the objectives of the course. As it turned out, I even had a control group in this experiment. The only examinations on which the prevailing patterns failed to show up at all were those of students who had already demonstrated a pattern of self-deception. Students who told me what they thought I wanted to hear produced the traditional "snow job." They did not, in fact, tell me what I was looking for. Those who weren't trying to did. I took this to be additional confirmation of the validity of a test designed to assess the attainment of integral behaviors. It was the student without integrity who failed.

Of course it can be argued that qualitative measurements can never approach the accuracy of quantitative measurements. For instance, I am unable (probably forever) to assess the percentage

of increase in self-esteem and autonomy on the part of either a total group of students or on the part of individual members of the group severally. But I think it is rather meaningless to try to reduce qualities to quantities. Those who can trust only quantitative instruments can stick to teaching only the ability to manipulate data. I prefer to enable my students to develop not only the ability to manipulate data, but the ability to self-actualize, to realize their human potential. Objectivists who are concerned with what they can quantitatively measure can count numbers. I will try to devise techniques for perceiving patterns. Objectivists may continue to specialize in rendering unto objectivity that which is objectivity's. Others, I hope, will begin or continue to generalize, and render unto both objectivity and subjectivity that which is respectively appropriate. If they do so, I am convinced we can devise academically legitimate instruments for self-evaluation. I shall perhaps be accused of unsubstantiated faith, and if so accused I will plead guilty to the charge. My faith is as unsubstantiated as the faith of one who makes the subjective decision that item "four" on his final examination is worth as many points as items "one" through "three.") The objectivist and the subjectivist are in the same boat; they are merely pulling opposing oars. The wave of the future may swamp those educators and those institutions which don't learn how to pull both oars.

NOEL F. MCINNIS

Evanston, Ill.

FRONTIERS

The Imperialism of Language

THE spread of a single language throughout the world—English, for example—is often defended on the theory that international understanding will increase as communication becomes easier. Then, too, the languages of the countries where there have been great advances in science and technology are the best means of transmitting these benefits, so that the ideal of material progress strongly affects the attitudes of national leaders concerning educational policy. There is a sense in which these languages internationalize culture. Writing on this question in *Bilingualism as a World Problem* (Montreal: Harvest House, 1967), W. F. Mackey observes:

The power and prestige of these languages as a means of communication are guaranteed by the political and industrial power of the nations using them as national tongues. English, French, German, and Russian are such languages and to a lesser extent, Japanese, Chinese, Spanish, Italian, and a few others. In comparison to these great languages and what they represent, the vast majority of the world's languages have little to offer in the way of knowledge and information. By acquiring one of the great languages, these millions not only give that language currency, but make it economically possible for even more material to be produced in it. It is in this way that the majority languages become even more widespread at the expense of minority ones, and the culture and language of smaller groups are sacrificed in return for the advantage of membership in the larger groups.

This sacrifice doubtless seems reasonable enough, in view of the practical advantage gained, and especially to the people who find pleasure and convenience in encountering others who speak their language in distant parts of the world. But what may not occur to such people is the extinguishing effect on other cultures of the spread of a language which automatically externalizes values, transmitting to populations made vulnerable by suffering and want the propaganda of the "thing." Those who study the riches of language often inform us of the almost

untranslatable delicacies that have been kept alive by cultures regarded as woefully backward in other directions. These qualities may be lost by the displacement of native language.

The book by C. G. Jung, *Analytical Psychology* (Pantheon), noted in last week's Review, has a passage which illustrates how subtle perceptions may be generated and become incorporated in language by small or isolated groups. As most readers know, a cardinal idea of Jung's psychology is the conception of the Unconscious. This region of psychological resources has two divisions, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. In these terms, to become conscious is to learn about oneself and one's cultural roots. So a language quite naturally becomes the idiom, at least in part, of the self-knowledge of the people who speak-it. And since people are observant and self-conscious in different ways, the cultural riches of the world are preserved in language. Speaking as a European, Jung said:

Of course we have an extraordinary amount of unconsciousness in our civilization, but if you go to other races, to India or China, for example, you discover that these people are conscious of things for which the psychoanalyst in our countries had to dig for months. Moreover, simple people in natural conditions often have an extraordinary consciousness of things of which people in towns have no knowledge and of which townspeople begin to dream only under the influence of psychoanalysis. I noticed this at school. I had lived in the country among peasants and with animals, and I was fully conscious of a number of things of which other boys had no idea. I had the chance and I was not prejudiced. When you analyze dreams or symptoms or fantasies of neurotic or normal people, you begin to penetrate the unconscious mind, and you can abolish its artificial threshold. The personal unconscious is really something very relative, and its circle can be restricted and become so much narrower that it touches zero. It is quite thinkable that a man can develop his consciousness to such an extent that he can say: *I count nothing human alien to me.*

This need not be made into an argument opposing a *lingua franca* for the "one world" of science and technology, but it is surely a strong

caution against letting the language of a dominant culture displace a speech which embodies the natural maturities of a simpler life. Psychological health, understanding of the rural environment, the subtler moralities of existential relationships, folk wisdom, and many other aspects of human development may all be made to atrophy by the introduction of linguistic habits which ignore these values. Such inroads are more than a theoretical danger, as Mr. Mackey shows:

Some people have propagated the notion that we would be better off with one language. For the more people who understand the same language, the greater the efficiency in national and international communications. On the other hand from a cultural point of view, the extinction of a language is an irreparable loss. The side you take in this debate depends on your sense of values. But the fact remains that the widespread languages are spreading at the expense of the minority languages. Why is this so? In the past, one of the reasons evoked was the increase in political alliances; but today this is a less noticeable factor than the great increase in mass literacy, coupled with the recent revolution in communications. Language communities which a generation ago were remote and isolated are today open to the influences of direct and indirect communication with the outside world. And since communication systems tend to standardization, the content is usually transmitted in a majority language, often in a language not spoken in the area. With the phenomenal increase in communications of all kinds—travel, films, recording, graphic reproduction, long-distance broadcasting, and so on, this process is rapidly being speeded up. Already there are not many spots left in the world which are completely immune from contact with at least one of the great majority languages.

We are much indebted to scholars of the caliber of Benjamin Lee Whorf for illustrating the capacity for philosophic insight which may be embodied in little known languages—such as, say, the Hopi tongue. The question, then, is whether the destructive effects of a dominant language on other cultures can be reduced. At root, the argument is not about either "language" or "communication," but about the ambiguities in modern ideas of "efficiency" and "aid" to underdeveloped countries. It is not, as E. F.

Schumacher has pointed out, in any sense "efficient" for a country like the United States to impose the patterns of high technology on countries like India. True growth, economic or otherwise, involves a pace unique to the people who are doing the growing, and a country that needs more wells, better hand-tools, and simple farming equipment suffers both interruption and alienation from natural life-processes when made to adopt in a few urban areas the precocious instruments of an advanced industrial society. In this case, the "dominant" language becomes a source of actual *infection* to older and perhaps wiser cultures.

A melancholy recognition of this law appears in a passage by Tanizaki, a writer well known in Japan, but hardly heard of in this country. Musing on "how different everything would be if we in the Orient had developed our own science," he said:

Suppose for instance we had developed our own physics and chemistry: would not the techniques and industries based on them have taken a different form, would not our myriads of everyday gadgets, our medicines, the products of our industrial art—would they not have suited our national temper better than they do? . . .

The Westerners have been able to move forward in ordered steps, while we have met a superior civilization and have had to surrender to it, and we have had to leave a road we have followed for thousands of years. The missteps and inconveniences this has caused have, I think, been many. If we had been left alone we might not be much further along than we were five hundred years ago. . . . But we would have gone in a direction that suited us. We would have gone ahead very slowly, and yet it is not impossible that we would one day have discovered our own substitute for the trolley, the radio, the airplane of today. They would have been no borrowed gadgets, they would have been the tools of our culture, suited to us.

This was written in 1934. Tanizaki might refer a little less respectfully to the "ordered steps" of the Westerners, and where they have led, were he writing today.