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THE FATEFUL QUESTION

PERHAPS from the desperations of the age—desperations made deeper by a wearing out of hopes that rested on scientific expectations—and perhaps, most of all, from fresh longings which come from the heart, the idea that *there is Truth*, and that human beings can know it and are spontaneously roused to seek it, is returning to the foreground of human awareness.

So, once more the fateful question: What is truth?

From the provocations of disillusionment with science, Edward Goldsmith, editor of the *Ecologist*, ended an article on "Religion" in the December issue:

> It may be objected that a religio-culture does not provide objective information, and that its tenets are simply not true. To say that an ancestral spirit exists, for instance, is not as "true" as it is to say that a nuclear power station exists.
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> Unfortunately, the criterion we are taught to use for determining the validity of a proposition is false. It is based on total ignorance of the principles governing the organization of information. It is forgotten, for instance, that information is organized for *one purpose* only:—so as to provide a model of a system's relationship with its environment, and there is only *one possible reason* for building such a model, and that is for the purpose of mediating adaptive behaviour.
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> Not only does the subjective information which constitutes the world-view associated with a society's religio-culture achieve this end, but, on both empirical and theoretical grounds, it would seem the only effective means of doing so. The fact that it does not constitute "objective" knowledge is irrelevant. Objective knowledge has never yet served as a basis for truly adaptive social behaviour, and Science which seeks, unsuccessfully as we have seen, to organize it, never has, and never can, replace religio-culture as the control mechanism of stable societies.

Mr. Goldsmith is not arguing for any particular religion, but for what might be termed a religio-philosophical approach to the meaning of human life, from which may be obtained working answers to the basic *ought* questions. Whatever one might say in defense of science and its canon of "objective" knowledge, we now know that scientific instructions about what we "ought" to do are not only meager but come too late. Moreover, their authority is limited to the coercion of facts. The need to do something because it is right, or to refrain from doing something else because it is wrong, has no voice in the scientific universe of discourse.

We may say, then, that Mr. Goldsmith is right. His article might be described as a persuasive pragmatic justification of religion, which is probably what he intended. In addition, his argument disposes of some of the cant ("scientific") objections to the religious approach, and that helps to clear the air. But we need more than utilitarian reasons for developing a religious philosophy. What, indeed, are the true reasons for such an outlook, or the best ones we can find? To say that we "can't do without it" seems somehow a decision made in flight, and the sources of religious inspiration surely lie hidden in deeper springs.

Since so many ghosts of cultural history and partisan habit haunt the subject of religion, it seems desirable to start out more generally, and to look again at the question of truth. For a simple beginning we could say that truth is what we say about something when we say it correctly. This is the correspondence theory of truth—what we say—*corresponds* to the thing we say it about. There is a more profound idea of truth. To know something *really* is to know it from the inside which is to *be* it, to have some kind of identity with it. Truth as correspondence is only the shadow or reflection of the truth known by identification. Truth as correspondence ends with description. Truth resulting from identification includes *feeling.* The feeling truth is holistic, although we may find it inarticulate, requiring help from the truth of correspondence for purposes of communication. Obviously, we are on slippery ground, here, but that

is the nature of the subject. The idea that communicable truth has these two sides, and *needs* them both, seems indispensable.

For another start, we quote from the posthumously published *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience* by Trigant Burrow (Basic Books, 1964):

> In the early life of the race, the impressions that came from the environment were common to all individuals. They were generic impressions or impressions affecting the species throughout. Among these common impressions were sunshine and darkness; the color and stir of day; the stillness of night; skies, clear or clouded; the sun's rising and setting; starlight; the smell of the earth, the flow of rivers, the wide expanse of oceans; forests, plains, lakes, and mountains. There were rain and wind, snow and mist, days of calm and tempest. These phenomena of nature were a part of man's forebears. They did not *think* of them. There had not yet evolved the instrument of thinking that made possible the use of symbol or language.

There was, in short, in those days no "truth." Nor was there untruth. There were only life and the vital bonds of living process between man and his environment. Burrow continues:

> But eons ago an unprecedented development took place. A capacity evolved in man that is possessed by no other species. Through the modification of a segment of the forebrain, man was enabled to produce (at first unconsciously and later consciously) symbols or signs in substitution for actual objects or situations. In other words, there developed the faculty of language, through which men not only responded to the same thing with the same symbol, but through which they came to *know* that they responded in a like manner to the same thing. Through an unprecedented miracle of nature, our organism contrived to take the universe of its surroundings into itself, as it were, to incorporate it in its own neural tissues. A tree or a stream became a vocal sound. It became a spoken or written word, and a mechanism emerged that related us to our universe of external matter and energy through an entirely new system of receptivity and response. We now became related to the world of external objects and to one another through an entirely different system of neural reactions.

Now the question or issue of truth emerges. Dr. Burrow has left the development of man, up to this point, quite neutral as to doctrines about human origins—he speaks of an "unprecedented development" and a "miracle of nature," with causation remaining open to individual preference. As a therapist, he is concerned with the social and individual consequences of pathological symbol systems, and with their correction. Problems arise, he shows, from the self-deceptions which grow out of symbolic misrepresentation. Study of the resulting distortions of human relations became the lifelong activity of Dr. Burrow. Here, relating to our concern for the idea of "truth," we use the passage he quotes from Cassirer's *Essay on Man* (Anchor, 1953), since it presents the problem in terms of language and human expression:

> No longer can man confront reality immediately; he cannot see it, as it were, face to face. Physical reality seems to recede in proportion as man's symbolic activity advances. Instead of dealing with the things themselves man is in a sense constantly conversing with himself. He has so enveloped himself in linguistic forms, in artistic images, in mythical symbols or religious rites that he cannot see or know anything except by the imposition of this artificial medium. His situation is the same in the theoretical as in the practical sphere. Even here man does not live in a world of hard facts, or according to his immediate needs and desires. He lives rather in the midst of imaginary emotions, in hopes and fears, in illusions and disillusions, in his fantasies and dreams.

This increase and dominance of symbolic activity—the emergence, that is, of intellectual life, of self-consciousness, with consequent separation between the subjective and objective aspects of experience—becomes, for Burrow, the *fall* of man, a tragic loss of the primeval unity he felt with the rest of life and the entirety of the natural environment. Objectification is seeing outside, or *having* to see outside—projecting—what is essentially inner. It becomes dependence on reflected reality, which is illusion, and even profanation. So, as Burrow suggests, Psyche must never see Eros, Semele is forbidden to look at Zeus, and Orpheus can recover Eurydice only if he does not turn back toward her.

Elsa must not ask the name of Lohengrin. Burrow comments:

> That the folk mind should be with so profound a conviction of sin as indicated by this general prohibition motive inherent in its earliest and most durable legends must indicate some deeply biological principle in human consciousness. It seems to me that this principle is nothing else than the innate abhorrence by the primary affective sphere of consciousness of the ruthless incursion of an alien objectivity.

Why not a "deeply human principle" instead of one that is biological? In any event, his point is clear. Later he says:

> Shunted into this new medium of relational contact, our motivation, our common principle of operation as a species, underwent a coincident shift. What had been the organism's whole feeling was transferred into the symbol of feeling, or affect. It became partitive, mentalized feeling—sentimentality.
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> I repeat that the sign, symbol or word has been and will continue to be a great asset in man's communication with man. But, where man's feeling, where his own motivation, where his very identity is transformed into symbol and metaphor, the story becomes quite a different one, for feeling and motivation are not to be so transmuted. . . . Interest and attention became deflected from the functional relationship of organism and environment and, to a large extent, centered on the *appearance*, or *image*, of the self and its behaviour. Man's symbolic function became systematized into the special organization or entity I have called the "I"-persona. The organism's total identity, its primary interest and feeling, was no longer experienced as a reaction common to the species as a whole. The reaction of the organism no longer sprang from a common center of motivation, of feeling, and of being. As an isolated center, as a unique agent of feeling, each individual's partitive self, or identity, was for him supreme. . . . The individual became a private principality separate from every other, and at the same time the organism of the individual as a whole suffered a loss in the exercise of its primary function in relation to the surrounding environment. Men came to judge one another on the superficial basis of their mental agreement or disagreement. . . . Men did not any longer function in cooperation with their fellows or with their common environment. The solidarity of the species was henceforth submerged in favor of the preeminence of *me*—of the "I" persona.

If this seems true—if, that is, it throws some light on our feeling about ourselves and our lives—then we are able to give significant content to the word religion, which is derived from the Latin verb meaning "to bind back"—back to a common unity or source.

What then is truth? Curiously, the very idea of "truth" is dependent upon our symbol-making faculty, the power and distinctive employment of individual self-consciousness—a power which is also the source of our misconceptions and our intellectual and moral isolation. Truth, then, is an expression of ideas or meanings which lead us back—which point to the road back to the original unity, yet, if rounded and complete, without denying the usefulness of the currency of individual perception (the stuff of illusion) . The matter is altogether paradoxical.

One is tempted, rhetorically, to ask Dr. Burrow what he thinks self-consciousness, or symbol-making, is *for*, since he holds it responsible for sundering the serene unity of the primeval *one*, and for generating the pain of separate, personal life—a life at odds not only with one another, but also with ourselves. He calls it a "great asset" in communication, but to what larger or final end? This question seems of immeasurable importance, since having an answer would give us the feeling of meaning, of purpose in our lives, and the promise of fulfillment. Without a sense that this sort of meaning exists, and may be gained, both religion and truth tend to become formulas for flight. Unless something worth understanding and doing well is going on in the world, how can there be an answer to the torturing dilemmas which beset Camus all his life, to the unresolved mysteries which create nihilists in dark periods of history, make quietists of the timid, and cynics of the intellectually sophisticated?

To what *end*, in short, blossomed the "unprecedented development" spoken of by Burrow? *Why* did Prometheus illuminate with fire the minds of dazed and unthinking mankind, lifting them from their dream-like condition to the vulnerabilities of consciousness—to the brief joys and overtaking woes, to heroic achievements followed by long-

drawn-out declines and disasters, in which we are now having such intensive instruction?

Various theologies have had something to say on this question; their answers can be looked up; the declarations of prophets and revealers can be compared; but we shall still be haunted by the question: What is truth? It seems more important to recognize the ultimate significance of the question than to collect an assortment of traditional answers. Such answers have been in the world for a long time, without noticeable improvement in the conduct of human affairs. If one or more of them are true, why have they not been understood and applied?

Looking at the original question more modestly, we may admit that we know what is meant by the idea of sensing or feeling that a thing is true. There is *some* kind of testing agency in us that recognizes at least *some* truth. It is not infallible, but it does work, and we live by its findings, insofar as we take charge of our lives.

Truth, then, we are obliged to say from experience, lies in those moments of recognition; the truth is born *in us;* it is only formally, not substantially, in the statement or other representation on which the recognition turns. Even if some statements or representations seem to provide wider and more enduring opportunity for recognition than others—making them, as we say, "classics"—the truth itself is still in the individual act of recognition.

What then are speech and language? Quite evidently, they are both the chains of illusion and the swords of liberation. This helps a little, but it does not tell us how to know whether a statement invites to truth or decorates an illusion. This problem is always with us. For example, we are now busily engaged in putting an end to the historical epoch during which we have been persuaded that only the "objective, empirically determined fact" can be true. For a number of hardly resistible reasons, we are recognizing that this view was illusory. We see that the supposed objectivity obtained its clear outline and precise definition from our own preconceived mental structures, elaborated out of unquestioned assumptions and imposed on the world as an account of "reality." The mathematical harmonies revealed by this process are impressive, but totally neutral in relation to usable philosophic meaning. The world of science, we are realizing, is humanly sterile. In *Chance and Symbol* (University of Chicago Press, 1948), Richard Hertz anticipated well this now growing consensus:

> . . . Objective truth is the cosmic barrack filled with nothing but dull, unrelieved primary qualities (like extension, motion, rest, solidity, etc., according to Locke, or "probability waves" according to quantum mechanics) which the English empiricists felt regrettably compelled to reveal to the world. . . . The stuff for subjective Reality is the secondary and tertiary qualities—a bewitching harmony of sounds, colors, and thoughts; of pagan and Christian syntheses; of vistas and penetrations. The stuff of objective Truth is "soundless, colorless, scentless, a dull affair, merely the hurrying material, endlessly, meaninglessly. The face-saving secondary and tertiary qualities are the inventions of the butterfly- and rainbow-chasing subject. The heart of the poet, said Jean Paul, is ringed by a blossoming, singing, glittering paradise while his body walks over Dutch swamps, Polish mud, and Siberian tundras. The paradise is subjective, the mud is objective. . . .
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> The modern poet is so disgusted that he no longer gathers the wasteland into his ark in the deluge and, more often than not, ceases to be a poet. Not long ago I read: "Can you imagine somebody taking the poems of T. S. Eliot and reading them to beautiful, high-minded girls on a lake in Italy as Liszt did with the poems of Byron?" Elsewhere I read: "Can you imagine somebody addressing an ode à la Dryden to the U.N.O.?" To make it short: in our age reality is raped by Truth. The objective primary qualities of the world a madness made into method by man's intellect, liquidate the secondary and tertiary qualities whose subjective origin gives them no standing in the consistency of our planning As Professor Karl Mannheim wrote in 1929: "All ideas are discredited, all Utopias have broken down." What remains is a factual "dryness," a behavior structure.

When the structure of a scientific conception—or even a world-view—breaks down, what do we do? The late Jacob Bronowski answered well. We make, he said (*American Scholar,* Spring, 1966), "an act of self-reference." We go back to the very sources of conviction in ourselves and try out new premises. And this, quite obviously, invokes the power of the imagination. At this level there is no

distinction between science and art, or, in relation to conceptuality, between science and poetry. It is as Owen Barfield says in *Poetic Diction* (Wesleyan University Press, 1973). When the individual feels the thrill of discovery, and knows that the feeling is "purged of all personal affection," then what he understands "must have at least equal weight with any reported historical or scientific facts which may be placed beside it." This, Barfield says, is the proper use of the imagination. It is subjective, but has absorbed the virtue or lesson of objectivity.

This poetic act—some would say "creative act"—is, in Barfield's view, the return to some layer of primeval unity, to that quality or state of being we enjoyed before the bifurcations and separations of determined and enterprising self-consciousness. What was for the ancient bard or maker of hymns a spontaneous expression of life and evident meaning is for us the use of poetic metaphor—a reaching back, by the poet, in this age of the divided and distinct, to capture the truth of a more limited state of being. Francis Bacon, Barfield thinks, was profoundly right in the *Advancement of Learning* when he said: "Neither are these only similitudes, as men of narrow observation may conceive them to be, but the same footsteps of nature, treading or printing upon several subjects or; matters." The poet's sense of truth, when it is authentic, becomes the gift of restoration to man's estate before the Fall:

> Men do not invent those mysterious relations between separate external objects, and between objects and feeling or ideas, which it is the function of poetry to reveal. These relations exist independently, not indeed of Thought, but of any individual thinker. . . . Thus, the "before unapprehended" relationships of which Shelley spoke, are in a sense "forgotten" relationships. For though they were never yet apprehended, they were at one time seen. And imagination can see them again. . . . Reality, once self-evident, and therefore not conceptually experienced, but which can *now* only be reached by an effort of the individual mind—this is what is contained in a true poetic metaphor; and every metaphor is "true" only in so far as it contains such a reality, or hints at it. The world, like Dionysus, is torn to pieces by pure intellect; but the poet is Zeus; he has swallowed the heart of the world; and he can reproduce it as a living body.

What then is the high function of mind, of intellect? It is to give "objectivity," not to things, but to knowledge or truth—to make it clear that we know, and know that we know. The rational capacity cannot make poetry or move us with the living quality of truth, yet rationality makes the recognition of truth possible. In this sense intellect is the foster parent of knowledge. The connections between things, Barfield says, now apprehended by metaphor, were once perceived as immediate realities. "As such the poet strives, by his own efforts, to see them, and to make others see them, again." Of this order of metaphors Emerson wrote:

> It is easily seen that there is nothing lucky or capricious in these analogies, but that they are constant, and pervade nature. These are not the dreams of a few poets, here and there, but man is an analogist, and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings, and a ray of relation passes from every other being to him. And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor objects without man. All the facts in natural history taken by themselves have no value, but are barren like a single sex. But marry it to human history, and it is full of life.

There is even a hint, here, as to *why* we are involved in all this getting of knowledge and truth through self-consciousness.

REVIEW
AN AGE OF LONGING

IT is a wholesome if sometimes disturbing undertaking to attempt to incarnate in another epoch of history—one, say, known for great human achievements, yet with conceptions of value and goal very different from our own—and to try to feel as the people of that time felt and thought about their lives. Even a single word may become a serious obstacle to accomplishing the identification required. For example, the subtitle of Frances Yates's *Astraea* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975, $21.75) is "The Imperial Theme in the Sixteenth Century," so you set yourself for exposure to the evil designs of acquisitive rulers, only to find that this is by no means Miss Yates's idea of "empire" in the age of Elizabeth. On the contrary, in telling about the origins of the essays presented in this work, she says:

> Almost a lifetime has been spent in trying to understand a period which has always seemed, not a dead past, but vitally important for present imaginative and spiritual life. The present book draws close, though indirectly, to Shakespeare; this world of the "imperial theme" is surely the world in which Shakespeare's imagination operates, and, though I have carefully avoided stressing this, the route followed here may indicate a historical opening towards a new understanding of Shakespeare's religion.
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> The studies on which these essays are based were written years before my *Giordano Brano and the Hermetic Tradition* (1964) yet Bruno is already prominent here, wending his way between France and England in search of the ideal imperial ruler who will save the world from tyranny. The close association in the mind of a Renaissance philosopher between the ideal unified governance of human society and the organization of the physical universe is very clear in Bruno's works, in which the politico-religious message is inseparably combined with the Hermetic religious philosophy.

This presents problems. How can we, after celebrating the insight and nobility of the utterances of Tom Paine in *Common Sense*, which excoriates kings and the very idea of a king, a few weeks later find merit in Bruno's quest? Bruno, alas, harbors multiple contradictions for those who take their notions of value exclusively from their own times—contradictions so serious, in fact, that he was burned at the stake by the Inquisitors of 1600, in punishment for disturbing the theological peace of mind. Bruno, champion of freedom of thought, of the Copernican doctrine, of an infinite universe and a plurality of inhabited worlds—honored above any other Renaissance hero by nineteenth-century freethinkers—was also a believer in the Elizabethan world-view, admirer of Neoplatonic hierarchies, exponent of Hermetic wisdom and magic, and a man who went in search of a benign sovereign that would inaugurate a return to the Golden Age of mankind!

It becomes evident that the Renaissance obtained its extraordinary moral energy from the utopian longings felt by the scholars and students of the past who uncovered the splendors of Greek and Roman classics:

> Petrarch's attitude to history reflects what has been called the humanist's new sense of historical distance. With his increased knowledge of classical civilization, the humanist is unable to regard this as having continued unbroken up to the present (his present). He thinks of it as having come to an end with the destruction of ancient civilization by the barbarians, whereupon there set in a period of darkness which has lasted up to his own time, but which it is the mission of the humanist to dissipate by discovering and studying anew the literary and other monuments of the ancient world. This should bring about a renewal, a rebirth, a new period of classical light dispersing the barbarous darkness extending from the fall of the ancient world, through the Middle Ages, to the present. There is still in this the notion of cyclic returns, of the periodic renovations, of imperialist rhetoric, but the humanist demands a much fuller renovation of classical civilization, the true nature of which he has begun to perceive.

A noble and just ruler, in short, might restore the world to justice, establishing an Empire of the Good. Astraea is the goddess of justice, hence Miss Yates's title. Since the eighteenth century, the world has looked to laws and constitutions for the establishment of justice. In the sixteenth century, men looked to wise and well-disposed

kings. While the kings often or always failed these dreamers, the idea of an ideal imperial rule did not die, but continued as a utopian vision—as, Miss Yates says, "the phantom of imperial *renovation"*—which, if unrealized in the political sphere, might "come true in the sphere of letters."

In England the ardor of the Reformation united with humanist hopes to attach a virtually sacred significance to the accession of Elizabeth—which took place on Nov. 17, 1558. It was an occasion in which the hopes of philosophers were joined with the simple longings of ordinary men. *Astraea* is illustrated with numerous plates showing the symbolism in the portraits of the Queen. Not just political opportunism, but deep human aspiration supported the idealizing conception of Elizabeth's role. Not only was she a virgin queen, but she represented a break with the infamies of Rome and popery; actually, the notion of the divine right of kings grew up in Europe mainly through controversy about the Pope's authority, those with reforming zeal preferring to give autonomy to the secular ruler, as protection against the Church's increasing oppressions. Miss Yates briefly characterizes the spirit of the time:

> It has been said of the Italian Renaissance that "it starts from the medieval conception of world-empire." The whole process of the "renaissance" of art and letters is intimately bound up with the return to a classical golden age, or rather with the more vital idea of the eternal survival and living rebirths of that age. The Elizabethan age is the great age of the English Renaissance, and in this sense the golden age theme lies behind it. It is also an age of national expansion, and the universal medieval aspirations turn in a nationalist direction, towards a golden age for England. But it is in its religious use of the imperial theme that Elizabethan imperialism is, perhaps, most strongly characterized, for the royal supremacy over both church and state—the keystone of the whole Tudor position—owed its sanction to the tradition of sacred empire. Elizabethan Protestanism claims to have restored a golden age of pure imperial religion.

European writers, too, looked to Elizabeth for release from the regime of "fire and sword, prison, chains and death." The defeat of the Spanish Armada by Elizabeth's sea captains gave her a fame which transcended the Protestant-Catholic struggle, making her "stand for those wider and deeper aspirations for some universal solution of religious problems which were circulating below the surface in sixteenth-century Europe." Bruno predicted a wide rule for her, "and prophesied the eventual expulsion of the Triumphant Beast of tyranny." Hope and longing for reform were in the air. Dozens of writers recalled Virgil's prophecy in the Fourth Eclogue of the coming of a Virgin who would establish the reign of Peace, and while Constantine had seen in this an anticipation of the advent of Christ, the prediction served again to lend a preternatural significance to the virgin queen of England. Spenser, Miss Yates says, "is the Virgil of the Elizabethan golden age, and the Faerie Queen its great epic poem" in which Elizabeth is the figure around which its universe of moral allegory revolves. Spenser does not say that Justice and a golden age have automatically returned with Elizabeth, but that her knights contend for the ideal of celestial justice.

Indeed, the practical setting of many of these dreams was flawed by ugly historical realities. Kings that poets were quick to idealize and flatter were involved in power struggles; Elizabeth's Protestantism was an inheritance from a man whose hands were stained with the blood of several unfortunate wives. The dream of peace was indeed a "phantom" of the Renaissance ideal; Virgil's golden age had in it nothing of voyages of conquest and imperial expansion, and there were other contradictions neglected by the enthusiasts.

What is notable, however, and shown by Miss Yates's labors, is the strength of the moral emotions which lay behind the political controversies of the age. One obtains a sense of reality for the expression of those feelings from the detailed study of the literature, public events, the art, monuments, and even the costumes of the time, provided by *Astraea.* From such books it becomes possible to have a sense of participation in the hopes and struggles of the Elizabethan age.

COMMENTARY
FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT

SINCE direct discussion of the problems of democracy is an unpromising approach, and touchy as well, we have been looking around for another way to get at the contrast between the ideas of Tom Paine and those of Giordano Bruno, noted in Review. The fact is that our eighteenth-century heritage of political ideals gives little structure for appreciation of Bruno's expectations of Queen Elizabeth!

Possibly, a passage from the second part of Horace Judson's article on the modern fear of what the scientists may do next (in the June *Harper's*) will illuminate the question. Speaking of the resources within science for self-control, Mr. Judson says:

> Science is the last of the great medieval guilds, meaning that its natural institutional controls are of a kind that most people in this century have never experienced. Medicine and the law are professions that in theory retain a self-governing, collegiate, guild organization; the patchy ethical performance of lawyers and doctors, and the sluggishness of discipline in these professions make the idea of peer controls and self-government seem dubious. But medicine and law have abandoned, since the turn of the century or before the essential organizational device of the guild: the apprentice system. Science retains that. The scientific community is the last place where every student must work at the bench in direct, individual relation to his master. It is almost the last place where the apprentice, once he has qualified must spend an itinerant, journeyman period for several years, doing his work in other men s labs, before setting up for himself. The mark of setting up for himself is that he acquires apprentices of his own. The apprentice system is the fundamental reason why there is something that can be called the scientific community. . . . it is at the bench, from the man who supervises a young scientist s first research that he takes the attitudes that will inform his ethical approach to doing science.
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> These are the roots of self-discipline that must be nourished.

Wondering about kings and legislatures, oligarchies and democracies, we read once again Plato's comment that the trouble with democracy is its impotence, caused by the wide division of sovereignty. Yet, he added, if the people have little respect for the law, "democracy is the best" of all the systems. Is there any way to combine the virtues of democracy with the desirable qualities belonging to other systems of government? The guild system described by Mr. Judson may be one workable approach to such a synthesis. Manifestly, it is a potential source of what our society needs.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NAIVE ART

YEARS ago, when teaching fifth grade in central city Los Angeles, each month I used to bring to class a magazine containing especially beautiful color photographs of outdoor scenery. Almost none of these children had experienced more than the ugly environment which had developed during the war years, turning rural areas into urban sprawl. Together the children and I would enjoy and exclaim over the beautiful pictures. Sometimes we would examine the subtle blends of color to see if we ,could distinguish various shades. Since few of them could read well enough to understand the articles, I summarized or read parts which I thought they would find interesting. Then I left the magazine on a table in the library corner for the children to look at when they wanted to. One result was that most of the children used their watercolors to produce pictures inspired by the photographs. Their pictures were a delight, alive with young energy. The finished work was shown on a display board.

To help the children to overcome their fear of using watercolors—so difficult to manage compared to crayons—we had a demonstration of how to work in this untried medium. The children loved to watch—everyone enjoys watching someone else draw, or paint, weave, or bring up a pot. That I was no artist didn't matter. The children were fascinated by observing change in form as a result of someone's effort and physical manipulation of material. It was magic!

This was a restless group. Strong language and flaring tempers with outbursts of yelling were common, and of course fights during recess on the playground. We all interacted with one another quite openly and honestly. It was rough and real. During one recess all thirty-eight of the children had gone far beyond our long building to the open playground next to a new, unfinished city park, mostly open fields. Left alone in the classroom, I was able to relax, having a whole ten minutes to enjoy some quiet. Then, bang! the door opened and six or eight of the children came running and shouting that I *had* to come out to the playground—*now!* Was it a fight? Then what? Well, they had to show me. I'd have to see. So they pulled and hurried me down the long corridor and out to the playground. It was one of those very rare Southern California days after a winter rain, with clear skies and a brisk breeze. Standing in a row beside me, the children pointed toward the north. "Look!" I looked, and there were the San Gabriel Mountains capped with snow, brilliant and glistening against the blue and the moving clouds. A rare sight indeed in our blurred post-war atmosphere.

The view alone was inspiring, but my greatest pleasure came from realizing that those ten-year-olds had noticed it in the midst of their play, had stopped, and demanded that I share it with them.

What is art? It is, I think, the receptive or the expressive language for what is beyond the factual and precise. It conveys the reach of meanings too subtle and alive for weights and measures. So considered, art may be thought of as a continuum from the simplest to the most refined expression, from the obvious to the obscurely abstract. For one beholder there is meaning which may appear trite to another. A family, say, comes from the Middle West to visit the Pacific Coast. Their first view of the breaking surf and the seemingly endless expanse of sea makes an impact that is beyond description in words. It arouses indefinable longings, even aspirations, combined with feelings of wonder and peace.

One day back home they find a print of a seascape in a store. Now it hangs in their living room as symbol of a sort of peak experience to be remembered. Is that print art? Indeed the entire sequence, including the original execution of the picture, its reproduction, and finally its appreciation by the family is, by our definition, a form of art. Naïve or folk art is a language among all common people. It transcends the barriers of spoken language differences. Sharing a scene of natural beauty with another who loves it, too, partakes of art. Using a medium such as clay, paint, music, or word, so that others have perception of insights and values involves experience of art, whether the work be a finger painting by a mentally retarded child or a

sophisticated abstract by a mature and practiced artist.

In working with retarded children one finds that if they have opportunity to experience a simple object, using all five of their senses on, say, an orange then, with little further help or direction, they are able to draw it. A child will draw a circle to represent an orange if he has held it in his hands and turned it around and around. Without this "touching" experience (and with normal children it happens quite casually), "round" will have no meaning for the child. An artist would say that in order to become skillful in drawing or painting, one must learn to see with clarity. If the object is then converted into a symbol of a feeling or an idea, the artist may then shape an expression of that idea, and it matters little whether the rendering is "realistic," "impressionistic," or "non-objective."

An encounter with a work of art may bring a moment of inspiration akin to the inspiration which for the artist was the beginning of the work. This is communication different from the cognitive. It is richer, alive with feeling.

Where does the learner fit into this scene? The act of learning is in the moment of inspiration. As learner, however, he lacks and needs to develop skills enabling him to express the idea. Skills in any art, such as language skills, provide the means of communication. The original idea has to work its way down from the thought, through the brain, calling into play coordinated expressive faculties, and finally be made objective by physical manipulations of actual materials. All these levels may be considered as instruments. If any step or stage is not functioning well, we may have reason to speak of an educationally handicapped person, one mentally retarded, lacking in coordination, or the like.

If the learner has an inspiration of his own, but needs help and guidance in managing the means of expression, the teaching-learning process in the art class might be as follows:

The teacher *provides* for the learner a variety of media;

The teacher *demonstrated* methods and techniques for the use of certain media

The learner has time to *experiment* with any and all of the media;

The teacher allows the learner to *select for himself* the objective form for his idea, and the medium of its expression

The teacher encourages the learner to *develop* his idea in his own way;

The teacher observes the learner carefully and communicates with him from time to time in order to become sensitive to the learner's intended goal, and to perceive the learner's needs in order to achieve that goal;

The teacher steps in as guide and assistant when the learner *asks*, or gives permission, for that help;

The teacher provides the particular suggestion, demonstration, or criticism appropriate to the specific needs of the learner at that time.

The teacher in an art class ought not to assign projects or set up required products or outcomes. The teacher should not interfere with the process unless he senses that the learner has become dissatisfied or discouraged. The teacher should make no judgment or evaluation of the product, and certainly give no "grade." The teacher needs to be open-minded about the learners' innovations. If a child is using the thoroughly gnawed handle of the paint brush in almost dry watercolor paint, he may be finding a way of saying what he means, and the result may be surprisingly good. If the child is searching for a way to accomplish his purpose and is unable to find it—"I can't make this waterfall look right!"—the teacher may respond with a suggestion.

Too often this situation is reversed. The teacher dictates the medium to be used, assigns the product or project, and when the learner asks for help, responds, "Well, just play around with it," or, "I want to see how well you can do." This is a way that makes it possible for the children to be graded on the "curve," since some are sure to succeed, and some to flounder and fail, according to the teacher's standards. This is the "sheep-and-the-goats" syndrome of public education in general, and a basic cause of the learner's disillusionment with organized, systematized education.

TEACHER

FRONTIERS

Need To Know

IT is no doubt of some importance, in addition to our own troubles, to know something about the difficulties which people are enduring in other parts of the world. Yet how far should one go in absorbing so many dolorous facts? The remedy for them is almost always obscure—dependent, as we look at things, or learn about them, on political processes which are slow-moving and not very accessible. What does being "properly informed" mean, these days? How much should one read for general understanding, and how much for figuring out things to do?

There are only individual answers, of course, to such questions. Herewith, then, briefly, are some items of reading which led to asking them.

The *Saturday Review* for Feb. 22 has a long, detailed story on conditions in Britain. The author is Roland Gelatt, a Londoner who draws extensively on a Hudson Institute report about life and prospects in the United Kingdom. We knew that Britain has been having economic troubles and social conflict, but not that "it has dropped within living memory from being the richest of Europe's nations to a position where it will soon be running neck and neck with Italy for tenth place in the continent's pecking order." In today's Britain, taxes are confiscatory, class relations growing sourer, the industrial plant is obsolescent, and labor troubles and disruptions have become the British way of life. "Twice within the last three years," says Mr. Gelatt, "workers in the nationalized coal mines have got what they wanted by paralyzing the nation." Production is stagnating—because of shortages, strikes, and inefficient equipment—and uncollected garbage accumulates, sometimes for weeks, on London streets.

Musing about all this, Mr. Gelatt wonders if a background cause may be that the British working man is relaxed, unambitious, and determined to resist both the practical and moral imperatives of industrialism. The Hudson Institute report attributes the difficulties described to "a habit of conciliation . . . for its own sake, a lack of aggression, a deference to what exists, a repeated and characteristic flight into pre-industrial, indeed, pre-capitalist, fantasies, a suspicion of efficiency as somehow 'common,' a dislike for labor itself." A few years ago critics were sure that Britain's easy-going ways were all wrong. Now people are asking "if the British have not yet again stumbled on the right course . . . caring more for the quality of life than for its pace?" Mr. Gelatt relates:

> A Welsh coal miner with a long record of absenteeism was asked by a visiting dignitary from London why he persisted in working a four-day week. "Because," the answer shot back, "I can't make enough to live on working a three-day week." The attitude is far from unique. At every level of society, people in Britain work to live; they no longer live to work.

"If," the writer concludes, "Niagara Falls is just ahead, you'd never guess it."

Norman Cousins starts his March 8 *SR* editorial by describing a parade of protesters marching toward India's capital, New Delhi, bearing placards reading, *Hungry People Are Human, too,* and *Is India Going To Be Thrown on the Rubbish Heap?* The marchers were teachers, students, shopkeepers, and commercial workers. The protest, Mr. Cousins explains, was a response to widely publicized claims by scholars and others in America (and elsewhere) that the starving millions of Asia cannot be saved by food shipments, that no amount of aid can stave off mass famine. Garrett Hardin, biologist at the University of California in Santa Barbara, has expressed this view. "He uses the analogy of the lifeboat. If the survivors take more than a certain number on board, everyone will go down."

Speaking of the protesters in India, Mr. Cousins says:

> Their grievance is not that they think they are entitled to help as a natural right, but that they are now being told, in effect, that they are not worth helping. They are protesting lifeboat analogies and

> the notion that some people have the right to decide whether others should live or die.

Mr. Cousins agrees. "Desensitization," he says, "not hunger, is the greatest curse on earth." He offers practical suggestions for helping the Indians to become self-sufficient. Give them the tools of agriculture and self-support, he says.

Meanwhile, judging from reports on internal conditions in India, by Devi Prasad and Narayan Desai, rising prices and corruption in government (bribery as a matter of routine) are driving people to desperation. In Bihar, it is said, "at least 50 per cent of government spending has leaked into corrupt pockets." It is useless, the Gandhian reformers claim, to seek either economic development or social equity so long as corruption is not rooted out. In Bihar students and others have joined under the leadership of Jayaprakash Narayan in a nonviolent campaign for the dissolution of the Legislative Assembly, where the corruption has major focus. "The movement," says Narayan Desai, "no longer remains a stray incident in Bihar's life. It has become one of the most significant phenomena in recent Indian history." Planned is a shift of the movement to the villages of the state of Bihar, with an effort "to organize parallel assemblies and a people's government, built from below." Thousands of young men and women have left school to take part in this work. A long struggle is anticipated, since the Central Government does not look with favor on the proposal that the state assembly should be dissolved. Narayan Desai concludes:

> We have already started organizing one-day meets, three-day seminars and ten-day camps. . . . But all our plans may have to be drastically changed in order to deal with the whims of the government. If it chooses not to allow us to organize training camps outside, we may be organizing them inside the prisons! Prisons, by the way, in Bihar, now swelling with thousands of Satyagrahis, are notorious for their wretched conditions and awful treatment of prisoners. Some incidents of atrocities might well be compared to police atrocities in Angola.

Well, we started out with the idea of finishing this discussion by turning to an account of what self-respecting and self-reliant people do under very hard conditions, when changing their conditions seems practically impossible. In *Mountain People, Mountain Crafts* (Lippincott, 1974), Elinor Horwitz tells about the resourcefulness and skills of the descendants of eighteenth-century English and Scottish settlers in the southern Appalachian highlands—people who learned how to make practically everything they needed—houses, furniture, clothing, bedding, utensils and tools. Yet they have only barely survived the inroads of high technology. This is a book about dulcimers, banjos, and fiddles; dolls and other toys; about woodcarving, cornhusk flowers, and things made out of coal. It is about spinning, dyeing, weaving, rug-making, and quilting; about woodenware for the home, chairs, brooms, baskets, and pottery. The things the Appalachians make are attractive and useful; their spirit is even more important. . . . And after reading those discouraging reports about other places, it is hard to avoid the thought that the whole world may be some kind of an Appalachia some day. So what ought one to do?