VOLUME XXVIII, NO. 37
SEPTEMBER 10, 1975

THE THERAPEUTIC LEAP

EIGHTEEN years ago, in an epoch-making article for the *Saturday Review* ("Man Is Not a Thing," *SR*, March 16, 1957), Erich Fromm characterized human life as a succession of births or rebirths.

> A person [Dr. Fromm wrote] can develop into a socially adjusted and useful person and yet remain stillborn in a spiritual sense. If he is to develop into what he potentially is as a human being, he must continue to be born. That is, he must continue to dissolve the primary ties of soil and blood. He must give up certainty and defenses and take the jump into the act of commitment, concern, and love.

Too often, Fromm says, therapy becomes a tacit conspiracy between the doctor and the patient to make a plausible adjustment to the status quo. The illusion both maintain is that there is "a method by which one can attain happiness and maturity and yet avoid the jump, the pain of separation." Obviously, there is a close relation between therapy and normal development, and it may be that Dr. Fromm's observation throws into relief certain necessities of human growth which tend to be overlooked in ordinary life.

These are days of anxious wondering: can the securities of a generation ago be recovered through cautious and prudent action, or must we prepare ourselves for leaps toward the unknown? One example of the willingness to jump may be found in Victor Ferkiss' latest book, *The Future of Technological Civilization* (Braziller, 1974), in which the author, professor of government at Georgetown University, marshals what seem to him the requirements of the age; then, in a few pages, he describes the "leap" that he is convinced is unavoidable. This chapter, "Getting There from Here: The Immanent Revolution," gives the writer's understanding of a change already begun, which he calls the "revolution of ecological humanism." It will be, he says, "an unstructured, unorganized movement for reform." It will not and cannot be "centrally directed," but will inevitably emerge within the framework of the present:

> Ordinarily revolutions come about not because conditions continue to be as bad as they have long been—this is more likely to lead to fatalism and apathy than to revolution—but because conditions fail to improve fast enough or because conditions are deteriorating. The revolution of ecological humanism will come about because of a combination of unsatisfied utopian hopes and growing conservative fears of disaster. This is the unique historical situation described by psychologist Robert J. Lifton: We see technology and science as simultaneously presenting us with the possibility of liberation from humanity's age-old burden of oppression, arduous labor, and want and at the same time threatening us with nuclear holocaust and ecocide. Or, as a political scientist puts it, it is a paradox that "at the very time many people are coming to an awareness of the possibilities for creative freedom, fear is spreading that humanity will be reduced to an army of robots." The revolution will come into being when a sufficient number of people recognize that the future cannot be a simple projection of the past but requires a conscious choice between liberation and destruction.

We have some trouble with Mr. Ferkiss' choice of terms. The prospective hero of his ecological revolution is called "technological man," by which he means the man who will use technology wisely and not be dominated or controlled by it in the fashion that Jacques Ellul predicted. "Technological man," he says, "will be inspired by a philosophy based on naturalism, holism, and immanentism—the philosophy of ecological humanism." One may agree that this is exactly what is needed—but is it really appropriate to call one thus inspired *technological* man? The term tends to surround its human subject with :mechanistic illusions peculiar to our immediate past. Ecological man might be a better name for the kind of human being Mr. Ferkiss has in mind.

Involved is a sympathetic level of feeling and attitude, more than mastery of technique, although skills would naturally be included. The closing paragraphs of this chapter fully justify the suggestion that Mr. Ferkiss is describing a therapeutic leap:

> The strength of ecological humanism does not lie in its ability to win pitched battles but in its ability to understand and harness the diverse forces of social change and to oppose to the haphazard actions of the agencies of destruction the creative power of pressures aimed at achieving a consciously sought common goal. Each change in consciousness has a potential for altering the actions of self and others. If enough of the interacting elements which make up a system perceive what the future shape of the system ought to be, they can restructure it by consciously altering the direction and velocity of their own movements and the responses they make to the movements of others. It is as though a large number of atomic particles which constitute a caterpillar were consciously to decide to turn it into a butterfly. Social change becomes a process of self-conscious metamorphosis.
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> To believe in the possibility of the immanent revolution of ecological humanism is an act of faith in the possibility of freedom, in the power of the human mind to predict the consequences of individual actions, and in the potential of the human individual to act so as to shape the future. To many this will appear the purest fantasy and self-delusion. But the only alternative is to believe that human beings are no different from electrons or the unconscious cells in a plant or animal, that human actions have no significance, and that human history is utterly without meaning.

This is Mr. Ferkiss' quixotic ultimatum, and he has done his best, in a scholarly work, to make it seem not quixotic at all. His declaration takes its place beside William James's confident rejection of great institutions and big success, preferring the "invisible, molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual," and he joins with Gerald Sykes in championing the "hidden remnant," even if not so hidden, these days. His reliance on the potential of individual action recalls Arthur Morgan's idea of "islands of brotherhood" which serve as fulcrums for the larger, deliberated changes that will be required. In effect, he is arguing for widening self-consciousness among the moral pioneers whose efforts Mosca believed keep the world from relapsing into barbarism.

The framework of growth begins to appear during a time of crisis:

> How do societies change internally in response to such outside pressures? Change creates crisis. Sociologist Robert Nisbet, following W. I. Thomas, describes the nature of crisis as "a relationship between human being and environment precipitated by the inability of the human being (or social group or organization) to continue any longer in some accustomed way of behavior." Crisis forces men and societies to become aware of change as old forms of behavior cease to be adequate to achieve their goals. Most human beings seek to deny the existence of crisis—the response of liberal society to the problems raised by technology, population growth, and man's impact on his environment is a prime example of this approach. But crisis has a positive aspect in that it permits new leadership conscious of the crisis and willing to deal with it, to come to the fore. . . .
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> Students of history have long argued about the relative importance of "great men" and broad social forces in the generation of social change. Robert A. Nisbet contends that great men and social forces combine to produce change when the historical moment is ripe. "Major changes," he writes, "are incomprehensible save in terms of superlatively endowed individuals, or of effectively marshalled elites, working within social circumstances, usually those of crisis."
>
> No one can predict whether the great men we need will be available to lead liberal society out of its present difficulties, who they will be, or where they might come from. But we do know that crisis is upon us.

One more paragraph by Mr. Ferkiss deserves quotation. If one were to make a list of the thinkers and writers who seem best qualified to lead—lead in the sense of pointing to both needs and opportunities—and then see what qualities they have in common, they would, we think, match up well with the individuals Ferkiss has in mind:

> The struggle against uncontrolled growth and technological change and in behalf of a society which

> will seek full self-actualization for all its members is therefore not simply a reactionary, romantic nostalgia for the past real or imagined, on the part of social groups displaced and downgraded by industrial society, as some apologists of things as they are and are becoming allege or imply. Rather, it is primarily a revolt on the part of the most intellectually open and technically sophisticated elements of the populations of modern societies.

What is the revolt against? Mr. Ferkiss says it is against uncontrolled growth and technological disaster, but, as he shows in the first part of his book, this means revolt against a particular way of thinking about the world and ourselves—the way established by the revolutions of the eighteenth century. What happened, actually, was that the eighteenth-century reformers took a truly spiritual idea—the idea of human freedom—and turned it to the service of material goals. The eighteenth century also overthrew the beliefs of religion, using the bludgeon of Enlightenment science, and this led to a practical, earthly conception of freedom, which was soon made dependent upon the possession of property. So freedom, in the terms of the economic liberals who shaped eighteenth-century thinking—pre-eminently John Locke and Adam Smith—was freedom to possess, use, and accumulate property. The sanctity of property became, as Harold Laski points out in *The Rise of Liberalism*, the chief article of faith in the secular religion of the nineteenth century, and it has survived in the twentieth century until about the present. Except for some mild paternalistic concern, the working classes who owned little or no property hardly figured in the conceptions of the economic liberals. They were regarded as a necessary labor force which would become unmanageable if it ever sought or obtained power—an attitude toward labor that inevitably generated hostility, leading to the socialist revolutions of the twentieth century. In time, however, it became evident that socialism only added to the implicit materialism of the liberals a blunt candor about the meaninglessness of conventional religion. There was no social argument against the claim that property and things constitute the highest good; the argument was about ownership and the sharing of the benefits obtained from the possession of things. The twentieth-century revolutions sought power in order to redistribute material goods and services.

Quite evidently, the revolution of ecological humanism considered by Mr. Ferkiss is taking shape at another level. In the past the reflexes of revolt were against man's injustices to man. The world itself was not part of the equation, but was simply there, a morally neutral and inexhaustible supply of raw material. Today, while the struggle against social injustice continues, the question of man's relations with the planetary host—the source and the support of his material existence—is rapidly becoming the major issue. Actually, some are convinced that establishing right relations with the earth will go far to dissipate the ills of social inequity. The implication here is that poverty and degradation from want are not so much the result of a wrong division of the spoils we take from nature as of the simple fact that we have been and are despoilers.

First came the religious alienation of man from nature. The pantheistic deity of ancient religion—assuming polytheistic forms among presumably "primitive" peoples—was replaced by the extra-cosmic god of Christian dogma. Then the Son—the Logos, the active spirit of Deity—was limited to a single historical figure (Jesus Christ), which has the effect of transforming all the pagan deities and nature spirits into "devils." Finally came the rejection of any sort of religion—on the ground of the misuse of its psychological authority and its collaborations with decaying monarchies—followed by the Enlightenment synthesis of social reform with material progress, a progress realized through scientific discovery, producing the confident and aggressive "modern" outlook which is now rapidly breaking up.

"The time has come," says Mr. Ferkiss, "to ask how the philosophy of ecological humanism

proposes to restore humanity to its proper role in the universe."

This is an impressive sentence. Yet one may submit to its persuasions without having a clear idea of what it means—without, that is, being able to say just what is humanity's "role in the universe." Traditional religions and speculative philosophies are not of much help here. The religions expound at length about the purposes and activities of the Gods, but reveal little or nothing about the meaning of human affairs. Men are supposed to be have properly, to obey the Gods, and thereby earn those satisfactions and joys which are promised as the reward of conformity. But this, as the *meaning* of human life, seems grossly inadequate. The attractions of virtuous obedience we have not been able to hold the allegiance of the best of men, who insist on defining for themselves what they will do with their lives, and why.

Conceivably, the pressure of circumstances—the Darwinian "struggle for existence"—was for a time sufficient to displace questions and wondering about what we are doing here. The distinct sense of mission felt by rare individuals—men such as Thomas Paine, and in more recent years, Arthur Morgan—commonly reflects the desire to help human beings out of their troubles; the goal, in short, has been therapeutic rather than the discovery and pursuit of a larger meaning for the life of mankind. Actually, the question itself may strike us strangely. Does it mean that there is some purpose in our existence which goes beyond the idea of "self-realization," beyond becoming, as people say nowadays, "whole human beings," or "fully expressing ourselves"? After all, the traditional religious conception of redemption or salvation is limited in its implications to some sort of personal or human fulfillment—as though we are on earth solely to work on ourselves, to make something better of ourselves. What else is there to do?

This is the attitude which sets us apart from the Gods. Humans are concerned with their own welfare and development, but the Gods seem never to think about themselves—their work is for others, for the whole. The Savior Gods are devoted to general enlightenment. But what if the Gods are really completed or transformed Men? What if the doings of the Gods are projections of submerged intuitions of the meaning of *human* life? Something of this kind certainly seems true of Prometheus, in whom the foresight of awakened mind is inseparably linked with the will to provide illumination to others. His enslavement to Zeus was a result of his altruistic resolve. Years ago Josiah Royce said that the one thing a moral agent requires for his fulfillment is a universe to improve; and this—if we can eliminate the puritan tone—sounds like a foundation principle for explaining the role of a Buddha, a Christ, or a Prometheus. Buddha was a man, Prometheus a god, and Christ, according to the theologians, half and half—but they all did the same thing: they heightened the consciousness of humanity.

Well, if the time has come "to restore humanity to its proper role in the universe," does this mean recognizing that the psychology and motivation of the gods is really the psychology and motivation of Man? A text for considering this possibility was provided by A. H. Maslow, who devoted his life to the study of human motivation:

> On the whole I think it is fair to say that human history is a record of the ways in which human nature has been sold short. The highest possibilities of human nature have practically always been underrated. Even when "good specimens," the saints and sages and great leaders of history have been available for study, the temptation too often has been to consider them not human but supernaturally endowed.

Are we in any sense on the way to the restoration Ferkiss speaks of? There are two massive tendencies apparent today which might be taken as evidence of a move toward discovery or rediscovery of the authentic human role. First is the strong earth mysticism which is plainly evident

behind the ecology movement. This is an affirmation, at once poetic, rational, and scientific, of the unity of man with nature. The theme is collaboration, not conquest. We speak lovingly of the planet, as though it were a living, breathing host, the matrix of our common life. Dozens of groups are actively engaged in defending the health and welfare of living creatures—birds, animals, fish, trees and fields, streams, mountains and meadows—all now have articulate champions.

The other movement, equally strong, and morally related, is the decisive rejection by the most intelligent members of an entire generation of the acquisitive and exploitive way of life. Throughout rural America one finds people engaged in a great experiment of natural living—as *amateurs*—by reason of a sense of affection for the life in the world and for one another. Often the experiments go awry—they are still, after all, experiments—but people keep on trying. It is as though a deep feeling of meaning is stirring and swelling inside a great many of us, trying to find expression. It is as though, as Allen Wheelis put it, a dawning sense of purpose presses us to seek a course we cannot see, having "rules which we must seek to find, not presume to enact."

REVIEW
ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY, HEALTH

A NEW kind of writing and publishing is now in full swing. It has been developing for about a quarter of a century and represents a variety of influences that are changing the way people think and act. The best way to characterize this new work is to describe several especially good examples that have come in for review.

First, then, a textbook—*The Dynamic Environment* by Edwin H. Marston (Xerox College Publishing, 1975, $10.95), which, as the author explains, presents the material of a college course he taught for five years. There weren't any school books like this fifty years ago, and probably none twenty-five years ago. Prof. Marston tells how three areas of technology—water supply and distribution, transport, and energy production and use—affect our lives. The text is both informative—instructing in the physics of these operations—and critical, showing the unanticipated and often irreversible results of technological advance. The reader of this book will know how his city—if he lives in a city—works. He will have a basis for understanding the economic interdependence of both city and country—and many of their problems—in physical rather than monetary terms. There are numerous generalizing passages like the following, which comes toward the end of the section on transportation:

> At one time it was assumed our problem would be solved with the invention of some miracle transportation system. We now realize that autos, jet planes, and existing, high-speed trains are all miracles from the perspective of 100 years ago and yet we still have problems. We have come to understand that foot trails and canoes may have served the needs of the Indians as well or better than autos and jets serve our present needs. Very clever transportation innovations may turn out to be irrelevant to our lives—as with the helicopter—or to do more harm than good—as with snowmobiles and other wilderness-penetrating all-terrain vehicles.

In the section on water supply, Prof. Marston traces the development of water supply systems from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when Philadelphia became the first city to have a waterworks (mainly to clean the streets and to put out fires), up to the present, when all urban dwellers are totally dependent on indoor flowing water:

> Today's high-rise apartment and office buildings, immense shopping centers, sports arenas, and restaurants could not function without running water. If we had to pump all the water we use, a good part of our lives would be spent at the pump. One hundred years ago we used less water and our lives had a different pace. Devoting several hours a day to pumping water, chopping wood, and emptying ashes was perfectly natural. Today our lives are more structured we have no time for such activities. Running water—originally a labor-saving device and convenience—is now an absolute necessity. Its labor-saving aspects are as important as its health and fire-control functions.

New in this volume, as a textbook, is the persistent inquiry into assumptions that have been taken for granted throughout the development of Western civilization. Factual studies show that the transportation arrangements of New York City, the water supply of Los Angeles, the energy requirements of all the major cities of the country, have created problems that are probably beyond any sort of solution, for the reason that every solution applied generates a new set of problems that must be dealt with. The sober presentation of facts which make such situations clear has the effect of raising far-reaching questions about both the foundation and direction of everyday life in industrial or technological societies. At the end of this book the author asks:

> Is the evolution of technology controlled by man or is it evolving in accord with some internal dynamic? Is the increasingly man-made character of the western world due to a conscious choice on our part or a result of technological evolution which functions more or less independent of human needs and motivation? . . .
>
> The difficulty is to somehow stand outside ourselves and our system and ask how our various

> technologies have shaped, or misshaped, us. If, indeed, technology is evolving in some inexorable way—independent of human well-being and health—it must be because we are somehow in technology's thrall.

Books which make us examine the assumptions on which our practical decisions are based are instruments of fundamental education. Do we have beliefs about progress, convenience, and prosperity that now are becoming technically as well as morally insupportable? If so, how can we change our direction? What are the obstacles to change? Are they practical, psychological, or both?

These questions lead directly to another example of the new sort of publishing. Prof. Marston's book throws light on the working of the status quo; the *Energy Primer,* produced by the Portola Institute, deals with the means of creating another sort of man-made environment—one that will establish synergistic relationships with nature. *Energy Primer* has 200 pages (10" X 13"). Copies may be ordered at $4.50 (foreign $5.50), prepaid from Whole Earth Truck Store, 558 Santa Cruz Avenue, Menlo Park, Calif. 94025. Following is a summary of the contents:

> The *Energy Primer* is a comprehensive, fairly technical book about renewable forms of energy—solar, water, wind, and biofuels. The biofuels section covers biomass energy agriculture, aquaculture, alcohol, methane, and wood. The focus is on small-scale systems which can be applied to the needs of the individual, small group, or community. More than 1/4 of the book is devoted to reviews of books and hardware sources. Hundreds of illustrations and a dozen original articles are used to describe the workings of solar water heaters, space heaters and dryers, waterwheels, windmills, wind generators, wood burning heaters, alcohol stills, and methane digesters. The final section of the book focuses on the need for energy conservation and some of the problems and potentials of integrated energy systems.

Only a polymath with engineering background could review this book critically. Our report is that the information in this encyclopedia of alternative sources of energy is concisely presented, with a balance of detail and simplicity possible only to writers who are practiced in making themselves understood. A portion of the introduction will illustrate how the question raised in *The Dynamic Environment* lead to subjects and issues discussed in *Energy Primer:*

> The groups involved with the *Energy Primer* had been receiving numerous inquiries about methods of supplying energy needs that could be implemented by individuals and small groups. . . . Most questions dearly reflected a growing dissatisfaction with a culture that allowed fewer and fewer options with regard to our control over life's everyday needs. The supermarket and the wall plug are still the major supply sources and there seems no end to it.
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> So we set out to write a book about renewable energy systems that people could use for themselves, a description of how they work, their limitations and potentials and the hardware and techniques necessary to grow, build and maintain them. But we soon realized that there were limitations. For one thing, the food and energy systems were in varying states of development and redefinement. New ideas were being offered every day about solar collectors, scaled-down waste systems, wind generators, etc. New companies were starting out all the time in response to the growing demand for devices that harness solar and wind power. Inevitably the book would soon be obsolete. In addition, renewable energy systems were, by their very nature, geared to the local conditions of climate, economy, geography and resources. It made little sense to try and describe endless possibilities that were already described in widely scattered community and regional publications, technical journals, "underground" brochures, survival texts and energy magazines both funky and slick. What we wanted was a sourcebook that brought basic information together, not a cookbook.

And that is what *Energy Primer* turns out to be—a sourcebook of basic information. It is a progress report on the presently available "intermediate technology" of small-scale alternative energy sources. It does not pretend to offer "total" solutions for the requirements of a mass society in its present organization and state of mind: "Our exaggerated needs *cannot* be supplied by solar, wind, water and biofuel energy alone. The prerequisite to using any renewable energy system is *conservation.* Without conservation, techniques and devices for using

renewable energy will always seem impractical and will always make little economic sense." The principle adopted in *Energy Primer* is fundamental to understanding the problem and to solving it: *First we must minimize our needs, then we can start changing our hardware.* The point is that if more and more individuals and groups start reducing their needs and supplying their own energy from small-scale alternative systems, a strong focus of informed opinion will result, from which the larger society will eventually be willing to learn. *Energy Primer* sets out to be a trend-starter and a trend-strengthener and encourager:

> The most obvious way to do this is to develop and adopt scaled-down renewable energy systems that are utilized where they are needed and designed for local environments and requirements. The new politics of self-sufficiency . . . relying on ourselves and our own decentralized energy resources . . . will conflict with the present politics of centralized institutions and industry. Hopefully, in time it will come to supplement this tradition rather than conflict with it. The important thing is that we generate as many options as we can for a future whose course grows more uncertain every day.

Another book plainly beyond our competence for technical review, yet which, on the basis of common sense and general quality, seems of exceptional value, is *Our Earth Our Cure*, by Raymond Dextreit (Swan House, P.O. Box 170, Brooklyn, N.Y. 11223, $4.95). The author is identified as "the most prominent naturopath of France," and what he says about the care of the body and the treatment of disease with herbal preparations is likely to win over even skeptical readers to his way of thinking—especially if you happen to know even a little about one of the subjects he deals with.

A brief section tells how to prepare herbal remedies and where to get the herbs. There are chapters on normal bodily function, with extensive discussion of key subjects such as the liver, elimination, the nervous system, and the ills of civilized humans such as diabetes, obesity, and gastric disorders. Eye, ear, and skin troubles have attention, also children's diseases. There is a section on arthritis and rheumatism. The appeal of the book is for a regime of general health and well-being, not isolated "problem-solving." The outlook is vegetarian, but meat-eaters are likely to find it filled with common sense. *Our Earth Our Cure* is a well-edited, handsome volume, a fine example of the new sort of publishing. Like the other books we have noticed here, it moves in the direction of self-sufficiency and cooperation with nature.

COMMENTARY
STORY OF THE MANAS READER

A LITTLE more than twenty years ago—when MANAS was not quite seven and a half—we had a visit, then a letter (printed in the April 13, 1955 issue) which told how a friendly reader was going to try to help increase our circulation. He did what he could, but felt that the results in new subscriptions to MANAS were negligible. Well, that was only what *he* thought. Our own stubborn view of the matter is that he set going some kind of current which, in subsequent years, led to a slow but steady growth in the number of MANAS readers.

This reader had another good idea. He thought a *MANAS Reader* would be a help to the paper. He selected articles he thought would make a suitable book and wrote to New York publishers, one after another. They were not interested.

Then, about fifteen years later (time ripens all) a New York publisher conceived the notion that maybe a MANAS Reader would be a good thing, after all. (He was encouraged in this idea by a well known humanistic psychologist.) So Richard Grossman, founder of Grossman Publishers, on one of his editorial trips to California, stopped in to pick up a fresh selection of articles, drawn from twenty-three years of publishing MANAS. The book came out in 1971—a big book, 6" x 9", with nearly 500 pages. The hardback was pticed at $15.00—too much for any normal pocketbook; but the paperback was—and is—$4.95

A time comes, in the publishing business, when books that don't move must be moved out—"remaindered," as they say. So, a couple months ago, we had opportunity to buy the existing stock of the hardback edition, and now offer it to readers at $8.00. And since the purpose of the *Reader* is to increase the MANAS circulation, we now offer a copy without charge to anyone who sends in five subscriptions. (Those who wish to purchase a *Reader*—either hardback or paperbound—should write their checks to the Cunningham Press, 3036 West Main St., Alhambra, Calif. 91801, the MANAS printer. This company is licensed to do retail business in California. Add tax if applicable.)

We told this story about the origins of the *Reader* to express gratitude and regard for two friends—Raymond Rogers, who came to see us in 1955, and Richard Grossman, who picked up the manuscript in 1970.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SOCRATIC METHOD

IN his Introduction to *Toward a Mankind School* (McGraw-Hill, 1974, $7.95), John Goodlad tells how he came to organize an educational experiment with the theme of Mankind as its background and goal. Having been asked to contribute a chapter to a book called *Education and the Idea of Mankind,* he found himself wondering how much is known of this subject. Perilously little, he concluded:

> The individual, the nation, or the people pursuing a mindless, self-indulgent course offends the sensibilities, endangers the health, or threatens the lives of others. Today, as never before, our problems must be approached from a mankind perspective and with mankind solutions. But, as yet, we have neither the perspective nor the solutions. . . .
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> A person is not born with a mankind awareness; he develops it or learns it. Therefore, one cannot contemplate mankind for long without contemplating education, too. It appears self-evident that the advancement of mankind and education go hand in hand.
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> But such a conclusion only reveals other troublesome questions. What kind of education advances the mankind idea and mankind behavior? What should be the content, the method, the setting?

The chapters in this book tell how a group of teachers in the University Elementary School, University of California in Los Angeles, set out to find working answers to such questions, how they started a school to test their ideas, and what they learned from the experiment. It makes good reading for teachers and others who are willing to look at such large problems with an open mind.

It happened that while reading Mr. Goodlad's book, we came across a paper by Hannah Arendt on "Thinking and Moral Considerations" (*Social Research,* Autumn, 1971), a topic that is basically the same. As so often in Miss Arendt's work, Socrates is the central factor in the development of this essay, and since Socrates seems to have had definite ideas about what to do for education that "advances the mankind idea," it should be worth while to recall his approach. Whether or not Socrates believed virtue could be taught, he was convinced, Miss Arendt says, "that talking and thinking about piety, justice, courage, and the rest were liable to make men more pious, more just, more courageous, even though they were not given definitions or 'values' to direct their further conduct."

Well, what did Socrates say about his "method," an what did he do?

> He called himself a gadfly and a midwife, and, according to Plato, was called by somebody else an "electric ray," a fish that paralyzes and numbs by contact, a likeness whose appropriateness he recognized under the condition that it be understood that "the electric ray paralyzes others only through being paralyzed itself. It isn't that, knowing the answers myself I perplex other people. The truth is rather that I infect them also with the perplexity I feel myself." Which, of course, sums up neatly the only way thinking can be taught—except that Socrates, as he repeatedly said did not teach anything for the simple reason that he had nothing to teach; he was "sterile" like the midwives of Greece who were beyond the age of childbearing. . . . It seems that he, unlike the professional philosophers, felt the urge to check with his fellowmen if his perplexities were shared by them—and this urge is quite different from the inclination to find solutions for riddles and then to demonstrate them to others.

Plato, let us note in passing, is a great historical wonder. He is so rich in positive content—or Platonism is so rich in positive historical effect—that, as Whitehead remarked, all subsequent philosophy seems but footnotes to his work. He has no doctrinal "teaching," yet affirmative attitudes seem always to emerge from study of Plato—"something new" results from the endless refinement and augmentation of what already exists.

His method—in the Socratic dialogues—is mainly critical, intended to generate doubt and uncertainty:

> The first thing that strikes us in Plato's Socratic dialogues is that they are all aporetic [doubt-stirring]. The argument either leads nowhere or it goes round in circles. In order to know what justice is you must know what knowledge is, and in order to know knowing you must have a previous unexamined notion of knowledge. (Thus in *Theaetetus* and *Charmides.*) Hence, "A man cannot try to discover

> either what he knows or what he does not know. If he knows, there is no need of inquiry; if he does not know . . . he does not even know what he is to look for" (*Meno* 80). Or, in the *Enthyphro:* In order to be pious I must know what piety is. Pious are the things that please the gods, but are they pious because they please the gods or do they please the gods because they are pious? None of the *logoi,* the arguments, ever stays put; they move about, because Socrates, asking questions to which he does *not* know the answers, sets them in motion. And once the statements have come full circle, it is usually Socrates who cheerfully proposes to start all over again and inquire what justice or piety or happiness are.

How does Socrates generate doubt? He does it by asking people what they think and why they think it. He doesn't "give" them ideas, but helps their own ideas to birth—hence the metaphor of a sterile midwife. He practices "the expert knowledge of delivering others of their thoughts, that is, of the implications of their opinions." He purges people "of those unexamined prejudgments which prevent thinking by suggesting that we know where we not only don't know but cannot know, helping them, Plato remarks, to get rid of what was bad in them, their opinions, without however making them good, giving them truth."

Obviously, there is some hazard here. The even tenor of our ways seems to depend very largely on relying on unexamined judgments, since *any* judgment, if you look at it closely enough, may be seen to have flaws. It follows that the Establishment people, who find it difficult to run a society smoothly when too many members of the population begin to *think,* are really against thinking. There is also the consideration that sometimes the Establishment people are justified in their apprehensions. Brash beginners in thinking often create great disorder by immature conclusions and premature actions. There are other dangers. Miss Arendt says:

> In the circle around Socrates, there were men like Alcibiades and Critias—God knows, by no means the worst among his so-called pupils—and they had turned out to be a very real threat to the polls, and this not by being paralyzed by the electric ray but, on the contrary, by having been aroused by the gadfly. What they had been aroused to was license and cynicism. They had not been content with being taught how to think without being taught a doctrine, and they changed the non-results of the Socratic thinking examination into negative results: If we cannot define what piety is, let us be impious—which is pretty much the opposite of what Socrates had hoped to achieve by talking about piety.

With possibilities of this sort implicit in thinking, why did Socrates continue? He must have been convinced that worse would befall if he didn't go on with his gadfly practices, his torpedo fish tactics. And he probably believed that there is no completely hazardless way to proceed in human life, which is never a sure thing.

Why do some people, after thinking enough to become skeptical of received opinions, turn into cynical or impious persons, or even nihilists? Because, Miss Arendt says, they *stop* thinking. They find it painful and look for settlements and substitutes:

> Nihilism is but the other side of conventionalism; its creed consists of negations of the current, so-called positive values to which it remains bound. All critical examinations must go through a stage of at least hypothetically negating accepted opinions and "values" by finding out their implications and tacit assumptions, and in this sense nihilism may be seen as an ever-present danger in thinking. But this danger does not arise out of the Socratic conviction that an unexamined life is not worth living but, on the contrary, out of the desire to find results which would make further thinking unnecessary. Thinking is equally dangerous to all creeds and, by itself, does not bring forth any new creed.

What did Socrates have in place of a creed, that kept him from turning nihilist? *Eros,* Miss Arendt shows, is the underlying principle—the longing for completion, inadequately translated "love." The meaning of this principle is not disclosed in doctrine, but in act. A realization of this, or something like it, seems implicit in what Mr. Goodlad says about the ideal teacher in a "Mankind" school. Such a teacher will avoid authoritative finalities and "view the students as in the process of becoming—a state not far different from his own."

FRONTIERS

Farming and Food

BACK in 1946, a brief year after World War II, Henry Beston wrote in *Human Events* (Aug. 21) about the crisis of European peasant civilization. Since the Bronze Age this Green Commonwealth has given Europe continuity of life through countless wars, invasions, burnings, plagues, pillages, and changes in sovereignty. It was ruled, not by laws, but by tradition and custom. The peasant civilization has two great divisions—the Mediterranean area, with a short winter and a long growing season (as in California); and the Middle European agricultural belt which extends from France through Germany to the outposts of the Slavs. In the latter region the winters are longer, but bright sun and rainy summers favor a diverse agriculture.

Always, in the past, the peasant civilization has recovered from the shock and ruin of wars, but in 1946 the prospect had changed. Beston wrote:

> Today the Peasant Civilization—where it exists east of the iron curtain—is helplessly caught in the toils of a social revolution whose intellectual origins are entirely urban. To this new order ancient customs are so much ignorant nonsense the old agricultural traditions a nuisance, and a brutal and efficient mechanizing of all farm life is the answer of the planners to all farm problems. The protagonists of this mechanized and industrialized agriculture apparently do not see that the old farming could face anything and carry on, while gasoline agriculture must live or die with the machine age.

It was natural for Henry Beston to recognize the dangers of mechanized agriculture some twenty-five years before most other critics. He was both farmer and naturalist (see his exquisite book, *Outermost House*), and a man with a deep regard for the welfare of both man and the planet. The expression, "on the side of life," was his.

Today some portions of the Green Commonwealth have made a good recovery, but the need to emancipate agriculture from its total dependence on gasoline and other petroleum products has not yet been admitted. The story of the Green Revolution in Mexico is a case in point. An article in *Elements* for June begins:

> From a technical point of view the green revolution is largely a biological and chemical revolution, but from an economic or political point of view, it is a commercial revolution. The new wheat and corn seeds developed in Mexico require complementary inputs of fertilizers, insecticides and irrigation water in order to produce high yields. They are generally associated with increased use of agricultural machinery as well.

The Green Revolution in Mexico, which took place mainly in the Yaqui Valley, part of the coastal plains of Sonora, has been called "Modernization without Development" by one writer, which means that successful farming under its influence has helped a few big landowners to become richer, while the small farmers are increasingly unable to survive. The *Elements* writer tells how the scientists of Norman Borlaug's group worked with the larger farmers, increasing grain production, but also causing a "significant transfer of resources from small holders to businessmen and inefficient national industries." Meanwhile, "foreign countries that sell machinery, insecticides and fertilizer ingredients have made good profits."

During the late 1930s, the revolutionary president, Lézaro Cárdenas, sometimes called Mexico's Abraham Lincoln, instituted land reforms in the Yaqui Valley, providing landless laborers with fields to work cooperatively in *ejidos* (voluntary farm collectives). He set up a bank to supply the collectives with credit. The *ejidos* languished, however, partly because the best land had remained in private hands, and also because later government regimes deliberately weakened the *ejidatarios* (cooperative farmers) by persuading them to divide the land up into private plots and by withholding the credit necessary to carry on collective farming. The Green Revolution was also a tool for defeating the *ejidos.* The big farmers got the best advice from

the scientists, while the *ejido* farmers were given second-rate seed and not informed properly about the use of fertilizer. They lacked the necessary dose touch with the research center. The *Elements* article concludes:

> In sum, then, the picture which emerges from this backward glance at agricultural modernization in Mexico since the war is one of waste: waste of natural resources, most especially subsoil water supplies, in an effort to grow on newly irrigated land crops which might better have been adapted to non-irrigated holdings; waste of manufactured agricultural inputs, and of the foreign exchange required to purchase many of their components, in the process of modernizing *ejido* agriculture in irrigation districts without giving *ejidatarios* themselves the knowledge, or the organization, required to utilize those inputs efficiently; waste of the profits generated by the "green revolution," which most often found their way into conspicuous consumption and speculative investment than into the creation of new sources of productive enterprise; and, above all, waste of human talent, possessed by the landless laborers whose work in mechanized fields was less important with each passing year; by the *ejidatarios* and *colonos* [tenant farmers?] whose control over their own land slipped from their hands in the course of agricultural technification, and by the majority of the dryland farmers of the country, who were simply abandoned during three decades to survive as they could. Such a strategy undoubtedly served, in the short run, the immediate end it pursued: production and productivity of grains and fibers increased sufficiently to feed, for a time, the growing urban population of an industrializing nation; and large volumes of agricultural products were made available directly to industry, as well as for export. But, like the kind of industrial growth with which it was associated, the green revolution in Mexico proved to be extraordinarily costly.

As for good news on the other side of the ledger, we have only a few indicators to report. From Rodale Press we have an English version of the April Newsletter of the International Federation of Organic Agricultural Movements (IFOAM), which was founded in 1972 by five groups, and now has nearly fifty members in eighteen countries. It provides a link among the growing number of bodies devoted to the ecological development of agriculture. The Newsletter gives ample evidence of the steadily spreading interest in organic food production and natural methods. Address of IFOAM—3 chemin de la Bergerie, 91700 Ste.-Genevieve-des-Bois, France.

Science for May 16 reprinted from *Nutrition Action* an editorial saying:

> Food faddism is indeed a serious problem. But we have to recognize that the guru of food faddism is not Adelle Davis but Betty Crocker. The true food faddists are not those who eat raw broccoli, wheat germ, and yogurt, but those who start the day on Breakfast Squares, gulp down bottle after bottle of soda pop, and snack on candy and Twinkies.
>
> Food faddism is promoted from birth. Sugar is a major ingredient in baby food desserts. . . . Meat marbled with fat and alcoholic beverages dominate the diets of many middle-aged people. And, of course, white bread is standard fare throughout life.
>
> This diet—high in fat, sugar, cholesterol, and refined grains—is the prescription for illness; it can contribute to obesity, tooth decay, heart disease, intestinal cancer, and diabetes. . . . Our far-out diet—almost 20 per cent refined sugar and 45 per cent fat—is new to human experience and foreign to all other animal life. . . .
>
> It is incredible that people who eat a junk food diet constitute the norm while individuals whose diets resemble those of our great-grandparents are labeled deviants. . . .

Finally, *Consumers Digest* for March/April has a long article on why it would be a good idea to cut down on meat-eating. It quotes the *Journal* of the AMA to the effect that "a vegetarian diet can prevent go per cent of our thrombo-embolic disease and 97 per cent of our coronary occlusions." Then follows a list of the various "poisons" and other chemicals which are a standard part of the diet of beef animals, to fatten them at low cost. The article in *Consumers Digest* is a long one, going on to advise the reader on how to achieve balanced nutrition without eating meat.