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THE FACTS OF OUR LIVES

WHICH is the most useful to us—statistics or biography? From statistics, we might say, we learn what socially or collectively *is;* from biography we learn what is individually possible or has been done. Statistics ignore, filter out, make hidden or "occult" the power and part played by individuality. Biography gives the melodic line of the life of a human being, heard against the contrapuntal background of social events. The background locates and frames the line, but does not determine its notes—or, at any rate, that is an assumption of biography. To speak of the life of a man is to declare that *he* made a life, created a line; biography values and investigates its meaning. If the individual man is nothing but a reflex of his times, then biography is meaningless, not worth reading. For then people are like atoms—given the same external conditions, they will all act in precisely the same way. This would compel us to say that biography is no more than the raw material of statistics. It means that nothing important can be said of individuals, whose destiny is determined by randomly bouncing molecules or the position of the stars.

Reliance on statistics has numerous other effects. The novel becomes a by-product of mechanistic sociology. Politics can be nothing but the pursuit of power. Education must be handed over to the behaviorists. Morality, freedom, and dignity are drained of content. Introspection becomes pointless. Art becomes either an expression of Degeneracy or the servant of Propaganda. Humanism survives only in the defeated memories of Huxley's *Brave New World* and Orwell's *1984*.

That is intolerable and we can't have it, we say. But if asked what we plan to put in the place of all this, we are embarrassed and weakened by the discovery that we don't really know. That is, we have little confidence in our capacity to describe the ideal relations between the individual and society—the *livable* balances between the line of biography and the framing reference-points of social and natural events. We can find individual examples of balances—they all come from or amount to biography—but we don't know how to convert our examples into a generalized view. Knowledge is expressed in laws. One can celebrate the wonder of individuality in an ode, but who knows how to give poetic vision the form of natural law?

Contrasted with the compelling bludgeon of statistics, poetry, we say to ourselves—poetry, the glory and wonder of individuality, remains unreliable and weak. How, we ask, can we arm this essence, this *sine qua non* of our humanity, against the mindless but shaping forces of external conditions and events? Is there some kind of social magic that can turn the very forces of the environment against its imprisoning tendencies? Can we put mind into nature, to make the flow of events come out more as we think it ought to?

Actually, this was the claim and by no means secret psychological weapon of Scientific Socialism, or Marxist-Leninism. In practice it required reduction of the individual to a cipher—in order, some day, to set him free. Curiously, the moral dream of the Communist Revolution has a capsule expression as mechanistic mysticism: You must give up your individual life in order to live. When the Proletarian State has become powerful enough to destroy all the enemies of freedom, it will wither away and men shall all be free.

Today that State, like other States which make parallel claims, continues its struggle for power, but the vision has waned, and belief in the vision has been converted into bureaucratic habit. Thinking people now recall Rosa Luxemburg's prediction, made in 1918: "The remedy invented by Lenin and Trotsky, the general suppression of

democracy, is worse than the evil it is intended to cure."

An obvious comment is that here an individual perception anticipated statistical (historical) confirmation by about two generations. However, the truth discerned by Rosa Luxemburg was as neglected as Cassandra's fateful predictions.

Should we then say that the truth recognized by the unique insight of individuals is *by definition* without compelling power? And does a truth of this sort, when armed with the force of numbers, lose its efficacy—become irrelevant or reversed in meaning?

Well, if this is the conclusion reached, it remains unprovable. What about the things you know, but can't prove statistically? Are they worth talking about, or even thinking about?

We tend to find such reflections discouraging. Nature, law, the "demonstrable" facts of life, are seldom on the side of the angels. No wonder Camus grew gloomy! No wonder that, periodically, troupes of nihilists emerge to exhaust their Luciferian resentment in world destruction. No wonder there are elitist doctrines of salvation for the righteous few, while all the others—whose behavior determines the depressing statistics—will be punished forever and ever.

In view of these manifest (even statistically verifiable) tendencies, what is the case for hope?

In asking this question, one speaks (as, obviously, one must) as an individual. Only an individual can speak in behalf of individuals. Only an individual can argue for the importance of individuals. Only an individual can contrast statistics and biography. Only individuals have what we call vision—and hope. So, all the time, individuals are proving their merit, their necessity, their unique and indispensable role, even though they fail to impress other individuals who are doing the same thing. They are doing the same thing but failing to persuade one another of its general importance. They are doing this and ignoring the significance of what they are doing. They participate, you could say, in the wonder of self-consciousness yet are discounting its value. Their lives, in short, are filled with contradiction.

This is a fact productive of great pain, but not yet a tragic fact. Tragedy ensues only when you recognize the mess, admit the prison, identify the pain, you have made for yourself. It would be a great step of progress, we might conclude, for humans to achieve a tragic view of human life. Not Unamuno's view, but, for each one, his own.

Perhaps this is a legitimate (visionary?) use of statistics—to make them serve the purposes of self-recognition. "The function of social science," according to Joan Robinson, "is quite different from that of the natural sciences—it is to provide society with an organ of self-consciousness."

What sort of laws, through the achievement of greater self-consciousness, might the social sciences formulate and test? Well, thought is the content of consciousness, and deliberated thought is the content of self-consciousness.

Not only are we able to think, we can think about thinking. That makes two kinds of thinking. We can think about how to cope with the world, and we can think about what sort of coping, to what end, deserves our highest determination. We can manipulate objects and then consider the purposes and ends of those who manipulate. Thought relates both to the evaluation of ends and to the ways and means of achieving the ends selected.

This is all pretty obvious and has been said many times. Our trouble may be that we have not taken these distinctions seriously—we have not reflected on what such differing capacities tell us about ourselves. We have not *studied* ourselves as essentially beings with these contrasting powers. If you go to school and ask what a human being is, they assign you a course in biology and then one in anthropology. If you ask about ends, they tell you about survival. If you keep on asking they invite you to take philosophy or go to church. They don't, in other words, go back of the "givers" of the age.

Today we blame this cavalier neglect of the nature of man on Science. Science consults the external world for its starting-points in thinking, in formulating laws. Naturally, it ignores the values men hold, except as "givens." It derives them from behavioral studies, and says "That's the way things are, that's the way man is." We are told to make the best of it. We try, but things get worse and worse. The indication, then, is that we ought to go back of Science to the fundamental elements in human nature—elements which make the practice of science what it is—in order to understand the modern world. We need to do this, but we find science itself continually getting in the way of such an investigation. "You can't do it," the scientists say. "It's just speculation, metaphysics."

Well, ignoring the scientific critics, let's make a metaphysical assumption about the nature of man and see what it may do for us, using statistics (history) as a tool. This is *another* way of attempting to turn existing external realities against the confining tendency of the human environment—against the constraints we see all about. In *The Meaning of History* (Braziller, 1964), Erich Kahler characterizes the modern world as largely an effect of a split in what he calls "Reason." Reason is *Nous*, Mind, the capacity to know, and to know that you know. Mr. Kahler speaks of the *"split between reason and its offspring, rationality."* What follows is an analysis that has become familiar in modern thought through works such as *Post-historic Man* by Roderick Seidenberg and *Technological Man* by Jacques Ellul. Kahler says:

> Reason is a human faculty, inherent in the human being as such, rationality is a technical function, a technicalization and functionalization of the ways in which reason proceeds. Functionalization makes rationality capable of being detached from its human source, and generalized as an abstract, logical method. Again, this process ultimately goes back to Aristotle's *Organon,* particularly his *Analytics.* But it is only rather recently, in consequence of the general process of specialization, and of the ensuing transformation of consciousness, that rationality has become completely independent of, indeed radically opposed to human reason. And just as the expansion of collective consciousness entails the shrinking of individual consciousness, rationality grows at the expense of reason.
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> To give just one, the most salient, example of this development: A scientist, or engineer, working on the problems of nuclear weaponry is, in his special research, compelled to proceed with the strictest rationality. As a private person, however, he may well succumb to all kinds of emotional bias, professional or ideological indoctrination, or just the functional enthusiasm for his work. As far as human reason comes in at all, it is effective only in the narrowest, personal scope of concern for keeping his job and pursuing his career, and even the care for the destiny of his children is repressed and held back from any connection with the dire implications of his work. To ponder over the general human consequences of his activity hardly occurs to him; indeed, according to the scientific canon of strict confinement to a limited field of research, such inferences are considered to exceed his competence. A scientist demonstrating that, given certain protective measures, a nuclear war will cost the nation only fifty, instead of a hundred and fifty million human beings, and therefore is "feasible," such a man, when confronted with the problem of human values, will reply, with the pride of his compartmental amorality, and a-humanity, that these questions are none of his business, and that his concern is strictly with well-defined technical problems. In the field of medicine for instance, rationality works toward the most subtle means of therapy and medication. Years may be devoted to saving the life of a single child, while, in the field of war technology, rationality juggles the lives of millions of human beings as mere proportional figures. The most dainty comforts are produced alongside of colossal destructivity. The prevalence of reason in human affairs would presuppose a comprehensive evaluation of all factors, including psychic and generally human factors, in a given situation. But in the anarchical condition of an incoherent collective consciousness, functional rationality has reached a point of autonomy where it simultaneously serves the most contradictory ends, among them purposes which human reason must regard as monstrous insanity.

This is generalization concerning facts so apparent that no multiplication of supporting illustrations is needed The facts are already in—far more than are required ta be "statistically

significant." There is a monstrous insanity in the way we behave. But we don't know it *at the time*, because we don't see the contradictions in the things we do. The people who recognize the contradictions are called speculators, doom-sayers, metaphysicians, mystics, poets, individualists, and "anti-scientific." Yet again and again, the visionaries prove to have been right. Schiller and Heine, Carlyle and Thoreau, Tolstoy and Gandhi, were all accurate prophets in what they said about the future of civilization. History has validated their foresight.

Knowledge of statistics, or history, then, confirms the diagnosis of poets. The trouble is, this admission doesn't tell us what to do *now*. And it doesn't instruct us in how to persuade other people to do things which a study of history may indicate ought to be done. Saddest of all, it doesn't identify the poets who should be given the closest attention.

To know what to do in behalf of a better world, you have to have a theory of a better world and a working conception of change. This implies understanding how to influence people to act for accomplishing change. It is quite apparent that the theories we have—and have used—do not work very well, and now threaten to precipitate disaster. We call these theories ideologies, which are declarations of certainty about the nature and processes of men and the world. Applying Erich Kahler's diagnosis, we have no difficulty in seeing that ideologies are a principal means by which we separate functional rationality from reason, and go on doing this until the effects of its "monstrous insanity" become inescapably evident.

Mr. Kahler makes it clear that the expansion of technical rationality leads to the "shrinking of individual consciousness," so that when systems of rational control break down, we don't know where to turn. Our resourcefulness is gone. We lack confidence in individuals. We keep on looking for some ingenious way to transform the results of rational technique. Or sometimes we say that if we could only make the truth seen by intuitive individuals *provable*, then everyone would *have* to obey and live by it. Yes, yes, that's what we need—the means of making inspired truth irresistibly strong. But that's the way ideologies come into being.

Kahler speaks of Aristotle as the author of the method by which reason is turned into a technique for making truth strong. The kind of truth that can be supported in this way is truth which depends upon physical evidence and bullet-proof syllogisms. Regardless of what you happen to think about good and evil, about man and nature, or about purpose and chance, when you are confronted by objectively demonstrated truth, you submit. Like it or not, you have to conform.

But compelled conformity is *tyranny*, we say. A man has the right to be wrong. Unless they can be wrong, humans can never be right. And when you look at history—when you can point to the immeasurable evil which results from systems which rely on the compulsion of either facts (supposed facts) or social or religious doctrine—you are able to declare on a statistical basis that not allowing people to be wrong *doesn't work*. Insisting on righteousness, in this way, is the greatest of wrongs. It has happened again and again in the past. There is an irrefutable statistical case for this analysis.

Historical (statistical) criticism wins, then, but it reveals only feeble alternatives. Anarchism, for example, which is one alternative, introduces a lot of familiar problems. The individual, on whom anarchism relies, feels desperately weak and incompetent; for centuries the truth seen by individuals has been regarded as unreliable, or disreputable, or merely a lucky guess. We have to *know*.

This is our present situation. In some intuitive way we feel that truth is truth, but find it impotent. So we go on doing things that won't work because we don't know what else to do.

Why does demonstrable truth seem strong? Because it is based on undeniable external reality. Why does demonstrable truth fail? Because

undeniable reality is only a portion of reality; it leaves out the truth we need to live by.

Well, let us assume that there have been wise men, and take a look at what they taught and how they behaved (if we can find out). One thing that can be said of them is that they gave little attention to, refused to use in persuasion, the provable sort of truth. They spoke gently of certain unprovable truths, asking people to think about them. They would never try to compel. They were systematically unsystematic, but often impressively reasonable in connections that we are able to understand.

Plato is one example of a wise man. In a chapter on the arts of persuasion in *Therapeia*—a book which presents Plato's philosophy in its entirety—Robert Cushman shows that while Aristotle put all his confidence in knowledge that could be demonstrated, Plato held that self-authenticating knowledge was of the highest importance. Self-authenticated knowledge is the truth of the individual, known only by individuals. Aristotle regarded the dialectical quest for this truth as a sophistical exercise. As Cushman says:

> Aristotle evaded Plato's problem of pedagogy by restricting knowledge to the sphere of cogent inference from acknowledged premises. Henceforth the character or disposition of a man seemed to be of no consequence in his attainment of *episteme.* Proof seemed to make both *ethos* and *eros* irrelevant to the achievement of truth.
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> For Plato, in contrast with Aristotle, the truth or the knowledge of ultimate reality (*i.e.*, "metaphysical" knowledge) is never necessary and never enforceable. Since assent cannot be required, because demonstration is not claimed, the right to dissent is always granted, and human freedom is respected. Likewise, although Divine Reality is available for human cognition, it does nor intrude itself upon human attention so as to constrain acknowledgment, but, rather, awaits it. . . .
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> Accordingly, in the case of "metaphysical" knowledge, *assent* waits upon *consent.* Thus the knowledge in question is precisely knowledge through freedom, that is, through acknowledgment. So while Plato's *paideia* is designed to cope with pervasive human ignorance, his therapeutic pedagogy neither aims at nor pretends to supply any such logical *tour de force.* as is, thereby, unable either to account for, to accredit, or to tolerate human error. For wherever apodictic [compelling] knowledge is asserted, there denial of the liberty to dissent is implied. The Aristotelian reduction of metaphysical knowledge to the hypothetical and apodictic variety has always carried with it the implication of conformity; for where propositions are demonstrably cogent, conscientious objection is irrelevant and on occasion intolerable. But for Plato cogency is not anticipated in regard to the ultimate object of knowledge. What is required is not *apodeixis* but transformation of *ethos.* And furthermore it is precisely the case that in this domain there can be no knowledge unless it is conscientious.

Achieved through the dialectic, or the Socratic method, Cushman says, is "a banishment of dogmatism and resistance to the truth." And, "What has been won is an acknowledgment of what was profoundly surmised but unhonored and unacknowledged." Plato, Cushman notes, was quite willing to concede limited value to the sciences, but he regarded them mainly as useful exercises in behalf of the abstract thinking required for reaching to self-authenticating truth.

Thus Plato, for one, *has* reversed the field on both Aristotelian and Baconian contentions. For Plato, self-authenticating, undemonstrable knowledge is the *strong* truth, since it leaves men free and makes them free—while the truth that compels, regardless of moral inclination, is for him *weak,* because it makes men vulnerable to external authority. Demonstrated truth is not *their* truth.

The strong truth is truth that touches men's lives in the area of individual growth. We can apply statistical method here and show that this statement about truth has consensual support from the wise. Let us say, then, that the wise are fully developed humans—self-actualizing?—and that the rest of us are unfinished, still trying to honor and acknowledge what is only surmised. This may not fit with our anxieties, our impatience, or with our old feelings about what is strong and what is weak, but does it fit with our vision and the enduring facts of our lives?

REVIEW
"SCHOLARLY" RESOURCES

FOR thirty years Hiram Haydn edited the *American Scholar*—a little longer than MANAS has been in existence—and during most of this time MANAS editors have been reading the *Scholar* with appreciation and quoting its contributors with profit. We read the notice of Mr. Haydn's recent death with regret, and when, shortly after, his book was announced, we asked for a review copy.

Words and Faces (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1974, $8.95) is about the word business. It oughtn't to be a business, which is probably the most charitable explanation of why it is so poorly conducted. Hiram Haydn was in that business as editor, writer, teacher, and publisher, for all his life, and if you are curious about how the book business is carried on and how serious journals of opinion are put together, this is a good book to read. We shan't attempt a review—the story of his life is too disconnected and confusing—but will offer some samples of what may be encountered in these pages.

For a time Haydn worked for Random House as editor. He relates this tale about how the partners, Bennett Cerf and Donald Klopfer, fulfilled their executive decisions. One of the firm's editors was clearly unproductive, his selections being deficient in both quality and sales potential. "It was evident that he must go if their [the partners'] plan was to have serious meaning and force." So—

> They tossed a coin to decide which of them would tell the editor the bad news. Klopfer lost, but agreed to carry through only if Cerf would sit in on the session and break in whenever it was clear that he was weakening. Just before this meeting they rehearsed their discussion in my office across the hall from Bennett's. Then, like conspiratorial high-school boys, they crossed over to the meeting place.
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> I saw the editor come down the hall, enter Bennett's office, and close the massive door behind him. He looked distraught.
>
> Abandon hope. . . .
>
> I could not work. I sat there, identifying with that man until identification became physical pain. I cannot remember that even a twinge of self-congratulation stained my sympathy: there, but for the grace of God—
>
> A half hour passed, an hour. I did not see the editor when he left, but I heard the closing of the door and then his rapid footsteps. They were not those of a defeated and humiliated man. But then I had known *that.* Bennett and Donald would have been kind.
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> I waited for them to come in. Ten minutes. Twenty. I crossed the hall and knocked. Bennett's voice, admitting me, sounded as though he was gasping.
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> I found them weak with laughter. I stared at them.
>
> "What's so funny?" I demanded.
>
> They quieted down, looked sheepish. Finally Donald explained. They had not only never gotten around to firing the editor; they had raised his salary and lent him money for the down payment on a house!

Admirers of the *American Scholar* may find pleasure in reminiscing about material they have read with Mr. Haydn as a guide. He tells how Joseph Wood Krutch was appointed contributor of "If You Don't Mind My Saying So," the department which became "the most popular feature of the magazine." He tells how he persuaded René Dubos to follow Mr. Krutch with the present series, "The Despairing Optimist."

Sometimes intense arguments grew out of *Scholar* articles. When in 1949 Robert Gorham Davis charged the New Criticism in literature with fascist tendencies—finding the influence of Joseph de Maistre and T. E. Hulme in the attitudes of T. S. Eliot—the outcry from outraged scholars was so great that Haydn organized a symposium on the question. He invited Mr. Davis to pursue his contentions before a jury made up of Allen Tate, Kenneth Burke, Malcolm Cowley, and William Barrett. There was a sparkling evening at Haydn's home, with Davis defending himself well, and Kenneth Burke discoursing irrelevantly on "hierarchy." There is this at the end of the report:

> It was late in the evening, when either Burke or I was holding forth, that I noted Malcolm Cowley, sitting there, rocking in silent mirth. But his amusement was not over our speeches; he was watching the steno-typist. That unctuous man was *playing* his instrument. Shoulders swaying in appropriate rhythm, he was actually applying his fingers as though to the keyboard of a piano. I thought of it as the Hierarchy Concerto in A Minor.
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> The record of this meeting was published in two installments: in the winter 1950-51 and the spring 1951 issues.

Haydn was rather proud of the fact that while he was editor at Random House, he was responsible for the rejection of Nabokov's *Lolita* and Norman Mailer's *The Deer Park.* He later decided that *Deer Park* was better than he had thought, but concerning Nabokov he remained intransigent. Three times he tried to read *Pale Fire* but never got beyond page 22:

> All the impatience I had known in the past with Henry James returned, reinforced. How mincing, how self-congratulatory, how condescending, how laboriously trivial—and how dull, dull, dull!
>
> Nabokov remained for me a skillful, coldly intellectual, misanthropic minor talent, shining with pale illumination in our Alexandrian blue ceiling.

Having enjoyed René Dubos' essays in the *American Scholar,* we thought his book, *Beast or Angel?* (Scribner's, 1974, $8.95) sounded promising, and its sub-title, "Choices That Make Us Human," was a further invitation. Somehow, Mr. Dubos sounds stronger in the *Scholar* than he does in this book. Perhaps, in writing a book, he felt obliged to remember that he is a scientist as well as an essayist, and composed with greater caution. Yet the book has some fine moments, consistent with its title and theme. He concludes the first section:

> The unity and stability of the human species accounts for the continuity of its biologic development. The immense diversity of its ways of life provides the materials for a social evolution which transcends animal evolution. But in many ways the myth of Prometheus remains the deepest symbolic expression of the mysterious events which launched the uniquely human adventure. Prometheus is the symbol of those attributes which make human life different from animal life. In Aeschylus' drama Prometheus chose to steal fire from Zeus, suffered for his audacity, and yet continued to believe that by his act of revolt he had launched humankind on the course of civilization.

This is an underlying theme of Dr. Dubos' thinking; it crops up again and again, first of all in a quotation from Rabelais' *Gargantua and Pantagruel,* which is a text facing the title page:

> Are you not assured within yourself of what you have a mind to? The chief and main point of the whole matter lieth there: all the rest is merely casual, and totally dependeth upon the fatal disposition of the heavens.

Dr. Dubos seems at his best when he is reflectively trying to understand the why of humanness—when, that is, he is not informing us of things scientists have found out about the human constitution or history. Curiously, the mind seems better able to deal with meaning when it leaves "facts" behind; that is, you feel more at home with a man who thinks than with one who catalogs and labels. This is especially noticeable in the work of another eminent scientist, Loren Eiseley, whose speculations about the nature of man seem inspired, in contrast to his facts, which remain dull and opaque. Probably they are not dull to *him,* but then they are *his* facts. Conceivably, the best use one can make of facts is as a whetstone to sharpen one's faculties on. It would be silly, however, to pretend that we can do without facts. We need facts as much as we need bodies. The puzzling thing is their intelligent use, which remains as obscure as how to use our bodies. Obviously we don't really know how to treat our bodies; the records of illness and malfunction of the organism are sufficient evidence of this.

Man, Dr. Dubos muses, needs to be individual—to be himself and no one else; and at the same time he needs to unite with others, find harmony with the rest of life. He doesn't know how to rationalize and feel that he is both one and many, and as a result he arrogates and abdicates

by turns, wondering why his life is out of balance. To be *only* an individual is to suffer alienation and loneliness—the "ultimate solitude," as Duns Scotus said. But to be only a part of the crowd is to extinguish the Promethean fire—a timid rejection of independence—and this is worse than loneliness: it is to die as a man. The relative successes and failures in dealing with this problem—which is omnipresent and continuous—make the endless individual and collective dramas of life.

Concluding the section on "Choosing to Be Human," Dr. Dubos chooses Pico for his spokesman:

> At the beginning of the Renaissance, Giovanni Pico della Mirandola expressed the genius of humanism when he affirmed that man was given by God the latitude to remain a beast or to become an angel: "With freedom of choice and with honor, as though the maker and molder of thyself, thou mayest fashion thyself in whatever shape thou shalt prefer. Thou shalt have the power to degenerate into the lower forms of life, which are brutish. Thou shalt have the power, out of thy soul's judgment, to be reborn into the higher forms, which are divine."
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> The creation of humanity evoked by Pico is the history of civilization. There is no need to demonstrate yet again that anatomy, physiology, and behavior of human kind have their basis in animal nature. What is needed is a more acute recognition and a better understanding of the fact that the human species has evolved socially by developing behavioral patterns and aspirations that transcend those of animal life. The progressive passage from instinctive reactions, which are animal in nature, to willful actions has always involved painful choices and decisions. It is through these choices and decisions that humanity progressively emerged from animality.

This passage gives the core of Dr. Dubos' outlook.

COMMENTARY
MORE FROM CAMPBELL

THERE is a comment in Joseph Campbell's book (see "Children") which fits well with Plato's contention that inward assent is more important than logical demonstration. Speaking of the stultifying effect of conventional "certainties," he says:

> Where the synagogues and churches go wrong is by telling what their symbols "mean." The value of an effective rite is that it leaves everyone to his own thoughts, which dogma and definitions only confuse. Dogmas and definitions rationally insisted upon are inevitably hindrances, not aids, to religious meditation, since no one's sense of the presence of God can be anything more than a function of his own spiritual capacity.

Another comment has direct bearing on the confident assumption of ideologists that they know exactly "what to do," although here Mr. Campbell is speaking more generally of common conceits:

> Those who think—and their name is legion—that they know how the universe could have been better than it is, how it would have been if they created it, without pain, without sorrow, without time, without life, are unfit for illumination. Or those who think—as do many—"Let me first correct society, then get around to myself" are barred from even the outer gate of the mansion of God's peace. All societies are evil, sorrowful, inequitable; and so they will always be. So if you really want to help this world, what you will have to teach is how to live in it. And that no one can do who has not himself learned how to live in it in the joyful sorrow and the sorrowful joy of the knowledge of life as it is.

This seems directly related to what Prof. Boulding says in the *Psychology Today* interview (see Frontiers). He calls for the elimination of manifest error. We have, he says, ample evidence of what we are doing wrong.

So, even if we don't know enough to redesign society from scratch, we can at least begin to put an end to the grossest of our errors. This might be said to be the essential point of E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful.* Almost anyone can now see that we have allowed our economic processes and institutions to grow to totally unmanageable dimensions. Just read the papers to see how much we are *obsessed* by the consequences of this mistake. If we try to scale the practical side of our lives to proportions allowing human control, we might find out a lot more than we know now about the advisability of various other arrangements.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE SOURCES 0F MORALITY

ALL the important questions involved in what we mean by moral education seem to lie in that mysterious space which separates guidance from independence. The truly moral act, we know, is what one does from one's own light, by one's own sense of right or fitness. Anything else, we feel, is a borrowed morality, a performance to win rewards or secure approval, and might be turned around to go in the opposite direction, if the external pressures should change.

Even in small children there are two sets of inclinations. A youngster who is a newcomer to a group of others his age, or a little older, will watch and listen carefully, intent on finding out the habits, customs, and measures of acceptance applied by its members. How will he fit in? Does he want to? What will happen if he rejects this but accepts that? A dozen or so levels of judgment may be involved, with lightning decisions made at all of them, one after the other. The same child, at home with parents or people he knows well, is in familiar territory. If he is nailing two pieces of wood together, but in a way that can't possibly work, and his father or older brothers says, "Let me show you how to do it," another sort of polarity intervenes. Which is most important: To do it *myself,* or to learn, perhaps, the best way to do it? Here the inner and outer integrities seem in conflict. Balancing them, we might say, is the art of life, while giving priority to the inner integrities affirms the meaning of life. Then the outer integrities supply wider radius or scope to the meaning.

There are, however, several theaters of action in which these tensions are more or less resolved. There is the pleasure/pain axis of purely physical existence, and the approval/disapproval axis of the life of the herd. There is the arena in which right and wrong are defined by proclaimed authority, and a somewhat more elevated region in which morality is rationally deduced from a constitution or social contract. Finally, as Lawrence Kohlberg's analysis shows, there is the rule of principle in each circumstance or relationship, interpreted by continual acts of self-reference. Conventions or systems are evolved to make explicit the rules of each of these levels, and so, historically, we have old testaments and new testaments, Brahmin logic and Buddhist reforms, rationalists and intuitionists. There is the law of the jungle, the territorial imperative, blaring notions of law-and-order, and sects of quietists content to let the world go by. There are also, by hypothesis, the wise, who know all the rules and how to use them, and when to put some of them aside.

During the birthtime of a society there is a concerted effort to establish wise conventions. Good men try to model social and individual behavior on Natural Law, according to the best light and needs of the times. Generations pass, and then these conventions are found to be meaningless confinements, caricatures of Nature, and the excellence of individual vision and inspiration is discovered to be the foundation of freedom and spontaneous human good. Yet, at the same time, there are here and there men and women whose capacity to live usefully within almost any conventional framework makes even tired conventions glow with an unearthly light—while, on the other hand, the life of a gentle but tough-minded man like Thoreau gives off the same light in the laconic practice of nonconformity.

What shall we tell the children? How shall we explain to them the priority of self-determination? How explain the futility of self-determination unless it relates well to the natural integrities of the world? How does one instruct a child in the difference between natural illusions and cultural deceptions, between ignorance and deliberate injustice? What is the part played by guidance, and what should be left to discovery, in such stupendous matters? All, no doubt, can be

made clearer in its own time; and, somehow or other, a good teacher seems to have a knack for doing what can be done about such questions—some of the time.

There is a sense in which high religion is always instruction in what we *partly* already know. The great religions don't tell us more, but encourage us to think that we *can* know more. In *Myths to Live By* (Bantam), a book of great practical usefulness in these matters, Joseph Campbell compares the revealed religion of Western tradition with the conception of a Buddha as the completely enlightened human being.

> The word Buddha means simply, "awakened, an awakened one, or the Awakened One." It is from the Sanskrit verbal root *budh*, "to fathom a depth, to penetrate to the bottom"; also, "to perceive, to know, to come to one's senses, to wake." The Buddha is one awakened to identity not with the body but with the knower of thoughts, that is to say, with consciousness; knowing, furthermore, that his value derives from his power to radiate consciousness—as the value of a light-bulb derives from its power to radiate light. What is important about a light-bulb is not the filament or the glass but the light which these bulbs are to render; and what is important about each of us is not the body and its nerves but the consciousness that shines through them. And when one lives for that, instead of protection for the bulb, one is a Buddha in consciousness.

Mr. Campbell quotes from Dr. Daisetz T. Suzuki to obtain a framework for this idea:

> "Nature," he said, "is the bosom whence we come and whither we go." "Nature produces Man out of itself; Man cannot be outside of Nature." "I am in Nature and Nature is in me." The Godhead as highest Being is to be comprehended, he continued, as prior to creation, "in whom there was yet neither Man nor Nature." "As soon as a name is given, the Godhead ceases to be Godhead. Man and Nature spring up and we get caught in the maze of abstract conceptual vocabulary."

After speaking of the Eastern conception of reaching after the feeling of one's ever deeper "identity with whatever one knows as 'divine'," and then, beyond that, to transcendence, Mr. Campbell asks:

> Do we have any such teaching in the West? Not in our best-known teachings of religion. According to our Good Book, God made the world, God made man, and God and his creatures are *not* to be conceived of as in any sense identical. Indeed, the preaching of identity is in our best-known view the prime heresy. When Jesus said, "I and my Father are one," he was crucified for blasphemy; and when the Moslem mystic Hallaj, nine centuries later, said the same he too was crucified. Whereas just that is the ultimate point of what is taught throughout the Orient as religion.
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> So, then, what is it that our religions actually teach? Not the way to an experience of identity with me Godhead, since that, as we have said, is the prime heresy; but the way and the means to establish and maintain a *relationship* to a named God. And how is such a relationship to be achieved? Only through membership in a certain supernaturally endowed, uniquely favored social group.

Here, on a vast cultural scale, we see contrasting viewpoints on the question of which comes first and has the most importance—discovery or guidance. Of course, the anxious search for a "guru," whether in the West or the East, amounts to dependence upon guidance rather than discovery. Perhaps we could say that when a person accepts guidance from one who is obviously wise, he puts aside "self-will," but retains self-reference, since by means of his own wisdom he has found someone it seems well to consult. Gandhi is a fine illustration of this. Gandhi never sought out or adopted a "guru," yet he learned much from others, as for example from Ruskin and Tolstoy and Thoreau.

FRONTIERS

Economists on Economics

IN an article in the *Review of Social Economy* for October, 1974, Kendall P. Cochran looks back on the original assumptions of the now prevailing (*still* existing) economic system, showing what they were and what they have led to. He makes it plain that if, as Socrates said, the unexamined life is not worth living, the unexamined economic system is the complacent institutionalization of disaster.

Mr. Cochran briefly sketches the character of status quo economics.

> The core idea [he writes] posits that what is good for society is simply what is good for the individual, as measured by the market, which is merely an extension of natural law. Individuals as individuals are all that matters . . . the issue is a crucial one, for one must accept or reject the basic moral philosophy of Adam Smith and Jeremy Bentham regarding the relationship of the individual to society—that is, the position that the wants of individuals are primary and those of society are secondary or derivative. The issue is so basic, it would be helpful to go back and take a careful look at economics in its philosophic beginnings. Now there was really no question on this matter for Smith and Bentham; the situation was inescapably clear to them. Society was no more, and no less, than the sum of the interests of the individual consumer, investor, workman, employer. In short, there was no society, no ongoing social organism with a life process of its own. There were only individuals acting in their own self-interest. From this point of view, the economic system exists only to satisfy the individual wants or needs of the consumer or investor therefore, the public wants or needs must take second choice or whatever is left over.
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> This is the basic moral justification on which economics, and its rationalization of the market as the final arbiter of all values, must stand or fall. Society, in this point of view, is only a fiction or an abstraction, for it is only the sum of individual self-interests. And if one accepts that morality, he, in turn, accepts conventional economics and its self-justification that its only function is to explain the mystery of price and the market mechanism. And he further accepts the position that, since individual self-interest is supreme, then any governmental action is a restraint on individual freedom and is therefore pernicious and evil, by definition.
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> What Smith and Bentham and all Classical and Neoclassical economists since have assumed is simply that individuals are *a priori* equal. Nature defined it that way. And only an arbitrary sovereign or pernicious government can upset that basic and natural equality. Thus, if all systems of preference or restraint are removed, then there will emerge an economic arena in which all individuals will be free to pursue their own self-interest, and *that* is what is best for society. This is critical, for from this point of view, that is the only definition of social good. Society is an abstraction, a nonentity, a fiction perhaps; for only individuals as individuals really matter, and the sum of their best efforts is the definition of what is good for society—the greatest good for the greatest number.
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> . . . Neoclassical economists redefine the maximum welfare of society as being quite simply the maximization of individual wants and individual self-interest, with no glancing thought being directed to who gets how much, since each was getting what he "deserved."

This unimpassioned, objective account of the economic rules we live by, together with Mr. Cochran's showing that, from an economic point of view, there is *no other* philosophy of life, is sufficiently devastating. The accuracy of what he says seems self-evident, its implications appalling.

Why have we put up with this poverty-stricken outlook for so long? Why has there been so little response to Karl Polanyi's moving appeal: "I plead for the restoration of that unity of motives which should inform man in his every day activity as a producer, for the reabsorption of the economic system in society"?

Conceivably, a question raised by Mr. Cochran will give us the beginnings of an explanation. Early in this paper he asks:

> But what if the economy is a product of institutional, historical, technological, social forces and not the product of natural forces or the unseen hand of a divine origin? Then the economist has a moral responsibility to help society see where it might go and understand what its alternatives are.

The problem is really this: Do the economists or anyone else *know enough* about the composition, forces, and meaning of human society to be able to "see where it might go and understand what its alternatives are"?

The comment of another economist, Kenneth Boulding, on the most familiar alternative to status-quo economics—Socialism—gives a partial answer. The following is from an interview with Prof. Boulding which appeared in *Psychology Today* for January, 1973:

> Fifty years' experience with centrally planned societies reveals that they are neither very much better nor very much worse than capitalist societies. Socialist societies have shown themselves to be defenseless against personal tyranny, defenseless against the corruption of the arts and even the sciences. Abolishing private property does not produce a society in which everybody does things for love. It leads instead to a society dominated by terror at its worst and propaganda at its best.

Prof. Boulding, however, is no kinder to capitalism:

> Corporate capitalism has been unable to maintain full employment without inflation. Social democracy, in part has been a fraud. Income has been redistributed to the rich in the name of redistributing it to the poor. The problems of pollution and resource exhaustion mount in significance. And overshadowing it all is the 200 billion dollars of the world war industry. This war industry is an appalling economic burden on the world and it represents a positive probability of almost irretrievable disaster in nuclear war.

What does Boulding think we should do about this mess? He has one sensible suggestion. It is that while we may not know enough to plan an ideal society—to say what our arrangements ought to be—we can at least find out and stop what we are doing that we are doing that is obviously wrong or won't work.