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THE SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

IT is a natural and probably irrepressible human tendency to look for a single comprehensive solution of human problems. At any rate, people keep on doing it and, as we know, the simple solution is likely to gain wide popularity since it makes the least demand on individual understanding and effort.

The most effective argument against simple solutions is that those which have been tried seemed to depend for their success on the dehumanization of man. This is fairly easy to demonstrate—easy, that is, if it be acknowledged that the longing for freedom, for self-determination, for independent thinking and individual self-realization is the chief defining characteristic of human beings. While other qualities may need to be taken into account, these have little meaning except in relation to the central and differentiating longing to be free.

With this in mind, then, we have only to read Dostoevsky's account of what the Grand Inquisitor said to the returned Jesus (in Ivan's story in *The Brothers Karamazov*) to recognize that authoritarian religion, which seeks total control of human behavior and thought, amounts to the dehumanization of man. And from this recognition, we may move to the conclusion that all tyrannies, whether over bodies or minds, represent different degrees of dehumanization. In contrast, the revolutions of the eighteenth century were partially successful resistances of the human spirit to the simplifying solution of dehumanization.

Of course, men convinced that they have the Truth don't think of themselves as tyrants, but as servants of the Divine Will, or perhaps as Patriots. Their motives seem to them above reproach, and all criticism either irrelevant or contemptible, or worse. So long as Truth is held to entitle men to the use of Power, having Truth means the end of dialogue, of rational discourse. The more reasoned a criticism, the more subversive it becomes, because of its persuasiveness. Giordano Bruno was burned for daring to reason about the Universe. The use of reason was the offense of Abelard, who was hounded for much of his life by that pillar of orthodoxy, Bernard of Clairvaux. And in modern times, many were the conscientious objectors who were sent off to prison for daring to *reason* about their scruples against war. To those who have a single, simple solution, reason becomes intolerable.

But the blood of the martyrs of reason became the seed of the scientific revolution. Galileo had said that the Book of Nature should be studied, not the books of scholastic doctrine, and eventually his counsel was heeded. It was heeded, one might say, to excess, for the time came when *only* what could be found out from the study of objective nature was regarded as having any "truth-content" at all. Now reason lost its autonomy, becoming the handmaiden of empiricism. The deliveries of the senses, ordered by reason, would suffice to supply all the truths of science, and with this knowledge the world would move forward to a scientific millennium. But the claim that *all* truth awaits discovery in the facts of objective nature, while vastly appealing to minds but lately freed from religious thought-control, was an insupportable simplification. Its guarantees were bound to fail. As Michael Polanyi says in *Science, Faith and Society* (University of Chicago Press, 1964):

> It is true that there was a time when the sheer destruction of authority did progressively release new discoveries in every field of inquiry. But none of these discoveries—not even those of science—were based on the experience of our senses aided only by self-evident propositions. Underlying the assent to science and the pursuit of discovery in science is the

> belief in scientific premisses to which the adherents and cultivators of science must unquestionably assent. The method of disbelieving every proposition which cannot be verified by definitely prescribed operations would destroy all belief in natural science. And it would destroy, in fact, belief in truth and in the love of truth itself which is the condition of all free thought. The method leads to complete metaphysical nihilism and thus denies the basis for any universally significant manifestation of the human mind.

Polanyi's point is that there is no way in which the ideals of truth, justice, charity, and human goodness can be vindicated by the scientific method. Allegiance to these ideas arises spontaneously in human beings, as an expression of their intrinsic nature, and they become the foundation of society and of all the higher undertakings of men. Metaphysical nihilism destroys the ground of any human association but that achieved "by submission to a single center of unlimited secular power." As Polanyi says: "A society refusing to be dedicated to transcendent ideals chooses to be subjected to servitude. Intolerance comes back full cycle. For sceptical empiricism which had once broken the fetters of medieval priestly authority, goes on now to destroy the authority of conscience."

This, again, is the dehumanization, or even the abolition of man. The evidence could be piled up—it has been piled up—to show that positivist conceptions of certainty lead eventually to a totalitarian conception of authority, since it becomes the obligation of those who have the truth to shape the lives of all men according to newly-discovered "scientific fact." Among present-day scientists, the behaviorists are examples of Positivists who are confident that, given the power, they could remodel the world in terms of their ideas of how human beings ought to behave.

Much the same criticism might be made of the technological welfare state, as writers such as Roderick Seidenberg (*Post-Historic Man*) and Jacques Ellul (*The Technological Society*) have shown.

There are, however, other ways of looking at the idea of broad solutions. No one would accuse Plato of over-simplification, yet there is a sense in which he sought a single answer to the problems of human beings by asking the question: Can Virtue be taught? This, at any rate, is the query to which his dialogues return, again and again. If we could be sure that virtue *can* be taught, then we would all set about teaching it, regardless of delays and problems, since we should feel that, one way or another, this is the only thing to do.

But we are not sure about this teaching of virtue, nor, finally, was Plato, although he devoted his life to demonstrations of how it might be attempted. One prime difficulty attends all such endeavors from their very beginning, and that is the general disagreement as to what, exactly, virtue is. If we consult Plato for help, we are referred to another, more inclusive abstraction. For it won't do, as we soon recognize, to say, simply, that a virtuous man is a man who is brave, strong, true, generous, kind, and just. A man may be brave, yet serve a bad cause, and can, then, his bravery still be called a virtue? A man's idea of justice may do disservice to multitudes outside the range of his concern, and is he then really just?

Perhaps we should say that there are small virtues and large ones, and that the large ones include the small ones, but not vice versa. Stringfellow Barr deals with this problem in *The Three Worlds of Man.* Speaking of the development of Plato's argument in the *Republic,* Barr says:

> As the dialogue proceeds, Socrates weaves a magic skein of luminous analogies between the various types of unjust men and the various types of unjust state. But since, both in the individual soul and in organized society, a just ordering of the organic parts will all hang on the quality of the wisdom that directs them, we are back again at the Socratic point that virtue depends in a special way on wisdom, a wisdom capable of transcending mere opinion and achieving knowledge. We cannot learn to be brave or temperate or just without this higher wisdom, for it is this wisdom that tells us which of our physical desires to follow and which we may not

follow; it is this that brings to our souls the internal ordering in which Socrates saw justice. In short, all genuine moral choices are guided by high wisdom that knows principles, as well as by prudence about cases. That is why a brave act is wisdom acting with respect to danger; and a temperate act is wisdom acting again, this time with respect to pleasure; and a just act is wisdom acting with respect to the rights of other men about us. If this be true, then it is easy to see why Socrates in so many of the dialogues seems to suspect that all virtues are really species of theoretical wisdom as much as of prudence. Or, more baldly, that virtue is knowledge.

But philosophical knowledge, or wisdom, is not easily come by, nor is it at all common. The world has not been kind to its philosophers, and while men sometimes honor their names, their teachings are carefully ignored. We may here be getting to the heart of our difficulty. It is at least conceivable that there is or has long been sufficient philosophical truth in the world to provide simple solution of our problems, but that this truth has not been acceptable; that either the truth is unpalatable, or it is not acknowledged to be truth.

In a rather remarkable article which appeared in the *New Yorker* some years ago (Feb. 25, 1967), Hannah Arendt discussed at some length the problem of relating philosophical truth to practical human affairs. Taking as a fundamental truth the Socratic proposition, "It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong," she considers its reception by the Athenian community:

The Platonic dialogues tell us time and time again how paradoxical the Socratic statement sounded, how easily it stood refuted in the marketplace where opinion stands against opinion, and how incapable Socrates was of proving and demonstrating it to the satisfaction not of his adversaries alone but also of his friends and disciples. Everything that can be said in its defense we find in the various Platonic dialogues. The chief argument states that for man, *being one*, it is better to be at odds with the whole world than to be at odds with and contradicted by himself—an argument that is compelling indeed for the philosopher, whose thinking is characterized by Plato as a silent dialogue with himself, and whose existence therefore depends upon a constantly articulated intercourse with himself, a splitting-into-two of the one he nevertheless is, for a basic contradiction between the two partners who carry on the thinking dialogue would destroy the very condition of philosophizing. In other words, since man contains within himself a partner from whom he can never win release, he will be better off not to live in company with a murderer or a liar. Or, since thought is the silent dialogue carried on between me and myself, I must be careful to keep the integrity of this partner intact, for otherwise I shall surely lose the capacity for thought altogether.

For the reflective man, this argument may be wholly persuasive. But for the man-in-the-street, the ordinary fellow who has never thought of himself as in partnership with another part of himself, or in dialogue of any sort except when speaking to someone else, the contention that it is better to suffer than to do a wrong may seem ridiculous. The care of his "immortal soul," to which Socrates adjured him, was a matter safely left to another time, since he was not, after all, well informed about the soul, and his soul, if he had one, gave him no pain, or hardly any by comparison to the pangs of hunger, the sting of envy, or the fear of bodily harm and death.

So it is argued—and has been argued for thousands of years—that philosophers have no role in public affairs and had best keep out of them. Fears and passions rule men, and those who become masters of manipulation use their knowledge of these emotions to reach power and to maintain control. Yet it is simply not true that philosophers exercise no influence on the opinions of men. Their ideas, and sometimes their actions, have a way of filtering down to leaven even popular opinion. Miss Arendt considers this in respect to the Platonic rule, which, she says, marks the beginning of Western ethical thought.

The Socratic proposition "It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong" is not an opinion but claims to be truth, and though one may doubt whether it ever had a direct political consequence, its impact on practical conduct as an ethical precept is undeniable; only religious commandments, which are absolutely binding for the community of believers, can claim

> greater recognition. Does this fact not stand in clear contradiction to the generally accepted impotence of philosophical truth? And since we know from the Platonic dialogues how unpersuasive Socrates' statement remained for friend and foe alike whenever he tried to prove it, we must ask ourselves how it could ever have obtained its high degree of validation. Obviously, this has been due to a rather unusual kind of persuasion; Socrates decided to stake his life on this truth—to set an example, not when he appeared before the Athenian tribunal but when he refused to escape the death sentence. And this teaching by example is, indeed, the only form of "persuasion that philosophical truth is capable of without perversion or distortion; by the same token, philosophical truth can become "practical" and inspire action without violating the rules of the political realm only when it manages to become manifest in the guise of an example. This is the only chance for an ethical principle to be verified.

Here Miss Arendt might have offered Gandhi as an example of one who made the Socratic maxim a foundation stone of his philosophy of non-violence, and who insisted that the principles of moral philosophy must have their application in daily affairs, including political action. Gandhi was able, with the help of some collaboration by historical forces, to mount a great social example of the principle of non-violence in the Indian struggle for political freedom. It may be that the general acceptance of this idea is further along than Miss Arendt suggests.

But let us consider another aspect of the same general problem. It seems clear that the principal religions of the world, regarded as forms of philosophy, propose goals or motives for human beings that do not match up very well with the dominant "drives" that are declared to animate most human behavior. The Buddha found the cause of human suffering to be the lust for life that animates most men. Christ urged his followers to give up their desire for possessions and to live by the light of the next world, rather than this one. Krishna instructed Arjuna in the discipline of non-attachment, as the means of finding his way to truth and liberation from the bonds of conditioned existence. Yet, at the same time, all these teachers called for performance of immediate duties on earth. Arjuna, Krishna said, would confuse the ignorant who could understand nothing else if he did not perform his appointed tasks in life—the work his karma had allotted to him. Jesus wanted his followers to be teachers of others—to spread the saving truth; and the Buddha was himself, as *Bodhisattva,* an emancipated soul who chose to return to incarnation again and again in the service of an ignorant and erring mankind. The final goal of all these labors, however, was the blessed state of Nirvana, the condition of absolute Oneness, where all differences would be dissolved, all objects absorbed, all separate selves merged in a unity so all-inclusive as to be beyond any imagery or finite conception.

Does the secularized West have anyone resembling a Bodhisattva in its heritage of mythic lore? No one we can think of, except, perhaps, Prometheus, who qualifies on the grounds of his compassionate motivation, since he brought fire or light to mankind, which is essentially the Bodhisattvic mission. The tortures suffered by Prometheus can be taken to symbolize the agony of the incarnate human spirit, inflicted by the cross-purposes which beset all men. What then is the response of the West to the counsels of the great religious teachers? As put by one of our civilization's most thoughtful spokesmen, it has a familiar appeal. In his book, *Appearances,* published in this country by Doubleday in 1914, G. Lowes Dickinson wrote of his visit to the great temple of Borobudur, in Java, where he sat, wrapped in thought, before an exquisite statue of the Buddha. He felt that the Buddha had expounded to him the beauty of a soul purged and redeemed of desire.

> Thereupon the West stirred in me, and cried "No!" "Desire," it said, "is the heart and essence of the world. It needs not and craves not extinction. It needs and craves perfection. Youth passes; strength passes; life passes. Yes! What of it? We have access to the youth, the strength, the life of the world. Man is born to sorrow. Yes! But he feels it as tragedy and redeems it. Not round life, not outside life, but

> through life is the way. Desire more and more intense, because more and more pure; not peace, but plenitude of experience. Your foundation was false. You thought man wanted rest. He does not. We at least do not, we of the West. We want more labour; we want more stress we want more passion. Pain we accept, for it stings us into life. Strife we accept, for it hardens us to strength. We believe in action; we believe in desire. And we believe that by them we shall attain." So the West broke out in me; and I looked at him to see if he was moved. But the calm eye was untroubled, unruffled the majestic brow, unperplexed the sweet, solemn mouth. Secure in his Nirvana, he heard or he heard me not.

Dickinson does not seem altogether convinced of his own case, and it must be admitted that less worthy uses of his argument are more familiar; and, remembering that he wrote in 1914—a fateful year—we may think that he would be far less confident today. Actually, Dickinson speaks for the best in the spirit of the Enlightenment—that "Let us then be up and doing" age which was so full of the hopes of new-born science and the burgeoning dreams of political freedom. The Enlightenment had its splendid vision, but it was largely betrayed by the acquisitive and hedonistic excesses of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Indeed, we have accumulated passion enough and stress enough to last for many a year. Nor have pain and strife been wanting.

Is it really possible for men to be both doers and thinkers, to know how to combine vigorous and fruitful action with the capacity for reflection and repose? In the *Gita* such rare individuals are called Karmayogis—men who find their way by doing their jobs, yet thinking beyond them. Probably our civilization is not yet old enough to have its own name for this rare synthesis of human roles.

REVIEW
A MAN "STILL SEEKING"

WHAT a man writes out of his own resources has a peculiar value. It is unmarred by the limitations of ideas which his times impose upon him, while the confinements of his scholarly discipline, if he has one, do not restrain his thought. While reading Loren Eiseley's *The Night Country,* part reverie, part reminiscence, it seemed again and again that he is telling his readers things out of his own life that no science of anthropology can ever reveal. They are things about man, his essential human qualities. It is as though the poet in the scientist had declared his independence and gone on ranging journeys of the imagination, and in the process revealed where he found his greatest nourishment. In this book, Thoreau is the writer most often quoted, with Herman Melville a close second.

Our first stop is with what Eiseley makes of the witches who lead Macbeth on his dark and self-betraying course:

> Who, we may now inquire, are these strange beings who waylaid Macbeth, and why do I, who have spent a lifetime in the domain of science, make the audacious claim that this old murderous tale of the scientific twilight extends its shadow across the doorway of our modern laboratories? Those bearded, sexless creatures who possess the faculty of vanishing into air or who reappear in some ultimate flame-wreathed landscape only to mock our folly, are an exteriorized portion of ourselves. They are projections from our own psyche, smoking wisps of mental vapor that proclaim our subconscious intentions and bolster them with Delphic utterances—half-truths which we consciously accept, and which then take power over us. Under the spell of such oracles we create, not a necessary or a real future, but a counterfeit drawn from within ourselves, which we then superimpose, through purely human power, upon reality. Indeed, one could say that these phantoms create a world that is at the same time spurious and genuine, so complex is our human destiny.

Are we willing to accept these creatures as our own? There is a state of mind which prefers that they be "out there," to be invoked, appealed to, or propitiated. It is, we might say, the longing for miraculous powers. If *they* are out there, then less can be expected of us. We may, by judicious spell-casting or sorcery, be able to get what we want without a great deal of bother. Or we have someone or something to blame our troubles on. Our "progress" hasn't put much restraint on such tendencies in human nature:

> Today we know more about where man has come from and what we may expect of him—or so we think. But there is one thing which identifies Macbeth's "Jugling Fiends" in any age, whether these uncanny phantoms appear as witches, star readers, or today's technologists. This quality is their claim to omniscience—an omniscience only half stated on the basis of the past or specious present and always lacking in genuine knowledge of the future. The leading characteristic of the future they present is its fixed, static, inflexible quality.

One thinks, here, of William Irwin Thompson's comment on Herman Kahn's study of the year 2,000, as being mainly an extrapolation of the present. But human behavior is not that easy to anticipate:

> Man escapes definition even as the modern phantoms in military garb proclaim—as I have heard them do—that man will fight from one side of the solar system to the other, and beyond. The danger, of course, is truly there, but it is a danger which, while it lies partially in what man is, lies much more closely in what he chooses to believe about himself. Man's whole history is one of transcendence and self-examination, which has led him to angelic heights of sacrifice as well as into the bleakest regions of despair. The future is not truly fixed but the world arena is smoking with the caldrons of those who would create tomorrow by evoking, rather than exorcising, the stalking ghosts of the past.

For another example of modern witchery, Loren Eiseley speaks of the expectation that with breaking the code of DNA it will become possible to find "a physical means to enrich our personalities."

> As our knowledge of the genetic mechanism increases, our ears are bombarded with ingenious accounts of how we are to control, henceforth, our own evolution. We who have recourse only to a past

which we misread and which has made us cynics would now venture to produce our own future. Again I judge this self-esteem as a symptom of our time, our powerful misused technology, our desire not to seek the good life but to produce a painless mechanical version of it—our willingness to be good if goodness can, in short, be swallowed in a pill.

And what is Eiseley's conception of future-making? He finds its secret in a couplet of Shakespeare:

It hath been taught us from the primal state
That he which is was wished until he were.

Men make themselves. "He says, in essence, one thing only: that what we wish will come." The poets seem to know. Of our own age it was said:

And what rough beast, its hour come round,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

Later in the book Eiseley wanders through the Maine woods with Thoreau. One grows exceedingly grateful to both, as Eiseley seems to become another Thoreau for the duration of this essay. This is what *Thoreau* is *for*—a man to be given endless incarnations in our lives, since he is so close to the core of things, so filled with essences. They do not belong only to him, but to anyone who can begin to feel them as he did. Thoreau climbs a mountain and stands high on a peak, in the midst of a "cloud-factory," for the clouds seem in formation all around him. He touches great slabs of rock and wonders, *"Who* are we? Where are we?"

The essayist has been struck by an enormous paradox. In that cloud factory of the brain where ideas form as tenuously as mist streaming from mountain rocks, he has glimpsed the truth that mind is locked in matter like the spirit Ariel in a cloven pine. Like Ariel, men struggle to escape the drag of the matter they inhabit, yet it is spirit that they fear. "A Titan grasps us," argues Thoreau, confronting the rocks of the great mountain, a mass solid enough not to be dragged about by the forces of life. "Think of our life in nature," he reiterates. "Who are we?". . . .

I do not know in the whole of literature a more penetrating expression of the spirit's horror of the substance it lies trapped within. It is the cry of an individual genius who has passed beyond science into a high domain of cloud. Let it not be forgotten, however, that Thoreau revered and loved true science and that science and the human spirit together may find a way across that vast mountain whose shadow still looms menacingly above us.

"If you would learn the secrets of nature," Thoreau insisted, "you must practice more humanity than others." It is the voice of a man who loved both knowledge and the humane tradition. His faith has been ill kept within our time.

We are moved to add here a passage by Thoreau which came at the end of his review of a state government volume entitled *The Natural History of Massachusetts.* Having demonstrated his own competence as a botanist, and given his evaluation of the study of nature in Massachusetts, he said:

The true man of science will know nature better by his finer organization; he will smell, taste, see, hear, feel, better than other men. His will be a deeper and finer experience. We do not learn by inference and deduction, and the application of mathematics to philosophy, but by direct intercourse and sympathy. It is with science as with ethics—we cannot know truth by contrivance and method; the Baconian is as false as any other, and with all the helps of machinery and the arts, the most scientific will still be the healthiest and friendliest man, and possess a more perfect Indian wisdom.

Toward the end of this book, Eiseley speaks of the cockiness of present-day science, showing, himself, that quiet unpretentiousness and distaste for claims that have characterized the greatest discoverers. He says:

Our faith in science has become so great that, though the open-ended and novelty-producing aspect of nature is scientifically recognized in the physics and biology of our time, there is often reluctance to give voice to it in other than professional jargon. It has been my own experience among students, laymen, and scholars that to express even wonder about the universe—in other words, to benefit from some humble consideration of what we do not know, as well as marching to the constant drum-beat of what we call the age of technology—is regarded askance in some quarters. I have had the vague word "mystic" applied to me because I have not been able to shut out

> wonder occasionally, when I have looked at the world.

But he does get a word in, now and then, as on one august occasion:

> At a university's opening exercises, in this era of carefully directed advising, in this day of grueling college board examinations and aptitude tests, I have been permitted just once to cry out to our herded youngsters: "Wait, forget the Dean of Admissions who, if I came today in youth before him might not have permitted me to register; be wary of our dubious advice. Freshmen, sophomores, with the gift of youth upon you, do not be prematurely withered up by us. Are you uncertain about your destiny? Take heart, in middle age I am still seeking my true calling. I was born a stranger. Perhaps some of you are strangers, too.' I said this, and much more besides, and was blushing for my impulsive folly, when students I did not know began to invade my office or come up to speak to me on the campus.

Well, Mr. Eiseley says he was born during the first decade of this century; so, those who want to go to school to him have no time to lose.

COMMENTARY
TO FILL THE DARK

WITH great delicacy, Loren Eiseley tells in *The Night Country* about a common ill from which he has suffered since his youth. One can read books about insomnia, consider various remedies, and now and then one helps, or seems to. Sleeplessness is not altogether understood—no doubt psychosomatic, we say to ourselves.

Mr. Eiseley's treatment of insomnia is not a familiar one. He has no remedies to offer. He has simply submitted to it, rejecting its anxieties, adapting his life to its whims.

> I do not lie and toss with doubt any longer, as I did in earlier years. I get up and write, as I am writing now, or I read in the old chair that is as worn as I am. I read philosophy, metaphysics, difficult works that sometimes, soon or late, draw a veil over my eyes so that I drowse in my chair.
>
> It is not that I fail to learn from these midnight examinations of the world. It is merely that I choose the examination to remain as remote and abstruse as possible. Even so, I cannot always prophesy the result. An obscure line may whirl me into a wide-awake ferocious concentration in which ideas like animals leap at me out of the dark, in which sudden odd trains of thought drive me inexorably to my desk and paper. I am, in short, a victim of insomnia—sporadic, wearing, violent, and melancholic. In the words of Shakespeare, for me the world "does murder sleep."

The trouble began in the year his father died, a slow and painful release. He lay for hours, sleepless at night, listening to his father die. It was a lonely vigil, for his mother was deaf. Afterward he was beset by wakefulness, and even the ticking of a clock seemed unbearable.

One night, when he felt close to madness, his grandmother saw his light and came and sat with him.

> I knew that she had saved my sanity. Into that lonely room at midnight she had come, abandoning her own sleep, in order to sit with one in trouble. We had not talked much, but we had sat together by the lamp, reasserting our common humanity before the great empty dark that is the universe.
>
> Grandmother knew nothing of psychiatry. She had not re-established my sleep patterns, but she had done something more important. She had brought me out of a dark room and retied my thread of life to the living world. Henceforward, by night or day, though I have been subject to the moods of depression and gaiety which are a part of the lives of all of us, I have been able not merely to endure but to make the best of what many regard as an unbearable affliction.

Is this the truth of the matter about insomnia? If you were making a book to offer help to sufferers, would you include Dr. Eiseley's prescription? Should his texts of philosophy and metaphysics be proposed as an alternative to pills?

The conquest of disease, of which we are so proud, was not won by such Spartan endurances, but by what we term the practical approach. Yet from the "solution" found by this man, with the help of his aging grandmother, we have his book, *The Night Country,* and who offers prescriptions for writing books like this?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A VIEW OF "PRIVACY"

A LTTTLE pile of papers to which we often have recourse for material is a collection of reprints of contributions by Robert McClintock to the *Teachers College Record.* The one for March, 1969, is valuable for its investigation of the meaning of "privacy," concerned with that side of our lives which is now said to be subject to increasing invasion. This reading of "privacy" is accurate enough, but Mr. McClintock points out a more significant meaning—what a person makes for himself out of his own inner life. In other words, a person can be left entirely to himself and still have no "privacy" in the original meaning of the term. This was, for the Romans, "retirement from the public and withdrawal into one's inner world" on the occasion of bereavement. So the really important privacy we have is self-created. Mr. McClintock says:

> For instance, there is little privacy in the life of the typical consumer, for although he may spend all his time on private premises, he never turns inward to his own devices and his life transparently follows the patterns laid down for him by the anonymous producers of the goods and services he consumes.

One might say that, in these circumstances, to have privacy requires an act of resistance followed by an act of creation. It is one thing to object to an invasion; another to fill an empty space with inner content.

Curiously, Mr. McClintock connects the idea of privacy with the political theory of checks and balances:

> The idea was to prevent power from being concentrated in such a way that it would be exercised impersonally, without the finitude of a particular private man standing as a public guarantee to the humanity of the deed. The ultimate aim of the theory was not only to ensure that definite responsibility for every official act could be located, but further to ensure that for every public deed there would be a man who, in the privacy of his person, felt responsible for its consequences. . . . One way to strengthen the use of privacy in public affairs would be to re-examine the theory of checks and balances in order to bring these up to date.

The growing relevance of this idea will not escape today's reader. Now comes a thoughtful consideration of the decline of privacy in the radical movement, or among some of those who call themselves radicals:

> As Martin S. Dworkin profoundly points out, the great danger in contemporary radicalism is in the widespread belief that American society, the entire "free" world, has become totalitarian. Men who no longer believe that they are free no longer recognize that they are responsible; in fighting against oppression, it is most easy to convince oneself that all is permitted. Now the dilemma we face is that the urge to force responsible behavior on disruptive minorities simply helps confirm the conviction that gives rise to their underlying sense of irresponsibility. Pemmissiveness and authority are, after all, merely different ways by which public officials can exercise paternal responsibility for other persons' conduct; the alternative to both, the alternative on which this country was founded, is to publicly guarantee private autonomy. To do this in present circumstances we should be seeking ways to strengthen, not weaken, our Bill of Rights.

Next is a re-reading of Rousseau's *Social Contract,* to show that Rousseau "unfailingly upheld that inner, authentic, 'natural,' thoughtful, private responses were the only foundation suitable for a community of men":

> By itself, official legislation was powerless to promote the good life, for "the laws . . . constrain men without changing them. . . ." Properly understood, the social contract stipulated that the only legitimate public power was in the acts that arose spontaneously from the aggregate of separate decisions that each member of the community made as he meditated privately on the matters about which he was personally, fully informed. In this manner, privacy is the basis of community.

We arrive at the educational implications of all this, since the question of what public education does about fostering the true idea of privacy can be seen as crucial for a self-governing people:

> There is a serious ambiguity in the idea of universal education: its proponents are not clear whether mass schooling should suppress or cultivate the inner man. This ambiguity stems from nineteenth-century school reformers: they knew that by "common school" they did not mean an ordinary, undistinguished school, but they were not clear

> whether they meant a school that would teach a common, a shared body of knowledge and values *to all,* or a school that would offer a common, an equal initiation to the art of self-culture *to each.* When confronted with pressing public issues, the easy course is to look to the schools as a means of paternally imposing a solution to the problem on our progeny: if only all get adequate driver education, vocational training, contact with those of other races and creeds, indoctrination to the American way of life, or what have you, it would seem as if many problems would happily disappear. With Horace Mann if not before, it became customary to see the public schools as a powerful agent of social engineering, the schools could constrain the disruptive, improve the safety of street and home, increase productivity, and spread a sense of patriotic service.
>
> All might be well if school for these public ends coincided with the education of each inner man; but in fact, it does not. Consequently, to the degree that the reigning powers manage to harness the schools to the direct pursuit of their public policies, they divert teadlers and students from their true public service, the cultivation of the private, inner response. In this way in the name of the public we jeopardize the future foundation of the public. The fruits of this practice are visible in the way a resentful anomie is spreading among youths, and the most promising antidote to it is the movement towards what has been misnamed as "local control," but what is in truth the client control that has long characterized the practice of medicine and law. This movement may be the harbinger of a renewed appreciation of privacy and its public uses.

This seems a peculiarly important way to think about public education, if only for the reason that so few are doing it.

We have been saving for review a story book about a ten-year-old boy of Tunisia, wondering whether the remarkable spunk and talents of this lad are entirely believable. One of the things we planned to say in connection with this book is that reading for adults ought to have some of its qualities. It tells about a strong, brave, thoughtful boy who has difficult things to do, and who manages to get them done in spite of many obstacles. Is it that people who write for children know that reading for the young has to have plenty of health in it, but that many writers for adults don't know health is important, or how to put it into their work?

This book (about a little boy) is *The Village that Allah Forgot,* by Norris Lloyd, published last year by Hastings House at $4.95. The time is the early 1960's. We should admit that nearly everything we know about Tunisia was learned from this book. A country of Arab culture and Islamic religion, it gained independence from France in 1956, although not entirely. Tunisia is just across the Mediterranean from Sardinia and Sicily, and France wanted to hang on to the deep-water port of Bizerte for a while, so this was provided for in the independence agreement obtained by Habib Bourguiba, the leader who had been working for Tunisian freedom for many years, even before World War II. Four years later, in 1960, the French began to enlarge their airport in Bizerte, and the Tunisians suspected that France was planning to keep the port indefinitely. Civilians and soldiers both marched in protest. Workers from Tunis were among the demonstrators, carrying flags and signs. When they reached a roadblock guarded by French troops, someone fired a shot—no one knew who did it—and the troops fired on the marchers. The father of the little boy was killed, making this small child the "man" of the family.

What could a ten-year-old do with responsibility like that? Although the French left Bizerte soon after, Ali, who lived in a little village with his mother and sister, could not forgive the wanton killing of his father. But soon his life is filled by the pressures of day-to-day needs. He picks flowers to sell along the road. He finds a way to get a chicken that lays eggs for his sister to eat, and perhaps grow stronger as a result. Ali becomes a man before his time. He does this by learning how to learn from everybody, even from the French, since the schooling he finally gets was from their influence, as his young student-teacher explains. His greatest joy dawns slowly, as he learns from others that among the Tunisians who know something of history his father is counted a hero. He was not a man, as some ignorant villagers had claimed, who foolishly risked his life and left his family without support. The gradual growth of self-respect, resourcefulness, and understanding in Ali makes this a fine story.

FRONTIERS
Time and the Land

INTRODUCING the War Resisters League Peace Calendar and Appointment Book for 1974, Dick Gregory says:

> The pilgrim comes to the New World and "discovers" a land that is already occupied. How do you find something that somebody else already has and you claim you discovered it? Talk about crime in the streets!
>
> That's like my wife and I walking down the street and seeing you and your wife sitting in your brand-new automobile. Suppose my wife says to me, "Gee, I'd like to have a car like that." And I answer, "Let's discover it." So I walk over to you and your wife and say, "Get out of that damned car. My wife and I just discovered it." The shock and surprise you would naturally feel gives you some idea of how the Native American Indians must have felt.

That's the mood of the WRL Calendar this year, which records memorable—mostly infamous—events in the conquest of North America by the white people who came from Europe. The Calendar quotes from notable statements by Indians, is illustrated with drawings and photographs of Indian art, and gives a page for appointments in every week of the year. The price is $2.75. Send the money to WRL, 339 Lafayette Street, New York, N.Y. 10012.

Of course, the history of the colonies wasn't quite that simple, but there is so much truth in Dick Gregory's joke that we probably won't ever get our history straight until we begin it by telling about the American Indians. James Truslow Adams started his *Epic of America* that way, but not many history books do.

Speaking of calendars, a handsome one created by Susan and Bruce Williamson to hang on the wall is printed on warm brown blotter stock. It has six long sheets, with a month on each of the twelve sides. The months are illustrated with handsome line drawings of the various yurts designed by Bill Coperthwaite (see "Children" in MANAS for May 23, 1973). Any profits from the sale of these calendars will benefit the Yurt Foundation, Bucks Harbor, Maine. A set of the calendars for a year is $3.50 and should be ordered from the Yurt Foundation Calendar, P.O. Box 2402, Denver, Colo. 80201.

Peter van Dresser, who wrote *Landscape for Humans,* a plan for the communitarian redevelopment of northern New Mexico, was interviewed by James B. DeKorne in the current *Lifestyle,* a new magazine published by the *Mother Earth News* people. Questions by DeKorne develop the highlights of van Dresser's earlier life as a decentralist during the 1930s. Asked his opinion of the present-day revival of decentralist ideas and the back-to-the-land movement, van Dresser said:

> Well, I have mixed feelings about it. . . . so far today's movement has been too much based on the idea of escaping to a wilderness to "do one's own thing." I feel that this is not an adequate approach to the kind of transformation our society needs.
>
> The new pioneering must be group, community and regional in nature. The new people have to be much more aware of their interrelations with society, not simply reject *all* society and try to attain a total self-sufficiency . . . which is nothing but a fantasy. They must be much more aware of the need for group efforts of various kinds and at various levels. . . . The institutional environment within which we live and operate makes possible or impossible the development of a true ecologically adapted society. We can't just ignore this—because no matter how far back in the woods we go, and how much we pretend we're Indians, I mean we just aren't—and we have to face up to these interreactions and group and organizational problems. . . . This extends to practically any field. I've yet to meet *any* of the so-called pioneers who produce a substantial portion of their proteins, carbohydrates and fats themselves. Everybody has a token garden, of course, which is very nice . . . but sooner or later they sneak down to Safeway and get the real main supply of provisions which keeps them going. This means commercial ranching, commercial farming . . . fairly sophisticated and complex specializations.
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> These specializations should certainly be on a much smaller scale, and should be on a community and regional level . . . but we can't pretend they aren't necessary. They *are* necessary. And the fantasy that

> you're being self-sufficient when you're not actually gets in the way of a real, alternative economy.

There is more in this interview, with much common sense in regard to the reduced *use* of energy, instead of so much emphasis on elaborate gadgetry, the point being that without general change in the rate of consumption, windmills and solar energy collectors can hardly be adequate. There is not and will not be any wonderful invention that will solve our problems. The full picture of van Dresser's thinking is in his book, *Landscape for Humans,* available for $3 from the Biotechnic Press, Box 26091, Albuquerque, New Mexico 87125.

In key with what van Dresser says in this interview is a report on some Iowa farmers in the *Los Angeles Times* for last Dec. 10. The *Times* writer, Bryce Nelson, found about a dozen growers who raise corn and wheat using organic methods on a large scale. These farmers live near Greeley, a small town forty miles west of Dubuque. One of them said:

> "I'm so happy about how things are going I'm glad to take time out from my chores to talk to you or anyone else about it. I've got soybeans this year that stand almost to my shoulder—50 bushels to the acre. I've never seen anything like it in my life. And my neighbors are afraid even to grow soybeans."

These farmers are growers and livestock raisers who have stopped using chemical fertilizers, herbicides and insecticides, and apply various alternatives—manure, fish oil, crop rotation, and also "green manure," which means plowing under a cover crop. They control pests with other insects. Interest among farmers has spread after Ralph Engelken, who has been farming organically for thirteen years, spoke at a recent midwest land conference at Cedar Rapids. "Since the conference, a stream of farmers has come along the muddy, unpaved road to his place to see whether commercial organic farming is for real." Engelken now farms 700 acres and says he gets higher yields and quality than his "chemical neighbors." He works a difficult hilly area. He said he averaged 125 bushels of corn an acre and got 185 bushels an acre on his best land. He says his costs are reduced by not using pesticides, and he and other organic farmers maintain that their cattle are healthier, eat less, and need little or no attention from veterinarians.

A Texas man who farms 1800 acres of wheat organically in Deaf Smith County said his yields were the same as those of his chemical-using neighbors, but that his quality was higher. Instead of insecticides, he said, "I have a good supply of lady bugs to control the green bugs for me."

Bryce Nelson talked to several other farmers in other states, including Bob Steffen, manager of the 1000-acre farm at Boys Town, located west of Omaha, Nebraska, who refuses to use chemicals. In number these organic farmers who raise food commercially are very few, but there is growing interest in the results they get, and many farmers are wondering about the harm done by the excessive use of chemicals. Engelken, who has had years of experience, says switching from chemicals to organic methods takes at least a couple of years. He told Nelson:

> "The farmers shouldn't get discouraged. The chemicals have killed off the live bacteria in the soil, it takes time to build them back. . . . If you work with your bacteria, your bugs, with your earthworms, they'll work for you. They'll balance it out."