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THE WORLD AS WILL AND IDEA

THE language used by psychologists to describe human capacities and tendencies is usually abstract and lacking in drama, so that what they say may have little effect on our efforts to understand ourselves. The psychologist determined to reach his readers is likely to provide vivid illustrations, numerous analogies, and even throw out a speculation or two, simply to engage the mind and get it going on its own. There is some risk in this, since people are inclined to settle questions too easily, and an abstraction supported by one dramatic example may be over-persuasive; but the good writer warns the reader against this tendency, and stirring the mind is far better than numbing it with colorless generalizations.

A wondering about how human opinions are formed led to these reflections. Because this is a psychological question, it was natural to read a little in psychology. Accordingly, we went to Jerome Frank's *Persuasion and Healing* (Schocken, 1974), since Dr. Frank, who teaches psychiatry at Johns Hopkins, is not only widely familiar with present psychological theories but also an excellent writer. Early in this book he says:

> In order to be able to function, everyone must impose an order and regularity on the welter of experience impinging upon him. To do this, he develops out of his personal experiences a set of more or less implicit assumptions about himself and the nature of the world in which he lives, enabling him to predict the behavior of others and the outcome of his own actions. The totality of each person's assumptions may be conveniently termed his "assumptive world."
>
> This is a short-hand expression for a highly structured, complex, interacting set of values, expectations, and images of oneself and others, which guide and in turn are guided by a person's perceptions and behavior and which are closely related to his emotional states and his feelings of well-being.
>
> The more enduring assumptions become organized into attitudes with cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. Every attitude may potentially result in some form of behavior—that is, interaction with the environment—although it can, of course, express itself only in silent thoughts. The cognitive aspect of the attitude can be considered the pilot who guides the behavior, and the affective part the engine or fuel which drives it.

The "cognitive aspect" is what we think, while the "affective part" is what we feel about an undertaking. Later Dr. Frank says:

> An inaccurate or unrealistic assumptive world leads the person to experience frustration and failures, resulting in feelings of impotence and bewilderment. A person in the grip of such feelings, whose sense of "self-potency" is weak, loses confidence in his ability to control either external events or his own feelings, so he fears new experiences. Like Hamlet, he prefers to bear the ills he has than fly to others he knows not of.

The image of Hamlet, or what he stands for, serves well those who write about the formation of human opinions. In an article (in the October *Harper's*) about the waning of "ambition" in our time, Joseph Epstein calls the present "The age of Hamlet," since we have so much trouble deciding what we ought to *do*. He says:

> Ideas have consequences, bad ideas fully as much consequence as good ones. Some people hold that we are, essentially, what we keep hidden about ourselves, our fears and secrets. Other people hold that, whatever our personal secrets and fears, we are what we do. There is often a conflict among men and women of good heart between those who believe that it is what one achieves that matters and those who believe that what one is and how one lives matters more. Some of us are Hamlets in our outlook, some Don Quixotes. In many the two types are combined in unending battle. But at the moment, among the best educated, Hamlet's view seems to predominate.

Mr. Epstein is certainly right about the existence of this "conflict" over what matters.

The fifth discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita* is entirely concerned with the choice between a life of action and a life of contemplation: You need to do both at once, Krishna says, which is not the sort of reply most people seek. The *Gita,* one could say, is a book devoted to the art of forming one's own opinions in the light of the best knowledge available, while the typical human inclination is to resist any important change in our views. That he might *have* to make a change cast Arjuna into the deepest depression, as shown in the first chapter of this great philosophical poem.

Getting down to the gist of the question: How human opinions are formed: it seems quite evident that our most accurate opinions are about everyday affairs—how to cook a meal, how to run a gas station, how to get from A to B. We are good at ways and means, not so good at values and meanings. This seems a matter of where our attention is focused as we go through experience. Here a passage from Coomaraswami's *The Bugbear of Literacy* is of use:

> Let me illustrate what I mean by responsibility. I have known Indians who indignantly refused to buy shares in a profitable hotel company, because they would not make money out of hospitality, and an Indian woman who refused to buy a washing machine, because then, "What would become of the washerwoman's livelihood?" For an equal sense of responsibility in a European I can cite the infinite pains that Marco Pallis took, in selecting gifts for his Tibetan friends, not to choose anything that might tend toward a destruction of the *quality* of their standard of living.

Our best opinions—those most true to life—are those which have been shaped in the midst of the continual impacts of experience, requiring immediate correction of our mistakes. But what about the Indian who wouldn't invest in a hotel? What impacts caused him to be so sure that would be wrong? You could say that he was following the precepts of his religion, but you could also say he had made himself sensitive to an order of moral experience that may be neglected by others. We don't know too much about that. Forming accurate opinions comes from intimate practice in forming them, and they are not formed except in the areas of our interest. Matters at a distance, in time or space, or in affective concern, get little attention from us, and our opinions about them are likely to be careless guesswork. As G. K. Chesterton remarked years ago:

> After the Great War our public began to be told of all sorts of nations being emancipated. It had never been told a word about their being enslaved. We were called upon to judge of the justice of the settlements, when we had never been allowed to hear of the very existence of the quarrels. . . . It is very exciting; like the last act of a play to people who have only come into the theatre just before the curtain falls. But it does not conduce exactly to knowing what it is all about.

Well, we can blame that on the newspapers, but should we? What is in the newspapers is what successful publishers have discovered people want to read. Consider the skyrocketing success of *Time,* which soon put its predecessors in the weekly field out of business (the staid *Literary Digest* is an example), and recall the mortality, during the second world war, of several fine magazines whose editorial intelligence and insistence on impartiality became their doom. (*Common Sense* is an example.) Why should we blame anybody for our inadequate and flawed opinions, so long as we refuse to reward journalists and historians for being careful about their facts and fearless in their opinions?

It would be far better, at the start, to recognize, as scholars like Jerome Frank show in careful, symmetrical detail, that our "Assumptive World" is made by ourselves according to our taste, interest, inclination and experience. It is so much a personal creation that supposing it to be made up of "knowledge" is probably the most far-reaching illusion of our lives. Yet, on the other hand, our assumptive world is what we have to work with, and, indeed, recognizing this, the founders of science took great pains to work out a method of testing our opinions concerning things visible and inescapable. Invisible things and matters held to be irrelevant to our earthly interests were excluded from the scientific

purview, for reasons which are obvious enough. Science is after all a pragmatic affair. Darwin put it well: "How odd it is that anyone should not see that all observation must be for or against some view, if it is to be of any service." Our observation is of matters held to be important—useful in practical ways.

The fact is that everything we think and do establishes an inclination to continue in the same direction, armed by assumptions which, unless they defy evident natural law, work as self-fulfilling prophecies until we are forced by a barrage of contrary events to make new ones. (The Vietnam War is an example of that.)

Meanwhile, it seems well to observe that the more remote and alien things are, either actually or emotionally, the less we are likely to learn about them and the more dangerous to others our opinions about them are likely to be. The relations of American settlers to the Indians might serve as an illustration of how a nation—and many of its people—may adopt assumptions that lead to ruinous actions, empowered by greed, anger, fear, and sentiment, depending upon where provocation is obtained. "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" was the view of those who believed simply that the Indians should get out of the way of the westward course of empire. And Rousseau's "noble savage" was its opposite number for those convinced that the Indians could do no wrong. One of the consequences of the ensuing brutal compromises in our relations with the Indians, through the years, has been that the present suicide rate among Indian teen-agers is the highest of any population group in the country, and perhaps in the world.

Since we have first-hand knowledge of only a little piece of the world, we obviously need to rely on some kind of second-hand knowledge for our relations with everything else. What, then, is the best kind of second-hand knowledge? Well, we know the answer to that. It is Science. Science is a kind of knowledge that is supposed to be free of the "human factor." The method of science is designed to get rid of sentiment and wishful thinking, and the errors of false analogy and limited past experience. In the field of objective nature, it does rather well. A good book for getting acquainted with the undoubted virtues of science is *Logic and the Scientific Method* (Harcourt, Brace, 1934) by Morris R. Cohen and Ernest Nagel. No one, after reading such a book, can ever again ignore or make little of the virtues of the scientific method. But it must also be recognized that those virtues are intrinsic human qualities with far wider application than to the confining fields of physical experience where science is presently practiced.

Scientific opinions are inspected opinions; well and good. If they have been inspected, they are likely to be sound, for there are no more searching critics than skeptical scientists. But along with the enormous cluster of facts, laws, and hypotheses properly called scientific, there are attitudes which can hardly be subjected to conventional inspection, if only for the reason that they are themselves partly the animating feelings and beliefs of the entire scientific movement. This can be illustrated from a splendid book by Brian Fitzgerald, his *Daniel Defoe* (Regnery, 1955), which is the story of a Puritan turned gallant, and a *genius* who wrote more than 350 separate works in that most wonderful century of English history—the seventeenth, and part of the eighteenth. Toward the end the author asks: "why did Defoe write as he did when he did?"

> What was it that caused him to be the first novelist in history? In other words, why did a demand for realism in prose literature arise at that particular moment in history? The answer is to be found in the social change that had come about in human society following the breakdown of the mediaeval world. The English revolution was not merely a politico-economic event: it was also a social one. And as such it had aesthetic consequences. Associated with such collateral developments as the growth of science and the beginnings of journalism, it produced what one might call the *humanisation* of aesthetics. Before the English Revolution what prose literature do we find? We find the mediaeval romance and its courtly descendants of the sixteenth

> and seventeenth centuries, the products of feudalism—the society of the Middle Ages, with its hierarchical order of human relationships, its feudal lords who owned the land, and serfs who tilled it. The chivalric romance was the particular and characteristic art-form of feudalism. It was produced to express and maintain the aristocratic attitude which the ruling class wished to encourage in order that their privileged position might be perpetuated. The chivalric romance represented the aristocratic outlook with its detachment from detail, its proud leisure, its arrogant solitude, and its unquestioned command of labour. These aristocratic characteristics had fostered the growth of the romance, in which its readers were transported to an unreal world of chivalry and exciting adventures, of bad magicians and brave Christian knights, of courtly lords and chaste ladies who approximated to godlike beings. Thus the chivalric romance, which signified the non-realist aristocratic literature of feudalism, was both authoritarian and escapist.

Farewell to all that. No one, not even Mr. Fitzgerald, asks what was being lost, along with mediaeval romance. It didn't seem necessary. What would "courtly lords and chaste ladies" find to do in our modern world? What projects would we set for Sir Galahad? What could he accomplish for us and our practical enterprises? Who, today, has either understanding or appreciation of the pure in heart? Under the grain of these mediaeval forms, there may have been meanings we have become blind to, and will have to recover an understanding of, once again. But this calls for motives that go beyond the interests and empiricisms of the hour, and for a use of data undeliverable by the senses.

However, in the second half of the seventeenth century—

> The bourgeoisie wanted something different; it demanded a new art form. The bourgeoisie was the middle class, those who belonged to the "middle station of life." They were the better-off part of the common people, the earthy, lusty new men who were thrusting their way into power through the cracks made in the old social structure by the English Revolution. These bustling tradesmen and petty-tradesmen, with their money, industry, and commerce, and with their elastic moral codes, had done forever with the old oppressive forces which had been lately overthrown by the Reformation and Revolution—the Catholic Church and the Feudal System, the land-owning aristocrats and ecclesiastics who had ordered their own lives and everybody else's on rigid principles and dogmatic creeds. The men of the new age, the Age of Trade, were revolutionaries. They were capitalists, and they rebelled against the feudal order because the feudal order denied them freedom—freedom to order their lives as they willed, freedom to develop their society in the way that history demanded. They wanted freedom to trade and freedom to explore; freedom to investigate and freedom to invent, and freedom to evolve an adequate philosophy of life. For these freedoms they had organised the democratic New Model Army, cut off King Charles's head, and established the republican Commonwealth. . . . The new bourgeoisie, therefore, stopped reading the old chivalric romances which had satisfied their fathers and their father's fathers. What interested the man of the new generation was facts. Facts were the raw material of the new scientific thought as well as of business, and the self-seeking tradesman could not get on without either. He had enormous gusto, and—what was more, for it was something new—he had an unprejudiced curiosity about the facts of life, the curiosity of the scientist. He demanded facts—even in his fiction. . . .

And in Defoe they found the stories of enterprise they liked—*Robinson Crusoe, Moll Flanders, Colonel Jack,* and *Roxana.* "The only difference between him and the others of his class was his immense intelligence and his wonderful gift for interpreting the bourgeoisie and their innermost yearnings." He was, as Fitzgerald says, "a literary common man."

We now have a "civilization" of the sort that Defoe and his middle-class contemporaries believed in with all their hearts (gusto). It is a civilization with economic processes as its vital organs and consumerism as its faith. The "bustling tradesmen" have grown up into the multinationals, while the New Model Army has been replaced by MX missiles and such-like instruments of planetary slaughter. We have accumulated the facts they thought of so highly, and in quantity that we cannot possibly digest, while our technical advance, so notable as means, so pointless as end, is increasingly seen as a sorcerer's apprentice. Only in theory have we got

rid of the feudal system, as anyone driving through the *latifundia* of California is forced to realize. We have all the freedom we need, and perhaps too much, or we have *had* it, and are now watching it slip away behind the constraints of an exhausted if not broken-hearted planet.

We are certainly rebels, but it is equally sure that we are not revolutionaries—not even bourgeois revolutionaries—but only rebels at war with ourselves. Wholly missing from our lives, that is, from our minds, are principles of order for the moral universe, which is understandable enough, since the idea of a moral continuum as a transcendent equivalent of the material continuum—the dynamics of which we are instructed in by a marvelous assemblage of physical and mathematic abstractions—is not something we have thought about at all.

But the physical principles—what are they? They are truths about matter and energy and motion—true near and far, true yesterday, today, and tomorrow, not contingent upon intimate acquaintance and everyday experience of them, but utterly dependable, indeed immutable. They are *laws of nature.* Could there be similar laws of moral nature and its relations? Is this conceivable, and if so what demonstrations might confirm their existence and rule? What would be the level of experience in moral realities? What would we need to see that we are not now aware of? How might such perceptive powers be developed? Is clairvoyance involved, or simply sufficient metaphysical common sense?

We have been thinking lately about the synergistic societies Ruth Benedict saw in principle and vision, and which A. H. Maslow wrote about in *Farther Reaches of Human Nature.* A high synergy society, she said, is a society in which the social forms are such that there is no aggression and the acts of the individual serve both himself and everyone else. There was, it seems, enough actual evidence for this principle to satisfy Ruth Benedict's conception of a scientific rule—or what might with further research be recognized as a rule. And Maslow declared, "I would say no Utopia can be constructed henceforth by the knowledgeable person without making peace with the concept of synergy."

What if this is indeed a psychological—or moral—law of human relations? A law that we cannot break with impunity? There is of course a difference between physical laws and moral laws. If you ignore gravity you fall on your face. Moral laws seem to take more time to make their effects manifest. But that is true also of the laws of health, which people are able to violate—for a time. The time-factor in the operation of the (now hypothetical) moral law deserves attention. The Buddhists, of course have given it attention for millennia. They call it the rhythm of Karma.

REVIEW
AMERICAN PHILOSOPHER

JOSIAH ROYCE (1855-1916) was a Californian born in Grass Valley. He graduated from the University of California in Berkeley in 1875, then went to Germany to study philosophy. After returning home he taught English at Berkeley, and then was invited to teach philosophy at Harvard, where he remained, with an interruption, for thirty-three years.

This distinguished American thinker first captured our attention with a passage in *The World and the Individual* (1900):

> That the mystic is dealing with experience, and trying to get experience quite pure and then to make it the means of defining the real, is what we need to observe. That meanwhile the mystic is a very abstract sort of person, I will admit. But he is usually a keen thinker. Only he uses his thinking skeptically, to make naught of the other thinkers. He gets his reality not by thinking, but by consulting the data of experience. He is not stupid. And he is trying, very skillfully, to be a pure empiricist. Indeed, I should maintain that mystics are the only thorough-going empiricists in the history of philosophy.

One might go from this to Plotinus for verification of Royce's perspicacious remark. A helpful passage in the eleventh edition of the *Britannica* fills out the picture of his thought. Royce, the writer says, believes in "the unity of a single self-consciousness, which includes both our own and all finite conscious meanings in one final eternally present insight." He was thus in some sense kin in thought to George T. Ladd, and to aspects of the ideas of William James, who was his friend.

Early in 1888 Royce's health broke down—he had been working too hard—and on his doctor's advice he took a cruise to Australia, remaining there for two months. The experience had a renewing and even inspiring effect on him. In a little book just published by the University of Kentucky Press ($11.50), *Royce's Voyage Down Under,* Frank M. Oppenheim devotes a hundred pages to the effect of the visit on Royce's thinking. He says in his preface:

> Ironically, Royce's 1888 insight into community arose precisely when he was removed from the highly intellectual and competitive communities of Harvard University, its philosophy department, and his own family, and was thrust first into solitude and then into nonacademic associations with his ship's captain and crew, with primitive Maoris [he also visited New Zealand] and an Australian backwoodsman. Plunged into the vital interaction between elemental nature and his own organism, into the simple direct life of the crew politicians, primitives, and into the divine presence, Royce was rescued from his own abstractions and from Harvard's rarefied academic atmosphere. Ironically, too, Royce's insight into loyalty as the vital center of community was occasioned by his lack of concern for his own health and thus by his disloyalty to himself, his family, and his university. A third irony was that some of his readers branded him a disloyal American when his insight into loyalty led him frankly to expose the shortcomings of the widespread view that any genuine American is against the government, community organizations, and big institutions.

A reader's first impression, here, may be that 1888 was a long time ago. Royce, who tried to see clearly, would doubtless have more sympathy, today, for the "agin-the-government" mood of many Americans, and their suspicion of big institutions, since much of the time such feelings are born in behalf of stronger communities. In Royce's time, however, he discovered in Australia an "*immense respect for the social order itself,*" and "a great love for social ties." He felt that loyalty of this sort led to a strong sense of social obligation and an earnest fulfillment of agreements and covenants. "After all," he said, "are not social ties the glory of rational human life?"

Mr. Oppenheim finds an experience at the end of his cruise the key to his admiration for loyalty as an essential principle of the good society. As the writer says, for Royce in the fall of 1888, loyalty, when bonded with self-reliance, meant "authentic moral life." He relates:

> Steaming home on the *Alameda,* Royce met a man who almost personified loyalty. Royce portrayed this European who had pioneered in the backcountry

of Australia as a "specimen of the true Australian bushman, of the more intellectual type," "an amusing and excellent fellow, Welch by name," "at heart he was a very good fellow who could never knowingly utter a mean thing." Hence, when Royce in his "Reflections" sought an authentic representative of the capacity and promise of the Australian nation, he turned to this frontiersman and man of the people, rather than to students or to literary writers. Accordingly, to appreciate Royce's 1888 philosophic outline of the loyal yet fittingly independent self, we closely observe the cameo he drew when describing his blunt and vigorous companion on the *Alameda.*

Royce's unforgettable friend was a self-made man, "a good way past middle life, but still full of vigor and quick of wits." He had been "in early youth a naval officer," and "passed many years in the bush as explorer, adventurer, and country-newspaper editor." His was a life of continuous striving, of searching out survivors, and of fighting political battles. What Royce most noticed in him was his courageous idealism. He "had passed through all the bitterness of a long and hard life without ever losing faith in the value of faithfulness." Such painful experiences taught him "he could not believe in many men; but he did believe in human life." He was one "who in youth had known the discipline of a quarterdeck and who had ever since carried about, in a faithless world, the ideal of good order, which somehow nobody near him seemed to be loyally disposed to rear." . . .

What Royce particularly admired in this backwoodsman was his intellectual questing and honesty. "He looked for signs of truth in his world as he would have looked for signs of distant water in the bush" was Royce's accurate description set in local color. The will to truth, so characteristic of Royce in the 1870s and 1880s, here became a basic and indispensable dynamism in the loyal self. This included an open honesty towards others which precludes such mask-wearing as hinders authenticity or alienates others. Royce saw that this frontiersman's "judgments were meanwhile all his own. . . . He was as honest a man as he was blunt." Finally, despite his open criticism of sham aristocrats and time-serving officials, the backwoodsman showed a true patriotism. . . . In this Australian Royce recognized the long-sought touchstone of his later ethics. His enlivened mind, having sketched out these lines of the loyal self as gathered here, would itself gather these hints for the developed doctrine which, with some omissions needed for popularization, directed his *Philosophy of Loyalty* in 1907.

There are surely worse ways to shape a philosophy of life!

Why aren't there thinkers today who write unashamedly about "loyalty" and other qualities that give coherence to human community? This word, incidentally, is almost as shadowed as the term "duty," and both raise the hackles of the modern thinker, who is usually an iconoclast looking for objects and attitudes to ridicule and condemn. He has no trouble finding them.

Royce, it is true, lived and wrote before the outbreak of the first world war. He died in 1916, when America was still untouched, except lightly, by the conflict going on in Europe. Those first few years of the twentieth century in America were a wholesome time—almost "golden," for those few who can remember it—and the pain of the war, and of the betrayals of the "peace" that came after, were unknown to Royce. It was a time when good and intelligent men could still speak glowingly of Manifest Destiny, and Royce was by no means immune to this doctrine. America, you could say, had not yet lost her innocence, although ten years after his death it was going fast.

Indeed, as early as 1917, another kind of social philosopher, Randolph Bourne, was writing—contra John Dewey—in the *Dial* for Sept. 13, to defend conscientious objection:

> War always comes to seem just that urgent, inevitable crisis of the nation's life where everything must be yielded to one purpose. For a few months, the public may retain the illusion of freedom, of mastery over social forces. But as war continues, there comes the deep popular recognition that there is now but one end—victory; and but one means—the organization of all the resources of the nation into a conventional war technique. . . . To a philosopher of the creative intelligence, the fact that war blots out the choice of ends given and even of means should be the final argument against its use as a technique for any purpose whatsoever. . . .

> War is just that absolute situation which is its own end and its own means, and which speedily outstrips the power of intelligent and creative control. As long as you are out of war, events remain to some degree malleable. This was the argument for "armed neutrality." But clamp down the psychic pattern of war on the nation, and you have precipitated an absolute where mastery becomes a mockery.

And three years later, a British journalist covering the Paris Peace Conference in 1920 wrote in the *Atlantic* for May of that year:

> Turn where you will, one finds only that the war has worsened mankind. Those who speak of the heroic virtues which are born on the battlefield, which spring, like the Phoenix, out of the ashes of war, are uttering the most stupid claptrap. The dominion of darkness has spread over Europe and a slimy progeny of cruelty, of bestiality, of insensibility, of egoism, of violence, of materiality, has crawled into the light of day—a noisome brood, of which it will be long before we can dispossess ourselves.

Long indeed. This may be the most comprehensive reason why hardly anyone is able to write as Josiah Royce wrote some eighty years ago. Yet it may be a good reason for reading him.

COMMENTARY
A HARD CHOICE

IN saying that "Hamlet's view" now prevails in American life (see page 1), Joseph Epstein (who is editor of the *American Scholar*) concludes that uncertainty and loss of faith now make the mood of the country. His (October) *Harper's* article traces the breakdown of "ambition" in America, suggesting at the end that "the real question posed by ambition is whether or not each of us has a true hand in shaping his own destiny."

Another way of putting the question would be: Are the goals we set for ourselves at odds with the laws of nature?

To be pressed for an answer to this question is painful. To change our goals involves the reconstruction of the idea of meaning in human life. On the other hand, not to change our goals means relying on power instead of character for our achievements. But nature is taking a hand in this argument. Nature or "life" is setting immutable limits to the goals that can be achieved by force or power. This is the discovery now becoming unavoidable, and that we find so hard to accept. No wonder old-time ambition is diminished.

Mr. Epstein's remedy is Spartan, involving a change in the center of gravity in human life. Biography, not history, is what counts. He says in his last paragraph:

> We do not choose to be born. We do not choose our parents. We do not choose our historical epoch, or the country of our birth, or the immediate circumstances of our upbringing. We do not choose, most of us, to die; nor do we choose the time or conditions of our death. But within all this realm of choicelessness, we do choose how we shall live: courageously or in cowardice, honorably or dishonorably with purpose or in drift. We decide what is important and what is trivial in life. We decide that what makes us significant is either what we do or what we refuse to do. But no matter how indifferent the universe may be to our choices and decisions, these choices and decisions are ours to make. We decide. We choose. And as we decide and choose, so are our lives formed.

This is the Stoic position, calling in our time for Existentialist heroism in an externally choiceless or "absurd" world. "Ha!" the Grand Inquisitor would say. "Do you think humans are equal to that?"

There is at least a mythic rejoinder, given by Plato in the tenth book of the *Republic*. The "realm of choicelessness," he suggests, is no more than the reflex of past decisions, made on the other side of Lethe.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
ORIGINS OF ADULT EDUCATION

FROM England comes a venerable if sprightly magazine devoted to community planning, now in its seventy-sixth year. *Town & Country Planning* first appeared in 1904; it was then called *The Garden* City (issued by the Garden City Association), but has had its present name for many years, as the organ of the Town and Country Planning Association, 17 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AS, U.K. The association and its journal seem largely a consequence of the inspiration of Ebenezer Howard, who conceived, wrote and talked about, then organized and built Letchworth Garden City and Welwyn Garden City. Howard, a correspondent says in a 1979 (October) issue of the journal, "not content to dwell in a private world of spiritual contentment, . . . sought to transform this inner contemplation to an outward form wherein the harmony of his vision would be reproduced in the fabric of material existence." Howard was convinced that "if we wait for politicians to act, we await forever," and by direct action he created Letchworth, which "remains a beacon of hope to the inhabitants of the wretched areas of dereliction that constitute the built environment of Britain's Victorian towns and decaying inner cities."

What is a garden city? A definition approved by Howard was given by the Association in 1919:

> A garden city is a town designed for healthy living and industry; of a size which makes possible a full measure of social life, but not larger; surrounded by a rural belt; the whole of the land being in public ownership or held in trust for the community.

Something of Vinoba's Gramdan program seems present here, and also Robert Swann's Land Trust conception, which is now more than an idea, since several land trusts have become active in the United States. A present proposal for another garden city in England, adopted by the Town and Country Planning Association, includes some of Howard's main ideas:

> . . . settlements of small, human scale; a basically cooperative economy; a marriage of town and country; control by the community of its own development and the land values it creates; and the importance of a social environment in which the individual can develop his own ideas and manage his own affairs in cooperation with his neighbors.

Colin Ward, the amiable anarchist thinker, planner, and architectural consultant who wrote *Child in the City*, contributed a farewell column to the issue at hand, in which he writes about the origins of what we now call "adult education." The following, titled "On the Informal Network," is the substance of his column.

* * *

Alan, my neighbor in Suffolk, is a farm mechanic who maintains the plant for a group of farmers. Like most country people with a patch of land of their own, he and his wife keep poultry and rear pigs, and grow fruit and vegetables, while Alan repairs other people's cars and mowers in his spare time, and has built himself a forge. One day he decided that he would like to make a copper coal scuttle of the traditional kind.

So he went to the sheet metal merchants in Ipswich and asked if they could put him in touch with a coppersmith. They gave him the address of the last practitioner of the trade in the town. He went to see the old man who discussed with him the techniques of cutting and shaping the metal, the right gauge to use, and the method of riveting. He lent Alan an example to copy and suggested that he should bring it back together with his own effort. Alan went back to the metal merchants, bought his materials and went home. When he had finished the object he took it for inspection by the old craftsman, who examined it and pronounced it "not bad."

His experience illustrates perfectly the ideal of learning webs or networks expounded by Ivan Illich; in particular the notion of "skill exchanges" in which people "list their skills, the conditions

under which they are willing to serve as models for others who want to learn these skills and the addresses at which they can be reached."

It would never occur to Alan that he was part of a learning web: it is as natural for him to seek out someone who has the knowledge he finds he needs, as it is for him to pass on to others the information that Fuller's Earth may sometimes improve the performance of brake linings. For many people this kind of spontaneous and convivial learning web does not exist, and the trouble is that they are often the last people likely to involve themselves in the adult education network to pick up the information in a more formal way, especially when we come to less tangible things than the acquisition of manual skills and find ourselves concerned with themes like public participation in planning and in housing policy, and with community action generally. But these are fields which are a growth area in new approaches to adult education, which is one of the easiest aspects of publicly funded education to curtail when times are hard, though its curtailment is pointless since it takes up much less than 2 per cent of local authority education budgets.

Michael Norton, in his *Directory of Social Change* (Wildwood House), reminds us of the variety of "community-oriented courses" springing up in the adult education world. Holloway Institute, in conjunction with a local tenants' association, ran a course which "prepared plans for a proposed new community centre, put forward a proposal that the management of the estate should be handed over to the tenants, devised a summer holiday programme and the means for funding it. At the Friends Centre in Brighton several courses have been held that have prepared and presented alternative plans for road and redevelopment proposals. At Bethnal Green a group learned (successfully) how to fight the compulsory purchase they were threatened with. In East Sussex, planners, teachers, and community leaders came together to look at possibilities for encouraging public participation at the Riverside Centre."

Two other recent books describe this kind of experience in adult education. The first is *Learning Networks in Adult Education: Non-formal Education on a Housing Estate,* by Paul Fordham, Geoff Poulton, and Lawrence Randle (Routledge). The scene is Leigh Park, a council estate outside Portsmouth, and the assumption of the New Communities Project, whose work is described here, was that "adult education should seek to serve the whole community and not merely those sectors of it who currently take advantage of what is provided." The second of these books is Michael Newman's *The Poor Cousin: A Study of Adult Education* (Allen & Unwin). His book is based on his experience as an "outreach worker" for one London Institute, the Addison, and describes, with a host of graphic examples, the experience of providing a service for that majority of the population who never thought that "night school" had anything relevant for them, and whose needs for education as a tool for social action were neglected by every other agency.

Newman reminds us that the origins of the adult education movement, like the origins of so much else in our society, were in working class self-help, "community-based" as the current jargon goes, and revolving around literacy, technical skills, and the urge to study and discuss history, politics and economics. With the growth of statutory local education authorities in this century, the emphasis moved to hobbies, and recreational and leisure interest.

However, it could be argued that the dressmaking, pottery and flower-arranging period was, in fact, a brief aberration "from which the service is only now showing fitful signs of recovery." And, paradoxically, it was during the hobbies period that principles and practices arose which are most valuable in the effort to respond actively and vitally to community needs. Classes were opened or closed on the criterion of

consumer interest, the principles were established that tutors might be people with experience and skill in a particular activity rather than professional teachers, and the principle grew up that the group itself should steer the course the way they wanted it to be.

When, at the end of the 1960s, the demand actually arose for classes on welfare rights, community action, planning and housing issues and so on, the practices of the system enabled it to respond. Adult education is moving perceptibly into the world of informal learning networks and skill exchanges, out of the classroom and into the community.

Suffolk, England COLIN WARD

FRONTIERS

Cooperation under Difficulties

A QUARTERLY magazine, *Kidma* (the Hebrew word for "Progress"), which comes to us from Israel, is issued by the Israel Chapter of the Society for International Development. The content is devoted to social and economic progress in developing countries. *Kidma* No. 3 for 1980 has an article by Gideon Weigert on the Arab Cooperative Movement in Judea and Samaria, regions on the West Bank of the Jordan River which until 1967 (the Six-Day War) were a part of Jordan, but are now controlled by Israel.

Why give attention here to self-help and cooperative activities on the West Bank? Mainly for the reason that, in the newspapers, we read only about doings that make people hate each other, as though nothing else ever happens there.

The economic co-ops of the region, we learn, during the Jordanian era, were mostly credit and thrift societies staffed by Jordan government officials, while the school co-ops were managed by the Jordan Ministry of Education in Amman. After the six-day war, most of these cooperative groups ceased to function (their funds were frozen by the Jordanian Government). The interesting part of Mr. Weigert's story begins here:

> There is, however, a second group of societies, dating back to the Jordanian period in Judea and Samaria. It includes production co-ops, cooperative oil presses, artisans women handicraft co-ops, and even a cooperative sick fund. Not only did these societies survive the war, they actually prospered. The difference is that they were *felt to be needed*, that their members could not do without them, indeed, their continued existence and regular activities were clearly perceived as a matter of life or death for the members who were ready to go to almost any length, to make sacrifices, if necessary, to preserve the cooperative services provided by these societies. As a result, such cooperative enterprises not only continued but in many cases greatly expanded their activities in the post-1967 period. At the same time, additional, *new* branches were added as a result of new socioeconomic developments in the areas, partly under the influence of personal, direct and daily contact with life and reality in Israel itself.
>
> These new branches, which *really* became cooperatives, had either not been known at all in the past or had fared poorly. They involved spheres in which an urgent need for collective action was becoming apparent, projects which no single farmer or townsman could successfully execute as an individual. Thus the consumer branch was a direct answer to the urgent need of large sections of the population to obtain basic food commodities at the lowest possible prices—the only way to cope successfully with the rising cost of living.

The economic benefits are obvious, but there are other not inconsiderable advantages:

> [Since] political parties are banned *in Jordan* and therefore not permitted in Judea and Samaria, where Jordanian law applies . . . the "cooperative way" forms an important exercise in democracy, a school in self-rule. These bodies thus fulfill a social-behaviour role: its officers, all active on a purely voluntary basis, are elected in annual shareholders' meetings by a democratic majority vote in which all members participate. Each society has its "control" and other committees overseeing its activities, meeting frequently, discussing problems in an atmosphere of mutual confidence, trying their best to streamline activities for the benefit of all the members.

It is of interest that this article was put together mainly with information obtained by the writer from hundreds of Arab cooperators in scores of societies visited in Hebron, Ramallah, Bethlehem and Nablus. They all, he says, went out of their way to be helpful, enabling him to obtain an "objective picture" of the cooperative movement in that area.

His report continues:

> In most villages as well as in some towns, these co-ops constitute the only democratically-run organizations, entirely managed by the people themselves, without any outside (including governmental) interference. They thus serve as a model of self-management, and their members are rightly proud of their achievements. In time, the successful operation of any first co-op in a given village often leads to the establishment of other societies in the same place, dealing with different aspects of the population's economic and development

> needs. Cooperation thus is snowballing, particularly when the members' devotion visibly yields tangible results, benefitting the community as a whole. In many cases, successful officers of the cooperative movement continued to function on a higher level in such public offices as mayors, city or village counsellors, putting to good use the experience which they had gained as efficient cooperative leaders. All told, cooperative membership in the West Bank more than doubled since 1967, from 14,000 to 30,000 (as of the end of 1979).

Another article in *Kidma* examines the prospects of world food supply in future years. The writer, Nachum Kedar, after detailing some of the remarkable increases in recent food production—in wheat, corn, sorghum, and potatoes—points out that nutrition the world around has not improved as a result, and that "most of the international assistance provided for developing countries has been a failure." Why should this be? The writer points out the limitations of the "green revolution," which requires that farmers become agri-technicians using agribusiness methods, and speaks of the absence of motivation among farmers lacking the capital to adopt new methods, who, if *"forced* to hand over a large portion of their crops to the very rich who are exploiting them," will find that "sitting in the shade of a tree is indeed preferable." Mr. Kedar remarks that "any Israeli or European farmer in his right mind would do the same thing."

> The real problem is that—by itself—one sector of development cannot change the face of things. For example, the most successful research into problems of fertilization is not effective if the price of fertilizers is not economical; and establishing an efficient training system is useless without providing a long line of other factors which, together, constitute an entire chain. In general the weakness of any one link suffices to prevent genuine progress in a comprehensive development plan. These links also include general education (as well as economic, scientific, and implementational) factors.

Kidma's address is 3 Moshe Wallach Street, P.O. Box 13130, Jerusalem 94385, Israel. Subscription is $9 a year, single copies $2.50.