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THE LOST DIGNITY OF MAN

IF we go back about a hundred years in our intellectual history, we encounter the forces which were then generating the certainties of the first half of the twentieth century, but also may recognize the seeds of the growing uncertainties of the present. The materialist confidence of Marx in his doctrine of total revolution and the establishment of "scientific" socialism, was taking hold in many parts of the world, to exercise its far-reaching effects in the transfer of political power to rigidly indoctrinated political leaders in the revolutions to come. The theory of psychoanalysis was being developed by Freud, which would eventually fill the vacuum of ideas in the West in relation to the whole area of psycho-dynamics. The impact of Marx and Freud on literature and culture is well-known and described in numerous texts. But while these changes were taking place, or in preparation, the discovery by Antoine Becquerel in 1896 of radioactivity gave at least a technical death-blow to theoretical materialism by putting an end to the billiard-ball atom, leading, years later, to Einstein's formulation: "Matter is where the concentration of energy is great, field where the concentration of energy is small."

Probably the most influential work in science in the last half of the nineteenth century was the evolutionary doctrine of Charles Darwin, which won its struggle against theological opposition and reigned almost supreme until quite lately—until the questions first raised by Alfred Russel Wallace, and by others since, made many realize that Darwin's insistence on chance and Natural Selection as the cause and guide of evolutionary development are by no means adequate to explain the emergence of a Beethoven or a Newton from the primordial slime.

Today, as we look out on a technology-ravaged nature, hear the warnings of the ecologists, the verdict of thoughtful agriculturalists, contemplate the ever-present threat of nuclear war, recognize the advancing threat of terrorism in a world filled with injustice and military arrogance, our uncertainties surely outweigh the certainties brought forward from the past. Religion no longer has claims upon our confidence. Save for the extraordinary character of a few—such as Gandhi and Schweitzer—the religious men of our time command no particular respect, while scientists, the originators of the Bomb, are eyed with as much suspicion as regard for their peculiar talents. The idea that science is in process of putting together little pieces of "knowledge" that will eventually explain the whole world and enable us to live happily at peace is no longer seriously believed in by anyone. Science, as we know, is fallible. It makes mistakes. Indeed, its progress seems a process of correction of past mistakes, and we begin to wonder whether the present-day corrections will eventually turn out to be mistakes, also.

But can we actually live in an unpredictable world—a world which our learned men have claimed to be without meaning—without, that is, any larger purposes than our own—and also filled with uncertainties? The answer is probably—not for long. Men need a faith to live by, preferably a faith founded on knowledge, if they can find it. The present is also, then, a time for the selection of a faith. A great many individuals are now working on this problem, whether for themselves or for themselves and others. The sources being investigated, naturally enough, are both science and religion, preferably philosophical religion. Religion, one could say, is necessary because only in religion do we find ideas of meaning, meaning for ourselves and of the world.

What about science as a source of the sort of understanding we are looking for? We live in the

twentieth century, not in the nineteenth, and the faith in science as capable, eventually, of solving all problems has very nearly faded away. Science explicitly declares that it has no metaphysics, no theory of meaning. It opposes an intrinsic teleology—the movement of life and the world toward the fulfillment of some great purpose or meaning—on the ground that this would amount to introducing some sort of transcendental "prejudice" into its investigations. That this position itself involves a metaphysical assumption—that the world is without meaning—is ignored. But if science is nonetheless knowledge of how the world works, of the laws of nature and the behavior of the world's inhabitants, what it can supply should be of at least some value. But as we said, we live in the twentieth century and thoughtful men have been studying science and the operation of its methods for many decades. Science, they have found, is by no means infallible. Various of its conclusions, once thought to be a part of reliable and unchangeable knowledge, have been found to be in error. Books such as Thomas S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* and the works of Carl Popper point this out. Kuhn has shown that at a given moment of history, the science of that time is only a way station, hopefully on the road to truth, but actually subject to radical revision and change. Popper demonstrates that science is fallible, that its method has not been carefully applied, that many beliefs thought to be scientific are really no more than cultural assumptions of a period of history, and he maintains that a proposition cannot be taken seriously as a scientific proposal unless it can be subjected to the test of truth or falsity. An indication of Popper's standing, today, and a measure of his influence is the Fall 1985 *Et cetera*, in which all the articles are concerned with various aspects of Popper's critique of modern science. The opening remarks of one of these papers reveal the character of Popper's thinking. The writer is Fred H. Eidlin, who says:

> Is a man capable, in light of the fallibility of human knowledge, of planning and carrying out fundamental and thoroughgoing reform of society, guided and informed by a comprehensive causally plausible and morally defensible social and political theory?
>
> Advocates of violent revolution usually ignore or brush off impatiently questions relating to the epistemological status of the theories upon which their prescriptions for violent action are based. The existing social and political order is so thoroughly corrupt, they are likely to argue, that It must be completely smashed in order for any kind of decent regime to be constructed.
>
> Karl Popper's social and political theory is sometimes regarded as conservative because he regards as crucial questions about the status as knowledge of the theories upon which calls for revolutionary violence are based.

This writer, however, who teaches political studies at the University of Guelph in Ontario, Canada, does not find Popper conservative but sees in his work a "radical, revolutionary strain." His opposition to "total revolution" is not based on the belief that far-reaching change is not needed, but simply on the fact that we don't know enough to attempt it. Our social science, that is, is far from being authentic science. Prof. Eidlin repeats the sort of questions that Popper raises:

> Radical revolutionaries are, of course, especially vulnerable when questions are raised about the status as knowledge of the theories upon which their proposals for action are based. However bad a status quo might be, at least there is an important sense in which it can confidently be said to work. It can be observed to work (however badly) and for many people such concrete evidence constitutes overwhelming grounds for support of the status quo. Since radical revolutionaries advocate replacement of the status quo by a completely new social and political order that has never existed and therefore cannot be observed in actual operation they cannot so easily evade questions about the epistemological status of their theories. How do they *know*, for example that the course of action they prescribe will, in fact, lead to the new and better order which they advocate? How do they *know* that such an order would be viable under any conceivable circumstances? How do they *know* that the violence they advocate can be kept under control once

> unleashed? How do they *know* that unforeseen, unintended consequence will not result in a worse social and political order than the one they propose to destroy and replace?

We might recall here certain costs of revolution suffered by a number of peoples in the twentieth century. We quote from a Czech writer, Joseph Skvorecky, who now lives in Canada (from his contribution to *The Writer and Human Rights*):

> It is estimated that violent communist revolutions in our century have dined on about one hundred million men, women, and children. What has been gained by this sumptuous feast? Basically, two things, both predicted by the so-called classics of Marxist-Leninism: the state that withered away, and the New Socialist Man.
>
> The state has withered away all right—into a kind of Mafia, a perfect police regime. Thought-crime, which most believed to be just a morbid joke by Orwell . . . has become a reality in today's "real socialism," as the stepfathers of the Czechoslovak Communist party have christened their own status quo.

The New Socialist Man is either victim or arrogant. The *Et cetera* writer continues:

> It is a matter of particular moral urgency to confront radical revolutionaries with such questions because of the high costs in terms of human suffering their revolutionary programs are likely to entail. Even if ends are allowed in principle to justify means (which is problematic), the question must be raised of whether or not there are solid grounds for belief that the means will in fact bring about the ends. Without such knowledge, it is difficult to see how anyone can morally justify a decision to implement such a program, claiming that the decision to do so is based on a rational weighing of costs, benefits, and risks.
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> Advocates of violent, radical revolution usually ignore or brush off such questions impatiently. They may respond by saying something like: "You cannot make an omelette without first breaking eggs," or "A revolution is not a tea party," or "What exists is bad. Something must take its place." Such remarks are clearly unsatisfactory responses to the questions posed in the present discussion. They all take for granted, as a fundamental premise, that the revolution will in fact result in a better society, avoiding the crucial question of how they know this to be true. It makes no difference how justified their moral indignation with the established order might be, or even how correct their diagnosis of its fundamental weakness, if this fundamental premise happens to be false.

Popper, in short, is against "big theory" doctrines of violent change on the ground that no one knows enough to try to institute them. There is no science which verifies such revolutionary theory. What then is science good for, socially speaking? Popper would have the practice of piecemeal social engineering. He explains in one of his books (*The Poverty of Historicism*):

> The characteristic approach of the piecemeal engineer is this. Even though he may perhaps cherish some ideals which concern society "as a whole"—its general welfare, perhaps—he does not believe in the method of redesigning it as a whole. Whatever his ends, he tries to achieve them by small adjustments which can be continually improved upon.

Fred Eidlin provides a useful comment:

> In both *The Poverty of Historicism* and *The Open Society and its Enemies*, Popper criticizes what he calls theories of "utopian social engineering." These are theories aimed at "remodelling of the 'whole society' in accordance with a definite plan or blueprint" and which are advocated as allegedly based on "scientific authority." It is against such theories, which Popper criticizes as "pseudo-scientific," that he develops his alternative theory of "piecemeal social engineering" which, unlike "utopian engineering," is held to be consistent with a correct understanding and application of the spirit and methods of science to society. In other words, it is the modesty and fallibility, the trial and error character, of science which is stressed against the claims of this particular adversary, as well as arguments about limits of social science, such as the assertion that "at present, the sociological knowledge necessary for large-scale engineering is simply nonexistent."

This seems a fair estimate of what is now understood to be the capacity of present-day social science. It can help us a great deal with our "piecemeal" efforts at social improvement, but not in the formulation of theories of major change. It is only instrumental, although quite necessary.

What, then, about the religions of the world as a resource? This is a large question since the

attitude of people everywhere is changing from acceptance of inherited traditional religion to what seems serious inquiry and change. A good book that would be helpful in gaining some insight into this change is Jacob Needleman's *The New Religions,* which came out in 1970. Dr. Needleman says in his preface:

> Significant though it is, the revolution that is striking the established religious institutions of the West is only part of a spiritual phenomenon that promises to transform everything that modern man has thought about God and human possibility. The contemporary disillusionment with religion has revealed itself to be a religious disillusionment. Men are moving away from the forms and trappings of Judaism and Christianity not because they have stopped searching for transcendental answers to the fundamental questions of human life, but because that search has intensified beyond measure.

He speaks of the search that is "turning hundreds of thousands of Americans toward the religions of the East and toward the mystical core of all religion." He continues:

> Nor does the phenomenon give signs of slackening. Bookstores are crammed with Eastern sacred texts, studies of astrology, reincarnation, states of consciousness, and the like. Students across the country are demanding courses in Buddhism, Hinduism and mysticism. . . . Moreover, psychiatrists, psychologists, and clergymen of all faiths are joining the younger generation in this pursuit—not only in order to understand the inclinations of the young and the interests of their patients or the members of their congregation. They are turning to these areas to see for themselves if the East has a knowledge to offer our threatened society and our tormented religions.

He thinks that the impact of these various influences "may well compel the consciousness of the West to take stock of itself in a way that has not happened since the dawn of the Scientific Revolution." This remark leads us to another book, one which seems a response to the challenge described by Dr. Needleman, which came out in 1974. It is *Reincarnation for the Christian,* by Quincy Howe, Jr., and was published by the Westminster Press. The author is—or was—a professor of classics at Scripps College here in California. He says in his preface:

> The time is ripe for Christians to ponder without reservation ideas that once seemed bizarre and alien. This does not mean that Christianity should abandon its past and rush heedlessly into change for change's sake. The result would be a formless amalgam of Eastern religion, popular philosophies, and scientific optimism. It does mean, however, that Christians should be as receptive in their spiritual life as they are in other areas to ideas that stand as undisputed truths in non-Christian parts of the world.
>
> It should be apparent in the ensuing pages that I personally believe in the doctrine of reincarnation and feel that it can enhance the framework of Christian life. I am further convinced that the contemporary Christian is not so inflexible as to reject out of hand a belief that has been attested for nearly three thousand years.

An important difference between Christian belief and reincarnationist philosophy relates to the nature, substance, and origin of the soul. Mr. Howe says:

> Whereas orthodoxy speaks of God as creating the world *ex nihilo,* out of nothing, those who have accepted reincarnation are inclined to speak of an act of emanation rather than an act of creation. . . . Thus the reincarnationist would describe the cosmos, not as a creation, but as an emanation from God. . . . This concept of Plotinus is similar to the ancient Indian theory of Brahman and Atman. According to Vedanta, the consummation of Vedic doctrine, every human being consists in essence of a divine Self, the Atman, which is the indwelling God. The goal of the spiritual life is to realize the full and perfect identity between this Atman and Brahman, who is God as the unmanifest Absolute.

How does this spark of the divine, the human soul, lose sight of its own divine nature? Since "the Self for the reincarnationist is seen as pure divinity, the only lapse can be one of defective self-awareness." By incarnation in the sea of matter or illusion, "the Self loses the ability to recognize itself as divine, and this is the point at which the fall for the reincarnationist takes place." Plato's *Phaedrus* myth of the chariot and the unruly horse is a mythic version of the fall; in Indian tradition, "That which obscures man's view

of his own divinity is called *maya*, a Sanskrit word indicating the divine spell that God casts on creation to give it the appearance of separate and distinct reality."

The successive lives on earth, in body after body, are the means of soul evolution, by which each spark overcomes the illusion of separateness and grows into awareness of its unity with the all-pervasive life and one divinity. The soul carries forward from life to life the lessons of experience, until at last the cycle of soul-making and perfection is complete. The law of Karma, of moral cause and effect and justice, is the ruling principle of this process. In discussing Karma, Mr. Howe says:

> We [Christians] reason that the selfish man will perhaps reap punishment in some kind of afterlife, but our sense of justice is outraged at the sight of someone who never had a chance and collapses wretchedly in an effort that was doomed to failure.
>
> Here is where the law of *Karma* makes sense of the apparent nonsense of life. The man who is born into abject poverty may have made ill use of his wealth in an earlier life; the wealthy man is reaping the fruits of an earlier generosity. . . . Karma introduces an element of reason and logic into a problem that has vexed many a devout Christian. . . . The Law of *Karma* entirely absolves God from responsibility for human suffering. Man assumes eternal and total responsibility for his life and has only his own egotism and bad judgment to thank for wretched and apparently unjust circumstances.

Quincy Howe deals thoughtfully with many aspects of this comparison of Christian orthodoxy with reincarnation, the most important of which, in the present, is the Platonic and Eastern idea that the human soul, being essentially godlike, has the *capacity* to rise above circumstances and remake its own destiny. As Pico declared in the fifteenth century, we make ourselves. In this idea, it may be, rests the truth of the lost dignity of man.

REVIEW
TALES OF THE PAST

THERE are various ways of trying to recover the past—the past that seems so thoroughly covered over by present preoccupations. One can read history, which means that you read historians, who often have widely differing opinions about the past. You can read biographies, the writers of which may or may not try to be impartial and informing. In all these ways of recovering history, we encounter obstacles which are a natural part of the human situation, doing our best to overcome them. One of the less common paths to the past was chosen by Wendell Berry, who tells about his adventures wandering through the Red River Gorge in Kentucky in several of his essays in *Recollected Essays,* reprinted by North Point Press in 1981.

In one of them he relates that in 1968 the Kentucky newspapers gave attention to the discovery in the Gorge "of a crude hut built of short split planks," hardly bigger than a pup tent—containing a stone fireplace and room for one man. The papers were interested because one of the planks bore the carved name, "D. boon." Had the hut actually been built by Daniel Boone, discoverer of the Kentucky Valley?

Berry, on a visit to the Gorge, went to see the hut. He found it easily enough, but virtually hidden from understanding sight by the distractions of the present. He tells what happened:

> The head of the trail was not yet marked, but once I found the path leading down through the woods it was clear to me that I had already had numerous predecessors. And I had not gone far before I knew their species: scattered more and more thickly along the trail the nearer I got to the site of the hut was the trash that has come to be more characteristic than shoeprints of the race that produced (as I am a little encouraged to remember) such a man as D. boon.

The hut was under an overhanging rock and was now protected from meddlers by a tall link fence:

> Outside the fence the ground was littered with polaroid negatives, film spools, film boxes, food wrappers, cigarette butts, a paper plate, a coke bottle.
>
> And inside the fence, which I peered through like a prisoner, was the hut, a forlorn relic overpowered by what had been done to protect it from collectors of mementos, who would perhaps not even know what it was supposed to remind them of. There it was, perhaps a vital clue to our history and our inheritance, turned into a curio. Whether because of the ignorant enthusiasm of souvenir hunters, or because of the strenuous measures necessary to protect it from them, Boone's hut had become a doodad—as had Boone's name, which now stood for a mendacious TV show and a brand of fried chicken.
>
> I did not go back to that place again, not wanting to be associated with the crowd whose vandalism had been so accurately foreseen and so overwhelmingly thwarted. But I did not forget it either, and the memory of it seems to me to bear, both for the Gorge and for ourselves, a heavy premonition of ruin.

Yet his expeditions into the Gorge were not without reward. He found one place, which, because of its inaccessibility to loggers, had remained wholly untouched. This was an encounter with unwritten history.

> And then you realize that you are passing among poplars and hemlocks of a startling girth and height, the bark of their trunks deeply grooved and moss-grown. And finally it comes to you where you are; the virginity, the uninterrupted wildness, of the place comes to you in a clear strong dose like the first breath of a wind. Here the world is in its pure state and such men as have been here have all been here in their pure state, for they have destroyed nothing.

That seems as good a reason as any for the study of our past—to find, if we can, a society, if any has existed, in a "pure state," and to acquaint ourselves with its qualities. The mythologists assure us that such a state once existed calling it the Golden Age, a time combining innocence and plenty, but our historians have not yet learned how or when to rely on myth. Yet ordinary

readers are not confined by professional inhibitions and, fortunately, there are novelists with the same turn of mind.

This brings us to a book which came in recently for review—*A Simple Story* by S. Y. Agnon, the Nobel Laureate, who wrote it in 1935. The translator of the present edition, Hillel Halkin, is a well-known translator from the Hebrew who adds a reflective essay at the end. The publisher is Schocken, the price $14.95.

The story—one could call it a tale of frustrated romantic love which, unexpectedly, ends in neither fulfillment nor disaster—takes place in Galicia, in a town with the fictitious name of Szybusz modeled on an actual town where Agnon was born, in a strong and happy Jewish community where people lived well under the benevolent rule of Franz Josef, who had removed all anti-Jewish legislation and protected the Jews from malice and persecution.

The author, Agnon, apparently thinks well of this island of tradition-bound culture where custom and habit while slowly relaxing, still exercise great power. The plot is indeed a simple one. A young girl, Blume, loses first her father, then her mother, and is alone and friendless, so she comes to Szybusz where her mother's cousin Boruch Meir, is a successful storekeeper. Blume is accepted by Meir, and his wife, who finds that the girl is an excellent housekeeper, gladly gives her the place of the hired maid. The Meirs have a son, Hirshl, about the same age as Blume, who in time falls in love with Blume, but is too shy to declare his feeling. She is attracted to him but says nothing and even avoids the youth as much as she can. Meanwhile Hirshl's parents find him a girl whom they think is an appropriate wife, considering his position—he works in their store—and he does what his parents expect him to do, and marries her, although he is not in the least attracted to her and begins to suffer acutely.

Blume, meanwhile, finds another housekeeping job and leaves. We are told that she loves Hirshl, but little to explain her unwillingness to show it. Hirshl and the wife selected for him by his parents have a son, to whom he remains indifferent. He goes on long walks in the evening, visiting the neighborhood where Blume now lives, but he never catches sight of her. Eventually he breaks down and has apparently gone mad.

Hirshl's parents take him to an elderly neurologist in Lemberg, a doctor of the mind who had become widely known for his success with difficult mental patients. Since there is reason to think that in this doctor the author, Agnon, finds a voice for what he thinks—which seems nowhere else revealed to the reader—some account of him may be helpful:

> It was said of him [Dr. Langsam] that he had studied in his youth to be a rabbi, but that, hearing a Jewish patient once abused by a Polish doctor, a not uncommon occurrence in those days when Gentile physicians treated Jews' bodies while damning their souls, he had resolved to go to medical school instead. Before long he acquired a reputation as a first-rate practitioner whom people came to see from all over while eventually he stopped treating physical complaints in order to specialize in nervous ones, which could lead to hopeless dementia if not dealt with in time. Never one to give up on a case, he had nursed many of his patients back to health.

Dr. Langsam gave Hershl no tests, but simply said to him, hello, "as if unable to understand what such a healthy-looking young man was doing in his sanatorium." He asked, "Well now, what seems to be the matter with you?" He asked the parents of the young man only a few questions, but simply told them: "I have never kept anyone here who was not sick, nor turned anyone out who was. When your son is ready to return home, I'll write to inform you."

> It was immaterial to him whether or not they told him the whole truth about Hirshl, since neither the patient's history nor his previous course of treatment struck him as particularly important. What was crucial, he explained to Hirshl's parents, was to keep their son out of the lunatic asylum and away from Szybusz—out of the asylum because it could make even a sane man crazy, and away from Szybusz because he would never get well if the children there called him names and threw stones at him. The

> combination of meekness, resignation, and sadness that he saw in Hirshl's face made the old doctor take an instant liking to him.

What was the treatment he gave to the youth? Whatever it was, it was effective, since Hirshl came home to Szybusz after three months in the sanatorium, apparently quite well, and happy with his wife's new baby boy. The reflective comment of the translator gives some insight into Dr. Langsam's method:

> Perhaps Hirshl would have been a happier and more fully alive person with Blume than he can ever be with Mina; perhaps a romance between the cousins would have had a disastrous end. . . . Since as a physician he must work with what is and not with what might have been, none of this matters very much. And what *is* is that, willingly or not, Hirshl has thrown in his lot with Szybus rather than with Blume and must be helped to make his peace with the fact. To accomplish this the old doctor assumes a cunningly indirect strategy. On the one hand, by means of his seemingly aimless stories, he builds up in his patient a positive image of smalltown Jewish life, thus getting him to accept that the conventional society of the Galician shtetl in which he is condemned to live has a dignity and value of its own and that there is no need to feel shame or anger at belonging to it. On the other hand, by recreating a semblance of the maternal warmth and care that Hirshl never received as a child, he encourages a transference that frees Hirshl of the unconscious rage felt toward his parents and especially toward his mother. Like Agnon the novelist, Langsam the psychologist, with his dislike of modern ways, is not as simple as he at first appears to be; there is a great deal of sophistication in his outwardly artless methods, which succeed precisely because Hirshl fails to see them for what they are.

So, also, with this story as a whole. The author goes back into history, to the first years of this century, and draws a to us laughable picture of a culture-dominated Jewish town and its youthful victim, Hirshl. What will happen? You never really know, until it does happen. The author is not didactic, but he may be hinting that a marriage arranged by the families of the wedded pair may not be so very bad, that the conventions are not without value, that anti-bourgeois goals may not be unrealizable as modern people pursue them. But none of these questions is really settled; Agnon leaves us with them, wholly neglecting what may have happened to Blume, the telling of which, he says at the end, would take another volume. Unexpectedly, this story is one to think about, while growing fond of all its characters, who actually turn out rather well, both parents and children.

COMMENTARY
VARIOUS CAPTIVITIES

IN this issue we have several illustrations of how we are held in captivity to the past by modes of thought and action which close our minds to the need for change. The reliance on coarse measurements of IQ is one example, discussed in the "Children" article. We know better now, as the review of the Kalamazoo study (see page 8) reveals.

It seems clear that intelligence tests will tell us some things, but not others which may be of far more importance. The skill to manipulate concepts is not sagacity, nor is it wisdom. But conservative-minded people are likely to prefer classification techniques because they serve to keep things the way they are—that is, themselves in positions of security and authority. Sometimes they should be kept there, so we can have no rule about this. But merely technical methods are never a substitute for originality, the capacity to put oneself in the place of another, and strength in one's convictions. This seems the fundamental truth behind James Fallows' remarkably good and useful article.

Then, in the lead article, the hold on our minds of the idea that science will give us the knowledge we need has attention. This confidence is now rapidly diminishing, but we do not know what to put in its place, or how to proceed. The task, today, is to accept individual responsibility, since institutional authority no longer has any serious claims upon our minds.

We are learning, also, that the suppositions of the advocates of "total revolution" are as groundless as the assumption of finality for scientific knowledge. The days of success for passionate partisanship are over, and the time for wise uncertainty has arrived, as Karl Popper recommends. It is time to put Socratic modesty in the place of "utopian social engineering" and dispense entirely with the instruments of total (and totalitarian) war. All systems of ideology need subjection to insistent questioning.

We are, we might say, "backing into" freedom of mind because of the breakdown of every sort of unwarranted assumption. The way is now open for the adoption of Platonic, Tolstoyan, and Gandhian attitudes and modes of behavior. Experience as well as reason now confirms the validity of the teachings of such minds.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WHAT A FASHION NEGLECTS

IN an article of close to twenty pages in the December *Atlantic*, James Fallows examines the resort to classification as the means to "achievement" and security, while avoiding risk-taking, independence, and inventive self-reliance and originality. Since, as Calvin Coolidge declared, the business of America is business, he focuses on the sudden growth and multiplication of business schools.

> In the past twenty years enrollment in graduate business schools has increased by a factor of ten. Next spring 67,000 new M.B.A.s will take their degrees to the marketplace. Alert to the workings of supply and demand, some business-school officials have predicted a glut; already, newer, weaker schools have been retrenching and some recent graduates have settled for less attractive jobs than they might once have hoped to get. Still overall enrollment continues to rise, and graduates of the most prominent schools are heavily in demand. The business-school community closely studies each school's "return on investment" or "value-added" ratio—how much an M.B.A. (manager business administration) degree adds to a person's salary, compared with how much it costs to obtain. At Dartmouth's Amos Tuck School, the nation's oldest graduate business college, tuition this year is $11,000, and the average starting salary for graduates is around $43,000. "That four-to-one ratio has been constant for at least the fifteen or twenty years I've been aware of it," Colin Blaydon, Amos Tuck's dean, says. Harvard also reports a four-to-one ratio, down from the heady seven-to-one ratio of 1969, but not so far that Harvard has any trouble filling its admission quotas.

There are of course a few voices of dissent—not, alas, dissent to the universal preoccupation with commercial enterprise as the natural calling of Americans, but dissent to the idea that the only way to succeed is by way of going to school and getting the grades. "We have created a monster," one business-school executive has said, proposing that "The business schools have done more to insure the success of the Japanese and West German invasion of America than any one thing I can think of." An investment banker declared, "I'd close every one of the graduate schools of business." What then is wrong with these schools? James Fallows says:

> The specific case against business schools is that they have neglected certain skills and outlooks that are essential to America's commercial renaissance while inculcating values that can do harm. The traditional strength of business education has been to provide students with a broad view of many varied business functions—marketing, finance, production and so forth. But like sociology and political science, business training has gotten all wrapped up in mathematical models and such ideas as can be boiled down to numbers This shift has led schools to play down two fundamental but hard-to-quantify business imperatives: creating the conditions that will permit the design and production of high-quality goods, and waging the constant struggle to inspire, cajole, discipline, lead, and in general persuade employees to work in common cause.

System and classification of people according to their degrees are means of introducing order into a chaotic and unpredictable world. They are meant to be that, and they are that for as long as enough people continue to put their faith in them. But eventually these methods become counter-productive because they inevitably eliminate the vital factors of originality and risk-taking. They are ways of "beating the game," which in the long run is completely impossible. Fallows says:

> From the student's point of view, the continuing migration into business school and from there onward to consulting firms and banks is hardly mysterious. That is where the money is. But when we think about our culture and its parables of ambition, the rise of M.B.A.s and consultants raises a question like that posed by the prestige and prominence of the legal establishment. Why is so much raw talent creamed off for pursuits of such dubious economic value? Why are so many of our smartest people induced to spend their adult lives waging merger wars against one another and doing battle over the tax code? Even the factory workers who once dreamed of opening their own stores have, it seems, reset their sights. When Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb interviewed a group of working-class parents in the 1970s, the parents "did not speak about the good life

> for their children in terms of small business. It exists, most of them believe, in the professions, in medicine or college teaching or architecture.

Mr. Fallows does not emphasize it, but the fact is that the economic cards are now stacked against small business, as the storekeepers of the nation know full well. However, he says in one place:

> When the transcontinental railroad network was completed, the United States was for the first time something like a national market. Small-town merchants found they couldn't compete with the big chains operating out of Chicago and New York. With the growth of steamship lines and the cultivation of vast new tracts in Australia, Canada, and South America, farmers were exposed not just to a national but to a world-wide economy. A farm family in Kansas could till, sow, pray for rain, and harvest—only to find that a bumper crop in Argentina had destroyed the price for wheat. At the time of the Civil War more than half of the American work force could still be found on the farm. By the turn of the century only a third was still there. With the decline of the village and the farm, doors were closing on the man who wanted to work for himself and opening to those who were willing to sign on with Armour or Union Pacific or Standard Oil.

Where human ability is concerned, classification depends upon measurement. That is the way big companies pick their employees. They want intelligent help so they test applicants for jobs for their intelligence. And as Fallows says, "It was the invention of IQ tests and the dawning of the idea that 'intelligence' was a single, real, measurable, and unchanging trait that severely limited each person's occupational choice." The first tester of intelligence, Fallows says, was the French psychologist, Alfred Binet. But Binet never meant his test as a means of measuring "normal" intelligence, but as a way of identifying children who need remedial schooling. He prescribed a course of "mental therapeutics" to build mental strength and improve the IQ. But both England and America seized the idea as a way of measuring the intelligence of everyone. As a result, people were typed by their IQ scores—forever and forever. This was apparently a great mistake but one seldom openly admitted. Fallows, however, makes it plain:

> Surely some people are more talented than others, and some are not fit to be doctors or artists or musicians. Still, there are reasons to be skeptical of the idea that IQ is usually the limit on occupational ascent. For example, one of sociology's longest-running and most thorough surveys, known as the "Kalamazoo Brothers" study, followed thousands of boys from their childhoods well into adulthood. A recent analysis of its results revealed that of the men who ended up as professionals, 10 per cent had as children been considered "high-grade morons." (That is, their IQs were 85 or below, placing them in the bottom sixth of the population. During the first half century of intelligence testing, people with scores below 85 were known in descending order of intelligence, as morons, imbeciles, and idiots. Now scores below 70 are associated with severity of retardation, from "mild" to "profound.") Michael Olneck and James Crouse, who analyzed the Kalamazoo data, found that a third of all the professionals and 42 per cent of the managers had childhood IQs below 100, which is by definition subnormal. As a group the managers had above-average IQs, but a large number of individual managers did not. According to pure meritocratic theory, Olneck and Crouse observed, the greatest diversity of IQ scores should be found at the bottom of the occupational pyramid (since some people have the brains but not the gumption or the opportunity to move up) and the least diversity at the top (where everyone would have to be smart to make the grade). . . . The greatest diversity of IQ scores was found not among unskilled laborers but among professionals. "It appears that the capacity to succeed (in professional and managerial) jobs is rather widespread, and is not confined to men who score well on tests," Olneck and Crouse concluded.

FRONTIERS

A Perverse Metaphor

PENDLE HILL, the Quaker study center in Wallingford, Pennsylvania, has for years issued thoughtful and useful pamphlets (six every year) some of which have been reviewed in MANAS. One that came out late last year, *Replacing the Warrior* by William A. Myers, seems of particular value. The writer inquires into the factors which bring about cultural change, and since the Quakers have always done what they could to avert war, Mr. Myers suggests that we need to replace the warrior as a cultural ideal. He begins by saying:

> For someone of my generation to address militarism invites reflection on certain facts about growing up in America. Born in 1944, I grew up knowing that my country was squared off against a belligerent rival, each country having the power and quite possibly the will to do unimaginable damage to the other without warning and for no intelligible reason. Though we do not like to confront the lethal absurdity of superpower politics, as citizens we must face the fact that while we pursue our ordinary lives—educating ourselves, thinking of careers, of families, of the joys and concerns of daily living—there are people devoting their talents and resources to the creation of devices whose use would end every daily life on the planet. This bizarre situation should lead us to wonder about the values we have chosen to follow.
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> The values inherent in nuclear deterrence show that we need a new cultural ideal, exhibiting a set of traits and characteristics more appropriate to our time and circumstances than the military ideal that has dominated the western tradition.

How, then, are cultural ideals adopted? If we knew that we should know a great deal. Naturally enough, to answer this question Mr. Myers goes back to the Greeks, who, from learning the *Iliad* by heart, made Achilles, the magnificent warrior, their cultural ideal. As Eric Havelock (in *Preface to Plato*) and others have shown, the young Greek, saturated with Homeric rhythms as part of his education, will naturally choose Achilles as his idea of what a Greek should be and do. He formed this ideal while hardly knowing it; his soul, in short, was not his own; he was an offprint of the tribal encyclopedia. This was Plato's case against the poets, since he believed that we should deliberately form our own characters, becoming more than echoes of Homer.

Yet Achilles, while badly flawed in character, became the culture hero of the Greeks. He had prayed that the Greeks suffer defeat so long as he refused to fight, because of his resentment when Agamemnon took away the woman who was his war-prize, and he stayed out of the war until his dear friend Patroklos was killed and Agamemnon made amends. What sort of loyalty to the Greek community was that, if pure self-interest could keep him from the desperate battle in which his fellow Greeks were being defeated? Plato's warriors would be different. They would put aside all self-interest. A second fundamental difference, Myers notes, is "that Plato's guardians, or some of them anyway, will be capable of intellectual pursuits far beyond the need of military prowess. They are to be philosopher kings."

Have there been any warrior heroes in our own time? Not since "Red Baron" Manfred von Richtofen, of World War I, who, after downing eighty aircraft, mostly British, died in aerial combat in 1918 at twenty-six.

> Von Richtofen shares with Achilles a number of characteristics. He is an aristocrat, he is a greatly feared opponent—for a time, in fact, the most formidable of the German fliers. He, like Achilles, is proud of his ability, his honors, his reputation, and he clearly seeks the glory to be gained by shooting down more Englishmen. . . . Like Achilles, von Richtofen is highly courageous. He knows the hazards of his art—he has seen many of his friends and enemies go down burning, and he speaks dispassionately of it.
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> The Red Baron comes at an interesting time in the history of warfare, a turning point which clearly marks a difference between our time and before. This difference is important to . . . the appropriateness of cultural ideals. For the Red Baron fought at a time when *aerial* combat, at least, was still "personal."

For von Richtofen, air war was a sport, like hunting. He was remarkably detached from the results of his skill.

> The Red Baron's detachment expresses itself in subtle attitudes toward what he is actually doing; his narrative style with its nonchalance and sporting language masks the essential fact that his business is killing other flyers. It is possible that one reason for this detachment is that von Richtofen displays his prowess—unlike Achilles—through the operation of a machine. His red triplane is really only a vehicle for carrying machine guns.

Today the transition is complete—war is all done by machinery. "Pushing the button" is now the metaphor for engaging in war—showing the extent of the detachment of warriors since the time of the Iliad. Now, we must *think* in order to see our connection with the horrors of war. If we do not think, we have learned nothing from the example of Adolph Eichmann, who, as Hannah Arendt made clear, was quite unable to think, and was simply a commonplace man "doing his job."

By reason of this need of attention to thinking, William Myers chooses the Quaker hero, John Woolman, as a counter cultural ideal, because Woolman had three qualities that are really essential to putting an end to war: his thinking embodied consistency, compassion, and moral imagination. He was born in 1720 in New Jersey, becoming a tailor and a Quaker minister. He found slavery morally intolerable, yet widely practiced, even by Quakers. He was never aggressive, yet he was uncompromising. One way that he made a living was by writing legal documents. After doing one bill of sale for a Negro slave, he would never do another, explaining why to both buyer and seller. "In two notable cases," Myers says, "Woolman's scruples caused people to decide to free their slaves rather than to will them to their heirs."

How did his moral imagination work? He was a tailor and made suits of clothes. When he realized that the commonly used indigo dye was produced by slave labor, he wore only undyed clothing himself, explaining why when asked. Woolman seems a far better ideal than any military figure in our own time. Myers says in a powerful paragraph toward the end:

> American society suffers from maintenance of an obsolete militarist ideal, one, moreover, which is seriously perverted by certain metaphors. Political rhetoric in our time invites citizens to think of the "interests" of the nation to be protected, and the language of physical strength and weakness is applied to the nation as a whole. Are "we" as strong as determined, as full of resolve as "they" are? In this metaphor the whole nation, that peculiar abstraction, is thought of as exemplifying well or badly the personal virtues of courage, strength, and technical skill. We are invited by this perverse and dangerous metaphor to think of the whole nation as a *hero.* But the mere existence of nuclear weapons means that the warrior ideal can no longer be part of the way nations define their relations with one another. Protecting nationalistically conceived "interests" through belligerence and threats of revenge, while pretending that the ultimate weapons are never to be used, requires either duplicity of thinking or utterly thought*less* detachment from reality.

National policy seems now to challenge the integrity of us all.