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A COLLECTION OF SYMPTOMS

WRITING in the *Saturday Review* for Sept. 16, Les Brown, the broadcast media expert on the *New York Times,* tells about technological advances in television equipment which may soon enable the TV set to "take the place of the neighborhood movie house, the home computer, the penny arcade, or the Sears Roebuck catalog." Presently being tested in Columbus, Ohio, is a lapsized push-button console, called "Qube," for cable TV which will give the viewer access to many channels, permit him to "talk back" to the program he is watching and, "incidentally," to buy directly through a button-pressing procedure. This innovation will also keep the broadcaster in close touch with the viewers:

> The computer, sweeping each of the Qube households every six seconds, records the purchases. It can also count the votes in a poll, giving the result in less than a minute, and it can handle the billing when viewers purchase [by punching a button] movies or sports events for their home screens.

After some discussion of the possibilities of this and other developments in TV technology, the writer remarks laconically that "no one can really predict what the social consequences of these electronic marvels will be." Indeed, whose interests will be served by this intimate connection with people's ideas and feelings at the moment of their decision-making, whether about a product or a candidate? Les Brown concludes:

> The "Big Brother" prophesied by George Orwell to arrive in 1984 appears to be on schedule. If that is unsettling to some policymakers, so also is the fact that companies operating systems like Qube will have extraordinary media power in their communities, for although the viewer will have the ability to answer back to the TV screen, the cable company controls the questions.

What do we learn from this sort of reporting and comment? Well, we learn how a small group of powerful communications entrepreneurs will probably obtain an even more secure grip on the psyches of many millions of people, telling them how to spend their money and, in effect, how to live their lives. In other words, acquisitive institutions are now so effectively organized and penetrating in their influence that they are taking the place of tradition and custom in the shaping of human behavior. More of and more in our lives are being molded to the procrustean requirements of the marketplace. This change is automatic and goes on all the time. We have never, of course, been free from outside influences, but today these influences are increasingly focused by the single-minded purpose of merchandisers. And since the channels are "objective"—the set is over there against the wall, and those clever people hired by big companies are putting images on the screen—we at least can become aware of what is happening. This is an important difference, which may prove our salvation. Transmission of habits and values by tradition and custom was an almost "natural" process which people seldom noticed or thought about, and, except for church and state, the influences reached us through the multiple sources of individuals. This meant that they were local and decentralized, never all-powerful, not the result of deliberate psychological manipulation.

While a few people have become very much aware of the great change in the sources of external influence, and are making themselves heard as critics and reformers, the great majority of the people seem as accepting of media communications as people in the traditional societies were of their various mentors. Writing of this modern submission to authority, Paulo Freire says:

> . . . an analysis of highly technological societies usually reveals the "domestication" of man's critical faculties by a situation in which he is massified and

has only the illusion of choice. Excluded from the sphere of decisions being made by fewer and fewer people, man is maneuvered by the mass media to the point where he believes nothing he has not heard on the radio, seen on television, or read in the papers. . . .

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of modern man is his domination by the force of these myths and his manipulation by organized advertising, ideological or otherwise. Gradually, without even realizing the loss, he relinquishes his capacity for choice; he is expelled from the orbit of decisions. Ordinary men do not perceive the tasks of the time; the latter are interpreted by an "elite" and presented in the form of prescriptions. And when men try to save themselves by following the prescriptions, they drown in leveling anonymity, without hope and without faith, domesticated and adjusted.

This applies to audiences in the United States as well as to the South Americans who are so well understood by Paulo Freire, but in North America a tired cynicism may be added. Les Brown reports:

During a televised interview with a local Columbus official one day, the program host asked the home audience if they believed what the official was saying. Viewers were instructed to press the top of the five buttons on the [Qube] console to answer yes and the second one to answer no. The vote was an overwhelming nay, and the embarrassed subject had to strain for credibility as the interview resumed.

Thumbs down! But still they watch and advertisers may retain greater credibility for their products, perhaps because the commercials are so carefully produced.

In another *SR* article in the same issue, Susan Schiefelbein describes the groups campaigning for better TV programming, some of them fairly effective. Parents have organized Action for Children's Television (ACT), which succeeded in eliminating advertising of sugar-coated vitamins for children. A present effort by ACT, to ban televised candy advertising addressed to children, elicited a report from the Federal Trade Commission which said (as summarized by the *SR* writer) "that advertising for heavily sugared products induces children to take a health risk; that children often cannot discriminate between programming and commercials; and that to children, 'an ad has the quality of an order, not a suggestion'." Spokesmen for the television industry, of course, declare that they are giving the public what it wants (people vote with their dollars), and that free spending or impulse buying proves we are a democracy.

To keep the record straight, Miss Schiefelbein concludes:

For each court case or petition or piece of legislation the media reform groups win, however, there are dozens of others that the networks ignore or, worse, scorn. The networks are most resistant to those who protest program content; they claim that in pushing to get certain programs canceled, reformers are infringing on the First Amendment rights of all broadcasters. The networks also claim that the outcry against TV sex and violence is coming from only a minority of Americans.

This final claim is accurate. Years ago, when Nicholas Johnson was one of the Commissioners of the FCC (Federal Communications Commission), he explained why the Commission often seemed too attentive to the interests of the broadcasters—too "permissive" in relation to programming:

Every day hundreds of pounds of legal documents are filed with the Commission, all presenting, in the most persuasive manner a talented corporate lawyer can muster, finely reasoned legal arguments why the broadcaster ought to be given what he asks. On the other side, the citizen's side, we receive virtually nothing. (Spring 1970 *Phi Beta Kappa Key Reporter.*)

It begins to seem as if we have about as much chance of improving television programs as Bruno had of getting the Holy Inquisition to agree with him, back in the sixteenth century. We do have one advantage over those days, however: We are able to say what we think. Not many people may hear us, but we can say it. Further, because there are those—such as Paulo Freire and others—who say it very well, we have opportunity to acquire, little by little, a better understanding of the present

human condition. This may be our only possible gain.

Meanwhile, a word about the *Saturday Review*. It is changing. From being a literary magazine it has become a kind of potpourri of cultural reporting and analysis, although with very good writers, as has always been the case. The Sept. 16 issue exposes so many of the characteristic tendencies of our society—as in the television stories—that the result seems a fairly accurate picture of the way we live now. So, going from back to front, we found—

> [Carll Tucker, the editor, saying:] In 1960, New York's state and local governments employed 10 per cent more people than the private sector; in 1973, 20 per cent. (The average for all the states, for the same period, rose from 11.4 per cent to 17.8 per cent.) A New Yorker pays 17.3 per cent of his personal income for local government (compared with the 15 per cent a Californian pays, the 12.5 per cent the average American pays). Being in an unfavorable competitive position in the last decade, New York lost corporations and jobs to other states. The tax base shrank. But state and local budgets kept growing.
>
> [Norman Cousins, the former editor, saying:] At a time like this, the real failure of education becomes apparent. Education has failed to educate about education. It has failed to provide adequate understanding of the centrality of education in a creative society. Schools have somehow failed to get across the biggest truth of all about learning: that its purpose is to unlock the human mind and to develop it into an organ capable of thought—conceptual thought, analytical thought, sequential thought. . . . One of the biggest needs of the school is not to teach people to do things but to help them to understand what they are doing. Nothing is easier than to create a society of people in motion; nothing is more difficult than to keep them from going nowhere. . . .

A full page is devoted to Walter Arnold's summary of the take-over by large conglomerates of the independent book publishing houses of the country, with the result that

> there are really only eight giant houses that agents and authors clamor after. (They are Doubleday, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Macmillan, McGraw-Hill, Prentice-Hall, Random House, Simon & Schuster, and Time Inc.) In the telling phrase of Richard Snyder, president of Simon & Schuster, these houses may become "like the seven sisters of the oil business." Already, the 10 largest mass-market paperback houses, every one of which is owned by a conglomerate, account for 90 per cent of the annual market. And two companies' book clubs (Doubleday's and Time Inc.'s) account for over 50 per cent of all book club sales. Obviously, if this trend continues, general book publishing could become like commercial television, a national junkyard dominated by a few networks that are, in turn, slaves to ratings measured by the lowest common denominator of interest.

This writer recalls Archibald MacLeish's characterization of the conglomerates which now dominate publishing: "corporate carnivores who have a high devotion to private profit at the expense of everything else."

Karl E. Meyer, who also examines television, reports on the suit brought by a mother against NBC, claiming that her daughter was the victim of an obscene attack because of the suggestive influence of an NBC program. Meyer weighs both the evidence and the First Amendment argument of the defendant, concluding:

> Who should have the final say? The networks and sponsors, whose paramount concerns are ratings and profits? Government regulators? Citizen groups employing boycott threats? It may well be true, in the words of Fred W. Friendly, a pioneer newscaster, that "the most serious threat to television and its claim to First Amendment freedoms is not the FCC or the Supreme Court or an imperial Presidency, but the runaway television rating process."

Good ratings mean sales—profits to prevent extinction. The reality of American communications, Karl Meyer says, is that "it is a business, controlled by market factors, and the old FCC system was but a token fig leaf on a naked emperor."

Naked or not, the emperor gets around. He has many irons in the fire. The first article in this issue of the *Saturday Review* is "The Corporation in the Classroom," by Fred M. Hechinger, who reports that a number of large corporations have claimed the right to "teach" the virtues of free enterprise in university classrooms. The

professors, they argue, don't think much of capitalism and "talk up socialist economics." That poor underdog, big business, is mournfully complaining about its image. Mr. Hechinger says:

> According to the Council for Financial Aid to Higher Education, industry has already underwritten 100 such courses, and another survey reports the endowment of more than 20 "free enterprise" faculty chairs, with an equal number currently in the planning stage. . . . Some of the big companies make no bones about the one-sided aims of the programs that they bankroll. The Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., for instance, has given Kent State University $250,000 to set up the Goodyear Professorship of Free Enterprise. The retired advertising executive who holds the new post says frankly that he regards it as a golden opportunity to act as a "business missionary."

This is one more episode in the drama of free enterprise, self-cast in the role of Little Red Ridinghood—"about to be swallowed by some Big Bad Wolf—Big Labor, Bad Socialism, Big Bad Government, and now, worst of all, college economics teachers." Mr. Hechinger wonders, why all this worry about the fragility of free enterprise system:

> Do its supporters really believe it can be saved from destruction only if conservatives infiltrate the colleges' economics departments? On the face of it, the proposition seems ludicrous. And yet, the underlying issue is deadly serious; for at issue is not just the matter of a few million dollars' being spent to finance a few business-propaganda chairs. The real question is: Who shall control the universities? Unless the universities retain their independence from even the most benevolent corporations—as well as independence from other benefactors—they will eventually find themselves being run by the host of conflicting, self-serving outside forces that have destroyed universities in other countries. If this happens, the teaching of economic theory will be only one among many crucial academic areas—including political science, history, philosophy, and science itself—that end up for sale.

Wasn't there anything else in that issue of the *Saturday Review*—something, say, a little bit good? Well, Thomas Middleton has some shy notes on a new book called *The Lunar Effect.* The psychiatrist author, Arnold L. Lieber, has become persuaded that "Scientific research is beginning to catch up with folk beliefs." Probably there's a lot of superstition mixed up with folk beliefs, but it seems important to recognize that there may be a lot of psychological and perhaps physiological truth in them, too. Mr. Middleton writes:

> I recall the only time I ever saw acupuncture performed. It was in an outdoor market in Taipei under an awning, between a fortune-teller and a fishmonger. The patient, seated on a wooden stool, was having needles inserted in his bare back. I didn't exactly laugh, but I smiled inwardly as such naïveté. It should have occurred to me that acupuncture wouldn't have endured for centuries if it didn't have some validity. Dr. Lieber postulates a very plausible connection between the lunar effect and acupuncture, and he suggests "the beginnings of a new and holistic view of the Universe—a system in which each part and every organism resonates with the cycle of the cosmos." Thirty years ago, no reputable scientist would have dared such phrases. Today only the foolhardy will sneer. There are, indeed, more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy.

If there is anything made plain by the material we have quoted from the other *SR* articles, it is that our society is out of key with the cosmos and that we are resonating in a way—not just over the air waves—that makes us all sick. "Holistic view of the universe" may seem a very vague expression, yet what better basis for self-diagnosis could we have?

What does holistic mean? It is an adjective derived from "whole," which descends from the same root as our word "health." To heal is to make whole. Obviously, then, a holistic universe means a universe which is some kind of organic whole. The ancient Greeks thought the earth was a great animal—a belief (animistic, we say) at which moderns laugh condescendingly—but this idea may prove more faithful to the world of nature than the Newtonian World-Machine. After all, the earth *acts* like a living organism. When you hurt it, it bleeds. It cries out in many-tongued voices when it is mutilated. Sometimes the voice is natural—heard in the sense that it seems sadly

diminished—as shown by Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*—and sometimes a human being becomes an articulate advocate for the creatures of field, forest, and stream—and, all the rest—as Supreme Court Justice Douglas declared should be done in his notable Mineral King dissent. Lately the holistic universe has acquired a virtual choir of inspired and well-tuned voices in behalf of the harmony of a common life. We have named them before—such writers as Theodore Roszak, E. F. Schumacher, Wendell Berry, John Todd, and, among members of an earlier generation, Joseph Wood Krutch, Lewis Mumford, and both the Polanyis (Michael and Karl).

The world is not a machine, and human life is not a cash transaction, they keep saying, over and over again. True health would be not needing to have this said any more.

A whole world is a healthy world. But what is a healthy world? We feel the meaning but hardly know. All we know is that the world is not very healthy now, and getting worse day by day. Meanwhile we have excellent cataloguers of particular ills who list the symptoms as they creep into view or explode in our faces.

Perhaps the sickness of the world is very much like the sickness of humans, which practically always, Dr. Henry Bieler would say, is the result of toxemia—evidenced by the agonized struggle of the body to eliminate poisons. We have a lot of names for those diseases, but mostly, Bieler says, they are the means available to the body for getting rid of the poisons we take into our systems.

If you ask a scientist what toxemia is, he may say that this is not an acceptable concept—not specific. It can't be tested. Something like that might also be said of health. You feel good, you are not sick, but what is it? More than one thoughtful physician has complained of the absence of the study of health in his medical education. Doctors know much about pathology, but very little of health. Perhaps the best first step toward understanding health would be to adopt very seriously the Hippocratic principle, Do no harm!

How could this be made practical in a world as imperfect as ours? Well, Gandhi gave his life—his long and self-sacrificing life—to showing what could be done. Listing parallel activities for individuals, communities, and populations would probably amount to a working definition of therapy for both the world and man.

REVIEW
STORY WITH A THOUSAND VERSIONS

IN retelling the tale of Everyman, Frederick Franck explains: "Once more—as if I were some medieval monk—I have to write this book by hand, person-to-person to you." Interestingly, after you get used to the calligraphy, a certain fondness for Dr. Franck's script develops; quite evidently, a pen-point can be made more responsive to the nuances felt by the writer than the brittle alternatives afforded by the typographer's craft, and the flow of meaning is less mechanized by having to be put into a book—*Every-One* (Doubleday, $12.50). Actually the formal printing of other material in this lovely volume—the back-of-the-book explanation of how the story of Everyman came to be a lifelong interest of the author, and a sixteenth-century version (first published by John Scott, of London) of the play—comes as something of a shock. Following the calligraphic delicacies, the harsh rigidity of Roman type seems to mar the communication, although the content is welcome enough.

Why give attention to matters which have to do with only the form of a work? Because the writer is first of all an artist, and to speak of how the artist's sensibility affects what he writes has prefatory importance. Dr. Franck is, moreover, a pen-and-ink artist, for whom drawing seems as important as breathing. So he drew the book, rather than having it printed. Just as Buckminster Fuller, when he came to record certain reflections in *No More Secondhand God,* found he could not do it except in poetry, so Dr. Franck has to tell the tale of Everyman by his own hand.

What is *Everyman?* It is an old morality play, and Scott's edition is said to have been translated from the Dutch. It tells of the encounter of the human soul with the assessors of moral law, at the time of death. The cast of the play is made up of personified witnesses to the soul's behavior during his life on earth. Their testimony will decide the soul's fate. In the Egyptian form of the drama, the soul stands before Osiris (the Judge), and as the report on his deeds is recited, he exclaims:

> "Oh my heart, my ancestral heart necessary for my transformations, . . . do not separate thyself from me before the guardian of the Scales. Thou art my personality within my breast, divine companion watching over my bodies." (*Book of the Dead,* chap. lxiv, v. 35.)

In an introductory note, Dr. Franck explains how, while visiting in Japan, he learned of the antiquity and presumed origin of *Everyman.* A work by a Japanese scholar, he says, "presents convincing evidence that the roots of our archetypal Christian morality play were not only at least a thousand years older than I had ever suspected, but that its central plot is based on a Buddhist parable." ("The Man and his Four Wives.") He gives its substance:

> The Buddha said to one of his Bhikkus:
>
> "Every man on earth possesses in himself four karmas . . .
>
> There was a man who had four wives. He loved his first wife best, he spoiled her and doted on her. She represents the body. He also prized his second wife. As soon as she was out of his sight, he became worried. She represents worldly riches. He was less attached to his third wife. Still, when she was troubled, he would console her. She symbolizes all social connections: parents, brothers and sisters, spouse and children. The fourth wife he treated less as a wife than a servant. He hardly noticed her at all. When the Messenger of Death summons him, the first wife shrugs. Number two is almost as indifferent, even mocks his attachment to her as sheer egotism. The third wife offers to go with him as far as the city gate, but not a step further. It is the despised fourth wife who says: 'I shall follow you in life as in death, for you I left my home and parents.' She is the symbol of man's essence, his True Nature which survives death, the Indestructible. . . ."

The sense of meaning grows on us from this account. It plays a part in all great literature. Arjuna's despondency, described in the *Bhagavad-Gita,* results from his blinding attachment to what the third wife stands for, and it becomes Krishna's role, as celestial Messenger, to open his eyes to

his highest loyalty. In modern times the tendency is to render these things into more abstract conceptions. This was clearly accomplished by A. H. Maslow in *Motivation and Personality.* In the Everyman tale, the wives represent Maslow's levels of motivation, and the soul has opportunity to exchange the dearer for the better. The ordeals of life help him to distinguish true values. But wifely symbolism is hardly appropriate today, since one of the tasks of the present is to recognize the feminine in the masculine, and vice versa, finding a harmony between the two. The ancient gods were portrayed as embodying both sexes, the balance being wordlessly conveyed by symbol. We, in contrast, have to *think* about these things, because of the invincibly "rational" attitude which a hundred years of scientific authority has given us, and also because of an increased insistence of the spontaneous "will to know." So, instead of telling a story about "wives" with different qualities, Maslow writes of the "hierarchy of needs" and classifies them as either Deficiency Needs or Being Needs. Using the old language, we could say that the Deficiency Needs belong to the body and the mask of personality, while Being Needs are of the soul. (For soul, Maslow uses an action synonym—self-actualizing.) In modern language, the generalizing abstractions of humanistic psychology are intellectually very different from the terms of allegory, yet their meanings are essentially the same. In the distant past the emphasis was always on the Virtues, but now we talk about "Values" with the same general intent, although the conversion of values into action seems harder than practicing the virtues. Originality is required.

Why don't the virtues appeal to us as much as they used to appeal to people in the past? Writers, at least, could then discourse on them without inhibition, but today we must be very careful to avoid any sort of moralizing. Preachers lose all their audience except for the medieval types. Self-conscious righteousness repels. Is this because human freedom is not respected by preaching?

Dr. Franck relates the "recensions" of *Everyman:*

> This profound parable became in modified form part of the *Legend of Barlaam and Josaphat,* that remarkable legend of Indian origin which contains a christianized version of the life of Gautama Buddha and which after percolating through Asia, reached the Middle East in the seventh century. It traveled further and penetrated Europe. Here the ancient Buddhist parable, once more transformed, became the central structure of *The Play of Everyman,* that top-hit of the Middle Ages, which after its two-thousand-year pilgrimage around the world, was to return to the East via Warwick, as a Buddhist-Christian credo.

Here (at the end), Dr. Franck is speaking of himself and his work. (Warwick is his home.) His Christianity, a freethinking brand, obtained psychological illumination from the study of Mahayana Buddhism. He says:

> In Mahayana I found the split between I and not-I solved, I found its essence of Wisdom-Compassion sublimely expressed in the ideal of the Bodhisattva: the one who, having reached full Enlightenment, vows to refuse his own attainment of Nirvana until he has liberated saved, all living beings from their sufferings, even mice and blades of grass.

Maslow, too, it may be remembered, found the Bodhisattvic ideal a splendid embodiment of the fully self-actualized human being.

In Dr. Franck's drama, the soul confronted by death explodes with the outrage, and then the impassioned pleading, of one brought before the Judgement Seat before he is ready. The author has a sure ear for modern speech and rationalization:

> *Everyone* Let me be!
> You are Death
> You are Time!
> Give me time,
> I have not done with living!
>
> *Death* They call that living . . .
>
> *Everyone* I have important appointments,
> prominent people are waiting for me . . .
>
> *Death* This trip has first—and last—priority.
>
> *Everyone* Look here: I'm willing to pay,
> I'll give you a thousand for each day . . .

Ten thousand . . .
Twenty for each hour . . . you want cash?
I'll get you cash!

Death No use . . . I set no store by riches.
I know no V.I.P.'s.
Presidents, politicians, professors:
all offer this world,
Popes, priests, preachers:
all offer me the next . . .
Not one of the buffoons
can bribe me to delay
for the single blinking of an eye!
I speak to you on highest orders:
Final accounting is required. . .
Obey! This is the day!

Then comes this interchange:

Everyone If death is the verdict anyway,
then why the slow cancer of an audit?
A balance sheet of what?
Of all my life?

Death I always love
to hear them speak about
"MY life," as if they owned it!
. . . .
Write up that balance sheet
of what you did in life
as long as it was yours
and do it now!

Dr. Franck has accomplished a mythopoeist's restoration of a universal story. The drawings which grace the pages, while not meant as "illustrations," are as compassionate as they are revealing. His pen has the touch of a Dostoevsky—a rare art and its own full vindication.

COMMENTARY
OUTWARD BOUND

READERS who enjoy the dialogue in Frederick Franck's *Everyone* (it begins in the next column) might find similar pleasure in a play written long ago (1923)—*Outward Bound,* by Sutton Vane. The action takes place on an ocean liner—symbolic of the passage of souls from this world to the next. What the humans undergoing this transition have to say for themselves becomes starkly revealing, and often quite funny. The drama plays well and has been produced again and again by stock companies, through the years. There are two characters called "half-ways," who have tried to take their own lives—a young man and his wife—and their intermediate destiny, as it finally develops, becomes the most interesting part of the play.

The Judge or "Examiner" in *Outward Bound* is dressed as a British clergyman, but has jovial directness the deceased find disconcerting. In one interrogation he talks to a "successful" businessman:

> THOMSON [the Examiner]. Well, sir?
>
> LINGLEY. I am Lingley, of Lingley, Limited.
>
> THOMSON. Never mind the "Limited" You are just Lingley now.
>
> LINGLEY. What am I charged with anyway?
>
> THOMSON. With just being yourself.
>
> LINGLEY. I'm very proud of being myself. From small beginnings I have worked up to great things. I have never hesitated but have always kept to the straight path.
>
> THOMSON. I know. But *how?* . . .
>
> LINGLEY. I—I'm afraid you don't understand business.
>
> THOMSON. Not the way you conduct it. Why you've been a rascal from the very start. You commenced your career by breaking a playmate's head against a granite curb because he had a painted tin horse. You wanted to get it. . . .
>
> LINGLEY. I've not been wicked. People respect me.
>
> THOMSON. Do they? To your face, perhaps. Some men get found out during their lives, Lingley. You are only found out now. Come; off you get.

To a more promising candidate the Examiner says: "Don't look so shocked. It must be done. Suffering sometimes works wonderful transformations. Let's hope, boy, let's hope."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
CONFUSION AND COMMON SENSE

IF we knew more about human beings, we'd probably write and talk more about them—their natural ends, capacities, and needs—when considering the issues of education. But instead, because we know so little, we argue endlessly about institutions. They, at least, are "objective," supplying evidence on the basis of which they can be praised or blamed. But such arguments about institutions seldom have much to do with the *essentials* of education—how children, or anyone, may learn. Usually they become heated debates about *justice,* exploring how social institutions contribute to it or stand in its way. For publication here we try to find material that has to do with teaching, with how people learn. One difference between good material about teaching and arguments about social issues is that teaching is something we all can do—and inevitably do do—without voting or belonging to or working for some organization. Teaching is a constant and universal role of human beings, while our institutional connections are only part-time. Moreover, we have very little control over institutional channels, except at the long range of some political process. We can afford to give only a comparatively small part of ourselves to working for institutional change, and we know that the return is likely to be small.

What then is the importance of being informed about the arguments concerning the schools? The only answer we can think of is that we may learn a little more about the patterns of human behavior. This may help us to be better teachers. We may become more fundamental in our approach to education, and less ideological. In other words, real education is the bootstrap operation which comes first, and which institutional processes may anon serve and anon damn. If this bootstrap reality is lost sight of, then the argument about institutions will have practically nothing to do with education.

James Coleman said something like this three years ago. Explaining that his 1966 Report was concerned with the comparative achievements of students in school, he maintained that his findings ought not to have been made the basis for settling social questions. In the matter of bussing, the issue brought before the courts turned on constitutional rights, and that, he said, is "a legal question, not a question of achievement levels." (*Nation,* July 5, 1975.) Coleman did not expect any immediate improvement in pupil achievement as the result of bussing, although, on constitutional grounds (involving justice), he believed that efforts toward effective desegregation should continue. The distinction he makes is important, yet continually blurred.

A new book by Diane Ravitch, *The Revisionists Revisited—A Critique of the Radical Attack on the Schools* (Basic Books, 1978, $8.95), gives broad background for understanding the almost endless argument about the institution of the public schools. Two books set the stage for her investigation—Ellwood Cubberley's *Public Education in the United States* (1919) and Paul Monroe's *Textbook in the History of Education* (1906). Miss Ravitch says:

> Cubberley was an educational administrator, at one time superintendent of schools in San Francisco, who came late to historiography; Monroe taught history of education at Teachers College for twenty years and from his seminar emerged numerous histories which reflected his interpretation of American educational history. The Cubberly-Monroe thesis, put simply, held that the story of American education was the story of the emergence and triumph of the American public school; typical historical treatments scoured the past to find "seeds" of the public school, traced its evolution as an institution, described its victories over "bigots" and "reactionaries," and climaxed with its establishment as a fully realized agency of progress and good government. . . . Cubberley's *Public Education in the United States* was a synthesis of the conventional wisdom of at least the previous half century. It became standard fare in professional schools of

education and for decades was widely considered the most authoritative text on the history of American education. Cubberly, writing in the first quarter of the twentieth century with the patriotic fervor of his time, depicted the emergence of the American public school system as the capstone of a long series of struggles between the forces of progress and the forces of reaction.

Anyone who is fifty or more will surely remember the pervasiveness of this estimate of American education, probably having shared in it until a few years ago. But now the mood toward public education is changed. Speaking of the radical attack on the public school system, Miss Ravitch says:

> Where liberals had argued that the spread of public schooling was social progress, radicals saw the public school as a weapon of social control and indoctrination; where liberals had maintained that reforms like compulsory schooling freed children from oppressive workplaces, radicals saw compulsory schooling as an expansion of the coercive power of the state; where liberals believed in the power of schooling to liberate people from their social origins, the radicals perceived the school as a social sorting device which undergirds an unjust, exploitive class system; where liberals considered the school to be an integral part of democratic society, radicals viewed it as a mechanism by which one group (an elite) exploits and manipulates another (the masses or the workers or minorities or "the community"); where liberals had worked to insure that individual merit would be rewarded without regard to race or religion or other ascriptive factors, radicals described the outcome of this effort as meritocracy, hierarchy, and bureaucracy.

While the schools are now vulnerable to such criticisms, partly because of the piously exaggerated claims made for them in the past—Bernard Bailyn speaks of "the patristic literature of a powerful academic ecclesia" which forwarded and spread these claims—Miss Ravitch believes that the radical critics, while useful in provoking questions, have done little actual good. She recalls that Horace Mann in his campaign for free public education proposed that the schools would serve all interests, finding some validity in his contentions:

> He argued both that education would be a great equalizer and that it would disarm the poor of their hostility toward the rich. Part of the political potency of the public school idea in the United States has been the simultaneous appeal to disparate interests. The continuing strength of the public schools is due to the fact they have at least partially fulfilled the expectations of their differing constituencies. . . . This consensual political process is a manifestation of democratic, pluralist politics, in which many groups and individuals press for their own interests and arrive at a resolution which satisfies most of the participants and crushes none. Radicals believing in the inexorability as well as the desirability of class struggle, see the political process as a way of defusing discontent without sharply altering the status quo.

The following suggests Miss Ravitch's position:

> An anarchist society, if such a contradiction could exist, would have no compulsion whatever, and very likely have no means of assuring elementary standards of equity; a Marxist society, which places emphasis on ends, tolerates the maximum of coercion in pursuing its goals. Fundamental to a democratic-liberal society is the recognition that basic values endure but are realized partially, incrementally, and sporadically; that ends and means are inseparable; that one ultimately determines the other, and that inhumane means can never produce humane ends.

Does public education contribute to the "upward mobility" of minority people? The answer has to be yes and no. If you read the *Reader's Digest,* you may say yes, since the July issue had impressive quotations from ten successful black people who have risen to heights—they are pictured and the article is headed "Black America Still Has a Dream." But there are dozens of articles (see for example Benjamin DeMott in the September *Atlantic*) and books which tell how the schools hold young people down.

Called for by such contrasts are long thoughts about the differences—far from explained—in human purpose, human capacity, human determination. Hardly anyone writes about this mystery—after all, what can you say? Ortega is an exception (see *Some Lessons in Metaphysics,* Chap. I).

The temperate common sense of Miss Ravitch's book is nonetheless valuable. She says at the end:

> Suppose, for the sake of discussion, that schools do not have cosmic purposes; that they cannot "save" society; that they are neither spearheads of radical change nor instruments of cultural repression. Think instead of institutions whose purposes are circumscribed by the public that supports them, and whose goals are limited and potentially attainable.

Writers like Ivan Illich and John Holt are not mentioned by Miss Ravitch, perhaps because they fit in neither her liberal nor her radical category and would require special treatment. But since they may be today's best critics of the schools, they certainly deserve attention.

FRONTIERS

Modernized Poverty

AN editorial in *American Forests* for July begins with a quotation on aid from E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful.* He wrote: "The new thinking that is required for aid and development will be different from the old because it will take poverty seriously." It will, he continued, "care for people—from a severely practical point of view." *American Forests* finds the World Bank taking this injunction to heart.

> Last February, without much fanfare, the World Bank published a small booklet setting out its new lending policy for forestry projects in the developing countries of the world. The statement is a landmark—recommended reading for anyone interested in international forestry development and conservation.
>
> Titled simply *Forestry,* the booklet, like Schumacher's book, could have been subtitled: *As If People Mattered.*
>
> Under its new program, the World Bank's main emphasis in forestry lending will be on projects in rural areas, responsive to the needs of the rural populations. This changing emphasis, says the policy statement, "will necessitate a radical change in the Bank's approach to forestry development" in order to "reflect the reality that the major contribution of forestry to development will come from its impact on indigenous people."

"Move over, Friends of the Earth," exclaims the *Forestry* editorial, "Make way for the World Bank."

While both booklet and policy may be all that is claimed for them, the enthusiasm of the *Forestry* editors seems at least premature. Reporting on the UN World Food Council's meeting in Mexico City last June, Patricia Flynn (*Los Angeles Times,* July 16) describes the recent expansion of agribusiness in Third World areas, in response to increasing demand for fruits and vegetables. She says:

> As a result, a growing number of Third World countries have become significant raisers of food for export, while their own people suffer severe food shortages. Ironically, this development is being encouraged by the very international organizations that have been charged with waging war against global hunger.

Miss Flynn quotes figures provided at the World Food Council meeting:

> —43 countries now suffer acute food shortages;
>
> —445 million of the world's people are malnourished (an increase of 55 million during the past eight years);
>
> —One-third of the world's children die of malnutrition and related diseases before the age of five.

She asks:

> How did the delegates respond to these statistics? Unfortunately, while they considered other suggestions, they joined the World Bank and the U.S. Agency for International Development in calling on the developed nations to make a larger public and private investment in the mechanization and modernization of Third World agriculture.
>
> Apparently, these international agencies still believe that such investment can strike a significant blow at world hunger. But as Latin America's recent experience so clearly demonstrates, nothing could be further from the truth.

Patricia Flynn writes at some length of the disasters agribusiness has brought to Mexico, Brazil, Guatemala, and Colombia, reaching what seems a totally justified conclusion:

> It is clear that the powerful landowners and agribusiness companies are not concerned with giving farm workers a fair share of the wealth they produce, nor with protecting the right of small farmers to their land, nor with meeting the food needs of the local population.

Required reading for the policy-makers of the World Bank: *Food First,* by Frances Moore Lappé and Joseph Collins. Miss Flynn obviously knows the book well.

Incidently, according to *Rain* for August-September, a new edition of *Food First* will soon be available. In it is a passage which shows that while the intermediate technology of biogas (methane) may help some under-developed

peoples, it can prove ruinous to others. In China it has been an enormous boon, but in rural India it may create desperation among the poorer groups. The point of choosing the *appropriate* technology is driven home by this account:

> First, [in India] even the smallest plants require a significant investment and the dung from two cows. Thus only well-off farmers who have at least two cows and some capital to invest now control the biogas. Furthermore, the dung, which once was free, now has cash value. In areas where biogas plants operate, landless laborers can no longer pick it off the road and use it for fuel. And since the landless and other poor villagers are in no position to buy biogas, they end up with no fuel at all. In other words, their position is worsened by the introduction of biogas plants, according to A. K. Reddy, governor of the appropriate technology unit at the Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore.

The fundamental to be grasped is that no technology is appropriate unless it protects or advances the poorest groups. If this is not understood, the authors say, "many people might be taken in by the claim of multinational firms that they now have converted to 'appropriate technology'." Firestone-India is given as an example:

> In 1976 the Company announced a solid rubber tire and steel wheel that they said would increase the carrying capacity of India's 13 million bullock carts by 50 per cent. Sounds great. But there are two snags. At a price of 60 per cent more than the conventional wooden wheel, Firestone-India's wheel is beyond the means of the poor peasant. Moreover, the new wheel will put traditional wheel-makers out of business. When asked why the company was introducing the new wheel, the factory director explained that the motivation was the current glut in the natural rubber market. "Rubber-tired wheels on bullock carts will provide a large outlet for this surplus rubber."

Right at the start, people didn't matter at all.

For a conclusion, we repeat the deliriously optimistic speculation of Richard Critchfield in a review of Lester Brown's *The Twenty-Ninth Day* (*Christian Science Monitor,* May 17). Speaking of the regions with ample sunlight, he says that "in a solar-powered world the 122 poor nations of the poor south may be poor no more; they have the most sun." He adds: "Far from the apocalyptic vision of mass starvation by the year 2000, we are likely to have food coming out of our ears." Lester Brown, the reviewer says, hints of this cautiously. Caution seems in order.