VOLUME XXXVIII, NO. 8
FEBRUARY 20, 1985

FROM PROFESSION TO PASSION

WHAT was once the great promise of our civilization, but has turned into bondage, is the discovery, followed by the practice, of specialization. The promise lay in the achievements of a few exceptional men of the stature of Copernicus, Galileo, and Newton—men whose natural bent for observation and study of nature altered not only the world we live in, but shaped the thinking of almost everyone as to the meaning of "progress" and the extraordinary heights to which it might lead. There was an element of deception in this expectation—the transfer to ourselves of the ability of such men, so that it became commonplace to say or suggest that *we* did all those wonderful things. We didn't do them, the natural philosophers did them, and while it is certainly true that their accomplishments stirred to activity the minds of those who, to begin with, could read, and led to the infectious enthusiasm of the Enlightenment, it is even truer that as the practice of science came to require more and more elaborate education, the resulting progress became less and less something in which most of us knew how to participate. This progress, pushed on by increasingly numerous specialists, went on all around us, but we were mere consumers of its fruits, eventually becoming almost helpless dependents on the devices invented by the few. This is the technological society in which we live, move, and have our very much reduced being.

Keeping pace with the advance of technology, although in a laggard way, have been the institutions of society, by whose patterns we live and which our education instructs us to accept. Indeed, education has been a collaborator in our reduction. The schools, especially those of the levels above high school, themselves transformed by the requirements of fields of specialization, became the champions and elucidators of the doctrine of progress, lending the aura of higher education to the complex vocabulary of the "how-to" disciplines. Intelligence came to mean possession of the skills of "problem-solving"—that is, the kind of problems that are taken seriously by a technological society. Questions about the meaning of human life were neglected if not forgotten. Meanwhile, the grade schools and secondary education served the needs of this society by "sorting out children to assume different positions in the occupational hierarchy," as Arthur Jensen put it years ago.

What about the Humanities, the literature of the classics, and English, which is not without its classics? Have they been immune to the blight of progress? Not according to D. S. Carne-Ross, who teaches them at Boston University. His book, *Instaurations* (University of California Press, 1979), is concerned with the way to restore literature to its role of a "centralizing civilizing force," since higher education has itself become a kind of specialty. And as he says, "Something is inevitably lost when a passion becomes a profession, when the spirit's fine commerce with an author is turned into an academic discipline."

Specialization, by reason of the way our minds work, is at its worst in literature for the reason that wisdom or insight is by nature unspecialized and is even shut out when its possible sources are subdivided within the narrow ranges of an academic curriculum. Prof. Carne-Ross is intent on defeating this tendency, seeking means of renewing awareness of the high possibilities of literature as at least the vestibule of the region of truth. It is, he says, "the strongest, even the sole remaining witness to much that mankind has always known but is now in danger of losing." He goes on:

To approach literature in this way need not mean treating it as something other than itself (as religion, for example), nor does it mean asking of literature something it cannot give. Such an approach does mean that we need to find ways of reading unlike those practiced in the academy, ways that have their own rigor even though they cannot be institutionalized. Neither scholarly research nor the concept of literature as a source of disinterested aesthetic pleasure will serve if we hope to see it as a witness.

Since the English department has never professed to see literature as a witness (whatever this term may prove to mean), there is no point in complaining that it fails to do so. Let me instead put to the department a question about something that concerns it very much: How far, in its teaching of literature, does it promote literacy?

To get some idea of what Carne-Ross means by "literacy" and by "ways of reading unlike those practiced in the academy," it is necessary to quote from him a long passage which begins with a brief extract taken from George Eliot's novel, *Daniel Deronda:*

"A human life, I think, should be well rooted in some spot of a native land, where it may get the love of tender kinship for the face of the earth, for the labours men go forth to, for the sounds and accents that haunt it, for whatever will give that early home a familiar unmistakable difference amidst the future widening of knowledge: a spot where the definiteness of early memories may be inwrought with affection, . . . may spread not by sentimental effort and reflection, but as a sweet habit of the blood."

Living as we do now, like nomads, never staying long enough in one place to grow into it—and if we do stick somewhere, the place itself is soon bulldozed out of recognition: from our perspective, what imaginable mode of existence does a passage like this point to?

Eliot, nonetheless, is here bearing witness (in my sense) to something, to a way of living on earth which alone offers humankind its true measure of content. But she was writing at a time when such a way of life, "this blessed persistence in which affection can take root," as she beautifully calls it had almost disappeared. . . . The industrial revolution was far into its stride. We cannot hope to understand, let alone recover, what she is talking about here. . . . To find out what kinship for the face of earth means we need to go back to its earlier forms when it meant something far stronger than even Eliot could imagine. For the great divide had already opened up. . . .

This great divide now stands between us and the whole earlier life of man. Of course, if everything that is needed to live well is found here, on our side of the divide, then there is no need to worry. But if the past holds much that we need now and may need more urgently tomorrow, then to be cut off from the past is the gravest of dangers. In the mass society we are taught to look on the past as a junkyard of outmoded devices, at best as a quaint reservation to be visited on ceremonial occasions. The only place where the past still has a home is in the liberal arts college, our "sacred precinct" where the remembering arts are cultivated and the texts of literature studied. Literature plays an important role here. It houses the living past as nothing else (except language) can. It also warns us, through our response, when a region of the past has fallen out of memory and becomes inaccessible.

Something else, happily, is now leaving us, although hardly dropped out as yet, and that is the immeasurable conceit of being "modern." We are no longer sure that all the people who lived before Galileo were primitives who hardly belonged to our species. Not only the Greeks, but even some of those thought of as primitive, are now recognized as having a wisdom, indeed a practical wisdom that we have wholly forgotten or never knew. Carne-Ross recalls a lecture he heard given by Alfonso Ortiz, "a Tewa Indian and a professional anthropologist."

Professor Ortiz told us, among other valuable things, that his people think it disrespectful to lie abed when the sun is up. If their father is at work, they should be too. We listened dutifully and did our best to imagine what it must be like to live in a world where such sentiments are still possible. Some of us, it may be, very much wanted to reach out to a world graced by this natural piety. We would like to share the feelings of the Indian logger mentioned by Gary Snyder who gave up logging and sold his chain saw "because he couldn't stand hearing the trees scream when he cut into them." And indeed Ortiz ended by telling us that if we wanted to be saved we will have to go to school to the Indians. Yet it was no use. The cultural gulf between the Indian reality he described and the reality we actually inhabit (whatever we may think of it) was too great. We *know* that trees do not

> scream when we cut into them. To unknow this we would have to dismantle a reality that began with the transcendental God of the Old Testament. We cannot suddenly step into a sacred universe in which man and earth are part of a great vital continuum bound together by sympathy. The pieties Ortiz held up to us could come across only as picturesquely technicolored Native Customs.

What is the author reaching for? Can his objective be defined? In one place he speaks of "the whole sacramental sense of life" as what we have lost; in seeking to regain it, he speaks as a man and a teacher, as one who feels that the symmetry of human life, its delicate balances and its avenues of inner growth, cannot be recovered without individual participation in the vast network of obligation that unites the life of the world. This participation was once spontaneous, a natural function of collective belief, but has been left behind by the alienating "objectivity" of scientific thinking. We have learned to study the world by isolating ourselves from the flow of its life and becoming experts in manipulation. The terms of the reunion sought may seem to involve the language of inherited religion, yet we find ourselves unable to go back to one or more of the many dialects of religious faith. It is the reunion that we want to feel, a kind of beinghood that is prior to the particular speech through which it gained conscious expression in the past. For this reason definition becomes almost impossible, since to use words about such matters is only to borrow from a particular past the limiting terms which now stand for bondage of the mind. And yet these terms also contain traces of the spontaneity that once had living presence among the societies of humans.

How can we recover the feeling we want without wearing the shackles thrown off in the eighteenth century? Is it possible, now, to pursue with our minds, deliberately and persistently, a durable position in the network of responsibility that once "came naturally" to human beings in traditional societies?

Mr. Carne-Ross finds clues to the answers to these questions in the study of classical literature, but not as it is studied in the academy. As he says:

> A great work of literature cannot be approached in the objective, disinterested way proper to the natural sciences: we ourselves are at issue there. Nor does a text belong to some distanced aesthetic realm, our most intense experience of literature tells us that this is a fiction. It follows that our beliefs can never simply be set aside when we read. Where do we read *from* if not from the center of our own being? Certainly we can entertain a variety of views about the world; it is part of the task of education to enlarge our limited range of opinions. But when a book introduces us to a world of which we can only say, "No, things are not like that," even more when it proposes a view of life which we hold to be untrue, then it is very doubtful how far we can be said to read it.

Here the author is getting at his meaning of literacy. It involves a schooled use of the imagination—the capacity not only to read the words of a text, but to recognize the ranges of feeling which are behind the words. The text, in short, becomes the avenue of an *incarnation* of our minds in worlds on the other side of the great divide. Carne-Ross thinks that we now, through our feeling of disenchantment with the world, may be ready to begin explorations of the past in a mood of deep yearning and expectancy that was not before possible.

> Earlier classicists approached Greece from a position of confidence, assured of the superiority of their own civilization and their own religion. Our position is different: it is need that sends us to Greece. We have no faith in our civilization and nothing that deserves to be called a religion. In early Greek poetry and thought we find not the idle or delightful fictions of paganism but a religious sense, a holy, that can speak strongly to those untouched by the transcendent deity of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In the Homeric world, a German scholar writes, "the divine is not superimposed as a sovereign power over natural events; it is revealed in the form of the natural, as their very essence and being." There are those who look to Greece from the wasteland of the present and think they discern there something that in a new form

might one day be recovered, a sense of the holiness of earthly dwelling.

Putting Greek at the center of intellectual life does not mean reinstating an old, outworn discipline. It means turning to something that only recently has begun to dawn.

As a device for the expression of hope, Carne-Ross suggests that teachers of the Humanities and classical language and literature who see no future for either teaching or learning in the academy as presently constituted might migrate and form a group, perhaps a real community of scholars, and begin to teach as they know they ought to, calling themselves a center of resistance. They would teach *literacy*. "With Platonic *paideia* somewhere in mind, they take literacy to involve a great deal, an awakening and re-direction of the spirit, a turning about of the whole being. A regrounding, which they see as the search for a new beginning." Their credo:

Literature matters, more now than ever before, because it bears witness to something no longer found anywhere else to what Pound calls "a lost kind of experience," the letter that has silently fallen out of a line of type; because it points, with an evidence we cannot altogether deny, to something that is missing, a gap or hole at the center of things. Literature matters because, housing the living past as nothing else (except language) can, it remembers and keeps reminding us, at a time when everything else tells us to forget and be content with what we have, that we are living without something that humankind has always had. Literature matters because it teaches us to resist society's insistence that its reality holds the sum of all things possible. But it can do none of these things unless we devise stronger ways of reading. Reading that makes greater demands on the texts, and allows the texts to make greater demands on us. We need a new form of literacy.

Lest he be taken too literally, the author notes "the agonizing, almost insuperable difficulties of welding into a community a handful of atomized individuals," but he also shows that a life apart from the academy will be a life transformed from the typical career of the conventional scholar. The scholars will find themselves reduced in time and energy because they will no longer regard themselves as privileged characters and now look for ways of supporting themselves on the land. They will become hand workers as well as mind workers.

The community I am trying to picture is made up of people of the book. They need their texts not for scholarship or aesthetic pleasure but for their essential sustenance, to propose models of a reality other than the reality enforced by our society and as a defense against the values of that society. They need time for their texts, time to practice the almost lost art of reading. And yet how are they going to find the time, out there in the woods?

Well, solving this problem will restore for them the reality of Necessity, which the technologists thought they had abolished, pushing it pretty far out of sight. This is a lesson that is in literature, but learning it from life as well will deepen the meaning and value of the texts. And after all, they will find that technology is itself a help, once we understand that it is no solution.

The old seclusion is no longer needed, nor is it justified: it is crippling. Mind alone cannot recover the dimension in which it once moved. The hand will have to go out again, hand working alongside mind, exploring, testing, laboring to discover what remains and start building again. Thinking will have to be joined to making and doing, the necessary accepted again and necessity reinstated as the final line of things. Necessity, our old enemy, is coming to look like an old friend, an ally against the monstrous man-made structure that balloons us round, and a pointer to the permanent facts of earthly existence and divine, unchanging nature.

A quotation from Schumacher's *Small is Beautiful* indicates the convergence of the author's thinking with lines which lead to other resistance centers. The enclave of teachers will no longer be specialists in the old sense, but more natural human beings, people who will be ordinary in a way that may make them extraordinary, having learned to understand people more directly, as well as their texts. They are attaining to a leanness that all of us need. Moreover, "there is too much fat on our library shelves."

Certainly there would be less time for reading, out there in the woods, and fewer books to read. But

> then those who still read now read far too much—reading, often, as a defense against the surrounding society. And we spend too much time on the wrong kind of books, the books—too numerous to absorb and rapidly becoming too expensive to buy—that one must have looked at in order to keep up. What a relief if the whole parastructure of commentary and critique and much of what passes for scholarship were to fall away into silence: a silence out of which the few, primary, texts could speak.

There are people like that, now, on the land—people with ample education who use the texts of their field, but they are also farmers, nearly every one of them, who are learning to read the text of Nature and giving her voice. They, too, belong to this community of scholars. They too, have found, as Carne-Ross puts it, that their task is "too large," too large for anyone, "but someone has to make a start somewhere. What they find they are aiming at, on the smallest of scales, is nothing less than a new founding, another instauration." It is a beginning which goes beyond the prudence which is "no more than enlightened self-interest."

> What is wanted is something that would stop us devastating the natural world, even if it could be done safely, an instinct or attitude that might in time lead to a principle: that while man can dispose as he wishes of the things that he has made, he has no such absolute rights over what is by nature, not by man. Since he is driven to create his polls, he must use the things the earth provides. But why not do so respectfully, sparingly, like someone asking his neighbor for help, not like a tyrant coercing a slave? . . . There is more here than respect, though, something that deserves to be called piety and might in time lead man to see that the things that are by nature are not his property and are even, in their unknown life out there, in some sense sacred. In still further time, the qualifying phrase "in some sense" might be dropped, and the light of the sacred begin to shine again in all that is.

This is the reason for the community, since—

> Education of this sort could not take place in the academy. It could happen only in a place where learning was also a way of living, through a stumbling, resolute dialogue between the members of the community and the land they worked on, the daily tasks they performed, the books they read, the thoughts they tried to think through.

If knowing Greek and Latin is part of the explanation of the excellence of this book, we can think of no more persuasive argument for such studies.

REVIEW
A DESIRABLE SYNTHESIS

CAN religion ever be scientific? This is a question wholly dependent on the definitions of religion and science. Those who look into the matter tend to be convinced that in order to get together they both have to change. But can they change without losing their identity? Two fairly ideal definitions might be used at the start. Both come out of the title of an old but very good book—*What Is and What Might Be* by Edmund Holmes. Science is the examination of what is, Religion the pursuit of what might be.

Science, after all, deals with what is demonstrable; if it says something about the future, the prediction relates to what must be, or provides some percentage of likelihood that it will be, giving the conditions that weight the probability in one direction or another. The factors of causation known to science don't change; they may be altered by other factors, but if an observer is able to assemble *all* the factors and determine their strength, his predictions will be infallible.

In religion, what will happen depends upon the subjective element in human beings, which is essentially unpredictable. A human may or may not choose to go in a certain direction, or perform a desirable or undesirable act. The human seeks the good, but no one knows precisely or finally what he thinks is good. Taking a vote gets us nowhere because convictions about the Good may change; they doubtless ought to change as we learn more about ourselves and the world. Whether a person finds his belief about the Good in Holy Writ or in the admonition of his heart, it still will change, since humans alter in understanding. For scientists, the changeable human being is a wild card, an intruder in an otherwise orderly universe. That is why the scientific method insists on objectivity, which is the elimination, as far as possible, of subjective inclinations on the part of the observer or experimenter. The idea of "ought" does not exist for the ideal scientist. His goal is the definition of what is. He stops there, but if he goes to work for someone else—if he hires out—then he sets out to produce what his employer wants, to make it out of what is. The fact that some scientists won't hire out, won't do what they as human beings believe is bad, doesn't change the nature of science, which only tells you what *can* be done, not what ought to be done.

There is another approach in this comparison. In the *American Scholar* for the Winter of 1967-68, Wylie Sypher draws on Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space,* saying:

> The scientist must repeat his observation if it is to be verified. In scientific experience "the first time doesn't count." By the time the observation is again confirmed, it is no longer new. In a marvelously poetic vein Bachelard remarks, "In scientific work we have first to digest our surprise." The poet, not the scientist is one who can trust his first vision, before the recognition is endorsed by duplicating it, before it is first codified into ideas, theories, laws.
>
> As Bachelard says, the poet is always living on "the threshold of being—he has no past." The images of art are unpredictable and unrepeatable, and thus liberating. They validate the instant. The artistic response is an unexpected increase of life, a surprise that keeps consciousness from becoming somnolent or routine. The poet, then, has a privilege which the scientist, as scientist, must forego: the poet's world is forever new. His recognitions may be disturbing, for they are not yet crystallized into explanations. We hardly need be reminded of Keats's spatial experience in first reading Chapman's Homer:
>
> > Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> > When a new planet swims into his ken.
>
> This first time the astronomer feels his wild surmise he is a poet, and the poetry in science is this instant of revelation or epiphany. Then his discovery must be reduced before it is reliable science. So Bachelard describes science as a way of organizing our disappointments under the guise of knowledge. Knowledge in scientific form is coherent disillusion, a sacrifice of discoveries to concepts and systems, a loss of an epiphany.

Well, poetry is not the same as religion, so how does this help us? But there is certainly

something in common in both poetry and mystical insight, and mysticism is a part of the religious quest, perhaps an irreplaceable part. The mystic seeks meaning rather than fact, and while it may be possible for mysticism to be systematic—Plotinus did something like this—the sense of "ought" that grows in the mystic and determines his life has expression by him in scriptural language that has something in common with poetry. Perhaps mysticism could be scientific—if there are laws governing the universe of subjectivity—but this now seems far over our heads (except for the order provided in the aphorisms of Patanjali).

Have there been approaches to the synthesis of science and religion from the scientific stance? We think of only one, made explicit in A. H. Maslow's 1964 book, *Religion, Values, Peak Experiences* (Ohio State University Press, and a later edition by Viking Press). He begins, in his Preface, by justifying a scientific investigation of religion on the ground that authentic religion grows out of "religious experience," and that this is a phenomenon that people go through and therefore falls within the scope of the scientific study of human life. He then says:

> This thesis that religious experiences are natural experiences could be seen by churchmen with dismay, as simply and only a further instance of science carving another chunk out of the side of organized religion—which, of course, it is. But it is also possible for a more perceptively religious man to greet this development with enthusiasm, when he realizes that what the mystics have said to be essential to the *individual's* religion is now receiving empirical support and no longer need rest only on tradition, blind faith, temporal power, exhortation etc. If this development is a secularizing of all religion, it is also a religionizing of all that is secular. This lecture is a critique, not only of traditional, conventional religion, but also of traditional conventional atheism. As a matter of fact, I am addressing myself much more to the latter than to the former. Religion is easy to criticize but difficult to explain. It begins to be clear to me that in throwing out *all* of religion, the atheists have thrown out too much.

Here is a scientist who has come more than halfway to the impartial examination of religion, not because he wants to be "fair to the opposition," but because he wants science to come out of its hiding behind the barricades of materialism and mechanism and acknowledge the reality of self-validating subjective insight, of values which are intrinsic in human life, and of moral freedom and human obligation and responsibility. These, he declares, are *facts,* which science cannot continue to ignore and retain its reputation for impartiality. These facts are a part of human life, but a neglected part for the science of the past.

Maslow, in short, was willing to redefine science, and he invited religionists to redefine religion by admitting that the religious aspect of human behavior, of human aspiration, of "ultimate concern," no longer need to be regarded as supernatural. Anything, he maintained, that is a major element in human life is natural simply because it is *there* to be recognized and made the object of study. He is not here reading "the spiritual" out of religion; he intends no reductionist version of religion as a result of his studies, but wants the spiritual to be seen as a natural part of human life.

What, then, is the "naturalistic" form of religious experience that Maslow takes as providing the data of his research? It is what he calls "the peak experience." For the meaning of this expression we go to the opening words of the third chapter of the book:

> The very beginning, the intrinsic core, the essence, the universal nucleus of every known high religion (unless Confucianism is also called a religion) has been the private, lonely, personal illumination, revelation, or ecstasy of some acutely sensitive prophet or seer. The high religions call themselves revealed religions and each of them tends to rest its validity, its function, and its right to exist on the codification and the communication of this original mystic experience or revelation from the lonely prophet to the mass of human beings in general.

> But it has recently begun to appear that these "revelations" or mystical illuminations can be subsumed under the head of the "peak experiences" or "ecstasies" or "transcendent" experiences which are now being eagerly investigated by many psychologists. That is to say, it is very likely, indeed almost certain, that these older reports, phrased in terms of supernatural revelation, were, in fact, perfectly natural, human peak-experiences of the kind that can easily be examined today, which, however, were phrased in terms of whatever conceptual, cultural, and linguistic framework the particular seer had available in his time. . . . to the extent that all mystical or peak-experiences are the same in their essence and have always been the same, all religions are the same in their essence and have always been the same.

What started Maslow thinking along these lines? He was introduced to the reality of the peak experience by individuals who were without sectarian affiliation, who did not think of themselves as especially "religious," but who lived lives that obviously fulfilled basic "religious" ideals. The book has many pages elaborating what happens in the peak experience and its effect on those who have it. The subject feels that values are the very stuff of his being, that there is a "beyond good and evil" reality, a harmony which reconciles all contradictions, and that this takes place vividly within ourselves.

COMMENTARY
MASLOW'S ACHIEVEMENT

THIS week's Review, which quotes from Abraham Maslow's *Religion, Values, Peak Experiences,* proposes a change in the practice of science which would permit and increase our understanding of religion. Yet a question should be raised.

Does Maslow leave anything out? He accomplished a heroic transition for modern psychology—from the study of pathology to the study of mental and emotional health—so that of course he leaves things out. But he made a start in a psychological project that should occupy us for several centuries at least. Will spokesmen of religion be able to recognize in Maslow a liberator of their minds, a restorer of their integrity? That remains to be seen. Such changes are never institutional but begin with individuals who have freed themselves of institutional restraints. In other words, there are those in the ranks of the religious who are actually not conventional at all, but thinkers who would find themselves largely in agreement with Maslow.

We might say one more thing about the peak experience, as summing up the significance of *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences.* The book seems to lead to the conclusion that the *"is"* which becomes known to the mystic, through the mystical experience, if appropriately communicated, becomes the *"ought"* of the rest of us who feel the truth so made known. No one remains unaffected by the peak experience, and everyone is capable, at least potentially, or in principle, of having it.

Omitted, however, in his book is a consideration of planes of transcendental reality. Can there be spiritual being apart from and independent of the earthly organism? The question of survival after death turns on this question. In relation to such ideas Maslow seems more like a Roman stoic than a Platonist, more like a Theravadin than a Mahayana Buddhist. Yet while he does often use the word "soul," he seems to conceive of the higher or "being" aspect of the human in terms that answer to the description of soul, even soul considered as an independent intelligence. If his later writings, as found in *Farther Reaches of Human Nature,* are included to provide a more complete expression of his views, then it seems that soul is recognized in terms of its functional possibilities, even if no substantive account of the soul is offered. What more can we ask of a former behaviorist whose education was almost entirely an absorption of ideas of the most materialistic period of modern times—from, say, 1925 to 1940? He freed himself and those inspired by him from nearly all the intellectual barriers to authentic self-knowledge.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WAYS TO CHANGE

BACK in 1977 Bantam books published *Taking Charge*, a book produced by the Simple Living Collective, a Quaker group in San Francisco, part of the Friends Service Committee of that city. It offered suggestions useful to many looking for ways to simplify their lives. It is encouraging to note that Harper & Row has now brought out a larger and much revised edition with a more explicit title—*Taking Charge of Our Lives—Living Responsibly in the World* ($8.95 in paperback). The book has 250 pages of suggestions and critical examinations of "the way we live now." For example, in the first chapter, on how we are "consuming ourselves," there is this summary of facts:

> In our economic system, profits are made not only on necessary goods and services, but also on invented ones—ones we are convinced we need through advertising. For example, while the food-growing, processing, and distribution industry has become centralized in the hands of fewer large companies, supermarkets carry over ten thousand different items, compared with about nine hundred in 1928.
>
> If we are unhappy at our work, we are encouraged to buy a new dress or a new model stereo system—and to discard the unfashionable or "technically obsolete" ones we already have. Everywhere we look, we are told that personal deficiencies can be overcome by using a particular brand of product: cigarettes, makeup, coffee, laundry soap. Standards of material perfection for our homes and personal appearance are set that very few people really believe they meet. The indoctrination process starts early. In 1972, Joan Gussow, a professor of nutrition education, along with her colleague, Ruth Eshleman, and eight graduate students, studied the ads that appeared in twenty-nine hours of children's television. Of 388 commercials (one every three and one-half minutes), 319 were for food. They were distributed as follows:

Commercial	*Percentage*
Breakfast cereals	38.5
Cookies, candy, gum, popcorn, snacks	17.0
Vitamins	15.0
Canned deserts, frozen dinners, drive-ins, peanut butter, oranges	9.0
Beverages and beverage mixes	8.0
Frozen waffles and poptarts	7.5
Canned pasta	5.0

> Professor Gussow and her students found the accumulated impact of these ads "blatantly antinutrition." After watching thirty-three of them, one student had to be relieved for something akin to battle fatigue. The report concludes that "watching children's television if one likes and respects food—and children—is sickening."

The chapter on "Work" gives an account of a project begun eleven years ago by some Oregon Quakers. They are a working community that has established Alpha Farm in Deadwood, Oregon, and now has members of many backgrounds. They operate a 280-acre farm, run a café which includes a book and craft store, conduct a hardware store and a construction business. One member is a newspaper editor who works in Salem, another serves as midwife at a local clinic. Financial income is shared, and after expenses what is left is divided among the members.

> The core of Alpha is the farm, where members raise most of their own vegetables and fruits organically, as well as some of the café's requirements. They keep milk cows, milk goats, and chickens for eggs, maintain a wood lot, and grow dahlias for sale of cut flowers and tubers. . . .
>
> Alpha's successful bid ten years ago to carry the local rural delivery route (two hundred miles, recently reduced to seventy miles) was a fortunate chance that helped to break down the community's initial image of them as "those Hippies." Three members drive the route two days each and thus come in regular contact with every person in their region. Each year at holiday time, the Alpha mail carriers leave a homemade gift for their neighbors in every mailbox—cookies, candy, or fruitcake.

Of the policy of Alpha and the Farm, the founder, Caroline Estes, says:

> Each day's work is equal to every other day's work. If you're delivering the mail, that's work. If you're baking bread, that's work. If you've just had a baby you're caring for, that's a day's work. We don't differentiate by how much money is brought in.

This, some readers may remember, was the rule followed by the members of the industrial community of watch-case makers in France, called Boimondau, described by Claire Hutchet Bishop in *All Things Common* (Harper, 1950). It becomes apparent from a reading of *Taking Charge of Our Lives* that there are many more alternatives to the way we live now than we are ordinarily aware of. Toward the end the authors say:

> Most people reading this book have probably experimented already with some of the things discussed here and have been, or are thinking of, experimenting with more. But the number of changes can overwhelm and tire us. When we decide we are interested in food changes, do we forget about energy use? When we decide to fight for rent control, do we ignore the basics of our body's health?

While dozens, or even scores, of new books about health come out every year, it is probable that very few of us are confident that we know precisely what "the basics" are, to say nothing of the particulars. This brings us to a volume we (MANAS) have received for review—*Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines* (Tarcher, $8.95). For the reader who has had personal contact with conventional medicine, an encounter with the ideas of homeopathy is likely to be puzzling, as indeed it was in the eighteenth century when the originator of this method of treatment of disease, Dr. Samuel Hahnemann, first proposed it to the medical men of that time. After acknowledging this, a teacher of medicine who writes the Foreword to the Tarcher book says:

> But if homeopathy is unfamiliar, and at times seems incredible, it is not uncongenial. We look hopefully for medicines that offer answers to the chronic conditions afflicting so many of us, and eluding the curative reach of conventional medicine. We want drugs that have fewer debilitating side effects. And we sense the rightness of a healing system which conceives of all symptoms as parts of a larger whole, which appears to stimulate the body's natural healing force, rather than attack its enemies. Homeopathy seems to work with us, not on us.

The authors of *Guide* say at the beginning:

> Homeopathy is a 200-year-old medical system you can use at home to help treat family members with a wide spectrum of acute health problems. It offers a way to gently stimulate our inner healing resources through recognizing and reinforcing the adaptive reactions of our natural defense processes. By choosing the correct, individually suited homeopathic medicine from the plant, mineral, animal, or chemical kingdom, you can successfully stimulate the body's own defenses. Following our instructions, you can complement your family's efforts toward good health with these safe, natural medicines that provide an effective, inexpensive alternative to conventional medicine.
>
> The best reason to use homeopathic medicines in self-care is that they work.

Who says so? Naturally, the authors of the book, but whom shall we believe—the present-day medical "authorities" or these enthusiasts of homeopathy? This is the situation of most of us when it comes to health care and self-care. It would be nice to have a *real* authority to tell us what is best to do. But it is our responsibility to choose our authorities in matters which require special knowledge that can't be just "picked up" by the use of what we hope is common sense. If we don't pick our own authorities we'll never be able to become independent of authority, which is an obvious need today.

Here we have another reading suggestion: Martin Gumpert's *Hahnemann,* subtitled "The Adventures of a Medical Rebel," published by L. B. Fischer in 1945. Hahnemann was born in 1755 in Meissen, Saxony. He spent his life contesting the claims of the orthodox medicine of the time, and died in ripe old age in 1843. He was almost as much of a rebel as his great predecessor, Paracelsus, because he decided to break with inherited tradition in the art of healing and resolved to know for himself what is the best way to heal the ills of the body. After a full medical education he realized that he knew practically

nothing. He stopped practice from a sense of responsibility until he had tried *on himself* the remedies he thought might help. This program of research lasted throughout his life. He was attacked again and again by the medical conformists of the age, but enough other doctors tried what he proposed to start a movement within the practice of medicine—a movement now reviving in this country. He was not infallible, he made mistakes, but he admitted them and went on with his work. The reader of Gumpert's book will almost certainly decide that a man whose career was so impressively heroic must have found out some truths worth inspecting. *Everybody's Guide to Homeopathic Medicines* would be a good way to learn something about Hahnemann's discoveries and the work of his followers up to the present.

FRONTIERS

From Vermont to Maine

A FRONTIER is a boundary of socially alive width, a leading edge made up of growing tips. The tips are inventive people of daring who have made some changes in their lives—changes which have a noticeable effect on others. Of these "tips" Arthur Morgan wrote in *The Small Community:*

> Only rarely are people creative. Far more frequently they are ready to imitate whatever of excellence may appear. Wherever men of competence and creative intelligence are willing to pay the price in preparation and in the arduous, persistent effort which creation always involves, the designing and developing of new communities is a worth-while field of effort.

One can describe the achievements of these new communities, tell about the directions in which they are developing, give attention to the group enthusiasm and vision which have become manifest through thinking and working together. But archetypal of these qualities are the lives of the pioneers, the individuals who got things starting to move in the right direction. These are the *originators* of whom Morgan speaks, people whose lives serve as archetypes of the communities of the future. We need to know as much as we can about them—as much, that is, as we can find out or they are willing to reveal.

These thoughts come naturally after reading Helen Nearing's new book, *Our Home Made of Stone* (Down East Books, Camden, Maine), with brief, pithy text and some hundred and fifty photographs of the stone house in Harborside, Maine, that Scott and Helen Nearing built, day after day, unhurried, over a period of three years—a large, comfortable house, 35 by 53 feet, overlooking Penobscot Bay. While finding the Bay in an atlas doesn't help in locating the area (Harborside isn't listed), the photographs gives you a feel of what the countryside is like.

Scott Nearing was born in a lumber camp in Tioga County, Pennsylvania, in 1883. He died a hundred years (and a few days) later in Maine. He graduated from the Wharton School with a degree in economics and began teaching there in 1906. Twelve years later, at the end of the first world war, he was, as he later summed up in his autobiography, *The Making of a Radical* (Harper, 1972), in the position of Vincent van Gogh who in 1880 wrote to his brother: "One of the reasons why I am out of employment now; why I have been out of employment for years, is simply that I have other ideas than the gentlemen who give the places to men who think as *they* do." Utterly opposed to war, Nearing had written a pamphlet, *The Great Madness,* for which the federal government charged him with obstructing recruiting, encouraging insubordination and mutiny in the armed forces. The trial lasted fourteen days, and after deliberating for thirty hours the jury found him not guilty. Meanwhile Nearing was becoming a socialist and a vegetarian. How could a man like that find a teaching job?

Ten years later he published a book (which Moscow didn't want published) and resigned from the Communist Party. More considerate than other critics, Mike Gold said in the *Daily Worker* that Nearing "had lapsed into a moment of mystic individualism." He survived by working in the radical fringes of our civilization—but always it was a Nearing fringe—and finally, approaching fifty, he decided to return to the country and be a homesteader. He met Helen, a violinist and vegetarian, they married, and moved to a hill farm in Vermont. For a living they raised maple syrup, for comfort and satisfaction they designed and built a stone house, for his life's purpose, Scott wrote—about the political messes in the world, about the joys and efficiencies of homesteading. Helen joined him in the writing. After nineteen years in Vermont they moved to Maine (in 1953), because, Scott jocularly explained, they were getting too prosperous on the maple sugar business, and because the influx of skiers and tourists was becoming unbearable.

It took time for the decision to build another stone house to mature, or rather for them to get going on the plan. As Helen says:

> The house we moved to was wooden, old and weather-beaten, of no architectural pretensions. We put aside house-building for the moment and contented ourselves with adding a fireplace and chimney, a stone garage and greenhouse, and a four-hundred foot stone wall around the new quarter-acre garden. For twenty-five years we lived in this old wooden edifice, patching it here and there, but never really ready to tackle a complete house again.

Then, when Scott was in his nineties and Helen in her seventies, they began a new house in Maine. They started in the fall of 1974 and moved in June, 1978.

> I dowsed for water and found an ample supply 80 feet from the house and 74 feet down. It is piped into the house; a hand pump over the wall lets us carry water easily to the garden. We have what might be called passive solar heating in the house's orientation. Morning sun pours in on the eastern balcony at the back of the house; living room and kitchen windows are to the south; and a front balcony facing west on the bay catches the sunsets over the water. A full woodshed attached to the windowless north keeps the winter winds away. Our solar greenhouse provides growing things year-round, with only the New England sun for warmth. We installed an ecological Swedish Clivus Multrum earth-closet instead of a water-closet. . . .
>
> We prefer to heat with wood rather than to buy oil. An old black-iron wood stove serves for cooking and for heating the kitchen. An ingenious Free Flow hand-welded iron stove in the living room keeps the chill off the whole house in the winter months. In summer an open Franklin stove gives us firelight and cheer when we want it.

When it came to laying the stone, Helen was the expert and Scott mixed the mortar in a wheelbarrow. She did all of it because the Flagg method, which they used, needs a single style in pointing (surface finishing) the stone wall. The stone is for foundation and the first floor. The second floor walls are wood, since getting the stone up high is burdensome and the wood looks fine. All the procedures are well described in extracts for this book borrowed from *Living the Good Life* (Schocken) which Helen and Scott wrote together.

The photographs are self-explanatory, so the captions are quotations from dozens of distinguished writers about homes and building—a lot from John Burroughs, some from Christopher Alexander. One passage that seems just right is from W. J. Dawson, going with a picture of Helen standing in an opening of the walled but unroofed house:

> I can conceive of few things that would do more to create a general pride of home than to insist that no man should have a house save by building it himself, after the old primitive principle of the earliest social communities. To build thus is to mix sentiment with mortar, and the house thus created is a place to which affections and memories cling; whereas the mere tenancy is incapable of nourishing any sentiment, and is, in any case, not a home but a lodging. (*The Quest of the Simple Life*, 1907.)