

THE NEGLECTED CAPACITY OF HUMANS

THAT the abstractions of science by which all our machines run and our electronic devices operate do not, in their totality, constitute a faithful portrait of nature is now well established and a familiar idea. Nature, as David Bohm and others have made clear, is a reality of endless complexity and subtlety of which, as yet, we know very little, despite the impressive manipulative skills of technology. The serious physical scientists of the present have written enough on this question to induce a becoming modesty in all those who, in earlier years, were prone to claim that when "the facts are in" the world will have no more significant problems. There seems a sense in which objective science is now gradually becoming a department in the Humanities—which is where it belongs—if consciousness is admitted to be a major factor in its determinations.

What, then, are the implications of this conclusion for other branches of science—especially those which have modeled their disciplines on physics in the hope of achieving a comparable certainty? The area of particular interest is covered by the term Social Sciences, concerned, as Edwin Seligman has put it, "with what takes place in man himself." This field is made up of the common wants of mankind, obtained through associated action. The phenomena of group activities are called "social phenomena," Seligman says (as editor of the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, 1930 edition), adding that "the sciences which classify and interpret such activities are the social sciences."

The oldest of these disciplines are politics, economics, history, and jurisprudence, which have of course been divided into dozens of narrower categories. As in all aspects of human knowledge, the things which get attention are those which are not only most in evidence but which directly affect

the conduct of life for good or ill. Thus the theory and practice of political economy, with criminal law and penology also prominent, make the foreground of social science inquiry. Judging from current history, it must be said that the social sciences have been far more successful in their descriptive work than in their prescriptions. Radical injustice seems to result when "theorists" have opportunity to apply their ideas, as in the case of the Hitlers and Stalins. The best theories seem those founded more upon our ignorance of the possibilities of human nature than any sort of predictive doctrine. In principle, the dictum of Thoreau has a great many followers. He said in *On the Duty of Civil Disobedience* (1849):

I heartily accept the motto, "That government is best which governs least"; and I should like to see it acted up to more rapidly and systematically. Carried out, it finally amounts to this, which also I believe—"That government is best which governs not at all"; and when men are prepared for it, that will be the kind of government which they will have. Government is at best but an expedient; but most governments are sometimes, inexpedient.

A less popular utterance by Thoreau is found in his *Slavery in Massachusetts* (1854):

The law will never make men free, it is men who have got to make the law free. They are the lovers of law and order who observe the law when the government breaks it.

The proclivity for law-making has various justifications, chief of which, perhaps, is the opinions people have of one another, and the desire to shape behavior. A good (or horrible) example is the work of John Calvin, the French Protestant reformer who in 1541 was invited by the Town Council of Geneva to take charge of their religious and community life. Six years earlier, in 1535, he had published his *Institutes* (*Institutio religionis Christianae*), identified by historians as "the first publication to contain the

principles of evangelical doctrine, so that it became the primer and guide-book, the canonical work of Protestantism." The *Institutes*, Stefan Zweig says (in *The Right to Heresy*, Viking, 1936), stopped the Reformation and gave it organized form just as the *Code Napoleon* rounded off the French Revolution. Zweig says of Calvin:

At twenty-five, like Marx and Schopenhauer, before gaining any experience, he logically thought out his philosophy to its conclusion. The remainder of his life was destined to witness the transplantation of this philosophy from the ideal world to the real one. He never altered an important word in what he had written; he never retraced a footstep, and never made a move in the direction of compromise with an adversary.

Installed as Geneva's religious authority and ruler, he imposed the "discipline" of his ordinances on all the people. In Zweig's words:

From the days when so universal a control of private life was instituted, private life could hardly be said to exist any longer in Geneva. With one leap Calvin outdistanced the Catholic Inquisition, which had always waited for reports of informers or denunciations from other sources before sending out its familiars and its spies. In Geneva, however, in accordance with Calvin's religious philosophy, every human being was primarily and perpetually inclined to evil rather than to good, was a priori suspect as a sinner, so everyone must put up with supervision. After Calvin's return to Geneva, it was as if the doors of the houses had suddenly been thrown open and as if the walls had been transformed into glass. From moment to moment, by day and by night, there might come a knocking at the entry, and a number of the "spiritual police" announce a "visitation" without the concerned citizen's being able to offer resistance. Once a month rich and poor, the powerful and the weak, had to submit to the questioning of these professional "*police des moeurs*." For hours (since the ordinance declared that such examination must be done in a leisurely fashion), whitehaired, respectable, tried, and hitherto trusted men must be examined like schoolboys as to whether they knew the prayers by heart, or as to why they had failed to attend one of Master Calvin's sermons. But with such catechizing and moralizing the visitation was by no means at an end. The members of this moral Cheka thrust fingers into every pie. They felt the women's dresses to see

whether their skirts were not too long or too short, whether these garments had superfluous frills or dangerous slits. The police carefully inspected the coiffure, to see that it did not tower too high; they counted the rings on the victim's fingers, and looked to see how many pairs of shoes there were in the cupboard. From the bedroom they passed on to the kitchen table, to ascertain whether the prescribed diet was not being exceeded by a soup or a course of meat, or whether sweets and jams were hidden away somewhere. The pious policeman would continue his examination of the rest of the house. He pried into bookshelves, on the chance of there being a book devoid of the Consistory's imprimatur, he looked into drawers on the chance of finding the image of one of the saints, or a rosary. The servants were asked about the behaviour of their masters, and the children were cross-questioned as to the doings of their parents.

We may think the horrors of Geneva under Calvin—which reached a climax in the burning of Michael Servetus at the stake, for daring to debate with Calvin—were a passing aberration, but two hundred years later the "spiritual" certainties of Calvin had become the rational infallibilities of Robespierre and his Jacobin colleagues of the French Revolution. Descartes had established the model for the use of reason and by the passage of a century the French radicals believed they had "discovered a definitive social order arrived at deductively by means of reason." Ortega summarizes the consequence (in *The Modern Theme*, Norton, 1933):

The edifice of political ideas thus built up is wonderfully logical; in other words its intellectual integrity is unquestionable. Now, the Cartesian only admits one virtue, pure intellectual perfection. To all else he is deaf and blind. For him what is anterior and what is present are equally undeserving of the least respect. On the contrary, from the rational point of view, they assume a positively criminal aspect. He urges, therefore, the extermination of the offending growth and the immediate installation of his definitive social order. The ideal of the future, constructed by pure intellect, must supplant both past and present. This is the temper which produces revolutions. Rationalism applied to politics results in revolutionary doctrine and, vice versa, an epoch is not revolutionary unless it is rationalist. It cannot be revolutionary except in the proportion in which it is incapable of sensitiveness to history. . . .

The Constituent Assembly makes "solemn declaration of the rights of Man and of the Citizen" in order "that, it being possible to compare the acts of the legislative and executive powers, at any given moment, with the final aim of every political institution, they may be the more respected, so that the demands of citizens, being founded henceforth on simple and unquestionable principles," etc., etc. We might be reading a geometrical treatise. The men of 1790 were not content with legislating for themselves: they not only decreed the "nullity" of the past and of the present, but they even suppressed future history as well, by decreeing the manner in which "every" political institution was to be constituted.

It is illogical to guillotine a prince and replace him by a principle. The latter, no less than the former, places life under an absolute autocracy. And this is, precisely, an impossibility. Neither rationalist absolutism, which keeps reason but annihilates life, nor relativism, which keeps life but dissolves reason, are possibilities.

It would probably be a mistake to call this passion for perfectionism pure evil; ideally, it is behind the continual striving for transcendence which animates the best of human beings; but there is no doubt at all that deciding we know what perfection is, how it should be defined and achieved, is one of the most oppressive evils of our lives. Defining it for *others*, that is, since defining it for ourselves is the practical ground of aspiration.

There are, we might say, two kinds of laws—laws which, growing out of sensible custom, give order to cooperative relations for the common good. Such laws are hardly coercive, but more like maps. They have obvious pragmatic value. But there are also laws intended to control or restrict, in behalf of the interest of the ruler or the dominant class. It is this second class of laws which eventually leads to revolutions and the subsequent writing of draconian constitutions. The American Revolution—sometimes referred to as the War for Independence instead of "revolution"—seems a good example of the honest attempt to remove restrictions, controls,

and impositions rather than to impose them. Hannah Arendt makes this thoughtful comparison:

It was the French and not the American Revolution that set the world on fire, and it was consequently from the course of the French Revolution, and not from the course of events in America or from the acts of the Founding Fathers, that our present use of the word "revolution" received its connotations and overtones everywhere, this country not excluded. The colonization of North America and the republican government of the United States constitute perhaps the greatest, certainly the boldest, enterprises of European mankind; yet this country has been hardly more than a hundred years in its history truly on its own, in splendid or not so splendid isolation from the mother continent. Since the end of the last century, it has been subject to the threefold onslaught of urbanization, and, perhaps, most important of all, mass immigration. Since then, theories and concepts, though unfortunately not always their underlying experiences, have migrated once more from the old to the new world, and the word "revolution," with its associations, is no exception to this rule. It is odd indeed to see that twentieth-century American even more than European learned opinion is often inclined to interpret the American Revolution in the light of the French Revolution, or to criticize it because it so obviously did not conform to lessons learned from the latter. The sad truth of the matter is that the French Revolution, which ended in disaster, has made world history, while the American Revolution, so triumphantly successful, has remained an event of little more than local importance. (*On Revolution.*)

Meanwhile, the foundation thinking out of which the American Republic grew has been altered into design of an entirely different system. Originally there was an element of transcendence in the political theory of the Founding Fathers. As John Schaar remarks, "Even the enlightened American Founding Fathers saw the Constitution as a partial embodiment of that higher order called the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." But today laws are designed in the interest of the acquisitive motives of corporate enterprise, and leaders are elected to office out of consideration for the services expected of them in behalf of economic goals. "Membership" in the society, Schaar says, "is instrumental: the association is an

efficient means for the achievement of individual goals, not an expression of a way of life valued in and for itself."

Modern societies have become increasingly like self-regulating machines, whose human tenders are needed only to make the minor adjustments demanded by the machine itself. . . . The functions of planning and control, and ultimately of decision-making, are increasingly taken away from men and given over to machines and routine processes. Human participation in planning and control tends to be limited to supplying the machines with inputs of data and materials. And still the complexity grows. Modern man is haunted by the vision of a system grown so complex and so huge that it baffles human control. Perhaps the final solution to the problem of human governance will be to make a machine king. (*New American Review* No. 8.)

In an account of what has happened to American society as the result of its domination by corporate enterprise—with its extra-social intentions, its acquisitive goals, and the imperatives of its processes—Andrew Hacker says in the introductory chapter of *The Corporate Take-Over* (Harper & Row, 1964):

It may well be that two Americas are emerging, one society protected by the corporate umbrella and the other a society whose members have failed to affiliate themselves with the dominant institutions. What of this second America? In part it will consist of small businessmen and other independent spirits who manage to do well without corporate attachments. But, more importantly, it will comprise the unemployed, the ill-educated, and the entire residue of human beings who are not needed by the corporate machine. Little thought has been given to these people. How are they to earn their livings and support themselves? How will they maintain their sense of self-esteem? If this pool grows to substantial proportions, if it finds political leadership, if it gives vent to its resentments and frustrations—then, and perhaps then only, will a force arise to challenge the great corporate institutions. For then will power meet power, the power of a mass movement confronting the power of the machine. The discard heap the machine itself created may arise to devour its progenitor.

This is a prospect which takes us back to our first paragraph—to concern with what the

abstractions of political economy, with its theories of action and reaction, its units of "economic man," seem to leave wholly out of consideration. Unmentioned is the large area of what human beings do—can be depended upon to do—without the coercion of law, simply because they are *human beings*. Has anyone studied this? Actually, the rather remarkable group of thinkers called anarchists have pursued this line of inquiry for more than a century. There are various sorts of anarchists, some of whom have given the idea of self-rule a bad name, discouraging investigation of what they have to say. Our interest, here, is in the conceptions presented in a recent book, *Anarchy in Action* (Freedom Press, 84b Whitechapel High St., London E1, U.K., \$3.00) by Colin Ward. He begins:

How would you feel if you discovered that the society in which you would really like to live was already here, apart from a few little, local difficulties like exploitation, war, dictatorship and starvation? The argument of this book is that an anarchist society, a society which organizes itself without authority, is always in existence, like a seed beneath the snow, buried under the weight of the state and its bureaucracy, capitalism and its waste, privilege and its injustices, nationalism and its suicidal loyalties, religious differences and their superstitious separatism.

Ward is interested in pointing out that what people do without the pressure of law—from basic human decency, regard for one another, from common sense and by an instinctive concern for the common good—that these qualities are what make even bad systems work, and not the decrees of the system. His concern is with the slow but continuous movement toward a social order in which these qualities have more natural expression, until, finally, they take the place of government authority. This is essentially Thoreau's idea, quoted at the beginning.

It is also, in a way, Gandhi's idea, which would reduce the national state to a few necessary functions (the administration, for one thing, of natural monopolies) and leave all important decisions to self-governing villages. Such themes

are consistent with the social thinking of ecologists and the communitarians. It is fair to say that they represent an idea whose time has come. Such anarchists as Colin Ward are concerned with the self-development of all, and with social forms which permit, encourage, and rely upon this self-development. States and governments now bring human weakness, not human strength, into focus, creating problems that, as we know from history, cannot be solved by angry and destructive revolution.

But is it only governments? The power of a government, even the most absolute dictatorship, depends on the agreement of the governed. Why do people consent to be ruled? It isn't only fear; what have millions of people to fear from a small group of professional politicians and their paid strong-arm men? It is because they subscribe to the same values as their governors. Rulers and ruled alike believe in the principle of authority, of hierarchy, of power. They even feel themselves privileged when, as happens in a small part of the globe, they can choose between alternative labels on the ruling elites. And yet, in their ordinary lives they keep society going by voluntary association and mutual aid.

This is the point: our society works as well as it does by reason of the *voluntary* action, the *voluntary* cooperation of people. And Ward's point, like Gandhi's, is that the strength of voluntarism is the way to social salvation. Compulsion, ultimately, is only for sub-humans.

When we look at the powerlessness of the individual and the small face-to-face group in the world today and ask ourselves *why* they are powerless, we have to answer not merely that they are weak because of the vast central agglomerations of power in the modern, military-industrial state but that they are weak because they have surrendered their power to the state. It is as though every individual possessed a certain quantity of power, but that by default, negligence or thoughtless and unimaginative habit or conditioning, he has allowed someone else to pick it up, rather than use it himself for his own purposes.

Ward's book is a study of the practice, here and there throughout history, of self-rule; and a study, also, of how people have opportunity, today, to pick up or restore the capacity for self-rule, step by step, by the acceptance of

responsibility. It is a book about the qualities of humans which are given little or no attention in the abstractions of political theory.

REVIEW

A BUDDHIST ANTHOLOGY

FOR at least two centuries, Western scholars—and others, such as conquerors, administrators, businessmen, and missionaries—have been examining and studying the forms of Eastern religion, gradually making more and more sense of them, as the decades go by. Today it is possible to read what *Eastern* scholars and religious thinkers have to say about Western religion and philosophy—to recognize, that is, the depth of their investigations and reflections. A particularly good example of this is found in the works of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, who for years occupied the Spaulding Chair of Eastern Philosophy and Religions at Oxford University and whose authoritative *Indian Philosophy* is widely used. After India achieved independence, Dr. Radhakrishnan served his country as ambassador to Russia, where he published his study, *The Principal Upanishads*, and he later became the Vice President of the Republic of India. Then, in a lecture at McGill University, published as *East and West* (Harper, 1956), he said:

We are living at the dawn of a new era of universal humanity. . . . If we escape from the dangers attendant on the control by irresponsible men, of sources of power hitherto unimaginable, we will unite the peoples of all races in a community, catholic, comprehensive and cooperative. We will realize that no people or group of people has had a monopoly in contributing to the development of civilization. We will recognize and celebrate the achievements of all nations and thus promote universal brotherhood. Especially in matters of religion we must understand the valuable work of the sages of other countries and ages.

Peace is not the mere absence of war; it is the development of a strong fellow feeling, an honest appreciation of other people's ideas and values. . . . We need, not merely a closer contact between East and West but a closer union, a meeting of minds and a union of hearts.

The world has had very little peace since these words were written, nearly thirty years ago, and today the papers are filled with material of a

very different character—reports of threats, conflicts, and small and large wars. Yet, at another level of human relations, "a meeting of minds and a union of hearts" has been going on. This increasing interpenetration of the minds of East and West comes during the decay and loss of influence of ancestral religions in both hemispheres, so that the times are propitious for a genuine rebirth of religio-philosophical thinking.

A major contributor to change in the West has been the impact of Zen Buddhism in both America and Europe, but especially in America. A measure of this influence is obtained from an expression of Thomas Merton, a Catholic priest, on the eve of the accident which took his life. He said: "Zen and Christianity are the future." This quotation is given by Frederick Franck in *The Buddha Eye* (Crossroad, 1982, \$14.95), of which he is the editor. The essays it contains are by Japanese thinkers (they should be called philosophers) of the Kyoto School, a body of Buddhists committed to bringing about a meeting of East and West in a "unity beyond differences." The writers are obviously schooled in the literature of Western thought and draw frequent parallels between the themes of European philosophy and Buddhist teachings. In a discussion of what may be called the "historical significance" of Buddhism, one contributor, Nishitani Keiji, speaks of the difference between political and ideological movements and what Buddhists attempt. He says:

Of course, "moving society" does not imply that Buddhism has a social theory of its own, or that it proposes some social revolution, for it is not a "social movement." Rather it transforms man's innermost mind radically, and develops man's most basic being to an unprecedented flowering. In short, it has acted as a moving force in society by opening up ways to transform man himself. As far as its religious function is concerned, Buddhism has exerted a really deep and lasting influence on society, be it to all appearances an indirect influence.

This is no idle claim, although some knowledge of history is required to appreciate its meaning. For example, speaking in New York in

1949, the then Chinese ambassador to the United States, Dr. Hu Shih, said:

It is a well-known historical fact that India conquered and dominated China culturally for twenty centuries, without ever having to send a single soldier across her borders. This cultural conquest was never imposed by India on her neighbors. It was all the result of voluntary searching, voluntary learning, voluntary pilgrimage and voluntary acceptance on the part of the Chinese.

The real explanation was that the great religion of Buddhism satisfied a need keenly felt by the Chinese people of the time. . . . Ancient China had only a simple conception of retribution for good and evil: but India gave us the conception of *Karma*, the idea of absolute causation running through past, present, and future existence.

This is no metaphysical abstraction, or not that alone, but a conception that has a direct bearing on all that we do. According to Karma, those who use violence will suffer violence; and those who bring understanding will meet and receive it. No real Buddhist has ever taken part in or brought about war. Gandhi, in this sense, was certainly a Buddhist, and he did much to restore respect in India for the greatest of her sons. Nishitani Keiji continues:

Nowadays people are inclined to think that to transform society is one thing and to transform man is another, and that the former takes precedence over the latter. In reality, however, these two aspects cannot be separated so simply.

Many "progressives" in this country [Japan], for instance, hold that the present crisis surrounding atomic warfare is a result of modern capitalism, which obstructs the inevitable course of history, or especially, of international monopoly capitalism's imperialism. They believe that the only way to overcome the crisis lies in a social revolution. But is this really so? Is it not rather that the crisis is not to be blamed on capitalist society alone, but is caused equally by the very thought that the crisis must be blamed exclusively on the capitalist system? The very viewpoint from which the conflict of social ideologies is seen as ultimate, and social revolution as necessarily having priority over anything else, constitutes one of the major factors in the very crisis that it is attempting to overcome. The very idea that social revolution should take precedence over man's

inner transformation is a not insignificant part of the crisis itself. In this context it is interesting to recall, for instance, that Georgi Malenkov, when still prime minister of Soviet Russia, once declared that the use of the latest weapons might result in the destruction of both the Soviets and its enemies, even of civilization as a whole. The following years, after his resignation, he was severely criticized in *Pravda*. What he had declared before, the Communist press reproached him, was ideologically untenable: only the West would be destroyed while the Soviets would survive!

How many of us in the West knew, remember, or care that Malenkov said that? But Buddhists and real peacemakers take note of such things. Surely this formulation of the contrast between political and personal transformation is extremely relevant today, when the political solution of international issues and problems and conflicts seems virtually impossible. Isn't it time to start at the other end?

The question of the Self is a theme which runs throughout this book—a topic of enduring interest in this period of transition. More and more people—as the old beliefs wither and die, and as scientific conceptions are questioned by scientists—are beginning to seek in a way that takes nothing for granted. This is a painful but sometimes productive search. The Buddhist conception of self—which is not uniform, although the dispute among Buddhists concerning the self is educational and fruitful—now attracts serious attention in the West. The interpretation of a Mahayana text by Abe Masao, another contributor to Dr. Franck's volume, gives what seems an apt summary:

The first and second lines express the joy of being born in human form during the infinite series of varied transmigrations. The third and fourth lines reveal gratitude for being blessed with the opportunity of meeting with the teaching of the Buddha—something which very rarely happens even among men. Finally the fifth and sixth lines confess to a realization that so long as one exists as a man one can and must awaken to one's own Buddha nature by practicing the teachings of the Buddha; otherwise one may transmigrate on through *samsara* endlessly. Herein it can be seen that Buddhism takes human

existence in its positive and unique aspect most seriously into consideration. Thus in this sense one may say that Buddhism is also man-centered.

However, for man to transcend his man-centeredness within his own individuality means for him to "die" in the death of his own ego. For only through death of his own ego is the cosmological dimension, the dimension of *jinen* opened to him. And only in that moment does he awaken to his true self—by being enlightened to the reality that nothing in the universe is permanent. . . .

Buddhist salvation is thus nothing other than an awakening to reality through the death of the ego, i.e., the existential realization of the transiency common to all things in the universe, seeing the universe really *as it is*. In this realization one is liberated from undue attachment to things and ego-self, to humanity and the world, and is then able to live and work creatively in the world.

The same writer, Abe Masao, in another article gives an account of the *Bodhisattva*, the being who has gained this high capacity. He not only transcends samsara, the sea of conditioned existence, but has no longer attachment to the bliss of nirvana, remaining in the world to be of service to others still caught in the illusions of bodily existence.

COMMENTARY

THE BEST IN HUMAN EXPERIENCE

SQUEEZED out of this week's "Children" article was a concluding quotation from Arthur Morgan, and since it expresses briefly and cogently one of the reasons for the existence of MANAS—suggesting what we try to do in various historical studies—we reproduce it here.

A person without history or knowledge of the past must see the world as commonplace because, except at extreme times, he is going to live among commonplace people who have come to that conclusion. . . . The only way to get the sum and substance of human experience is to reach out beyond the years we have into the years of the past, into significant experiences of the human race.

The impact of unusual humans is the chief source of inspiration to others. This is why, in some respects, biography seems more important than history, since biography often has to do with the makers of history. An interesting example of this is the effect on Abraham Maslow of two exceptional individuals who were his teachers—Ruth Benedict and Max Wertheimer. They set him on fire, and an extraordinary career, accomplishing a major reformation in the theory and practice of psychology, was the result. Maslow, in turn, became the inspiration of almost countless others, by no means limited to students of psychology. His books have been read and studied by general readers as distinguished humanist documents, exercising an influence so extensive that it becomes very difficult to trace.

Maslow also played a part in the convergence of the philosophical thinking of East and West. This week's Review ends with consideration of the Bodhisattvic ideal of Mahayana Buddhism, a conception which has notable appeal to the spiritually awakening minds of Westerners, who find it both logical in evolutionary terms and inspiring in religious terms of transcendence united with compassion for the whole of life. In his later papers, published in *Farther Reaches of*

Human Nature, Maslow gave the *Bodhisattva* as an ideal example of the self-actualizing human.

An effort is made, in this week's *Frontiers*, to draw attention to those who may some day be regarded as makers of history, through the transformation of attitudes toward Nature. The individuals named, and their colleagues, might be regarded as inspirers of future generations.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

LEARNING DISABILITIES '

IN MANAS for Oct. 29, 1980, we quoted at length from an article by Merritt Clifton on "Learning Disabilities" in children. This material has now been expanded into a pamphlet, *Learning Disabilities: What the Publicity Doesn't Tell*, available from the author at Samisdat, Box 129, Richford, Vermont 05476. Parents with children who have been labeled as sufferers from some sort of learning disability will find encouragement and help in the facts assembled in this pamphlet. Because the symptoms of disability are so many, they include numerous qualities or incapacities that every normal child will exhibit, for natural or good reason, from time to time. Examples of such misdiagnosis are provided, and Clifton remarks that the "loose definition of 'learning-disabled' allows anyone in authority to manipulate the concept any way he or she desires, without regard to either the child's opinions or those of the parents." He quotes the experienced teacher, John Holt, now the editor of *Growing Without Schooling*, who says that he has found very few children "who have not promptly met or exceeded normal expectations, once removed from whatever adverse emotional pressures they found in the school environment."

A fundamental point is the need to distinguish a learning *difficulty* from a learning *disability*. Difficulties may have a number of causes, sheer boredom with school being one. An oversimplified test may lead to all sorts of abuses. As Clifton says, "Teachers and administrators following these popular guidelines would label any imaginative artist 'learning-disabled'." Yet there are some actual disabilities, most of them related to brain damage, although they may be difficult to diagnose.

The section on dyslexia (trouble in reading) is of particular interest, indicating the obscurity of whatever causes this difficulty. Here a variety of

possible causes are suggested, with examples from case studies. Quoted is a doctor who has made extensive study of learning disabilities. He says:

"All or most pediatricians dealing with developmental or (presumed) congenital dyslexics will find that they are usually boys, and that there is frequently a number of male dyslexics in the father's family." On the other hand, when children come from non-reading families, they are unlikely to pick up reading at home. When little boys emulate fathers who don't read or respect books and learning, they don't read either, adopting similar attitudes. Finally, children whose parents read stories to them tend to pick up reading much sooner and more rapidly than children whose parents are illiterate, who simply do not read to them.

Merritt Clifton is primarily concerned with the mistreatment of children through careless or indifferent use of inadequate information concerning learning disabilities, and with the exploitation of assumed disabilities by educational publishers. He concludes:

A few experienced teachers and pediatricians do look behind the LD claims. "I don't doubt that big textbook publishers are pushing learning disabilities," states Dyer. "Just about every three years they have to find and start a new fad, so they can sell new books. You know where the real money is, eh? It isn't just in the textbooks, and I've seen schools scrap practically new sets of math textbooks to get sets with maybe six pages added. It's in all the teaching manuals, the special training seminars, all the things the teachers and the schools have to pay for to use this supposedly new, improved stuff the textbook companies are putting out. They're wasting the taxpayers' money. After a while, there's nothing really new. I started teaching in 1933, and by the time I retired three years ago, I'd seen most of what I was taught back in the thirties come and go out of style and come around again."

Marjorie Lou-Sleznick Forman (a pediatrician) reaches the bottom line: "The present emphasis on LD, in addition to being very profitable for some persons, is exceedingly destructive to the majority of the children thus labeled. Also, and not least of what's wrong with LD programs, "bureaucratic institutions rapidly, if they ever have had, lose touch with the very persons for whom they work." When learning disabilities become a product, children

become objects and statistics and slaves to adult expectation even more than ever.

This seems a good place to recall that Margaret Rawson, who was for years a teacher in the School in Rose Valley, in Pennsylvania, wrote *Developmental Language Disability* (Johns Hopkins Press, 1968) to report on the successful work with twenty dyslexic boys, all of whom recovered under the care and attention given them in a special language program carried on by the author. (See MANAS, Sept. 8, 1968, for a review.)

Responding to the question raised by a reader in the Feb. 2 MANAS—"How do we go about inculcating *vision* in people?"—another reader urged: "Give them absolute freedom which we dare not entrust to ourselves, let alone *everybody*. Inculcate or cultivate anything in people and you interfere with the very thing (freedom) necessary to produce the result desired." We don't exactly know what to make of this comment, but it called to mind some of the observations of Arthur Morgan, one of our country's most distinguished educators and teachers. In a collection of his insights (*Observations*, Antioch Press, 1968), in the section on Education, he said:

Here is an inherent dilemma of society. Our vast cultural inheritance, which chiefly distinguishes the habits and actions of men from those of other mammals, and without which men could not survive, is transmitted chiefly by conditioning and indoctrination. Yet in many respects that conditioning results in killing an impulse to critical inquiry. On the other hand, the very craving for critical inquiry is aroused and instilled by conditioning. A wise course of action in reference to conditioning is not disclosed by abstract theory, but by wisdom, experience, judgment. These are the real dilemmas in the conduct of life.

Other related paragraphs:

Advocates of complete freedom in education overlook the fact that life is full of social compulsions, determining interests, habit, and conduct; the very earliest which are the unconscious indoctrinations of infancy and early childhood.

We are surrounded by compulsions—religious, commercial, social, and patriotic, most of them so deep-seated and unconscious that we feel they are part of ourselves, and that we must fight for them. Some of these compulsions are to superstition, provincialism, vulgarity, and mediocrity.

If the college and university are not to be ethically neutral, then we have a dilemma. To what particular values shall they be committed? The answer, I think, is "To those standards and values which are arrived at and sustained by full, free, critical inquiry." In some respects these ethical standards will grow and shift and change as experience, insight, and judgment change. The changes that take place will be somewhat like the changes which take place in scientific fields. They may be radical, but they are not capricious.

As the reader can see, Morgan addressed himself to questions that are as old as the hills, which have never been finally answered, yet to think about them may be the most important engagement in human life. As a result, his writings have a sage-like quality, very different from the popular books and articles of the day. These questions are carefully avoided by writers who cultivate the changing fashions in educational theory. Morgan, you could say, was a radical conservative or a conserving radical. He declared:

The child is the future, and possession of his mind is fought for by various elements. Authoritarian religion would own him if it could; so would professional education; so would business; so would some parents; so would organized labor; so would fellow children. Between and among all these pressures a way must be found.

FRONTIERS

Project of the Twentieth Century

THE project for mankind in the eighteenth century was to learn how to think about the organization of nations which would establish and assure human rights. In the nineteenth century the interest turned to the economic expansion made possible by the Industrial Revolution, and to scientific discovery and development. Objectively, the twentieth century has been marked by great revolutions and by world wars which accelerated the development of death-dealing weapons to the point where they threaten the life of the planet. At the same time industrial progress and applications of science have in our time led to recognition that the world is a complex of vital interdependencies, that no major activity can be undertaken without having far-reaching effect around the world. Thus world control became the tacit although fairly obvious motive of the managers of the most powerful nations. This drive for control has turned human life into something of a shambles for a great many people.

Today, in the closing years of the twentieth century, another great project is beginning to be recognized as a necessity—to learn to think about the earth and its peoples in terms of cooperation and collaboration, in terms of conservation and the pursuit of meaning instead of wealth and power. For us, then, the time has come to adopt a new conception of history, to regard as the really important events the appearance of thinkers who have called attention to this task. This history might begin with a study of *Man and Nature* (1864), by George Perkins Marsh, retitled in another edition (1874) as *The Earth as Modified by Human Action* (Scribner). Marsh sounded the keynote for another kind of thinking (as Stewart Udall makes clear in *The Quiet Crisis*, 1963). In 1909, Gandhi published *Hind Swaraj*, a book addressed to the changes that he saw were required for his country, India, to gain a free and harmonious life, yet equally applicable to the rest of the world. A beginning in ecological thinking

for America was made by Howard W. Odum with publication (Holt) in 1938 of *American Regionalism*, which gave an account of the various ecological regions of the United States. (His sons, Howard T. and Eugene Odum, have continued this work along several lines, for which they are well known.) Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* came out in 1962, shocking the nation into awareness of what modern industry and agriculture have done (and are doing) to the land, the waters, the creatures, and the people of the country. Three years later E.F. Schumacher organized the Intermediate Technology Development Group in London, and proceeded with work that reached a climax in publication in 1973 of *Small Is Beautiful*, a book of immeasurable influence.

More or less at this time three other men of exceptional capacity got going demonstration and educational projects: John Todd (New Alchemy Institute), John Jeavons (Ecology Action), and Wes Jackson (the Land Institute). At New Alchemy people work on a variety of things with the over-all objective of developing systems of organic agriculture, fish culture, and dwellings using solar energy and wind power, in behalf of small-scale subsistence for families and small communities. Jeavons has concentrated on biodynamic gardening for small-scale food production, and Wes Jackson, agronomist and plant breeder, has the objective of developing food grains from perennial grasses which protect the soil from erosion. Meanwhile Wendell Berry has been reaching a large audience with his books—especially *The Unsettling of America* (Sierra Club, 1977) and later collections of his articles in books (North Point Press). Several magazines—two in particular, *Rain*, issued in Portland, Oregon, and *Resurgence*, published in England, give continuous currency to this sort of thinking.

Amory Lovins, a young American physicist, has had an impact on not only American but world consideration of the energy problem, starting with

his now famous *Foreign Affairs* article in October, 1977, "The Road Not Taken." in which he contrasts the promise of renewable energy sources, including conservation from greater efficiency in energy use, with the "hard path" of conventional sources such as petroleum, coal for generating electricity, and nuclear installations, of which he is severely critical. An energy consultant, Fred Baldwin, reviewing Lovins' *Soft Energy Paths* (Friends of the Earth, 1977), which includes "The Road Not Taken" (in the *Nation* for Nov. 12, 1977), spoke of the extraordinary influence of the *Foreign Affairs* piece, noting how extensively it was photocopied. Baldwin wrote:

Numbers of increasingly faint copies circulated within the Energy Research and Development Administration at the time of its publication. The ideas of its author, an American physicist named Amory Lovins, continued to generate interest at the working-staff level. . . . The main reason for Lovins' importance is that he has managed to redefine the energy problem, and thereby to change the frame of reference of a large number of technical debates. He has first-rate credentials as a nuclear physicist and, in his words, a "former high technologist." He is familiar with a staggering body of recent literature on energy. He writes clearly and often eloquently. All of these things help, but his appeal is that he has managed to define a pattern against which a jumble of technical choices can be compared and evaluated.

Recently, with his wife, Hunter, a lawyer and former associate of Tree-People in the Los Angeles area, Amory Lovins has formed the Rocky Mountain Institute (P.O. Drawer 28, Old Snowmass, Colorado 81654), to pursue effective public education concerning energy sources and alternatives, and its efficient and economical use, to study the issues involved in land, food, and water, and the interconnections of these crucially important fields. By 1990, an Institute statement declares, "water will replace energy as the most prominent resource issue." A major project will be "to synthesize the elements of a 'soft water path'."

No solution can succeed which treats the problems of water, land, energy, and economics as unrelated—as current policy does. Rocky Mountain

Institute's special contribution will be a systematic search for the links and leverage points which would enable soft, least-cost strategies in water energy, and farming to work together.

An obvious link is that between agriculture and the water required for irrigation.

For example, California's main industry—farming—uses eighty-five per cent of all water in the state. Pumping that water is California's biggest use of electricity. The irrigated farms in seventeen Western states consume three quarters of all the water used in the United States. . . . Farm irrigation is mining ancient groundwater reservoirs. For example, the Ogllala Aquifer underlying six High Plains states is being drawn down, in certain key regions, four to ten feet a year but recharged only a quarter-inch per year. The flow pumped from the Ogllala would rank roughly tenth among American rivers. Two thirds more water is drawn from the Ogllala during the four dry months than flows *annually* in the Colorado River past Lee's Ferry. The Ogllala is already, on average, about a third depleted, and the depletion rate is rapidly accelerating.

Meanwhile, the equivalent of a dump-truck load of topsoil "passes New Orleans in the Mississippi River each *second*," and a forty-acre farm passes Memphis every hour.

It becomes evident that the foundation has been laid for another way of thinking about the planet and our lives. The intellectual plateau of awareness of our condition, with indications of what ought to be done, has been marked out and put in place by the pioneer thinkers of the second half of the twentieth century. While we cannot say that actual change is well on its way—far from it—yet a notable beginning has been made.