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UNINCORPORABLE POWER

VIRTUALLY all writing (except technical treatises or manuals) is an attempt at orientation, for the writer himself and for his readers. The best fiction is meant as orientation, whether we consider *Don Quixote, The Brothers Karamazov,* or *Moby Dick.* The story is of course a thing in itself—a very good thing, sometimes—but it is also a signpost, or contains them. By his characters the novelist reveals himself or his view of the world. He has something to say about the world and the people in it—why else would he write? His books have their substance which we enjoy, but they are also signposts. A great work of art has both substance and vision—this, indeed, might be the defining characteristic of art: its dual nature.

The novel erects signposts without labeling them. The essay has labeling for one of its purposes. Speaking broadly of the arts as the human activity which provides signposts, Ortega says (in *The Dehumanization of Art and Notes on the Novel*):

> Elsewhere [in *The Modern Theme*] I have pointed out that it is in art and pure science, precisely because they are the freest activities and least dependent on social conditions that the first signs of any changes of collective sensibility become noticeable. A fundamental revision of man's attitude towards life is apt to find its first expression in artistic creation and scientific theory. The fine texture of both these matters renders them susceptible to the slightest breeze of the spiritual trade-winds. As in the country, opening the window of a morning, we examine the smoke rising from the chimney-stacks in order to determine the wind that will rule the day, thus we can, with a similar meteorological purpose, study the art and science of the young generation.

Ortega proceeds to this task (he wrote in 1925) with gratifying result. His essay is still worth reading. Here we are concerned with the work of another essayist on the same subject—Erich Kahler's *The Disintegration of Form in the Arts* (Braziller, 1968)—an investigation directly concerned with identifying the meaning of art as a species of signposts. First, then, Kahler's definitions, giving his viewpoint and intent:

> Artistic form is structure and shape created by a human act. This may indeed be accepted as a preliminary distinction of art: *art is form created by a human, intellectual act.* . . .
>
> Any work of art has more than one dimension. Its artistic quality makes itself felt in the dimensions of breadth length and depth, and indeed even in the dimension of time. . . .The dimension of depth takes it to other levels and that implies additional fields of correlation and what may be singled out as another, no less essential attribute of a work of art: its *symbolic quality,* its moving simultaneously on different levels. . . .
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> No single event has artistic value unless it has generally human relevance. The true artist reaches beyond the phenomenal level, the surface level, on which both, the usual and the unusual, the exceptional and the non-exceptional take place; he drives an occurrence or a situation into a depth of intensity where it is every human being's concern and potentiality.

Kahler devotes a number of pages to the various forms a work of art may take, then explains why:

> I have dealt so elaborately with the meaning and problems of form because I believe them to be crucial not only in regard to art, but in regard to our whole human condition. We live in an era of transition, in which age-old modes of existence, and with them old concepts and structures, are breaking up, while new ones are not as yet clearly recognizable. In such a state of flux—more rapidly moving than ever—in the incessant turmoil of novelty, of discoveries, inventions and experiments, in such a state, concepts like wholeness, like coherence, like history are widely discredited and looked upon with distrust and dislike. Not only are they felt to be encumbering the freedom of new ventures, they are considered obsolete and invalid. The repudiation of all these concepts implies a discarding of form, for they all—wholeness, coherence, history—are inherent in the concept of form. They all mean and constitute *identity.* Indeed, form may be plainly understood as identity. As Richard Blackmur strikingly put it: "Form is the limiting principle by which a thing is itself."

> Accordingly, losing form is equivalent to losing identity.

Before going on with Erich Kahler's argument an exception should be taken here. Feelings of *identity* are important above all to human beings, but it is a question whether human identity depends on the limiting principle of form. In an essay on education, Vinoba Bhave declares: "There is no such thing as knowledge divorced from action." Here action may be taken as equivalent to form, since formless things cannot act; but Vinoba adds: "There is only one exception to this rule, and that is the knowledge that 'I am, I exist'; the knowledge of the Self is divorced from action. It is beyond action." Here, drawing on Upanishadic wisdom, Vinoba indicates that the self-knowledge or sense of identity which the human seeks is not dependent on action or form. But things or objects whose nature does depend upon form—which are defined by their form—may serve as *symbols* of identity, and in this sense Blackmur is doubtless right.

In this first part of his book Erich Kahler is concerned with the breakup of culture, reflected in the disintegration of art forms, during an "era of transition." The present is such a time. He says:

> In all previous transformations of humanity, the breaking up of old forms of existence and conception was immediately linked with the creation of new forms; it was, in fact, partly at least, produced by this creative process. Today, however, the processes of disruption by far outstrip those of new consolidation, indeed the creative processes themselves cannot help producing disjunction. . . .
>
> "Mechanization takes command," as Siegfried Giedion has proclaimed, has taken hold of our very existence and of the human mind. Accordingly, any person who still uses organic terms, who raises demands of an organic nature, of a comprehensive *human* nature, who speaks of wholeness coherence, form, is *eo ipso* considered a romantic reactionary.

Finally, at the end of this first of the three lectures making up his book, Kahler declares his position:

> What I stand for and work for, I admit, is what makes human beings human, what keeps humanity, the *genes humanum*, human. Unless we want to renounce all care for our essentially human quality, which is ineluctably of an organic nature, we have to cling to the organic concepts with their demands and defend them against the onrush of boundless mechanization. It is not wholeness, coherence, form as such that is obsolete. What is obsolete is their inveterate conventional, static semantics that former generations have left with us. Our task is to re-create, to re-realize these concepts out of our present circumstances. What happens when our avant-gardes try to dispose of them altogether, and how this total abrogation must ultimately lead to atrocities such as we are witnessing today, this I propose to show in the following lectures.

To illustrate the disintegration of form in the arts, Kahler turns to the "action painters" and the New York School of the 1950s, and their "accidental" forms, remarking that this work, while reduction rather than abstraction, can be seen as "a kind of abstraction, an inverse abstraction, an abstraction into the total concreteness of bare material, a divestment of substance." He comments:

> True abstraction is brought about by an act of concentrating a phenomenon, a process, an impression, an argument to a point where their essence is laid bare. In abstract expressionism, however, nothing is recognizable from which these products may have been abstracted. . . .No inkling is given as to what is meant by "art." Art seems to be a process of voiding, a *tour de force* of reaching the absolute zero-point.

The focus on externality, the elimination of the actual presence of an artist filled with human intentions, results in nothing but a hodgepodge of surroundings, of surfaces. It is a "transformation of man himself, his transition from individual to collective existence."

Another aspect of the disintegration of form grew out of the excessive preoccupation with "the irrational forces of the psyche." "The disillusioning experience of the unfathomable depth of the unconscious," Kahler says, "and of the unmasterable, labyrinthine condition of people's life and environment caused people's minds to revert to surface existence."

> Hence, the behavioristic approach to the phenomena of psychic and social life. . . . In the domain of letters it brought art to question itself, its own function, methods, capacity of expression, and, in a more advanced stage of the process, this inquiry

> into the communicative medium merged with the substance to be conveyed: experimental techniques prevail over and finally become the very subject matter of works of art. In true art, as it was said before, "form" and "content" are only two aspects of one and the same thing: the what determines the how. Recently, however, the order is reversed: the how not only determines, it downright constitutes the what. It is no accident that in our days a concept and a slogan was so persuasively raised, proclaiming that the medium is the message.

Mallarmé and Joyce, Kahler shows, were ancestors of the celebration of form, and in 1916 there came "Dada," an "exuberantly inventive movement, uncommitted, flexible, humorous as it was, using all imaginable means of provocation," and anticipating "everything that today is carried on by pedantic bores." But the Dadaists knew what they were doing—"the nonsense remained nonsense."

> In the meantime chaos has fully erupted. The "beat" poets, while still revolting, seem to have settled down in it, and indeed to overstress it. In the poetry of Ginsberg, Gregory Corso, and others of the movement, the boundless rhapsodizing of Walt Whitman, reversed into disillusionment by the experiences of our age, is kept in motion through psychic, visual, and verbal free association. . . Now, however, among the most recent intellectual generations under the objectifying and functionalizing influence of science and technology, something radically new has been undertaken: *Language* has been divorced from its human source. . . . The isolation of words from their significative coherence, which started as early as 1912 with Marinetti's concept of "free words," is equivalent to its severance from its substance, which is human feelings, thoughts, and conceptions; what remains is a devised free association of linguals, or a promiscuity of fractured, defunct meanings, corpses of meaning.

No reader who has tried to keep track of the peregrinations of literature during the past twenty-five years can be unaware of the gradual retreat from human meanings in both the serious and the popular writing of this period. Commenting, Kahler says:

> Many people, including intellectuals, are inclined to consider these movements as vogues of folly that will pass. But it seems to me that they are to be taken very seriously. They are the outcome of an evolutional trend, a consistent artistic and broadly human development. The overwhelming preponderance of collectivity with its scientific, technological and economic machinery, the daily flow of new discoveries and inventions that perpetually change aspects and habits of thought and practice, the increasing incapacity of individual consciousness that operates anonymously and diffusely in our social and intellectual institutions—all this has shifted the center of gravity of our world from existential to functional, instrumental, and mechanical ways of life. . . .
>
> For a long time, human communications could be seen to be shifting from a discourse between the centers of inner life, that is, between people as human beings, to dealings between their functional peripheries, their occupational concerns. . . . In this process, functional rationality has gained the upper hand so as to displace human reason. Scholars and scientists, who in their research control most intricate rational operations, may be seen sometimes lacking all sense of reason when faced with issues of general human import. Those 600 medical, or rather anti-medical scientists at Fort Detrick in Maryland who prepare the most devilish kinds of genocide, the physical and chemical engineers who work on the refinement of nuclear weapons, the military planners, the "think tanks" who have calculated all rationally foreseeable circumstances and tell us that, given adequate protective measures like getting used to spending our lives in fashionable caves, not the *whole* nation would perish in a third world war, but only a mere 60 to 100 million people—such experts, if confronted with the question of broadly human implications, would answer, with the pride of their professional amorality: "These matters exceed our competence; what we are concerned with are purely technical, rational problems."

Here Erich Kahler has moved from the arts to areas of national policy and control, showing that, wherever we turn, we see the same signposts. He called this a "transformation of reason"; actually it is an elevation of the mere mechanism of reason—the rationalizing faculty—above the human *nous* or humane intelligence of a thinking, valuing being.

If the arts and literature can be taken as signposts showing the direction of our lives—or a change in our center of gravity—then we should easily be able to find confirming evidence. The confirmation is everywhere, and nowhere plainer than in higher education. Writing in *democracy* for

last April, Sheldon Wolin tells what has happened in the universities:

> After World War II, the growth of the nation's economic and political power, and the determination of its ruling groups to compete for global supremacy, were reflected back upon the universities—in the form of pressures and incentives to concentrate upon developing scientific research, technical skills and methods, and the forms of professional knowledge that aid in social control (law, medicine, public health, social welfare, and the management sciences). The result was the radical alteration of the purpose of the university and college, from education to the pursuit and imparting of knowledge. It was at this point, when humanistic education was being replaced by technical knowledge, that the masses went to classes.
>
> This shift had been partly grasped by observers who frequently remarked on the emergence of scientific and technical subjects to a position where they and their spokesmen were now the defining force in higher education.

Today the faculty—the teachers—no longer run the universities. The universities are governed by businessmen—that is, professional administrators. "Before World War II, most academic institutions were run by the faculty," which "determined curriculum, looked after the welfare of the students, controlled appointments and promotions, and set the tone of the institution." But after the war "the *administration* of colleges and universities began in earnest." While the professors still have their voice in matters of curriculum and hiring and promotion, "administrators often have the last word and always are able to exert some influence in every area." Prof. Wolin points out that education has shifted "from a liberal-humanist foundation" to regarding the ideal student as involved in "scientific and technical programs." He observes:

> There are profound political implications to the fact that the humanities are gradually being transformed in ways that make them more congenial to a technocratic than to a political culture. Historians have increasingly adopted the methods and outlook of the social sciences, scholars of literature are now second to none in the enthusiasm for "technique" and for modes of textual analysis that restrict understanding and conversation to a progressively smaller circle of adepts. . . . Perhaps the most significant development has occurred in philosophy, which was once thought to be the center of the humanities. Philosophers are now the supreme proponents of the primary value of techniques. So confident are most philosophers in the analytic methods developed in this century that they believe there is virtually no area of serious knowledge that they cannot clarify. Accordingly there are now "philosophers of public policy" and "ethicists" who are ready to argue the implications of genetic research, abortion, and pollution, but none who seems to know where philosophy ends and the rationalization of bureaucratic morality begins.

Thus the institutions of education are themselves another signpost pointing to the conclusion put concisely by Prof. Wolin:

> The problem is that by its own self-understanding science is inherently incapable of serving society as other great political and religious world views have in the past. Science is a source neither of moral renewal nor of political vision, it has no principle that requires solicitude for traditions or historical identities that, until recently, were the basis for most political thinking and action. . . .
>
> In retrospect, one can see that the value of humanistic education was surplus value: it could not be translated directly into usable power—which meant that, from the point of view of a system based on technical functions humanistic learning was useless.

But in fact, he says, "that learning was neither useless nor powerless."

> It did not make sense in an input-output model of a knowledge-power relationship; but it spoke instead to how a person should live by himself and with others. And because it spoke to persons rather than things, it formed a critical presence of unincorporable power in a world where, increasingly, the line between treating persons and handling things was becoming obliterated.

The task of restoration lies before us. It has practically nothing to do with educational institutions as they are now. With all that bureaucracy in charge, those places are virtually hopeless. The renewal and restoration must come from individuals and small groups. There are also signposts—a variety of them reported in these pages—showing how such beginnings are made.

REVIEW
FOR THE GOOD OF ALL

READING in *The Law and the Lawyers* (Navajivan Publishing House, 1962), a compilation by S. B. Kher of what Gandhi said on this subject—of special interest because Gandhi was himself a lawyer—we came across something he wrote in 1940 (in *Harijan*) that recalled earlier observations by Thoreau and Max Muller. Gandhi was responding to the mournful query of an Indian judge:

> Courts and the institution of lawyers are mainly responsible for the moral and spiritual degradation of our village peasantry in particular and the public in general. Even "respectable" people, whom one has learned to regard as the soul of honour in their everyday life, will tell barefaced lies for a trifle in a law court and think nothing of it. The canker is eating into the vitals of our village life. Would you suggest as to what a person in my position (viz. a judge), who has to record evidence and give judicial decisions, can do to check this evil?

Gandhi replied:

> What you say is too true. The atmosphere round law courts is debasing as any visitor passing through them can see. I hold radical views about the administration of justice. But mine I know, is a voice in the wilderness. Vested interests will not allow radical reform, unless India comes into her own through truthful and non-violent means. If that glorious event happens, the administration of law and medicine will be as cheap and healthy as it is today dear and unhealthy. The heroic advice will be for you to descend from the bench, embrace poverty and serve the poor. The prosaic will be for you to do the best you can in the very difficult circumstances in which you find yourself, reduce life to its simplest terms and devote your savings for the service of the poor.

Speaking (in *Civil Disobedience*) of officials who found themselves embarrassed by their duties, which had been made immoral by governmental fiat or law, and asked (as one did Thoreau), "But what shall I do?" Thoreau gave his reply; "If you really wish to do anything, resign your office." Then, in "Slavery in Massachusetts," he said he doubted if "there is a judge in Massachusetts who is prepared to resign his office, and get his living innocently, whenever it is required of him to pass sentence under a law which is merely contrary to the law of God."

Max Muller objected to the opinion, widely held in England early in the nineteenth century, to the effect that the inhabitants of India were virtually all habitual liars. James Mill had spread this belief, and when Muller wrote, in 1883, it had been largely absorbed by student candidates for the Indian Civil Service. The Orientalist pointed out that Englishmen who served as officials in India had little if any knowledge of village life and consequently were ignorant of the actual qualities of the common people. The courts were in the cities and were English institutions, not Indian, making an environment alien to peasants from the villages. Drawing on Sir William Henry Sleeman, whose unique duties took him into the wholly Indian areas, Muller said (in *India: What Can It Teach Us*?):

> That village life, however, is naturally the least known to English officials, nay, the very presence of an English official is often said to be sufficient to drive away those native virtues which distinguish both the private life and the public administration of justice and equity in an Indian village. . . . [Sleeman] assures us that falsehood and lying between members of the same village is almost unknown.

An Indian lawyer told Sleeman that "three fourths of those who do not scruple to lie in the courts, would be ashamed to lie before their neighbors, or the elders of the village."

Truth-telling and general honesty, it would seem, are not only individual traits, but a combination of the moral qualities of both individual and community. Isolated from the beneficent influence of the village and the presence of neighbors and friends, the obligation of truth-telling was no longer felt by the villager.

Apparently, by 1840, the atmosphere created by the British legal system had triumphed over the habitual honesty of Indian villagers. As noted by Sleeman, the invasive and threatening temper of

the courts had made lying the rule rather than the exception.

Gandhi, however, in the reflections about his profession which come at the end of this book, seemed to hold both Indian and British lawyers responsible for the degraded morality of the courts in India. He wrote in *Young India* in 1927:

> Throughout my career at the bar I never once departed from the strictest truth and honesty. The first thing which you must always bear in mind, if you spiritualize the practice of law, is not to make your profession subservient to the interests of your purse, as is unfortunately but too often the case at present, but to use your profession for the service of your country. . . . The fees charged by lawyers are unconscionable everywhere. I confess, I myself have charged what I would now call high fees. But even whilst I was engaged in my practice, let me tell you I never let my profession stand in the way of my public service. . . . And there is another thing I would like to warn you against. In England, in South Africa, almost everywhere I have found that in the practice of their profession lawyers are consciously or unconsciously led into untruth for the sake of their clients. An eminent English lawyer has gone so far as to say that it may even be the duty of a lawyer to defend a client whom he knows to be guilty. There I disagree. The duty of a lawyer is always to place before the judge, and to help them arrive at, the truth, never to prove the guilty as innocent.

Gandhi had no success at the start of his legal career in India. That was why he went to South Africa, where an opportunity for work developed. As the editor of this volume, Sunit B. Kher, says: "From 1893 to 1912 Gandhiji practiced in South Africa." Early in his practice he realized that "the true function of a lawyer was to unite parties riven asunder." "This lesson," he said, "was so indelibly burnt into me that a large part of my time during the twenty years of my practice as a lawyer was occupied in bringing about private compromises of hundreds of cases."

By the time he left South Africa he had come to be regarded as an ornament to the legal profession in that land, and a shining example to the English and South Africans as a member of the public community. But by then he had lost faith in the courts as the means to Indian freedom. As Mr. Kher says in his introduction:

> Accordingly, in 1912 Gandhiji entirely abandoned the practice of law and henceforth devoted his entire time and energy to the service of the community. Thereafter, in the remaining years of his earthly sojourn, whether in South Africa or in India, Gandhiji, as a Satyagrahi, was very often engaged in breaking laws rather than in expounding or interpreting them in the courts of the land. It may here be recalled that when, after his imprisonment in 1922, during his first civil disobedience movement in India, he was disbarred by his Inn; he would not apply thereafter for reinstatement, as he regarded himself as a farmer and a handicraftsman, who had renounced the profession of law deliberately many years before in South Africa.

Gandhi's first appearance in court as a deliberate violator of the law occurred in 1907, when he refused to register as an Asiatic in the Colony of the Transvaal—a requirement which he regarded as discriminatory and unjust. He pleaded guilty and was ordered by the magistrate to leave the Transvaal within 48 hours. This also he refused to do, and was sentenced to two months' imprisonment.

A section in *The Law and the Lawyers* is devoted to Gandhi's various trials on charges which he openly admitted, regarding the offenses as acts of civil disobedience. In 1922, during what is termed his "Great Trial," he was brought before the court under accusation of spreading disaffection toward the British government in India. He not only admitted but affirmed his guilt, and in an oral statement explained why his own disaffection had grown to the point where he no longer had confidence in British justice. The eloquence he had gained in the South African courts was now turned to the cause of India's freedom. He said in this statement:

> Before the British advent, India spun and wove in her millions of cottages, just the supplement she needed for adding to her meagre agricultural resources. This cottage industry, so vital for India's existence, has been ruined by incredibly heartless and inhuman processes as described by English witnesses: Little do town-dwellers know how the semi-starved

> masses of India are slowly sinking to lifelessness. Little do they know that their miserable comfort represents the brokerage they get for the work they do for the foreign exploiter, that the profit and the brokerage are sucked from the masses. Little do they realize that the Government established by law in British India is carried on for the exploitation of the masses. No sophistry, no jugglery in figures can explain away the evidence that the skeletons in many villages present to the naked eye. . . . The law itself in this country has been used to serve the foreign exploiter. . . .
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> The greatest misfortune is that Englishmen and their Indian associates in the administration of the country do not know they are engaged in the crime I have attempted to describe. . . . I believe that I have rendered a service to India and England by showing in non-cooperation the way out of the unnatural state in which both are living. In my humble opinion non-cooperation with evil is as much a duty as is cooperation with good. But in the past, non-cooperation has been deliberately expressed in violence to the evildoer. I am endeavoring to show to my countrymen that violent non-cooperation only multiplies evil and that as evil can only be sustained by violence; withdrawal of support of evil requires complete abstention from violence. Non-violence implies voluntary submission to the penalty for non-cooperation with evil. I am here, therefore, to invite and submit cheerfully to the highest penalty that can be inflicted upon me for what in law is a deliberate crime and what appears to me to be the highest duty of a citizen.

This book gives a virtually continuous picture of Gandhi in the courtroom, first as a lawyer contending for justice, then as a man brought before the bar as an offender against an invader's "justice." His example as a lawyer and a man had a transforming effect on both the British and the Indian people. This collection of extracts from his works shows how a man of integrity became able to use the institution of the legal profession for the good of all.

COMMENTARY
THE GREAT PARADOX

ON the question of identity—see page one—it seems desirable to make a clear distinction between identity and the *sense* of identity. Without form, or perhaps we should say without engagement in form, we lose our sense of identity, but may nonetheless remain what we are. Our sense of identity is a changing affair. The focus which gives us the feeling of "I am" varies with the idea of the self. It varies from the conception held of himself by the determined egotist to the larger conception of the patriot who identifies with his country, or to the Christlike human who identifies with all mankind.

Does the Christ or the Buddha in this case lose his individual identity? The answer is doubtless that he does not, but rather that he forgets it. He acts as an individual, yet in behalf of all. For him there is only one Self, and this feeling provides his working sense of identity.

This question became the problem of Spinoza, whose pantheism seemed to dissolve individuality. A modern philosopher has summarized his idea:

> Spinoza's philosophy, and his conception of God, ultimately comes down to just this: The cosmos is a single "substance," and this, nothing outside of the cosmos, is what we call "God." We are each part of God insofar as we are "modifications" of that one infinite substance. But this means that what we call our individuality, our individual persons are arbitrary distinctions, and insidious, for they make us think of ourselves as separate and opposed, instead of a single cosmic unity.

But to lose oneself in "the All"—Is this to become a "nothing"?—someone is sure to ask.

In thinking about this it might be helpful to add the central idea of one of Spinoza's contemporaries—Gottfried Leibniz, who regarded the universe as consisting of an enormous host of evolving spiritual intelligences, individualities he named "Monads." Leibniz, one could say taught the philosophy of the Many, while Spinoza traced all identity to the One. Putting these conceptions together, we might say that humans are intelligences which act individually, yet are capable of recognizing their identity with the All.

But can we really think of ourselves as individuals who are at the same time expressions of the One?

The paradox may seem impossible, yet it is one that has been resolved in practice by rare human beings.

After all, whom do we honor by telling our children about them? We want them to know about Lincoln, about Jesus, about Socrates, and like figures scattered sparsely throughout our history. The Alexanders and Napoleons may have some importance, but not as models. We want them to know humanistic teaching—to learn what the best humans have said about "how a person should live by himself and with others," as Sheldon Wolin put it (on page 7). Such things have to do with the *radius* of the idea of the self. And such knowledge, Mr. Wolin adds, has "formed a critical presence of unincorporable power in a world where, increasingly, the line between treating persons and handling things was becoming obliterated." The "power" he speaks of is the power to *illuminate* never to control. What sort of humans have this power? Spinoza's sort of humans have it. They see the spark of divinity, however covered up, in every one.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WELL-ROUNDED EDUCATION

EVEN the best of conventional writing and criticism concerning education typically ignores the work of new institutions where the individuality and imagination of the founders have not yet been weighted down by layers of institutional practice and organizational convenience. We are thinking of places and groups like Ecology Action in Palo Alto, the New Alchemy Institute on Cape Cod, and the Land Institute at Salina, Kansas. We regularly see publications from these sources and are invariably impressed by the fresh vitality of what is said—and going on—at such places. These real reformers and innovators in education are bypassing the institutions of their time and working diligently at what obviously needs doing. Sooner or later, their pioneer efforts will begin to shape the patterns of more intelligent forms of education for the future. Listening to them, helping them, and sometimes participating in their innovations might bring that future a little closer.

That all three of the groups we have named are working on the land is no coincidence. This is where education starts, or ought to start. When this country was settled by migrants from England and other European countries about the first thing they had to learn was how to grow food in North America. This knowledge became part of the nurture of the minds and character of the young. Since those early days that knowledge has been displaced—omitted from both the formal and informal curriculum—and it is questionable whether the replacements have anywhere near the same importance. If you read the intelligent writers and critics of our time on the problems of soil, food production, and nutrition, it soon becomes evident that these problems are not only serious, but will continue to get worse, and for a long time. This is a reality that people with children in the middle years of growing up need to face and do something about.

What would a young person encounter at, for example, the Land Institute in Kansas? A story in the Winter 1981 *Land Report* (which comes out three times a year) relates:

> On a typical morning, everyone meets at 9:00 to plan the day's work and make announcements. This is also a time for environmental current events, and for sharing ideas, concerns and inspiration gained from individual reading. Group discussions over assigned readings then continue the rest of the morning. A *few* of the books to be read and discussed during the spring term will be *Nature's Economy* by Donald Worster, *Ecology and the Politics of Scarcity* by William Ophuls, *Small Is Beautiful* by E. F. Schumacher, *Soft Energy Paths* by Amory Lovins, and *The Feeding Web* by Joan Gussow. .

During the afternoons the students do physical work on the land.

What about "academic" subjects? Well, the fact is that these agricultural writers are all extremely literate people with rich cultural backgrounds and nearly all of them make use of the heritage of literature in provocative ways. Further, this kind of exposure may be ideal for the young with hungry minds, who will want to know more about such allusions. Wondering along these lines, we picked up *New Roots for Agriculture*, written by Wes Jackson, founder of the Land Institute, and turned to the notes at the end of one of the early chapters. Among those named or quoted are Plato, George Washington, Thoreau, Gifford Pinchot, John Muir, John Wesley Powell, and Lewis Mumford—all people worth looking into. Minds grow "organically" by such means. The eager pursuit of an interest, as we all know, is far better than taking a course that is supposed to make you "well-rounded."

In this same issue of the *Land Report* an article on "teaching" nutrition by Joan Gussow speaks of the problems she, as a nutrition "activist," has encountered. She says at the beginning:

> My message is very simple. Much as I would like it to be so, I am very much afraid we cannot teach children—on television—what they most need to know about food in the last fifth of the twentieth century.

Further on, after recalling that some anti-smoking "spots" on television proved quite effective, she says that "spots" in behalf of sensible nutrition didn't work the same way. They were "no match for the sea of scrumptiousness in which they float."

> Eating is not a bad habit. Unlike smoking, eating is not something you can give up altogether. It is something that you must learn to control. We are assaulted by temptations to eat—either we develop strong characters or we overconsume. Yet it is very difficult to promote thoughtful self-control on a medium which is devoted almost entirely to selling mindless self-indulgence. "In order to exist as we are," Jules Henry once wrote, "we must try by might and main to remain stupid." Television assists us in that effort. Self-indulgence, not self-restraint, is what makes the economy go. I don't watch much TV, as I said, but I would be interested in hearing about any shows in which moderation, self-restraint, non-consumption and conservation are the characteristics of a contemporary hero figure.

Incidentally, Joan Gussow thinks highly of Jerry Mander's *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television,* quoting his view that "television cannot be reformed because among its other inherent problems it controls the images we carry around in our heads."

Elsewhere in this issue is the report of a day-long conference at the Land Institute on "Energizing Communities." A Kansan energy expert told about loans for solar applications available from the Federal Solar Energy and Conservation Bank and spoke of state-wide workshops on solar hot water heating. Amory Lovins "emphasized the need to work on energy efficiency before worrying about new energy supplies." Don't, he warned, put "a solar system on a sieve." Rob Aiken of the Small Farm Energy Project expressed concern about "the vulnerability of present agricultural practices, the dependence on outside sources of energy, complex machinery, and foreign exports."

Other speakers:

> Community development specialist, Jerry Wade, of the University of Missouri warned of "pre-empting the community of its own potential." The emphasis should be on the educational process rather than the planning, and on the development of community and local political control. He warned that the needs of the community must be learned, and not assumed. "The central question is not technological but social. How can we get the community to regain control?" People must be aware of the role they have in decision-making processes.
>
> Ed Dutton of the University of Kansas talked about collective self-regard versus individual self-fulfillment. To begin building collective self-regard, individuals must be met on a one-to-one basis, listening to their needs. As the organization develops, large tasks should be tackled in small pieces so there can be achievements and a sense of success. At this point, both individual self-fulfillment and collective self-regard can be experienced. At all times, more people should be encouraged to become involved, heightening a sense of community. Ed warned against stepping in as a "professional" with the community as a "client."

Another speaker was Jim Benson, an author of the *Country Energy Planning Guidebook* now being used by a hundred communities.

> He encouraged people not to get too involved with data gathering since approximate ideas of how energy is used could be sufficient for community energy development. . . . Jim stressed the urgency of local energy planning as a way of beating the top-down authoritarian approach.

From considering education of this sort, being "well-rounded" acquires new meaning. (The address of the Land Institute is Route 3, Salina, Kansas 67401.)

FRONTIERS

An Anarchist and Some Socialists

IT seems a sign of health that political thinkers, very much concerned with the here and now, are following the example of other inquirers and returning to the ancients for refreshment and basic principles. An example is the essay on Lao tse by Brian Morris in *Freedom* for Aug. 2, 1981. *Freedom* is an anarchist journal and Morris, presumably, an anarchist writer, one who looks into the *Tao Te Ching* for anticipations and illuminations of anarchist ideas.

Since Brian Morris's essay has eight good-sized pages, we can hardly do justice here to the arguments or analyses he presents, but the material on Government—the concluding section—should be of general interest. He begins:

> As a naturalistic philosopher, and in terms of his ethical theory and attitude toward war and nature, Lao Tzu can certainly be considered to hold views that are consonant with anarchism. It comes, then, as no surprise that when one examines the politics of *Tao Te Ching* the over-all impression that one comes away with is that Lao Tzu was an anarchist. This is the impression of one oriental scholar:
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> "The philosophy of the *Tao Te Ching* is perhaps one of the most revolutionary that has ever been formulated. Interpreted literally . . . it represents an attack upon everything that has gone before to make up what is called civilisation. Lao Tzu tells us to 'Let things alone.' He tells governments in particular to let things alone; in short, he sees nothing but evil in the idea of government." (Tomlin, 1968, p. 254.)

What is the basis for such an assessment?

> Before addressing ourselves to this question, however, it is perhaps important to note the perspective from which *Tao Te Ching* is written. It is indeed a political tract first and foremost, rather than a philosophical treatise, or a work of mysticism—even though expressed in mystical aphorisms. But what political scientist has ever faced directly the issues that Lao Tzu poses? But it is not written as a radical polemic. Quite the contrary. *Tao Te Ching* is essentially a text by a scholar giving advice to a ruler on how best to govern and keep order within the kingdom. Lao Tzu is addressing himself to the same "problematic" as Confucius: how best to cope with the general disorder, the conflict, and the "state of chaos" that existed at the time of the "warring states." And as Weber noted, as an archivist he belongs to the same stratum as Confucius—the literati—and thus took certain things for granted. One of these was the positive value of government. But the logic of his philosophy leads him ironically to conclusions that are fundamentally anti-statist.

There are aphorisms by Lao tse which clearly support this view. Morris quotes some of them and says:

> Passages in *Tao Te Ching*, with its doctrine of non-violence, undermine the very cornerstone of realistic domestic policies by declaring war, capital punishment, and imprisonment as untenable. But more than this: it denies any relevance to the state. The majority of the aphorisms in the second half of *Tao Te Ching* are formulas for good government; but the only kind of government or order that Lao Tzu seems to consider valid is simply *no* government.

Whoever reads Lao tse carefully and thinks about what he says seems to become a Taoist, and this applies to distinguished scholars as well as ordinary folk. An example is Joseph Needham, almost certainly the leading scholar of our time concerned with Chinese culture and science. In the brief version of his *Science and Civilization in China* (1978) Needham says: "The Taoists aim for society was a kind of agrarian collectivism, without feudalism and without merchants; they advocated what was virtually a return to a simpler way of life." One sees here why Lao tse is now increasingly singled out for study. Morris says in summary:

> . . . as Needham stresses, Taoism, unlike the primitivism in Europe, was naturalistic, and initiated a scientific movement that had no equivalent or counterpart elsewhere. Even the distrust for technology must not be overstated. "What the Taoists were objecting to was the misuse of technology, not technology itself; to its use as a means of enslavement of men by the feudal lords. Waley in fact suggests that Lao Tzu's ideas on technology were very similar to those of Gandhi. And finally, it is worth noting that Lao Tzu repudiates the hierarchical relationships implicit in kinship and marriage structures of that period for as Nisbet remarks, Lao Tzu (along with

> other religious philosophers of the sixth century B.C.) espoused a kind of universalism that transcended the narrow confines of kinship and race. The ideal expressed seems to be that of a decentralized community, and one verse in particular is instructive in this context, for it suggests that impartiality rather than kinship ties should have salience for the sage.

Morris declares at the end that Lao tse was indeed an anarchist and "indeed the first writer to express the libertarian socialist ideal." There would certainly be great value for modern libertarian thinkers to give close attention to the social sagacity of Lao tse. They might also discover the metaphysical roots of his thinking.

This conclusion justifies calling attention to an article on present-day Jugoslavia by Sidney Lens in the October *Progressive*, "The Promise of Self-Management." An alert and experienced critic, Sidney Lens finds very little to complain about in Jugoslavia, which he visited last summer. While freedom is by no means without limit (Milovan Djilas is not permitted to leave the country) and editors must be careful what they publish, the Jugoslavian conception (and practice) of communism is still in striking contrast with the Soviet-dominated countries. Lens says:

> What I found most impressive about self-management communism is that it involves the average citizen in economic and political decision-making to an extent unknown anywhere else—whether in capitalist, communist, or Third World countries. The system, introduced after Tito's break with Stalin in 1948 and often modified since then, begins with the assumption that workers, not the state, own the means of production.

The account given by Lens of the qualified "free speech" allowed in Jugoslavia—it is slowed down, not stopped—is informing; likewise what he was told by students he asked whether or not they were enthusiastic about socialism. A typical reply was, "No, not enthusiastic in the sense that we glow every day. But we accept it as a good thing. We're not unhappy."