

COMING OF AGE IN THE WORLD

TO come of age is to reach that place in life where one looks out upon the horizons of his time, understands his work, and accepts the responsibilities which lie before him. This is the completion of that rapid interval of change from boy into man, or girl into woman, during which the individual acquires the sense of purpose or meaning that is to be the sustaining guide throughout his adult life. The young, quite naturally, long for this instruction. And the adults of a society are responsible for providing it.

While there are wide differences between cultures, this process is everywhere fundamentally the same. That is to say, each generation must induct its children into an understanding of the general scheme of things, and in some sense launch them on the human enterprise. In our society, this traditionally has meant seeing that the young get what we call an "education," and then sending them out to "get a job." In recent times, however, this responsibility has been made nominal by the enlarging functions of public institutions. "Society," like the Forest Lawn mortuary service, takes care of "Everything." And only during the past few years have we begun to realize that the bland and ineffectual mix of Hellenic tradition, Christianity, scientific ideas about nature and man, does not really educate anyone, and exhibits extreme contradictions against the background of furious economic activity guided by the slogans of acquisitive enterprise.

For a century or so, the built-in conflicts of these traditions were absorbed by the monumental achievements of men who are gaining control of an enormous and rich continent. There were vast lands to settle, natural energies to harness, and cities to build, with railroads and later airways to connect them. "Coming of Age," in such circumstances, meant getting in on the systematic

exploitation of the natural world. At the beginning, of course, it had no such unsympathetic description. The first Americans came to self-consciousness gradually, through various spokesmen. But none of them was more explicit in his grasp of what it meant to be an American than Crèvecoeur, a Frenchman who lived in New York state. In *Letters from an American Farmer*, he made it seem like a great awakening:

An European, when he first arrives, seems limited in his intentions, as well as in his views; but he very suddenly alters his scale . . . he no sooner breathes our air than he forms new schemes, and embarks in designs he never would have thought of in his own country. . . . He begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection; hitherto he had not lived, but simply vegetated; he now feels himself a man, because he is treated as such; the laws of his own country had overlooked him in his insignificance; the laws of this cover him with its mantle. Judge what an alteration must arise in the mind and thoughts of this man; he begins to forget his former servitude and dependence, his heart involuntarily swells and grows; this first swell inspires him with those new thoughts which constitute an American. . . . From nothing to start into being, to become a free man, invested with lands, to which every municipal blessing is annexed! What a change indeed! It is in consequence of that change that he becomes an American.

He is an American, who leaving behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labors and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world.

This spirit continued to animate Americans right up to the *From Rags to Riches* epoch of American folklore, and while it now has a vigorous existence only in the politics of nostalgia, every American reader will feel, at least faintly, similar threads of ground-breaking, pioneer

identity in himself, simply from having grown up in the United States. But since the shaping influences of life are today very different, "coming of age" is no longer marked by the eagerness which the young were still able to manifest only a generation ago. What does it mean to "grow up," now? What are the "challenges" which the young are able to feel, when they reach their late teens and early twenties? This is the time when they need to make some judgments about themselves and the world they are expected to enter as productive and useful individuals.

The challenges no doubt exist, but they seem to be in hiding. There is certainly no coherent formulation of them by the adult culture. The best minds in the adult community are filled with perplexing questions, apprehensions of failure, and painful wondering. Intelligent adults seem mainly occupied in confessing to one another that they can recognize no genuine human purposes in the common life; and one sees in the newspapers and the popular magazines only a tiresome repetition of the pretexts that have been substituted by mediocre minds. After all, how would you go about listing the "purposes" and justifying the policies of a society that is obviously unable to find an alternative to a war that all men admit to be self-destructive?

We have come a long way from the oldest of conceptions of human identity, which began with the idea of man-in nature. American civilization, until the present, has been dominated by the idea of man-conquering-nature—an ominous exchange. Today, there is a sense in which the conquest is complete, or at least no longer fruitful. There is now abroad the feeling that man has become victim-of-himself, nature having become a remote, devitalized abstraction. And the environment has changed from natural external surroundings to circumstances almost wholly artificial or man-made. In an essay contributed to *The Man-Made Object* (Braziller, 1966, Michael Blee observed:

The contemporary environment, the rich assembly of man-made objects that structures it, has .

. . . a collective image generated by the bombardment of experience, an intensity created by sheer pressure and repetition, and by lack of individual definition due to movement. Here most surely are radically different problems of identity, different categories of creative responsibility.

Paul Riesman, in *Sign, Image, Symbol*, carries this view a step further:

To the extent that modern man lives completely within his civilization, . . . he lives within a sterile dream world. The dreams are not his own dreams—he is afraid to dream his own dreams. Once fabricated, the forms of civilization have no power to grow in their own right and interact with the human beings who live in them. The only things which grow and change in themselves are organisms, whose meanings and purposes are unknown, to be discovered: this means people, other forms of life, and the universe itself in all its aspects. Fabricated objects and meanings do not have this property. Growth is a process which can take place only in some kind of interaction or transaction between two different organisms. Thus man living in civilization stifles his own growth, and if he is sensitive to this, falls into deep despair.

This is a way of saying that the rhythms of nature, which once informed man's life-patterns and lent them meaning for as long as human undertakings could be seen as encounters *with* nature, are now no longer realities in our lives. To "come of age," today, is to confront artificiality, mechanistic explanation, and historical pretext. The impulses we are expected to respond to are generated by man-made stimuli, and the "Goals for America," which people wonder about from time to time, remain in the charge of some Congressional committee that makes no reports.

What stands in the way of our seeing these difficulties clearly? Mainly an incredible conceit. Mainly a self-righteousness which we have been absorbing for the best part of two centuries, and a self-confidence which was brave and handsome for a while, in a "show-off" way, but has now become shrill and empty.

There is a curious parallel between our apparently optionless condition and that of the "primitive" society which has been overtaken by

the nervous energies and insatiable expansion of Western civilization—when there is nothing to do but "adapt," and to do this is to lose all that has been known of a good life. There is a passage in *Man in a Mirror* by Richard Llewellyn in which the desperation felt by an African tribesman confronted by "Westernization" is conveyed in brooding-reminiscences. The passage concerns a leader who, because of his European education, is able, to look forward as well as back; yet when he looks forward, he can see no understandable future for his people:

Thinking of all the generations of lion-killers while he crossed the plain, Nterenke began to realize with an increasing dismay which he found almost comical that the Masai intellect held not the least notion of physical science, no philosophy, or sense of ideas in the abstract, or any mathematical process higher than the use of the hands and fingers. He amused himself in trying to imagine how he might try to teach Olle Tselene the theory of the spectrum. Yet every tracker knew the value of sunlight in a dewdrop because the prism told where the track led and when it had been made. How the eye saw the colors or why the colors were supposed to exist was never mystery or problem. They had no place anywhere in thought. But all male Masai, from the time they were Ol Ayoni, had a sharp sense of color from living in the forest and choosing plumage for the cap. Color became a chief need in the weeks of shooting, and comparing, and taking out a smaller for a larger bird, or throwing away a larger for a smaller, more colorful. He wondered where the idea of color began, or why a scholar should interest himself. Mr. James had taught that sound politics led to a rich economy where people earned more money for less hours of work, and so created a condition of leisure needed by inventors, whether mental or physical. The Masai had always enjoyed an ample economy, if it meant a complete filling of simple needs, and after the animals were tended, there was plenty of leisure. Yet there were no inventors of any sort. There was a father-to-son and mouth-to-mouth passing of small items that pretended to history, and a large fund of forest lore that might pass as learning, but there were no scholars, no artists, no craftsmen in the European sense.

The effect was to lock a growing mind in a wide prison of physical action and disciplined restriction that by habit became accepted as absolute liberty.

In this story, Nterenke is the sole intermediary between his tribe and the representatives of white civilization. Recognizing the lack of any basis of communication between the two cultures, he has his own Dark Night of the Soul in behalf of his fellow tribesmen. Western ways simply do not translate into any level of the understanding of the Masai.

The dilemma—which is ours as much as it is the Masai's—acquires a desperate finality if we turn to universal tradition. What, for example, has "coming to maturity" meant throughout the ages? It is the *entering into life* of the grown individual, appareled in his best, and rich in the instruction of the vision of those who have gone that way before. As Joseph Campbell puts it in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*:

The tribal ceremonies of birth, initiation, marriage, burial, installation, and, so forth, serve to translate the individual's life crises and life-deeds into classic, impersonal forms. They disclose him to himself, not as this personality or that, but as the warrior, the bride, the widow, the priest, the chieftain; at the same time rehearsing for the rest of the community the old lesson of the archetypal stages. All participate in the ceremonial according to rank and function. The whole society becomes visible to itself as an imperishable living unit. Generations of individuals pass, like anonymous cells from a living body; but the sustaining, timeless form remains. By an enlargement of vision to embrace this super-individual, each discovers himself enhanced, enriched, supported, and magnified. His role, however unimpressive, is seen to be intrinsic to the beautiful festival-image of man—the image, potential yet necessarily inhibited, within himself.

This is the way, for all those for whom man-in-nature still has meaning, of being brought into the field of adult activity. Yet it will no longer work. It will not work for the Masai because the natural background is being replaced. It will not work for us because we have long since broken faith with "the classic, impersonal forms," and have taught ourselves quite other imagery of manhood and achievement. Man-conquering-nature does not lend itself to natural readings; it has no inherent balance principle; and in its

climactic development it offers only the forced adaptation of human beings to a fabricated environment which allows no living "interaction or transaction." This environment has no corrective for self-delusion. It is a place without measure or human-scaling norm.

In a paper, "On the Problem of the Human Problem," James B. Klee, of the psychology department at Brandeis University, has this passage:

Some say that the present man is becoming a conformist. Maybe so. But perhaps this is not his intention. Perhaps conformity is a result of what might be more correctly identified as a narrowed image of man, shrunken by his own success with the material world. The ideals of purity, respectability, and power of domination he gained so deservedly in his mastery of the physical, he is now tempted to apply to himself or at least to others as he continues. I frequently get a weird feeling of petulant spoiled bratness from the successful scientist. Watching from afar some of our major "geniuses," on television especially, one senses an inordinately successful child prodigy who never quite got beyond twelve as he delighted in his collecting of stamps, coins, facts, microbes, electrons, numbers, words, etc. He seems never to have stopped or have been stopped, and if he were, one might expect the initial reaction to be a pout. Of course Western Man shows this even more. But the shock comes when we find the scientists doing it, too. We excuse so much in the name of science. It is as if the frame of reference of the recipients of the benefits of science has reverted to the level of magic white or black. The idea of the challenge with its implications of possible failure has been replaced by the idea of hygienic goodness.

In such a society, the "rites of passage" are not rites, nor do they accomplish any passage. Instead of "rites" we have a prolonged indoctrination session, accomplished by the mass media. As Ludwig von Bertalanffy says: "If a slogan, however insipid, is repeated a sufficient number of times and is emotionally coupled with the promise of reward or the menace of punishment, it is nearly unavoidable that the human animal establishes the continued reaction as desired."

"Coming of age," in our time, seems accurately portrayed in the dread discovery of the Existentialists. We are made to realize that the world—the world as we have reconstructed it and interpreted it—has no natural hospitality for the dreaming hopes of man. Nature is now a gutted mine, a shelf of chemicals, a bare, mechanistic anatomy, with no more psychic unity than a corpse. Earth Mother no longer, not even arbiter of the competitive struggle, Nature secretes her essences away in hidden places. She is a violated virgin who has lost all trust in man. The tides of life, once made to flow in fructifying cycles by the locks of tradition, now gather in stagnant pressure behind the dams of frustration. There is no relief except as this angry fluid is drawn off into the arteries of nihilism and mindless revolt. All the signs point to a great stoppage of history itself.

Now something terrible—or something wonderful—will have to happen. It is as though the age had conspired to bring to social mankind that final choice which once came only to lonely individuals—for there is, as Joseph Campbell says, "another way":

But there is another way—in diametric opposition to that of social duty and the popular cult. From the standpoint of the way of duty, anyone in exile from the community is a nothing. From the other point of view, however, this exile is the first step of the quest. Each carries within himself the all; therefore it may be sought and discovered within. The differentiations of sex, age, and occupation are not essential to our character, but mere costumes which we wear for a time on the stage of the world. The image of man within is not to be confounded with the garments. We think of ourselves as Americans, children of the twentieth century, Occidentals, civilized Christians. We are virtuous or sinful. Yet such designations do not tell us what it is to be man, they denote only the accidents of geography, birth-date, and income. What is the core of us? What is the basic character of our being?

This is the beginning of the cycle of becoming of the hero. There is a kind of doom to be felt even in the asking of these questions. If we think about it, we see that awareness of the fact that "such designations do not tell us what it is to be

man" is of the essence of what we call the *modern spirit*—born in prophetic agony and restlessness in the nineteenth century. Once this is felt to be true, there can be no going back to the old faiths and the old forms of "maturity." "Not this, not that," man's introspective genius keeps telling him. "No man," as Campbell says, "can return from such exercises and take very seriously himself as Mr. So-and-so of Such-and-such a township, U.S.A.—Society and duties drop away."

The conventional community of today does not merely turn away—declare a "nothing"—only the lonely dissenter, the rebellious wonderer; now, by its spreading artificial processes, it exiles all men from life. So there can be no "coming of age," these days, unless it be through the second birth of man as hero. This is the hard and terrible destiny we have made for ourselves. Ancient spiritual secrets are now the only explanation we can have of the all-demanding common need.

REVIEW

SYMBOLIC UNDERSTANDING

IN his introduction to *Symbolism in Religion and Literature* (Braziller, 1960), Rollo May speaks of the hard-headed neglect by psychologists of the symbolic meanings found in great literature. Not until the general cultural impact of psychoanalysis was widely felt were the basic discoveries of men like Freud and Jung admitted by academic psychologists. Dr. May shows how the work of Kurt Goldstein with brain-damaged soldiers was critical in this recognition, for these patients had lost the capacity to think in symbolic terms, and as a result were helplessly confined to their concrete situations. To have psychological freedom is to think symbolically. Dr. May comments:

It follows, thus, that an individual's self-image is built up of symbols. Symbolizing is basic to such questions as personal identity. For the individual *experiences himself as a self* in terms of symbols which arise from three levels at once; those from archaic and archetypal depths within himself symbols arising from the personal events of his psychological and biological experience, and the general symbols and values which obtain in his culture.

A second observation impressed upon us by our psychoanalytical work is that *contemporary man suffers from the deterioration and breakdown of the central symbols in modern Western culture*.

The agnostic strain in modern literature—nowhere more evident than in the work of the Existentialists—is no doubt a massive symptom of this ill; yet at the same time it is a desperate attempt to understand orders of experience which authoritative scientific opinion has declared without meaning in human terms. Along with other disruptive influences, this mechanization of experience has virtually destroyed the whole-making functions of the human community and produced, by reaction, a number of therapeutic "specialties"—such as psychoanalysis—to take their place. Dr. May finds, for example, that the psychological role of myth and symbol in the plays of Aeschylus and Sophocles gave the Greek social community a natural "therapy." He comments:

In this classic phase of Greek culture we notice that the problems which are dealt with in psychoanalysis in

our modern world seem to be taken care of by a kind of "normal" psychotherapy operating spontaneously through the accepted practices in Greek drama, religion, art and philosophy. It is not difficult for a modern psychoanalyst to imagine the great abreactive effect on some person burdened with guilt feelings because of hostility toward an exploitive mother, who watches, let us say, the public performance of the drama in which Orestes kills the mother who had destroyed his father, is then pursued over hill and dale by the punishing Erinyes (who, since they track evil-doers and inflict madness would seem psychologically to be symbols of guilt and remorse), and finally achieves peace when he is forgiven by the community and the gods. I do not mean, of course, that these therapeutic experiences would be consciously articulated by the citizen of Greece in fifth century B.C. Indeed, our point is that just the opposite was true, that "therapy" was part of the normal unarticulated functions of the drama, religion and other forms of communication of the day. One gets the impression in these classical periods of *education* rather than *reeducation*, of normal development of the individual toward *integration* rather than desperate endeavors toward *re-integration*.

There seems a wise penetration in this account of the situation of modern man. Either for his sins, or for his sophistication—doubtless for both—he must somehow learn to do self-consciously what earlier cultures accomplished more "normally" and without torturing self-examination. For us, an act of growth seems always to be also an act of correction. To reach "maturity," in our time, is to gain something that has been lost, to succeed in some *salvage* operation, as well as to grow into something new. And while we may be helped in all this by one another, we must in a special sense always do it for ourselves.

Part of our "growing up," then, is a recovery of the meanings in our cultural past. To be what we are, we must know what we have been, and this involves conscious reabsorption of past symbolic understandings of ourselves. *Shakespeare's Royal Self*, by James Kirsch (published by G. P. Putnam's Sons for the C. G. Jung Foundation, 1966, \$7.95), is a book in the service of such a realization. The author is a practicing analytical psychologist in the Los Angeles area. He was for years a personal student of Jung, and brings to this study of *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, and *Macbeth* the full background of Jungian doctrine. For this reason, if not for others, the present discussion cannot be a critical review, but

only some suggestions as to the usefulness of such studies.

First of all is the fact that Jung, more than anyone in the modern psychological movement, has made modern man aware of the primary importance of symbolism in his inner life. Second, Jung accomplished in himself, and therefore for those in his circle of influence, a quiet emancipation from virtually all the assumptions of nineteenth-century materialism. In Jung, therefore, one encounters man as an essentially *psychological* reality. When, then, Dr. Kirsch goes to these plays of Shakespeare, which are the plays of inward struggle, concerned with the destiny-shaping forces in man himself, the Jungian analyst finds the dramatist unfolding the mysteries of individuation. Lear's madness, for example, is seen by Dr. Kirsch not as "insanity" but as the total engrossment of the king in the heroic task of self-realization. Lear is a great soul confined by a puny mind. His acts in behalf of a superficial order, in which he twice misreads appearance for reality—when he denies Cordelia her heritage, then honors Goneril and Regan—precipitate him on his downward course, and related sub-plots conspire to increase his ruin. Lear must be purged and made wise—and *nothing* is spared to accomplish this end. Disaster mounts upon disaster until Lear is finally driven to face himself. This is the design of the drama. As Dr. Kirsch puts it:

Why must Lear suffer so much? The reason, as stated before, is that his attitude still seeks the cause for his misfortune outside himself, that is, in his daughters. It appears that for individuals who are intended to know themselves, the Self creates extraordinary situations in order to force the individual to experience himself to the utmost.

By having this destiny, Lear's self is a royal self:

Lear is not only king by being the head of a country; the essence of his being is royal. In spite of his abdication, he remains a king. His royalty must assert itself as an inner truth. Therefore, his own Self constellates this extreme of suffering in order to fulfill his humanity to the utmost.

Dr. Kirsch's reading of Hamlet is that of a man dissuaded from his high duty—he was a philosopher—by the Ghost's obsessive demand for revenge:

Hamlet is the only one at the court who carries within himself an image of the divine order of things. He possesses the greatest integrity. The *tragedy* is that he is also poisoned by the Ghost. Through his reckless attitude toward the Ghost, he becomes psychologically changed. He therefore cannot handle wisely this admittedly difficult and rotten situation. He is drawn back into his father's psychology and profoundly contaminated with the late King's spirit of crime and revenge. Now called to action, he cannot act in a manner corresponding to the true Hamlet, the man of spirit.

While King *Lear* raises man to high self-realization, *Macbeth* accomplishes the reverse. The forces of final balance, in this play, are not in the individual, but in the social community. Macbeth's last feeble utterance as a man—ultimately diminished—comes shortly before he dies, when he recognizes his fate and accepts it:

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,
But bear-like I must fight the course.

Dr. Kirsch has this general comment:

In the analysis of *Hamlet* mention was made that every one of Shakespeare's plays contains lines which refer to *knowing oneself*. Individuation, as defined by C. G. Jung, represents the process by which self-knowledge may be gained. Macbeth's words prove that originally he had had the capacity to know himself, but his deed and the inability to carry the guilt have irrevocably destroyed it. Since individuation is no longer possible for him, the opposite of individuation is forced upon him. From now on, he must pretend to be what he is not. He must wear masks and clothes to cover up what he really is. He must equivocate. The further the action develops, the wider becomes the gap between his pretense and his true being.

...

What grows on the reader of this book is the need to take Shakespeare seriously in all that he wrote. Here was a man who was able to embody a clear moral tradition—the Elizabethan world-view—and as an artist to range against it those contradictions of which the world was then becoming aware, and thus to shake to the core men's ideas of both themselves and the world. While doctrines and theories lie in shambles, there is still the quest which animates the noblest of men, an intention which no disaster can obliterate.

It is this quest, finally, which Shakespeare makes us respect.

COMMENTARY

A MAN FOR THIS SEASON

As diagnostician to the ailing psyche of modern man, Rollo May puts his judgment with a brief clarity: "*contemporary man suffers from the deterioration and breakdown of the central symbols in modern Western culture.*"

Aristophanes read the ills of his time with equal simplicity: "Whirl is king, having kicked out Zeus."

Days and years could be spent in listing the distempers and disillusionments of a souring civilization, and there will always be scholars whose attainments are devoted to nothing else. A point is reached, however, when we tire of being told what is wrong. An inventory of toppling gods and broken faiths is useful only for opening the mind, and what men need in a dissolving psychological environment is bit of solid ground.

There have been men—a few of them—for whom the gyrating insanities of Whirl prove no disturbance, and when you look at their lives and thought you find that, before the trouble came, they showed an equal indifference to the pretentious claims of Zeus. They didn't obey him before he was kicked out, so his displacement does not upset them at all.

Nothing that is happening today could have troubled Thoreau in a more than ordinary way. The faiths that are coming apart were not his faiths, the promises that are now being broken did not interest him when they were made. His principle of equilibrium was not gained from the symbols which are now deteriorating. He has his manhood and his courage from another source—in his own, free-floating independence of spirit—and it is here that we must all now look for foundations that will stand. What lay behind these thoughts of Thoreau, set down in 1863:

Let us consider the way in which we spend our lives.

This world is a place of business. What an infinite bustle! I am awaked almost every night by the panting of the locomotive. It interrupts my dreams. There is no sabbath. It would be glorious to see mankind at leisure for once. It is nothing but work, work, work. I cannot easily buy a blank-book to write thoughts in; they are commonly ruled for dollars and cents. An Irishman, seeing me make a minute in the fields, took it for granted that I was calculating my wages. If a man was tossed out of a window when an infant, and so made a cripple for life, or scared out of his wits by the Indians, it is regretted chiefly because he was thus incapacitated for—business! I think there is nothing, not even crime, more opposed to poetry, to philosophy, ay, to life itself, than this incessant business. . . .

If a man walk in the woods for love of them half of each day, he is in danger of being regarded as a loafer; but if he spends his whole day as a speculator, shearing off those woods and making earth bald before her time, he is esteemed an industrious and enterprising citizen. As if a town had no interest in its forests but to cut them down!

Thoreau was no friend to half-hearted liberals. The argument from "feasibility" he did not even hear. He was no preacher, either. He simply explained his stance from the oak of his being. Why should he make "adjustments"! How would this serve the life he set out to live?

The community has no bribe that will tempt a wise man. You may raise money enough to tunnel a mountain, but you cannot raise money enough to hire a man who is minding his *own* business. An efficient and valuable man does what he can, whether the community pay him for it or not. The inefficient offer their inefficiency to the highest bidder, and are forever expecting to be put into office. One would suppose that they were rarely disappointed.

What disaster, what common corruption, could shake the degree in the life of a man who thought as Thoreau thought about the common run of social encounters:

Just so hollow and ineffectual, for the most part, is our ordinary conversation. Surface meets surface. When our life ceases to be inward and private, conversation degenerates into mere gossip. We rarely meet a man who can tell us any news which he has not read in a newspaper, or been told by his neighbor; and, for the most part, the only difference between us

and our fellow is, that he has seen the newspaper, or been out to tea, and we have not. In proportion as our inward life fails, we go more constantly and desperately to the post-office. You may depend upon it, that the poor fellow who walks away with the greatest number of letters, proud of his correspondence, has not heard from himself this long while.

I do not know but it is too much to read one newspaper a week. I have tried it recently, and for so long it seems to me that I have not dwelt in my native region. The sun, the clouds, the snow, the trees say not so much to me. You cannot serve two masters. It requires more than a day's devotion to know and to possess the wealth of a day.

The lesson here is simple enough. A man must find his own "native region"; and having found it, inhabit it as consistently as he can. Only by this means can he have symbols that will not "deteriorate," and a life that the world cannot twist or frighten. The only good that can be made out of the horrors of history is a new beginning for an education that is determined to make this lesson clear.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

THE CHALLENGE OF WORLD EDUCATION

IN a paper published last year by the World Academy of Art and Science, John McHale, of the World Resources Inventory (University of Southern Illinois), considers the potential resources for higher education for all the world. What might be called the "moral necessity" for universal education is stated at the beginning of the paper:

Now, as never before, the level and quantity of formal education largely determines the degree of freedom of the individual, the prosperity of a nation, and, in the final analysis, the survival of human society. In the developing complexity of our present world, lack of education is, on the one hand a form of disenfranchise. The illiterate individual is denied full cultural participation in his society: his economic freedom and social mobility are restricted according to such formal knowledge, skills and techniques as may only be gained, and duly certified, within a formal educational system. On the other hand, it is also a world being transformed by scientific and technological agencies whose understanding, service and control demand a high degree of organized formal knowledge and attainment for their continued functioning and development.

It is a world which depends, quite literally, for its physical survival on a highly educated society.

Initially, this seems a somewhat ruthless view of the chances for a better life of all those destined to be left behind by the uneven development, throughout the world, of the required technological facilities. Can we concede that, because of an enormous jump in industrial expansion in certain parts of the world, the people who happen to live in other areas are doomed to be second-class human beings? Or should we insist that other directions of human development, independent of high technology, contain the real promise of the future of mankind? We may argue that there have been wise and good human beings in cultures at *all* stages of technical development.

Why should the special talents of the present be permitted to change our judgment in this?

Mr. McHale has his own way of showing awareness of such contradictions. He points out: "Even in the advanced countries the task of educating the bulk of the population to merely adequate standards is proving to be more than our most highly developed educational systems can cope with." The practical problem of communicating to students the enormous store of "facts" makes it necessary to question the *content* of modern education. Mr. McHale writes:

Great progress is being made in how we may present more information, test more rigorously and instruct larger numbers—but *what* and *why* are questions seldom heard.

The magnitude of our present task requires that we reexamine and reorganize the content as well as the channels of education; that we reshape the curricula as well as the buildings and classrooms--that we restore to education its prime concern with the development of whole men—not merely greater numbers of technicians or well-stuffed specialists of this or that subject area. . . .

Now, perhaps, we need to ask what is *the minimum amount of knowledge* necessary to understand a field or a group of fields. As rote learning was rendered obsolete by the printed book, so the intensive specialization of "human books" may now be obsoleted by mechanized data storage.

Science gives a lead here in its trending toward fresh unities and relationships of many fields—in cosmology, atomic theory, genetics, etc. We have gone swiftly from a great number of isolated principles to much simpler models and hypotheses. Education should seek to reinforce such convergence of knowledge by pacing each accumulation of new detail knowledge with its conscious integration in new concepts and meaningful wholes.

Now what Mr. McHale seems to be fishing for, here, is a way of dealing with increments of scientific knowledge such that they may be accumulated *organically*, instead of piling them up additively as endless items of mechanistic fact. This would involve making scientific theory and knowledge into a body that grows by assimilation; its methods would somehow duplicate the

assimilative processes of the human body which make possible physiological growth. It would mean changing our modes of thought about nature and the universe into vital processes, and putting aside the *machine* model of the universe.

Mr. McHale doesn't say so, but we think he might agree upon the necessity of revolutionary reforms in our approach to cosmology, and of learning how to think of technology as a psycho-physical branch of the cosmological process itself—a process not alien to the human qualities of human beings, but rather a conscious extension of their natural powers.

It is reasonable to suppose that the initiative for such changes would have to come from those areas of human inquiry now devoted to *synthesis*—the areas devoted to man, his nature, and his possibilities. Man, after all, is the only conscious synthesizer we know of, and if these things are ever to be accomplished, they will be done by man thinking like a man—not by man imitating a machine.

Yet it is in the area of humanistic studies that Mr. McHale finds the most discouraging evidence of cultural lag:

Where science education may have given the lead in this new understanding of our world, the traditional arts and humanities still lag far behind. Those areas of our education which deal with the transmission of the symbolic and value content of our culture do so almost entirely in terms of the past. They avoid any immediate relevance to the external cultural environment.

Mr. McHale points to the shocking fact that "less than two per cent of our present educational time is spent in studies of cultures other than our own, let alone the emergence of the new forms of culture which surround us." And the external appearance of cultural uniformity of which he also speaks is often referred to by less charitable critics as the "Americanization" of the world, in terms of mass production technology and its all-pervasive commercial symbolism spread by the mass media. Meanwhile, what are supposed to be "cultural

institutions" take their lead from other than human needs: "We do have various centers for International Studies but these tend to be no more than cold war colleges concerned solely with political and economic positions. Their internationalism is generally of the nineteenth-century, imperial variety."

Mr. McHale's discussion concludes with a description of a 200-foot-diameter, miniature Earth or Geoscope, developed by the World Resources Inventory as a tool for education in world trends and pattern formations, complete with computer-controlled access to the data library of the Inventory.

What we should like to add, here, is an encouraging note which grows out of observation of another level of human activity. In the Listener for Feb. 18, 1960, Czeslaw Milosz found reason to speak of the possibilities and promise of a common culture for all the world:

There has never been such curiosity about the whole past of Man on Earth, nor so many signs of exploring civilizations in their sinuous growth. We enter a sesame of our heritage, not limited to one continent. And this is accessible to the many, not only to some specialists. For instance, there has never been so great an interest in the art and music of the past. A price has to be paid, and recorded music or reproductions of paintings have their reverse side in cheap "mass culture." There is also a danger of syncretism. Yet a new dimension of history, understood as a whole, appears in all its dependencies. We deplore the dying out of local customs and local traditions, but perhaps the rootlessness of modern man is not so great, if through individual effort he can, so to say, return home and be in contact with all the people of various races and religions who suffered, thought, and created before him.

Mr. Milosz writes of certain unplanned, spontaneous developments of the times—as yet, we may think, no more than mere waveless on the surface of things, but indicative, it may also be, of a deep and slowly rising tide.

FRONTIERS

We Can Try

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ART and the so-called educative process—where do they meet? Is art education an informative tunnel between those who know and those who do not? Between the expert and the innocent? What is it that the art teacher knows and the student does not know? And after that question is settled, who will ask what is it that the student knows and the teacher has forgotten?

What are we teaching? I am a painter and a teacher. Do I teach people how to paint? What is "to paint"? I paint but I can't tell you what it is. I mix color and apply it to a surface. That is all I can say that is specific. To give existence to a dead surface is fulfilling beyond anything that I know. Can I lead others to this same experience? I am a teacher and this is expected of me. I begin by mixing colors and applying them to a given surface and then—and then what?

What is the force that brings into identical existence the self and the beyond self? What is it that fuses the propulsion that makes the mark with the mark itself? It is easy to take a tool, a piece of chalk, a dab of paint and make a mark, even an exquisite mark. But to what end and out of what necessity is this taught? Is the mark made out of the head of the marker or the appraisers of the mark? If the goal is social service, then the high objective of art is universal communication, and the only satisfaction that an artist can aspire to is the nodding of all the heads that would shake in terror and fury at the sight of the unfamiliar, the unidentified. The criterion of achievement would be in the facility to do as others expect of you and to find a cow-like contentment in being able to retreat from the terrible vacuum within to the dubious security of a gregarious art.

The tragic fallacy of this highly socialized educational goal is that it is the surest way to

postpone, if not eradicate, the real purpose of any educative process which is to induce independent integrity and equilibrium in the individual, and the courage to seek organic identity with things outside of himself.

The problem of the teacher is essentially the same as the painter's. It is not so much a matter of setting down creditable forms or of teaching people how to paint them. The first job is to forget about art and art forms and bring the individual back to himself. The reason why the world is overpopulated with ineffectual teachers and uninteresting painters is the fact that this first requirement is, above all things, terrifying. It is easier and more publicly rewarding to join the parade and leave oneself behind. The happy good health of the objective personality, the gregarious façade, is rewarded with the fruits of collectivist conformity ranging from the Prix de Rome and the Phi Beta Kappa key to membership in the Communist party. The promising negativism of the student who is struggling with the real issue within himself is turned over to the psychologist for correction when, in fact, it is the teacher's own most positive challenge. Of the two cases the first, like the society into which he has been so easily integrated, lives on social sedatives while running away from his own symptoms. I wonder, which of the two may be said to be the sicker?

Teachers sometimes forget that students are growing as they learn and that the extent of the growing process cannot always be measured by the success of the learning process. On the contrary, there are many times when the learning process is temporarily throttled by the accelerated development of the individual. This has been observed so many times in my own teaching experience that by now I am always alerted by signs of frustration and discouragement—signs that time and again have proved a turning-point and an omen of renewed creative vigor and achievement. The conventional educational procedure involves automatic failure at this point when, as a matter of fact, these difficulties could

indicate progress and promise. I had occasion recently to advise a student whose work had literally fallen apart to take heart, that she was in one important sense farther along than many of the defter ones whose facility had not as yet gone through the fire of self-questioning and doubt. Painters know this phenomenon well. Educators seem to have forgotten it.

Again the question—painting and teaching, where do they meet? Does painting derive from painting, and does education pick and distribute the full-grown fruits of professional achievement? Or, on the contrary, do both involve a continuing search for those particular and unpredictable tangibles that will answer the deep and immediate needs of a growing, self-questioning personality? Education by concept alone is so deeply rooted in our thinking that even our creative people, painters, craftsmen, composers become frozen by it when confronted with a teaching task. Students are so inured to the system from early childhood on that only by long and convincing demonstration can they be persuaded that painting by concept is as misleading and unrewarding as existence by concept would be and is. The teacher is asked how, then, can he justify his position. What, if not transferable information, has he to give? There is an answer to this. There are memories to be recalled, a forgotten existence to be revived, old and unexpressed aspirations to be activated.

Do you remember a summer day long ago when you were slowly following a narrow path through the tall weeds? Do you remember your thoughts as your feet touched the dry, scrubby earth? Do you remember the small piece of bark that lay under your foot as you stepped forward? Do you remember pressing down with all your strength? Do you recall the fervor with which you sensed that you would never lose that instant? Do you remember that you were eight years old? Do you remember that you dared not tell this nonsense to your elders?

And do you remember snapping your fingers and wondering what happens to the sounds? One by one. Here now. Now gone. But when is now? Now is gone before you can catch it. Snap faster. Snapsnapsnap. Bring them all together so that now will last long enough to touch. Do you remember how troubled you were, and do you remember the laughter of the grownups? And then you stopped this silliness and were rewarded for shaking hands properly with Aunt May. Remember?

And what about painting? Are there proper kinds of painting that can be taught like handshaking? Or is there a unique existence that precedes the act, that dictates its course and its identity? Does the act of combining single points of reference in space into a greater single image derive its sanction from art history, or could it be one answer to the snapping fingers of a child who questions the nature of space and time, and the wonder and terror of being alive and alone?

In the face of a world which stakes its salvation on the objective blueprint and the materialist prescription, is there any hope of reviving, in those we chance to guide, thought that is whole-beinged, and achievement, great or small, based on this and this alone?

We can try.

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