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THE ROOTS OF POWER

IN reflective moments, a man has no difficulty in recognizing that there are two ways to regard what we call "society," and that both views are needed to throw light on the practical, day-to-day decisions all individuals make concerning their social relationships.

At its best, society has the character of a school, helping people to learn how to order their lives. It brings persons of little experience into contact with others who are likely to know more about both philosophical and practical questions. It is a focus for the regulated expression of man's concern for his fellows, for various sorts of cooperation, and it is a common ground for the sharing of those pleasures and activities which have no existence except in human association. It makes possible mutual enjoyment of unique excellences which arise from widely differing human potentialities. We speak of a rare individual who deserves to be regarded as a "universal man," and it seems obvious that the qualities which are implied could hardly be known except in a diversified social context.

At its worst, society is both a tyrannical ruler and a juggernaut of destruction. The defenders of a society organized to exercise these roles never think of it as a school, but only as the agency for the control of human wickedness. They find threats of wickedness all about. Not to recognize wickedness where they see it is itself an abominable crime, since this tends to diminish the importance of control and would leave all men increasingly defenseless against evil. There is a sense, then, in which such a society rapidly develops into an endlessly resourceful producer of wickedness, since its "good life" depends upon having plenty of wickedness to control or stamp out, and the efficiencies of its public service are exhibited by the skills developed in this sort of corrective management.

Well, these are poles of thought about "society." There is some reality in each extreme, but neither is ever found in isolation, although some social situations seem to approximate fairly well one extreme or the other. It hardly needs pointing out that we live in a period of history when social conditions typifying society in its tyrannical, anti-human role press for attention—the Nazi and other concentration camps, for example—while locating situations embodying a social ideal is much more difficult. However, Neill's Summerhill might satisfy some of the latter requirements, and less known examples may occur to the reader.

How do these polarities—the ugly reality of the one, the distant vision of the other—affect our ordinary thinking about "society"? It seems evident that they affect our thinking in a way very much the same as other normative ideas affect our thinking about good and evil or desirable and undesirable ends—our longings for an ideal situation contribute much more to our judgments than does a realistic grasp of the factors that would have to go into operation to produce an ideal situation. Or, in other words, our *feel*ing about ends has a strong tendency to displace practical recognition of our ignorance concerning means. One immediate consequence of this condition of mind is usually that the destruction of evil seems to us far more important than the production of good. Feeling makes us want to act, and destruction is unsubtle and obvious action compared to creation and building. Besides, the materials readily available for building seem so inadequate, as things are now. Who could make anything good out of the omnipresent failure and corruption recognized by the simplifying perceptions of feeling? So we demand, first of all, a general clean-up before the new beginning.

The main trouble with this point of view is that there is always some truth in it. The persuasive power of this truth allows longing to continue to hide ignorance about the ways and means to good until it finally turns the feeling of knowing *some* truth into the feeling of having *all* the truth that is needed to solve the problem.

This raising, through feeling, of partial truth to an absolute seems to affect nearly all our thinking about ends. Take for example thinking about good government. What is government? It is the system of practical compromises men work out to resolve the various contradictions which result from the polarities of thinking about society. Political philosophers, sometimes, and other observant and thoughtful men know that this is the nature of government, but many other men, who are less thoughtful, who are pursuers of simple good and eager avoiders of painful evil, think of government as something that ought to be made unqualifiedly *good.* It does not occur to them that this may be impossible. Assisted and encouraged by demagogues, a great many people develop vague ideas about how government might be improved—not in terms of an understanding of what government is in itself, but in terms of what they think government ought to do, and in terms of disliked features of government which they would like to see removed. In short, the definition of good government they eventually arrive at is almost entirely shaped by longing. At this point the fact that government is by nature a compromise becomes morally unacceptable. If government is a compromise, the man of longing declares that it *ought not to be.* Compromise, he points out, is immoral. It accepts measurable evil as some kind of necessity, which no really good man can tolerate. The programs devised in this spirit often mix up what may be very good ideas with complete impossibilities. If it is argued that moral longing is not the best guide to legislation, the reply is made that nothing good comes about except from moral longing. This is true enough, but it is not the whole truth.

Society, in other words, is the human situation writ large—so large that it is no longer recognized as the human situation. It is seen as a situation that can and ought to be changed by good men and true. If they are good men they will see what to do, and if they are true they will *do* it! The trouble here, again, is that there is substance to the claim. What sort of substance, and how much, remaining undetermined, the claim becomes a moral absolute.

Longing is seldom willing to take instruction from either reflective or historical inquiry. No one can deny that the original Bolsheviki were men of high humanitarian longing. The longing they felt had earlier been given dramatic splendor in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848:

> When, in the course of development, class distinctions have disappeared, and all production has been concentrated in the hands of a vast association of the whole nation, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat during its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by the force of circumstance, to organize itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution, it makes itself a ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away by force the old conditions of production, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms, and of classes generally, and will therefore have abolished its own supremacy as a class.
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> In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition of the free development of all.

It would be difficult to equal the rhetorical power of this appeal to human longing in any document published since. The language is stately, the hungers it promises to satisfy immeasurable. Yet the most pertinent comment, today, is in a statement issued last year by the War Resisters League, occurring in a brief case made against political violence of any sort:

> . . . the heroic experiment of the Russian people, which began with the moral support of virtually all progressive movements of the world, . . . eventually

> produced a State which killed millions of its own citizens in purges and forced labor camps, oppressed the nations of Eastern Europe, and to this day is still imprisoning writers who seek the exercise of the most elementary freedoms. . . .

Last summer a Russian scientist, Andrei Sakharov, whose brilliant achievements in theoretical physics have made him practically untouchable by the Soviet bureaucracy, dared to say: "After 50 years of unrestricted domination over minds of the whole country, our leadership is afraid of a mere hint of free discussion." The point of these quotations is in showing what may happen when human longing reaches the intensity required to energize a revolt as far-reaching as the Russian Revolution.

Under the very different circumstances of the American Revolution, a rational inquiry into the nature of government had been possible. By comparison with the polemics and manipulation of longing of the Communist Manifesto, the deliberations of the Founding Fathers concerning the proposed constitution for the United States were models of dispassionate investigation. The typing of the Federalists as mere strategists of "a privileged class," as Broadus Mitchell remarks in an appreciation of Alexander Hamilton, too easily diminishes the greatness of their accomplishments. There is a utopianism of authentic vision as well as that of emotional longing, and while feeling attends both, vision gives as much consideration to means as to ends. What might be called existential "reality-testing" of theories of government pervades the *Federalist Papers,* inviting readers to consult the nature of government, as well as their longings, in deciding about the Constitution.

In the thirty-eighth paper, James Madison reviewed various reforms in the governments of classical antiquity, noting that in nearly every case a single man had been responsible for the new political design. He wonders at this, and comments:

> Whence could it have proceeded, that a people, jealous as the Greeks were of their liberty, should so far abandon the rules of caution as to place their destiny in the hands of a single citizen? Whence could it have proceeded, that the Athenians, a people who would not suffer an army to be commanded by fewer than ten generals, and who required no other proof of danger to their liberties than the illustrious merit of a fellow-citizen, should consider one illustrious citizen as a more eligible depository of the fortunes of themselves and their posterity, than a select body of citizens, from whose common deliberations more wisdom, as well as more safety, might have been expected? These questions cannot be fully answered without supposing that the fears of discord and disunion among a number of counsellors, exceeded the apprehension of treachery or incapacity in a single individual. History informs us likewise, of the difficulties with which these celebrated reformers had to contend; as well as of the expedients which they were obliged to employ, in order to carry their reforms into effect. Solon, who seems to have indulged a more temporising policy, confessed that he had not given to his countrymen the government best suited to their happiness, but most tolerable to their prejudices. And Lycurgus, more true to his object, was under the necessity of mixing a portion of violence with the authority of superstition; and of securing his final success, by a voluntary renunciation, first of his country, then of his life.
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> If these lessons teach us, on the one hand, to admire the improvement made by America on the ancient mode of preparing and establishing regular plans of government; they serve not less on the other, to admonish us of the hazards and difficulties incident to such experiments, and of the great imprudence of unnecessarily multiplying them.

These are considerations which remain to haunt the best of constitutions, setting absolute limits to the benefits to be gained from any sort of government, and the truly amazing thing about the Founding Fathers is that they *dared* to hope that the people themselves could be brought to this understanding. No higher compliment was ever paid to a general populace. It is certainly difficult to imagine a similar expectation on the part of today's political leaders.

The politics of longing, or—to borrow from Solon—of adjustment to prejudice, brings far worse compromises than those "normal" to the political process. And since the great States of

the present do not even dream of inviting people to do the self-reliant, critical thinking on which genuine self-government would be based, it is entirely natural that men who combine broad intelligence with the desire to work for social reconstruction often avoid the political process entirely. This, for example, was the course chosen by Gandhi, and the one followed by his successors in the Indian Sarvodaya movement. More than ten years ago, Vinoba Bhave cut himself off completely from even the organizational mechanisms of the Gandhian groups. Contrasting his mode of work with the role of leaders in the Indian government, he said:

> I am sure were we to occupy the position and shoulder the responsibility which they do, we would act much in the same manner as they. Whoever occupies office and wields governmental authority must needs think in a narrow, cramped, and set circle. There can be no freedom of thinking for him. He finds himself, as it were, under an obligation to think and act as the world seems to be doing.

Another Indian leader, Jayaprakash Narayan, once a Marxist revolutionary but now of Gandhian persuasion, has called attention to the fact that "on advent of Swaraj [Indian independence], Gandhiji did not accept any power himself." The reason: "Simply because he [Gandhi] knew that legal authority would not help him to establish such society as promised the good of all people, the Sarvodaya pattern of society." Narayan continued:

> Gandhiji was the greatest statesman India has ever known. Our politicians of today all learnt politics at his feet. But Gandhiji did not touch the ruling machinery with a pair of tongs. If law could bring grist to the mill of the people he would have certainly accepted office. Law cannot be instrumental in changing socio-economic values or outlook towards life. That is impossible without a basic change—change at the root.

In her contribution to *Leadership and Political Institutions in India* (Park and Tinker, Princeton University Press, 1959), Joan V. Bondurant summarizes the elements in the Gandhian conception of social service:

> The idea of a class of leaders trained to live a simple, nonattached life is not new in the annals of speculation upon an ideal state. The suggestion that, ideally, society would be best governed by a class that does not want to rule but agrees to do so for the good of society has been advanced more than once in the course of centuries of man's reflection upon political processes and institutions. But a system of extra-party, extra-institutional leadership, established through demonstration of sincerity, service, effectiveness, and direct appeal, and functioning as political conscience within a system of representative, democratic government, has not yet been formulated. Such a possibility lies implicit in the recommendations of Gandhi and the suggestions of those who currently examine the Gandhian experiment. "Banish the idea of the capture of power," said Gandhi, "and you will be able to guide power and keep it on the right path." Vinoba, advocating the setting up of a group which would keep strictly away from conventional power, suggested that such a group would be "composed of workers totally detached from power, devoted to ceaseless service, with unfailing adherence to the principles of right conduct and morality. . . . They will serve the people and keep in touch with them through the service and disseminate among them the right kind of knowledge. The existence of a party of this type only will purify the administration."

Why, exactly, should power—surely a necessity of even good government—be so shunned by men determined to serve the social welfare of their fellows?

Because, in the present, access to power is through promises to satisfy human longing. The man who uses this means to power too easily becomes either a liar or one who is self-deceived concerning what can be done with power. And the power obtained by such Machiavellian promises can almost never be used for doing genuine good. Too many concessions to irrational longing stand in the way.

The only long-term remedy for such situations is action in behalf of fundamental social education by men who reject any sort of power. This should be quite plain.

Miss Bondurant suggests that the Gandhian conception of leadership has not been formulated.

Yet something like it has been practiced in various epochs, as by the members of the Pythagorean Brotherhood. And a counsel of similar import seems implicit in a closing paragraph of Gaetano Mosca's classic, *The Ruling Class.* This is the conclusion of a man who made a lifelong study of the origins and uses of political power:

> Every generation produces a certain number of generous spirits who are capable of loving all that is, or seems to be, noble and beautiful, and of devoting large parts of their activity to improving the society in which they live, or at least to saving it from getting worse. Such individuals make up a small moral and intellectual aristocracy, which keeps humanity from rotting in the slough of selfishness and material appetites. To such aristocracies the world primarily owes the fact that many nations have been able to rise from barbarism and have never relapsed into it. Rarely do members of such aristocracies attain the outstanding positions in political life but they render a perhaps more effective service to the world by molding the minds and guiding the sentiments of their contemporaries, so that in the end they succeed in forcing their programs upon those that rule the state.

This view of social leadership, you could say, was given formal discipline by Gandhi and his followers. What would relieve such men of the charges commonly directed at "aristocrats"? Only, it seems clear, their rejection of power and their refusal to profit personally from what they do. They lead simple, nonattached lives and will not use violence as the means to progress. They are no threat to established authority save as their example gnaws at the roots of all political power, gradually inspiring self-change in the longings of the people.

REVIEW
NEEDED: A KIND OF MEN

THE war in Vietnam may some day be regarded by historians as the first conflict engaged in by the United States in which the moral issues of being in it at all generated resistance that reached almost mass proportions. For much the same reasons the present may be remembered as a time when citizens of humanist conviction found their integrity severely tested by national policies increasingly at odds with principles they had been brought up to believe were the roots of their country's dignity and honor. Only perturbing thoughts can come from noticing how many men of advanced intellectual attainments have been drawn into merely "technical" participation in the war. Scholars with special knowledge of the Far East are called upon to contribute no more than sophistication to the opportunism of decisionmakers. Men whose minds were shaped by scholarly objectivity, who habitually think of the peoples of other nations and races as human beings, more or less like ourselves, are compelled to recognize that this kind of thinking is a luxury not permitted by the national interest. One disenchanted East Asia specialist, James C. Thompson, Jr., who in 1966 terminated a five-year term of service to both the White House and the State Department, spoke of "the banishment of real expertise" in time of crisis. And scholarly resistance to the psychology of nationalism, he found, unfits a man for public duty. In his article in the *Atlantic* for last April, Mr. Thompson said:

> I shall not forget my assignment from an Assistant Secretary of State in March, 1964: to draft a speech for Secretary McNamara which would, *inter alia,* once and for all dispose of the canard that the Vietnam conflict was a civil war. "But in some ways, of course," I mused, "it *is* a civil war." "Don't play word games with me!" snapped the Assistant Secretary.

Another report on the embarrassments of the humanist conscience is provided by a chapter from a forthcoming book by Eric F. Goldman, published as an article in *Harper's* for January under the title "The White House and the Intellectuals." Mr. Goldman, a Princeton historian, served as Special Consultant to the President from 1964 to 1966. It became his misfortune to have suggested the ill-fated "White House Festival of the Arts," early in 1965. Behind the proposal, he explains, was an urge "to help in trying to establish some degree of rapport between the President and the better-educated groups in metropolitan America." What he couldn't know, at the time, was that the President would order continuous bombing of North Vietnam during the interval between the proposal and the date finally set for the affair.

Mr. Goldman's article is mainly a study of the tensions created in the White House and in the world of arts and letters by Robert Lowell's courteous but firm withdrawal of his acceptance of an invitation to attend the Festival. The poet decided that he simply could not go, and explained his reasons in a letter to the President. The resulting furor in the White House and the reactions of other troubled artists and writers make the substance of the historian's report. Mr. Goldman's own enduring pain came from the fact that he could find in the White House no trace of respect for the integrity of men of dissenting opinion. The article is long, filled with anecdote and detail, and encouraging in the sense that it tells about a number of serious and conscientious people who made up their minds in various ways, explaining themselves as well as they could. But most encouraging of all is that so wide a self-questioning could be precipitated by the personal decision of a single man—one whose eminence as a poet, it is true, drew attention to what he did, but still only one man. As part of his final comment, Mr. Goldman said:

> When the troubles came, I steadfastly and sincerely maintained that the festival was a salute to the arts, and nothing more, and that Lowell was wrong in his statement that he could not appear without at least a "subtle commitment." Now, having lived through this experience and learned what one political leader actually expected from his ceremonial guests, I wondered.

Related to this general problem is a book that recently came in for review—*Mission to Hanoi* (Berkeley paperback), by Harry S. Ashmore and William C. Baggs. Both authors are newspaper men and both are associated with the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Notice of *Mission to Hanoi* seems especially appropriate here since it describes the attempt of two private citizens to help end a war which shames all mankind, and the people of the United States in particular.

A book like this should not be read with the question in mind: Did they succeed or did they fail? There is a sense in which the pursuit of peace cannot be less than the collective project of the human race. It is not an undertaking to be measured by familiar criteria of "success"; the more far-reaching the attempt, the greater the formal failure to be expected, you could say. Gandhi, we may recall, referred to his "Himalayan blunder." But anyone who speaks of him as a failure has little grasp of what Gandhi undertook.

So, in its way, with *Mission to Hanoi.* The two men involved went to Hanoi twice and talked with an official high in the North Vietnamese government concerning the possibilities of peace. They came to value this official as a friend. They tell the story of their talks with him and with various officials of the United States. The authors are civilized and urbane; as veteran journalists they know something of the foibles of human nature and the fickle behavior of states, yet they were shocked by the maze of contradictions into which their persistent efforts led. There is little choice between repeating the whole story of what they endured and drawing on epithets of strung-out disillusionment and compounded frustration, to make a summary. But epithets will not help. The ill disclosed by *Mission to Hanoi* deserves a more serious treatment. As the authors say in their last chapter:

> We found in the course of our own experience that the most compelling characteristic of the foreign policy-making process is an almost total absence of both villains and heroes. In the last year or so, many prominent figures at the top level of the administration and an increasing number in the second tier, have quietly disappeared from the Washington scene. It was quite clear that most of these were disaffected with the President's policies and priorities—and no matter where they started, the discontent led back to the expensive, inconclusive fighting in Vietnam. But not a single one of these resigned on principle and raised his voice in public protest when it might have helped rally the growing popular movement that finally brought down the Johnson regime on the issue of Vietnam.

This was not, quite obviously, the sort of silence that speaks louder than words.

After noting the simple fact that negotiations are meaningless without at least a little mutual trust, the authors say:

> Somewhere in the Asian skies we fell to discussing these and assorted philosophical matters with Mary McCarthy, who has emerged as perhaps the most uncompromising moralist among the intellectuals who have elected to double as war correspondents. In her brief book, *Vietnam*, which recounted her explorations in the South, she took the stand that the issue was first and last a moral one and must not be treated as subject to any degree of compromise. American intellectuals, she proclaimed, should follow the lead of their compatriots in France at the time of Algiers. The only answer for America was to get out of Vietnam, it is not the business of intellectuals to figure out *how* this is to be done, or whose face is to be saved; the practical matter of disengagement is the tawdry business of generals and politicians. In her hortatory mood, Miss McCarthy had dismissed with contempt those who had opposed the Vietnam war but had fiddled with formulas for ending it by negotiation—the likes of Fulbright among the politicians, and Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger among the intelligentsia, and, of course, ourselves.
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> Now emotionally spent after more than two weeks behind the lines, she was indulging in second thoughts. Perhaps she had been too hard on Fulbright and the others, they had, after all, fought the good and lonely fight; and because they had done so, Lyndon Johnson was now removing himself from the scene and allowing hope to blossom again across the troubled planet. We, in our turn, were suffering from premonitions of more double-dealing to come, and we found ourselves urging Miss McCarthy and her cohorts to stick to their guns. . . .

> The missing quality in the excessively personalized age into which we have been catapulted, we decided, might be defined as disinterest. Our society seemed to have lost the distinction between a disinterested and an uninterested man; one was assumed to be in on the action for what it could do for him, or he wasn't expected to be in on it at all; and Dr. Freud has taught us that rewards can be emotional as well as material, so that even the martyrs are not beyond suspicion.
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> In the unwinding of the long journey, it seemed to us that disinterested men, without undue commitment to the past or excessive passion for change, were surely our nation's greatest need if we are to face up to the new world foreshadowed by the agony of Vietnam—a world in which arrangements of power cannot yet be dismissed, and the traditional instruments of power no longer work.

The project, then, remains what it has always been—increasing the number of disinterested men. There will be no peace without more of them.

COMMENTARY
RIGHT TO HUMAN BEHAVIOR

WE have a "letter to the editor" from the War Resisters' International, with headquarters at 3 Caledonian Road, London N.1, England, signed by Devi Prasad, General Secretary, which reads:

> Fifteen internationally known persons have appealed to the people of the world to join the War Resisters' International in its campaign for the Recognition of Conscientious Objection to Military Service as a Human Right. They have asked people everywhere to collect signatures on a petition, which will be sent to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights. The petition says:
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> *We, the undersigned, call upon the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to recognize conscientious objection to military service as a human right.*
>
> According to the 180-page survey published by the WRI, out of 101 countries there are only nineteen which have some kind of provision for conscientious objection, most of them being inadequate. The United Nations has recognized "the right to life" as a basic right in its Declaration. It is, therefore, equally important and it is high time that the world Organization recognized "the right not to take life" as a basic right also—but unless millions of people work for this cause the Organization which is built of governments will not move. Human Rights Year is a great opportunity for each of us to work for this cause and if each of us took action, it could bring freedom to conscientious objectors everywhere.
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> Copies of the Appeal with the petition form are available from the War Resisters' International. We hope that your readers will help the WRI in this project. The minimum they could do is to write down the petition on a piece of paper, add their signatures and post them to the War Resisters' International.

The "Appeal" referred to gives the humanist reasons for insistent support of "the right not to take life." As the appeal says in one place: "Governments retain the right to conscript and kill. Conscientious objectors in the East, West, and among the developing countries do not always have the right to resist conscription or to refrain from killing."

The fifteen persons initiating this appeal are Max Born, Fenner Brockway, Claude Bourdet, Josué de Castro, Danilo Dolci, Paul Goodman, Alfred Kastler, Theodore Mond, Jayaprakash Narayan, Martin Niemöller, Abbé Pierre, Michael Scott, Benjamin Spock, Michael Tippett, and Lanza del Vasto.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE WORLD OUTSIDE

[This is another of the lectures by Robert Jay Wolff on teaching art and design to high school students.]

WE are ready to get down to work. You will be meeting your students for the first time. Upon entering a high school design class, what will be the students' expectations? Obviously, they will be expecting "art lessons," some with a sense of pleasure, some with misgivings, some with boredom. For the most part they will be resigned to the assumption that they are entering strange territory where almost anything can happen. In these first and uninitiated moments, what does art mean to them? For most it represents a magic skill, a high and special attainment which is so far beyond their reach that to many the idea that they are expected to learn to perform these miracles must seem thoroughly ridiculous. In this situation you will no doubt find the nervous giggle, the worried frown, or, most difficult of all, the wistful hope that the teacher has some special tricks with which even kids can slay the dragon.

How will they be expecting you to start? Certainly not by taking them out on a field trip with nothing but their eyes to work with. Yet this is the best thing you can do. Why? For the simple reason that they are split in two to a degree greater at this moment than they will ever be again under your tutelage. They have left the best part of themselves outside the classroom and the only thing left for you to work with will be a pack of embarrassed misgivings and a tight mental attitude expecting only another conventional method of learning which has to be tackled. You might be able to talk them out of it. But a simpler way to bring their vitality into the classroom would be to take them back outside where they left it.

You might start by telling them that you can't begin to draw or paint or build or design until you've learned to look at things; and not only that, but to really see the things you look at. You can ask certain challenging questions at this point. Anyone would recognize, for example, the house across the street from his own home. He sees it every morning on his way to work. He knows the people who live in it and he's probably been in and out of it dozens of times. Ask someone in the class to describe the house across the street from him. Is it a frame house or a brick house? What color is it? Are the windows big or little? Does the roof slope steeply or gently, or is it flat? Are there any trees? How many? How big are they? Are they as tall as the house or taller?

You will probably obtain an eager response to these questions. The descriptions will start confidently, but as they go from the general to the particular there will be vagueness and uncertainty. Exasperation will take over where complacency began. This may be the beginning of a new visual curiosity which should relieve you of the temptation to sugar-coat the coming field trip with persuasive talk about the wonders of nature. You have here, already, a situation in which most of your class will want to get outside, not necessarily to seek artistic vistas, but simply to prove to themselves that they are not as blind as they have made themselves seem. Do not try to arouse them visually with reference to the beautiful, the unusual, or the sensational. Your first purpose is to sharpen visual acuity rather than to manufacture special visual interests. For the most part your students will come to you with pretty set ideas as to what is worth looking at and what isn't, especially so far as application to art is concerned. And they are in an art class. They will expect you to be partial to those aspects of nature which you as an expert in matters of art supposedly will want to fit into the expected pattern. You can dissipate this predisposition for visual preciousness by the kind of down-to-earth visual challenge we have been speaking of.

Why do we do this? Recall that we have decided that we cannot begin with the problems of design until we are sure that we have established

an active identity between inner and outer realities. It is easy at this point to confuse the real with the artificial. This is something to watch out for. For as soon as we underline any particular aspect of nature as especially acceptable, we have already set up an artificial corridor into "art." The thread between your classroom and the real world is thin and easily broken—so handle it carefully.

It is important at this point to bring the process of normal, unconscious perception out of the obscurity of automatic behavior into the light of consciousness. Make it understood that, without our noticing, our eyes perform miracles of observation from one minute to the next. Make it understood that the chief difference between an artist and a layman is not primarily a matter of professional skill but an understanding and a utilization of the miracle of perception, the common heritage of everyone. Ask: Do you have to be an artist to tell the difference between one face and another? It seems a simple matter to be able to tell the difference between Jim and Joe. Actually, it seems too simple to even mention. Yet, really, how simple it is? Ask any two students to stand up. Point out that everyone knows that one is so-and-so and the other is so-and-so. It's as simple as that. But is it? Here are two people with the same general physiognomy. Each has two eyes, a nose, a mouth, a head of hair, a chin, ears, and so on. What, actually, do our eyes have to do before we distinguish one from the other? Compare the two faces. The eyes will be set differently in each face, they will be a different color. One will have a long nose, the other a shorter. In one case the nose will be closer to the mouth than the other's. One's ears will be placed lower on his head. The shape of the head in one case will be different from the other. You will point out all these observations and will no doubt be greeted with roars of laughter. But you can climax this performance with a demonstration of a simple truth that will be as unexpected as it is obvious. The fact is that every time any one says "hello Jim" instead of "hello Joe," his eyes have had to assemble all these characteristics, to notice the particular nose, the particular eyes, the particular chin, and the particular combination of all these features that, altogether, finally total the observation that identifies Joe and makes visually clear the fact that it isn't Jim. Now this isn't very funny. It's a fact. Can anyone suggest a simpler method by which he thinks he distinguishes one face from another? If no one can, then we have to admit that the simple act of visual identification involves more than we are aware of. Perhaps in moving through the familiar patterns of our daily lives we see a lot of things that we don't realize. Let's say that we see a great deal more than we realize. The conclusion is that we will not begin to realize all we see until we start looking at things more deliberately. We are almost ready to put on our hats and coats and go outdoors.

Perhaps, before you go, it would be a good idea to show the group some photographs from your *visual note book.* These photographs should have three main characteristics, as follows: (1) They should be simple, unemotional records of familiar, visual facts. (2) They should be visually surprising and even shocking, not by the trickiness of the photography but because they induce visual pleasure in observing things that were never before thought to be worth looking at. (3) They should be sharp and lively photographs and should be varied in scale and point of view, from the close-up to the vista, from the straight shot to the bird's-eye and worm's-eye views. You might explain that the photographers who took these pictures did not have to go beyond their own neighborhood for their subject matter. They simply used their eyes a little more than most of us do.

Ask the group how they would describe the street the school is on. What gives it the particular character that makes it so familiar to them, and perhaps a little different from neighboring streets? Is it the fact that the buildings are arranged differently, that there are fewer trees, that the street is wider or narrower

than most? Is it also in the little things we notice but don't know we're noticing, like the broken edge of the curb that we glimpse as we step down to cross the street, or a new patch in the pavement, or the street lamp as it shines through the branches of a certain tree, or the fire-escape that crawls up the side of a certain building, or the cracked texture of a stucco wall, or initials impishly imprinted in the sidewalk? These are little things, but they are important visual facts that all together make up the sum of our visual knowledge. There is no sense in dividing the world into pretty things and ugly things because the real world is a mixture of everything and sometimes what we assume is ugly isn't at all, but is in fact full of meaning and interest.

What about these photographs? Look them over carefully to see if there isn't much in them that would have had no interest for us if a sensitive designer had not come along with a camera to make us look more closely.

With this kind of preparation your students will be ready for a walk around the neighborhood, a walk which will be in the nature of a visual adventure rather than a classroom routine. You have unlocked the doors to their keen but suppressed perceptive faculties and they will take all the more pleasure in using them because they have been given an incentive to do so.

You might suggest that the group prepare "telescopes" in the form of rolls of heavy paper. Liken these to the photographer's lens. With this device they will be able to put a frame of reference around a given observation. Objects, textures, colors and forms which are usually lost in the conglomeration of the surrounding world will be brought into focus and seen. You will be already contributing to the quality of your later experiments in photography.

The few suggestions that have been offered here are tentative and are intended to start the prospective teacher of design on the way to his own and, perhaps, better solutions. The purpose of this course is to induce creative planning and sharpen pedagogical insight. If course content from A to Z were provided, the very essence of good teaching would be discarded: I mean resourcefulness and ingenuity, insight and sensitivity, and the ability to improvise sound procedure in the face of unpredictable and unexpected responses. Told exactly what to do, you would be helpless to do more than impose another academic routine upon your students. You would not fool them with the new and unusual content of the routine you put them through. By the time they reach you, unless they have been unusually fortunate, they will be past masters at detecting the smell of the prescribed lesson that has been well learned. People of thirteen and fourteen have sometimes a keener nose for this than their elders of college age or older. It will be hard to fool them and the measure of the creative vitality that you are able to induce will be proportionate to the amount that you provide.

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FRONTIERS

The Practice of Philosophy

PHILOSOPHY ought not to be made into an intellectual specialty. Yet of all serious inquiries philosophy is certainly the most difficult, and difficult things are seldom undertaken except by exceptional men. This seems to limit the pursuit of philosophy and make it appear a specialty. But since philosophy, whatever else it may include, is directly concerned with the meaning of human life, no man avoids philosophizing of some sort. Decisions as to what is true or good are plainly philosophical decisions, and we all make such decisions, however we think of them. We may call them "patriotic," or "family," or simply "practical," but they are philosophical decisions at root.

A teacher of philosophy is a man who tries to help other people in learning how to make such decisions in an enlightened way. So, there are two kinds of deep waters involved in teaching philosophy. The teacher of philosophy needs some idea of how decisions ought to be made, but he also needs an idea of how to teach about the ways to make them.

However, since learning how to make philosophical decisions is itself an endless process, which very often, as we see from the history of ideas, is divided up into various specialized inquiries, the challenge of this task tends to obscure the *teaching* responsibility. This isolation of "philosophy" from the obligations of teaching compounds the offense by turning philosophical inquiry into a recondite pursuit understood only by specialists who are uncaring of ordinary human need. The defense commonly made of this tendency is that philosophy cannot be made "easy." The defense may be formally correct, but not applicable to what is defended. That is, the obscurity of the academic specialty called "philosophy" may be largely the creation of its practitioners, and not the obscurity native to philosophy itself.

A long article by D. F. Pears, "The Development of Wittgenstein's Philosophy," in the Jan. 9 *New York Review of Books,* might be taken as an illustration of the problems presented by the present scene in philosophy, or what goes by that name. No one who has opened and inspected one or two of the books by Wittgenstein will have failed to sense in his work the presence of an extraordinary mind, even if no pretense is made of understanding him in a systematic way. The article by Mr. Pears, a review-essay dealing with seven books, some by Wittgenstein, some by others about his thought, confirms this view. But the "ordinary" reader, while respecting the intellectual capacities displayed by all concerned, may be beset by nagging questions. He recognizes that he would have to give *years* to understanding what these men have to say, simply to find out whether it is worth knowing about. And Mr. Pears' article leaves him no escape from the impression that the people involved in such studies would never expect anyone but a special sort of intellectual or academic to undertake this task. And what, the reader asks himself, will be the fruit of such devotion? He cannot really tell. He may feel a wholesome respect for Wittgenstein—gained mainly from lucid asides—yet he is constrained to turn away.

There is something wrong with this situation. Should the reader conclude that there is something wrong with philosophers or teachers of philosophy, who allow such a situation to continue, and continue with almost no objection from their own ranks?

Perhaps what is wrong is at root a kind of ethical neglect—an indifference to ordinary people, to the need of a general education for all men, to which people who call themselves philosophers ought to make a continuous and at least initially recognizable contribution.

It may be a wild idea, but why couldn't candidates for the degree of doctor of philosophy be obliged, instead of writing incredibly obscure theses, to follow the example of the Jehovah's

Witnesses? That is, they could be sent out into the streets to do "field work" for a year or so. This might be the best way to produce a salutary reform in the content of modern philosophy.

A teacher of philosophy, after all, should be more concerned with human development than with professorial and departmental development. And think how pleasant it might be if, of an evening when the door-bell rings, you found on the steps a young man with the *Republic* in his hand, or Spinoza under his arm, instead of copies of *Watchtower!*

A philosopher, in other words, ought not to be a man entirely devoted to figuring out things *for himself!* with occasional progress reports in academic cipher to a few other people of similar interests and concerns.

Conceivably, "figuring things out" is, in the nature of things and in the nature of figuring, not a process that can be completed solely in behalf of oneself. It is at least possible, on the simple proposition that we are parts of one another, that philosophic understanding is unobtainable by anyone who thinks in isolation. If this should be a law of progress in philosophy, we might expect the wisest men to have been those who made the greatest effort to share what they have learned with others. And one might argue that this is actually the case. It seems defensible to say that Buddha and Plato are two of the profoundest thinkers the world has known—whose thought has had the most persistently attractive power for other men—and that, also, they made extraordinary efforts to put at least part of what they had to say in words that would have the widest possible appeal. Their "figuring out," in short, was inextricably associated with teaching—and their teaching was much more than a reading off of conclusions reached in solitude, although such conclusions obviously played a part in everything they said. Most of all, they tried to be understood. They did not deny the difficulty and depths of philosophy, nor the native obscurity of truth, but they showed how philosophizing might have a beginning in the life of any man. This, it seems, is exactly what philosophers who think of their discipline as a specialty either will not do or do not know how to attempt.