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SCIENCE IN TRANSFORMATION

CONTEMPORARY writers on ecology seem at their best when they avoid the quantitative language of science—when they "let themselves go." They make their "practical" arguments of course. They get attention with figures on pollution and waste, now that the misuse of nature has reached the point of having obvious and threatening consequences. But the positive communications of ecology often seem scriptural in content and are sometimes spontaneously poetic in form. As Ward Shepard says in *The Subversive Science* (Houghton Mifflin, 1969, $8.95), a new book which he edited with Daniel McKinley:

> Ecology may testify as often against our uses of the world, even against conservation techniques of control and management for sustained yield, as it does for them. Although ecology may be treated as a science, its greater and overriding wisdom is universal.

Its science, you could say, is for sinners, but its nourishment (in wisdom) is for souls. Both are necessary, since sinners will often listen only to science—the kind of truth which *compels*—but the wisdom is essential for the reason that scientific knowledge, as the record now begins to show, is never enough. The title of the book has this explanation:

> The ideological status of ecology is that of a resistance movement. Its Rachel Carsons and Aldo Leopolds are subversive (as Sears recently called ecology itself). They challenge the private or public right to pollute the environment to systematically destroy predatory animals, to spread chemical pesticides indiscriminately, to meddle chemically with food and water, to appropriate without hindrance space and surface for technological and military ends, they oppose the uninhibited growth of human populations, some forms of "aid" to "underdeveloped" peoples, the needless addition of radioactivity to the landscape, the extinction of species of plants and animals, the domestication of all wild places, large-scale manipulation of the atmosphere or the sea, and most other purely engineering solutions to problems of and intrusions into the organic world.

Ecology, then, is a profession by means of which its practitioners grow into the habit of having a care for the world. The dimensions of what they study insist upon nothing less. Some primordial axiom of internal relations impresses itself upon men who, little by little, are led to see nature whole.

The ecologist is constrained by his practice to distrust the pluralism of the project approach, to seek equilibriums instead of isolated gains. Costly partisan clarifies which began in science with Galileo are now losing their enormous prestige. The ecologist sometimes sounds like a lay interpreter of ancient religions of nature. Himself a celebrant of the unity of life, he finds wonderful anticipations in the faiths of other times. He may on occasion declare his discovery that these people *knew*. As Mr. Shepard says:

> It is manifest, for example, among pre-Classical Greeks in Navajo religion and social orientation, in Romantic poetry of the 18th and 19th centuries, in Chinese landscape painting of the 11th century, in current Whiteheadian philosophy, in Zen Buddhism, in the world view of the cult of the Cretan Great Mother, in the ceremonials of Bushman hunters, and in the medieval Christian metaphysics of light. What is common among all of them is a deep sense of engagement with the landscape, with profound connections to surroundings and to natural processes central to all life.

Well, what was the evidence relied upon by these people for what they "knew"? Quite different from ours, no doubt. Only a partial knowledge, it seems clear. Their social systems—or, at any rate, the *language* and justification of their social systems—are anathema to us. Their science, if they had any, was rudimentary. Yet for them the world was a wonder, not an oyster; its presence counted for more than a footstool or

stepping stone to more progressive things. The inquiry of Archibald MacLeish may be repeated here:

> Why was man a wonder to the Greeks—to Sophocles of all the Greeks—when he could do little more than work a ship to windward, ride a horse, and plow the earth, while now that he knows the whole of modern science he is a wonder to no one—certainly not to Sophocles' successors and least of all, in any case, to himself.

Ecologists find the increasing audibility of such questions almost deafening to them. They also find that in sensibility they have gone far ahead of the rest. We have put up so many barriers to the kind of knowledge we need. Mr. Shepard has noticed the limitation of language:

> It is difficult in our language even to describe that sense [of engagement with all life]. English becomes imprecise or mystical—and therefore suspicious—as it struggles with "process" thought. Its noun and verb organization shapes a divided world of static doers separate from the doing. It belongs to an idiom of social hierarchy in which all nature is made to mimic man. The living world is perceived in that idiom as an upright ladder, a "great chain of being," an image which seems at first ecological but is basically rigid, linear, condescending, lacking humility and love of otherness.
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> We are all familiar from childhood with its classifications of everything on a scale from the lowest to the highest: inanimate matter/vegetative life/lower animals/higher animals/men/angels/gods. It ranks animals themselves in categories of increasing good: the vicious and lowly parasites, pathogens and predators/the filthy decay and scavenging organisms/indifferent wild or merely useless forms/good tame creatures/and virtuous beasts domesticated for human services. It shadows the great man-centered political scheme upon the world, derived from the ordered ascendency from parishioners to clerics to bishops to cardinals to popes, or in a secular form from criminals to proletarians to aldermen to mayors to senators to presidents.

As a result of this "great man-centered" scheme, we believe only in a *smorgasbord* interpretation of the natural world, and the only popularly understood ethics is concerned with getting everyone his share of the goodies spread out on the board. Progress is measured by collective wealth in goodies and our ingenuity in devising new flavors to enjoy. The high achievement of the technological society of the United States, a Harvard scholar recently declared, is demonstrated by the variety of "new options to choose from," which, he contended, leads to "changes in values in the same way that the appearance of new dishes on the heretofore standard menu of one's favorite restaurant can lead to changes in one's tastes and choices of food."

The gourmet analogy comes so naturally! And it leads, also quite naturally, to the claim that "most Americans have a greater range of personal choice and a more highly developed sense of self-worth than ever before."

So, as Mr. Shepard says, ecology is a "resistance movement." Ecology rejects an attitude which shapes the everyday opinions of people of every sort, supporting the careless hedonism it inspires with the claim that enjoying yourself is not evil, and that since knowledge brings power, and we *have* the power—as anyone can see—we must also have as much "truth" as we need at the moment.

Several of the briefer classics of modern ecological literature are brought together in this book. Aldo Leopold's "The Land Ethic" is included, also Lynn White, Jr.'s "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," both of which are often quoted in these pages. Actually, the book contains numerous authoritative revisions in the mechanistic thinking of the times. René Dubos' "Second Thoughts on the Germ Theory" will make some readers wonder if the work of Antoine Bechamp (who disputed the conclusions of Pasteur) may soon be revived. "An Ecological Method for Landscape Architecture" by Ian McHarg demonstrates the close relation between ecology and all the environment-making professions. Other contributors known to the

general reader are John Collier, Laura Thompson, and Jacquetta Hawkes.

Underlying the efforts o£ these writers is a determination to contest assumptions which support the various forms of *modern* tyranny, which is only superficially political, being at root an expression of prevailing ideas of self and the world. Nicola Chiaromonte recently gave these ideas brief characterization:

> . . . the difference between modern and ancient tyranny lies in the fact that the modern is dominated, first of all, by the idea of conquest of nature on the part of man (collectively organized) thanks to science, and, second, by the vulgarization of scientific and philosophical knowledge, which produces a new and, one should add, completely unexpected kind of dogmatism and conformism, since it is based on the idea of a continuous criticism of reality and on empirical knowledge, not on any sort of revealed truth. This dogmatism and conformism received formidable support in the idea of science as a universal language and a superior manifestation of objective truth. And since science gives itself the aim of the conquest of nature and the efficient regulation of human society, it must be diffused and vulgarized—that is, it imposes itself with authority, though without assuming an explicitly dogmatic form, but rather the guise of empirical certainty. And this is not only true of the natural sciences but also of the so-called human sciences.

It was, it now seems plain, this idea of "science as a universal language and a superior manifestation of objective truth" that compelled Western man to wait until the heaped-up effects of the exploitation of nature were everywhere upon him before questioning authoritative claims to progress. Ecology is a comparatively new discipline—the word was first used, Lynn White says, in 1873—and only since World War II have we realized that a war fought with hydrogen bombs might "alter the genetics of all life on this planet," or that "our present combustion of fossil fuels threatens to change the chemistry of the globe's atmosphere as a whole, with consequences we are only beginning to guess."

"It is time," says Daniel McKinley, the other editor of this volume, "for men to commit themselves to a contemplative study of nature, however hard that may be for us to begin." How, indeed, does one "begin"? Aldo Leopold believed that people must learn to love the land, and he found reasons for declaring this view as practically a natural law. But how are such affections generated? Leopold lived a life that developed them, and there may be no other way. Reading *A Sand County Almanac*, the book he wrote toward the end of his life, gives some clues, and getting it into the schools would be a major educational achievement. We might also investigate the lives of the now displaced peoples who seemed to love the land, and find out what they believed. One systematic way of getting at this would involve the study of language. In his introductory essay to *The Subversive Science* Ward Shepard noted the inadequacy of English to convey the feelings that accompany "engagement with all life," and it seems likely that language reform—or evolution—would come with the change in attitude that the ecologists are calling for.

As we all know, the American Indians had the best relationship to the land that has existed on the North American continent, and Benjamin Lee Whorf, who gave devoted attention to the languages of the Indians, particularly that of the Hopis, has some suggestive passages on what they must have felt about the world and their relationships with the rest of life. How a man felt and thought was for the Indians a crucial thing. Whorf discovered this and wrote appreciatively of Indian attitudes. Thirty years have passed since this paper, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Languages," was set down, and with the various liberations from reductive assumption that have been affecting some branches of scientific thought in recent years, his account of the Hopi sense of "being in" the universe may not seem so strange to present-day readers:

> Hopi attitudes stress the power of desire and thought. With their "microcosm" it is utterly natural that they should. Desire and thought are the earliest, and therefore the most important, most critical and crucial, stage of preparing [for a course of action].

Moreover, to the Hopi, one's desires and thoughts influence not only his own actions, but all nature as well. This too is wholly natural. Consciousness itself is aware of its work, of the feel of effort and energy, in desire and thinking. Experience more basic than language tells us that, if energy is expended, effects are produced. WE tend to believe that our bodies can stop up this energy, preventing it from affecting other things until we will our BODIES to overt action. But this may be so only because we have our own linguistic basis for a theory that formless items like "matter" are things in themselves, malleable only by similar things, by more matter, and hence insulated from the powers of life and thought. It is no more unnatural to think that thought contacts everything and pervades the universe than to think, as we all do, that light kindled outdoors does this. And it is not unnatural to suppose that thought, like any other force, leaves everywhere traces of effect. Now, when WE think of a certain actual rosebush, we do not suppose that our thought goes to that actual bush, and engages with it, like a searchlight turned upon it. What then do we suppose our consciousness is dealing with when we are thinking of that rosebush? Probably we think it is dealing with a "mental image" which is not the rosebush but a mental surrogate of it. But why should it be NATURAL to think that our thought deals with a surrogate and not with a real rosebush? Quite possibly because we are dimly aware that we carry about with us a whole imaginary space full of mental surrogates. To us, mental surrogates are old familiar fare. Along with the familiar images of imaginary space, which we perhaps secretly know to be only imaginary, we tuck the thought-of actually existing rosebush, which may be quite another story, perhaps just because we have that very convenient "place" for it. The Hopi thought-world has no imaginary space. The corollary to this is that it may not locate thought dealing with real space anywhere but in real space nor insulate real space from the effects of thought. A Hopi would naturally suppose that his thought (or he himself) traffics with the actual rosebush—or, more likely, corn plant—that he is thinking about. The thought then should leave some trace of itself with the plant in the field. If it is a good thought, one about health and growth, it is good for the plant; if a bad thought, the reverse.

The Hopi emphasize the intensity-factor of thought. Thought to be most effective should be vivid in consciousness, definite, steady, sustained, charged with strongly felt good intentions. They render the idea in English as "concentrating, holding it in your heart, putting your mind on it, earnestly hoping."

In this paper, printed in *Language, Thought, and Reality* (M.I.T. Press, 1969), Mr. Whorf goes on to discuss the way in which Western, mechanistic ideas of space, time, and matter are reflected in our language, indicating the greater subtlety, especially in relation to the new physics since Einstein, of the concepts which are capable of expression in the Hopi tongue. It may help to add' here, a passage from Laura Thompson's *The Hopi Way,* occurring in the chapter, "A Stone Age Theory of the Universe":

> Theoretically all phenomena, natural and supernatural, living and dead—including man, animals, plants, the earth, sun, moon and clouds, the ancestors and the spirits—are interrelated and mutually dependent through the underlying dynamic principle of the universe—which we shall call the law of universal reciprocity. This law implies the concept of immanent or cosmic justice. The emphasis is not, however, on the idea of rewards and punishments or on punishments alone (retribution), but on the mutual exchange of essentially equivalent but not identical values according to fixed traditional patterns, in the interests of the common weal. Man, the elements, animals, plants and the supernatural cooperate in an orderly fashion, by means of a complex set of correlative interrelationships, for the good of all.
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> This concept of the universe is not "mechanistic" in the usual sense of the term, on account of the special role played by man in the scheme of things. Whereas, according to Hopi theory, the non-human universe is controlled *automatically* by the reciprocity principle, man is an active agent who may or may not acquiesce in it. While the world of nature is *compelled to* respond in certain prescribed ways to certain stimuli, man not only responds but also *elicits* response. Hence, man, in the measure that he obeys the rules, may exercise a certain limited control over the universe. . . . It is interesting to note in this connection that the Hopi use the same word for "to will" and "to pray." Praying is willing. The Hopi believe not only that man can control nature to a limited extent by observing these rules, but that if he does not do so, the universe may cease to function. That is, the movements of the sun, the coming of rain, the growth of crops, the reproduction of animals and human beings depend (to a certain extent at least) on man's correct, complete and active carrying out of the rules.

Whether love of nature and the land—which means continuous awareness of the living reciprocities supporting all forms of intelligent being—can be maintained by human beings without some such sense of structured kinship pervading the whole, is the question these time-honored faiths press upon us. So far, we have only the intuitions of poets, the vision of naturalists, and the unexpressed credos, it may be, of shy and harmless men everywhere, to carry us along.

REVIEW
A LOST CAUSE?

JUDGING by *The City Is the Frontier* (Harper paperback, $1.95), Charles Abrams knows more about the problems of modern cities, and why what is being done to relieve them fails, than anyone else who has written on the subject. He has held various jobs connected with public housing, almost from its beginnings, and combines this experience with a thorough grasp of the human factors involved. In consequence, he reports mainly the frustration of the good intentions of legislators and others who are honestly devoted to the public good, yet have found no means of overcoming the apathy, indecisiveness, and misdirection of a civilization which has lost its way in a jungle of conflicting short-term interests.

A book like this can have no other purpose than the formation of enlightened public opinion. There is no way but this to get good things done by democratic process. In these terms, Mr. Abrams' report is vastly discouraging. The ignorance behind the good intentions has dimensions matched only by the avarice of commercial opportunism. Sometimes the misuse of public funds seems as irresponsible as the waste that occurs in war. Sometimes the ruthless uprooting of people in the name of urban renewal seems worse than the barbarism of ancient conquerors, who at least did not pretend to be performing "social services" for their victims. And the conversion of idealistic social measures into tax shelters for the already very rich produces a train of ironies that could easily have turned this writer into nothing but a passionate muckraker. Mr. Abrams is not a muckraker, although his book has enough leads in it to keep muckrakers busy for a generation. His main intention is to give guidance to those willing to work to make oar cities better places for people to live in, even though the facts thus far wholly justify him in saying that the tendency of our public housing programs is toward "socialism for the rich and private enterprise for the poor."

At the end of his first long section on urban renewal, he summarizes the initial perversions of the Housing Act of 1949:

> Thus the legislation which Congress had enacted to help solve the slum problem was evicting many more slum dwellers than it was rehousing. It was only one of the many examples of how legislation passed with the best of intentions is ultimately perverted during the administrative process. In the long run, the profit motive somehow operates as the undesignated but effective legislator while the public obligation is pushed under the rug

The book tells in detail how the intentions of the Act were first eroded and then set aside. The account might be regarded simply as a study of the preliminary stages of the social discovery that self-interest eventually fails as an ethical principle, and as a revelation of how unfitted for accepting this discovery is a population that has believed in self-interest as a law of nature for about two hundred years. The rediscovery, formulation, and rationalization of moral obligation is obviously a slow, disorderly, and painful process. The only way to find anything hopeful in Mr. Abrams' book is by looking at his report with this difficult recognition in mind. Of the failure of urban renewal legislation, he says:

> The perversion was not entirely the fault of the officials. The formula had been faulty from the beginning. It was not devised to pull cities out of their troubles. There had been no independent investigation into the financial aspects of slum developments, the ramified nature of the housing problem, or the predicaments of central cities and the temptations they would enforce. It could have been foreseen that the slum dwellers would not be rehoused on the cleared sites and that little if any public housing would be built for them on vacant sites. The economic motivation had been the dominant ingredient in federal housing recipes from the inception and the stated ideal of better housing for everybody had simply supplied the sweetening, the coloring, and some of the political palatability. Since the welfare of the building industry had won equal place with the people's welfare in the 1949 act, it seemed inevitable that sooner or later the interests of

> the lower-income families would be forgotten. When the entrepreneurial and the general welfare are bracketed in the same legislation, it should not be surprising that the social purpose will be subordinated. It was.

Later in the book, after saying that these criticisms still apply, Mr. Abrams adds:

> It [the program] deals primarily with only one aspect of the city's predicament, i.e., housing and slums, while it ignores its others—poverty, social unrest, school problems, racial frictions, physical obsolescence, spatial restrictions, decline of its economic base, and the lack of financial resources to cope with its major difficulties.

Too often, even reformers take for granted the invisible components of social health in an urban community, concentrating entirely on physical considerations. Mr. Abrams speaks to this point:

> America's vitality in the past was reinforced partly by its plurality of cultures and the contributions these cultures made to the American environment. These cultures are disappearing with the emergence of newer generations, and with their passing is going also the plurality of the environments which these varied cultures created. Diversity is giving way to a stagnant uniformity and a spiritual fatigue. Television in the parlor, automation and its routines, the monolithic additions to cities the endless rows of duplicate suburbias and road programs are leading inevitably to an environmental homogenesis in the nation, the consequence of which will be a nationwide monotony. The urbanization and suburbanization of American life is becoming a treadmill when it should be a frontier. This is the real challenge that urban renewal should be confronting.

What can a man at a drawing board do about "spiritual fatigue"? What can *anybody* do about it, in terms that a lawmaker can make a positive contribution to? A vision of a sort, "material" in its origins, shaped at least some of the first American towns which became cities. And the contributors of the cultural pluralism to which Mr. Abrams refers had their immigrants' longings and dreams. But for a long time, now, American cities have reflected the dull monotone of the motives of both their builders and most of their inhabitants. A vision which turns too easily into mere appetite—and then into something not even physically natural when satiety and hunger are always found together—produces ills that architects and city planners cannot remedy. They can construct drab hives to accommodate necessity, but not places which sparkle with individuality and imagination. For this people are needed to inspire the designers with the splendid patterns of their lives. Here, of course, we get into areas hardly mentioned, if at all, by men who seek political solutions, since it is hard to tell people they lack individuality and worthy aims and at the same time ask for their vote.

Gradually disappearing from the older cities are what Mr. Abrams calls "escape hatches"—places where a natural diversity remains. In this respect New York once had wonderful resources, but the decline has been dramatic:

> In the 1920's, New York City could boast a quota of exciting places, most of them created and sustained by the interaction of people and enterprise. Yet Luna Park has given way to a housing project; Harlem, once sprouting as a tourist, jazz, and dance center, became "unsafe" and was declared out of bounds; Central Park, which might have become an evening stroller's paradise with a little official imagination, was virtually closed to people after dark; the Aquarium, with the view of boats, water, Miss Liberty, and the Wall Street skyscrapers was ruthlessly demolished; so was the nearby Washington Market with its bear meat, partridge, and venison, composing an epicure's museum without counterpart. . . . Times Square remained, but had gone honky-tonk because there was nothing else in the city for the honky-tonkers. New York City's waterfront which could have supplied imaginative recreational novelties, was walled up with housing projects. Stuyvesant Town, Washington Square Village, and some of the forthcoming urban renewal projects are or will be enclaves with "no trespassing" signs. Lincoln Center is for the music lovers but not the lovers. . . .
>
> The function of the city threatened by the suburb, automobile, and television set is essentially to challenge sameness and ennui. It must find new ways of making itself more interesting as well as preserving what is worth keeping.

Well, we all know what sort of person goes about trying to make himself "interesting." People of interest are attractive not because they plan to go on display; they do original things because they want to, and make the places where they do them interesting as a result. It might be a good idea for a city to have an ombudsman in charge of overcoming monotony and boredom, but he couldn't do much of anything by himself.

The ills of the modern city are so deep-rooted that the familiar problem-solving approach seems quite futile. There are even well established *mores* against sensible solutions. Mr. Abrams tells about tax penalties imposed on one large building because the architects persuaded the owner to forego rent for a ground-floor area, in order to leave it open to the street and the wandering pedestrian. Admiring New Yorkers called it a "masterwork," but the tax assessor called it "conspicuous consumption" and raised the assessment to cover what might have been charged for such profitable space. There is also the architecture of intentional discomfort. Coffee shops and eating places which depend on low prices and fast turnover need to hustle people in and out, so they are built to deliberately discourage leisurely sitting around. Concern for the saunterer and interest in the arts are banned as oddities:

> Sunday laws permit baseball and bar hopping but not bookstore brousing. Censorship has often leveled the public taste to that of the official arbiters of decency, while Shakespeare was barred for a time from showing in New York's Central Park as an intrusion on the park's greenery. The vibrant little-theater movement in Greenwich Village was almost strangled at the start when the police refused a pioneer group the right to operate a theater-in-the-round except under a cabaret license, which would have required liquor to be sold at every show. Since the sponsors would not gamble on showing Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* to a drinking audience the theater group demurred.

One of Mr. Abrams' final recommendations is that, in all city planning, room must be left for people to contribute to their own environment. This seems a principle we must learn to apply in every direction.

COMMENTARY
THE KEY TO TOMORROW?

CERTAIN realities implicit in the material in this issue cry out for recognition. First is the moral dilemma produced by the inescapable fact of hierarchy in both nature and human life. The quotation from Ward Shepard in the lead article seems mainly a rejection of the self-serving interpretation of the law of hierarchy made by Western man. In religion and politics, it led to arrogance and exploitation.

So the law of hierarchy was repealed by the eighteenth-century revolution, and the law of equality put in its place. This great moral truth that had been for so long suppressed by perverted applications of the hierarchical principle now rang in legislative halls throughout the world. Men everywhere, some sooner than others, thrilled to the promise of fraternal solidarity in equal worth. And it was natural enough that the principle which had operated, very imperfectly, to synthesize human differences into social unity was in turn suppressed, its reality in nature deliberately ignored. Of course, the law of hierarchy, being a law, continued to operate, but only clandestinely. It nourished private egotisms, supported stubborn pride, and drawing on the secrets of Machiavelli, ruled from behind the scenes. Here and there it gained beneficent expression as vaguely democratized *noblesse oblige,* but hierarchy could have no rationale in the new doctrines of progress.

Even truth about the laws of nature was democratized, in the sense that new scientific discoveries had to be passed upon by the guild of professional empiricists—established, that is, as natural "facts" by the vote of qualified specialists. Thus qualified, hierarchy and authority, we decided, could be allowed in scientific circles so long as people trained to think without moral assumptions and other emotional weaknesses remained in control.

But with official condemnation of the idea of hierarchy came functional loss of structure and even rhetorical contempt for the ideal of individual distinction. Human excellence became something the social system, by embodying equalitarian political goals, automatically added to *everyone.* And since the system is known to be the sole source of good, all things—even people, if need be—are its legitimate raw material. How could the system make mistakes? It is the only true system in the world, having by triumphant revolution abolished all the false systems a couple of hundred years ago.

Yet now there are these manifestly excellent men who show us that this system, and the various sub-systems that go with it, are ravaging our lives and slowly suffocating our children. The schools, the colleges, the city streets, the parks, the rivers, the oceans, are becoming bad places for human beings and bad places for every living thing.

Curiously, these excellent men do not ask for power. They couldn't use it, if you gave it to them, for what they want to accomplish. They ask for help, and they have a kind of authority, although it does not subsist on power. Are these men, perhaps, modest representatives of the sort of hierarchy which embodies the true excellences of the human species? Do they harmonize in themselves the meanings of both equality and hierarchy? Does their occasional presence among us give notice of a time for radical change—for learning how to reconcile these principles?

In *The Will to Meaning,* Viktor Frankl makes the following characterization of the present:

> Ever more patients complain of what they call an "inner void," and that is the reason why I have termed this condition the "existential vacuum." In contradistinction to the peak-experience so aptly described by Maslow, one could conceive of the existential vacuum in terms of an "abyss-experience."
>
> The etiology of the existential vacuum seems to me to be a consequence of the following facts. First, in contrast to an animal, no drives and instincts tell man what he *must* do. Second, in contrast to former times, no conventions, traditions, and values tell him

> what he *should* do, and often he does not even know what he basically wishes to do.

It follows that, in an age of the existential vacuum,

> education must not confine itself to, and content itself with transmitting tradition and knowledge, but rather it must refine man's capacity to find those unique meanings which are not affected by the crumbling of universal values. This capacity to find meaning hidden in unique situations is conscience. Thus education must equip man with the means to find meanings.

These generalizations give some order to the contradictions and anomalies we see all about. Already the young have hit upon the key idea of Dr. Frankl's proposals. They are the voice of *conscience* for the age—in their rejection of war, of "business as usual," and in their longing for a simpler life. The young are also often incompetent, confused, prone to incredible oversimplifications, and largely ruled by feeling. Yet it must be admitted that the examples given them of excellence in maturity are incredibly few. How much can we ask or expect of the young? If they are able to tell the truth only from desperation, and only part of the time, they still seem far ahead of everyone else in many matters that count.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
MATTERS OF RELEVANCE

READERS who want to replace the feelings of hopelessness and impotence produced by books like Jonathan Kozol's *Death at an Early Age* will find in William Glasser's *Schools Without Failure* (Harper & ROW, 1969, $4.95) clear directions concerning what must be done. How could anyone do constructive things in circumstances that have been so carefully adjusted to failure, and in the presence of attitudes so deeply stained with expectations of failure? For answer to this question, one needs to read Dr. Glasser's book. He knows how to break with the past. He works with potentiality, which obsession with the past can only shut out. It is true of course that such a man has to be able to get into the schools in order to work. Would the Boston schools Jonathan Kozol wrote about even let him in the door? At any rate, some California public schools invited him in, and gave him both teacher and administrative cooperation.

Schools Without Failure could be labeled a devastating attack on the schools. Yet criticism is a secondary theme. Finding human capacity and nurturing it is the subject of the book. The criticism is necessary only because no one can do what must be done while pretending that the schools are "not so bad." Dr. Glasser makes this clear in his first chapter:

> The traditional psychiatric-sociologic approach is ineffective because it assumes that school problems are almost entirely a reflection of individual personal problems, poor home environment, poverty, and racial discrimination. In contrast, it is apparent to me and to most of the educators I work with that although external environmental conditions are bad for many children, *there are factors within the education system itself that not only cause many school problems but that accentuate the problems a child may bring to school.*
>
> In asking for my help, the schools expected that I would follow the traditional approach to problems, one used in every part of our society today. This approach is: don't investigate the part played by the system in causing difficulties; instead, when difficulties arise, separate those in trouble from the system and treat them by specialists. Separation and treatment by specialists, a concept that guides almost all juvenile correctional and mental health programs in the United States today, has made a serious intrusion into the schools. The concept is somewhat erroneous for juvenile offenders and mental patients, but right or wrong, it makes little difference to the average man or to the country as a whole. For the schools whose problems dwarf the problems of mental health or juvenile correction in immediacy, concern to the nation, and the numbers of people involved, the concept of separation and treatment is disastrous.

Dr. Glasser found that 75 per cent of the children in the central city of Los Angeles "do not achieve a satisfactory elementary education." This failure of the schools may mark the children for life, with wider consequences for society in general.

What does Dr. Glasser propose? He thinks that what is taught the children must be related to their lives in way, that they can understand. Teachers, therefore, must be freed from the confinements of an irrelevant curriculum. But such provisions are only instrumental. They are means through which the basic needs of the children—"the need for love and the need for self-worth"—can be met. All things can be added to children who are loved and are confident, but nothing will help those who are not.

These fundamentals are systematically neglected in a public school which practices the "pouring in" theory of education. And when they are neglected, and the children fail, and the system permits blaming the children instead of itself, a determined man like Dr. Glasser is needed to expose what is really happening:

> Ordinarily, one thinks that the need for love will be fulfilled in the home rather than in the school or other outside institutions. Closer examination, however, shows this belief to be false. Teachers are overwhelmed with children who need affection, but at present they do not know how to react to the obvious need for love of many of their students. Children who need affection desperately, not only from teachers but

> from each other, have little opportunity to gain that affection in school. To say that helping to fulfill the need for love is not a school function is tantamount to saying that children who don't succeed in giving and receiving desperately needed affection at home or in their community (outside of school) will have little chance to do so. Having failed to love as a child, an adult is in a poor position ever to learn to love. . . .
>
> Love and self-worth are so intertwined that they may properly be related through the use of the term *identity*. Thus we may say that the single basic need that people have is the requirement for an identity: the belief that we are someone important and worthwhile. Then *love and self-worth may be considered the two pathways* that mankind has discovered lead to a successful identity. People able to develop a successful identity are those who have learned to find their way through the two pathways of love and self-worth, the latter dependent upon knowledge and the ability to solve the problems of life successfully.
>
> For most children only two places exist where they can gain a successful identity and learn to follow the essential pathways. These places are the home and the school. As stated previously, *if* the home is successful, the child may succeed despite the school, but that is too big an *if* to rely upon. We must ensure that the child's major experience in growing up, the most constant and important factor in his life, school, provides within it the two necessary pathways: a chance to give and receive love and a chance to become educated and therefore worthwhile.

The enormously practical meanings these terms of ultimate value have for Dr. Glasser form the content of his book. Love means the capacity on the part of the teacher to find some feeling of self-worth, some memory of success, in the child, and to *build* on these as foundations:

> A failing child will continue to fail if the teachers who work with him remind him of his failure. Failure breeds failure; to break the cycle of failure, we must work in the present and realize that a person who has failed all his life can succeed if he becomes involved with a responsible person.

If this means changing the curriculum, Dr. Glasser will work to change it. There is no use, however, in manipulating the environment so that the child "does not suffer the reasonable consequences of his behavior." But what is asked of the child in the way of responsive behavior must be reasonable, too. That the child is *responsible* is the key to Dr. Glasser's approach, which he calls Reality Therapy (he has a book with this title). This approach makes the school responsible for making reasonable demands of the child. He summarizes the present situation:

> Memorizing is bad enough. Worse is that most of what they are asked to memorize is irrelevant to their world; where it is relevant, the relevance is taught poorly or not at all. Children are dismayed by the sudden and to them incomprehensible difference between the first five years of their lives, when they used their brains for fun and for solving their own problems, necessarily relevant to their own lives, and their life later in school when, with increasing frequency, from grade one through the end of graduate school, much of what is required is either totally or partially irrelevant to the world around them as they see it. Thus both excess memorization and increasing irrelevance cause them to withdraw into failure or to strike out in delinquent acts. "Smart" children soon learn that what is important in school is one thing and what is important in life is another, and they live this schizophrenic existence satisfactorily. Many, however, do not.

Much of this book is devoted to showing how the subjects taught in school can be presented so that their relevance to the daily life of the children is understood. *Schools Without Failure* should be widely read and its counsels put into practice. Dr. Glasser has been helped to establish the Education Training Center, 2140 West Olympic Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90006, to spread these ideas.

FRONTIERS

The Way We Live Now

NOW and then, John D. MacDonald includes in one of his well-told detective stories a brief passage of tough-minded insight that both surprises and delights the reader. For example, in a recent Travis McGee epic, the author devotes a page to McGee'.s reflections on the scene of a Western state university campus:

> The kids hustled to their ten-o'clocks, lithe and young, intent on their obscure purposes. Khakis and jeans, cottons and colors. Vague glances, empty as camera lenses, moved across me as I drove slowly by. I was on the other side of the fence of years. They could relate and react to adults with whom they had a forced personal contact. But strangers were as meaningless to them as were the rocks and scrubby trees. They were in the vivid tug and flex of life, and we were faded pictures on the corridor walls—drab, ended and slightly spooky. I noticed a goodly sprinkling of Latin blood among them, the tawny cushiony girls and the bullfighter boys. They all seemed to have an urgency about them, that strained, harried trimester look. It would cram them through sooner, and feed them out into the corporations and the tract houses, breeding and hurrying, organized for all the time and money budgets, binary systems, recreation funds, taxi transports, group adjustments, tenure, constructive hobbies. They were being structured to life on the run, and by the time they had become what is now known as senior citizens, they could fit nicely into planned communities where recreation is scheduled on such a tight and competitive basis that they could continue to run, plan, organize, until, falling at last into silence, the grief-therapist would gather them in, rosy their cheeks, close the box and lower them to the only rest they had ever known.
>
> It is all functional, of course. But it is like what we have done to chickens. Forced growth under optimum conditions, so that in eight weeks they are ready for the mechanical picker. The most forlorn and comical statements are the ones made by the grateful young who say Now I can be ready in two years and nine months to go out and earn a living rather than wasting four years in college.
>
> Education is something which should be apart from the necessities of earning a living, not a tool therefor. It needs contemplation, fallow periods, the measured and guided study of the history of man's reiteration of the most agonizing question of all: Why? Today the good ones, the ones who want to ask why, find no one around with any interest in answering the question, so they drop out, because theirs is the type of mind which becomes monstrously bored at the trade-school concept. A devoted technician is seldom an educated man. He can be a useful man, a contented man, a busy man. But he has no more sense of the mystery and wonder and paradox of existence than does one of those chickens fattening itself for the mechanical plucking, freezing and packaging.

This says more, in a few paragraphs, than a great many articles and books have been able to say. And the idea of separating the meaning of education from the necessities of earning a living seems the heart of any possible change for the better.

Interestingly enough, in any society containing the potentialities of survival, extremes of this sort eventually produce their compensating opposites. A UPI report from London in the Los Angeles *Times* for last April 20 provides a pleasantly relaxed account of the drop-out anarchist communities now developing in England. It begins:

> On a back porch in north London, a large, lumbering lad with unruly hair sits absently twirling an oak leaf.
>
> "Sometimes you feel like this is the only thing worth doing," he says, smiling.
>
> Reginald Broad, 25, lives in a huge, rambling house with several friends and more cats than he can ever count. Each girl, boy, and cat comes and goes as the individual pleases. Each has some sort of bed and a box full of odds and ends. All, except perhaps the cats, are young anarchists.
>
> Just inside the front door, there is a bowl holding some coins and folding money—shillings and pound notes—which bears the sign, "take what you want, leave what you can."
>
> "The bowl is hardly ever empty," Reggie said, sticking his thumbs in the pockets of a shaggy sheepskin jacket. "We call it free house. When we have food, we divide it up. When we have thoughts, we share those, too."

> Reggie used to operate computers, but for the time being he has dropped out. "One day it hit me that I didn't have anything more to say to those people I'd been talking to for so long," he said.
>
> "Everything I wanted to do, there always seemed to be someone telling me I couldn't do it," he added. "The whole scene looked pretty empty and that's when I became an anarchist."
>
> For Reggie, and scores of alienated youth in Britain, anarchism has captured their imagination as a new way of living. It has released them from boredom and brought them together.

A much older friend, a printer who works for *Freedom*, the anarchist weekly which has been published for a great many years, said of this and similar groups: "These kids are good kids. They don't go smashing windows at the American Embassy or screaming and yelling without a reason." They are often ingeniously active in student demonstrations. The report relates:

> During one demonstration against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, anarchists passed out leaflets and shouted "Read the Russian case! Read the Russian case!"
>
> The leaflets were blank.

While hardly organization-minded, the anarchists are no averse to developing new forms of education:

> To the consternation of Britain's education officials, the anarchists have also organized a number of "free school" campaigns within secondary schools. Students hold their own classes, choose what they want to study and work towards abolishing such things as uniforms and corporal punishment.

Reggie told the reporter:

> "I think you can feel this new anarchy in the air. Not the bomb-throwing, screaming kind, . . . but something very nonviolent, something which is the highest refinement of human reason.
>
> "Chaos is what we've got now. Order, people understanding people and settling their problems by free discussion, is the alternative anarchists offer."

Another member of the group said: "Our dream, of course, is that some day there will be no gargantuan state but just little communities where everyone can get on with what he wants to do, as long as he doesn't interfere with the next chap." When someone asked, "That all sounds very beautiful, laddies, but will it work?" the reply came:

> "Does what we have now work? Just because no road leads to Utopia doesn't mean no road leads anywhere."
>
> "I think," Reggie said, "we are gradually getting somewhere. There are experimental anarchist communities in Yorkshire and Wales and then here we are sitting across the table, talking freely, living much more in our own little anarchist world than any other."

A thing that might be added to these contrasting accounts is that neither one exhausts the possibilities of the people involved. They are only social "snapshots." The human potentialities of the students described by John MacDonald have no stimulus or outlet in the environment set up for them by the older generation, while the free energies of the English youth can find little structure and few existing channels of expression, so that their lives now seem amorphous and perhaps "unproductive." But both accounts present only *reactive* phenomena. One scene is wholly lacking in dream or vision; the other offers little else. Our habit of "objective" reporting condemns us to such limiting views.