

TOWARD A SOCIOLOGY OF BEING

THE questions to be studied, the ways they are to be studied, and everything else that passes under the rubric of "sociology" depend on assumptions which are usually not articulated at all, and which most sociologists appear to avoid as "insusceptible of proof": assumptions about the nature of man. Sociologists usually do not openly utilize the terminology of behavioristic psychology. But without examining or acknowledging their debt, they commonly rest everything they do on these premises borrowed unwittingly and whole: that man is by his nature a collection of conditioned responses to situational stimuli. It is difficult otherwise to account for the orthodox sociological conception of man as a creature whose behavior is so patterned that one may sum up each person in terms of his roles and statuses; and, indeed, that one may abstract from the behavior of large numbers of persons such regularities that roles and statuses are often spoken of as though they were entities with an existence of their own.

Sociology has been able to survive as long as it has with this world-view because people do indeed act in a fairly predictable way much of the time. This enables one, after interviewing a sample with a standardized questionnaire, to say, with an appropriate number of weasel words, that the people who live in Piedmont will more likely vote Republican than the people who live in East Oakland, and so forth. For some limited kinds of purposes such findings are doubtless meaningful. None of these is a particularly "sociological" application, however. Statistical methods are inherently unable to shed much light on most of the important questions about what is going on in society. The important questions are the ones that are hard to answer, and they are hard to answer precisely because man is not just a creature who acts out a series of social roles. Man is also a

creative and cantankerous creature who sometimes kicks over the traces. Babbitts try their hand at abstract expressionism; crooks become honest men, and honest men sell out for the right price; ministers desert their wives and run off with organists, or leave the organists and return to their wives. And this kind of latent indeterminacy is not just individual. Sometimes substantial numbers of people kick over the traces in the same way at the same time. People get swept away by a demagogue; welfare recipients rise up in protest against being degraded, young people drop out to become hippies.

The entire range of social movements, fads, fashions, booms, panics, crazes, mobs, riots, revolutions, is incomprehensible in terms of man "programmed" to act and talk and think in a certain socially acceptable and predictable way. The sociology of the survey research method says almost nothing, and can say almost nothing, about this whole vast area of human behavior. Gagged by the consequences of its conception of the nature of man, it is virtually mute on the subject of social change—the area which should constitute the growing edge of sociology. Societies are obviously changing, and changing at an accelerating rate. They are changing primarily in the above mentioned ways—the "unacceptable" ways which lie outside the competence of polls and interviews.

The behavior of human beings—not only when they are running outside of established channels, but, for that matter, when they are acting more "stably"—is adequately accounted for only in terms of a radically different conception of the nature of man. Man is a creature, the only creature, with a sense of self. Given this sense of self, he is able to carry on internal dialogues with himself, and he does so during practically every waking moment. Some of the exchanges in this

dialogue are more common than others, and in these cases the internal conversation may flow back and forth almost instantaneously and unreflectively. Shall I turn off the alarm clock? Yes. Shall I put on a clean pair of socks? Yes. Right foot first? Yes. Now left foot? Yes. White shirt next? No. Undershirt? Yes.

Repetition may cut down the transaction times of such dialogues to tenths or even perhaps hundredths of seconds, but the process never becomes purely "automatic." And the moment anything slightly out of the ordinary occurs—and there are hundreds of such moments in every human being's existence, every day—the internal communication slows down, blooms and proliferates in all manner of new directions. This razor blade is getting dull. Shall I change it or make do one more time? What's the matter with these blades, anyway? Should I pick up a box of that other brand today? Say, has my wife been shaving her legs with my razor again? How many times do I have to ask her not to? Is this a sign she is growing away from me? Am I being unreasonable? And so forth. These sequences cannot be accounted for by behavioristic theory.

A human life is built up of such rich, blooming, variegated give-and-take. It is "social" to the extent that the internal images which pass in review as one is thinking, speaking, or acting are derived from experiences one has had with others. This is a very great extent indeed. But "the others"—*i.e.*, society—can never completely control the content of the images, the sequences in which they will pass in review in the individual's private dialogue, or the selections which the individual will make on a particular occasion.

There is nothing esoteric about this conception of man's nature. Nor is it a sentimental view of the way one might like human beings to be. It is the way human beings are, and cannot help being. Whoever you are, you may verify this conception of the nature of your own nature by looking into yourself (your Self) during any waking minute. You cannot stop the flood of

images and subvocal conversation even if you try—and the harder you try, the more will flood in through the back door. For example, as you have been reading this piece, hundreds of reactions, recollections, propositions, and possibilities have passed fleetingly in review within your perpetual dialogue.

Human behavior, then, is the outcome of dialogue, rather than any fixed stimulus-response arcs, instincts, or metaphysical imperatives such as "role" or "status." To account for human behavior, there is no substitute for "getting in on the dialogue." This is another way of saying that, for anything more than the most superficial kinds of understandings, sociology requires a conception of the nature of man which is humanistic rather than mechanistic.

Let us consider a few examples of how orthodox, mechanistic sociology and a new humanistic sociology might differ in their approaches to the same problems. Let us say we are interested in the question of employee morale or job satisfaction. If we happen to be survey research sociologists, we prepare a battery of questions, and after a number of pre-tests, we select, say, a dozen questions which provide a "scalable" basis for ranking informants from very low job-satisfaction to very high job-satisfaction. We find, say, that 5 per cent rank in what we call a very low satisfaction category, 5 per cent in a very high satisfaction category, with other percentages distributed in a "normal curve" in whatever categories we have ordained between the two extremes.

Like the strictly objective scientists that we aspire to be, we let these statistics speak for themselves—but they speak neither very loudly nor very accurately about what is really going on in the job situations of our society. They cannot. For one thing, many informants are not in close enough touch with themselves and their internal dialogues to be aware of how they honestly feel toward their jobs. For another thing, many would not tell an interviewer the truth even if they were

in touch with it. For example, it is commonplace for people to feel resentful toward bureaucracies for homogenizing them, and to "fight back" by subtle forms of sabotage, by boondoggling, by taking a whole day to do a task that might take no more than an hour if their morale were good. To observe these things is crucial to any serious understanding of what is happening in American working life, and will happen increasingly as more jobs become bureaucratized.

People are unlikely to admit to an interviewer—even an interviewer highly skilled at manipulating their privacy—that they have been boondoggling. They usually do not openly admit it to themselves. It is probably not so much a matter of their fearing that they will be fired if the truth is known, as fear of a loss of esteem: self-esteem, and esteem by another. Most people crave the good opinion even of an interviewer they have never seen before and know they will never see again. The crucial understandings are a closed door as long as the researcher has a questionnaire in his hand. The door begins to open only as he grows sensitive to the *sub rosa* dialogues that lie behind overt dialogues—for example, what people are really saying as they engage in idle office gossip during coffee breaks. Or, perhaps even better, the researcher may work at a white-collar job himself, and tune in on his own internal communication, moment by moment.

Another example, from among many which could be given, of the way a humanistic sociology, as distinguished from a mechanistic sociology, might operate in a given area: Traditional sociology collects data on divorces and classifies them by age of the principals, length of marriage, number of children, etc. These statistics usually appear in courses and sections of texts entitled "social pathology," "social disorganization," and the like. Such a perspective conceals more than it reveals. Behind the statistical curtain, a tremendous ferment is taking place, moving in the direction of redefining the relationships between men and women in our society—redefining love,

sexuality, the family, maternity, paternity, masculinity, femininity. Some of this ferment, to be sure, is rebellion without a cause, and many people are being badly hurt to no constructive purpose. But much of what is going on might better be thought of as social reorganization than as social disorganization. The family is not going to be tomorrow what it was yesterday or is today. If sociology is to make a useful contribution to the understanding of this deep tide, it must have almost totally new methods of observation.

The *reductio ad absurdum* of the survey research method was the census of orgasms conducted by Kinsey, who was, of course, a biologist, but was ever afterward called a "sociologist" because he used the orthodox sociological method of asking people some simple questions and adding up the simple answers. Any number of sociologists promptly went out to conduct similar censuses, and then quibbled over whose sampling technique was the best. All of it was so irrelevant to what is really happening in the relationships between the sexes that it was tantamount to outright falsification. If there is any one thing of which we may be sure about the present process of redefinition, it is that, amid all the fitful starts and blind alleys, it points in the direction of quality of relationship rather than quantity. Women are demanding that they be perceived not as sexual objects, or housekeepers, or nursemaids, but as full persons in their very own right. And so are men, a little more slowly perhaps, and in their own ways.

How does a researcher apprehend these things? He becomes attuned to the conversation of gestures. He learns what is meant by silences as well as by words. He learns what is meant by the sighs, frowns, giggles, tears. He has to get behind masks, to where the gropings, the agonies, the intimacies are. He cannot possibly do this in an interview. The instant he knocks at the door of a couple in the midst of a quarrel, or an act of love, or any other kind of authentic revelation, the authenticity ceases, and he gets answers from

masks, not from the real people behind. His findings maybe "true" in the sense that most people prefer to wear masks in the presence of interviewers and other strangers. But, his findings will be false in the sense that there were critical dialogues taking place behind the masks, dialogues by definition inaccessible to strangers.

The survey research method is helpless in the face of most significant social questions because of a kind of Heisenberg effect which is far more serious than anything in the physical or biological sciences: the very act of observation distorts that which is being observed. But whereas the natural sciences accept the "uncertainty principle" with an appropriate humility, sociology tries to nullify it by investing more time and talent in sharpening the very methods that are trivializing human social life, cutting back its true boundaries, betraying it, falsifying it.

It is difficult to think of a precedent for this: a would-be science busily engaged in denying and eroding the character of its subject-matter. Sociology, as the study of human relationships should, before anything else, have a clear conception of what genuine human relationships are, as distinguished from ersatz varieties.

If two people act like automatons toward one another—one consistently subordinate, one consistently superordinate, let us say, or one consistently aggressive, the other consistently passive—they are the beau ideal of orthodox sociological research. And if you multiply them by a million, you have the beau ideal of a stable, predictable, quantifiable society. But can they be said to have a human relationship? It would be more accurate to say that they have an inhuman relationship.

Sociology is going to fall farther and farther behind in its comprehension of what is actually happening in society, and what is going to happen, because people are growing more and more dissatisfied with inhuman relationships. What is taking place behind the masks is growing richer all the time. Social roles are not what they may have

been. People are building their interior castles stronger, getting in touch with themselves better. That is the root reason why our society is growing increasingly dynamic: men are increasingly demanding that their essential human nature be recognized and fulfilled. All kinds of people are mounting this demand in one way or another, from the millionaire business executive who joins an "encounter group," to the man with the hoe who no longer dumbly accepts the blowing out of the light in his brain but is joining a union or asking for land of his own. It is dawning on vast numbers of people that they are real and that they are individuals, unique in all the world, not just a bundle of projections of what their parents, teachers, employers, and others think they ought to be. It is dawning on people that they are entitled to demand that they be allowed to function and grow as authentic persons. This is the greatest revolution among all the revolutions of our time, and it is bound to spread. For after all the other revolutions are consummated—computerization, the guaranteed annual income, "black power," land reform, or whatever—the most basic of hungers will remain to be satisfied: the hunger to be a truly human being.

If sociologists devoted themselves to sensitivity rather than methodological rigor—if they spent more time looking behind social roles and less time at the façades (including a great deal of time looking behind their own roles and searching for their own selves)—would this be the abandonment of sociology as a "science"? It all depends on what one means by science. Yes, if science is the accumulation of numbers representing observations which can later be duplicated more or less exactly by some other observer. No, if science is the accretion of wisdom, insight, and understanding of the subject-matter by means which are most appropriate to the nature of the subject itself.

The question of "subjectivity" and "objectivity" is a bugbear in any such discussion. The process envisaged here does not require that

sociology take to the hustings and plump for the humanization of man, mount shot and shell against the dehumanization of man, or even to use the naughty words that one is "good" and the other is "bad." Man's nature is his nature, no matter what sociology says, and man is going to struggle toward the fulfillment of his nature no matter what sociology does or does not do. What is envisaged here would not involve "taking sides," losing scholarly dignity, or whatever other red herrings the sociological establishment might try to draw across the trail. All that is suggested here is that, for the sake of its own survival if for no other reason, sociology begin asking the right kinds of questions—those which really get at the things which hold groups of human beings together, tear them apart, and enable them to reassemble themselves in some coherent way. These are the legitimate sociological questions. All questions which assume that human beings are mechanical are unrealistic, unsociological, and in the truest sense of the word "unscientific."

It is entirely proper that a work of literature—a novel by Dickens or Zola, for example—be considered also a work of sociology, quite possibly a greater work of sociology than a statistical study of nineteenth-century England or France could have been if there had been survey research sociologists at large in those days. It is entirely possible that more might be learned about family life in modern Mexico from five families telling their stories honestly than from any number of stilted interviews with any size sample.

The *sine qua non* of human science is not numbers; it is insights, and the power of prediction which insights confer. If plays by Ionesco announce to those who have ears to listen amidst the laughter, that communication between husbands and wives, teachers and pupils, has become absurd, and that people are growing restive with absurd communication, then these are major sociological statements, and may be said to have forecast such developments as the Free Speech Movement better than any academic

sociological statements. If plays by LeRoi Jones anticipated, before Watts, that there was going to be violence between "black" and "white" in the North, they should be counted as better sociology than any of the surveys.

The best sociology is not usually by sociologists, but by those who are free from any obsession with statistical methods: anthropologists, existential psychologists, theologians, philosophers, novelists, playwrights. For example, Buber is most often thought of as a philosopher—the founder of the "philosophy of dialogue." But he was as much a sociologist as anything else, and he gave us the conceptual tools for a "sociology of dialogue," or what we have here called "humanistic sociology."

One of the most significant features of the survey method is that it precludes any dialogue between the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer is carefully trained to stifle all his normal human impulses—to take from the informant, but to give nothing of himself in return. This cannot but perplex the informant, throw him off stride, render the entire situation counterfeit. In real life, people do not function without cues from others.

Without dialogue, there is no such thing as society. Without listening to this dialogue, tactfully, attentively, lovingly, there is no such thing as an adequate sociology.

If sociology continues to lag in its grasp of the nature of human nature, and what this nature implies for research problems and methods, it will increasingly be cast into the intellectual penumbras of our time. It will be overshadowed by the philosophers of being, psychologists of being, and others who are in touch and in sympathy with the great contemporary revolution in man's understanding of his own nature.

It does not strain the imagination excessively to visualize institutions of higher learning, twenty years or so from now, in which sociology departments occupy approximately the same kind

of place that classics departments do today. Since the Academy changes cautiously, a corner will be reserved for the present crop of bright, young, mathematically-oriented assistant professors of sociology, by then grown into full professors. They will still get grants from the National Institutes of Health and other federal agencies. They will be given a computer for their very own, and they may command a somewhat distant admiration from their less mathematically-inclined colleagues who do not know how to write a computer program. But their version of sociology will be regarded as an anachronism by most students, and without students any academic field grows old, sere, crotchety, quaint, and irrelevant. Students will gravitate toward the promise of greater wisdom, which will lie in such areas as the psychology of Maslow, the philosophy of Kierkegaard, the theology of Tillich, and even more, in areas we can presently only vaguely foresee: creative combinations of "talking about" the psychology, philosophy, theology, anthropology of Being, and actually Being through body movement, sensory awareness, self-revelation, painting, whatever.

It does not exhaust the imagination to visualize "courses" and perhaps even a whole "curriculum" in which "students" and "professors" begin by learning to shuck their masks by dance, improvisatory theater, and the like, and then go on simply to share their life-stories. More might be learned about sociology, and a score of other "subjects," in these ways, than from any number of formal lectures.

If this is the trend, why trouble to protest against the shortcomings of contemporary sociology? Why not let events take their course, and let sociology go into eclipse? What difference does it make where the insights come from, as long as they come?

It does make a difference whether the emphasis is on the dialogue of John and Mary Smith, or whether the question is, how are all the other Smiths doing with their dialogue, empathy,

sharing, genuineness, joy, love, and other aspects of humanness? Are they going forward, by and large; are they going backward; or are they standing still? Why are some people moving more than others? What are the processes by which a fledgling human being, necessarily dependent on those around him for his images, identity, and very survival, grows beyond this dependency and becomes a unique person? How can people pass along the necessary continuities to the fledgling human beings who are born to them, and then, in due time, help those beings become less conforming and more fully human? What are the environmental influences which tend to assist this process? What influences hinder it? What can be done to encourage the influences which foster human development? What can be done to minimize the influences which retard it?

With exemplary modesty, most humanistic psychologists and others who are in the vanguard of the revolution in Being focus on the individual, and do not attempt to address the sweeping broad-gauge questions. But somebody must be so immodest as to do so, for these questions will determine whether society itself lives or dies. These questions constitute the province of what might be called a "sociology of dialogue" or "humanistic sociology." Since the word "humanistic" is subject to various misinterpretations, perhaps it would be preferable to say that what is advocated here is an ushering out of the old sociology of seeming, and an ushering in of a sociology of human becoming and of being.

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REVIEW

COMMUNITY IS THE KEY

TURNING INTO TOMORROW, by Watson Thomson (Philosophical Library, \$3.75), is a book about community. Born and educated in Scotland, the author has devoted his life to education—beginning with a stint of tutoring in the West Indies, then some years as a superintendent of education in Nigeria, followed by a career in adult education in Canada. A brief autobiographical introduction tells of experience with a study group in London which Mr. Thomson regards as foundational to his later life and thought. In 1937 he moved to Canada, where he has lived and worked ever since.

Basically, *Turning Into Tomorrow* is a work of theory, although grounded, as the writer says, in personal experience. Its greatest interest for the reader is likely to be in its illustration of the *kind* of thinking that needs to be done by everyone seriously concerned with the development of a more human society.

Until quite recently it has been assumed by most educated people that essential social knowledge is being accumulated by the scientific approach to human affairs, and that eventually men will know enough to plan their arrangements on a foundation of well-ascertained fact. In contrast to this now waning hope, Mr. Thomson's book is an appeal to the individual intelligence by a musing discussion of questions and issues on which a good human life may be seen to depend. They are at root philosophical and psychological issues, and are examined in the context of recent historical experience and assumptions about the nature of man. Taking off from the "central ideological issue of the Cold War, individualism and collectivism," the author exhibits the internal contradictions of systems embodying the extremes of this polarity. The total collective has a moral sanction in "the good of all," yet it throttles the individual, who is "the locus of the creative mind" and whose talents are suppressed by "the constraints of the collective will." On the other hand, rampant "individualism" eventually establishes a society amounting to a travesty of its declared ideals. Mr. Thomson comments:

So when the issue is posed in this way, as it so often is: Does the State exist for the sake of the Individual and his fulfillment, or the Individual for the sake of the immortal Collective?—what are we to say? There is one resolving consideration which may just be mentioned here. . . . So long as the problem of the One and the Many is of the single person and anonymous millions, the dilemma is absolute, or at best can be resolved only in a never fully satisfying compromise. But when the question is of the relationship between the single person and a number of other persons whom he can know and fully understand, synthesis of opposites becomes possible. Such a collective can be infinitely enhancing to the individual, its pressures by no means oppressive and limiting. Indeed, it appears that only in such a personalized context do both horns of the dilemma, both the opposite poles, realize themselves in their own proper quality—the collective thoroughly socialized, the individual most fully individuated.

Thus the crucial unit is not the solitary individual but the small community—in Mr. Thomson's words, the "group of miscellaneous persons dedicated to the business of never being less than authentically personal, and therefore, entirely human; and, therefore, representative of the species, of Man." It is at the organic level of community that the great dichotomies of our time can be resolved, through the insight gained by individuals living and working together in a small group. The author gathers considerable evidence to show that the various pressures of our present environment all point to this solution, which must be consciously sought and practiced by individuals. If fundamental human problems are met and dealt with at this level, they will not be extrapolated to completely unmanageable proportions as we encounter them in the antagonisms between nation-states. Mr. Thomson says:

The goal toward which this kind of group strives is the reconciliation and conscious unification of the whole family; the time and place of starting is here and now. All the great opposites of mankind must finally be contained—male and female, Oriental and Occidental, black man and white, individual and collective—within a climate of knowledgeable concern from each to each, and so a sense of belonging.

There is no way of reaching the goal in one heroic leap. What matters is that the direction is

clearly realized from the humblest beginnings so that there are no built-in limitations which preclude the ultimate attainment. Care is needed about these beginnings. As the French proverb states, "It is only the first step that counts."

To show the theoretical depth of this book, we reproduce a passage on the subject-object dichotomy, which is at the root of the faults of all social organizations which ignore the individual:

In this subjective/objective dichotomy every position exists from that shared by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche that there is no truth except subjective truth, to that which has come to be thought of as the normal scientist's view—that the only way we can get even an approximate picture of reality is through the scientific method, the key to which is the rigorous exclusion of the subjective, that is, of personal hopes, fears, wishes, dreams or other non-measurable aspects of the experimenter's personality.

For each of these opposite views a most impressive case can be built. And no compromise is possible because in the final analysis no bridge can be built between the two; there is the world of fact and the world of values and neither one can be described in terms of the other. That is why the problem of "the two cultures"—that of science and that of the humanities—is so recalcitrant.

No compromise is possible; synthesis, however, is not merely possible but easy—if you happen to be that kind of "whole" person. You cannot "split the difference" between the objective and the subjective, between fact and value, but an Einstein can derive immense satisfactions from venturing into the cold austerities of mathematical logic at one part of the day and evoking the warm tones of his violin at another. The important thing is that both writer and reader, speaker and hearer, should know which kind of language is being used at any given moment. But part of the immoral skill of the propagandist and advertiser is to make statements look like statements of disinterested, verifiable fact when they are really statements of highly interested opinion or subjective feeling.

These resolutions, which Mr. Thomson calls "synthesis," require the application of individual insight. No social planner can create them for anyone else. They grow out of the experience of people with one another, in terms they can understand, in which the impact of the other is at

least as great a subject as it is as object. One may become schooled in synthesis by learning to see others as subjects, through the daily encounters of community. But the making of community in the present will require ingenuity:

Community, of course, does not and cannot mean what it once meant. To our forefathers it meant a common folk culture, many ties of kinship and rootedness to a certain place. Today, none of these elements remain, not even fixity of place. . . . What then does community mean today and is not the experience of community for most people inevitably meagre? The answer is that community has been robbed of almost all its primal meaning. Nothing of its nourishing substance is left to us. But we have one immense potentiality, hardly known to our forefathers out of which a new, universal kind of community may be built: the capacity for deep understanding, and, if we will, of deep communication. That is why we will have to abandon our distinction between an unintentional and an intentional community. There is no community at all unless it becomes at some point and in some degree intentional. From here on we shall be imagining a group of neighboring families who are growing towards full, that is to say, increasingly intentional, community.

The penetration of this analysis should be plain to all. Yet you do not exactly prove or "verify" such propositions, but rather parallel them with your own. Insight is cultivated and grown, and it cannot be laid on the block for reductive scientific demonstration. So it is with community itself—the vital processes of human growth in community can hardly be measured in themselves, but only, in time, by their fruit. The author relates his thesis to many of the modern world's problems. By discussing the elements of community at a theoretical level, he is able to show how some of the dynamics of community are already at work in the peace movement and other of the changing social relationships of the times. It seems clear that nothing else will work. Toward the end of his book Mr. Thomson writes:

The vast and terrible confusion and insecurity of our generation can be traced ultimately to the crumbling away of the traditional theologies on which most of our ethical standards depended, and our cowardly refusal to renew our ethical foundations from within ourselves.

COMMENTARY **BEYOND COMPROMISE**

REALLY useful criticism always goes beyond mere identification of evil—it *comprehends* an evil by showing its relation to counter-forces. In an early chapter of *Turning Into Tomorrow* (see Review), Watson Thomson quotes L. L. Whyte's general idea that "the penalty for any principle which fails to express the whole is the necessity to coexist with its opposite," then shows the hopelessness of expecting to avoid this necessity:

It is not my intention to deride social democracy, nor to endorse communism. But I do say: Why should the casual adherents of social democracy expect to win over the deep devotion, the much more total commitment, of many communists? The ones who can hope to go further than the communists are those who have an equal commitment to the way of direct synthesis, who deny themselves the luxury of taking sides and then fighting it out, who can hold within themselves the tension between the opposites, and so find genuine novelty.

Not all conflicts can be resolved by "finding a middle way" or "splitting the difference." Some of the more genuine dichotomies—tension/relaxation may be taken as a case in point—are not at all amenable to this treatment. To any who have trouble passing easily from a state of nervous and muscular tension to one of relaxation—and their name is legion—the worst possible advice would be to "split the difference" and find some "middle way," half-tense and half-relaxed. The desirable capability clearly is to know how to be fully tense for one kind of situation and fully relaxed for some others, alternating smoothly and speedily as the demands of the situation change, the one mode assisting the other.

. . . creative reconciliation comes about by *containing the opposites*, appreciating both of them to the fullest, until out of this tension of continence a third is born, not a compromise but a new thing—above and between. This applies, as we shall see, to the individual/collective polarity and to social projection, capitalism/communism. But perhaps the truest comment to make here is that when people, instead of evading conflict and seeking always the difference-splitting compromise, discover a positive zest for fully realizing and creatively holding together the great opposites, all things change and new things

emerge. A New Order is created which is economic, political and cultural, which is coherent and all-of-a-piece, being born of the same small seed of principles—not either/or but both.

One sees, here, what is behind the compulsion of the "extremist" to reject "compromise." He *knows* that compromise will destroy his principle, and "argument" will never cure his desperate condition. He may be helped, however, by the example of those who balance the truth of his principle with an equal appreciation of its contrary.

CHILDREN

... and Ourselves

NOTES AND COMMENT

FOR contrast with A. H. Maslow's account of his experience in medical school (in *The Psychology of Science*, quoted in MANAS for last Nov. 1), a reader in England has sent us a description of an anatomy lesson, centuries ago, at the University of Padua. In those Renaissance days a very different spirit introduced students to the study of the human body. While Dr. Maslow's twentieth-century teachers set out to "remove all sense of awe, privacy, fear, and shyness"—deliberate "desacralization," he called it—the first anatomists of the West felt a deep responsibility to generate the opposite effect. The following is from Ian Rawlins' *Aesthetics and the Gestalt* (Nelson, 1953):

At the University of Padua (founded in 1222) can be seen the first anatomy theatre in the world. It was constructed in 1594, and William Harvey must have worked there when he was a student at Padua (1598-1602).

In the center is a space for a human body upon which a postmortem examination is to be conducted. Around, arranged in tiers, is *standing* room for students. They were forbidden to *sit*, out of respect for the dead. (Actually to do other than stand upright would be physically impossible, so constricted is the space.) There were no windows, and the proceedings took place by the light of a candle. These simple rules appear to have been devised deliberately to make sure that no lack of reverence occurred, and to imply that the advance of knowledge was the sole justification for something to be performed with reluctance.

One wonders what is behind the compulsion to abandon such attitudes in the name of science. Conceivably, scientific educators with so little concern for the mystery of death might be expected to be indifferent to many aspects of life, and to ignore the more "mysterious" ones.

Parents who send their children off to "the university" without even wondering about the attitudes of the men who will be teaching them

may be no more responsible than those who are content to let their children fend for themselves. Actually, it might be better for a youth to go to work at unskilled labor than to go to college only to acquire the sophisticated prejudices of a declining culture.

A report on "Teaching and Learning by Tape," by Noel McInnis, of Kendall College, Evanston, Illinois, gives another slant on the dehumanization of education, showing how electronic devices may be used to offset the general effects of "bigness" and organization in education. Kendall is a junior college where various experiments in "Humanized Curriculum Design" are carried on under the direction of Prof. McInnis. The present report deals with the use of small, portable tape-recorders to recover elements of the face-to-face relationships. Prof. McInnis writes:

The instructional value of the cassette recorder was initially discovered by three of our Freshman English staff, who began using the machine for the oral grading of themes in the summer of 1966. Students submitted cassettes with their themes, the instructors recorded oral critiques thereon, and upon the return of theme and cartridge the students checked out a recorder in the college library and played back the instructor's commentary. This experiment demonstrated the following advantages:

1. The instructor was able to provide several times the amount of criticism orally as he could in written form, within a comparable period of time.
2. Instructors were able to make more relevant criticism via the spoken word.
3. Students found the approach to be more personal, and felt a greater rapport with the instructor.
4. The project instructors found reason to believe that the rate of improvement from paper to paper was greater when the oral process was used.

Prof. McInnis amplifies these conclusions with part of a report on similar experiments carried on at Bard College in New York. There, Dr. Harold L. Hodgkinson found that students valued this "oral grading" as "a *personal* response from the teacher." However:

It soon became clear that in terms of saving time, the new system was not effective. In fact, correction times . . . changed very little. However, what *did* happen was a marked change in what the instructors considered to be a reasonable job of marking a student paper. They were, at the least, quadrupling the amount of information on each paper. . . . The major change that this experiment produced was an awareness on the instructors' part of how poor their previous standards concerning theme correction had been. Here, the medium proved to be the message, as with twelve minutes of speaking time available to the instructor, he could not, with a clear conscience, say "Good Job" and go on to the next paper. Thus, even though time was not saved, teachers' attitudes about the correction of themes changed in a positive direction.

To this Prof. McInnis added his own comment:

Our own English staff have remarked, however, that this positive attitude is unlikely to develop if one adopts the oral-grading procedure wholesale. When grading 40 papers orally in a short period of time, the tendency toward standardized routine comment is just as great as with traditional reading procedures.

Prof. McInnis amplifies these conclusions with part of a uses for tape recorders in education, ending with some "operating tips" concerning the instruments used at Kendall. All this is instructive concerning ways to reduce the depersonalizing tendencies of mass education. One hopes, however, that the long-term effect of such "discoveries" will be to increase the demand for smaller schools, smaller classes, and student-teacher relationships sustained by a lot more than electronic substitutes for the actual human presence. The "progress," if any, as Prof. McInnis shows, could easily be lost if the use of tape-recorders becomes routinized. The ultimate lesson of this experience may be that there is really no good substitute for the personal encounter of teacher and pupil. Meanwhile, teachers confronted by the practical necessities of enormous classes may indeed profit by the use of tape-recorders, where budgets allow. The novelty of using them may prove an incidental value, and such communications devices are likely to play a part in any future environment the students enter.

Even so, it needs to be said that no gadget can really replace the ideal person-to-person relationship. A gadget may help us to recall how important that relationship is, by a fairly good simulation of some of its qualities, but we ought not to settle for this. If someone argues that students are now appearing at schools en masse, and that only such methods are "practical," it could be said in reply that the basic problem of tomorrow's society, according to cybernetic prophets, will be finding things for people to do. So, why not have ten times as many teachers as we have now?

FRONTIERS Arts and the Man

ONE Of the rather wonderful things about this moment of history is that, despite its many discouraging aspects—and perhaps because of them—men who work in the arts are gaining a new kind of voice, and becoming thereby considerably more than "artists." That is, what some of them are thinking and declaring is becoming amazingly precise—practically "scientific," one might say—which means that the artist's utterance about himself and his work is gaining a purity of insight and a constancy of form approaching that found in a theorem of geometry.

The old charge that the Humanities and philosophy do not make any "progress," but continually rummage around with the same old questions—questions that have never been finally "answered"—is being refuted by the clear discovery that these questions are not *supposed* to be answered. It is true enough that the same materials are used over and over again—men are still men—but now the materials are being used with a difference. A new refinement in the examination of the old questions is evident; the discussion is more finely "rained." It is almost as if the arts had profited by an imperceptible "transfer" of skills from the practice of science, now noticeable as a new plateau of artistic insight. There is no reason why this should not be so.

An example of this sort of lucidly articulate thinking in behalf of the arts is found in Wylie Sypher's article, "The Poem as Defense," in the Winter 1967-68 *American Scholar*. Mr. Sypher is Robert Frost Professor of Literature at the Bread Loaf Graduate School of English. Except, perhaps, in the writings of J. Bronowski, it would be difficult to find so clarifying an account of the creative act.

The poet's vision, Mr. Sypher points out, is single, instantaneous, and unique. It is unpredictable and unrepeatable. For the poet, one experience is never the same as any other. In

science, this would be total defeat. For the man hoping to establish laws, "the first time doesn't count." For the scientist, only the codified, regularized and predictable aspect of experience has reality. A French physicist, Gaston Bachelard, has celebrated this distinction between artist and scientist in a book, *Poetics of Space*. The artist seeks "surprise," his art failing when it does not occur. But surprise can be welcomed by the scientist only at the moment of discovery. Recalling Keats' lines,

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken,

—Mr. Sypher remarks:

This first time the astronomer feels his wild surmise he is a poet, and the poetry in science is this instant of revelation or epiphany. Then his discovery must be *reduced* before it is reliable science. So Bachelard describes science as a way of organizing our disappointments under the guise of knowledge. Knowledge in scientific form is coherent disillusion, a sacrifice of discoveries to concepts and systems, a loss of an epiphany.

There is no contempt, here, for order and system. The problem has been not the elimination of order where order belongs, but preventing a programmed order from intruding where it does *not* belong. His failure to recognize that all beginnings, innovations, and the fresh visions leading to growth are forms of the poetic experience enables the planner to chain the future to the past. As Mr. Sypher puts it:

. . . by using an adequate method we can rule out the unexpected, and so accurately realize and predict human behavior that even those who resist a certain program can be rendered ineffective in advance. Techniques, in brief, can absorb our very hostility to techniques because the technician has already calculated our resentment and provided for it in his program. Thus we can be stripped of choices, since the technician can deceive us into believing we are free when we are not. Jacques Ellul says that the supreme feat of the technician is to leave us entirely unaware of his techniques. This kind of technology is the ultimate in human engineering, for resistance to programs can be foretold, discounted beforehand, and thus accommodated to the program. The technologist

dreads surprises. He must not be surprised. He predicts everything—and in a sense discovers nothing.

So science, we might say, is the delegation of choice. What science knows covers the area where surprises need no longer be expected. To have all such areas managed by technology is a great time-saver, freeing us for the explorations that we must make in order to continue as human beings. But when, through an eagerness for regularity, and therefore a dislike of surprise, the technologist-planner extends his hegemony to regions of the unknown, he becomes a denier and enemy of growth. As Mr. Sypher says:

. . . we are living in a technological society—which is to say a society increasingly managed by technicians who try to deal with everything by their methods, their planning, their programs. The great danger in methodical planning is that it becomes official, and thus of necessity the technician easily becomes a bureaucrat. . . . We should distrust any system whatever. The evil comes when method is used (or abused) technologically—that is, when it is beguiled by its own mechanism.

The work of art, when it embodies a moment of surprise, of discovery, and does not fall prisoner to its own techniques, is a symbol of the human spirit. And when the human spirit is generally confined, it is natural for art to grow into a resistance movement. Mr. Sypher has a good passage on this:

Once a student asked me what I thought an artist's first task should be in our society. My answer must have seemed romantic or irresponsible: I said that the artist's first vocation now, is resistance. I gave this reply sadly, for resistance may become freakishness, frivolity, insolence or anarchy. Yet to day's poet, novelist or painter must refuse as best he can the technological schemes that would dominate or dehumanize us depriving us of unexpected choices. . . . It is hard to have to justify Pop art, William Burroughs, Happenings and computer poetry, for such art is reckless to the degree of insolence. It is an insolence which can be justified only by recognizing that our society is even more colossally insolent in attempting to engineer human beings.

Yet the artist is capable of more than one sort of insolence. There is the high dudgeon of the spirit itself, as in Tolstoy's *What Is Art?*—a work filled with lofty contempt for all but the very great in human expression; and there is the insolence of becoming a mirror which insists on reflecting back to men only their most mediocre or degrading aspects. The philosophical artist may use all such devices, on occasion, but his purpose is to recall a lost symmetry—to suggest, however obscurely, a high and holy balance. The true artist never merely "reacts." He remains unpredictable. He surprises by remaining a whole man.