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THREADS OF CONTINUITY

IF everything were going well with the plans and projects of modern man, as embodied in the corporate enterprises of state, industry, and commerce, it might not even occur to us to question the assumptions on which those enterprises are based. But everything is *not* going well. And it is gradually becoming evident that our conceptions of knowledge, meaning, and human fulfillment are in some way deeply flawed, with the result that far-reaching changes in human thinking are now in the making.

Naturally enough, these changes are contemplated in the language of past ideas and conditions. If figures on the natural resources of a finite planet show that the growth economics of a generation ago cannot be expected to work very much longer, we try to adapt our thinking to a "no-growth" system for the future. We must, we say, stop the destructive things we are doing, such as making war, seeking national dominance, and wasting and polluting the earth's resources. Not only are these activities reprehensible in themselves, but also they no longer serve even men's selfish interests. A cautious program of self-restraint must be adopted by all.

But won't this produce a bleak and uninspiring world, with human energies given over to "making do," and planetary controllers measuring out the remaining resources to be sure that there will still be enough to go around? Humanist rhetoric tells us that we should be able to find enthusiasm for making virtues out of these harsh necessities, by learning to be "creative." The arts can flourish without needless consumption. The technology of more with less should be the technology of the future, and will present new challenges. If we plan and educate, surely the spirit of cooperation can replace the no longer applicable ardor for acquisitive pursuits. What other outlook can rational analysis suggest?

Well, as elements in a tract for the times, for an improvised program, these urgings are no doubt serviceable. But really fundamental changes seem far more likely to come out of some deep inclination of men's lives—an emotional arousal linked with vision that might in one case lead to a great migration of peoples, or in another bring a sudden polarization of the tastes and longing of a generation. It is hardly necessary to gather historical evidence to show that authentic historical change does not occur until men begin to see themselves, the world, and human relationships in a fresh and transforming light. Then old conceptions of meaning and value fade and disappear—quite rapidly, because they have been replaced.

For example, one idea that seems doomed to lose its significance—the significance it has had for two or three hundred years—is the idea of history. For modern man, the idea of history is hardly distinguishable from the idea of progress. For practical purposes, progress began for us with the age of science. The history of mankind before Copernicus is regarded as little more than a prologue to the "real" events which opened the way to applications of scientific discovery in industry and technology. The emergence of the modern nation-state was a parallel development. While, as Hegel noted in *The Philosophy of Law*, political ideas since the eighteenth century recognized the rights and opinions of the individual, it has been taken for granted that only through the state could the individual gain opportunity to express himself. The state was the means of self-realization for all—"is nothing," Hegel declared, "but the organization of the concept of freedom." History is thus the study of states.

Far more of our thinking about history and nationality comes from the Hegelian pattern of

explanation than we suppose. Some years ago, writing in *The Root Is Man*, Dwight Macdonald paired quotations from Hegel and Franklin D. Roosevelt to illustrate pervasive assumptions. Hegel wrote in the essay quoted above:

> The people without its monarch and without that whole organization necessarily and directly connected with him is a formless mass, which is no longer a State. In a people, not conceived in a lawless and unorganized condition, but as a self-developed and truly organic totality—in such a people, sovereignty is the personality of the whole, and this is represented in reality by the person of the monarch.

And President Roosevelt said in his 1940 Inaugural Address:

> Lives of nations are determined not by the count of years but by the lifetime of the human spirit. The life of a man is three-score years and ten. . . . The life of a nation is the fullness of the measure of its will to live. . . . A nation, like a person, has something deeper, something more permanent. . . . It is that something which matters most to its future, which calls forth the most sacred guarding of its present.

This personification is not so acceptable today, although most people would be reluctant to reject it openly. The question is, What would a person be without a state to shield and *identify* him?

The lack of any clear answer to this question is probably the chief reason for the perpetuation of enormous state power, even though that power is now increasingly horrifying and quite apparently irrational in the eyes of a "real many people. A human life devoted to activities within the larger identity of the state is at least a familiar life. And today the economic side of existence is so closely related to the political necessities of the nation-state that it becomes difficult to imagine a future in which political power plays a diminished or wholly unimportant part. Here, no doubt, lies the weakness of our thinking in relation to the kind of society that will come into being in terms of no-growth economics, since such a change would almost certainly put an end to reliance on military power.

The problem may be set in another way by asking: What sort of dialogue could Thoreau have had with Hegel? After all, both men were brilliant thinkers. Yet it seems clear that despite their admitted talents, even genius, they could have had very little to say to one another. Hegel, as John McTaggart remarked in his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology*, was simply not interested in individuals. For him they did not seem to count. Fulfillment was through organic political association. By himself a human being could do very little. What is a bee apart from the hive? For Hegel human values were realized only through hierarchical political organization—a scheme of relationships which had no meaning for Thoreau.

We chose Thoreau for this comparison because no one else seemed so apt an example of a person who required neither nationality nor government apparatus. Thoreau was not anti-community, but he was certainly anti-state. Doing without the state subtracted no meaning from his career. On the contrary, he worked very seriously at living a good life; he gave his existence rich content; finally, he practiced no-growth economics as an ideal achievement, and to the extreme annoyance of many of his countrymen.

But Thoreau, it is sometimes said, cared little for his fellowmen. The charge can be verbally supported, but only verbally. A passage in Joseph Wood Krutch's Introduction to the Bantam collection of Thoreau's writings goes behind the words:

> Sometimes the retreat to Walden appears as a demonstration of universal significance, sometimes it is merely the personal expedient of a man who found it, for the moment, convenient. On the opening page he says he writes merely because some of his neighbors have expressed a curiosity concerning his way of life. But the following paragraph admits of a didactic purpose: "I would fain say something . . . concerning . . . you who read these pages, who are said to live in New England; something about your condition . . . in this world, in this town, what it is, whether it is necessary that it be as bad as it is whether it cannot be improved as well as not." When he is accused of being selfish, of not "doing good," or

> of not relieving the poor, he retreats into the most ferocious individualism. When, so he says, he has offered to maintain certain poor persons as comfortably as he maintains himself, they have preferred to remain as they are. "As for doing good . . . I have tried it fairly, and strange as it may seem, am satisfied that it does not agree with my constitution." Or again, "I came into this world, not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad." And yet, when you catch him at it, trying to make it better is precisely what he is doing.

The enthusiastic and growing audience Thoreau has today would seem to agree with what Krutch says. Only a little of following Thoreau's example would have made the world a vastly better place to live in, according to present estimates of what is wrong with it.

At issue is the fact of Thoreau's engagement in a kind of thinking that made him a fruitful and contented human being without the political supports found necessary by most of his countrymen. And while it is impossible to "imitate" Thoreau, it is not at all impossible to recognize the direction of his thought, and to see how it set him free from circumstances and beliefs that brought into being a world now so rapidly wearing out.

For one thing, he was concerned with the full and rounded meaning of the life of an individual human—what it should aim at, how it could be lived.

We may remind ourselves that great epochs of past history have had a somewhat similar focus. There were of course empires and governments, but the best intelligence of the times was not wholly absorbed in social or collectivist thinking: the great philosophical works of the East are not concerned with states, but devoted to *the meaning of human life.* Thanks to our own achievements in technology, it is now possible for everyone to possess these books and to know at first hand the kind of thinking which lay at the root of the preindustrial civilizations whose achievements in art, literature, and philosophy can still awaken our awe at the profundity and potentialities of human thought. The *Bhagavad-Gita,* of India, exists in many translations; the *Upanishads* are easily available, although some renditions are far better than others; and the *Dhammapada,* embodying Buddha's teachings, has become known throughout the world. Lao-tse's *Tao Te Ching* is the most translated (into English) scripture save for the Bible. Then, as introduction to the ideas of the ancient Greeks, one might read three dialogues of Plato, the *Apology,* the *Crito,* and the *Phaedo.* The *Enneads* of Plotinus can now be sampled in paperback.

These books are valuable for a number of reasons, one being that they supply threads of continuity which reach across centuries of extreme cultural change, uniting not only generations but the thoughtful and reflective men of all epochs. Thoreau, for example, read much in Max Müller's famous collection of Oriental classics, *The Sacred Books of the East.*

The "idealism" of Western speculative philosophy is empty abstraction compared to the substance found in Eastern thought. There are realities of human experience which speculative systems cannot possibly touch, so long as they have only a logical content. In the West, material dealing with these realities is found only in fiction and poetry, seeming to be totally ignored by philosophy and even, with perhaps some recent exceptions, by psychology as well. The sort of thing we are talking about is illustrated by the following passage from a current novel, in which a boy is talking to his grandfather:

> "When you had your heart attack," he asked, "were you afraid?"
>
> His grandfather scowled into the vine-covered lattice walls. "You know, Anthony, I remember sitting down in that chair not feeling too good, and then the next thing I knew I was on the floor feeling like a hole had been blown through me by a shotgun."
>
> "But"—Anthony studied his own browned hands, their nails edged with dirt—"were you ever scared?"

"Of dying?" He smiled wryly. "With all the people staring at you, well, you get a little self-conscious and you start watching what they're watching."

"But you weren't scared?"

"No."

"Well"—Anthony pulled a moonflower and tossed it away—"why do you suppose that is?"

"I suppose," his grandfather said, "when you're that close to dying, you see it for what it is; it doesn't look that bad."

This quiet acceptance of death—when "you see it for what it is"—is doubtless evidence of some deep current of awareness in human beings, a kind of perception that does not always come to the surface, although its presence may be felt with sufficient frequency to make its reality undeniable. What can we say about such feelings or attitudes? Are they "knowledge"? They certainly function as knowledge. The old man's calm in the face of death seems a stance or elevation far above anything that could be termed a "state of mind." What he felt gave him a sense of truth, of knowing what death is. One might call it "resignation," but not a "giving up" sort of resignation; perhaps it was simply a knowing that death is some sort of process in life.

Are there moments when the world's or nature's processes, its beginnings and endings, are so linked with selfhood that they can be known to *belong?* Is this a destined merging of subject with object, by an inner arrangement of the tumblers of one's being, which we can experience and remember, but cannot command?

It gave the old man freedom from fear. To do this it had to be a very real wisdom, yet the kind a person both knows and does not know. He has feelings he acts upon, but cannot reasonably explain, save in Pascal's fashion of saying that the heart has reasons of which reason knows naught. Even so, Pascal was obliged to call them "reasons"—which suggests an unspoken or unargued logic, and not something senseless.

It is not such a great distance from the practical wisdom of the grandfather to the philosophical wisdom of Socrates, as described in the *Phaedo.* The old Greek street corner sage had no fear of death, either. He made his dying into the occasion for a long discussion of immortality with the friends who had gathered to be with him in his last hours. Somewhere Plato suggests that the art of the philosopher lies in knowing how to die easily, and Socrates becomes a rare example of this art in the *Phaedo.* The book can easily bring tears to the eyes of the reader. At the end Socrates tells his friends to put away their grief, and calmly drinks the hemlock.

A similar and perhaps deeper wisdom is suggested in the *Bhagavad-Gita,* where Krishna tells the young prince, Arjuna, that it is wrong to grieve either for the dead or for the living. Continuing (in the second chapter), Krishna says:

> I myself never was not, nor thou, nor all the princes of the earth; nor shall we ever hereafter cease to be. As the lord of this mortal frame experienceth therein infancy, youth, and old age, so in future incarnations will it meet the same. One who is confirmed in this belief is not disturbed by anything that may come to pass.

The *Gita* purports to be instruction in how one may become *confirmed* in this belief, since belief is not enough for the kind of certainty Krishna possesses and Arjuna seeks. Here the teacher declares that the Spirit in the body "is without birth and meeteth not death," that it "is not slain when this its mortal frame is destroyed." And he adds: "As a man throweth away old garments and putteth on new, even so the dweller in the body, having quitted its old mortal frames, entereth into others which are new."

In chapter four, Krishna tells Arjuna: "Both I and thou have passed through many births. . . . Mine are known unto me, but thou knowest not of shine." Earlier he had anticipated the philosophic serenity of the Stoics by saying:

> But whether thou believes" it [the spirit in man] to be of eternal birth and duration, or that it dieth with the body, still thou hast no cause to lament it.

> Death is certain to all things which are born and rebirth to all mortals, wherefore it doth not behoove thee to grieve about the inevitable. The antenatal state of beings is unknown; the middle state is evident, and their state after death is not to be discovered. What in this is there to lament?

There is no question, here, of proposing that the old man in the novel knew all this, but that, conceivably, he sensed its substance, although without having concepts to give expressive form to his feelings. Many human capacities work perfectly without becoming explainable. These might be taken as "signs" of a functional knowledge that we possess about the meaning of our lives. The literature of other ages shows that we have hardly begun to consider the riches of individual consciousness, so preoccupied have we been with an external sort of "progress." Our very beinghood remains virtually still-born, so far as conscious awareness of it is concerned.

More important, then, than cogent arguments for a no-growth, simplified, and more natural society may be the development of *content* for a life that is comfortable and at home in such a society, and of men and women who do not feel threatened or deprived by having to live with fewer things.

It is time to stop orating about the preciousness, the uniqueness, the inviolability of the individual, and to begin to supply evidence of the reality of these qualities. One begins to sense why Thoreau felt it to be such bad taste to go about forever talking about "doing good," when what was being done had so little merit or fruit.

The good society, it seems likely, will not call itself the good society. It will have no insecurities and no inclination to boast. Wise men do not need to speak much about wisdom and truth, being relieved of such burdens by the spontaneities of a truly human life.

REVIEW
MORE ON THE HUNZAS

WHEN G. T. Wrench was a young man in medical school in England, one question haunted him continually:

> Why was it that as students we were always presented with sick or convalescent people for our teaching and never with the ultra-healthy? Why were we only taught disease? Why was it presumed that we knew all about health in its fulness? The teaching was wholly one-sided. Moreover, the basis of our teaching upon disease was pathology, namely, the appearance of that which is dead from disease.
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> We started from our knowledge of the dead, from which we interpreted the manifestations, slight or severe, of threatened death, which is disease. Through these various manifestations which fattened our text-books, we approached health. By the time, however, we reached real health, like that of the keen times of public school, the studies were dropped. Their human representatives, the patients, were now well, and neither we nor our educators were any longer concerned with them. We made no studies of the healthy—only the sick.

Young Dr. Wrench did not stop asking his question, but he got no encouragement from his profession. Who ever heard of a doctor specializing in health? Specialists are known by the diseases they treat. Not until he read Sir Robert McCarrison's work on nutrition did he begin to see a way to study the splendors of normality and health. There are no dates given in his book, *The Wheel of Health* (a new Schocken paperback, $1.75), but this report on what he found out about health was first published in 1938, so that his work must belong to the early years of this century; and the book is rich enough in content to have required a long period of research.

Dr. Wrench's fundamental contention is that poor diet lies at the root of disease. Germs are everywhere, but inadequate nutrition makes us vulnerable to infection. The matter is as simple as that. He is critical of the typical "research" approach to the study of illness in that it seeks to isolate particular causes, ignoring the total picture. The really important fact to recognize is that *healthy people do not get sick.* About half this book is devoted to proving that healthy people do not get sick. The rest is given to showing what has probably happened to people who do. As might be expected, Dr. Wrench's book is a natural companion to Sir Albert Howard's *Soil and Health* and has a similar effect on the reader. Its common sense is so obvious, its suggestions so natural, that one easily sees why diet and agricultural reform are now becoming major forces of change in our time. Such books inspire their readers to some kind of action.

For evidence to support his views, Dr. Wrench turns to history. One particularly good example of the importance of diet is provided by the Danes. During the closing years of the nineteenth century, the American pioneer farmers, having settled the prairie country of the West, began to ship wheat and barley to Europe at prices with which the Danes could not compete. So the Danes, needing to survive, switched from raising grain to breeding pigs, cattle, and poultry. England became their market for bacon, butter, and eggs. They also changed their own diet, becoming heavy meat-eaters.

This went on for years. Then came the first world war, and after the United States became involved a blockade at sea put an end to Danish foreign trade. The situation was very serious for the Danes. Mikkel Hindhede, the Superintendent of the Danish State Institute of Food Research, was asked to help, and was made Food Adviser to the Danish Government. Dr. Wrench tells the story:

> The problem that faced him was this: Denmark had a population of 3,500,000 human beings and 5,000,000 domestic animals. She was accustomed to import grains from the United States for both. There was now a shortage of food grains.
>
> The pigs had provided hams and bacon for the English as well as for Danes. In the crisis the question arose: Would it be wise to get rid of the pigs and let men eat the food which otherwise the pigs

would eat? Hindhede decided it would be wise, so some fourth-fifths of the pigs were killed and about one-sixth of the cattle. Their grain food was given to the Danes, and it was given, not in the exact form in which it was given to the pigs—not as bran mash, for instance—but as wholemeal bread with extra coarse bran that is not put into wholemeal bread.

In addition to this bread, or Kleiebrot, which was made official for the whole country, the Danes ate porridge, green vegetables, milk, butter, and fruit. No grain or potatoes were allowed for the distillation of spirits, so there were no spirits. Half the quantity of beer was permitted.

As some pigs were left, the people on the farms got meat; the people in the cities—40 per cent of the population—got very little meat. Only the rich could afford beef.

The food regulations were begun in March 1917 and were made stringent from October 1917 to October 1918.

The result of this enforced national diet was a remarkable lowering of the death-rate. The death-rate, which had been 12.5 in 1913, 1914 now fell to 10.4 per thousand, which is the lowest mortality figure that has been registered in any European country at any time." . . .

Hindhede attributes this extraordinary rapid and marked change to two things: (1) less meat, (2) less alcohol. He regards the bran as having largely filled the gap of the scanty or absent meat, bran having a good proportion of vegetable meat or protein. He regards the experiment as a triumph for his previous teaching. "The reader knows," he writes, "how sharply I have emphasized the advantages of a lacto-vegetarian diet. I am not in principle a vegetarian, but I believe I have shown that a diet containing a large amount of meat and eggs is dangerous to the health."

The figures on the death rate may seem a little more impressive when it is realized that during the period of the diet change mortality diminished by practically seventeen per cent.

It should be said that Dr. Wrench also points out that the Eskimos of the northwest coast of Greenland live almost entirely on sea animals and birds, yet are extraordinarily healthy, having fine teeth and hair, with no trace of scurvy or malnutrition. Wrench attributes this to the fact that these Eskimos eat the entire animal, leaving no waste. By eating every part even to the skin of the narwhal—they balanced their diets!

Dr. Wrench's objection to the style of scientific research in nutrition is simply stated:

> In the writings of the scientific experts on nutrition, there are very numerous part-time experiments based on synthetic or specially made-up diets, omitting or cutting down the quantity of one or more of the factors which compose a diet. One scientist will cut down the quantity of protein given and watch the effect of this upon animals, another will cut down the fats and note the resulting sicknesses; another will give vegetable or irradiated vegetable fats in place of customary animal fats another will give a diet in which vitamin A is defective, B is defective, C is defective, and so on.
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> The experiments are skillfully devised and carried out with consummate technique. They lead to a mass of knowledge about proteins as things in themselves; fats as things in themselves; vitamins as things in themselves; but whether these can be things in themselves and are not really relative to a host of other conditions in nutrition is as yet scarcely considered. McCarrison's statement in the Cantor Lectures, for example, that "the diet of the Sikhs is only health-promoting so long as it is consumed in its entirety" is foreign to all this fragmentation.

The valley of Hunza, located where India meets Afghanistan and China, and close enough to Soviet Asia for a Hunza traveler to walk there in a day, if he wanted to, is not a big place. The fertile region is a "beautiful and highly cultivated sunny seven miles long," and in 1938 this small Muslim state had some 14,000 people. They have achieved fame by becoming known as the healthiest people in the world, and perhaps the most cheerful. Dr. Wrench gives much attention to the Hunza people, their freedom from disease, their longevity, what they eat, and how they grow their food. While the items of food are not radically different from the British diet, the Hunzas prepare and eat them differently. They grow wheat and make bread, using the entire grain; they eat everything fresh; they have no refrigeration so they drink buttermilk or sour the milk. Dr. Wrench is inclined to think that this is

far better than pasteurization, and he tells why. They eat little meat because they have little—about once every ten days. They are extremely active and have bodies that compare well with Greek statues.

Next he goes to the question of how they raise their crops—which is, as we would say, "organically," using compost and natural fertilizer. Even the British, Dr. Wrench maintains, if they would take the advice of students of agriculture like Prince Kropotkin, could manage to feed themselves on their own land by using these methods.

> Anyone who has compared the meticulous care and agrarian economy of China and Japan with the empty grass fields of Britain is forced to the conclusion that the effort to make Britain self-sufficient in food is lacking. In spite of our physiological conviction of the need, the Returns of the Ministry of Agriculture for the last year, ending June, 1936, show that progress is still in physiological regress. In that year 33,100 more workers were drawn from the land, and this was not caused by mechanization. No less than 284,900 acres went out of cultivation, 69,000 of these being wheat acres. Potato acreage decreased 7,000 acres.

Dr. Wrench speaks of the advantages of farming on terraced land in mountainous country, where water is plentiful, in contrast to prairie country where, once the top soil is exhausted, artificial fertilizers are required to maintain production.

The Wheel of Health concludes with a long discussion of the agricultural practices of the past, showing how much better they were in so many respects—as in China, in Peru under the Incas, and in ancient Egypt—and giving the evidence of freedom from disease of these ancient peoples. We must now, Dr. Wrench says, begin to learn from the past.

COMMENTARY
TEXTBOOK REVISION IN CALIFORNIA

THE alterations in the science textbooks that will be used by California schoolchildren starting September, 1974, do not seem so disastrous as some citizens have feared. As a result of religious pressure, the State Board of Education has agreed to changes of the sort briefly indicated by the *Saturday Review* for Jan. 27:

> In one book the statement "It is known that life began in the seas" will be altered to read: "Most scientists believe that life may have begun in the seas. Another sentence in the book states that the oldest rocks contain no fossils and adds: "These rocks are from periods before life began or from periods when the only forms of life were minute and soft-bodied and left no fossil remains." This would be changed to read: "These rocks are from periods before life began or from periods when the only forms of life left no fossil remains. Thus scientists can only speculate about the character of these early life forms."
>
> Another book now states: "All scientists do not agree on when and how the earth was formed." This "dogma" would be changed to read: "Scientists are not sure when and how the earth was formed"—a statement sure to instill confidence in every child who reads it.

So far as we can see, such changes will neither weaken character nor build it. But according to the *SR* report, the Fundamentalist advocates of "reform" in science education will now campaign for presentation of the Garden of Eden story of Creation in the science texts, along with what is said about Evolution.

It would be no service to the depth of meaning in mythic or symbolic accounts of cosmic and human origins to force a single one of them into "competition" with the empirical data of the evolutionists, however incomplete, as though the two approaches to cosmology and anthropology are comparable in these terms. A literal reading of religious scripture is probably the quickest way to bring discredit upon it, since this subjects religion to the test of *material* demonstrations, and would amount, in effect, to a return to belief in miracles.

Moreover, if the Christian myth is to be presented, then so should various other symbolic accounts of "beginnings," in order to preserve public education from any taint of sectarianism. The First Amendment apart, only a little study of history should show that the "materialism" of science developed very largely as a defense against theological "mind-control." It seems notably unintelligent for this sort of indoctrination to be attempted again. Actually, the Christian teachings now gain strength mainly through recognition of their kinship with other, often older, symbolic accounts of the beginnings of things.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

PAST ACHIEVEMENT AND GOOD SIGNS

ANOTHER useful discussion of Black Mountain College is provided by the December 1972 issue of the *San Francisco Book Review*, in a brief essay by Roger Wicker. While mostly an informal account of the sources for further reading on Black Mountain, it is evident that the writer is very much at home in this subject, so that he picks especially good passages for quotation. From a documentary by Charles Bell, to be found in the Black Mountain collection of the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill), there is the following:

> Having taught at Black Mountain is an experience worth paying for. One pays in spiritual tension. The sheer fever of living there, of encountering these strange students, of being battered by the communal waves, of living the storm and stress of a consciously progressive anarchy—this cannot be sensibly described. Black Mountain . . . builds in a way the counter-pole to St. John's College. Where St. John's revolution is itself a return to tradition and the past, that is, an imposed regimen of the mind, Black Mountain's very rupture with tradition is in a sense traditional, a last continuance of the splurge of progressive education. In this it pretends to have no method, no system, but this very attitude implies both method and system, namely of a licentious pluralism, and with a hatred of the St. John's pure and abstract authority. And for the binding regimen of the mind, we have here an orgy of feeling activity. If St. John's has been called impractical and anti-modern, this may be termed hectically practical, wedded to the loosest phases of modernism.

The comparison seems a good one, save that it may give a somewhat unfair impression of at least the intentions of the modern founders of St. John's—Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan. Years after he had left St. John's Buchanan asked a group of students and faculty from the college: "Why do you have the same curriculum now that we had thirty years ago?"

Mr. Wicker mentions his own article on Black Mountain in *Red Clay Reader* (Charlotte, N.C., 1969), which was, he says, until recently the only attempt to tell about the beginning, the middle, and the end of Black Mountain. But now there is Martin Duberman's book, which has been noted here and is valued by Wicker for refusing to make a "definitive statement" about what Black Mountain was—and, in terms of its enduring influence, still is.

The more we read about Black Mountain, the plainer it becomes that what was great about it was the intensity of purpose of a number of persons of vision who taught there, and the freedom they had to do what they believed in. The various obstacles—the microscopic salaries, having to build new buildings, and other duties—didn't seem to matter much; or rather, they provided dimensions which helped.

Yet the framework created by John Andrew Rice was of great importance. Mr. Wicker gives this brief account:

> Explaining to a friend in 1933 what he was seeking by the founding of Black Mountain, Rice referred to the hoary chestnut about Mark Hopkins and a student on a log constituting the ideal college. He continued, saying, "Now look at what's become of Mark Hopkins' log. Between the teacher and the student sit as a minimum requirement of all academic logs, a president, a dean of the college, a dean of men and women, and a registrar, all of whom are more or less subject to a board of trustees or regents." Furthermore, the trustees tended to be conservative businessmen who knew little or nothing about education.
>
> Rice and his colleagues sought to eliminate as many of these "impediments that ordinarily stand between the teacher and the student" as possible. And to that end, Black Mountain was owned by its faculty, had no non-teaching presidents, no trustees, no deans, no registrars, no fraternities, no sororities, no arbitrarily imposed rules, no required curriculum and no intercollegiate sports. Each year the entire Black Mountain community elected a rector to head the college, sign the checks, and generally act as moderator rather than as president. . . .

> The end came slowly for Black Mountain. The ideals were intact, although somewhat changed, when it became impossible to continue because there wasn't enough money. There was never enough money throughout Black Mountain's life, and the college was dependent on donors such as the Guggenheim Foundation at one point, on the money the students raised on a summer-long speaking and fund-raising tour throughout the U.S., on increased tuition and on the proceeds from the summer institutes in art, music and theatre.

America wasn't very hospitable to Black Mountain College. The extraordinary value of Rice's conception, of the Bauhaus teachers, of the other artists and writers who came there to teach, was not understood. The school was starved out, and without foundation help would not have lasted as long as it did.

"Survival" seems a matter of small importance in measuring an achievement like Black Mountain College. In a healthy society, a school like that would not have had to struggle so hard to last as long as it did. In a sick society, only improvisation and subsidy could keep it alive. Improvisation and subsidy, then, were signs of health—health of a sort—in an acquisitive society which seems to value conventionality, status, and formal structure more than vital teaching and learning activity. But too much improvisation—and also too much subsidy—can weaken and harm a good school. The balances are hard to estimate when so much that is good has to make its way against the grain of the times.

It seems likely that starting new institutions of this sort would be much more difficult, now. If this is so, then the thing to learn from Black Mountain is what it brought into focus, and why it proved so valuable to so many, as distinguished from the means that were used at that time. Only other means, it seems likely, could provide a similar focus today. And that focus probably wouldn't be called a college, or even a school.

The present seems definitely an interim period, so far as generously useful institutions are concerned. The major functions of our society—on which so many depend for food, shelter, and clothing, for health and education and social order—are all in the hands of trained professionals of various sorts. And many of the existing institutions are ruled by these professionals. A self-centered professionalism leads to the kind of indifference to the realities of human need that Rice in his way tried to overcome at Black Mountain. Changing all this is almost certainly going to be a painful, slow, and arduous process requiring heroic determination on the part of the people who get the change going.

Fortunately, a movement for such a change is already emerging, and an important aspect of it is the subject of a new book edited by Ronald Gross, *The New Professionals* (Simon and Schuster, $8.95). Mr. Gross has chosen fifteen contributors, among them Staughton Lynd, Seymour Melman, David Hawk, Nat Hentoff, Neil Postman, and Caroline Bird. Science, medicine, law, the clergy, journalism, politics, engineering, business, and the idea of "demasculinizing" the professions, are the fields examined.

In his introduction Gross points out that for many of the youth of today the reforms and changes in the professions are coming almost too late, since the record of professional performance has become so bad. He says:

> People usually enter a profession to serve ideals such as healing, teaching, justice. But you do not simply heal, teach or serve justice—you become a doctor, teacher, or lawyer. The professions have become established, institutionalized and rigid. Each profession has developed its own complex of training schools, licensing procedures, professional associations and regulations.
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> Because of these institutional relationships, the professions, and professionals, have become deeply concerned with values—like prestige and high income—not directly related to the ideals of the profession. And in order to protect these, and fend off criticism and outside scrutiny, the professions have developed a mystique which defines their work as extremely complex, requiring extended education, great intelligence and skill, and highly sophisticated judgment.

Then what happens? The professions serve themselves first, the people second, and often indifferently. Ronald Gross elaborates:

> By organizing into professions our collective effort to make the world and ourselves more fully human, we have bureaucratized our most essential existential concerns. "The deepest of our collective responsibilities is taken out of our hands," writes the British educator and poet Edwin Mason. "But the problems that matter most are those least often discussed which are common to us all, not those which can be earmarked as belonging to any profession."
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> Thus the net of the professions, while seeming to strengthen our capability to deal with our problems, actually lets life slip through its huge interstices. Those problems or conditions which cannot be defined in the terms developed for jurisprudence, pedagogy, politics, or one of the other disciplines, lose their claim on our attention, and even their reality. We cannot name them: Attorneys talk law but are embarrassed to speak about justice; doctors know all the labels for diseases but cannot define health or fight for it; journalists hide behind the concept of objectivity when what is needed desperately is to write the truth.
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> Ivan Illich has indicted our entire system of service institutions for reducing their clients to dependency, usurping our right to autonomy and authenticity, and monopolizing resources which should be made directly available to consumers.

That there are enough talented young people around to write, in these terms, a lively book on the major institutions of our time, is enormously encouraging. This book may help a lot of people to find work that they are able to regard as honorable and useful. The new professionals the book describes are working hard to eliminate meaningless complication and to define and embrace the primary responsibilities their callings should involve.

FRONTIERS

Even the Government Is Interested

THE literature on the energy crisis grows apace. Studies, articles, statements, multiply, and scores of conferences are being held. The momentum of informed concern is gathering at a rate which has already caused the Government to become involved in investigation of the possibility of reversing national trends. A summarizing article in the *Sierra Club Bulletin* for last December reports:

> In recent months, a solution advocated by the Sierra Club and other environmentalists has been gaining support: instead of mining and drilling for more fuel and designing more and more power plants, why not try cutting back on the energy demand?
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> Heretical as this idea might once have seemed in the United States, it nevertheless is being suggested seriously by scientists, economists and engineers. A staff report representing 11 federal agencies recently set forth in more than 20 pages "The Potential for Energy Conservation." Even more recently, the Rand Corporation studied the energy crisis as it affects California and suggested energy-saving steps to the state government. Both studies indicate that the United States not only consumes energy at an ever faster pace, but consumes it recklessly and wastefully, as if energy cost nothing and were in endless supply. How much could the nation's energy demand be reduced by stopping this needless waste? The studies indicate a potential savings of 25 to 30 per cent.

Continuing, the *Bulletin* writer, James Spaulding, details a number of ways in which energy could be saved, mainly through changes in the methods of transportation. According to the government report, the effort to reduce energy consumption must be aimed primarily at the automobile, which is responsible for a great deal of the excess consumption and waste. Spaulding also points out in other connections that often a single BTU (British Thermal Unit) saved in the home or office will save two more at the source, since for each unit consumed two units are wasted through inefficiency in converting fuel into electricity.

Mr. Spaulding says that the U.S. Office of Science and Technology is expected to release a report on a study of the energy crisis early this year. He also says that speakers at a meeting of the American Chemical Society last year agreed that a new pricing system for energy must be adopted—one that reflects the true cost to society of energy consumption. In such a system, the price would increase with consumption instead of being reduced.

Such developments are evidence of the fruitfulness of the efforts of individuals and independent groups that have been campaigning for years for intelligence and basic morality in human relations with the environment. These, we might say, are now ideas "whose time has come."

Readers wishing to inform themselves concerning the issues of the use of energy and its sources could hardly do better, as a beginning, than to read the booklet, *The Case for Solar Energy,* by Peter E. Glaser, Vice President of Arthur D. Little, Inc., Cambridge, Mass. (free copies of which may still be available). Mr. Glaser presented this material as a talk at the conference on Energy and Humanity held in London last September by the Society for Social Responsibility in Science. In it he said:

> The most striking fact about the exponential growth of energy consumption over the last century is that it cannot continue forever. In a world with limited natural resources and a finite ceiling upon undesirable interactions of energy production systems with the environment, the future of energy supply poses a multitude of problems. These facts can be dramatized by considering that during the next 30 years the United States will consume more energy than it has in its entire history. Over this time span the annual United States demand will probably triple. Projected increases in energy demand indicate that the pressures on energy resources and the environment will be experienced worldwide because each nation will aspire to obtain a larger share of finite resources to maintain and improve the quality of life for its people. . . .
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> The complexities of assessment and planning for future energy consumption can be illustrated by the presently-experienced confrontation between the

> electric utility industry and those opposing the construction of new power plants. The issue which has to be faced in the near future is further development of energy production methods utilizing existing energy versus preserving the natural environment in the face of increasing pollution, which in some areas is already approaching crisis proportions. The public is demanding substantially more electrical power and is expecting the power to be available—without shortages or rationing. At the same time the public is expressing an unprecedented concern about environmental quality, but has not yet faced up to the price that may have to be paid to achieve this quality. . . . As Forrester states: 'It is not a question of whether growth will cease, but rather whether the coming transition to equilibrium will occur traumatically or with some measure of human intervention which may head off some of the most tragic outcomes."

It is true enough that the public "demands" or "expects" the industrial plant of the United States to keep the promises it has been making, and with the efficiency and dispatch it has been boasting of for the past hundred years or so. But the public is only doing what it has been taught to do by the public relations experts of industry. And who, in this relationship, should have known better? Or, in any bad situation created by an excess of manipulation, who is to blame? The sheep or the shepherds? The children or the Pied Piper?

Perhaps we should say that fixing "blame" doesn't matter much now, since a crisis or an emergency calls for a remedy, not blame.

But as everybody is saying, it won't be "easy." There is also an international dimension. Commenting on the SSRS Energy and Humanity conference in London, Christopher Henrich said (in the SSRS *Newsletter* for last October):

> Optimists say we must help all the poor nations to become rich nations forthwith, and then the political problems will be solved. I think it emerged clearly from the conference that there is no prospect of this happening in the foreseeable future. The resources don't exist. There is not enough oil in the world for everyone to drive automobiles as much as the people of the USA do; nor is there enough steel for all the cars they would require, nor plants to make the cars; nor roads, etc. I am not trying to be a callous imperialist by saying so; the most wholehearted conceivable effort on the part of everybody in the world could not spread the present American standard of consumption over the globe. . . .
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> Ultimately, we must either curtail our growth or redefine it. I think a redefinition is possible, and we may come to regard the middle third of the twentieth century as having been characterized by a rather childish and neurotic desire for more and more complicated mechanical toys. But the readjustment in our thinking will be very painful. Trying to persuade the average American that he must consume less, not more, and give up the prospect of greater consumption in the future, will be a task to stagger the imagination.

Well, as more and more people recognize the necessity, it may not be so difficult a task. If we begin by redefining what Mr. Glaser calls "the quality of life," a basic change in habits and objectives might even be welcome. For a growing number of people, it already is.