

DIAGNOSIS OF INSTITUTIONS

WE do not have much difficulty in justifying our complaints about institutions. Pick an institution, or pick two or three of them—say, the schools, the courts, the military—and the list of their offenses will be easy to compile. The system-dominated requirements of the schools waste the time and the lives of the children. The fundamentally moderate John Holt has spoken of the schools as jails, and a great many of the young agree. The courts are places where the indifference of people toward one another comes into sharp focus and is raised to a higher power by bureaucratic authority. Persons who devote their lives to helping the ignorant, ineffectual and weak who get into trouble soon learn the irrelevance of the claim that the courts are institutions which deal in "justice." All they can do is try to bring a little kindness, a little friendliness into an inhuman situation. And the military—the military, to the shame of conscientious soldiers, has become a symbol of the paranoia of a nation. It is an agency empowered to infect generation after generation of the young with the delusions made possible by almost unlimited destructive power. Fortunately, more and more of the young feel dishonored by military enterprises.

It is hardly remarkable that the antagonism toward institutions has sometimes gone far beyond a reasoned resistance to the invasions of political authority, turning into an emotional, retching revolt against the "powers that be." The rejection of social rules represented by institutions has become almost a reflex among a large proportion of the coming generation. Social pressures which once secured a high degree of conformity now have only a small effect. Take for example the fear of bearing an illegitimate child. The heavy condemnation of the community for this "offense" now no longer exists, or is so much diminished as to count for little. There was a time

when a child which came into existence under these circumstances was nearly always put up for adoption, but today, with the illegitimacy rate considerably higher than at any time in the past, young unmarried mothers are keeping their babies. Agencies in the Los Angeles area which make a business of supplying infants for adoption report that couples who want a child of white middle-class origins will have to wait years before one will become available. Nor is marriage sought as a security or protection. Often these young mothers would rather trust to their own ingenuity and the help of family and friends, than rely upon the laws designed to protect children through marriage.

Actually, the indifference of the young to the protective aspect of institutions is a chief source of alarm to the older generation, since so many risks seem to be involved in ignoring the entire range of conventional securities provided by ways of doing things incorporated in custom and law. But the parental generation, it also seems clear, is not as sensitive as the young to the hardening process of institutional indifference to human values: the parents do not have to go to the schools as they are now constituted, nor does the threat of taking part in the war in Vietnam hang over them with the ugly immediacy that is felt by those of draft age. The economic and other practical securities gained by a conforming course mean little to a generation which regards a life so constrained as not worth living at all!

It would be possible, of course, to make a list of the practical services to people performed by institutions, and it might be argued that there is an obligation to do so. But this sort of rational balancing of accounts tends to ignore that a deep emotional polarization has already taken place: the influence of institutions has been judged as anti-human, and even quite considerable services are

likely to be perceived as little more than bribes which lead to self-betrayal. Why not then, instead, have a look at the spontaneous movements in human striving which eventually take on social patterns? Not until these patterns are stultified by the external devices of organization do they become subject to the evils of institutionalization.

Every frontier society, for example, will work out plans for the education of children, and one can easily imagine the excitement and anticipation which would attend the erection of the first school-house in an outlying region. The teaching of the young is a spontaneous and irrepressible interest of all parents, and it finds inventive expression among people who have no institutional provisions for education. Conceivably, the best teaching might take place under such "primitive" conditions. A story of the colonial days presents the unforgettable picture of a farmer on Long Island who balanced a copy of John Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* on the handle of his plough, reading a few lines with each furrow, his object being to prepare his boys to understand that "the people" were the true sovereign, and this was Locke's doctrine. Whatever the imperfections of this father's understanding, the impact of his intentions and hopes undoubtedly carried through to his sons. So, also, with school-houses cooperatively constructed. We too easily forget that in a healthy, young society, there is a natural longing for education and learning, and that when books and opportunities for schooling come to be taken for granted, something vital has died away.

Perhaps, in some distant future, human beings will be so well and symmetrically developed that each family will be able to complete the education of its own children, but until that day the help of teachers will be needed, and this, we might say, is a natural form of social complexity which an evolving society must develop. The meeting of this need is surely not a social evil. How, then, do the institutions devoted to education go wrong?

John Holt put the answer very simply in his recent book, *Freedom and Beyond*. The schools go bad because they are made to do many things that have nothing to do with education. For one thing, they are given "political" purposes to embody; they are supposed to produce "good citizens." They also exercise a police function, since staying out of school is a violation of law.

How could we prevent the schools from becoming bad places? One thing we could do would be to take Gandhi's advice, and establish complete separation of school and state. In the education that Gandhi envisioned, the government would have no control and absolutely nothing to say about what is taught. This alone would go a long way toward making the schools a spontaneous expression of the people—a true service to the complex needs of the society. Where there is no delegation of responsibility, there is no submission to external authority or power.

If we notice the spontaneous forms of complexity in a free or voluntarily ordered society, we have no difficulty in recognizing the values which, declared "official" and made the occasion for the exercise of some kind of authority, lead to the abuses which make institutions seem so uniformly undesirable. In the Kibbutzim, for example, a member who shows particular ability as an artist—a sculptor, say, or a painter—may by common agreement be given part time off from his "bread-labor" duties in the kibbutz, in order to practice his art. This is simple recognition of the complexity of the culture of a civilized community. The artist is a respected contributor to the welfare of the whole, and is helped in his differentiation from the common pattern.

One might argue, of course, that an artist should be able to devote *all* his time to his art, but the reply might then be that the kibbutz cannot afford to risk the pretenses, posturings, and time-wasting that often go under the name of "art," and that differentiation, to be legitimate, must always overcome difficulties. The artist, one could say,

has to prove himself by some means, and if he claims that no one is competent to pass on his capacity, this is no new problem in human societies, nor can there be any novel solution for it. The point, here, is that unofficial, voluntarist relationships *tend* to avoid the evils of institutionalization, and they do not block the development of complexity. The limit of desirable complexity is always a matter for the moral and æsthetic and social conscience or awareness of the members of the community to consider and work out. The artist, for example, may communicate some subtlety by a complex evolution of his art, yet he knows, or tries to know, when to stop. A general culture of æsthetic perception may heighten his awareness, but he must make his own decisions. The individualization of all decisions that can be practicably made by individuals is the secret of freedom from institutional abuse.

On the other hand, the ability of a society to move freely and fearlessly in the direction of complexity, according to its own judgment—which means the judgment of the individuals involved—is the secret of freedom from the tyranny of a mechanical, simplifying "equalitarianism." As the Swiss historian, Jacob Burckhardt, once remarked, "the essence of tyranny is the denial of complexity."

No free community will long survive the failure to use the special talents of individuals to the best advantage of all. While the ideal may be the full development of each person, it would be folly to let a natural teacher spend all his or her time in isolation from the young. Not only will the young benefit from contact with the teacher, but the other adults will learn from watching how the teacher relates to children. The danger lies, not in encouraging teachers to teach, or in anyone doing what he knows and can do best, but in legalizing and licensing and *certifying* these roles, so that their spontaneity is lost.

The evils of the institutionalized society do not grow out of differentiated roles—actually, nature is filled with relationships dependent upon

differentiation and hierarchy—but upon human attitudes toward them. Roles—this is a somewhat cheapened word made to do duty for a profound idea, the idea of natural function, or *dharma*—have always played a basic part in the social life of man, and there could be no culture without them. We need no elaborate scientific studies to see that men are drawn to widely differing activities, and it may also be evident that these differences by no means need to lead to mutual suspicion and contempt. For example, a youth of middle-class origins who, thrown on his own resources, finds work in a labor gang, soon learns to respect the man who knows how to handle a shovel. A skilled laborer is a man who can work all day without succumbing to exhaustion; he knows how to let the tool help him conserve his strength.

No fundamental activity in relation to the provision of food, shelter, and clothing is without essential dignity, and it seems that any well-conceived society will adopt the practice of having all its members serve an apprenticeship in work of this sort, regardless of the capabilities they may ultimately develop. But in a good society these decisions will all be made by common sense—a common sense that is at best partly embodied in tradition. Good traditions are like the skills practiced in a trade, representing what has been found out by many generations of workmen, and passed along from journeymen to apprentices, on the job. The invasions of technology have greatly reduced this transmission of tradition, but it still exists.

Actually, the building trades make a good illustration of how a youth may learn a great deal about his environment and about the craft of adapting to it. The boy who helps his father build a home for the family is adding to his own grasp of complexity and making himself more independent and self-reliant. Very nearly everyone would admit that a good society is one in which this sort of education is encouraged. One could say, first, that such learning is the essence of Americanism—fostering the do-it-

yourself resourcefulness which has characterized the people of this country since the colonial days. Yet the various kinds of institutionalization which have affected the construction of homes have made this sort of education increasingly difficult in the United States. In a recent working paper produced at CIDOC at Cuernavaca, titled "Retooling Society," Ivan Illich observes:

Most people do not feel at home in their house, unless a significant proportion of its total value is the result of input of their own labor. The declining satisfaction with housing in Massachusetts might be related to the fact that in 1945 32% of all one-family units were still self-built (either foundation to roof, or just constructed under the full responsibility of the owner) while by 1970 this proportion had gone down to 11%. Tools and materials which favor self-building had increased in the intervening decades, but social arrangements—like unions, codes, markets—had turned against the choice.

In other words, the interests of institutions have worked against the interests of the people as a whole, making it very difficult for citizens to practice the unique endowments and capacities of the American people, and denying them the economic advantages their knowledge made possible, while cutting off the younger generation from the learning possibilities which come with building one's own home. In this case, the right to complex knowledge—the skills of housebuilding—was reserved by law and regulation to a small segment of the population. This, as Burkhardt said, is the essence of tyranny. But numerous bureaucratic reasons for the limitation on owner-building are no doubt provided.

The "simplicity" required by bigness is often at fault in such situations. Take the building codes. The basic idea of a building code can certainly be defended. It provides protection to the home-owner and prevents the inexperienced or ignorant builder from making costly and dangerous mistakes. But a building inspector cannot know everything. He may not even be an engineer, but simply a man with some experience in the field. So, to protect himself from criticism,

he slavishly follows the "book." The ingenious owner-builder may discover splendid low-cost ways of satisfying the *intent* of the code, but he may not be permitted to use them because the code specifies the use of other, often expensive materials preferred by the contracting industry, which has no time for the ingenious improvisations a clever owner-builder may devise. So sheer economic power prevents the owner-builder from doing the intelligent and feasible thing, and his costs grow far too large. Perhaps he is prevented from building at all, as the Massachusetts statistics indicate.

The solution is not, of course, no building code, but begins far back in the process of the evolution of complexity. Too much specialization, too much delegation of authority, too much legalization and licensing have produced a situation which will take many years to remedy, through the gradual reclaiming, by individuals, of the right to be productive, to be ingenious, to be intelligently considerate of the welfare and health of their fellows and themselves, in what they do, instead of depending upon hired watch-dogs to look after these matters.

Finally, it is wholly conceivable that some sorts of complexity which people agree upon as desirable for all will be revered and honored for the services they perform. The public buildings of a city do not need to be saturated with feelings of indifference and contempt; their corridors are under no necessity to smell of urine and carbolic acid. If they were buildings of which the people felt proud, as symbols of the order and justice that had been collectively achieved, these buildings would have an entirely different atmosphere. There have been public buildings, public places, which answer to this description. It is by no means unimaginable that there are *good* qualities which are somehow generalized from the feelings of large numbers of people, just as bad qualities come to the surface in angry crowds and mobs. Such evils must have their opposites. And as for the feeling behind what we might term

"good" institutions, is there not an example of an ennobling collective emotion in what the Pueblo Indians feel in relation to their Blue Lake high in the mountains? (Societies simpler than our own often illustrate the value of living traditions of the sort we have turned into heavy-handed institutions.)

One might, for example, think of a city, not as a place where dirt, ugliness, bad air, and the acquisitive spirit come into focus, but as a center where exceptional men and women—many of them teachers—are to be found. A city could be a place where people come to learn what they cannot learn elsewhere. If this were the reason for a concentration of population, the environs of a city would naturally reflect the intentions from which it grew, and people would come there for visits, much as, ages ago, they went on pilgrimages to holy places.

It is true enough that cities as we now know them are focal infections of society. Their unhealthiness is so inevitable that, as Arthur Morgan has pointed out, they always die unless their energies are continually supplemented by new migrations of people from the country. But a city could be like the heart and brain of a society—expressive of its highest intelligence and its noblest feeling, if the reason for its existence were to change. Cities could still perform necessary economic functions, but no one really knows how much decentralization would be possible, if the economic lives of the people were to grow more self-sufficient and independent, through the development of subsistence agriculture and the use of technology to free men from the tyranny of closely managed economic organization.

This would bring another sort of complexity to social groupings, and the institutions of such a society would have a much more voluntary, spontaneous character. Places and forms of human association for the common benefit would then become symbols of ideals, and the word "institution" would probably drop out of our

vocabulary, or at least lose the meaning it has now. For the complexity of human life would have been restored to individual embodiment, and the tools occasionally used for its extension and expression would not turn into instruments of monopoly, denial, external control and restraint.

REVIEW

QUEST FOR "REAL BEING"

SUMMERTIME reading usually includes a fair amount of fiction, since the vacation period calls for something "light," but the fiction we have been looking at during July and August has been, with one or two exceptions, darkly depressing. It seems clear that most of the writers of today's novels, whether popular or "serious," have a very low opinion of human beings. There is no real "reach" in the lives of the characters. The quality of most current fiction recalls the comment which appeared a generation ago in a now forgotten publication, *Twice a Year* (in the double issue for 1948), by a French critic, Claude Edmonde Magny. Magny's article was mostly about *U.S.A.* by John Dos Passos, but what he wrote has much wider application. Generalizing about Dos Passos and John O'Hara, Magny said:

These writers communicate a very special malaise; the same malaise we find in some of the magazine stories that are so useful a study for anyone interested in the sociology and psychopathology of the United States; with their characters stuffed full of clichés, real social mannikins, dressed in platitudes and satisfied to be nothing else; all the more terrifying in that they lack even the relative existence which suffering gives to any consciousness however empty it may otherwise be. The profound truth to which this whole world of American fiction bears witness is that nothing in man belongs to him; considered in himself, he does not exist; he is reduced to a bundle of physiological and social determinisms. Whether Dos Passos' heroes succeed or fail, are happy or unhappy, satisfied or dissatisfied, the cause is never in themselves: it is due neither to their force of character, their ability nor their wisdom. . . .

All their reality is outside them. Also (although purely incidentally) the portrait of these creatures without consistency constitutes the best possible indictment of the society which produced, one might say, secreted them—which gave them the fictive appearance of separate existence, the illusion of individuality—but is unable to endow them with real *being*.

Magny believed that Dos Passos was in metaphysical revolt against the society which

produced these people, and suggested that this revolt gave the novelist's books the dignity of a "mute protest" against the condition of mankind. But a protest which requires that all human beings appear to be the helpless victims of an economic system could have no more than a nihilistic effect. Not strength, but only despair, could grow from such a view.

One book we read this summer was not at all in this category. *The Rosemary Tree* by Elizabeth Goudge is a study of human growth, deep enough to overcome all charges of sentimentalism. In one place Miss Goudge's feeling about the nature of man is made explicit. The passage we have in mind is concerned with the shaping of a principal character in the story, and the author's view comes out in dialogue between the former wife of this man and the now old woman who had been her childhood nurse. The nurse is questioning the woman, Daphne, about the early years of the man to whom she had been married.

"I never noticed a thing wrong with his nerves," said Daphne.

"But you noticed his fear, though you did not recognize it," said Harriet. "When I was a nanny I always gave a scared child phosphates. I hadn't been a week with John before I started him on phosphates, so scared as he was of those other wretched boys, that Judith's children, and he never developed anything worse than catarrh and headaches. What sort of childhood did he have?"

"Michael? I really don't know," said Daphne. "He never spoke about it. Really Harriet, you can't trace every mortal thing back to childhood."

"Every mortal thing," said Harriet. "It's only the immortal thing that a man can be judged on, that bit of himself that he makes as he does the best he can with what fate handed out to him. . . ."

This is what is missing in most of the novels of today—that touch, hint, or suggestion of the "immortal thing" in a man that he makes for himself. For this is his claim to "individuality," his lifeline to eternity, and it is all that will not submit to some sort of mechanistic explanation. To be too explicit about this "immortal thin"" is not the

business of the novelist. He can leave that to the fabricators of creeds and the formulators of simplifying dogmas. Actually, saying too much about the mystery and wonder of this secret part of man often seems worse than the crude denials of materialism.

It is true enough that Miss Goudge seems to find extraordinary qualities in some men of the church, to testify to the "immortal thing," but when it appears in her books it is never in the form of a cant saying, but rather in some homely wisdom such as expressed by this old nurse—and a novelist, after all, must use the pageantry of civilization for the symbols, if not the substance, of what is to come out in the story. Novelists, save for a Tolstoy or a Dostoevski, are not the movers and shakers of world faiths.

When will there be more writers capable of dealing with this crucial matter? Wondering along these lines, we thought of Edward Bellamy's brief essay, "The Religion of Solidarity," written in 1874, when he was twenty-four (edited by Arthur Morgan and published by the King's Crown Press in 1945). Bellamy said that he wanted this essay read when he was about to die, as the faith which supported him throughout his life. Bellamy's sense of the "immortal thing" was very strong. He wrote:

Now who can doubt that the human soul has more in common with that life of all time and all things toward which it so eagerly goes out, than with that narrow, isolated, and incommensurable individuality, the thrall of time and space, to which it so reluctantly, and with such a sense of belittlement and degradation, perforce returns?

Very often must it happen to everyone when wandering abroad at night, to feel the eyes drawn upward as by a sense of majestic, overshadowing presence. . . . The soul of the gazer, drawn on and on, from star to star, still travels toward infinity. He is strange to the limitations of terrestrial things he is out of the body. He is oppressed with the grandeur of the universal frame; its weight seems momentarily to rest upon his shoulders. But with a start and a wrench as of life from soul the personality reasserts itself, and with a temporary sense of strangeness he fits himself

once again to the pigmy standards about him. The experiences which have been mentioned are but examples of the sublime, ecstatic, impersonal emotions, transcending the scope of personality or individuality, manifested by human nature, and of which the daily life of every person affords abundant instances.

What, then, is the view of human nature thus suggested? On the one hand is the personal life, an atom, a grain of sand on a boundless shore, a bubble on a foam-flecked ocean, a life bearing a proportion to the mass of past, present, and future life, so infinitesimal as to deny the imagination. Such is the importance of the person. On the other hand is a certain other life, as it were a spark of the universal life, insatiable in aspiration, greedy of infinity, asserting solidarity with all things and all existence, even while subject to the limitations of time and space and all other of the restricting conditions of the personality. On the one hand is a little group of faculties of the individual, unable even to cope with the few and simple conditions of material life, wretchedly failing, for the most part, to secure tolerable satisfaction for the physical needs of the race, and at best making slow and painful progression. On the other hand, in the soul, is a depth of divine despair over the insufficiency of this existence, already seemingly too large, and a passionate dream of immortality, the vision of a starving man whose fancy revels in full tables.

Such is the state of man, and such his dual life. . . . This dual life, personal and impersonal, as individual and as universal goes far to explain the riddle of human nature and of human destiny.

Bellamy says that "the daily life of every person" affords abundant instances of this dual reality in man, and it may in some sense be so, yet not many persons take note of such inner experiences and read their meaning as Bellamy did. For if this were happening, then more human beings would have their own, self-made religion, and there would be little further need for churches and institutional religion. Perhaps it is a laziness of the spirit, an immaturity of the heart, that creates the apparent need for ready-made beliefs and institutional religion. Perhaps the only really useful religion would be one which makes it plain that no man is truly religious until he finds instruction from within himself, through converse

with the "immortal thing" he has been able to generate by his own effort. A true teacher, then, would be the one who puts this idea into the most intelligible and luminous terms.

Meanwhile, another quotation—this time from a poet, Paul Valery, who found the pure ego behind the personality to be the true self in human beings:

Our *personality* itself, which stupidly, we take to be our most intimate and deepest possession, our sovereign good, is only a thing, and mutable and accidental in comparison with this other most naked ego; since we can think about it, calculate its interests, even lose sight of them a little, it is therefore no more than a secondary psychological divinity that lives in our looking-glass and answers to our name. . . . Is not the chief and secret achievement of the greatest mind to isolate this substantial permanence from the strife of everyday truths? Is it not essential that in spite of everything he shall arrive at self-definition by means of this pure relationship, changeless among the most diverse objects, which will give him an almost inconceivable universality, give him, in a sense, the power of a corresponding universe? It is not his cherished self that he elevates to so high a degree, since by thinking about it he has renounced it, and has substituted for it in the place of subject this *ego* which is unqualified, which has no name, no history, which is no more sensitive, no less real, than the center of gravity of a planetary system or ring, but which is the result of the whole—whatever that whole may be. . . .

One more bit of summer reading, in Follett's *Modern American Usage*—almost as valuable to readers as to writers—is the entry under "*personal*," which seems to fit, here:

The loss of the sense of individuality, which is said to be the curse of modern man, has endowed with magic the words *personal* and *personalized*. *Personal* is now attached to many words that need no such qualifier and that make of *personal* a mockery. Thus, commenting on the resignation of a close associate a President tells the press: "*I am fond of him as a person*." Aside from making one wonder to whom *person* refers, the declaration raises a puzzle as to the nature of fondness. Authors receive requests for their *personal autograph*. The bereaved are told I'd like to offer you my *personal sympathy*, or *Her death was surely a personal loss to all of us*.

Novelists report of an ordinary woman *She came in supported by her personal physician and her lawyer*—what's the matter with the lawyer that he isn't personal?

One might think that the loss of individuality—which is loss of a sense of an "immortal thing" in human beings—has led to a desperate effort to compensate by stressing so many "personal" attachments and importances. These are poor things indeed to take the place of what has gone out of life and literature.

COMMENTARY

UNNOTICED MONOPOLY

THE paper by Ivan Illich quoted on page 7, "Retooling Society," is an investigation of means to reform our economic lives. (Copies can probably be secured by writing to CIDOC, Apdo. 479, Cuernavaca, Mexico.) There is always the same underlying theme in Illich's work—the restoration of the competence and self-reliance of man. His point in this paper is that tools and production systems often grow so large and complicated that the ordinary person can no longer use them. This makes him a mere consumer—someone compelled to buy the products of the system instead of devising more practical things for himself. The more people must *buy* what they need, the more helpless or dependent they become. Illich illustrates how this works:

Just as man-made devices can first tame and then destroy nature, so systems, designed to service man, can first supplement and then subvert his natural ability to care for himself. Over-efficient production results not only in pollution but also in a general form of monopoly, which I shall call radical or general monopoly. By radical monopoly I mean the dominance of a type of product rather than that of a particular brand. I speak about radical monopoly when a production process exercises exclusive control over the realization of public needs by restricting the market to one type of commodity or one profession. Cars shape the city in their image, practically ruling out locomotion on foot or bicycle. This is radical monopoly, not the fact that more people may drive Chevrolets than Chryslers. Schools monopolize learning by redefining it as "education." People who learn outside of schools are still officially "uneducated." Doctors deprive the ailing of all access to cures for illness which were not prescribed by doctors. They define the incurable as standing in need of institutional care until the public feels incompetent to care for its members who are not fully "normal": the pregnant, neurotic, old or sick. General monopoly excludes natural competence by imposing consumption.

At the same time, people are indoctrinated in the belief that if what they have is not "new," it is

somehow second-rate. An artificial social scale is thus created, making people want—or think they want—the "latest thing." These beliefs are carefully fostered by industrialists to maintain the flow of production. So, as Illich says, "Industrial innovation modernizes poverty." The eternal demand for "progress" and something "new" cannot help but create a dissatisfied, frustrated society.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

ON MUSIC—AND OTHER THINGS

[Some months ago, a reader suggested Gertrude Price Wollner's book, *Improvisation in Music* (Doubleday, 1963) for review here. We borrowed the book from the library, but soon realized that to do it justice would require the response of a musician. Accordingly, we invited a composer friend to comment. The following brief essay on music education was the result.]

THE competition for the attention of a child's mind today is more acute than at any time in our world's short history. Television, radio, recordings, and motion pictures constantly crowd out the normal desire to learn and master arts and skills. If a child is to learn these arts today, teachers must compete for the attention and interest of the pupil. The successful teacher will have to make his subject so interesting that the child will look forward to the study and not give in to the passive participations claiming his time.

One of the creative ways a person can participate in the joys of music is through the art of improvisation. It played a large part in the musical lives of earlier composers and musicians, and it was once common practice for a performer to improvise his own cadenzas when performing a concerto. Why this practice gradually faded from the music scene could very well make a suitable subject for research. Perhaps one reason for the decline in improvisation is the mystery of how one improvises. No systematic attempt to teach it comes to mind, especially in classical music, and those instrumentalists who could improvise were thought to have a "special gift." Improvisation is literally spontaneous composition, or ad lib composition on existing themes by another composer, or spontaneous composition based on one's own ad lib themes.

Jazz has kept the art alive, although in its crudest form. Except for a few rare performers—Benny Goodman, Oscar Peterson, to name two—and presently Bill Evans, jazz improvisation

usually lacks any insight into form, counterpoint, and variation on a theme. The jazz musician commonly ignores the tune he is improvising on and is confined to the mere chord progression of the stated piece. This is using only one element of the materials available to the musician engaged in improvisation. Fortunately Goodman, Peterson, and Evans are aware of the additional elements of music. You could say then that in jazz almost anyone can improvise, but only a few do it well. A concluding fact remains therefore, that to improvise intelligently one must have a knowledge of harmony, form, counterpoint, rhythm, and also a general music background beyond mere dexterity in performing on a particular instrument.

Gertrude Wollner is one of those rare teachers with the knowledge, imagination, and enthusiasm that are vital to the teaching of music. Fortunately for those who cannot study personally with her, her book contains just about every facet of music education. *Improvisation in Music* is an organized manual of the materials and elements of music required for developing the skills of improvising music; it is also a thorough primer which looks behind the veil, showing what music is really about and how it is constructed. The book can easily be used in providing the general music education so necessary to the well-rounded musician.

Step by step, chapter by chapter, Gertrude Wollner leads the student through the mysteries of rhythm, melody, counterpoint, harmony, and form in a manner that is stimulating to the imagination and inspiring to anyone with a love for and interest in music.

This book should be thoroughly studied by anyone undertaking the instruction of music. By balancing the music instruction involving laborious exercises that give dexterity with the elements of creative musicianship, the teacher helps the pupil to experience the satisfaction and thrill of being part of music itself, giving full vent to the urge to create something uniquely his own. With this participation by the pupil, music may come alive

for him as he absorbs knowledge of harmony, counterpoint, rhythm, and form. A sharp decline in musical "drop-outs" might be assured by the use of *Improvisation in Music*.

And for the adult who plays piano but was never taught what is behind the chords and scales he labored over, here is an opportunity to catch up on what he has missed.

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Looking through a book that will have attention in a later issue in Review, we found additional evidence to support the idea that educational ideals don't really change a great deal, although each generation may hail them as great discoveries. The book is Michael Wreszin's *The Superfluous Anarchist* (Brown University Press, 1972, \$8.50), an excellent study of the life and work of Albert Jay Nock. In his later years, Nock became an acidulous critic of very nearly everything but the traditional classic education—which he had himself enjoyed—but in the years before America entered the first world war he was an ardent advocate of progressive education. It is commonly believed, Mr. Wreszin points out, that Randolph Bourne was mainly responsible for calling public attention to the educational theories of John Dewey, through a series of "rhapsodic" articles in the *New Republic* in 1915. But as a staff member of the *American Magazine* Nock wrote extensively in 1914 about William Wirt's application of Dewey's ideas in Gary, Indiana, and in the *American* he reached a much larger audience. Mr. Wreszin says:

Nock endorsed Dewey's principle of learning by doing, which he believed was a master stroke of common sense: "We ourselves always learn things better by seeing or doing them than by reading about them." On the other hand Wirt's school was not merely a "vocational" school. He had avoided the pitfalls of offering only "instrumental knowledge." . . . Wirt and his colleagues skillfully subjected the students to "the most ingenious and insidious temptations" to become cultured.

It was their method that Nock found so attractive and effective. And, as he understood it, it

did not seem remote from his own early training. Wirt understood "that human beings (including children) left wholly free to act and surrounded by free opportunity, will naturally do the right thing as far as they know how." Nock was delighted with the "utter absence of discipline," which was, he wrote supremely practical "because, being left wholly free in the midst of practically unlimited opportunity, it was (the children's) natural instinct to be good, kindly, and industrious." Like Bourne and Dewey, he believed in the natural development of a child's self-expression. If a child was left free and unfettered he would blossom into a civilized creature with genuine values. The progress of humanity depended upon such freedom.

Consistent with Nock's own experience was the fact that the Gary schools did "not try to teach anything." They merely offered endless opportunities and imaginative inducements for children to teach themselves.

Nock recognized in the Gary experiment an application of the principles of Leo Tolstoy and the ideas of the anarchist educator, Francisco Ferrer. Apparently, what Wirt was able to accomplish overcame Nock's initial skepticism. But Wreszin adds:

However, as early as 1914, before the avalanche of criticism began, Nock was aware of the potential perversion of progressive educational theory and practice, which ultimately turned many public school systems into mindless training grounds for "life adjustment" and factories for producing docile and acquiescing citizens. When he went out to Gary he was full of suspicion and distrust. He had expected to find a "school . . . busily turning out 'useful citizens' in the cant sense, but doing very little for the diffusion of sweetness and light." He conceded that he had been "wholly wrong and prejudiced. "

If educational ideals don't really change much, neither do the qualities of promising students. After World War I, Walter Gropius, then a young German architect, conceived the idea of merging the Weimar Art Academy, which he had been asked to direct, with the Weimar Arts and Crafts School, in order to create a "consulting art center for industry and the trades." Helped by a patron, the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar, he accomplished this unlikely union and in 1919

launched the school of design later to become famous as the Bauhaus. Gropius assembled an illustrious faculty which eventually included Lyonel Feininger, Paul Klee, Wassily Kandinsky, and Lazlo Moholy-Nagy. The students came from all over Germany and from Austria. Two-thirds were men, most of them poor, as all Germany was poor and beaten down after the defeat in war. Gropius was able to cancel tuition fees and to help the students to make saleable products in the Bauhaus workshops. This radical conception of a school—bringing art to industry—attracted daring and imaginative students. One who attended from the beginning wrote:

When I saw the first Bauhaus proclamation, ornamented with Feininger's woodcut, I made inquiries as to what the Bauhaus really was. I was told that "during the entrance examinations every applicant was locked up in a dark room. Thunder and lightning are let loose upon him to get him into a state of agitation. His being admitted depends on how well he describes his reactions." This report, although it exaggerated the actual facts, fired my enthusiasm. My economic future was far from assured, but I decided to join the Bauhaus at once. It was during the post-war years, and to this day I wonder what most Bauhaus members lived on. But the happiness and fullness of those years made us forget our poverty. Bauhaus members came from all social classes. They made a vivid appearance, some still in uniform, some barefoot or in sandals, some with the long beards of artists or ascetics. Some came from the youth movements.

A year after its beginning, the Bauhaus had a little over two hundred students. The school moved to Dessau in 1925, later to Berlin, and was finally closed in 1933 by Mies van der Rohe, under pressure by the Nazis.

FRONTIERS Architecture Defined

Two themes are developed by Ian McHarg in a recent paper, "Architecture in an Ecological View of the World," which appears in No. 11 of the *Structurist*, an annual magazine published by Eli Bornstein at the University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon, Canada. Ian McHarg teaches landscape architecture and regional planning at the University of Pennsylvania and is author of the recently published *Design with Nature*. This paper seems of particular importance because of the clarity of the writer's explanations of both architecture and the practice of ecology.

Briefly, concerning architecture, he says:

Architecture should not be called architecture, it should be called fitting.

This verb "to fit" is of profound importance. Charles Darwin said that the surviving organism is fit for the environment. On the other hand, Lawrence Henderson has said that the actual world, with all the variability of environments, constitutes the fittest possible abode for all life that has existed does or will exist.

You can think of yourself, your cells, your tissues, your organs, your institutions and consider all available environments for them. Among the multiplicity of environments there are most fit environments. There is a requirement not only to find the most fit environment but also to adapt that environment and/or yourself in order to accomplish fitting. The fit survive, according to Darwin.

So we are engaged inextricably in the process of finding fit environments and adapting them and ourselves. We are in this business of adaptation for survival. That is the real definition of architecture.

Where you find that most fit environment and adapt it and yourself, to accomplish a fitting, you accomplish a *creative* fitting in thermodynamic terms. This is real creativity in which every organism and every ecosystem is intensely involved throughout all life.

You are engaged in a creative process, which has nothing to do with long hair, whether you wear sandals, whether you wash or don't wash. This is the implacable test which engages all creatures in all time

and must engage all men in all time in order to insure survival. When done, it is creative, and the measure of its creativity is survival of the process.

Mr. McHarg makes a strong case, but he ought, we think, to give some thought to the objections raised by Joseph Wood Krutch to exclusive emphasis on "survival" in relation to the creative development of living things. When Krutch sat down to write his book, *The Great Chain of Life*, he looked out of his Arizona window, musing and gathering his initial thoughts, and just then a cardinal filled the air with song. What, Krutch asked himself, had the beauty of the bird's voice to do with "survival"? The very joy of life would have to be included, he thought, as an essential part of the story of living things.

Mr. McHarg is being tough-minded, and his toughness is plainly on the side of the angels, but surely architecture must have its spontaneous flowerings, its strains of both premeditated and unpremeditated art! One can understand, however, how this idea got left out of an article devoted mainly to what architectural designers must now do if they are to make a new start in relation to the uses of the environment. Architects do not have *carte blanche*:

There is no capriciousness in nature. The architect who believes that the white paper represents a site upon which he is going to invest his professional skill is mad. Written upon that white paper, whether he sees it or not, are 4½ to 6 billion years of physical evolution, 2½ billion years of biological evolution, a million years of human evolution, and perhaps some thousand years of cultural evolution. All are written on that land in biophysical and cultural processes having intrinsic form with implications for the form he must give.

How does one discover those implications? By what Mr. McHarg calls ecological planning, which amounts to inventorying the environment in order to understand the way the world works. He gives these instructions:

First you have to assemble those people who are competent. This is an outrageous novelty which architects don't ever consider. The great problem with ecological planning is that you are not allowed

to speak in the absence of evidence. We'll start at the beginning because, first and most important, is bedrock geology. That gives us 500 million years of evidence. We employ the man who knows about bedrock geology, and he describes the geological history and the geomorphology of the region.

Then we hire the biometeorologist who understands climate. Then we ask the two to get together because the interaction of climate and bedrock geology over the past million years is reflected in surficial geology. If you understand surficial geology, you are then in the process of understanding hydrology. That enables you to understand why rivers are and where they are; whether there is underground water or not.

Once you understand about surface and groundwater hydrology, you are able to understand about soils because they are only a byproduct of a process which can be explained in terms of the interaction of climate, bedrock, surficial geology, physiography and hydrology. If you understand about soils, then you understand about plants because plants are variable with respect to environments, which variability is comprehensible in terms of climate, geomorphology, physiography, hydrology and soils. If you understand about plants, you understand about animals because all animals are plant related, which leads you to understand about that special animal called man.

There is more—much more, of course—to be understood about man, but eventually you know enough to see the region as an interesting biophysical process, and "then you have an ecological model," and are ready to think about land use. What is the measure of good land use? Mr. McHarg has an answer to this question:

Wherever you find health—physical, social, mental in human societies, or physiological in nonhuman ecosystems—you have found absolute, explicit, irrefutable evidence of creative fitting. Any process which has found the fittest environment which has been able to adapt that environment and itself to accomplish a creative fitting, is healthy.