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UNQUIET DESPERATION

LITERACY, as we know, is one of the boons conferred upon the modern world by the invention of printing. It would be difficult to imagine any of the achievements of civilization without the modern media of communication and the education which has made world-wide literacy possible.

But literacy, for all its obvious contributions, has also become the instrument of a kind of paralysis—through being able to read we are constantly exposed to an endless stream of diagnosis, made to admit so many "problems" that the mind totters in any attempt to consider them all.

This is not, of course, only a phenomenon of literate intellectuality. The problems exist. And because they exist and make themselves felt, it is natural for men to make definitions of them, and to try to locate solutions. This is the present human condition, but it is a condition which has been vastly increased by endless analysis and competing theories of causation relating to the problems, along with proposed solutions, and arguments about *them.* The situation is all too familiar.

How different the world must have seemed at, say, the turn of the century! Sixty years ago the identification and formulation of problems seemed the best possible evidence of the progressive character of Western civilization. The assumptions of an expansive humanitarianism were hardly questioned at all, and most men shared in the conceit of their competence to move from solution to solution—a consensus of confidence which can now be likened to universal pessimism of the present. Who, in the decade of hope and glowing social enthusiasm before the first world war, could have coined an expression like "failure of nerve"?

It is difficult to pinpoint fundamental changes in human attitude—when did the Renaissance *really* begin?—but the changes do take place, and by the nineteen-forties it was becoming clear that the mood of serious inquiry had passed from the definition of particular problems and proposals of solution to an agonized wondering about the general human situation. Science and Liberal Progressivism could no longer claim the allegiance of the best minds. But since, in the West, the reign of Reason and the promise of Scientific Rationalization had been so absolute, the decline and fall of both theology and speculative philosophy so decisive, where were men of serious mind and ethical determination to turn? They could only turn inward, and consult what was becoming for many men a growing sense of moral proportion that led to views unyieldingly opposed to what now seemed the manias of progressive problem-solving.

The roots of this change are various, and can be traced to the thought of men as dissimilar as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and beyond them to ancient philosophers like Buddha and Lao-tze. The ultimate reference, for man, once again became individual responsibility, not other peoples'—whether scientific or political—theories of the world and resulting programs for problem-solving. As early as 1930 Ortega y Gasset had sensed the disillusionments of European man with the utopian promise of science, and ten years later, with the shadow of the Nazi invasion hanging over France, Simone Weil was publishing her reflections on the moral law of retribution in her essay, *The Iliad, or The Poem of Force.* She wrote:

> This retribution . . . was the main subject of Greek thought. It is the soul of the epic. Under the name of Nemesis it functions as the mainspring of Aeschylus' tragedies. To the Pythagoreans, to Socrates and Plato, it was the jumping-off point of

> speculation upon the nature of man and the universe. Wherever Hellenism has penetrated, we find the idea of it familiar. In Oriental countries, which are steeped in Buddhism, it is perhaps this Greek idea that has lived on under the name Kharma. The Occident, however, has lost it, and no longer even has a word to express it in any of its languages: conceptions of limit, measure, equilibrium, which ought to determine the conduct of life are, in the West, restricted to a servile function in the vocabulary of technics. We are only geometricians of matter; the Greeks were, first of all, geometricians in their apprenticeship to virtue.

Now what we have here, unequivocally, is a declaration that man's true universe is under the rule of moral law, and that the physical universe, to which the "vocabulary of technics" applies, has only a secondary or derived reality. This is the view which, in various guises, has been seeping into modern thought since the 1940's. This is the fierce assertion of Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, although he makes it simply human obligation rather than a principle of the natural moral order. And in Camus, all meaning grows out of individual integrity and unbending determination to remain human, regardless of the anti-human cosmic odds. In the United States, this view found clear expression in the essays published in *Politics* during the war by Dwight Macdonald, the most important of which were later reprinted in his book, *The Root Is Man.* Here, echoing Simone Weil, he says:

> The moderation which the Greeks, as clear-sighted and truly scientifically minded a race as this earth has ever seen, showed in their attitude toward scientific knowledge should become our guide again. Despite their clear-sightedness (really because of it), the Greeks were surpassed by the intellectually inferior Romans in such "practical" matters as the building of sewers and the articulation of legal systems, much as the ancient Chinese, another scientifically-minded and technologically backward people, discovered printing and gunpowder long before the West did, but had the good sense to use them only for printing love poems and shooting off firecrackers. "Practical" is put in quotes because to the Greeks it seemed much more practical to discuss the nature of the good life than to build better sewers. To the Romans and to our age, the opposite is the case—the British Marxist, John Strachey, is said to have once defined communism as "a movement for better plumbing." The Greeks were wise enough to treat scientific knowledge as a means, not an end; they never developed a concept of Progress. This wisdom may have been due to their flair for the *human* scale; better than any other people we know of, they were able to create an art and a politics scaled to human size. They could do this because they never forgot the tragic limitations of human existence, the Nemesis which turns victory into defeat overnight, the impossibility of perfect knowledge about anything.

In *The Root Is Man,* Macdonald writes in investigation of the grounds of a new political philosophy. He is concerned with that temperateness of mind which results from knowing the limits of all manipulative, utilitarian action. He speaks of the attitude which relocates the realities of the human situation in the individual, showing its consequences in immunity to compulsive activism:

> Contrast, for example, the *moderation* of Socrates, who constantly proclaimed his ignorance, with the pretensions of a nineteenth-century system-builder like Marx. The Greeks would have seen in Marx's assumption that existence can be reduced to scientifically knowable terms and the bold and confident all-embracing system he evolved on the basis of this assumption—they would have set this down to "hubris," the pride that goeth before a fall. And they would have been right, as we are now painfully discovering. Nor is it just Marx; . . . this scientific "hubris" was dominant in the whole culture of that Age of Progress. But it just won't do for us. We must learn to live with contradictions, to have faith in scepticism, to advance toward the solution of a problem by admitting as a possibility something which the scientist can never admit: namely, that it may be insoluble. The religious and scientific views of the world are both *extreme* views, advancing total, complete solutions. We should reject both (as the Greeks, by the way, did; they were a notably irreligious people putting their faith neither in the Kingdom of Heaven nor the Cloaca Maxima). Kierkegaard advises us to "keep the wound of the negative open." So it is better to admit ignorance and leave questions open rather than to close them up with some all-answering system which stimulates infection beneath the surface.

It is this new kind of Humanism, a humanism with a self-reference instead of a "liberal" reference, which contributes the only available balance-principle in relation to the omnipresent "problems" of the age. This spirit becomes manifest in the tensions felt by many people—the tension stretched between their growing distrust of all conventional or "progressive" solutions and the yearning to *respond* to the crying human need behind the "problems" with which the human conscience is bludgeoned from hour to hour and day to day. The difficulty in choosing which problems to face up to lies, one might say, in the incommensurable factor which now seems hidden in all problems.

There is always an incommensurable factor in human life. In the "optimistic" days before World War I, it had its play in the upward and onward confidence men felt in their ability to cope—to do whatever needed to be done. The problems were finite, and the incommensurable and omnicompetent human spirit would define them and solve them and go on to other things.

But now the incommensurable factor has moved—it is out there, in the disorders of the world, in the apparently infinite regress of yesterday's practical solutions, in the multiplying dilemmas which are produced by any and all finite steps of correction. The system of technological rationalization—with its terrible extension in politics of the methods of modern war—begins to seem as though it embodied a secular version of the Fall. How can men relate the mandates of their moral emotions to this system without having their good intentions chewed up by its compromises and wasted by its endless misfires?

You could say that the Progressive, Scientific-Method system of attacking problems has a monopoly on all the practical techniques of action, but has lost touch with compassion, has forgotten the meaning of individual dignity, and has externalized every conception of growth and creativity. Only our nascent Humanism has moral ardor, shows sharpened ethical perception, while suffering a terrible impoverishment in the matter of means. For this and other reasons, the reborn spirit of man would like to go back to beginnings, to make all things new again, but how is this possible without deserting the world?

People are of course learning to resolve this contradiction in their individual lives. But because the poles of contradiction are so dominant, there tends to be no satisfactory middle ground on which the path of Socratic "moderation" can be conscientiously pursued. In a world where fanaticism has become the rule—in order to preserve old and familiar ways of doing things—genuine moderation is transformed into an "extreme." The attempt of youth to practice civilized doubt, to respond to conscience, to think out the meaning of individual responsibility, becomes against the background of desperately pressed conventional solutions the very model of "extreme" behavior.

Such a situation cannot help but put continuous pressure on the moral sense of human beings. Young men who, from a variety of causes, some known, some obscure, have been made sensitive to the immorality of war, find it difficult to accept any rational justification of military action. What they hear, instead, is Sartre's unforgettable soliloquy:

> If I am mobilized in a war, this war is my war, it is in my image and I deserve it. . . . For lack of getting out of it, I have *chosen* it. This can be due to inertia, to cowardice in the face of public opinion, or because I prefer certain other values to the value of refusal to join in the war (the good opinion of my relatives, the honor of my family, *etc.).* Any way you look at it, it is a matter of a choice. This choice will be repeated later on again and again without a break until the end of the war. Therefore we must agree with the statement by J. Romains, "In war there are no innocent victims." If therefore I have preferred war to death or dishonor, everything takes place as if I bore the entire responsibility for this war.

This is the primary logic of aroused moral intelligence. It cannot be disputed by the derived logic of humanitarian aims held up by the existing system of technology and politics. This latter logic is flawed by too many failures, dishonored by too many compromises, fragmented by too many discontinuities between degrading means and unachieved ends. It is a logic now seen to be wrong in both theory and effect.

In short, the transformation in attitude we have been speaking of—a transformation which began in the 1940'S and is now in full swing—is revealing not only a new and humanized view of "reality," but *a new kind of man.*

As always, the new man is appearing—being forged—in desperate circumstances. Arjuna became Krishna on a battlefield. Gethsemane was indispensable to the man who became Christ. And the new Humanism was born in death camps and undergrounds. It is inevitable that the rounded, fully expressed presence of this new man is hard to know or to describe. It seems necessary to declare his existence before he can be recognized as a fact.

We have compared this new man with the emergence of the classical religious hero, and the analogy may have further uses. There is a difference, however; in our time his appearance is a *social* phenomenon. That is, the present scene of trial is one of the relationship of man to man, not of man to unseen spiritual reality—although it might be said that the conjunction sought is of the spiritual reality in both, or in all men. This is a kind of secularization of the spiritual, but not a materialization. (It may be what the rebel theologians following Bonhoeffer are groping for, in their demand for engagement *in the world*, although they still seem to identify religion with its institutional apparatus and, with some few exceptions, are not taking the simple step that Emerson took—leaving the church.)

Still confronting us all is the sea of "problems" and the endless catalog of proposed solutions; and there is still the urgency of needing to *do* something, to make some answer to all these claims. But as we said, people are finding individual forms of action, although they are difficult to write about with any confidence or clarity. The quest for "community" is a course followed by some. The opportunities for "action" provided by the New Left are embraced by many of the young. The approach described by Henry Anderson in "The War on Alienation" (MANAS, Feb. 22) illustrated various kinds of Humanistic enterprise. Macdonald, in *The Root Is Man,* offered a general suggestion:

> We must begin way at the bottom again, with small groups of individuals in various countries, grouped around certain principles and feelings they have in common. These should probably not be physically isolated communities as was the case in the nineteenth century since this shuts one off from the common experience of one's fellow men. They should probably consist of individuals—*families*, rather—who live and make their living in the everyday world but who come together often enough and intimately enough to form a *psychological* (as against a geographical) community. The purpose of such groups would be twofold. Within itself, the group would exist so that its members could come to know each other as fully as possible as human beings (the difficulty of such knowledge of others in modern society is a chief source of evil), to exchange ideas and discuss as fully as possible what is "on their minds" (not only the atomic bomb but also the perils of child-rearing), and in general to learn the difficult art of living with other people. The group's purpose toward the outside world would be to take certain actions together (as, against Jim Crow in this country, or to further pacifism), to support individuals whether members of the group or not who stand up for the common ideals—or, if you prefer, make propaganda—by word and by deed, in the varied everyday contacts of the group members with their fellow men. . . .

One difficulty in all such pursuits is the lack or mere infancy of a commonly understood language which preserves in its very grammar the incommensurable factor of *human* reality for both thought and action. We have, however, much excellent criticism showing how this factor gets lost or dropped out of the problem/solution language. Yet how do you put it back in? A special quality of human awareness seems essential to keeping that quality in thought. We recognize its presence when it exists, but how to keep it alive in what we say and do is something of a mystery. It is always in Thoreau, in Emerson, and in some of the poets. But it seems to sour or disappear when we try to "inject" it as an act of the utilitarian will.

We don't know very many of the rules of being human, and, as Edward Dreyfuss admitted, "We can teach theory but not humanness." What Archibald MacLeish said about a poem has some application here: "The test of a poem is not its power to create emotion but to withstand emotion." In short, being human has its own tough-mindedness; it is never awash with undiscriminating-emotion; it rejects easy technical presence to a "wholeness" which blots out awareness of the suffering in the world.

At this point, probably the only thing we can say with certitude is that humanness is understood only by being lived out in experience, and that two-dimensional accounts of its rules—the kind of accounts which work very well in intellectual theory and for technology—are always misleading. From this it follows that discussions of this problem which fail to give the reader a strong sense that the most important thing is somehow "intangible," are bad discussions which are likely to lead to compromise, illusion, and failure.

But just as there are lives—the lives of many men—which in various ways, some of them dramatically thrilling, others soberly consistent, are endowing humanness with deeper meaning, so we may look to a growing literature in which all these values come more and more alive.

REVIEW
A MATTER OF SOVEREIGNTY

IN the Introduction to his *History of Philosophy* (just published by Dover, $2.75), Julián Marias proposes that philosophy proper began when ancient Greek thinkers asked the question, "What is this?"

The question implies that the thing inquired about is something in itself, something that can be defined. This assumption Marías identifies as the *theoretic,* as distinguished from the *mythic,* approach. He explains:

> To mythic man, things are propitious or harmful *powers* which he lives with and which he uses or shuns. This is the pre-Hellenic attitude and one which the people to whom the brilliant Greek discovery has not penetrated continue to share. Theorizing consciousness, on the other hand, sees *things* where previously it saw only *powers.* This constitutes the great discovery of *things.* . . . In order to realize its significance, we must make use of forms of thought which, while differing from the modern Western attitude, retain a remote analogy with the mythic attitude: for example, that of the infantile consciousness, the attitude of the child who finds himself in a world full of hostile or benign powers or persons, but not strictly speaking, of *things.* When man begins to theorize, instead of being *among* the things, he is *opposite* them, *alienated* from them, and thus they acquire a meaning of their own which previously they did not have. They seem to exist for themselves, apart from man, and to have a predetermined consistence: that is, they possess a number of *properties,* something of their own, something that belongs to them alone.

On this "discovery," we might say, is founded the entire validity of the body of knowledge called "science," and, subsequently, the use of science polemically, as a means of opposing the claims of authority based on religious myths. The idea of obtaining through the study of nature accurate and precise definitions of "things," and then, armed with this knowledge, of establishing ideal conditions and institutions for human benefit, is the foundation of scientific utopianism, which still pervades much of modern thought.

But today, scientific utopianism is challenged on many counts, not the least of which are the practical failures of science to control the anti-human consequences of its own progress. More deeply, however, it is challenged by the rising self-consciousness of the creative spirit in human beings, which recognizes in itself an aspect of the *mythic* approach. The originator, the maker of new things, the synthesizer and creator realizes that he deals with "things" not scientifically but as representative of "powers" which serve his purposes. He is interested in things, not as things-in-themselves, but as means to wider meanings. And if he is philosophically reflective, he will declare that the truths of science are true only relatively. These truths alter according to their relevance to creative acts. Objective definition gives no isolated, independent finality. Human purposes are the measure, not some external scheme of "reality" to which man is alien, and which can only oppress him when allowed controlling authority. The doctrine of "objective" scientific truth had passing utility as a bludgeon against the pseudo-scientific claims of organized religion, but it is now recognized that *any* authority external to human intelligence eventually destroys the ground of human freedom.

So, today, the idea of human identity is becoming a free-floating, self-validating conception. We recognize in ourselves both the mythic and the theoretic approach and see the need to exercise both in balance. What is called the subject/object dichotomy is seen, from the mythic point of view, as "original sin," and from the theoretic point of view as the origin of self-consciousness and all the human capacities which result from being able to think of ourselves as separate from the world.

Modern psychology is rapidly becoming a study of the tensions in human life which grow out of naïve allegiance to either one or the other of these two points of view. Mental health is increasingly defined as finding balance between them. The substitution of a man-made environment—the creation of science for the world of nature seems to require that we now achieve this balance consciously. It is for this reason that psychology inescapably becomes philosophical since the value-aspect of every human decision is somehow affected by whether and how the decision is made from a mythic or a theoretic stance.

Our culture is a vast palimpsest of traditions embodying the themes of myth and theory. The man who would set himself free from the past, and then *use* the past instead of remaining its creature, needs to identify these themes in order to choose between them.

A good illustration of the pervasiveness of these themes is found in the Introductory essays of the recently published *Modern American Usage* by Wilson Follett (Hill and Wang, 1966, $7.50), which was completed by Jacques Barzun (with the help of others) after the author's death in 1963. These essays, no doubt by Mr. Barzun, are a justification and a defense of Mr. Follett's proposal—which resulted in this book—"It is time we had an American book of usage grounded in the philosophy that the best in language—which is often the simplest—is not too good to be aspired to." You could say that for Mr. Follett—and Mr. Barzon—words are the "powers" of the writer. He uses them for his creative purposes; and the same is true of the forms of speech. These purposes are exacting; the writer is after excellence in communication; and since what is created is never the exact copy of any model, but, despite certain resemblances, is uniquely itself, a manual intended to assist in the use of words and language as "powers" becomes less certain as it rises to whatever heights it can achieve. A book on the practice of an art must itself be something of a work of art, or it is the enemy of the artist.

Mr. Barzon is contending for value-judgments about the use of English against the linguists and the professional compilers of dictionaries who want their scientific findings about words and usage to stand against any meddling aspiration to excellence on the part of writers. Those who want to use words as "powers" are told to be content with the unweeded garden of language the way it is—*Nature* is the authority and cannot be contradicted. This is "reality" as found out by the theoretic approach of linguistic scientists who know how to study language as made up of "things" and whose conclusions have been properly confirmed by other practitioners of the science.

> They [Mr. Barzun writes] are the professional linguists, who deny that there is such a thing as correctness. The language, they say, is what anybody and everybody speaks. Hence there must be no interference with what they regard as a product of nature; they denounce all attempts at guiding choice. . . . Within the profession of linguist there are of course warring factions, but on this conception of language as a natural growth with which it is criminal to tamper they are at one. In their arguments one finds appeals to democratic feelings of social equality (all words and forms are equally good) and individual freedom (a man may do what he likes with his own speech) . These assumptions further suggest that the desire for correctness, the very idea of better or worse in speech, is a hangover from aristocratic and oppressive times. To the linguists change is the only ruler to be obeyed. They equate it with life and accuse their critics of being clock-reversers, enemies of freedom, menaces to "life."

Mr. Barzun produces a full-dress argument to controvert these claims; so far as we are concerned, there is no contest: he is simply right. And the book itself has the rare virtue of helping its reader to exchange his poor uncertainties for far better ones about the use of English. *Modern American Usage* is both embarrassing and reassuring to the practicing writer, which is all that can be expected of such a volume. We recommend it highly.

What remains perturbing, however, is the fact that the theoretic thinkers who imagine themselves to be practicing unassailable "science" have to the extent indicated by Mr. Barzun carved up the world of learning and culture into private untouchable domains. No wonder the language of the academy is afflicted with undecipherable jargon; and why else should it be that the half-educated mouth fashionable phrases borrowed from the learned professions much as advertisers used to put white coats on their pictured authorities to establish the claims made as "scientific."

Obviously, we have a long way to go before we reach the kind of cultural balance needed for symmetrical exercise of our human powers. The problem is to indulge no fact-defying myth, to practice no myth-ignoring science, despite the fact that there is no way under heaven in which this balance can be vulgarly defined or institutionally determined. It is indeed a brave new world that we must seek—a world without confidence-men who dare to tell us that this balance has at last been worked out by experts. An added difficulty comes from the fact that every such system of balance that men devise and then recommend to others—so that they won't be tortured by having to think for themselves—has in it a *symbolic* presence of the balance that must be achieved by individuals. The good systems—and we can hardly do without them—also have frequent red alerts, explicit warnings that the balances they describe are indeed only symbolic, and must not be mistaken for the truly inward goal, but we have not as yet the habit of noticing warnings and alerts, and this is how, after a generation or two, the good systems are made into bad.

And so it is that a talented and persuasive champion of the mythic approach often sounds to us as though, *at last,* a final dissolver of mechanistic dichotomies has come among us, who will make all things good again; or that, when a brilliant theoretician launches a new vocabulary of analysis of "things as they are," we see in him a longed-for scientific savior.

But these are only the latest arrivals in the arena of contention for the sovereignty of man. They have their day, generating hopes by redressing balances, gaining attention through novelty, and then they go down, sunk by their own partisan allegiances. The mystery of the relationship between *powers* and *things* remains.

COMMENTARY
DO-IT-YOURSELF HOUSING

IN *Peace News* for Oct. 9, 1964, Theodore Roszak offered a practical and humanly constructive proposal for urban redevelopment. Instead of razing slum areas and putting up hive-like, characterless housing, he said, why not teach the people who live in the slums to restore their own homes, many of which are basically good structures which are rundown but not beyond repair? After presenting the plan in some detail, Mr. Roszak concluded mournfully, "It is too much to expect that the ideas presented here will be adopted by housing authorities. . . . There are too many vested interests and too much bureaucratic inertia behind the going system."

It is pleasant to be able to report that very similar ideas are being put into practice as a result of the efforts of a religious group. According to the *Christian Science Monitor* for April 20:

> Do-it-yourself slum renovation is taking many forms in many cities.
>
> In Philadelphia a group of clergymen has developed a unique approach to self-improvement by slum dwellers.
>
> The Interfaith Interracial Council of the clergy is a nonprofit organization representing 4oo churches. It has received two federal grants to support its program.
>
> The council buys dilapidated buildings at minimal cost, hires and trains local unemployed poor to rehabilitate the dwellings. Then the ministerial group arranges financing and mortgages and sells the refurbished houses to the poor.
>
> The council also offers counseling in home ownership and management to the new property owners.
>
> A $93,000 grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development is being used as a revolving fund to buy a few houses at a time, renew and resell them. The total program is aiming for 200 rebuilt homes.
>
> The Interfaith Council asserts the idea will work in any city where there are large numbers of rundown single houses available at low cost.
>
> In Philadelphia such houses can be bought for from $200 up.

Moral? Well, the obvious moral is that even "far-out" proposals ought to be written up and published. Publishing them puts them "in the air," and while Mr. Roszak's *Peace News* article may not have been seen by the Philadelphia clergymen, they got the idea from somewhere.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WE REALLY BELIEVE IT

HOW they do it remains a mystery, yet it is happening all the time. Suddenly, youngsters who were children only two or three years ago begin speaking a language which reflects perspectives that we suppose to belong only to a solid critical maturity. It isn't imitation—it's too original to be that. And it's too widespread a development to be disposed of as a little precocity here and there. We'll call it a flooding response of perception to deep-felt need, and leave it essentially unexplained.

We print below a portion of an essay by Mark DeVries, who at the time of writing was hardly more than half way through his teens. This material, titled "There Will Be Wars and Rumors of Wars," appeared in the 1966 *Literary Review* of Pacific Southwest Liberal Religious Youth, a journal which comes out once a year.

* * *

Contemporary history writes itself in nouns: Hitler, Stalin, non-aggression pact, Pearl Harbor, Dachau, Hiroshima, Moscow, Yalta, Hungary, Suez. . . . names of disaster, of guilt, betrayal, spiritual exhaustion. And superimposed on the experience these words evoke is a formula whose significance may never be washed away: $E=mc^2$, the key to the atom.

Man, having found the means to release the natural force imprisoned in matter and thereby to obliterate himself, his heirs and the sum total of his racial inheritance, has created the most pervasive fact in his history: one must learn to breathe, eat, make love in its presence; it is a part of every living consciousness.

On the surface of life it seldom obtrudes: the cop blows his whistle, the street crowds move, business goes on from nine to five in a hundred thousand offices. But the facade of this seeming normalcy shows signs of weathering; each day the mortar crumbles a little more. Man, behind the masks with which he plays his daily roles, cannot be totally blind to continuing collapse; the consequence is an increasing self-division.

He glimpses the portents of chaos everywhere and correspondingly grows aware of his own nakedness and impotence—his nothingness. His fate—survival or extinction—bears less relation to his personal moral bookkeeping than to the scarcely audible assents and dissents of power figures almost too fear-stricken to make decisions. He senses that time is shrinking into itself, the past losing its relevance and the future receding further and further from his control. Only the present seems to hold the possibility of his meaningful participation, for he can still possess the moment.

By choosing to live only in the present, however, he cuts himself off from those values which have propped up his vision of himself as the hero of history. The sense that he is part of an unfolding design (the religionist's belief in increasing good, the positivist's faith in progress) is no longer accessible to him. Even those institutions which have maintained their strength because they have enabled man to achieve desired ends are put to severe tests; for long-term goals have lost their relevance!

Marriage, made and perpetuated in order to provide for family continuity, becomes form without substance in an age where tomorrow has a horizon darkened by a mushroom cloud. Work, with its myriad rewards in status and well-being, becomes time and effort spent in thrall. For the individual who steps off the trolley in the conviction that there is really no place to go, all things, persons, and beliefs which serve as *means* tend to lose their validity. All of life becomes an accumulation of ends, with all goals immediate.

Should a man live a slave to illusions he knows to be untrue? Or should he tear down the false front that masks itself as his dignity and thereby enter into an existence wherein, through the ever-present reality of sudden and violent death, he can find the potential for freedom and authentic identity? This is how the question poses itself to young people on both sides of the Atlantic.

* * *

This discussion grows out of a sensibility that is inescapably aware of the dark realities in the psychological present. The writer is saying, *Surely, you don't expect me to "carry on" undertakings of this sort, which should have sickened the very souls of all you older people!*

There is more to ponder, here, than just another generation of radical youth. It is evidence of a stopping-point, and a starting-point, in history. Perhaps the young feel an unspoken unbelief in the present on the part of their parents, who have not known what to do about it, and have feared to object. Perhaps the source lies deeper, in a kind of unconscious revulsion on the part of us all which the young, being susceptible to such feelings, are expressing with an astonishing clarity. *They* can see no reason for keeping still about so ugly an inheritance.

It is sometimes pointed out that the present generation of American youth were born to "affluence" and can afford the luxury of radical protest. Elsewhere, it is argued, they would be too busy getting enough to eat. But if this is the case, who has a better right to a voice on what should now be done with the overflowing resources of the country? To say that a man, because he is well fed, is free to think, is not to reduce the significance of his thinking. There is a sense in which radical American youth are saying that if the material part of the American Dream has come true, now is the time to prevent the rest of the Dream from going completely sour. A paragraph from Calvin Trillin's letter to the *New Yorker* (reprinted in *Revolution at Berkeley,* Dell) conveys the mood:

> Although Savio is considered the most moralistic of the New Radicals, all of them explain their conclusion that America is "sick" or "evil" at least partly in moral terms—emphasizing that American society is not what it claims to be, that it engages in sham and hypocrisy, that those in control are not concerned with "telling it like it is" (a phrase borrowed from SNCC workers in Mississippi). . . . Suzanne Goldberg a graduate student in philosophy from New York, who is a member of the FSM Steering Committee, has explained this moral tone by saying, "It's really a strange kind of naïveté. What we learned in grammar school about democracy and freedom nobody takes seriously, but we do. We really believe it. It's impossible to grapple with the structure of the whole world, but you try to do something about the immediate things you see that bother you and are within your reach."

And if, at times, one wonders why matters grew so furious at Berkeley, there is this to consider, from another part of the same book: "So little understood was the importance of the Berkeley upheaval that *The New York Times'* two-man San Francisco bureau filed nothing for the first two months that the revolution was taking place at the University of California."

FRONTIERS

A Socialist Analysis

WHILE the revolutionary movements of modern times have all been born from humanist vision and protest, the impatience of revolutionaries soon arms revolutionary purposes with self-interest, thus generating internal contradictions in the revolution. For self-interest is no fit companion for humanist vision, and sooner or later displaces its substance, leaving only pretentious claims. After this happens, the new revolutionary establishment will listen only to technical criticisms and the maintenance of power is substituted for the original humanistic objectives.

The only conceivable way to avoid this chain of events would be for the revolutionary to give up his impatience—to refuse, that is, to exploit self-interest to gain his revolutionary ends—but how, then, could he think of himself as a revolutionist? His angry awareness of injustice makes compromise easy enough—only he does not call it compromise, but "realism," or "accepting human beings as they are." Yet the manipulation of self-interest for the organization of power brings obvious falsifications of the humanist ideal. And this, in turn, is seen as hypocrisy and deception by the opponents of change, so that intelligible dialogue becomes impossible and the partisanships of ideology harden into citadels of dogma. A similar analysis might be made of conservative doctrine, in which self-interest plays a primary instead of an instrumental role. Self-interest is the reward that makes the practice of the conservative virtues of initiative and self-reliance attractive. Take away self-interest, the argument runs, and men would become sluggish and irresponsible. That they are also made irresponsible by self-interest tends to be ignored. The defender of conservative doctrine, moreover, is blind to the accumulating evils of economic structures founded upon self-interest. And he rejects the entire vocabulary of modern psychological and sociological criticism, involving words like "alienation" and "dehumanization." So, again, there can be no dialogue.

It seems unlikely that a general dialogue about the good of man can be restored without open recognition that self-interest is destructive as a means and degrading as an end in human life. Only Gandhi attempted to start this kind of dialogue, and he is not the favorite social philosopher of any of the existing ideological camps. Little attempt is made to understand Gandhian economics—E. F. Schumacher and Walter Weisskopf are the only exceptions we can think of. Gandhi's ethical thinking stems from classical Eastern transcendental philosophy, which makes him insist that economics occupy an entirely subordinate role. This, in the modern view, is simply "unrealistic." For Gandhi, however, economic activity is mainly a vehicle for the basic education of mankind.

Meanwhile, it is to the credit of socialist thinkers that periodically they are driven to return to the original humanist inspiration. Two modern socialists, Erich Fromm and Jayaprakash Narayan, have pointed out that the reduction of socialist purpose to a struggle for material well-being has led to a loss of social vision and the moral weakening of the movement. Now another voice is added to this analysis, although from a more systematic and technical point of view. *Strategy for Labor*, by Andre Gorz (Beacon Press, 1967, $5.95), develops the contention that poverty and misery are no longer the foundation upon which social revolution must base its struggles. While the poor still exist and need help, the chief evil, today, Gorez contends, is the quality of the life lived by very nearly everyone. Following in his criticism of modern technological society:

> Economic, cultural, and social development are not oriented toward the development of human beings and the satisfaction of their social needs as a priority, but *first* toward the creation of those articles which can be sold with the maximum profit regardless of their utility or lack of utility. Creative activity is limited by the criteria of financial profitability or of social stability, while millions of hours of work are wasted in the framework of monopoly competition in order to incorporate modifications in consumer products, modifications which are often marginal but always costly, and which aim at increasing neither the use value nor the esthetic value of the product.
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> The social repercussions of the process of production on all aspects of life—work condition, leisure, education, entertainment and mass

> consumption, city planning—are not absorbed by any social project tending to humanize the social process, to give it meaning, to further social aims. The social processes, instead of being dominated and governed by human society dominate *it;* they appear as "accidental" social results of private decisions and they proliferate anarchically: dormitory-cities, urban congestion, internal migrations, various kinds of misery and luxury. Instead of putting production at the service of society, society is put at the service of capitalist production: the latter endeavors with all its ingenuity to offer to individuals ever-new means of evading this intolerable social reality; and the implementation on a grand scale of these means of escape (automobiles, private houses, camping, passive leisure) thereby creates a new anarchic social process, new miseries, inverted priorities, and new alienation.
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> Mature capitalist society, therefore, remains profoundly barbaric as a *society*, to the degree that it aims at no civilization of social existence and of social relationships, no culture of social individuals, but only a civilization of individual consumption. Simultaneously, the homogeneity and the stereotypes of individual consumption created by the oligopolies produce this particular social individual whose social nature appears to him as accidental and alien. . . .

These various charges do not remain vague and undocumented. The author cites the "planned obsolescence" of the American automobile industry, which limits the life of cars, and reports that the first fluorescent light tubes lasted 10,000 hours, so that more "research" money was spent by the manufacturing company to design a tube that would last only 1,000 hours. That stockings do not need to wear out as soon as they do, is well known. Short-run profit is the common rule, and inventors, researchers, and engineers are made to "discover that long-range research, creative work on original problems, and the love of workmanship are incompatible with the criteria of capitalist profitability." Mr. Gorz examines the Gaullist theory of education—somewhat reminiscent of Clark Kerr's—in which the student is to learn techniques but to be kept in ignorance of the "larger" pattern. The author finds this an "attempt to teach ignorance at the same time as knowledge." One sees why the reviewer of this book in *The Harvard Review* called it "a model for the kind of manifesto that the American New Left lacks."

Every radical critic of capitalist society is able to see in it the seeds of its own destruction and Mr. Gorz is no exception. Toward the end of the first part of his book he says:

> For capitalist civilization, efficiency, productivity, and output have always been the supreme "values"; these "values" now reveal themselves in their true light: as a religion of *means.* They could find their justification in the midst of acute scarcity by making possible an intense accumulation of the means of overcoming scarcity. In the midst of disappearing scarcity, they become a religion of waste and of factitious opulence. But these two value system—the one which requires the worker to become subhuman in his work, and the one which requires him to consume superfluous goods—cannot long coexist. They could coexist only if dehumanization in work were strong enough to make the workers unfit for any but sub-human and passive leisure and consumption. Such is no longer the case.

The socialist remedy for this situation is described:

> The only humanism which can succeed . . . is the humanism of free activity and of self-management at all levels. It presupposes that individuals instead of seeing themselves and being seen as means of society and of production, be seen and see themselves as ends, that no longer the time at work, but free time becomes the standard of wealth.

Like other analysts, Mr. Gorz believes that automation will lend a hand in creating the conditions for the realization of this ideal. Socialism, he believes, presents no economic or ideological obstacles to its achievement, although he admits (in a parenthesis) that it may offer bureaucratic obstacles.

One may accept all the criticisms of existing society made by this writer without being as confident as he is that socialism, as presently conceived and understood, can provide the cure. The "presuppositions" listed above represent high humanist achievement, and it may be doubted that *any* socio-economic system, which at best is a social effect of the qualities of human beings involved, can become a *cause* of such excellence. That, however, is the socialist view.