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WHAT IS A GOOD BOOK?

ONE distinguishing mark of a good book is found in the way the writer has used his primary and secondary sources. While these terms are usually applied to the materials of history—"primary" meaning original data, the documents or artifacts one cannot go behind, and "secondary" covering what other researchers have said about them—here we use them in a more general sense. "Primary" means simply what a man knows for himself, regardless of how he acquired it, and "secondary" means the findings of other men, which have a use, but which have not been internalized by the writer. These secondary materials may be things he would like to know Independently, but has not had time to assimilate, or which, in order to be known at firsthand, would require more attention than they seem to be worth. Yet they have both finish and integrity, having played a part in the central drama of some other man's inquiries—indeed, that they have these qualities is why they deserve repeating—but for the man who uses them in a secondary way they are only props or scenery, restricted to material for background, or should be.

The good writer has an instinct about these things. When he gets to what he really wants to say, he won't use secondary sources. What they disclose isn't *in* the depths of his being. They'll come in handy on the periphery of the development. So it is that a great play is still gripping even when the scenery and costumes are inadequate. These can be imagined, or forgotten. The pageantry of the performance may complete its symmetry, and an artist has normal concern for this, but at the climactic moments you see only the figure, not the ground, and any one of a dozen or more ways of dressing things up might have served equally well. The writer whose capital is all in a memory-bank of secondary materials is a hack.

A book which is all borrowed scenery may have pageantry, but there can be no drama. There has been no conception, no pregnancy; it has no *life*. A setting is necessary, and the way it is put together may be engaging, but as you read along you are waiting for something to happen, for some spontaneous movement which depends upon nothing but itself. When it comes you make contact with the writer: you learn *what he has to say*. If he is wise—able, that is, to speak in universal accents—you may learn what the world has to say, on one of those rare occasions when the world finds a voice.

Meanwhile, consider a work of criticism. It is art or literary criticism, say. The writer may begin with some description of a painting or a book. He gives you a setting of some sort. But there is no tingle of fresh meaning until he creates something of his own. Until, in other words, art generates art. Criticism which fails to be art is hardly worth reading. You might as well look at a map, read a table, or study a diagram. Understanding a work of art means finding parallel resonances of meaning in yourself, experiencing its contagion of discovery. Unless this happens, somehow, in a work of criticism, it amounts to nothing but the technique of telling about technique.

Technique, of course, has its importance. It represents some means of revealing simplicity in complexity, and can be said to be most successful when the technique is itself invisible—when it becomes a natural part of the creative act. And it must, so to say, forget itself. It can have no will of its own.

The worst enemy of art is proud technique. The second worst enemy of art is sloppy or careless technique. There is no art without technique.

Technique as an end instead of a means in art becomes either egotism or reassurance. In the dance, for example, technique is mere gymnastic. Or mannerism. Made into an end, it either falsifies or denies authentic discovery. It becomes narcissist and monopolist. Technique is something that develops in time and place and is entirely dependent upon them. Its champions, therefore, fear and hate the timeless. They say the timeless doesn't exist—that it can't, which is true enough—but they are unaware that it pervades everything that does. They demand external, visible securities, admire closed systems, glory in precise definitions, admit only classified realities. They try to make the finite do duty for the hidden presence of the infinite and the indefinable in human life.

What role has established knowledge of the past for a good writer? The past is made of the formal symmetries left by earlier becomings, and the *art* of the past, abstracted from those symmetries, contains instruction for future becomings. Art takes off readings of what becoming is like—not what it *is*, but what it is *like*. It offers not life but some, perhaps the best, of its finite consequences. But it becomes art through what it leaves out, by what it does not fix, by what it knows enough not to claim.

What, the reader should ask, does this writer know in and of himself? What is his unique testimony? What is for him a matter of life and death? And the critic should ask, with what preparedness did he come to his task? How serious is he? Did the dignity of his communications inform his skill, or is the form an empty box? How well does he distinguish between what he really knows, what he partly knows, and what he doesn't know, but suspects?

Alas for art and literature in an age requiring "certainties"! The champions of technique have opened a vein and the culture is already in bloodless condition.

Shall we make "science" the whipping boy for this? We might. Yet the real scientists are bored by exactitudes determined in the past. The "known" has continuing life only as a bridge into the unknown. All except the growing tip of scientific discovery is technique. What one man can tell to another for use without re-creation of its truth is technique. This sort of telling generates a false faith—the faith in closed systems, in the profane magic of technique. There is, however, another sort of "telling"—which transmits only facts fertilized by questions. No line drawn by this telling returns on itself. It is a telling which generates a wonderful theater of intimations, parallels, hints, invocations, and uses the symbols of the beginnings of things, of becomings and transformations, of movements not yet complete. There is some "method" in this telling, with perhaps a "technique" of its own, but a technique that will denounce the sure thing, voice no final word, avoid the still-born fact.

Suppose that a "good book" is before us, open to some page. One may ask, after reading a bit, Where did he find *that* out? How can I verify it? What was his *source.;* The quality of a good book may be in the fact that these questions cannot be answered. They are beyond the reach of technique. Yet he said what he said with words, and *that* is technique. Quite so, but it is the use of technique to outwit technique, to exhibit its limit and stretch a bit—only a little bit—further. If he is a teacher as well as a writer he may say something about this; reveal, that is, a secret or two. There are moments when this serves his art, but others when it will shrivel and deface. In any event, there is no point in seeking for the "sources" of what a good writer says out of himself.

Yet there is some point in saying that to grasp a writer's meaning it helps to understand his times. Not in order to know "history," but to get *through* its forms to the vital content behind them. The logical symmetries of what the writer said are not enough. If he is worth reading, he is worth staying with until you can't "classify" him—until

you feel what he felt as matters of ultimate concern.

Great works of literature are composed in this spirit. The science likely to survive is science found out in this mood. This is the seminal essence in all the works of man. Ortega y Gasset, a man who wrote good books, shows in (*Concord and Liberty*, in the section "Prologue to a History of Philosophy," an application of this idea:

> Life is concrete and so are circumstances. Only after having reconstructed the concrete situation and the function of the idea in it can we hope for a true understanding of the idea. But when we take the idea in its abstract sense, which in principle it always holds out to us, the idea will be a dead idea, a mummy, and its content that vague suggestion of human form peculiar to a mummy. . . . I make bold to assert that a "history of philosophy" as chronological exposition of philosophical doctrines is neither "history" nor " philosophy." It is precisely an abstraction of authentic history of philosophy.
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> A "history of ideas"—philosophical, mathematical, political, religious, economic—in the traditional sense is impossible. Those ideas, I repeat, which are but abstractions of ideas, have no history.
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> A conception of doctrines as mere "doctrines" uproots them from their time-environment, with the result that the "philosophies" of twenty-six centuries are offered to us on one and the same plane of time—as of our own day. We seem invited to judge whether Parmenides, Plotinus, or Duns Scotus "are right" in the same way that Bergson, Whitehead, or Husserl are right. Those ancient philosophers are introduced as our contemporaries, heedless of the fact that it is the date that constitutes the essence and the authentic meaning of their writings. Or, which is the same: the statement that Parmenides belongs to the sixth century B.C. should not serve as incidental information, simply to remind us that "naturally in his time people thought that way." No, it is not that Parmenides' ideas may appear more estimable and perhaps pardonable, considering his time, but that, if we fail to see them in relation to their date, we do not understand them well, we simply do not know them—no matter what your final verdict on them may be.
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> Nor will it do to believe that we have written history when we have shown the influence of an idea upon subsequent ideas. Yesterday's idea does not influence that of today. It influences a man who reacts with a new idea. Any attempt to write history without speaking of men and groups of men is doomed.
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> To sum up: History must abolish the dehumanized form in which it has offered us philosophical doctrines. It must incorporate them again in the dynamic interplay of a man's life and let us witness the teleological functioning in it. What if all the inert and mummified ideas which the customary history of philosophy has presented to us arose and functioned again, resuming the part they played in the existence of those who wrestled with them? Would not all those patterns of thought light up with a universal evidence to *gratify* us, their historians who revived them, as they gratified the original thinkers and students around them?

What Ortega seems to be doing here is to free philosophy and the history of philosophy from the delusive appearances of form and technique. One could say that philosophy is the area where techniques count for the least; or, better, where they are least capable of definition. The more subjective the inquiry, the less objective the disciplines involved, and the meaning of man's life is surely the most subjective of inquiries, concerning which there are no "experts." A man consults an "expert" about the meaning of his life only at extreme peril to his soul. The worst societies in history are those which left or delegated the explanation of meaning to experts.

Perhaps we could say that the forms of excellence in human life have a range from the completely subjective to the completely objective (extremes, of course, which don't really exist), and that on the objective side the criterion of achievement or realization depends mainly upon technique, but that, moving toward the subjective pole, the discipline of virtue gradually displaces the discipline of technique—in short, that virtues are the technique of the soul. In life, the two disciplines have endless interplay and bleedings, the one being continually mistaken for the other.

When it comes to expression of ideas, the stuff of books, distinguishing between primary and secondary sources may become difficult. Yet in

really fine work the wonder of the primary material shines with its own light. The great

writer can never be explained away in terms of "influences," although a knowledge of them may help to expose his intent. Montaigne is not still read because of the "influences" upon him, but for what *he* did with them. This is also evident in the work of Martin Buber. He is a figure in a religio-philosophical tradition, but his knowledge seems almost entirely his own.

So, there are these men who can only be "explained" in terms of themselves. They are the men worth reading. Their knowing flows from an act of self-reference. Primary knowing is always based on self-reference. You may use other references to speak of what you know; indeed, other references are a necessity of communication; but what you know is not out of those references, it is out of yourself.

We are born into a world made of secondary sources. The project of life is not to die as naked as we came. High culture is the wonderful, semi-objective creation of a number of men who have determined not to die as naked as they came. High culture is not human greatness itself, but the spontaneous efflorescence of the lives of men indifferent to hearsay; it is also the matrix of high possibilities for the young fortunate enough to be born where it exists.

No good book about education can be written in neglect of these things. Every real teacher knows this. Since we have been discussing "philosophy," an illustration may be taken from Leonard Nelson's *Socratic Method and Critical Philosophy* (Dover, 1965), in which the writer warns teachers against the temptation to substitute their own technique for the primary sources of the students. The passage occurs in a criticism of Jakob Fries:

> Fries, the most genuine of all Socrateans, gave the Socratic method only qualified recognition because he considered it inadequate for achieving complete self-examination of the intellect. He acknowledged its capacity to guide the novice in the early stages; he even demanded emphatically that all instruction in philosophy follow the spirit of the Socratic method, the essence of which, he held, lay not in its use of dialogue but in its "starting from the common things of everyday life and only then going on from these to scientific views." But as soon as higher truths, further removed from intuition and everyday experience are involved, Fries does not approve of letting the students find these truths by themselves. "Here the instructor must employ a language molded upon subtle abstractions, of which the student does not yet have complete command, and to which he must be educated by instruction."

Fries wrote a didactic novel to illustrate how this should be done. Nelson regards this as a desertion of Socrates. He comments:

> I should not think of choosing a really successful dialogue of Plato's—were there such—as subject matter for a philosophy seminar as it would forestall the creative thinking of the students, but there is nothing in *Julius und Evagoras* [the didactic novel] to preclude its use for such a purpose. For the development of abstract ideas which it presents to the reader does indeed "invite" critical verification by the students, as Fries desires. However, though otherwise exemplary, it offers no assurance that the students will accept the invitation or, if made to stand on their own feet, that they will master such difficulties as they may encounter on their way. Have your students study the fine and instructive chapter on "The Sources of Certainty," and I stand ready to demonstrate in a Socratic discussion that those students will still lack everything that would enable them to defend what they have learned. The key to the riddle is to be found in Goethe's words: "One sees only what one already knows."
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> . . . the instructor's lecture that Fries would have delivered "in language molded upon subtle abstractions," just because of its definiteness and clearness, will obscure the difficulties that hamper the development of this very lucidity of thought and verbal precision.

Here, for the purposes of our question, "What is a good book?", is instruction on the ease with which secondary materials may be substituted for the primary realities of individual knowledge. There are incredibly sophisticated and impressive forms of "they say," yet they will always lack the ring of independent truth.

REVIEW
ENDS AND MEANS

IT is an exercise now and then worth repeating to review in some anthology, say *Stevenson's Book of Quotations*, all the selections concerned with a uniquely human undertaking—such as those appearing under "Thinking" and "Thought." Here one finds the seeds of every intellectual controversy the world has known. Many of the quotations resound with verisimilitude, yet are often in head-on contradiction with each other. Some seem filled with undeveloped but incontestable truth, as this, for example, from Epictetus:

> In all men, thought and action start from a single source, namely feeling.

But however rich these wonderful one- or two-sentence gems, they always need to be added to. Entire sciences, philosophies, world faiths, and ideologies have depended upon the arguments issuing from these themes, and the arguments are, of course, still going on.

The contents of the March 1970 *Etc.* occasioned our small expedition into *Stevenson's*, since so many of the contributions seem lively extensions of basic philosophic and psychological dialogue. This issue also happens to be an excellent if informal introduction to the General Semantics movement, giving insight into the feeling which led the one-time Polish nobleman, Alfred Korzybski, to pursue the thought and action which became its origin. While his work was essentially critical, it grew out of recognition of the positive need of men of the modern world to gain "a sane attitude toward the symbols men live by."

This humane motivation continues, apparently giving the General Semantics movement its ongoing vitality and its fruitfulness in many directions, while the challenge of inquiry into the role of symbols in human life provides unlimited scope to active minds. Hardly any important philosophic issue escapes some sort of attention from the General Semanticists—the Platonic Theory of Forms, the Nominalist/Realist controversy, the interdependence of the subjective and objective fields of experience, the relation between thought and language, and numerous other questions are investigated by those who work in this field. And one sometimes finds in *Etc.* observations so searching that they seem likely to turn up in tomorrow's anthologies. Take for example the last sentence of the following from Edmund Carpenter's paper, "Not Since Babel":

> Artists, poets, children, tribesmen, film-makers find it much easier to accept the term "wordless thinking," when applied to ritual, than do scholars who will admit to two languages only: verbal and mathematical. For them, the analytical mode of thought alone is synonymous with intelligence. They are reluctant, for example, to grant dancers membership in a college faculty. But the knower as the observer and the knower as actor behold different worlds, and shape them to different ends, and it's senseless to condemn one for failing to meet the standards of the other.

This final comment seems peculiarly useful in understanding widely differing ideas about "knowledge." For example, a man moved by *eros*—who feels he has something to *do*—will cleave to "realities" very different from those admitted by the mere "observer." The man of external stance, who lays claim to "objectivity," tends to evolve a static view, while the man in motion, who has shaping intentions, who looks about with a strong sense of *ends*, cannot help but locate his defining realities in what he finds to be obstacles and openings to his objectives. The two men will speak different languages, with dialogue between them probably beyond even the best translator's skill. The motives of the one shut out the meanings of the other.

Korzybski, quite plainly, was a knower who insisted on becoming an actor as well as an observer. He was a man in motion. In his article, "Korzybski's Quest," Gerald Haslam, one of the editors of *Etc.*, takes from S. I. Hayakawa the

following account of the intentions and methods of the founder of General Semantics:

> Korzybski summarized, in a few and highly original formulations, what he felt to be the basic assumptions underlying the habits of evaluation common to the most advanced contemporary thinkers. The modern habits of evaluation appeared to rest, he said, on three fundamental non-Aristotelian premises. Comparing the relation of language (as well as of thought, memory, mental images) to reality with the relation of maps to the territory they represent, he laid down these premises: (1) a map *is not* the territory (words *are not* the things they represent); (2) a map *does not* represent *all* of a territory (words *cannot* say *all* about anything); (3) a map is *self-reflexive,* in the sense that an ideal map would have to include a map of the map, which in turn would have to include a map of the map of the map, etc. (It is possible to speak of words about words, words about words about words, etc.; in terms of behavior this means that it is possible to react to our reactions, react to our reactions to our reactions, etc.) Evaluative habits based on these premises, Korzybski said, result in a flexibility of mind, lack of dogmatism, emotional balance and maturity, such as characterize the best scientific minds at least in their thought within their special fields.

Korzybski saw the two world wars of this century as resulting from the absence of these qualities. He was a reformer intent upon freeing men's minds from the prison of misunderstood symbols. At the beginning of World War II he appealed to psychiatrists to cooperate in the "gigantic task of post-war educational reconstruction to save for civilization whatever there is left to save, and to build from the ruins of a dying era a new and saner society."

Korzybski's life, then, was a continuous campaign, a crusade for reform in thinking. He pointed to the danger in mistaking relativities for certainties and then acting upon them with religious fervor.

Another contributor to this issue of *Etc.*, Anatol Rapoport, writes on "Integrating Knowledge with Action." This might be regarded as a central theme of the investigations of the general semanticists. In one place Mr. Rapoport also uses the analogy of the "map" to represent the symbols and language on which we have come to rely. He says:

> Now a map may be a good map or a poor map. A good map is one whose structure corresponds to the structure of the territory it represents. If such is the case, then using the map is an aid to travel: it helps you get there. If the map is good, you can reduce the "checks" against the territory to a bare minimum. The road maps we travel by are generally good maps, kept up-to-date by competent map makers. The same cannot be said about our language as a representation of the world we live in. In general, it is very difficult to check our "verbal maps" against the territory which they are supposed to represent, and in a moment we shall see why.
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> There is, to be sure, one rather exceptional area of human activity where the verbal maps are constantly and persistently checked against the territory and kept up-to-date. That area. is called "science."
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> A science can be called an organized body of reliable knowledge. But this definition does not tell us much unless we know what is meant by "organized" and "reliable." Reliable is used here in the same sense as in "reliable map."

Mr. Rapoport goes on to develop the meaning of scientific "reliability," but we might summarize by asking what a good map-maker puts on his maps. The answer must be, places most likely to be thought desirable to reach, and the best ways of getting there. If new places become important, the maps must change. The history of science, you could say, describes such changes. How they come about, the resistances to them, and the intellectual rigidities of even scientists make up the subject-matter of Thomas S. Kuhn's excellent book, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* It becomes evident that reform of scientific prejudice is every bit as difficult as wearing away any other sort of prejudice. One of the tasks of the semanticists is to point this out, along with their other critical activities. There are vested interests in scientific theory as in other human enterprises.

Mr. Rapoport ends by applying the critical principle of Semantics to an urgent issue now before the American people:

> . . . communication between those who support the present war and those who oppose it is all but impossible, even though both sides speak supposedly the "same language," English. Actually, the two speak different languages, because they have organized their experiences in very different ways. For the ones, "power" and "security" are identified, for the others they are not related. The ones see as a primary value the ability of the United States to dictate forms of political organization throughout the world; the others see in this power a threat to the world.

Now comes a very interesting conclusion:

> For many years I felt that the basic principle of general semantics, emancipation from the tyranny of words, provided the hope of extending human reason to bear on human relations as well as on the environment. In the last few years I have come to a somewhat modified view. I still think that in the long run the emancipation from the tyranny of words ought to be a primary goal for humanity. Unfortunately, however, catastrophes which threaten us are too imminent. They must be averted regardless of what it takes to effect the long term changes in man's view of himself. Therefore, as you may have noticed, in pointing out the emptiness of the words and concepts presently used by politicians to whip people into line behind their disastrous policies, I myself have used words and concepts calculated to evoke strong emotional responses. . . . if knowledge is to be integrated with action, the emotive power of words must be retained, for that is what provides the energy of action. . . . Integrating knowledge and action means combining a sense of commitment with an ability to subject to merciless analysis the ideas on which commitment is based.

Right here are all the elements needed for a full-dress revival of issues raised in the Platonic Dialogues, beginning with Plato's criticism of the mimetic poets. No man can act wisely or justly, Plato contended, if his *psyche* has been shaped by the emotional persuasion of poetic models of behavior. A man must learn to take instruction from himself, not from the tribal encyclopedia, and the critical method for obtaining freedom from the emotionally charged symbols of the times was the Dialectic. So, as a critical activity, the object of the semantics movement seems identical with the critical side of Plato's undertaking—both sought emancipation from the tyranny of popular symbols, a tyranny which in our time Korzybski held to be the result of "Aristotelian" thinking.

Yet the decisions of men, as Mr. Rapoport shows, cannot rest on "criticism" alone. The urgencies of imminent historical disaster now make him resort to "words and concepts calculated to evoke strong emotional responses," which are intended, one could say, to get by the critical guard of his audience. He does not dare to wait for the "long-term changes in man's view of himself." So he enters the lists with strong feeling-tone words, to oppose the symbol-manipulators.

Not remarkably, this charge has also been laid at the door of Plato, who brings mystical visions and even poetic rhapsody to his defense of the Theory of Forms. He uses *art.* And Eric Havelock, in *Preface to Plato,* concludes: "Plato allows himself to fall back into the idiom of precisely the psychic condition which he is setting out to destroy."

However, unlike the model of the General Semanticists, which is based upon "the best scientific minds," the Platonic model is the philosopher in uncompromising pursuit of self-knowledge and moral truth. And Plato's use of art, as Havelock shows, is in connection with his "myths," which have built-in protection against being taken literally. Have the semanticists something further to learn from Plato, now that they are finding criticism to be "not enough"?

COMMENTARY
THEORY OF THE FORMS

READERS drawn to wonder about the meaning of Plato's Theory of the Forms might find considerable help in an article by Sir Patrick Duncan which appeared in *Philosophy* (Journal of the British Institute of Philosophy) for October, 1940. While this discussion, "Socrates and Plato," is mainly an attempt to clarify what may be known about the difference between what Socrates and what Plato contributed to the Theory, its elucidations are particularly valuable in disposing of much pointless and irrelevant criticism of Plato.

From the dialogues and other sources, this author says, it is evident that in Socrates' view of life "the material things of the sensible world and the desires and satisfactions associated with them, are a meaningless flux, hindering the higher nature of the soul, in so far as it allows its bodily environment to be affected by them, from finding its true life in knowledge of the eternal realities." This leads to the idea that the true essence of things is "not apprehensible by the senses but only by reason, by participation in which, in some indefinable way, the world of becoming can become intelligible in its approximation to the real."

This, for Sir Patrick, is the Socratic contribution, inspiring Plato to "those visions of immortal imagery, in which, in the *Republic*, the *Phaedo*, the *Phaedrus*, and elsewhere, he describes the conversion of the soul from its twilight gropings among the things of the senses to the clear day of the world of truth and reality." The writer continues:

> It is there—in its power of spiritual and ethical illumination—not as an ontological system—that the main interest in the doctrine, as we find it in the dialogues, is placed. In that must have lain its chief interest for Plato, who had a profound distrust of anything like a closed system of philosophy. Unless we regard the *Timaeus* as merely a dramatic picture of a scientific position which Plato himself had long outgrown, which does not seem to me to be justifiable, we must believe that he continued to think along the lines of the eternal unchangeable "Form" as essential to the possibility of true knowledge, of its reflection in the flux of "becoming" as it emerges into the ordered world of our sense perceptions, of number and geometrical figure as the elements on which the ordered world is built. But in place of any formal exposition of the doctrine, we get the myth of the Demiurge.

The doctrine of the Forms, to the extent that it is elaborated in the dialogues, finds the sole reality in the Forms, "a supra-sensible order of Being, apprehended only by reason, by relation to which, however such relationship may be conceived, the world of sense enters, in so far as is possible for it, into the real world of rational order." The Aristotelian criticism, that the Forms were a "separate" world of static universals, ignores Plato's essential meaning, serving only Aristotle's differing view:

> It may be that in that very conception lay the "separation" of which Aristotle complains—the conception of a timeless order of Being which is the true reality above and beyond but in some way, difficult to define, connected with the world of sense. For Aristotle the real thing was the substance, the basis of the attributes in which were expressed sensible qualities through which it came into perception and knowledge. The doctrine of the Platonic dialogues may well have seemed to him a separation—clothing with independent, even transcendent existence, the Forms which to him were mere universals, secondary to and inseparable in being from an underlying substance. In the myth of the *Phaedrus* the "separation" is complete. There we find ourselves in a world where the Forms exist in their own light—a world attainable only by the Gods and by the souls of those mortals who have been purified from all association with temporal objects or desires.

The doctrine of the Forms involves intellectual difficulties of which Plato was well aware, as the *Parmenides* shows. Yet Plato will not abandon "the conception of a timeless, eternal reality."

> Neither will he leave the Forms in some transcendental existence, outside the sensible world, and inaccessible to it, as in the *Sophistes* he accuses the "friends of the Forms" of doing. It is by participation in, or by the presence in it, of the Forms

> that the world of sense attains to that degree of reality and objectification that we find in it. But he gives no systematic explanation of that "participation" or "presence"—in which it consists or how it takes place. We are carried over that difficulty on the wings of the myth.

Plato's view, quite plainly, is like that of Parmenides, who held "that if a man, owing to these difficulties and others like them were to refuse to believe in the existence of Forms, he would destroy the significance of all discourse." The candor of openly incomplete explanation, at the intellectual level, has not been sufficiently appreciated in Plato. Sir Patrick ends his essay:

> If the name of Plato, more than that of any other philosopher, is associated with [the Pythagorean tradition of the Way or Life of the Spirit], it is because of his profound insight into the needs and aspirations of the spirit of man. It was his conviction, as he states in the *Epistles*, that the highest truths could not be conveyed by the study of treatises or systems, but must pass by a spark of illumination from one soul to another. He has left, in his dialogues, an endowment to posterity which, while it embodies no four-square system of philosophical doctrine, has passed on from generation to generation through the centuries, that spark of spiritual illumination.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
AFFECTIVE LEARNING

THERE are a few books with such delicacy of intentions and success in execution that wide ranges of inward meaning are opened for the reader. One book of this character, good for nearly all ages, is Scott Momaday's *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (University of New Mexico Press, 1969). The fact that Mr. Momaday is both a Kiowa Indian and a Pulitzer Prize-winner is a detail that ought to be mentioned, although in days of greater cultural maturity it would be naturally left out.

The author knows what the Indians of the plains have suffered, yet conveys something of the meaning of their lives without blurring it with feeling. The story of the Kiowas is told through the eyes of others—the writer's forefathers—yet with what seems complete understanding. Early in the Prologue, Mr. Momaday says:

> "You know, everything had to begin. . . ." For the Kiowas the beginning was a struggle for existence in the bleak northern mountains. It was there, they say, that they entered the world through a hollow log. The end, too, was a struggle, and it was lost. The young Plains culture of the Kiowas withered and died like grass that is burned in the prairie wind. There came a day like destiny; in every direction, as far as the eye could see, carrion lay out in the land. The buffalo was the animal representation of the sun, the essential and sacrificial victim of the Sun Dance. When the wild herds were destroyed, so too was the will of the Kiowa people, there was nothing to sustain them in spirit. But these are idle recollections, the mean and ordinary agonies of human history. The interim was a time of great adventure and nobility and fulfillment.

The book is a series of contrapuntal themes, with three melodic lines. These are developed around the actual but also metaphysical journey of the author to the grave of his grandmother, in the Indian cemetery at Rainy Mountain, Oklahoma. Kiowa legends and stories make the substance of the book, and there are separate paragraphs of description of Indian life and tradition, and still others of the author's reflections. The following about his grandmother illustrates the texture of Mr. Momaday's prose:

> When she was born, the Kiowas were living the last great moment of their history. For more than a hundred years they had controlled the open range from the Smoky Hill River to the Red, from the headwaters of the Canadian to the fork of the Arkansas and Cimarron. In alliance with the Comanches, they had ruled the whole of the southern Plains. War was their sacred business, and they were among the finest horsemen the world has ever known. But warfare for the Kiowas was pre-eminently a matter of disposition rather than of survival, and they never understood the grim, unrelenting advance of the U.S. Cavalry. When at last, divided and ill-provisioned, they were driven onto the Staked Plains in the cold rains of autumn, they fell into panic. In Palo Duro Canyon they abandoned their crucial stores to pillage and had nothing then but their lives. In order to save themselves, they surrendered to the soldiers at Fort Sill and were imprisoned in the old stone corral that now stands as a military museum. My grandmother was spared the humiliation of those high gray walls by eight or ten years, but she must have known from birth the affliction of defeat, the dark brooding of old warriors.
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> Her name was Aho, and she belonged to the last culture to evolve in North America. Her forebears came down from the high country in western Montana nearly three centuries ago. They were a mountain people, a mysterious tribe of hunters whose language has never been positively classified in any major group. In the late seventeenth century they began a long migration to the south and east. It was a journey toward the dawn, and it led to a golden age. Along the way the Kiowas were befriended by the Crows, who gave them the culture and religion of the Plains. They acquired horses, and their ancient nomadic spirit was free of the ground. They acquired Tai-me, the sacred Sun Dance doll, from that moment the object and symbol of their worship, and so shared in the divinity of the sun. Not least, they acquired the sense of destiny, therefore courage and pride. . . . Although my grandmother lived out her long life in the shadow of Rainy Mountain, the immense landscape of the continental interior lay like memory in her blood. She could tell of the Crows whom she had never seen, and of the Black Hills, where she had never been. I wanted to see in reality what she had

> seen more perfectly in the mind's eye, and traveled fifteen hundred miles to begin my pilgrimage.

George Catlin said of the Kiowas in 1834:

> They are tall and straight, relaxed and graceful. They have fine, classical features, and in this respect they resemble more closely the tribes of the north than those of the south.

One gets the sense of "knowing more perfectly in the mind's eye" from Mr. Momaday's book. Without deliberation, one finds oneself reading it over, in some parts, two or three times.

* * *

In the *Froebel Journal* for June, 1969 (published in England by the Froebel Foundation, 2 Manchester Square, London, W1M 5RF), Charles H. Rathbone, then of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, describes a week-long training course for teachers of infant and junior classes held in April, 1968, at Loughborough University, near Leicester, England. Some seventy teachers came and participated, even though there was no "credit" for attendance, and they paid the registration fee themselves. They came, no doubt, for various reasons, but what they got was a renewed sense of how it feels to be a child. There were rooms for art, natural science, mathematics, English, physical science, and music. There were structured activities, including lectures, films, field trips, and special meetings, but everything was voluntary and the programming was of a sort that easily gave way to restructuring in pursuit of spontaneous interests that fired up in individuals and small groups.

The illustrations of how this worked out in practice are many and effective; here we have space only for a few of Mr. Rathbone's generalizations:

> Learning at every turn was individualized; flexibility the watchword. In the end I had little doubt that those responsible for the course had deliberately attempted to construct precisely that environment that would provide, for the teachers, a model of what their own classrooms might be like. It was the structure of the course, then, that offered the most systematic instruction: for in Loughborough the medium was indeed the message.
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> Yet the quality of the experience differed from that of an ordinary teachers' workshop: the quality of the Loughborough experience was truly different, and no simple enumeration of its components can adequately account for that uniqueness. When I left Loughborough, I was still looking for a missing component; now I think the answer lies instead somewhere *between* the components.

Moving around from room to room, the teachers did what children do as they go from room to room. They began to recapture long-forgotten emotions—or, perhaps, to realize how far they had left behind natural childhood responses:

> Consider how I felt when I finished my first linoleum block. As someone else said about *his* attempt in this medium, he hadn't done a linoleum block in twenty years, and during the interval there had been little progress in either style or accuracy: his 1968 effort reminded him above all else of the work of a third-grader.

It didn't really matter, one could say, but *caring* so much about it mattered quite a lot. The week at Loughborough taught the teachers things they needed to know about themselves.

FRONTIERS

Are Giants Necessary?

WE are told that machine-design is dictated by a force called "Scientific Progress." Actually, machine design is often influenced by forces much less laudable than "Scientific Progress." One sometimes wonders if perhaps the "Scientific Progress" myth was invented to cover up the fact that machine-design is often influenced strongly by greed, power-lust, and nihilism. The press-agents of big technology always tell us that we live in the best of all possible technological worlds. There is no better way in which things could have been done.

We are told, for example, that automobiles must be built by giant corporations such as General Motors, Ford, and Chrysler. The "technological efficiencies" achieved by such giants could not be accomplished by smaller firms. Considering the constant upward creep of automobile prices, and the constant lowering of automobile quality, we might perhaps be justified in questioning this proposition. It is indeed being questioned. Recently I met a quite talented foreign engineer who had come to look over the American automobile industry.

I asked him, "Who is the most efficient automobile producer in America?"

Whom did he name? Ford? General Motors? Chrysler?

He said, "Well, Checker Motors is pretty good. But there is still a better one."

"Who is that?"

He named an automobile mechanic in Los Angeles, who has set up a speed shop to build hot rods for the young set. This man does not wish to become involved in controversy, so he must remain nameless. I went to his shop and saw the admirable efficiency which can be developed in a small shop. The custom car industry has become a big industry in Southern California. Here the mystery has been pretty well stripped away from car-building. Boys in their late teens view Detroit styling departments with contempt. They are convinced that they can do it better themselves. Detroit has on occasion paid them the sincere flattery of imitation. The automobile put together by Johnny Jones in his backyard may in fact be in some respects a better automobile than the typical Detroit product of today. Any new car you buy today goes back to the dealer a dozen times for adjustments; in other words, Detroit didn't really finish building it. The harassed dealer, watching his costs, is often evasive about making warranty adjustments. The buyer often finds himself stuck with the cost of finishing the car. Even so, he may have a hard time finding a competent mechanic to do the work.

Walter Reuther is always boasting of the gains which he has made for his auto workers. UAW members working a full year may earn $8,000.00, which indeed is high, as industrial wages go. However, I know an auto worker in Southern California who is doing better for himself than Reuther is doing for UAW members. This man is the proprietor of an establishment known as Smokey's Speed Shop. Smokey is self-educated. He has no University degree; he is a mechanic, not a Technocrat. He is self-educated. He is no dullard about automobile designing. Once he entered a creation called the "Smokey's Speed Shop Special" in a Concourse d'Elegance. It took first prize as "Best Car in the show." The competition was rugged. There was a Rolls-Royce with special body by Park-Ward of London. There was a Delahaye which once belonged to the Aga Khan and cost $33,000.00. There was a Hispano-Suiza and a Caddie with special body by LeBaron. Last year Smokey topped the UAW lads handsomely in income. His net income was over $210,000.00. Of course, to the Bourgeois order, Smokey is an utter abomination. He issues no stock and pays no dividends to investors. When Smokey earns a dollar, it goes into Smokey's pocket. His hired hands do well, too. None of them earns less than $15,000.00 per annum. All must begin as

apprentices. Smokey will not employ trade-school graduates.

What do we have here? We have the kind of working men whom the Bourgeoisie have struggled for several centuries to exterminate. Here we catch a whiff of the atmosphere of the handsome Guild Hall in Antwerp five centuries ago. There is no unskilled labor here. There are no illiterate hillbillies slapping things together on an assembly line. Here everything is done with loving care. Oil kings and chain grocery magnates come to Smokey's Speed Shop and pay fantastic prices for his cars.

But, you say, the average car buyer cannot afford such a thing. Smokey will sell you a very nice car kit, which you can put together yourself. It costs much less than a finished Detroit automobile. If you buy this kit, you yourself assume the labor function which is done by the illiterate Hillbilly on the assembly line. If you think about the matter, you will see that the assembly of an automobile is an easy thing. It is done all the time in Detroit by people who cannot read and write, indeed sometimes by people who cannot count to ten. What sort of working-class culture has Detroit created? It has created a savage jungle, in which the working class slowly disintegrates. Perhaps Detroit should stop selling finished cars and sell us a good car kit to be assembled by ourselves. Assembly is a thing which Detroit does poorly and at enormous cost. The vaunted efficiency proclaimed for the assembly line method is a myth. The assembly line is a political device, not good technological practice. Its purpose is to *control* labor, to organize power, to concentrate power in a few hands. Was the last car you bought well assembled? It was not. None of them is.

There are many good car kits on the market today, advertised in the various "Hot-Rod" magazines. For do-it-yourself types, this may indeed be the best way to attain automobile ownership. The kits are not hard to put together. Years ago, possessed of a desire to feel young again, I put one together myself. It had a carburetion arrangement known in those bygone days as "six pots," and it emitted a deep, soft, pleasing growl which aroused the suspicions of every traffic cop who heard it. The cost? I kept books carefully. The cost was $2,758.22. For this I got a handsome automobile which I felt owed no apologies to Pinnan Farina.

Technology has been shaped by the Bourgeois power drive, by a class which came to dominance by defeating two other classes, namely the Aristocracy and the working class, both of which the Bourgeoisie have busily condemned as mad dogs ever since. When I consider the corruption of the mechanical arts which has occurred, I am tempted to cheer for the Virginia Woolf class war: "The class war is not really between the upper class and the lower class. Actually, the upper class and the lower class are locked together in blood brotherhood against the bloodless and pernicious pest who stands between." Our Bourgeois academics have a deep contempt for the mechanical arts. This is simply their morbid and corrupt class-power lust. They are interested in upholding the myths which support the power of their caste. There is no genuine basic integrity in them. Long ago the Bourbons predicted sourly, "No good will ever come of having the world run by shopkeepers and bourse-gamblers." Sometimes I think that the Bourbons were right. They fought the rising Bourgeois class tooth and nail. Sometimes I could wish that they had won. They didn't, of course, and now we are saddled with the Bourgeoisie, at least until the Virgina Woolf revolution comes to wipe them out. Bring out the red flags, Virginia Woolf! Let's put the revolution on the road!

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