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THE QUESTION OF IDENTITY

THAT the energies behind the modern "quest for identity" are essentially subjective in origin seems beyond debate. In about a quarter of a century, the polarity of driving human inquiry has reversed; questions which fall under the generic heading, "What is man?", have taken the place of questions about nature or the external environment. Such questions, of course, have always overlapped in a wide band at the equator of inquiry, since man lives in a natural environment and is surely in some sense a "natural" being, but the background urgencies, now, it seems clear, are more concerned with subjective than with objective reality.

A great alteration of this sort in the pursuit of truth seems always to be caused by feeling. There is a "feeling," today, that the important truths lie inside ourselves, and that the mandates for what we must do are to be sought there. And it is natural, perhaps, since the subjective has been for so long a neglected area, that at the beginning it should be thought of as being fairly simple. Feeling itself is often persuasive of this view. One thing that can be asserted of feeling is its generally holistic character. A feeling, given play, suffuses the whole man. If we borrow from political language we could call it imperial or "totalitarian." This is a suggestive analogue, yet it may be misleading. After all, something which may be called "disciplined" feeling undoubtedly exists. The great artist has it. By setting precise limits to the expression of strong feeling, he creates forms embodying meaning and giving delight. Extraordinary men animated by altruistic feeling are also characterized by austere self-control. Both these aspects of their lives are profoundly inward, suggesting that the "subjective" may not be simple at all; it may, indeed, be as wide a domain as the world of external nature, and paradoxically both more and less accessible to study or analysis.

Yet this complexity does not stand in the way of the general realization that subjective truth is gaining recognition as *primary* truth. When a man says, in effect, "Don't talk about me as an object, as something you can change or fix without my having anything to do with it! I am a *man*, a subject, and I'm going to make up my own mind!"—when he says this, he obviously speaks from a feeling of his unreducible reality as a human being.

Perhaps we should contrast with this the different but not entirely dissimilar feeling of Galileo, at the dawn of the age of science, when he declared his intention to study the Book of Nature in preference to medieval manuals of logic and scholastic philosophy. "Philosophy," he said, "is written in that great book which ever lies before our eyes—I mean the universe." He went on to argue that mathematics is the language of natural fact. (How and why the enormous structure of science erected on the foundations laid by Galileo and others led to the systematic neglect of the subjective side of man—not to mention extensive possibilities of the subjective side of nature—would make an inquiry of great importance, since it might give instruction in how to avoid excesses in vast collective swings of the pendulum of feeling and thought, but that is not now our subject.)

Failure to recognize the complexity of the subjective region can easily lead to many sorts of confusion. Take for example the differentiations of subjective motivation. One of its chief roots seems to be the longing to be at one—to participate in unity. There are, it seems clear, graded unities, ranging from the most sublime aspiration to simple desire for a particular combination of one sort or another. There is the reaching toward some inward fusion of the individual with "all that is," sometimes called the "oceanic feeling" or the "peak experience," and there are emotional hungers which declare themselves at various levels of man's being. All these feelings, we might say, are analogues of one another—the metaphors of poetry, the symbols of religion and myth, the allegories of folk tales, and even the images of common speech give evidence of this—yet

they are not the same. There is need, in other words, for order—for a "discipline" of some sort—if we are to understand the ranges of feeling.

Galileo found mathematics to be the discipline appropriate to the study of the elements and forces of nature. He was proved right, one could say, by the fact that the application of mathematics to the phenomena of physics has led to prediction and control of physical happenings. But we must add that this was because the elements of external nature have a constant, unchanging aspect, susceptible to mathematical analysis.

Mathematics does not work in ordering the differentiations of human subjectivity—at least, not in the same way—for the reason that the subjective realities of man's life are not constant in the same way. They vary from man to man.

This can be seen in any field where the human element is a major factor, yet where, at the same time, there has been at least some success in the establishment of known disciplines. A good example is diet. No one who has read even superficially on this subject can have failed to notice that there is no infallible single system of diet for the human race. What works well for one person does not work so well for another. There is some kind of limited, experimental truth in practically all systems of diet, yet curious "miracles" of healing have been accomplished by programs which are in one or various respects contradictory to each other. No doubt some para-principles of common sense characterize all beneficial dietary schemes, but these will be so broad as to give little hint of a common menu. That is, their specificity speaks to mind, but not to matter. The right diet for any man seems obviously to be the right combination of subjective and objective determinations, which means that it will have *unique* factors in it, which only he can contribute. There is also the complicating factor that a sour state of mind or feeling can sour any stomach. So there is a metaphysical or even a philosophical component in *all* the disciplines affecting the health or good of human beings.

It is reasonable, then, to say that there is a direct parallel between the health of the mind and the health of the body, although, in the case of the mind, the subjective factor is immeasurably stronger. The right diet of physical nourishment for a man is the diet that puts his body in harmony with itself, and the right diet of thought is what puts the *man* in harmony with himself. Here, no doubt, we may have help from others, just as we do in matters of physical health, yet because of the uniqueness of the individual mind and self we can *rely* on others far less—in fact, ultimately, not at all. There is a basic difference between having help from others and depending upon it. The best help, for a human being, is what tends indirectly to contribute to his self-reliance. This is the initial and perhaps the greatest paradox we encounter in reflection on the mystery and wonder of subjectivity. What we do about this paradox is probably more important than any other decision in human life.

The common practice, however, is to pick somebody you think knows and then to follow him. To remain without a guide is a state of hardly endurable pain. (Nature abhors every sort of vacuum.) Historically, you could say, the Western world has been following Galileo for several centuries; or at any rate, it accepted the claim that there is certainty about the external world in mathematical demonstrations, and nothing to be known—nothing, that is, of vital importance—in any other study. But today, modern thought has reached a great watershed of decision: the inner life of man *demands* attention. It becomes important, therefore, not simply to reverse our direction of inquiry, but to do it in a way that will not repeat the same mistake that our entire civilization made in ignoring what was left out of the "knowledge" science offered to make available.

We have then, as individuals, not simply to "pick" a new means to truth and follow it, but to pick the means that will also make us self-reliant, in some sense independent, for that, and that alone, is health of mind. Ortega put this very well in the seventh chapter of *Man and Crisis*, entitled "Truth as Man in Harmony." There he says that a man needs to find out what he knows, in and of himself, and what and how he uses it. Even his *doubt* is knowledge for this purpose, since doubt serves to prevent over-

confidence and warns against blind advances into territory which is still unknown. Ortega's discussion of skepticism illustrates this point. Skepticism need not be a defect in a man's life:

> What is essential is that the skeptic be fully convinced of his skepticism, that it be in fact his own genuine form of thought; in short, that when thinking this he be in agreement with himself and have no doubt with respect to what he can depend on when he comes face to face with things. The evil thing is for the skeptic to doubt that he doubts, because this means that he fails to know not only what things are, but what his own genuine thought is. And this, this is the only thing to which man does not adapt himself, the thing that the basic reality which is life does not tolerate.
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> But then *problem* and *solution* take on a meaning which is completely different from that which they customarily have a meaning which in its origin excludes the interpretation offered by the intellectual and the scientist. Something is a problem to me not because I am ignorant about it, not because I have failed to fulfill my intellectual duties with regard to it; but when I search within myself and do not know what my genuine attitude toward it is, when among my thoughts about it I do not know which is truly mine, the one which I really believe, the one which is in full accord with me. And vice versa; *solution of a problem* does not necessarily mean the discovery of a scientific law, but only being dear with myself about the thing that was a problem to me, suddenly finding among many ideas about it, one which I recognize as my actual and authentic attitude toward it. The essential, basic problem, and in this sense the only problem, is to fit myself in with myself, to be in agreement with myself, to find myself.

It would miss Ortega's point entirely to assume that some form of self-satisfied neglect of the thoughts of other men is an appropriate solution. This would be ridiculous for any intelligent human being, nor would life, in fact, permit it. Ortega is dealing with *use* of the help we may gain from others, and showing what is not help at all, but stultification. In any event, this account of the human situation explains why already-existing systems of thought do not and cannot solve our problems. Thought solves our problems only as we make that thought entirely our own. How this is done is a subject that is consistently neglected.

In all the well-known theories of human nature this question seems ignored or casually passed over. The balance within the individual—which is his mental health—is certainly not a part of behavioristic doctrine, which is concerned mostly with conditioning techniques and the setting up of desirable models. In Freudian psychoanalysis, the matter of a man's harmony with himself is probably covered by the concept of "ego-strength," a quality in human beings which is recognized out of necessity but left unexplained.

Knowing, in short, is not knowing "everything," but consists in knowing what we know, in using it as well as we can, and in knowing what it means to learn more. Something of this sort seems at the root of Jean Piaget's discoveries about all human learning. The human being does not come to the world equipped only with sense organs to experience the world outside. He brings also certain competences in understanding the world, and these competences are subject to change and improvement. The higher the competence, then, the larger the contribution of "subjectivity" to the knowledge obtained. A man with very high competence will speak of his knowledge in a way that is quite incomprehensible to persons of less competence. They may be *impressed* by what he says; or they may be impressed by *him;* they may make faith and dogma out of his knowledge, but what he knows cannot be knowledge for them until they acquire a competence similar to his. If he is a teacher as well as a man of competence, he will help them to do this, and he will do all he can to prevent dogmatic repetition of what he knows or has taught. The heart of the matter, then, is in the competence, not in any product or finished performance.

We now see our difficulty. There is a fundamental difference between capacity and act. The act proves the capacity but does not contain it or exhaust its possibilities. In fact, in relation to some kinds of capacity, the act only *seems* to prove the capacity. The least important forms of capacity can be imitated without being understood. Children can be taught to pull triggers and men can be taught to drop bombs. Societies can be made dependent upon mechanistic imitations of capacities which belong to

a very few men called "experts," and such societies are very easily thrown into extreme disorder by another kind of "expert," or they may fall into disorder almost by themselves, because of a few expert miscalculations.

This sort of criticism of the technological society is familiar enough, now, to be called a cliché. But it is no cliché to suggest that the same confusion of capacity with performance or product may exist throughout the present enthusiasm for subjective investigation and in the "quest for identity." Telling evidence that the confusion *does* exist was provided some years ago by Theodore Roszak in a brief article in *Peace News* (March 31, 1967):

> Friends of mine who teach at the San Francisco Art Institute, one of America's leading art schools, tell me that they have been inundated these past few years with 18-year-old kids who want desperately (and arrogantly) to believe that all the art of the past is a hopeless drag and that every least gesture they produce—especially if it is part of a trip—is just as good as anything Rembrandt or Cézanne ever did. . . . The misfortune about all this is that it is leading an entire generation to screen out of its life depths of human experience that are invaluable and indispensable—but which can only be reached with some willingness to be humble and to accept an intellectual discipline: a willingness to live with and learn from and to grow in the company of great souls who are our natural allies in the struggle against dehumanization.

Remarking that "the creative act grows out of disciplined study, undertaken in an attitude of love, and out of intense feeling and lifelong preparation," he adds:

> I know that I, myself, have never had my consciousness more potently—and often painfully—"expanded" than while performing Shakespeare with an amateur group, or while—quite simply—reading Tolstoy. The depth of such experiences is beyond exhaustion—but it is not easily or cheaply plumbed. Ironically, many of the founding fathers of the drug culture—men like Alan Watts, Aldous Huxley, Gary Snyder—have been men of great cultivation who have brought to the drug experience a deal of disciplined study. I think this may even be true of Allen Ginsberg, when he is at his best (which is not, I fear, when he is pouring out torrents of semi-literate verse). But unfortunately, in the hands of vulgarizers like Timothy Leary, the search for humanization becomes a facile manipulation of push-button psychic techniques, which, I feel, cheapens not only the meaning of human culture, but of human personality as well. And the cheapening of culture and personality is precisely what all the contemporary forces of evil . . . are out to accomplish. The Buddha, you know, located nirvana at the end (not at the beginning) of the eightfold path. Does anyone remember, I wonder, what the stages of that path are—and what they demand of us?

In the light of this comment, it seems only common sense to pursue the study of subjectivity and the quest for identity with the help of "the company of great souls who are our natural allies in the struggle against dehumanization." Failing to seek this help would be like deciding to find the best diet without becoming familiar with what devoted men who spent their lives researching this question have said about it. "Natural inclination" is not by itself a very good guide for modern man, since his "nature" is in fact a manifold of feelings, by no means in harmony with one another, and for the reason that practically everyone's "natural taste" has been grossly distorted by the habits of the times. Animals may know instinctively what is good for them to eat, but few humans do.

The world of culture and ideas is if anything more diverse and confusing, and the "natural" in this area may be obscurely remote from "spontaneous" inclination. Plato's seventh epistle may have the only key to this puzzle. In any event, our minds have been too much shaped by externalizing conceptions of reality and mechanistic doctrines of human nature for any easy assumptions to be adopted. There should be immediate value, therefore, in turning to thinkers who lived before the advent of the scientific revolution, if only to discover what sort of psychological and moral independence they were able to achieve, and what they said about achieving it. An incidental benefit of this investigation would be the early realization that some of the most profound insights of modern humanistic psychology are to be found, although in somewhat different language, in the teachings of the Buddha, and in Socratic wisdom. Yet there is an important difference to be discerned. Both Eastern religion and

Platonic philosophy offer a view of the self or soul as a being with a life *independent of,* as well as in relation to, the body. There is a sense in which both Buddha and Plato regard the body as the "prison" of the soul—a view which has direct consequences for their idea of the self and in their ethical conceptions and ideas of morality. Many of the potentialities assigned to the biological organism by humanistic psychology—after all, high human qualities must come from *somewhere*—are traced by these old philosophers to a distinctive order of intelligence which is *sui generis,* the underived nature of soul. Whatever one thinks of this difference, at the outset, the Buddhist-Platonic doctrine obliges a radically changed outlook on some of the vexed questions of the present, such as the mystery and problem of death, the inadequacy of heredity and environment to account for human individuality, and the problem of freedom in relation to the ominous possibilities of modern chemistry and biology for manipulation of the psycho-physical organism used by man. In illustration of these questions, a passage may be quoted from José Delgado's article on electrical stimulation of the brain in the May *Psychology Today:*

> New neurological technology . . . has a refined efficiency. The individual is defenseless against direct manipulation of the brain, because he is deprived of his most intimate mechanisms of biological reactivity. In experiments, electrical stimulation of appropriate intensity always prevailed over free will. For example, flexion of the hand invoked by stimulation of the motor cortex cannot be voluntarily avoided. Destruction of the frontal lobes produced changes in effectiveness that are beyond any personal control.
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> Scientific annihilation of personal identity or, even worse, its purposeful control, has sometimes been considered a future threat more awful than atomic holocaust. The prospect of any degree of physical control provokes a variety of objections: theological objections because it affects free will, moral objections because it affects individual responsibility, ethical objections because it may block self-defense mechanisms, philosophical objections because it threatens personal identity.
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> These objections are debatable. Prohibition of scientific advance is obviously naive and unrealistic. It could not be universally imposed and, more importantly, it is not knowledge itself but its improper use that should be regulated. A knife is neither good nor bad, it may be used by a surgeon or an assassin. Science may be neutral, but scientists should take sides.

Whatever the merit of these last contentions, it is clear that a more substantial—less speculative, less abstract and problematic—conception of the self or soul would have a great effect on anyone considering them. It might follow that what we need, today, more than anything else, is strongly rational conceptions of the alternative possibilities of man's subjective being. Without this sort of disciplined thinking, the plausible logic of manipulative science will almost certainly flow in to fill the areas of weakness and indecision in our thought about ourselves.

REVIEW
BLAKE'S GENIUS

IT was not, as J. Bronowski points out in a *Nation* review, until after the 1927 centenary of the death of William Blake, marked by publication of his entire works in one volume by Geoffrey Keynes, that his stature as poet, artist, and thinker began to be recognized by the modern world. This is not to say that he has been "understood," but that this affirmative rebel of the eighteenth century may speak more clearly to our time than he did to his contemporaries. Many books on Blake have appeared since 1997. Bronowski wrote one of them—*William Blake and the Age of Revolution* (1943)—and he refers to others, Mark Schorer's *The Politics of Vision* and David Erdman's *Prophet Against Empire*. A very good book, *Blake's Humanism* by John Beer, was noticed in MANAS for Oct. 2, 1968.

We now have for review two extraordinary volumes, one a complete facsimile reproduction of the original *Songs of Innocence and of Experience,* in full color, issued by Blake in 1789 and 1794, with an introduction by Geoffrey Keynes; the other, *William Blake: Poet, Printer, Prophet,* a study of Blake's illuminated books, also by Keynes, containing dozens of full-color reproductions of Blake's plates, nearly all in their original size. In the latter book, the paper was made to match the paper used by Blake, and in both volumes six- and eight-color lithography was used to achieve faithful effects. The publisher of these works is Orion Press in association with the Trianon Press and they were produced in France. They are distributed in the United States by Grossman Publishers; the *Songs* volume will soon be available in a low-cost edition ($7.95), and *William Blake* is $15.00

One who turns the pages of these books may find himself less eager to speak about Blake than he was before he looked at them. Wonder, power, and beauty have presence in the drawings or etchings, just as they have in his poetry, and the immediacy of experiencing these qualities has no substitutes. One usually tells about things by speaking of their similarity with other things, but to follow this plan in relation to Blake's work would be a distortion and a disaster. Blake is *not* the member of any series, whether of art history or literature. He is simply himself. His work is not suggested by the work of anyone else, and he defies interpretation according to any familiar canon. The only suitable "placing" of Blake that we can think of is the philosophic one repeated by J. Bronowski in his review (*Nation,* Dec. 22, 1969) of Kathleen Raine's *Blake and Tradition,* in which he says:

> The tradition of neo-Platonism in which Kathleen Raine places Blake is in its essence a mystical form of humanism. It was its humanism rather than its mysticism which made the early Fathers of the Church suspicious from the beginning, and which caused Saint Augustine to condemn its more extravagant texts such as the Hermetic books. In the authoritarian centuries before the Renaissance, neo-Platonism was the only form of humanist dissent from dogma that was open to independent minds, and it became strong in England in the same spirit during the Puritan revolution in the 17th century. Its chief exponent in Blake's lifetime was Thomas Taylor, and Kathleen Raine shows that Blake read a good deal in him and followed into some of Taylor's sources.
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> The influence of Thomas Taylor and earlier neo-Platonists on Blake's thought and imagery makes a pointed addition to our knowledge. Blake was well informed about other writers who struggled with the same intellectual problems that engaged him, and particularly with the universal grounds for individual dissent in the face of social and religious authority.

What can be said of Blake, from experiencing his poetry and painting, and reading a little of his life? One thing seems clear: Blake was a visionary who had his visions under the control of a craftsman's discipline. He knew how to give his imagination rein, and how to limit it. If he was accused by some of his contemporaries of being mad, this can only be because the world is seldom graced by men like Blake. The men of art and letters had their notions of "order," but Blake found his instructions elsewhere—within himself,

one could say; yet he is informed by a richness of conception and a sublimity of aspiration that goes far beyond any personal devices. The myth of the *Phaedrus* may give the best structural scheme for comprehending Blake. He must have had flights of the mind and perceptions of realities that were possible only to strong-winged souls, and what he saw at these upper levels of being supplied the content he put into his books.

He did not find it easy to please buyers. He wrote in 1799 to a discontented customer:

> "You say that I want somebody to Elucidate my Ideas. But you ought to know that What is Grand is necessarily obscure to Weak men. That which can be made Explicit to the Idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the Ancients consider'd what is not too Explicit as fittest for Instruction, because it rouzes the faculties to act. I name Moses, Solomon, Esop, Homer, Plato."

So far as his work is concerned, Blake's life falls into two divisions. The first encompasses his schooling and training in his craft as an engraver, and the composition of the *Songs of Innocence*, which he produced in 1789. In that same year, Keynes tells us—

> . . . he set about making a number of books embodying his philosophical system which he expressed in increasingly obscure form. These have become known as his Prophetic Books, their production going on at the same time as he was painting numbers of pictures and making large colour prints, using a tempera medium instead of oil paints for the former. . . . his poetry . . . was being affected by his increasing awareness of the social injustices of his time which directed his thoughts to the composition of a series of lyrical poems forming the sequence known as *Songs of Experience*. . . . Public events and private ambitions soon converted Innocence into Experience, producing Blake's preoccupation with the problem of Good and Evil. This, with his feelings of indignation and pity for the sufferings of mankind as he saw them in the streets of London, resulted in his composing the second set.

At least one of Blake's short poems has a place here; the one called "London" shows why Blake, once read, is not forgotten:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow
> And mark in every face I meet
> Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
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> In every cry of every Man,
> In every Infants cry of fear,
> In every voice; in every ban,
> The mind-forg'd manacles I hear
>
> How the Chimney-sweepers cry
> Every blackening Church appals,
> And the hapless Soldiers sigh
> Runs in blood down Palace walls
>
> But most thro' midnight streets I hear
> How the youthful Harlots curse
> Blasts the new-born Infants tear
> And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

It is in the later, prophetic books that Blake becomes the most luminous and at the same time most difficult to understand. The lyric quality so evident in the "Songs" now bursts forth with same annunciatory splendor in the line of drawings so intense and packed with intention that the reader is bound to make some effort to understand Blake's meaning. John Beer's book is some help in this; also Harold Goddard's essay on Blake's Fourfold Vision; and perhaps some other volumes Beer mentions but which we have not consulted.

The fact is that Blake found no contemporary language adequate to his inspiration, and he felt obliged to invent his own mythic tongue. These meanings were crucial to him. When an admirer wanted the pictures alone, Blake warned that such a volume would lack "some of the best things," since his drawings "accompany Poetical Personifications and Acts without which Poems they could not have been Executed." Actually, these pictures are Blake's illustrations of what he understood to be Cosmic Psychology, or Transcendental Dynamics. This is what he was looking at, and what he rendered into the most suitable imagery, visual and verbal, that he could find or invent; and this is the reason why Blake does not fit into any scheme of succession or "influence" in either art or literary history. The understanding his visioning disclosed seemed far more real to him than the concrete factual world,

and all that brought him into touch with that world was his compassion and his longing to help assuage its pain. Hence the tensions between the particularist sympathies of a humane man and the impersonal majesty of his metaphysical conceptions, and in the bewildering counterpoint of history and myth.

If Blake had not also been a great poet and a great artist, his thought, no doubt, would still be neglected, as something eccentric or merely quaint. But to see the illuminated prophetic books makes this an impossible conclusion. No man gains such vatic power without knowing something great, and knowing that he knows.

COMMENTARY
BLAKE'S HUMANISM

IN the book of this title John Beer devotes his first chapter to showing both the difficulty of classifying Blake and the artist-poet's need to invent his own mythic structures to convey what he had to say. This becomes apparent from a brief statement of Blake's conception of man:

> True humanity, according to him, is not to be found by taking the average of the mass of mankind as we know them. Rather, it is glimpsed whenever a man, anywhere, lives by his own inward vision. From the fullness of that vision the majority of men have fallen away. If Blake refuses to acknowledge the existence of original sin, his belief in the loss of original vision provides him with a no less exacting yardstick for the judgment of human conduct. It is in the means and manner of human reformation that he differs significantly from the Christian position. . . . He was neither committed to orthodox Christianity nor yet willing to see human nature simply as a part of "Nature." He was of a select company . . . who announce their belief in humanity yet refuse to accept any definition which is drawn from looking at the sum of human beings. Instead they insist that the key to understanding "humanity" can only be found by an exacting look at the nature of the individual. . . .
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> This is no ordinary view of man; it begins by looking beneath the carapace of social behavior in each human being to discover the energies which animate, the vision which controls. The point where reason and energy rise from their normal, unawakened state, touch one another and merge into an inter-animating vision and desire is for Blake the central "humanity" in each man. We cannot begin to understand his attitude unless we grasp the firmness of this belief that behind the characteristics of each man there exist the lineaments of the "eternal man," most nearly apprehended when we see him possessed by his energies or radiant with his own imagination but even then glimpsed only fleetingly. . . . His work involves a search for the eternal images underlying the tricks and sports of time. But these eternal images are not placed outside man: they do not stand like Byzantine mosaics in eternal judgment upon the changes and chances of this world. Blake's realism demands that his images be relevant to the fact of change as well as that of permanence: his most successful images represent the lineaments of states through which men must pass, while also showing, within those lineaments, the lineaments of the eternal man.

Those who obtain copies of the Blake books described in this week's Review will find their enjoyment of them much enriched by reading Mr. Beer (*Blake's Humanism,* available at $9.00 from Barnes & Noble). His book has the rare virtue of interpreting Blake in terms of Blake.

It may interest some readers to know that an extremely informative analysis of "the cheapening of culture and personality," described in the quotation from Theodore Roszak (on page 7), is provided in a long appendix at the end of Erich Neumann's *The Origins and History of Consciousness* (Bollingen Series, Pantheon, 1954). Despite the pretentiousness of this title and the obscurity of language for those unfamiliar with Jungian categories, this discussion should be valuable to any reader struggling to comprehend the diverse psychological phenomena of the declining mass society. It deals with the desperate substitutes embraced by those who find the struggle toward individuality too demanding under present conditions. Neumann says:

> In these circumstances, the disoriented, rationalistic consciousness of modern man, having become atomized and split off from the unconscious, gives up the fight because, understandably enough, his isolation in a mass which no longer offers him any psychic support becomes unendurable. For him the hero's task is too difficult, the task he ought to perform by following in the footsteps of humanity before him. . . .
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> The unique and frightful thing about this recollectivization is that it does not and cannot possibly mean a genuine regeneration. . . . The great danger that evidently prevents a conscious realization of this situation lies in the illusory phenomena which appear with recollectivization and blind the ego. The toxic effect of the mass situation lies precisely in its intoxicating character, which is always a concomitant of the dissolution of consciousness and its powers of discrimination.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
FACING FACTS

THE paperback book, *The School and the Democratic Environment*, published by Columbia University Press in behalf of the Danforth and Ford Foundations, has the virtue of open admission of practically all the major problems and defects of today's public schools. The consensus of the contributors, which includes such men as HEW Secretary Robert H. Finch, U.S. Commissioner of Education James Allen, and former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, is that America is in the throes of a vast change in attitude toward values, and that the schools, which operate on the assumptions of consensus and stability, must now adapt themselves to the processes of change. No wonder some experienced educators and teachers feel that loosening up so heavily institutionalized a system as public education in order to accommodate it to radical change is an impossible task, and that it would be better to start something new!

A paragraph of the Foreword, by Gene Schwilck and Edward J. Meade, has almost this implication:

> . . . authoritarian schools affect more than just the students. They create a climate that stifles teachers, as well, and everyone else who comes into contact with the schools. And just as the question of authoritarian schools is bigger than the students, so, too, is citizenship education more than just the problem of the schools. The school is a macrocosm of the community. It is not a leader in the change process, it mirror's the community's feelings. If the community cannot agree on the desirability of a more articulated role for the schools in the political socialization of its young, then school executives, school boards, administrators, and teachers, in all likelihood, will feel little pressure to take positive steps to correct present imbalances and failings.

Some of the weaknesses of the society at large show why the community often finds itself unable to do much of anything to help the schools. These are described by William L. Smith, who recently headed an independent organization in Cleveland that was apparently able to accomplish a great deal:

> We are a crisis-oriented society. We bring together our mammoth resources and manpower, we address ourselves to the problem; we develop the solutions; and we put the mechanisms in operation to get the job done. We never stop to think that the job cannot be done in a short period of time because we are not a humble nation. We are an arrogant society. Our arrogance is based on the bootstrap, self-made, rugged individualistic nature of our existence. This is our tradition, our heritage, and our national pride. We have made it, as a people, against tremendous odds.
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> We have moved to a point where we are an instant action society. We expect instant coffee, instant TV dinners, instant headache relief, instant information retrieval systems, and so forth.
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> Yet problems that are people problems do not fit these instant systems, and the sooner we accept this, the more effective will be our efforts. . . . One of these problems that defies an instant solution is the problem of urban education. The heart of the present crisis in public education is the realization that the system has failed a major segment of the population.

Alan F. Westin, professor of public law and government at Columbia, and director of the Center for Research and Education in American Liberties, remarks in one place:

> My general conclusion is that a significant part—though by no means all—of current student unrest stems from antidemocratic teaching and administration within our schools and from school-aggravated tensions from the larger society over issues such as racial conflict and political dissent.
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> Taking this view, I do not think it will be easy for any school administration or city government that is inclined to do so to put the lid of forcible control back on the schools. The protests are too deep and too widespread for this policy to work, short of stationing policemen at short intervals in every school corridor. Even if such interventions could work, I would oppose them vigorously, since I believe that fundamental reforms in the content, process, and government of our schools is essential if American society is to cope effectively with the pressure of social change.

> Of course there is a need for order and structure. But when justice and participation are provided, order will emerge in that context. Where it does not emerge naturally, discipline should be applied and will then be widely respected.

Here and there in this book there are examples of how, now and then—due to the activity of unusual teachers and administrators—order *does* emerge naturally. In each case there is confirmation of Mr. Westin's judgment, to the effect that "the era of 'top down' reform in American education is over." He adds that its record of flawed conceptions and failed projects "during the 1950s and 1960s does not suggest that many tears need to be shed for its passing." Launching new forms of education will be difficult, but what existing systems do have in their power "is to *stop doing* what we do now through ritual, fear, or outmoded laws and practices." Of equal importance is the comment of Gerald Marker and Howard D. Mehlinger:

> The rebellion in the high school is no longer limited to random acts of vandalism but assumes the shape of sophisticated political tactics. The rebellious youth are no longer the lonely and the alienated but the school intellectuals. The irony of the present situation is that school officials are often in the position of having to punish the brightest and most committed students in the school, the very type of student the school ought to be most proud to have educated.

A comment by Mr. Finch also deserves space:

> On the other hand, I am apprehensive about some proposals for reform. In some models, the classroom, if not abolished altogether, becomes mostly a convenient place for strategy sessions in the battle for social change. What we must strive for also is to teach the analytical and critical skills, refine the ability to analyze, distinguish and compare, and cultivate the ability to marshal and present arguments that are logical and based on fact.

A reading of this book leaves little room for any view except one which relies almost entirely on the contributions of conscientious and ingenious individuals, whether by making more space for genuine teaching in existing institutions—almost clandestinely, as often seems necessary—or by improvising new schools. Probably the most valuable help that a "practical" man could give to the future of education in the United States would be showing ways to provide an economic base for free and independent education. It is becoming almost ridiculous to expect the State—whether federal or one of the fifty—to accomplish any important change for the better.

FRONTIERS

Note on Contemporary Criticism

THE best in modern socio-philosophic criticism now goes beyond exposure of the fallacies of mechanistic, reductionist rationalism, so long regarded as the only way to think by our science-dominated culture, and is examining the limitations of the remedies being applied to this ill. We have three samples of this new criticism.

One is Ronald Sampson's review of *Ego and Instinct* by Daniel Yankelovich and William Barrett, in the *Nation* for May 11. Mr. Sampson first praises the book highly for "exorcising the specter of scientific materialism." When, however, the authors turn to a psychoanalysis freed of Freud's mechanistic assumptions for the remedy, Mr. Sampson says:

> . . . the authors fail to see that the enterprise of a "science" of man as a basis for successful human engineering is misconceived. Thus, because we are supposed to be doing science—the science of man, based on a revised and scientifically redefined psychoanalysis—we must be seen to be objective, that is to say, value free. The authors, however, are men and cannot therefore be value free. Accordingly the values, which *qua* scientists they cannot avow explicitly, have to be inferred from the style, the occasional aside, the basic presuppositions of the scientific aspiration. . . . The real trouble comes ... when the authors have to define the nature of therapy. The patient has to be cured. What does that mean? To enable him to be free to face the truth and so live in greater freedom. But what truth? The truth of evolution's requirements? The truth is that for our scientifically hobbled authors there can be and is no truth in the larger crucial metaphysical sense. And this is admitted "A technology of therapy may be quite useful without regard to its truth; change, not truth, is its objective."

The idea of "truth" is indeed the Siege Perilous in a science-oriented culture, and one can understand the caution of the authors under review without objecting in the least to Mr. Sampson's criticism. What must also be said is that the longing for truth is an irrepressible hunger of the age, the point being that, since the quest is inevitable, *some* kind of caution is necessary. The advance, here, is that this issue now comes out into the open. Obviously, the book by Yankelovich and Barrett deserves further attention.

There is a not unrelated discussion in the first chapter of Charles Hampden-Turner's just published *Radical Man* (Schenkman, Cambridge, Mass., paper, $5.50), devoted to the devastating mistakes made by a "science of man" which uses tools borrowed from physics. In one place this author says:

> What is meant by value free science is that tools can make no final judgments as to ends. But tools can, as we have seen, bring certain ends nearer by their application, make other ends nearly impossible to attain, and leave vast areas of human endeavor undiscovered. If we value integrity and wholeness then the process of analysis without synthesis will create disvalues. If we value love, then a detached technique can hinder both its study and its consummation. The controlled experiment will not enable us to examine freedom and spontaneity. . . . Those tools regarded as most "scientific" uncover selectively those aspects of man that most resemble the dead mechanical universe for which the tools were originally designed.
>
> Tools of science are an extension of our senses and soon become part of us. We know from research that the pupils of our eyes will contract when we see distasteful things and expand to take in what we value. It behooves us therefore to be aware not only of what our liking or disliking enables us to see but to consider that tools act like an expanding pupil to let in some phenomenon *as if we liked it.* And since science itself is a prestigious authority what its tools screen out will be less valued by the culture as a whole.

Mr. Hampden-Turner finds many social scientists to be practitioners who think of themselves as "purposive, creative, and free," yet who use a discipline which has a value free background. This affects both their practice and themselves:

> As Maurice Stein has observed, the attempt to be value-free in social contexts can end up by making one value*less.* He who is silent assents, and to

describe the *status quo* with detailed and passionless precision is usually to dignify it.

And there are practical reactions:

It is hardly surprising that social science students, who more than those in any other field, value altruism are in open revolt from campus to campus, as their schools attempt to drill the humanity out of them and force them into the conservative cast. Not since the Children of Israel were required to make bricks without straw has a generation been faced with such a ludicrous disproportion between the social tasks and the tools provided. The revolt began at the Berkeley campus at the University of California, where nearly 40% of the students study the social sciences and where over 50% of the Free Speech Movement were majoring in that area. The French student revolt of May 1968 began in the department of Sociology. Early in the Columbia University revolt social science students spontaneously seized their own Fairweather Hall. At Harvard, students of Social Relations were disproportionately represented among those arrested in University Hall in the Spring of 1969. During this term the most popular course in the entire University was Social Relations 149, a student-run breakawaycourse with over 800 members, that deliberately eschewed formal disciplines in order to attain human relevance.

What testifies to the present bankruptcy of the social sciences is that formal disciplines and human relevance are so difficult to reconcile, that our best students are obliged to sacrifice the first in choosing the second. This book will attempt a reconciliation between the two.

Actually, Mr. Hampden-Turner's volume (420 pages) might be regarded as something along the lines called for by Henry Anderson in his MANAS article, "Toward a Sociology of Being."

This sort of criticism seems usefully generalized by George W. Morgan in a paper, "Man's Humanity and the Crisis of his Self-Understanding," in the Fall-Winter 1969 issue of the *Review of Existential Psychology & Psychiatry*. Mr. Morgan is a professor without departmental affiliation at Brown University. He writes:

. . . the expansion of science has brought on a crisis of inestimable gravity in man's self-understanding. This crisis is twofold. On the one hand, science by its very nature is such that the sphere which essentially constitutes man as man lies outside its domain; on the other, this crucial fact is ignored or understood inadequately. Science is often regarded as the sole and sufficient way to know man. The consequence of this is that we do not see man as *man.* His humanity is either ignored completely or so explained as to be explained away. He is reduced to purely physio-chemical processes of the body, or to neo-behavioristic "stimulus-response" mechanisms, or to some other mechanism of a psychological, sociological, or political kind, or to the product of cultural forces. His mental life is equated with electrical-chemical phenomena in the brain or the workings of electronic computers, or is otherwise reduced, for example, to mathematical models of game theory.

Even when science is not regarded as the sole mode of knowledge, it often happens that other ways of knowing are deformed by scientific or pseudo-scientific traits which are deliberately or unconsciously adopted without awareness that they deny the view of man one believes oneself to be holding. Quasi-scientific explanation, quasi-scientific language and a quasi-scientific attitude of impersonality are found all too frequently even in humanistic and religious areas.

The general need seems clear enough. It is for rigor and discipline in the pursuit of self-knowledge, or knowledge of man, yet of the sort that does not externalize, deny or ignore human wholeness, and will not collapse in the presence of incommensurable realities of consciousness and potentiality. Without such a discipline, the familiar mechanistic forms of intellectual "security" are bound to creep in and take charge.