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THE GREATEST PUBLIC NEED

WHAT sort of tolerance or understanding is possible for the ordinary man concerning the problems of "the management"—the management of societies or states? The main difficulty, here, lies in the fact that understanding can amount to little without a measure of identification—it involves thinking of oneself in the position of the person or persons who are to be understood—and there are both practical and moral barriers to identification with the official organizers or managers of today. Both sides of the problem are briefly covered in a passage from *Mission to Hanoi,* by Harry Ashmore and William Baggs, in which the authors report a conversation they had with Mary McCarthy, said to be "the most uncompromising among the intellectuals who have elected to double as war correspondents."

> In her brief book, *Vietnam,* which recounted her explorations in the South, she took the stand that the issue was first and last a moral one and must not be treated to any degree of compromise. American intellectuals, she proclaimed, should follow the lead of their compatriots in France at the time of Algiers. The only answer for America was to get out of Vietnam; it is not the business of intellectuals to figure out *how* this is to be done, or whose face is to be saved; the practical matter of disengagement is the tawdry business of generals and politicians. In her hortatory mood, Miss McCarthy had dismissed with contempt those who had opposed the Vietnam war but had fiddled with formulas for ending it by negotiation—the likes of Fulbright among the politicians, and Kenneth Galbraith and Arthur Schlesinger among the intelligentsia, and, of course, ourselves.
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> Now, emotionally spent after more than two weeks behind the lines, she was indulging in second thoughts. Perhaps she had been too hard on Fulbright and the others; they had, after all, fought the good and lonely fight; and because they had done so, Lyndon Johnson was now removing himself from the scene and allowing hope to blossom again across the troubled planet. We, in our turn, were suffering from premonitions of more double-dealing to come, and we found ourselves urging Miss McCarthy and her cohorts to stick to their guns.

Well, you could call this an "existential" resolution—the kind of consensus-from-fatigue that may overtake an uncompromising man of principle after battering for years at a situation constructed out of nothing but compromises and deceptions—and apparently impenetrable to anything else. Then, indeed, unless he is a moral genius, he may give a bit here and there. What else can he do? The carnage goes on and on.

On the other hand, the man with some faith in the rules and arrangements of management, who seeks "practical results" in change, may make contact only with some law of diminishing returns which consumes the moral energy of everything he does. This does not always happen, of course. The results he gets will depend upon his tough-minded grasp of the forces involved and the complexity of the situation he is attempting to affect. What sort of "practical" men get the best results? The question is so loose as to be almost meaningless, but Lincoln Steffens had something to say about this, and Gerald Sykes's essay on "The Politics of Shipwreck" (in *The Hidden Remnant,* Harper, 1962) shows the totally unconventional character of men who are able to deal with such disreputable forces. The germane wisdom is Ortega's, which Mr. Sykes quotes:

> "The man with the clear head is the man who . . . looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic, and feels himself lost. . . . Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look around for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere, because it is a question of his salvation, will cause him to bring order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas, the ideas of the shipwrecked."

What this tells us, and about all it tells us, is that the best practical managers of irrational situations are men whose sagacity has been

forged, tempered, and proved in the school of hard knocks. Such men cannot or will not explain themselves. They are of little help, therefore, in a theoretical consideration of the problems of management. What we want is a better grasp of our own obligations in relation to the intolerable aspects of power, which means something more than cryptic intuitions about the qualities of men who use power effectively, or who achieve good results in ugly relationships where power seems to be of the essence. A stoic patience may help us to endure situations on which our rational methods have no effect, but recognizing the presence here and there, in seats of power, of extraordinary individuals only makes such situations more bewildering.

Is there, one wonders, some kind of "split" in the psyche of us all, a division which—in the long term—has made intolerable situations inaccessible to us? What about Miss McCarthy's claim that those who voice objection to the immorality of the war in Vietnam have no obligation to devise a practical program of disengagement—that this is "the tawdry business of generals and politicians"? Without bothering to notice that numerous peace groups have proposed elaborate programs for the disengagement of the United States, let us look at the implications of refusing to do so. There is a sense in which refusing to provide a plan may be an implicit charge that the generals and politicians don't *want* a plan, and would make endless objections to any plan proposed. Or it amounts, obliquely, to what Thoreau said to the judge who claimed it was his duty to administer a *bad* law. You could, he said, get down from the bench. The idea is to dissolve the structure of an evil instead of opposing it.

One might say that Miss McCarthy's position accepts, as a working arrangement for her purposes, the division of labor or responsibility which is characteristic and traditional in our society. We have, that is, different people to do different things. A paragraph from Arthur Morgan's book, *Observations,* describes the setting in which her criticism of policy is offered:

> The separation of church and state in America has had a result which builders of our constitution did not foresee. The condition provided for was one in which the church would care for the spiritual needs of men, and would present the fundamental purpose and meaning of life. The state, through such schools as should be developed, might look after the practical and material considerations. The school would prepare youth to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," but the churches would control "the things that are God's." But now we have a great and unexpected development. The school becomes our dominant national institution and the church relatively fades away. The practical methods of life are comparatively well cared for, but the fundamental purpose and meaning are neglected.

Miss McCarthy, in short, along with various others, performs the duties of a lay preacher. She declares that an end to the war in Vietnam is one of "the spiritual needs of men." The management in charge of "practical and material considerations" has involved all the people in terrible violations of "fundamental purpose and meaning," and these must be *stopped.* Miss McCarthy will not submit to the delaying tactics of arguments about ways and means. That is not her department. To call attention to the violations is what she knows how and is able to do. And the voice of conscience, we may say, is nonetheless valuable for not being the author of practical plans.

But in a society which allows conscience to become the specialty of a few people, it tends to grow impotent, and its voice strident from being unheard. Then it can be ignored, since practical affairs cannot be guided by cries of desperation.

There are those who might cite Dr. Morgan's analysis approvingly: "Yes, that's what we've always said. Separation of church and state was a great mistake. It has divorced practical undertakings from divine guidance." But this bland declaration ignores a great deal of painful history, and neglects the reason for the separation—to make it impossible to arm spiritual

or psychological tyranny with political power. This seemed the only way to keep conscience a private affair.

What Dr. Morgan means, it seems clear, is that the Founding Fathers, while denying the state authority over private morality, had no intention of departmentalizing it. This is the result they did not foresee. As a matter of fact, the Founding Fathers were hardly true believers in the doctrines of the churches of that time. The first seven presidents were Deists—men who had worked out their own guiding moral principles and who probably expected that other people would be able to do the same.

The conclusion, then, from American cultural history, is that if the people do not themselves preserve moral wholeness in their lives, their political and social institutions will not be able to do it for them. Unfortunately, this conclusion, while true, has no political utility. No man seeking office will use it. Social truth is not a vote-getting device, while blaming institutions for our troubles promises a wide field of effective action for the right man in power.

This sort of scapegoating is a habit supported by a hundred years of angry revolutionary criticism which also locates the chief sources of social evil in practical institutions. So it is natural enough that the lay preachers of the present are virtually *unable* to identify with the managers of society. The division of responsibility is too well established and the institutional isolation of the management from moral responsibility too extreme.

Let us look, again, at the small plot of common ground discovered after their various grueling experiences by Miss McCarthy and Messrs Ashmore and Baggs. "Perhaps," the former mused, she had been "too hard on Fulbright and the others"—on men who tried to work within the managerial scheme of things. Yet Ashmore and Baggs, tired out and disillusioned by managerial double-dealing, found themselves "urging Miss McCarthy and her cohorts to stick to their guns."

How much actual *shipwreck,* we might ask, does it take to find that much area of simple, existential acceptance? And what are its elements? The common ground was made of defeat and hope. It was made of uncertainty, of admitted ignorance, and of unwillingness to submit to despair. Both approaches had broken down at the level of means, and there remained only the motive, which was the same for both.

The two newspapermen journeyed to Vietnam to see what they could do to expedite and spur the work of the social managers, to contribute the energies of resourceful amateurs within the limits of the methods established by law and known to both. Miss McCarthy went there to challenge and shame, to expose deceit. All three planned to use available channels of public pressure, and did. What, in the last analysis, lay at the root of the newspapermen's disenchantment with the activities of the managers? It was, quite plainly, the confusion of power with righteousness—a confusion so thorough that righteousness had become a nullity—that, and an official egotism fed from so many "high" sources that these two conscientious citizens could make no impression at all with the *meaning* of their efforts and proposals. The barriers they encountered were more than the normal fallibilities and imperfections of human nature. What stopped them was worse than the ordinary lag of institutions and the division of responsibility resulting from complex social organization. They were up against subdivided men who, quite apparently, were simply unable to question themselves or the authority for which they acted. They were up against delusions of grandeur from which all grandeur had been subtracted. Only the delusions remained, and these were of a sort that could only be called grubby in content, yet exercised a narrow, military omnipotence. So it was natural for them to begin to think kindly of

Miss McCarthy, to understand her unwillingness even to try to cope with all that.

What we are trying to get at, here, is the nature of the psychological obstacles which shut out ordinary men from the problems of the managers. What stands in the way, it; seems, is the incredible egotism of institutionalized man—not the egotism of individuals who work in institutions, but the heaped-up and spread-out overlay of righteousness, of system-justified behavior. That is what makes the plans, methods, and presumptions of management so abhorrent to men of intelligence and good will.

A smashed man, a shipwrecked man, a man born of adversity who has found some private rock for foundation, is a man who learns to work in almost any situation, but he can't explain his methods nor will he try. The psycho-social conditions he encounters, having been funded and averaged out like some kind of enormous national debt, he deals with as he might deal with a flood, an earthquake, or any natural disaster. He doesn't "judge" history, he doesn't try to "change" people, but works in the present with what raw materials it provides. He is something like a person who spends all his time binding up the open wounds of discarded humanity—improvising help for the failures and the depressed and deprived of an urban slum. Such a person doesn't talk about "justice" any more. He has no time, and anyhow, nobody hears. The system is not his, its management has no human relation to his work, and he feels no particular allegiance to it. He occupies himself the way a kind man might behave in hell, if he got sent there by mistake. In a mixed-up, disorganized culture, you are likely to find such men—a few of them—almost anywhere, doing what they can and asking no questions. They have plenty of what the psychologists call ego-strength, but hardly any ego. They don't fit into anybody's "programs" for social change or betterment, and you can't plan on having such people around. Nobody knows how they develop or where they come from. But they exist.

What can and ought to be worked on is the reduction of institutional delusions of grandeur, which now make wholeness a virtual impossibility for our society—which turn social sanity into the prerogative of the lunatic fringe, drive our brightest youth into the interstices, and convert alienation into a badge of honor.

There is just no hope for a society in which the best men can no longer think with sympathy about the problems of management. It isn't that the best men ought to go into management. Probably they should go into very different activities—do things that managers don't understand and have no interest in doing. The great movement now under way in this country, variously described, but representing the search for human meaning, for better ideas of self, for deeper self-consciousness, for forms of daily work that have some discoverable relation to genuine human need—this vast trend, which is a movement, and is great, is going to go on and to grow. It will bring into being new kinds of practical enterprise, new kinds of schools, and looser, less regimented human communities. It is going to modify and adapt technology to the service of actual needs. Even if there is a lot of pain, dislocation and disorder in the process of the change, these things are going to happen, for they are in authentic demand among the generation which, some twenty-five years from now, will be running the world.

One obvious effect of this change will be a vast reduction in the responsibilities and powers of management. Meanwhile, if management is to contribute a little less disorder to the world, it is going to have to reassess its role and revise its self-image. If there is anything at all to the idea of feed-back, and self-regulation on the basis of signals received, management has been making terrible mistakes for a great many years. The best way for management to return responsibility to the people is not to abdicate, but to admit that it is not infallible—that, indeed, it hardly knows what it is

doing. The evidence is in, the facts are public, and all that is now required is honest admission.

The world can't afford any more total revolutions. Continuity of history and culture is difficult enough to maintain, as it is, and the involuntary disorders of the time are already extreme. If public men would make public the inadequacy of their knowledge about what they ought to do, they might get a little cooperation instead of blind belief alternating with distrust and blind rebellion.

The admission that must be made public is that *nobody* knows enough to think for millions of people. Teachers don't do their students' work for them; that isn't teaching but the destruction of education. Even when they know the answers, they can't teach by telling the answers. And what we have now, in a world dominated by managers of various sorts, is a few people pretending to have answers that nobody can possibly know.

More "research" will not help us. Only less pretense. People can cope with the ignorance and mistakes of their leaders—they've been doing it since the Beginning. But no people can cope with official conceit, with the preposterous lies which conceit uses to put up a bold front. The point of the "death of God" theology is the return of responsibility for moral decision to the people. What else could it possibly mean? And now the managers of States and other great social enterprises are going to have to tell a similar truth for a similar rebirth of responsibility. They can save the world only by confessing how little they know.

REVIEW
FROM WORDS TO MEANINGS

PERHAPS any other issue, read carefully, would produce a similar effect, but the December 1968 *Etc.* (a "Special Literary Issue") seems especially rich in evidence that the life of human beings is nourished by symbolic meanings. In the concluding contribution, a fantasy called "The Intellect," T. Mike Walker writes:

> So I restrict myself to a study of corpses, words which are the tombs of motion; frozen feelings. Yet there is something magical and fascinating about the dead; when our minds take it up, language begins to dance like flowers in the wind beneath a sky exploding with butterflies. Words are mosaics with which we shape our experience, and as our experiences multiply we create new words for them, and since dozens of new words are added to our languages every day, I am constantly behind in my work. I am an historian of the transitory, and I measure my life with a tool of time, which is no more arbitrary than any other tool since it exists only in my head, since it is psychological and therefore untrustworthy.

What we have in our heads may be "psychological and therefore untrustworthy," but what is not in our heads, being unknown, cannot even come under suspicion! Mr. Walker only accepts the inevitable. Another paper provides illustration of how, when our minds take up the dead words of lost languages, they "dance like flowers in the wind." "Symbol and Metaphor in Nahuatl Poetry," by Rafael J. Gonzales, recalls Miguel Leon-Portilla's exciting studies of the philosophy of the Nahuatl Indians. Mr. Gonzales says:

> Since the language of the Nahuas is largely based on symbols, much is lost in mere word-by-word translations. Consider the word *centzontli,* which is the mocking-bird, but meaning literally "bird of four hundred voices." Or the verb *to teach,* in Nahuatl *ixtlamachiliztli,* "to give wisdom to the countenance of others," since the teacher, *teixcuitiani,* means "he who makes others take on a face," that is, makes them define their characters or, if you will, discover themselves.
>
> Moreover, there was one language for the common people and one for the nobles and the gifted. We have only to examine the Nahua concept of man to realize how intricate and subtle it was. Expressed as a formula for courtesy, the term *in ixtli, in yollotl* (your face, your heart) may be regarded as a metaphor for what we call the integral character of a human being, that harmony between the external acts of a man and those intimate, psychological motivations within him, which constitute his personality. In addressing someone in this manner, a man was recognizing in him the most important attribute of a mature person, *omacic oquichtli.* Being master of a face and a heart, he has integrity.

To show that the Nahuatl language is based on "a complex and vast mytho-religious tradition," Mr. Gonzales gives varied examples of the use of four Nahuatl metaphors: "flowers, quetzal plumes, jade, and hearts." The imagery of gold and jade in Nabuatl poetry shows again and again that these materials were prized chiefly as symbols of enduring values of the mind. An Otomí song speaks of itself—the song—as only a setting for the jewel of *meaning,* typified by lasting jade, so that a reference to jade in this poetry "signifies a more permanent achievement of the human being." The Spanish invaders of Mexico, because they fingered gold greedily for its own sake, were regarded by the Aztecs as barbarous and childlike. Mr. Gonzales says in a concluding passage:

> It was the wisdom of this ancient culture to recognize the human consciousness symbolized by the heart as being the most precious of things. . . . According to the Nahuas, it was part of a teacher's duty to "humanize people," for "thanks to him, the love of the people is humanized" (*itech netlacaneco*); he "makes the hearts strong" (*tlayolpachivitia*). Leon-Portilla defines the word literally as follows: *yol* (*otl:* heart), *paclaivitia* (to make strong), *tla* (with relation to things)—signifying "make hearts strong with relation to things."
>
> What the Nahuas meant by this term becomes more apparent when we piece together the scattered mosaics of their thought in what remains of their literature. It was an attribute of the "mature man" to have a "heart firm as stone." In our own culture such an expression describes an unfeeling cruel character. But this is not at all what the Nahua meant. The word *yollotl,* heart, comes from *ollin,* movement, this

> being indicative of life. When "stone" (supreme stillness) is coupled with "heart" (source of movement), we get an image of dynamic stability, and when this stability is "strong with relation to things," we get something like the "unmoving mover," the principle of Eastern mysticism—a consciousness existing in and with the varied forces of human condition, yet master of itself. This complex concept is made even more significant when we consider the metaphor of the "jade heart," where the stability issues from the very substance of which it is formed, life, that source of movement which must simultaneously be still and moving in total harmony with the universe.

Now comes an application of this symbolism to the Feathered Serpent:

> Given the symbol of the jade heart, we are provided with a key to the symbol of Quetzalcoatl, the plumed serpent. A dualistic image, it brings together two diverse principles, the male and the female, analogous to the Yin-Yang. In Nahua mythology the serpent is identified with the mother goddess (Coatlicue), the earth; the bird with masculinity (Huitzilopochtli), the sky, the heroic. In the feathered snake the two principles are united: active and passive, abstract and concrete, positive and negative—the serpent with the possibility of flight and the bird which must lose contact with the earth. It was this unification of opposites that became the patron god of culture, art, knowledge.

Finally, Mr. Gonzales speaks of Nahuatl awareness of the hazards in the use of language:

> They recognized that language is an intricate and dangerous tool, for, with it, man must capture truth. Words are so many hands with which he must grasp the great butterfly. If he holds it too tightly, he mutilates it; if he holds it too lightly, it escapes him. Perhaps the Nahuas very wisely let it fly between compound terms, trusting that somewhere between the two images one could catch a glimpse of truth, knowing that its movement and flight are as much a part of itself as the chemical composition of its wings.

A passage in a paper by Ralph E. Carnes throws light on the unique power of the poet:

> Benjamin Lee Whorf maintains that each language system has within it an "implicit metaphysics," a *weltanschauung* unique to the particular language. The poet, by breaking the conventions of the language system, provides us with enrichments of our "world-view" and alternative interpretations of the "implicit metaphysics" embodied by our language. Thus it is possible for the reader to become aware not only of what his language reveals to him which has gone unnoticed before but also of further realms of meaning that the language system has hidden from his view.

Here, perhaps, is some explanation of the intuitive resistance many people feel to language simplification for utilitarian reasons, and even to changes in spelling which drop out old origins. What metaphysical associations will be thrown away by this merely pragmatic approach? The fact is that another language interests us in human terms only as it reveals the basic attitudes of the people who use it. A "made-up" language constructed for "efficient" communication is only a mechanistic device.

The implicit metaphysic is the context for the symbols or abstractions used in any communication involving human values, and the reader indifferent to the context can hear only "noise." This is clear from simple illustrations in a paper by Jack Matthews:

> The most important goal in reading is to experience the events "beyond the words" as if we were somehow participating in them. . . . Whenever we make a judgment, we make comparisons and contrasts, and these arise from the act of putting things in context. . . . If you want to understand a saw, you must have wood; if you want to see what fire is, you must have tinder; to understand the idealistic Romeo, he must be juxtaposed with his foil, the cynical Mercutio. And so it goes. . . . What is a murderer without a victim? What is an anchorite without a world of corruption and error? What is loneliness without society? What is a symbol without a habitat?
>
> When one discovers (or possibly "creates") a context he brings two or more things together to see what they have to say about each other. What happens when students read *Treasure Island* in the ninth grade and *Huckleberry Finn* in the eleventh grade and some teacher says to her eleventh graders: "How are these two books alike?"

What Edmund Carpenter says in "The Eskimo Language" strongly reminds the reader of

Janheinz Jahn (in *Mantu*) on African art and poetry:

> Art, to them [the Eskimo], is not a noun, something there, to be viewed, standing between man and experience, but what occurs when carver and material collaborate.
>
> This is difficult for us to conceive, for English emphasizes nouns, things that are there, apart from us. Eskimo, in contrast, makes little distinction between "nouns" and "verbs"; rather, all words are forms of the verb "to be," which itself is lacking in Eskimo. That is, all words proclaim in themselves their own existence. Eskimo isn't a nominal language; it doesn't simply name things which already exist, but rather brings things-actions (nouns-verbs) into being as it goes along. This idea is reflected in the practice of naming a child at birth: when the mother is in labor, an old woman stands around and says as many different eligible names as she can think of. The child comes out of the womb when its own name is called. Thus the naming and the giving birth to the new thing are inextricably bound together. . . .
>
> Eskimo seem to be saying that nature is there, but man alone can free it from its dormant state: that it requires a creative act before the world explored becomes a world revealed, that the universe acquires form, "existence," only through the actions of man the speaker-artist-dancer: man the revealer: he who releases the dynamism inherent in nature and guides its expression into fruitful forms.

Taken as a whole, this issue of *Etc.* is fascinating evidence that the serious study of language leads directly to encounter with the philosophy by which men live.

It is also evidence for the contention of Lewis Feuer (in his *New York Times Magazine,* April 24, 1966) article on philosophy, to the effect that the most stimulating philosophical thinking, these days, comes from people who are active in other fields and whose thinking is uninhibited by academic convention.

COMMENTARY
WHY REASON FAILS

THE frustration we experience in discussion often comes from not being able to *get at* the neglected realities which make obvious truths seem irrelevant. For example, when Mario Montessori recalled in a conversation with A. S. Neill how his mother, Madame Montessori, stimulated a desire to learn to read in the illiterate parents of the four- and five-year-olds she was teaching, Neill just exploded. "This is beyond me! It's beyond me," he said. Montessori couldn't understand. Why wasn't the desire of the parents to learn to read a fine thing? Neill explained:

> It's beyond me because you're talking about education, the three R's and science, and I'm thinking about the dynamics of life, the dynamic in a child, how we're going to prevent the child from becoming a Gestapo, or becoming a color hater and all these things. The sickness of the world. I'm interested in what we're going to do *for* children to stop them from becoming haters, to stop them from becoming anti-life.

A similar criticism might be made of George F. Kennan's article, "Rebels Without a Program" (a chapter in his book, *Democracy and the Student Left*) which the *Reader's Digest* printed last December. Mr. Kennan is full of sage observations, but he leaves out perceptive awareness of what is felt by the young.

This tends to cancel the sense of what he says, which is a pity, since Mr. Kennan is often worth listening to. He starts by recalling Woodrow Wilson's conception of "the perfect place of learning," where men pursue truth dispassionately, refusing to allow partisan concerns to distort their vision. Then he says:

> There is a dreadful incongruity between this conception and the state of mind—and behavior—of the radical left on the American campus today. In place of slowness to take excitement, we have a readiness to react emotionally, and at once, to a great variety of issues. In place of self-possession, we have screaming tantrums and brawling in the streets. In place of thorough talk, we have banners and epithets and obscenities and virtually meaningless slogans.

Then, toward the end:

> I submit that if you find a system inadequate, it is not enough simply to demonstrate indignation and anger by mass defiance of established authority. . . . If the student left had proposals for the constructive adaptation of this political system to the needs of our age, and if its agitation took the form of reasoned argument and discussion, then many of us could view its protests with respect. But when we are offered, as the only argument for change, the fact that a number of people are angry and excited, then we of my generation can only recognize that such behavior bears a disconcerting resemblance to the origins of totalitarianism.

A calm, sagacious evaluation, this; and Mr. Kennan ends on a truly compassionate note: "we have to do here with troubled and often pathetically appealing people, acting, however wisely or unwisely, out of sincerity and idealism, out of the unwillingness to accept a meaningless life and a purposeless society."

What is missing is serious attention to the *enormity* of the concrete impact on the students of a "meaningless life and a purposeless society." Obviously, Mr. Kennan doesn't feel what they feel, and probably can't. So his wisdom—and it *is* wisdom—suffers by coming out of the wrong mouth.

One remembers here Lewis Feuer's account of how the Soviet intellectuals adapted themselves to Khrushchev's revelations of Stalin's crimes. After a while, they begin to say, "Well, he made a few mistakes"—the word used for mistakes being the Russian for the kind of mistakes a child makes in spelling. To *feel* and try to explain what Stalin really did would shake the foundations of their society.

The parallel is not exact, but the psychological correspondence is clear.

Telling what happened at Columbia, Richard Kunen wrote in the *Atlantic* for last October:

> We petitioned, we demonstrated, we wrote letters, and we got nowhere. We weren't refused, we were ignored. So one day we went into the buildings, and one day later we were pulled out and arrested and many people were beaten. In the intervening days we were widely accused of having ourselves a good time in the buildings. We did have a good time. We had a good time because for six days we regulated our own lives and were free.

There's something basically upsetting about people who want to hold all the cards of power and position while they preach "reason." The reason may be sound, and continue to be sound, but experience shows that a point is reached when people simply can't hear it. Then there is only one thing left for people who believe in reason to do: Equalize the situation. Usually, this is felt to be too costly or risky. So there are wars, or riots, or student rebellions.

On principle, there is never sufficient excuse for the abandonment of reason. But this is something you say to yourself, not to people having a very hard time. How can they *believe* that you believe in reason, even though you see quite clearly from the serene heights of affluence and power?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SEARCH FOR OLD FRIENDS

KNEE-DEEP IN THUNDER is a delighting but curious sort of children's story which may create some problems for the adult reader. The author is Sheila Moon, a practicing psychotherapist, and her book is illustrated with rather wonderful drawings by Peter Parnall (published by Atheneum, 1967). The "problems" may not be of great importance but they seem worth mentioning, although the story is so well told that even adult readers will want to finish it.

The problems won't exist for children to whom the story is read. Three hundred pages of the perils of Maris, a little girl of about the age of Lewis Carroll's Alice, which starts out in a *Wonderland* setting, give a lot for the reader of any age to look forward to. Seeking refuge from a family quarrel about money, Maris runs off to her favorite hollow in a wild place near the shore. Lying there in the grass, she watches her little dog pursue a beetle that skitters out of sight. The dog burrows, kicks up a chestnut-sized stone with a *velvety* surface. The stone is a talisman that changes the hollow into a wonderful valley; and meanwhile the beetle reappears, much enlarged, and starts to talk:

> "Tell me your name and why you are here." As he asked the question—or, rather, gave the command—it sounded like the first day of school, and I almost giggled.
>
> "My name is Maris." I stopped. The full weight of the second part of his command filled me with confusion and anxiety. "My name is Maris," I repeated, not knowing where to go next.
>
> "So you said. Now what really brought you to this place? Or perhaps I should say, what do you think led up to this?"
>
> "Well, I guess it was a kind of accident."
>
> "Nothing," said the beetle gravely, "nothing, my dear Maris, is ever an accident. All events and circumstances in a life are conjoined, in ways known or unknown, to each other as cells in a living body. Let us not then speak of accidents!"
>
> "No," I said, "no," though I was not clear at all as to why. "Well, I wanted to be by myself, to be let alone."
>
> "Why?"
>
> "Because I feel all mixed up and scattered whenever Mother and Dad are having problems! I love them both and I can see both points of view, and then I get mad at both of them for being like they are!"
>
> "And you, Maris—what is your point of view?"
>
> "I guess I want everybody to be happy!"
>
> "Although perhaps a meritorious sentiment, that is hardly a point of view." He sighed. "I had in mind something rather more individual. But I greatly fear that you are not yet individual, and we must begin where you are and not where I might hope you were."
>
> I wasn't sure I understood, but I got the idea that I wasn't very desirable, and the only reply I could think of was, "That's where I am even if you don't like it!"

And now the adventures begin. Led by her insect Virgil, Maris meets an old, old woman seated by a fire. "Her clothes were strange and hard to define, for their color and texture seemed continually shifting, now sombre, now luminous, now rough and worn, now rich as finest velvet."

> "Grandmother!" the beetle whispered in a voice conveying both awe and love. "O our grandmother!"
>
> The old woman turned her face full toward us. I caught my breath at the dramatic and ancient beauty, great dark eyes set deep in a maze of wrinkles, a mouth that had smiled at all beginnings and grieved at all endings since life began.

Well, the old woman is the presence of wisdom, patience, and love who gives an underlying harmony to a little girl's adventures in an eerie world where all sorts of insects talk, where a red ant performs heroic exploits, a quaint caterpillar turns into a lovable butterfly, and dragon flies and fireflies go on intelligence missions for Maris and her insect friends—along with a brave little boy who turns up after a while.

The tale is an artful combination of fairy tale and myth, which is why the problems come in, for the adult reader. Part of the delight in a myth is that you have heard it again and again. Its meanings are old friends. But as you read along in *Knee-Deep in Thunder,* you sense strange mythic meanings you can't get at. A few bars from an old song give a special sort of pleasure because you know the rest of it—you're on safe ground. So with a story that has mythic elements—they add unwritten chapters you tell to yourself. They make you a story-teller, too.

The jacket-flap of *Knee-Deep in Thunder* says: "Maris' adventures are haunted by Navajo mythology and a deep stream of age-old wisdom; but her problems and questions all belong to today"—and you want to know what is Navajo tradition and what is something else. Perhaps the reader doesn't *need* to know, but that won't stop him from wanting to. And the wish may be more than idle curiosity. This is not intended to be a criticism of Sheila Moon's storytelling, but only a question about the wonderings stirred by bits of unfamiliar myths. The bits can't convey the symmetries which made the myths support and enrich the psychological and moral lives of many generations. People need to saturate themselves with mythic meanings, so that in time they become a second-nature resource. So you want to know how this worked for the Navajos. The first encounter doesn't help much. You don't have any bearings.

With such questions in mind, and following the lead of the flap, we hunted for information on Navajo mythology. We didn't find any; we haven't yet. Not a great deal, one librarian said, is in print on the subject; or, at least, not much is easily available to the ordinary reader. We did learn that by far the most authoritative source on Navajo mythology and culture is the Museum of Navaho Ceremonial Art, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which has large stores of material. Meanwhile, this seems a good place to name two other books children enjoy, in which there is excellent use of Indian lore—Jack Schaefer's *The Canyon* (on the Cheyenne, Ballantine paperback), and *Waterless Mountain* by Laura A. Armer (McKay, 1931).

More than a hundred years ago, Augustin Thierry remarked that "in legend alone rests real history," for the reason that "legend is *living* tradition, and three times out of four it is truer than what we call History." One might say that legend or myth distills what we need to know from history—the enduring relationships between Necessity and the will of men, and casts them in dramatic form. In this way myth lights up the meaning of our lives.

FRONTIERS

Scientific Frontiers

THE "News and Comment" section of *Science* for Jan. 24 has several items of interest. Bryce Nelson reports on a film recently released by NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration), titled "Debrief: Apollo 8." Devoted to the first manned flight around the moon, this 16-millimeter color movie (available free) is said to provide excellent views of both the moon and the earth, but the stress, apparently, is on the sanctity of the enterprise.

Mr. Nelson calls the film an "interesting public relations document," and his report implies that NASA might now be regarded as the federal agency in charge of Divine Relations:

> The film-makers also emphasize the importance of religion. In addition to featuring the astronauts' reading from the Book of Genesis, the film is given an inspirational beginning, to the accompaniment of low music and pictures of the heavens, with a statement of Norman Vincent Peale, the popular preacher who performed the recent marriage ceremony for President Nixon's daughter.

The longshoreman philosopher, Eric Hofler, appears at the end to wonder if man may have not originated in "outer space"—a possible explanation of our interest in cosmic explorations—"a kind of homing impulse . . . we are drawn to where we come from." Hence, perhaps, "our preoccupation with heaven, with the sky, with the stars, with a God who is somewhere out there. . . ."

Mr. Nelson also ends on a wondering note:

> Perhaps NASA is on the right track toward building popular and budgetary support for the space effort. After all, how can congressmen bring themselves to vote against programs which bring the nation closer to God?

More mundane affairs are dealt with by Andrew Jamison, who reports that William P. Lear, wealthy industrialist, expects to put a steam car on the market in 1970—"both a moderate- and a high-priced model." Lear has taken over a former Air Force Base ten miles north of Reno, Nevada, where he and his engineers are said to be perfecting a steam automobile calculated to make the internal-combustion engine "an oddity" within twenty years.

Mr. Lear's projects include the creation of a center of diversified industry in that region of Nevada, to provide alternatives to a gambling-dominated economy:

> Besides the steam project, Lear has set up Titanium West which will produce titanium ingots; he also plans to produce power alternators and automatic airplane pilots, and to start a charter jet service and a precious-metal refinery. He sees his enterprise as providing the industrial base for a future technical community here that would also include the nearby Desert Research Institute and the University of Nevada.

People active in the development of steam-powered vehicles testified in a Senate hearing last spring that their main problem is money. All the technical obstacles to steam power, they said, had been overcome, and a model vehicle driven 25,000 miles was found to have released into the atmosphere only "about 1 per cent of the pollutants that an uncontrolled internal-combustion engine emits." Lear told the *Science* writer: "I looked around and saw that if somebody didn't do something, the auto industry would bury steam just like it had done before."

A California concern, Thermodynamic Systems, Inc., of Newport Beach, is also developing "a small and highly efficient steam engine," but a spokesman for this company said it was for use in stationary power plants, helicopters, boats, and airplanes. He explained: "We just don't have the money to fight Detroit." The *Science* writer adds:

> But it seems that Lear does have the money to do just that. With his flair for the dramatic, Lear plans an unveiling of his racing car and of a prototype passenger car in mid-February (last month). The two cars will have the same basic engine, but the racer's will probably be larger, to produce greater speeds. The engine has three crank shafts arranged in a triangle, with six cylinders and 12 pistons. As in all

> steam systems, there is no transmission. Lear says his system will start in 20 seconds at 20 degrees below zero. The generator (or boiler) is a monotube that will operate almost forever on a supply of water, since the water is recirculated through the condensing system. The generator, condensor, and radiator will all be under the hood of the car, while the engine in the standard model will be underneath the car. Lear says the engine in the standard model will be about 400 horsepower and will weigh about 65 pounds. The entire system will weigh about 650 pounds—a bit less than the engine system weighs in a regular car. As the size of the boiler is decreased (Lear hopes to bring it down to about two-thirds the present size) the weight of the system will also decrease. A small turbine engine, powered from the boiler, will handle the auxiliaries—air conditioning, power-assist systems, radio, and so on.

Government agencies reveal a mild interest in steam vehicles, but continue to be skeptical. However, the California Legislature has asked the California Highway Patrol to put steam engines in six of their vehicles to find out what they can do. Mr. Lear and Thermodynamic Systems may both participate in this program. Both use "a working fluid of water mixed with soluble oil (5 per cent) to solve freezing and lubrication problems." Usable fuels include kerosene, diesel oil, gasoline or paint thinner, providing about as many miles to the gallon as today's cars, it is said. One cautious watcher of these developments, John Maga, an official of the California Air Resources Board, is quoted as saying:

> What seems to have been needed up to now was somebody with a lot of money. If Lear has been able to solve the problems that have historically been associated with steam then maybe steam cars will be able to compete with internal-combustion cars. And if they can, that would be very good for air pollution.

Bryce Nelson also reports a "research strike" which was planned for March 4 by professors and graduate students of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, intended to dramatize how the "misuse of scientific and technical knowledge presents a major threat to the existence of mankind." The idea of the protest originated in the physics department but spread to others, and was expected to spark demonstrations at Cornell and perhaps elsewhere. Originally conceived by graduate students in opposition to the Vietnam war, the halt in research took on broader aims through sympathizing faculty influence. A physicist at M.I.T. said: "we expect very broad faculty support; on the order of a majority of the faculty."

A faculty statement was initially signed by 47 members, and was then sent to the entire faculty for signing. This statement said:

> Through its actions in Vietnam our government has shaken our confidence in its ability to make wise and humane decisions. . . . The response of the scientific community to these developments has been hopelessly fragmented. . . . The concerned majority has been on the sidelines and ineffective. We feel that it is no longer possible to remain uninvolved. We therefore call upon scientists and engineers at M.I.T., and throughout the country, to unite for concerted action and leadership.

The statement declares objectives such as turning research from military projects to pressing environmental and social problems, and helping students to see the importance of choosing between science practiced for human good and the construction of weapons systems. Another goal is stimulation of opposition by scientists to "ill-advised projects such as the ABM system, the enlargement of our nuclear arsenal, and the development of chemical and biological weapons." The M.I.T. research strike, Mr. Nelson observes, represents "a kind of cooperation between the generations which is rare at universities these days."