

THE IDEAL OF PLENITUDE

LEWIS MUMFORD'S new book, *The Pentagon of Power* (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, \$12.95), sequel to *The Myth of the Machine*, issued in 1967 (reviewed in MANAS for Jan. 31, 1968), is without doubt the crowning glory of a career of nearly fifty years of effort to understand the achievements and mistakes of Western man. In *Technics and Civilization*, published in 1934, Mumford said that his general purpose was to place "technical development within the setting of a more general social ecology," and toward the end of the present volume he writes:

If we are to prevent megatechnics from further controlling and deforming every aspect of human culture, we shall be able to do so only with the aid of a radically different model derived directly, not from machines, but from living organisms and organic complexes (ecosystems). What can be known about life only from living—and so is part of the experience of even the humblest organisms—must be added to all the other aspects that can be observed, abstracted, measured.

Much of this book is intellectual history, tracing from its origins in the awakening European mind the preoccupation with power and with mechanical, manipulative skills and showing the displacement by these capacities of all other human attainments. In this way *Pentagon of Power* represents the fruition of a cycle of criticism which has been gathering strength ever since Roderick Seidenberg's *Posthistoric Man* (1950), and reached an apex of pessimistic doomsaying (for American readers) in 1964 with Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society*. While these works have been provocative, Mumford goes far beyond them by showing a way out of the prison of non-human technological thinking. He is able to do this because, as Theodore Roszak says, he writes with "the mind of an artist, perhaps more so than the mind of a scholar: it loiters over form and symbol and deals in the affairs of man

with that sense of the divine which has become an impossible embarrassment for our grimly secularized intelligentsia."

Because we have quoted so much from this book in recent issues of MANAS (using the *New Yorker* excerpts which appeared in four issues of that magazine), we shall here concentrate on the latter part of the volume. As artist-critic, Mumford belongs to the company of thinkers of which Carlyle and Emerson are illustrious examples, and this splendid heritage comes out particularly in the closing chapters of *The Pentagon of Power*. Since, with Emerson, Mumford grasps the fundamental dynamics of causation in human affairs, he knows what must be done to change the course of history, and he is able, therefore, to find encouragement in those as yet fragile and barely emergent historical tendencies which will one day take on more tangible shape. A long passage on "materialization" and "etherialization" in relation to human culture might well have had the following from Emerson as its guiding text:

Thus always we are daunted by appearances; not seeing that their whole value lies at bottom in the state of mind. It is really a thought that built this portentous war establishment, and a thought shall also melt it away. Every nation and every man instantly surround themselves with a material apparatus which exactly corresponds to their moral state, or their state of thought. Observe how every truth and every error, each a *thought* of some man's mind, clothes itself with societies, houses, cities, language, ceremonies, newspapers. . . . We surround ourselves always, according to our freedom and ability with true images of ourselves in things, whether it be ships or books or cannon or churches. The standing army, the arsenal, the camp and the gibbet do not appertain to man. They only serve as an index to show where man is now, what a bad ungoverned temper he has; what an ugly neighbor he is; how his affections halt; how low his hope lies. He who loves the bristle of bayonets only sees in their glitter what beforehand he feels in his heart. It is

avarice and hatred, it is that quivering lip, that cold, hating eye, which built magazines and powder houses.

It follows of course that the least change in the man will change his circumstances; the least enlargement of his ideas, the least mitigation of his feelings in respect to other men; if, for example, he could be inspired with a tender kindness to the souls of men, and should come to feel that every man was another self with whom he might come to join, as left hand works with right. Every degree of the ascendancy of this feeling would cause the most striking changes of external things: the tents would be struck; the men-of-war would rot ashore; the arms rust; the cannon would become streetposts; the pikes, a fisher's harpoon; the marching regiment would be a caravan of emigrants, *peaceful* pioneers at the fountains of the Wabash and the Missouri. And so it must and will be. . . .

Mumford does not borrow Emerson's rhetoric; he has his own, which he devotes to man's struggle to rise from an animal condition to "a superior, mentally activated, fully developed human being." This, for Mumford, is the meaning of man's enterprise on earth:

From the beginning, technics had an active part to play in this self-transformation; but it neither instituted these activities by itself nor, until our own age, did it seek to narrow man's capacities to those that could be confined to a technological outlet.

Man is his own supreme artifact. But this passage from animal to human has been no easy one; and it is far from finished; many further developments loom ahead. All through history there have been fixations, regressions, degradations, monotonous cyclic repetitions, institutionalized errors and terminal disintegrations. . . . Yet despite these blockages, there have been intermittent, if not incessant, evidences of high creativity and genuine development, culminating in symbolic personalities, mythical and natural, human and divine, that still set a standard for further human development.

Without these possibilities for subjective transcendence which are basic to man's whole development, it is doubtful if such a hypersensitive organism as man's could have survived the terrors and ordeals that were painfully magnified by the sweep and depth of his own consciousness: disease, bodily injury, senseless accident, human malignity, institutional corruption. An age like our own, whose

subjectivity trusts only one channel, that through science and technology, is ill-prepared to face the stark realities of life. Even those who still cling to the ancient heritage of religion and art, rich and nourishing though that still is, have become so acclimated to the dehumanized assumptions of technology that only a scattering of faithful souls have dared to challenge even its grossest perversions.

We should like to emphasize one sentence in the above: *Man is his own supreme artifact*. This is a way of saying that the record of his true excellences is always best preserved in himself—not in his constructions or monuments, his external achievements, which are but temporal marks he leaves behind him, but in what he has made of himself.

The early part of *The Pentagon of Power* describes the ascendancy of the delusion that machine power is the measure of man's potentialities. By a conspiracy of historical events, the corruption of religion and the tyranny of absolute monarchs became intolerable during the years when the great, founding discoveries of modern science were made. As a result, science and technology became both pseudo-religion and the support of revolutionary social gospel—their progress would make the spread of equality a practical possibility. Thus the operations manuals of the World-Machine were now the new Holy Writ. The vast over-simplification in this idea was ignored, even though some of the original discoverers plainly knew better. Mumford writes:

As Newton astutely observed in his "Optics," it is through tracing the causes of phenomena from their physical effects that we come to the First Cause, and this, he added, "is certainly not mechanical." If I dare amend that statement in order to apply it, not to the physical universe, but to human affairs, it would be by finding the First Cause, not alone in Newton's all-pervading Divine Organizer, but in the human mind.

To hold that man's subjective impulses and fantasies must be given as much weight as formative influences in culture, indeed as prime movers, as either the impressions made on his senses by the "physical world" or by the varied tools and machines he has contrived in order to modify that world may

seem to many, even today, a somewhat daring hypothesis. In our one-sided picture of the universe, man himself has become the displaced person: out of sight and therefore out of mind, an exile and a starving prisoner in a concentration camp he himself has laid out.

In reacting against the uncontrolled subjectivism of earlier world pictures our Western culture has gone to the opposite extreme. Once upon a time people gave far too much authority to their uncorrected and incorrigible fantasies, and they ignored the fact that men cannot by exclusive concentration on their inner life survive and reproduce except by the charity and grace of others who do not suffer from such delusions: a truth that the Hippies will in time find out. The failure to create a coherent transcendental world picture that did sufficient justice to the existential and subjectively unalterable facts of human experience has been the fatal weakness of all religions. But this subjective error has now been overcorrected, and has in turn produced a notion that is equally false: namely, that the organization of physical and corporeal activities can prosper in a mindless world.

For those who are over-impressed by the security of existing institutions—who cannot imagine any way in which counter forces of health and sanity will be able to prevail—Mumford has an interesting section on the decline of great empires. When its time came, collapse of Roman power and authority was swiftly accomplished. Not only were there attacks by barbarians from without, but there were deep changes of attitude on the part of many Romans themselves. And, as Mumford says—

If such renunciation and detachment could begin in the proud Roman Empire, it can take place anywhere, even here and now: all the more easily today after more than half a century of economic depressions, world wars, revolutions, and systematic programs of extermination have ground the moral foundations of modern civilization to rubble and dust. If the power system never seemed more formidable than now, with one brilliant technological feat following another, its negative life-mutilating counterpart has never been so threatening: for unqualified violence and crime in every form, patterned after the dehumanized examples of the Power Pentagon, have invaded what were once the most secure and inviolable activities.

This is not prophecy: it is a factual description of what is already happening before our eyes, with murderous confrontations and infantile tantrums taking the place of rational demands and cooperative efforts. Yes: the physical structure of the power system was never more closely articulated: but its human supports were never more frail, more morally indecisive, more vulnerable to attack.

Throughout the critical portion of the text Mumford distributes his suggestions for what must be done—often the revival of the polytechnic methods of the past, involving the handicraft approach which would use all sorts of intermediate technology, yet maintain human beings in control of operations under the guidance of principles of human good. Polytechnology may use machine principles, but in the form of tools which develop no "imperatives" of their own, being merely extensions of human skills. Gandhi's enthusiasm for the sewing machine is an example of Mumford's idea of the right use of technology. Further, the analogue for the guidance of institutions in the service of man is always the living organism. The machine, as has been pointed out, serves only one value—*more production*. So a machine-dominated civilization is a civilization predicated on the "always more" principle. This mindless drive to growth Mumford would replace with the principle of organic plenitude—which seeks not always more but a balanced sufficiency. "Always more" leads to a psychology of "never enough," which is manifestly an obsessional condition. Plenitude, on the other hand, is a freeing principle. Organic plenitude, once established, releases human energy for other, higher pursuits. At the end of his book, Mumford says:

To describe even in the barest outline the multitude of changes necessary to turn the power complex into an organic complex, and a money economy into a life economy, lies beyond the capacity of any individual mind; any attempt at a detailed picture would be presumptuous. And this is so for two reasons: genuine novelty is unpredictable, except in such features as are recognizable in another form in past cultures. But even more because the materialization of the organic ideology, though

already well begun, will take as long to replace the existing establishment as the power system required to displace the feudal and municipal and ecclesiastical economy of the Middle Ages. The first evidences of such a transformation will present themselves in an inner change, and inner changes often strike suddenly and work swiftly. Each one of us, as long as life stirs in him, may play a part in extricating himself from the power system by asserting his primacy as a person in quiet acts of mental or physical withdrawal—in gestures of nonconformity, in abstentions, restrictions, inhibitions, which will liberate him from the domination of the pentagon of power.

No one who reads the current books and magazines, who tries to keep up on the "youth" movement, who watches the current changes in publishing practice, knows of the small migrations of people from the cities to outlying areas, and recognizes the evidence of the "inner emigrations" which have been going on since the nineteen-forties, will lack for illustrations of what Mumford means here. Again, as he says:

In a hundred different places, the marks of such de-materialization and etherialization are already visible: many more than I have felt it necessary to cite. If I dare to foresee a promising future other than that which the technocrats (the power elite) have been confidently extrapolating, it is because I have found by personal experience that it is far easier to detach oneself from the system and to make a selective use of its facilities than the promoters of the Affluent Society would have their docile subjects believe.

Though no immediate escape from the ongoing power system is possible, least of all through mass violence, the changes that will restore autonomy and initiative to the human person all lie within the province of each individual soul, once it is roused. Nothing could be more damaging to the myth of the machine, and to the dehumanized social order it has brought into existence, than a steady withdrawal of interest, a slowing down of tempo, a stoppage of useless routines and mindless acts. And has not all this in fact begun to happen?

When the moment comes to replace power with plenitude, compulsive external rituals with internal, self-imposed discipline, depersonalization with individuation, automation with autonomy, we shall find that the necessary change of attitude and purpose has been going on beneath the surface during the last

century, and the long buried seeds of a richer human culture are now ready to strike root and grow, as soon as the ice breaks up and the sun reaches them. If that growth is to prosper, it will draw freely on the compost from many previous cultures. When the power complex itself becomes sufficiently etherialized, its formative universal ideas will become usable again, passing on its intellectual vigor and its discipline, once applied mainly to the management of things, to the management and enrichment of man's whole subjective existence.

None of this will be painless, of course. Shocks may be a part of the process, as Mumford elsewhere suggests, but since he is fundamentally concerned with human growth he most naturally speaks at the end of his book about the processes essential to growth.

Something should be said here about Mumford as a teacher. In the area of architecture and design, his influence has been something like the influence of A. H. Maslow and Carl Rogers on the young in the development of Humanistic psychology. Yet there may be a sense in which his larger influence is just beginning. He has always been the most knowledgeable of the historians of technology, and with this book he becomes a distinguished historian of culture and of ideas. This is a book that should have wide use in the new schools, at the high school level. It is a book to use for understanding our civilization, and for guidance in planning a better one.

REVIEW

QUESTIONS THAT NEED ANSWERS

AT the end of an enlightening and persuasive article on the ecological crisis, in *Science* for Nov. 27, 1970, Leo Marx says:

We cannot rely on technology because the essential problem is not technological. It inheres in all of the ways in which this dynamic society generates and uses its power. It calls into question the controlling purposes of all the major institutions which actually determine the nation's impact upon the environment: the great business corporations, the military establishment, the universities, the scientific and technological elites, and the exhilarating expansionary ethos by which we all live. Throughout our brief history, a passion for personal and collective aggrandizement has been the American way. One can only guess at the extent to which forebodings of ecological doom have contributed to the revulsion that so many intelligent young people feel these days for the idea of "success" as a kind of limitless ingestion. In any case, most of the talk about the environmental crisis that turns on the word *pollution*, as if we face a cosmic-scale problem of sanitation, is grossly misleading. What confronts us is an extreme imbalance between society's hunger—the rapidly growing sum of human wants—and the limited capacities of the earth.

Leo Marx, who teaches English and American studies at Amherst, is the author of *The Machine in the Garden* (Oxford University Press, 1965), a valuable study of the long literary resistance to mechanistic philosophy and industrial expansionism, a resistance which began with Schiller and is today a somewhat emotional reaction against the planetary abuses of technological power. The present paper is based on a talk he gave before the American Association for the Advancement of Science in December, 1969. Prof. Marx sees, with a clarity matched by few present-day critics, the need to reform not only our manifest "bad habits" in relation to the natural habitat, but to re-examine the philosophic ground of our entire way of life. His work, therefore, belongs with the writings of Lynn White, Jr., Aldo Leopold, Joseph Wood Krutch, Walter Weisskopf, and E. F. Schumacher on this

most important subject. In a passage intended to show the practical bearing of the ideas of men like Carlyle and Thoreau on man's relations with nature, Prof. Marx writes:

Perhaps the most striking thing about this expansionary ethos, from an ecological viewpoint, has been its capacity to supplant a whole range of commonsense notions about man's relations with nature which are recognized by some preliterate peoples and are implicit in the behavior of certain animal species. These include the ideas that natural resources are exhaustible, that the unchecked growth of a species will eventually lead to its extinction, and that other organisms may have a claim to life worthy of respect.

The record of American business, incomparably successful according to quantitative measures like the gross national product, also looks quite different when viewed from an ecological perspective. Whereas the environmental ideal I have been discussing affirms the need for each organism to observe limits set by its ecosystem, the whole thrust of industrial capitalism has been in the opposite direction: it has placed the highest premium upon ingenious methods for circumventing those limits. After comparing the treatment that various nations have accorded their respective portions of the earth, Fairfield Osborn said this of the United States: "The story of our nation in the last century as regards the use of forests, grasslands, wildlife and water sources is the most violent and the most destructive in the long history of civilization."

Who watches over the precious topsoil to protect its consumption by real estate developers? Nobody. "Since World War II approximately one-fifth of California's invaluable farm land has been lost in this way." The dominant motive of the American Way—profits—rules without question. This pattern has had the effect of wholly suppressing another theme of American life—a view of man and nature held by thinkers and "dreamers," by reflective human beings:

The focus of our literary pastoralism, accordingly, is upon a contrast between two environments representing virtually all aspects of man's relation to nature. In place of the aggressive thrust of 19th-century capitalism, the pastoral interlude exemplifies a far more restrained, accommodating kind of behavior. The chief goal is

not, as Alexander Hamilton argued it was, to enhance the nation's corporate wealth and power; rather it is the Jeffersonian "pursuit of happiness." In economic terms, then, pastoralism entails a distinction between a commitment to unending growth and the concept of material sufficiency. The aim of the pastoral economy is *enough*—enough production and consumption to insure a decent quality of life. . . .

One sees here the consistency of the pastoral ideal with various of the reform movements of the present—E. F. Schumacher's advocacy of "Buddhist Economics," A. H. Maslow's emphasis on the importance of Being-needs, and the whole tendency toward recovery of man's inner life:

From a psychological viewpoint, the pastoral retreat affirmed the possibility of maintaining man's mental equilibrium by renewed emphasis upon his inner needs. The psychic equivalent of the balance of nature (in effect the balance of *human* nature) is a more or less equal capacity to cope with external and internal sources of anxiety. In a less-developed landscape, according to these fables, behavior can be more free, spontaneous, authentic—in a word, more natural. The natural in psychic experience refers to activities of mind which are inborn or somehow primary. Whether we call them intuitive, unconscious, or preconscious, the significant fact is that they do not have to be learned or deliberately acquired. By contrast, then, the expansionary society is figured forth as dangerously imbalanced on the side of those rational faculties conducive to the manipulation of the physical environment. We think of Melville's Ahab, in whom the specialization of function induces a peculiar kind of power-obsessed, if technically competent, mentality. "My means are sane," he says, "my motive and my object mad."

Prof. Marx has for his objective the demonstration that the thought of the American pastoral tradition is rich in counsel and perspective on the underlying causes of the misuse of the environment:

Our literature contains a deep intuition of the gathering environmental crisis and its causes. To be sure, the matter-of-fact idiom of scientific ecology may not be poetic or inspiring. Instead of conveying Wordsworthian impulses from the vernal wood, it reports the rate at which monoxide poisoning is killing the trees. Nevertheless, the findings of ecologists confirm the indictment of the self-aggrandizing way of life that our leading writers have

been building up for almost two centuries. In essence it is an indictment of the destructive power-oriented uses to which we have put scientific and technological knowledge. The philosophic source of this dangerous behavior is an arrogant conception of man, and above all of human consciousness, as wholly unique—as an entity distinct from, and potentially independent of, the rest of nature.

It was Aldo Leopold's contention that nothing short of a deepening sense of man's essential unity with the rest of nature can bring the sense of fitness that is required to restore health to our relations with the earth; and this, too, seems to be Prof. Marx's view.

Yet it will be a long, long road to this realization for a great many men of the New World. Even the most thoughtful of the technologically minded—those who are becoming very much aware of the potential disasters in an unplanned and ungoverned progress—are still far from thinking in holistic terms. Their apprehensions and caution are growing out of the pain of past mistakes rather than from feelings of need for what Marx calls "the balance of *human* nature." An excellent example of the best of modern technological thinking appeared in No. 13 of the 1970 series of a rather exclusive magazine called *Innovation*, read by industrial designers and those concerned with the management of technology. The writer, Eugene Fubini, speaks openly of the failure of technologists to anticipate the more remote consequences of their activities. Inventors and developers, he says, give close attention to the *first* set of consequences of what they do, which is usually to replace an old means of doing something with a more "efficient" way. Yet they *could* see a long series of graded consequences, such as resulted, for example, from the introduction of the internal combustion engine. Even the ghetto culture, he shows, is related to this invention. Or take television, which replaced the movies—but also keeps the children in the house—"you are essentially creating for them a vicarious type of experience through television which the school was supposed to supply in the pre-TV stage."

Of course, he finds good results, too—a network of highways now connects in common interests lands which once were fought over in vicious local wars: "The set of values had been radically changed by the technologies of the internal combustion engine and communications." Mr. Fubini finds this encouraging, but he might also have noted another sort of war—one far more devastating—that has become possible through technological advance.

He explains his present reason for stressing "bad" consequences:

I think it is because we always assumed that anything new was good. New equalled good. And many people still think that way. Thus, it was somewhat of a rude awakening to find that sometimes new is not good! And hence the new emphasis: New is not good! A counter-reaction you might call it. But if I weigh the pluses and minuses, I think the pluses win. But I must admit: I don't have a clear proof. It is perhaps a matter of faith.

Mr. Fubini's article is titled "What Are the Consequences of What We Are Doing?" He shows a decent regard for unanticipated possibilities, and believes that greater efforts should be made by technologists to foresee the effects of what they do. But there is no hint of the desirability of an inner balance. The restraint is still empirically, not philosophically, grounded. Yet one portion of his article is especially interesting:

You ask: "How have you—Fubini—come to be concerned?" I answer: "Because I have children and my children talk to me." But it is more than that. It is because young men exist and because when I look at what moves them or makes them think, I try to put myself in their shoes. And I find that the large majority are not radical young men. They are reasonable, thoughtful. And they make me think when they ask me questions: "What are the values that make you do what you do?" "How do you measure progress?" "Why are you happy in what you do?" . . . I say to myself: "Can I answer those questions?"

COMMENTARY

THE PASTORAL TRADITION

IN a delightful essay called "Natural History," Aldo Leopold tells this story:

One Saturday night not long ago, two middle-aged farmers set the alarm clock for a dark hour of what proved to be a snowy, blowy Sunday. Milking over, they jumped into a pickup and sped for the sand counties of central Wisconsin, a region productive of tax deeds, tamaracks, and wild hay. In the evening they returned with a truck full of young tamarack trees and a heart full of high adventure. The last tree was planted in the home marsh by lantern-light.

This was a puzzling thing for them to do. As Leopold says, "man bites dog" is a hackneyed commonplace compared with "farmer plants tamarack," since—

Our farmers have been grubbing, burning, draining, and chopping tamarack since 1840. In the region where these farmers live the tree is exterminated. Why then should they want to replace it? Because after twenty years they hope to reintroduce spagnum moss under the grove, and then lady's-slippers, pitcher plants, and other nearly extinct wildflowers of the aboriginal Wisconsin bogs.

This explanation calls for more:

No extension bureau had offered these farmers any prize for this utterly quixotic undertaking. Certainly no hope of gain motivated it. How then can one interpret its meaning? I call it Revolt—revolt against the tedium of the merely economic attitude toward land. We assume that because we had to subjugate the land to live on it, the best farm is therefore the one most completely tamed. These two farmers have learned from experience that the wholly tamed farm offers not only a slender livelihood but a constricted life. They have caught the idea that there is pleasure to be had in raising wild crops as well as tame ones. They propose to devote a little spot of marsh to growing native wildflowers. Perhaps they wish for their land what we all wish for our children—not only a chance to make a living but also a chance to express and develop a rich and varied assortment of inherent capabilities, both wild and tame. What better expresses land than the plants that originally grew on it?

This attitude fits well with what Mumford calls "organic plenitude," and also with the theme developed by Leo Marx, to whom this week's Review is devoted—"the balance of *human* nature." In his book, *The Machine in the Garden*, Marx tells of what he found in the works of Joseph Addison, in the way of an advocacy of what could be called "farm gardens." Opposing the formal gardens of great private estates as wasteful of land, Addison asked:

But why may not a whole estate be thrown into a kind of garden by frequent plantations, that may turn as much to the profit, as the pleasure of the owner? A marsh overgrown with willows, or a mountain shaded with oaks, are not only more beautiful, but more beneficial, than when they lie bare and unadorned. Fields of corn make a pleasant prospect, and if the walks were a little taken care of that lie between them, if the natural embroidery of the meadows were helps and improved by some small additions of art, and the several rows of hedges set off by trees and flowers, that the soil was capable of receiving, a man might make a pretty landscape of his own possessions.

Emerson once remarked that the views of nature held by any people seem to "determine all their institutions." And elsewhere he suggested that the landscape is an expositor of the divine mind. From the rich implications of these ideas, it follows that ecology should, perhaps more than other branches of science, reveal philosophical tendencies. No one who has read the chief figures in the ecological movement can have failed to notice this.

Reading Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as a kind of prelude to the later development on American literature of the pastoral ideal, Leo Marx has this interesting passage, which shows the depth of the humanist vision—something far better than mere "wilderness" sentimentality:

The play fosters no illusion that a permanent retreat from the city is possible or desirable. But the temporary exile, or psychic renewal, may also be understood in political terms. If the city is corrupt, it is men who have made the journey of self-discovery who must be relied upon to restore justice, the political counterpart of psychic balance. Thus the

symbolic action, as in our American fables, has three spatial stages. It begins in a corrupt city, passes through a raw wilderness, and then, finally, leads back toward the city. But the court party is not returning to the same Milan from which it came. There is now some hope that what has been learned on the island can be applied to the world. What has been learned, needless to say, is not the lesson of primitivism.

So, as always, there is paradox in these matters. Here, while objective factors have their place and part, the subjective factors rule. It is this light and guidance that the distinguished humanist thinkers of the "pastoral tradition" provide, and whose thinking Leo Marx illuminates so well.

The only hope of the future is that this light can be made to grow stronger and stronger, until it no longer represents a tiny minority of thoughtful individuals, but an influential segment of the population. The stimulus caused by actual kick-back, not merely "feedback," from the misused environment will be all to the good, so long as the guidance comes from the light, and not from anger, anxiety, and reaction.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

YOU GET USED TO IT

SANDRA WEINER'S book of photographs with text, showing and telling about the Chicano families who pick the fruit that grows on California's enormous farms, can't help but delight the reader. Somehow, the ugliness and cruelty in their lives is not the most important thing to know about these people. Yet the book jars and arouses, too, since the injustice the Chicanos endure is so stupid and so unnecessary, and they ask so little. Here we shall try to convey the strength of these people, and the quality of life which they maintain in spite of everything. The book is called *Small Hands, Big Hands* (Pantheon, \$3.95), and is subtitled "Seven Profiles of Chicano Migrant Workers and Their Families." Two paragraphs of the introduction give both sides of the story:

The work is not inhuman—nothing like working in an automobile assembly plant. There are no intolerable noises, no foul smells, none of the self-destruction that man has created in the name of progress. There is sky and land and trees; sun and water to nurture the land. Everything we think about when we think of a day in the country. Except the endless toil of picking a ton of fruit.

The product itself is good and pure, sundrenched sweet fruit, warm to the touch, sweet to the taste, fragrant and beautiful to look at. So is the outward form of organization—the family—man's earliest and most natural social unit working together for a common goal. And yet: annual income for a family of four is \$1400. The other facts have been widely publicized—a system of usurious credit frequently imposes conditions of almost life-long slavery; opportunities for education are for all practical purposes non-existent; housing, sanitary and medical facilities are inadequate.

Yet times are hard in Mexico, too, where these people come from. A boy not quite thirteen begins his story by saying that he loves "working because that's my usual thing I have to do."

We come from Sonora, Mexico to California in February. I go to school in Mexico but I learned English in the California school the first year we came here. That was six years ago. When I am in Mexico I study in Spanish and when I am in California I study in English and sometimes Spanish. Five or four of my eight brothers speak English, the rest are starting to. Now we go to Mexico only for vacation—here in the United States we do farm work. We have a house there but we just put the furniture in a safe place and let the house stand. I like it better in the United States but we have to get some rest so we go to Mexico. . . .

The things that I study in school in Mexico are a lot harder than it is here. Last year I was in the fourth grade and I come over here and I'm in the sixth. But I should have been in the seventh. Here we live in a farm labor camp, not pretty but you get used to it. Over in Mexico there isn't a single car, just cheap buses that carry people around. Over here you have your own car. We went back by train last year, all ten of us with our television set.

Next comes a short disquisition on how to pick apricots, and how to avoid breaking an arm or a leg. "Once you're used to it you can pick with two hands and your feet can do the holding of the ladder." Then, as to cucumbers:

When I pick cucumbers the head man stands at the bin and when you get a pail full you have to empty it in the bin. I don't like to use gloves 'cause when it's hot the sweat gets into them and the little sticky hooks at the end of the cucumber get into them and when you try to take off the gloves your hands will hurt more. This year our boss paid twenty cents a bucket and for the extra big ones a bonus, half to the grower and half to us. To fill a ton you pick all day. It's very hard to pick a few tons and one day my father and brothers we picked three and we all had a bad backache all day.

A mother gave this account:

Shortly after my first child was born I went back to work with my husband and this time we worked in the vineyard picking grapes. After we had two children I had to leave them with my husband's grandmother in order to work. Then we were chopping cotton. That's when the cotton is very thick and you take off most of it and you just leave the plants you think will make a better crop. You also weed at the same time with a hoe. And you are in the hot sun all day. You work about 12 hours and

sometimes you are paid by the hour and other times by the row. When there was no other crop we worked on sugarbeets. The difference in cotton and sugarbeets is it's a long hoe and you can stand up hoeing cotton but with sugarbeets it's a short hoe and you must be on your knees.

About that time my husband hurt his back and I was the only one working.

We had three children and were living at the rancher's camp. We worked Sundays and often late at night irrigating, to have our place to live. He was injured on the ranch. They were loading some sacks of fertilizer and he was standing on the platform. It was weak and old and as they were throwing one sack to one man and then to the other he caught one and the floor gave way and he went right through.

After my husband was injured and couldn't work we had to move because they really want the whole family to work, especially the man. We found a small place to live and my husband had to stay in bed for six months and I worked in the fields. When he was walking again he found a job in the cannery.

We didn't set out to report on a "social document," but these facts are part of the fabric of the life of these people. The following is by an eighteen-year-old girl:

We do whatever each farm needs, either thinning, or tying, or hoeing, or picking. We have picked almost every fruit and vegetable growing, but the hardest job that I know, as a woman, is sugarbeets. Even the men say it is hard. After thinning you leave each plant five inches apart from the other. That's very hard because you have to be bent over on your knees with a small hoe, maybe twelve hours and this makes you sick with the kidneys or back. You must thin it while it is still a young plant. If you try sitting it doesn't work and you do not get the work done.

There was this man, he was a labor contractor for the ranchers, and he hired about 200 people and I made about 33 or 32 rows that day. You have to be a fast person. I had gone with shoes and socks into the field but I came out without the shoes or socks because the blisters on my feet they were paining me. So I went back to the car to lie down because I couldn't stand or move. I was already half with fever from tiredness. The labor contractor didn't want to pay my father and he was saying, "Well, your daughter has to come out and get the money, she knows how to sign her name." And even though I

was feeling so sick I was happy because I thought we were going to have so much money for the family. And all we got was seven dollars for nine people working twelve hours. . . .

I am much happier now because I am learning so much. When I was in school I didn't learn anything. I had to rush from school to pick cotton and I would forget the English and arithmetic. I never learned to speak English but I learned English real good when I started walking on the picket lines asking people not to buy grapes in the stores that sold them. At the first boycott they wouldn't take me because I didn't speak the language. So I had to learn fast to speak English. Everybody helped me who knew how to speak it. I still don't know how to read or write but I will learn.

It is hard to believe now that I had lived the way we did for so long. I remember at home on Saturday we would all take baths and eat together and then my father would play the trumpet. My sister and my brother-in-law played the guitar and my little sister played the guitar and we would sing and dance. Even though our life is with so much work we love to have fun and have some happiness. You have to carry some happiness in your heart.

And this, in truth, is the wonder of this book—the happiness these people have in their hearts.

What will life demand of us as the price of getting back to, of finding joy in, such simplicities? That we think of it as a "price" is the "hidden wound" Wendell Berry talks about in his latest book. But the real "price" demanded of us is that we seek an answer to this question even though we don't seem to *have* to. Here may lie the essence of what we call civilization.

FRONTIERS

Two Spanish Originals

IF there were to be a burning of books—and this is an idea we give no support—if men decided to burn some books and not others, we hope they would burn up all the intellectual deadwood, books which should not have been published in the first place. But of course, book-burners have quite other tastes and aims. They naturally destroy books that should be preserved, and keep the worthless ones.

What are the books, then, that deserve the noble defense of them Milton made in *Areopagitica*? We shall try to answer, not with a reading list, but with the identification of a single quality. The really precious books are books which tend and intend to drive the reader to rely on himself, to stir himself, to understand and improve himself. Everything else worth reading and worth preserving comes from writers who have responded to this appeal, however heard, and we can always restore the harvest so long as we know the secret of the seed.

In unpleasant fact, there are already far too many books in the world—so many that they are no longer highly regarded simply because they are books. One doubts that more than five per cent of the books published each year are in any sense worth printing. How many forests are sacrificed to this annual avalanche of useless verbiage! It goes on and on, for publishing is now a business, proud to be known as an "industry," with trade associations and economic consultants, and of increasing interest to enormous corporations looking about for ways to diversify their economic base. It is time, indeed, for a Quixote to challenge the whole plan and meaning of the modern publishing enterprise: by making himself ridiculous, to make *it* ridiculous, if he can.

This is a thought which comes of reading the last chapter of Miguel de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life*.

What is it about the Spanish writer and thinker which grips the reader? Perhaps the question should rather be, What is it that Unamuno and Ortega y Gasset have in common?

We might say that these are men who always shaped their own opinions. A borrowed thought for them remained a thorn and a spur, until it had been naturalized by their minds or rejected. Nobody lived their lives for them. Nobody suffered for their sins. Nobody could "save" them. They were like Saint Christopher, of whom the poet Frederick Faust said,

But Offerus for himself hath died
And for him Christ will weep.

It is the sturdy manhood of these writers which makes their work compelling. In his first chapter, Unamuno wrote:

On a certain occasion this friend remarked to me: "I should like to be So-and-so" (naming someone), and I said: "That is what I shall never be able to understand—that one should want to be someone else. To want to be someone else is to want to cease to be he who one is. I understand that one should wish to have what someone else has, his wealth or his knowledge; but to be someone else, that is a thing I cannot comprehend." It has often been said that every man who has suffered misfortunes prefers to be himself, even with his misfortunes rather than to be someone else without them. For unfortunate men, when they preserve their normality in their misfortune—that is to say, when they endeavor to persist in their own being—prefer misfortune to non-existence. For myself I can say that as a youth, and even as a child, I remained unmoved when shown the most moving pictures of hell, for even then nothing appeared to me so horrible as nothingness itself. It was a furious hunger of being that possessed me, an appetite for divinity, as one of our ascetics has put it.

One need not arrive at the same conclusions as Unamuno, nor admire the ones he reached, but it is necessary to respect his way of reaching them. He is a man who puts first things first:

And what all the objectivists do not see, or rather do not wish to see, is that when a man affirms his "I," his personal consciousness, he affirms man, man concrete and real, affirms the true humanism—

the humanism of man, not of the things of man—and in affirming man he affirms consciousness. For the only consciousness of which we have consciousness is that of man.

The world is for consciousness. Or rather this *for*, this notion of finality, and feeling rather than notion, this teleological feeling, is born only where there is consciousness. Consciousness and finality are fundamentally the same thing.

To be just to Unamuno, one must read him carefully. Meanwhile, he says at the end of this book:

I feel I have within me a medieval soul. . . . And if some accuse me of subserving the cause of Catholic reaction, others perhaps, the official Catholics. . . . But these, in Spain, trouble themselves little about anything, and are interested only in their own quarrels and dissensions. And besides, poor folk they have neither eyes nor ears!

But the truth is that my work—I was going to say my mission—is to shatter the faith of men here, there, and everywhere, faith in affirmation, faith in negation, and faith in abstention from faith, and this for the sake of faith in faith itself; it is to war against all those who submit, whether it be to Catholicism, or to rationalism, or to agnosticism; it is to make all men live the life of inquietude and passionate desire.

Will this work be efficacious? But did Don Quixote believe in the immediate apparenial efficacy of his work? It is very doubtful. . . .

One thing you know about Unamuno from this short quotation is that he is not a man to be pushed or pulled, lured or seduced. He will go his own way, and he will pay his own way, too.

The other Spanish writer with a firm grip on his own life and thought is Ortega. He is both philosopher and teacher. Early in *Man and Crisis* he says to his students:

I have tried to make it easy for you to fill the words "human life" with reality—words which to us are perhaps the most important in the entire dictionary because that reality is not just any reality, but our own, and in being ours it is the one in which all others are included as our own, the reality of all the realities. Everything which in any sense pretends to be a reality must somehow appear within my life.

But human life is not a reality directed toward the outside—the life of every one of you is not merely what I see by looking at you from within myself. On the contrary, what I see of you is not *your* life, but a portion of my own. To have you there as readers, to be talking to you on paper, is something that is happening to me. I find you facing me in various guises—young people who are studying, older men and women—and on speaking to you I find myself obliged, among other things, to search for a way of expression which will be comprehensible to all of you; that is to say, I must consider you, must deal with you, so that you are, for the moment, an element in my destiny, in my surroundings. But it is clear that the life of every one of you is to you not what each of you is to me, turning toward me and therefore toward something outside yourselves, but it is what each of you lives for yourself, out of yourself, and directed toward yourself. And in that life I am no more than one ingredient in your destiny, an ingredient in the environment in which you live. . . .

The reality of a life, then, consists not in what it is for him who sees it from the outside, but in what it is for him who is within it, for him who goes on living it, while and insofar as he lives it. Hence, in order to know another life which is not ours, we must try to see it not from within ourselves but from the point of view of the person who lives it.

This is why I said very formally, and not as a matter of simple metaphor, that life is drama; the character of its reality is not like the reality of this table, which consists merely in being here, but is made up of the fact that each one must go on doing for himself moment after moment, in a perpetual tension of affliction and hardship, without ever having complete security within himself. Is not this the very definition of drama?

There are no echoes in Ortega. His thought is always his own, and it is this quality in his work which gives it those wonderful "family resemblances" to the work of others who have the same quality.