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THE ABUSE OF HISTORY

THOSE who are ignorant of history, it is said, are doomed to repeat it. But those who have superficial knowledge of history, if we go to them for instruction, usually try to make us complacent about its repetitions. "Oh yes," they say, "all this has happened before." And then they give you what seem reassuring examples. Often classifying a happening is enough to make it seem commonplace, "taken care of," so to speak. It is quite possible to classify everything and understand nothing. Yet the arts of plausible classification are useful to the "business as usual" outlook. From the historical viewpoint, it is a very "Roman" attitude. Above all the Romans were governors and administrators. They believed that the affairs of the Empire should run smoothly. Loyalty to the State was the highest good for a conscientious Roman, and order in public affairs was the end that shaped all his values. Romans made their most weighty judgments according to this canon.

This, you could say, is the natural outlook of men who "take charge." It was spontaneous for the public-spirited Roman and official; it was matter of course for many British administrators for a century or two, and it is natural to many Americans, although in the United States the idea of order has a "progressive" twist. For an American, to disturb order is to interfere with *progress*—an activity for which there can be no excuse.

What is the protagonist of history, from this point of view? Quite plainly, the protagonist is the orderly and progressive social collective. So, when people of this general persuasion look to the past for light on puzzling current events, they study it in terms of their values. They select what seems important in the past according to its relation to these paramount interests. Their judgments about cultural and historical phenomena are formed in this way.

This is the way influential Romans thought, and it is the way a great many people of reputation and influence think today.

Take for example Roman thinking about religion. Marcus Terrentius Varro, an accomplished scholar and antiquarian of Roman history, a contemporary of Julius Caesar, remarked in a discussion of religion that three kinds of theology were possible. There was first, he said, the poetic and mythic theology of the sort found in Homer. This theology grew out of tales of the Gods and their doings.

Then there was the civil theology, so-called, which was made up of observances required by the State. This was the civil theology of Rome to which the early Christians objected, exposing them to persecution and martyrdom, not because of their heretical beliefs, in which the Romans were not especially interested, but because they refused outward respect for the pseudo-religious claims of Imperial rule. Finally, there was the natural theology taught by philosophers. Only this theology, Varro believed, had the possibility of being true. The general opinion of Romans toward the other forms of religion is given by A. E. Taylor:

> The established view about mythology, as early as the days of Herodotus, was that it had been made up by the poets, whose sole object in their stories was not to instruct but to interest and amuse. Civil theology, again, has nothing to do with truth or falsehood; it is the creation of the magistrate who sanctions certain feasts and other ceremonies with a view to nothing beyond their social utility. As Scaevola the pontiff had said, in a very Roman spirit, there is only one kind of theology (the civil) which is of any social utility, and it is not true.

It is interesting to regard the magistrate-created forms of religious observance in the United States in the light of Varro's and Scaevola's candid expressions, which can not, of course, be duplicated today for the reason that, unlike the ancient Romans, the masses of the present can read.

There are other differences between the two periods. Much more influential now, in terms of faith and belief, is the peculiarly American religion of "Education." Until very recently, the role of education and learning has been practically sacrosanct in American life, and the alliance of schools, colleges, and universities with the interests of the state and the business community has not been a source of criticism but of proud celebration. Clark Kerr's *The Uses of the University* shows the vast utility of the higher education to the requirements of the advanced technological society, while Ivan Illich's strictures seem accurate enough in identifying the popular attitude toward learning as practically "religious." As he put it: "School has become the world religion of a modernized proletariat, and makes futile promises of salvation to the poor of the technological age." Further: "The nation-state has adopted it, drafting all citizens into a graded curriculum leading to sequentia1 diplomas not unlike the initiation rituals and hieratic promotions of former times."

Well, this is Illich's use of history in passing as a kind of satire, and we can have no quarrel with it. The important consideration is the role of scholarship—the values it is made to serve. If, by a kind of instinct, the man who writes history is interested mainly in throwing light on the forces which characteristically disturb the stability and progress of the nation-state, and not in the quality, the inspiration, and the significance of those who played a part in past disturbances, then he can have little more than a very "Roman" influence on his readers, no matter how careful his research. He takes a state and even a "business" view of what is important in past events.

In the case of the work of serious scholars, the situation becomes more complicated. Such men seldom deliberately enter into the service of the status quo, or adopt "business as usual" norms, but the discipline of complete "objectivity" in scholarly research results in study without underlying *purpose,* so that the typical concerns and anxieties of the age inevitably seep into scholarship to provide a substitute orientation, without being deliberately chosen. What other point of view is there for the value-free scholar to adopt? And no man can pursue studies without a point of view. Consciously or unconsciously, he has to stand *some*where.

What seems a clear instance of this sort of historical learning appears in the form of a feature article in the *National Observer* for Jan. 11. (The *National Observer* is a weekly newspaper published by Dow Jones & Co., which also issues the *Wall Street Journal.*) The article is made up of excerpts from a paper by Nathan Adler, a lecturer in criminology and psychology at the University of California in Berkeley. This paper is "The Hippie Character Type," which appeared in *Psychiatry* for November, 1968. It is a very "cool" discussion, as the opening and closing paragraphs of the *Observer* version will show:

> Viewed as an exclusively contemporary occurrence, Hippie conduct and the values associated with it are too easily rationalized or dismissed as the antics of the lunatic fringe. But when the deviant conduct is examined as a modern version of earlier modes of behavior, not only does the investigation become more relevant, but also it leads to theoretical implications. The antinomian personality, it becomes manifest, recurs in specific stressful settings of social instability and crisis, where it serves the same adaptive function. . . .
>
> I have presented evidence that the personality configuration and the values that have emerged within the contemporary Hippie movement are not new. They have appeared many times in the past, as for example in the Gnostic and similar religious heresies, and in the Romantic movement. In each case this personality configuration, which I have denoted as the antinomian personality, arose in a time of social crisis and transition, when old values and

> behavior controls were no longer adequate and new ones had not yet emerged to take their place. The antinomian mode, with its characteristic emphasis on intuition, immediacy, self-actualization, transcendence, and similar themes familiar in Hippie conduct, is an adaptive style manifest in transitional periods.

The difficulty, here, is that "antinomian" becomes a catch-all which takes in very nearly every sort of resistance to authority. There is brief critical notice of the quality of the authority resisted, but the faiths and credos of the resisters are often clubbed together indiscriminately, as though hardly worth looking into. The possibility of these people, any of them, being profoundly *right*, is made to seem without pertinence.

What does "antinomian" mean? Its literal reading is "against the law," and the word came into use in relation to the struggle of the early Christians to live by the spirit of the New Testament, as distinguished from the "law" of the Old. The *Britannica* article says:

> Christians being released, in important particulars, from conformity to the Old Testament polity as a whole, a real difficulty attended the settlement of the limits and the immediate authority of the remainder, known vaguely as the moral law. Indications are not wanting that St. Paul's doctrine of justification by faith was, in his own day, mistaken or perverted in the interests of immoral licence. Gnostic sects approached the question in two ways. Marcionites, named by Clement of Alexandria *Antitactae* (revolters against the Demi-urge) held the Old Testament economy to be tainted throughout by its source; but they are not accused of licentiousness. Manichaeans, again, holding their spiritual being to be unaffected by the action of matter, regarded carnal sins as being, at worst, forms of bodily disease. Kindred to this latter view was the position of sundry sects of fanatics during the Reformation period, who denied that regenerate persons sinned, even when committing acts in themselves gross and evil.

Dr. Adler adds:

> Antinomianism has a long history in many settings, and to suggest that the term be transposed into a contemporary, secular setting is to emphasize the continuities between those earlier times and our own. The employment of the label also stresses the fact that particular conduct and personality modes can and do recur under specific ecological conditions.

There will be those, however, who might prefer the explanations of a William Blake for the turbulence of the times, in contrast to this method of classification according to "antinomian" behavior patterns. Actually, a period when "old values and behavior controls" are no longer adequate, and "new ones" have not yet "emerged to take their place," may be an interval of extraordinary *freedom* in history—a time when far-reaching decisions can be made and carried out. This would mean that we should study such cycles of transition not simply as periods involving recurring behavior patterns, but for their potentiality of great ideas and liberating conceptions.

In his survey of past historical phenomena, in quest of parallels to "Hippie" behavior, Dr. Adler seldom pauses in order to make distinctions. After describing the declining days of Rome, he says:

> It was in such apocalyptic times that the Gnostic heresies arose as social movements. Gnosis refers to knowledge, but not as an analytic and cognitive process. It implies, instead Illumination, Revelation, and Intuition as the basis of a truer purer, and better knowing. The Gnostic heretical cults rejected the authority of church and law and devised new strategies to achieve salvation. These movements rejected the worldly life and turned to the interior self for truth. Scorning established institutions they insisted on direct and personal access to insight and to God. They defended faculties that they deemed to be superior to reason and to order. Liturgy and ritual had lost meaning for them; they reached out for a pantheistic fusion and unity with nature or for a total escape from the bondage of this evil world.
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> The members of these Gnostic sects founded Utopian communities and colonies; they aspired to a "self-actualization" in which they would free the "pneuma," as pure spirit, from its bondage in the contemptible body. They spoke in tongues, joined cults of love, and sought ecstasy as a steady state. . . . In rejecting all that was worldly they spurned the ornate, both in the rituals and imagery of the church and in their personal lives. They affirmed, instead, a simplification of values, rites, and dress. In their zeal

> some became ascetic. Others permitted themselves all indulgences and perversions as an expression of their contempt for the world and themselves.

Dr. Adler traces the recurring appearance of Gnostic influence throughout European history, describing the persecutions suffered by later heretics at the hands of militant orthodoxy, then discovers similar tendencies in the Romantic movement in art and literature. Coming to the present, he writes:

> We again live in an epoch of wars and revolutions. Established institutions and values crumble and are repudiated. The British Empire is at an end and American claims as the heir apparent are not being honored. Radicals shaken by the Khrushchev revelations and the internecine struggles of the Russians and the Chinese are dismayed as they see these revolutions, too, devour their children.
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> Major breakthroughs in technology and new sources of energy introduce a new industrial revolution. Racial groups demand civil rights and disrupt customary roles and power relations. Bureaucratic governmental and corporate structures depersonalize human relations and confront people only in "rational" functions rather than as human respondents. Alienation, a cry that arose among the French *cognoscenti* of the Resistance, has become the code word of intellectuals around the world.

The young in America and of Americanized Europe undergo an ambiguous adolescence, with the draft and no meaningful jobs to look forward to. A war whose moral basis is increasingly rejected haunts this generation; and meanwhile: "The vast bureaucratic and corporate world continues in its course, indifferent as the stars to all protest and dissent." So, the antinomians are with us again. The drug culture, "happenings," sexual extravagance, witchcraft and magic, Tarot cards and the Kabballah, are replacing orthodox religion. In the intellectual world various "liberations" are apparent. Dr. Adler refers to "the search for a 'Psychology of Being,' and . . . the ideology of self-actualization," and a little later observes:

> Now, as before, when the antinomian has become modal, mysticism and transcendence, "kicks" and ecstasy become dominant aims. The Hippies seek a Golden Age to renew the lost innocence of childhood, or to find the purity of the ancient apostles, or the integrity of the noble savage. They synthesize an Indian tribalism as an identity. Thoreau becomes their patron saint and they leave the cities to live in the wilderness or in Utopian communities.

Well, it is all too much, too mixed up, and comes far too fast. No doubt the patterns of great historical upsets and changes do repeat themselves in this way, but to look at the patterns only, to put all these things together, simply because they *happen* together, seems a way of devaluing practically everything that may have a heroic and ennobling element in it, whether past or present.

Consider the Gnostics. There were certainly all kinds of Gnostics, some of them pre-Christian. The Gnostic doctrine of emanations as a means of accounting for the universe and everything in it is surely a far more philosophical teaching than the familiar "creation" story, and if there is ever to be a synthesis between science and religion, we may find that Gnostic ideas have key contributions to make. Gnostic conceptions are clearly reflected in the philosophy of evolution found in Plotinus, who was far from indifferent to cognitive processes, as Dr. Adler seems to indicate for all Gnostic ideas. And without apology or explanation, he casually groups rigorous ascetics with persons indulging excesses and perversions in his quickie summary of ancient antinomians.

Should Thoreau, one wonders, be called an antinomian?

This word is really too one-dimensional in meaning to throw light on the possibilities which open up during a period of transition. But Dr. Adler doesn't seem directly concerned with giving light on possibilities. He is writing "objectively," classifying external relations to the social order during times of extreme historical disturbance, and drawing some parallels. All this rejection of law, he tells us, has happened before.

No doubt. But is anything really worth knowing about these "happenings"? Is it

important, or merely "bizarre," that a hunger for self-knowledge bursts into overt declarations of search, and rejection of substitutes, in times of institutional breakdown and failure? Is the similarity of gross symptoms the thing, or is the quest the thing?

It is worth noting, as something more than an afterthought, that what is now known of the Gnostics and their teachings comes to us mainly from their bitterest ecclesiastical opponents. Nearly all their original writings were destroyed, and, as the *Britannica* says, "for an exposition of Gnosticism we are thrown back on the polemical writings of the Fathers in their controversy with heresy." We know that partisans such as Irenaeus and Tertullian and Epiphanius were not trustworthy witnesses, since orthodox Christian advocates were mainly interested in building a strong, inelastic organization which would rule by unquestioned authority in religious belief. The Gnostics fared no better than the pagan philosophers at their hands. But the inadequacy of these sources is not noted by Dr. Adler. The Gnostics were "agin the system," and therefore antinomians. Yet some of them, like Marcion, could stand as models for the highest ideals in thought and moral behavior.

The antinomian of today, says Dr. Adler, "embarks on a subversive program of willful, deliberate derangement in the hope that he can purge the accidental, the banal, and the trivial and renew the world." Well, *which* antinomians? The term drops out the distinction between persons who hold themselves rigorously to transcendent principles of action and those who have only nihilist impulses.

This blurring of motives and intentions shows the failure of a coarse, behavioral "objectivity" in social analysis. The question of what is really happening in history does not even come up. Even though we cannot answer it, the question ought to come up. Nothing good comes out of history save from those who make a valiant effort to understand the meaning of their lives.

REVIEW
STRENGTH WITHOUT POWER

THE *Nation* began publication in 1971 with four articles (in the Jan. 4 issue) on "The Crippled Conscience," an entirely appropriate theme. One article traces through history the uses of torture as an instrument of authority, including its recent revivals in Western history. Another article briefly summarizes the testimony of some forty Vietnam veterans at a three-day hearing held in Washington, D.C., early last December: the National Veterans' Inquiry into U.S. War Crimes. All the witnesses related horrors:

> Each man telling a story had been in the story. Most had killed, tortured, destroyed. They had done so in the name of the people of the United States, whose elected government had sent them to do what they did—what was and is being generally done in Vietnam.
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> The hearings were thus a confessional, a ceremony, a service of heroic dimensions. Or should have been. The veterans had come upon an astounding discovery, through personal experience, which they wished to pass on to their countrymen and women:
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> War crimes were policy. The war was a crime. The conduct of the war flowed from its criminal character. No one in Vietnam could escape complicity. Everyone there was a criminal. . . .
>
> With one exception, the press around the country treated the veterans' war crimes hearings as routine news. They gave space without prominence or follow-up. The exception was the *Los Angeles Times,* which not only displayed the reports conspicuously but a week later ran a strong feature stressing the implications of the "surfacing" of these converted veterans.

No Senator or Congressman came to the hearings, although a Congressman-elect, Parren J. Mitchell, of Maryland, came, and commented that the testimony showed the brutality and senselessness of the whole war, and its effect on American youth.

The shock of such factual material makes a context for the discussion of Power by Ronald Sampson. Mr. Sampson lectures on politics at the University of Bristol and is the author of an important book, *The Psychology of Power.* One could call him a Tolstoyan and come close to being accurate. In this *Nation* article he makes a straightforward advocacy of anarchism and pacifism, showing the practical interdependence of the two positions, as he sees them. He starts out by saying:

> The connection between anarchism and pacifism is very close, and I propose to commence with pacifism. What is a pacifist? The dictionary defines a pacifist as an anti-militarist, who seeks the abolition of war. This definition is less than satisfactory in that it does not make explicit the vital distinction between those who would support a "just war" and those who repudiate all war. My usage of the term "pacifist" includes only those who live by the principle that they will not intentionally take human life, cost what it may. (Few people, if any, can guarantee what they might do under any conceivable circumstances, but the pacifist *aspires* to die rather than to kill, if the choice is forced upon him.) If an exception is made the whole point of pacifism disappears. People who go to war have little difficulty in persuading themselves that they are pacifists at heart, who have been forced to abandon their pacifism by the malignancy of their foes.

A further point would be that if you allow the possibility of an exception, however remote, then you need to be *prepared* for it, for no war can be fought without elaborate preparations. So conceding the exception is enough to create the entire military institution and all the vested interests that go with it.

Well, as Mr. Sampson says, people find it very difficult to imagine living without an army and a navy to protect them, and a government to tell people what to do when emergencies arise. From this fact it is a simple inference that the power of government rests upon fear. There are social functions and cooperative organizations which do not rely on fear, and the anarchist is not opposed to these, but only to those which exercise coercive power. Anarchists who are not pacifists are a contradiction in terms, in Mr. Sampson's view. So far as we can see, such men contemplate

a single, ultimate political act of violence to destroy political power and to usher in the millennium of anarchist cooperation.

Is anarcho-pacifism a forlorn hope? Only in the sense that every vision of an ideal society, from Plato's Republic on, can be called a forlorn hope. What sort of men—men and women—one wonders; will stick to the principle of beneficent powerlessness through thick and thin?

Let us take some examples. There was Socrates, for one, who insisted that it was better to suffer than to do wrong. There was Tolstoy, and there was Gandhi. Now all of these men had a species of transcendent faith in the spiritual nature of reality. If we add Mr. Sampson for present purposes, and recall an earlier *Nation* article of his, we might say the same of him. And in this discussion he says:

> To sum up, then, a pacifist is one who can recognize the gravity of the moral and spiritual implications of being prepared himself to take the life of a fellow human being, whatever the reasons, however seemingly justifiable. The answer to those who reject such a policy on the pragmatic ground that it implies sacrificing the lives of the morally more mature to those less mature, is that this is a law of the universe which cannot be altered.
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> That is why pacifism rests on a true religious understanding of the nature of man's relation to the universe. Reverence for life does not mean killing in order to influence a subsequent series of events, which is never within the capacity of any individual to control. Reverence for life means revering life that is to say, not destroying it. The purpose of life is not to save good men from perishing at the hands of bad men—for one thing, no one can ever be entirely sure how good or bad a man is. The purpose of life is to exemplify goodness at the expense of badness, and thus to strengthen the force of goodness in the world.

At the root of the pacifist stand is the conviction that violence and killing cannot accomplish good, but only evil, which comes sooner or later, and a short-term good is not good, since it deceives by giving the impression that the violence has achieved a good end. How is this conviction gained? There are many ways in which "beliefs" are formed, not all of them educational, not all of them durable, so here we speak of *conviction.* One way that conviction is formed is through the progressive confirmation of a metaphysical view of life and nature—in this case of the moral law of harmlessness, sometimes spoken of as the "Law of Compensation," or Karma. The only humanly significant acts are moral acts. Gandhi, for example, was entirely persuaded of the immortality of the soul, and that the course of authentic human development is through spiritual or moral evolution. The moral quality of what a man does is very nearly the whole thing, not what is done to or against him in a single life.

Another source of conviction arises out of insight into the moral psychology of everyday life. We don't really know what Mr. Sampson's metaphysical opinions are, but it is clear from his book, *The Psychology of Power,* and from this article, that he has an extraordinary grasp of the processes of psycho-moral growth that take place in human beings. It seems clear that a deep certainty of the truth in non-violence, or pacifism, can be gained in this way. The main content of his article is concerned with those small changes in individual attitude by which a person learns to deal with others without either oppressing them or submitting to their will. It is in daily life, Mr. Sampson is sure, that we experience the tests of both pacifism and anarchism. Only by this sort of development of independent individuality, which is friendly and cooperative, but uncompromising and without fear, can the tyranny of governments and the horror of war be finally ended.

Mr. Sampson does not make it easy on himself. In one place he writes:

> Bereft of all power, without an organization, without a trade union, without a political party, without a police force, without an army, what is the individual to do, alone and "powerless" amidst a gigantic ocean of evil? It is easy to prescribe and very difficult to do, and it is, moreover, the only means of liberation that is effective and that will advance inch by inch along the road to real freedom.

> The individual has to stand up and draw the fangs of those who oppress him, or dominate him, or treat him as less than an equal, at the only time and place possible, that is, when and where it occurs. The objection is made again and again, however, that the mere individual is impotent. What, it is asked rhetorically, can only one person do? The implication seems to be that around the next corner there will be somebody who isn't only one person. Yet, when evil is afoot, people do not wring their hands, lamenting their impotence as "only one person"; they get on with the bad work and do it most efficacously.
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> The truth is that "only one person" who is tied to an organization which exercises a degree of control over his beliefs and responses, is indeed largely crippled for good purposes. He is the power man's dream. Through a hierarchy of control it is possible to reduce men to paralyzed automata. Military conscription, for instance, has hitherto represented the ultimate length to which arbitrary power could go in the total subjugation of free men. Modern technology is beginning to open up new vistas. The power to reduce mankind to quantitative digits, computerized data to be fed into machines controlled by the new technocrats, undoubtedly threatens new possibilities for human robotization.

The general recognition of this tendency in the technological society has led to a strong revival of anarchist thought. Noam Chomsky, whose *American Power and the New Mandarins* has been widely influential, reviews the relationship between anarchist thought and libertarian socialism in a paper which appeared in *Anarchy* 116 (October, 1970), showing how clearly the anarchist thinkers of the nineteenth century anticipated the threat to the revolutionary goal of the bureaucracy which consolidates the gains of successful revolt. And on the violence of revolutions he quotes Martin Buber: "One cannot in the nature of things expect a little tree that has been turned into a club to put forth leaves." It becomes plain that it is a great mistake to suppose that "anarchism" is a political label that defines much of anything. Anarchism is not, as Rudolph Rocker says, "a fixed, self-enclosed system, but rather a definite trend in the historic development of mankind, which, in contrast with the intellectual guardianship of all clerical and government institutions, strives for the free, unhindered unfolding of all the individual and social forces in life." In an epoch when the prevailing sense of reality leads to political forms of action, this trend seeks political expression, but as men look more deeply into the forces that shape human character, it may become less and less political, finally turning communitarian in the Gandhian and Tolstoyan sense of this term. Indeed, it is this meaning for "anarchism" that Mr. Sampson adopts in his *Nation* article.

COMMENTARY
A "MAN-FOR-OTHERS"

JUDGING from an article in *Christianity and Crisis* for Jan. 11, the campaign of the UFWOC (United Farm Workers Organizing Committee) headed by Cesar Chavez to obtain union contracts with the lettuce growers of California is more than just another struggle for the rights of labor. This article is an interview with Jim Drake, Chavez' executive assistant. Answering a question, Drake said that Chavez is more than a good organizer and administrator. He is a "man-for-others," and this attitude affects the Chicano strikers:

> You can see it all through the organization. The farm workers see more in Cesar than just a leader. He's also an example of how they want to relate to other people. Cesar went to jail, and still he's saying, "Although I think the judge is wrong, I'm not angry." And farm workers are saying, "I'd like to live like that." Most of them are, well, peasants, but they're learning the highest possible drive and desire—to eliminate anger in their lives.

The community spirit is engendering other attitudes, in a situation so extreme that most people would regard it as practically hopeless:

> There's a strong feeling in the union about guys not ending up as just wage earners. To the Chicanos who have been out on strike for five years, all eating out of the same pot, you don't have to preach about a community style of living. That's what I mean about new life styles developing and why it isn't so bad to have taken this long. It's not going to be a revolution in the literal sense, and we don't have any visions of a big land reform. But it's going to happen.

There are some share-croppers in the union, who are adding their managerial experience—knowledge of planting and business—which opens up new possibilities. Further:

> We have 40 acres in Delano. No one thinks of that as the "union headquarters." We call it the 40 acres, and its everybody's. People are growing vegetables on it, and others are raising animals. The co-op gas station and co-op clinic are there, and the credit union, the graphic arts department and the legal department. You can come there whether you're a member of the union or not. It's your 40 acres if it can help you.
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> What we have with the farm workers is a nation within a nation. They are separated off in many ways—economically culturally, racially. They're excluded from citizenship. They can't vote since registration is very difficult for a migrant. Besides, 40 per cent of them are Mexican citizens, and citizenship is a whole area we haven't yet touched. We will move in that direction as soon as we are better established. . . .
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> I think that the farm worker giving of himself for his community comes about as close as you can come to real discipleship.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
CUSTODIAN, PREACHER, AND THERAPIST

THERE is considerable "shock" effect from reading Ivan Illich. Take the idea of childhood. If there is anything present-day parents and people generally are proud of, it is the special attention and consideration they give to their children. They think of past centuries as dark ages when children were ignored, exploited, neglected, and regard the numerous schools and colleges of our time as monuments to the unique humanity of modern man.

Mr. Illich is singularly disdainful of these achievements. His attention is focussed on what has been lost to the young through all this "schooling," and on what is expected from them in return. He might even regard the pride taken in the elaborate education of the young in the advanced industrial countries in somewhat the same light as the tough-minded northerner used to consider the "kindness" of the pre-Civil War plantation owner to his slaves.

Regardless of the good intentions behind all this schooling, Illich needs to be heard. It is true enough, for one thing, that schools and higher learning institutions are major trouble centers, today. Why, if they are such "good things," is there so much resistance to them?

One of Illich's contentions is that common notions about what is "good" for children may be much worse in effect than just letting them alone. This view is beginning to be shared by others. In the Winter 1971 *Horizon*, one of the editors, J. H. Plumb, proposes that in modern times there has been a great change in children, owing mainly to the fact that while they used to take part in adult life, "during the past four centuries we have pushed them into a world of their own." "No wonder," he adds, "they have made that world into a citadel of rebellion." This is a long paper dealing with the changes in adult attitudes toward the young, and identifying the factors which led to their isolation from adult society. Toward the end Mr. Plumb says:

> After World War II huge segments of the population, female as well as male, remained in the educational system to twenty-one and beyond, and the number increases every few years. . . . The middle classes grew much richer, and the pressures on their children toward economic and social goals eased, too. They were pressurized neither to be Christian gentlemen nor Horatio Algers. And yet in spite of a myriad of warning signs that attitudes toward children needed to be changed, the attitudes belonging to an earlier and simpler world were still enforced. . . . parents and educators insisted on old patterns of overt deference and unquestioning obedience. . . . Repression, conformity, discipline, and exclusion were until lately the historically bred attitudes of most educationalists and parents.
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> Kept out of the adult world, the adolescents naturally created a world of their own choosing—one that incorporated their own music, their own morals, their own clothes and their own literature. And they, of course, began naturally to capture the minds and imagination of the children, who, although younger in age, nevertheless lived with them in the same basic educational territory. In consequence, during the past few years, the period between infancy and adolescence has been sharply reduced, and may be reduced even further in the future.
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> Social movements and tensions in the adult world can be adjusted by politics, but adolescents and children have no such mechanism for their conflicts with the exclusive world of adults. And so the result has been, and must be, rebellion. That rebellion, however, is not due to the mistakes or difficulties of the last few years. Rarely do we look far enough into the past for the roots of our present problems. This revolution of youth has been building up for decades because we forced the growing child into a repressive and artificial world—a prison, indeed, that was the end product of four centuries of Western history, of that gradual exclusion of the maturing child from the world of adults. We can now look back with longing to the late medieval world, when, crude and simple as it was, men, women, and children lived their lives together, shared the same morals as well as the same games, the same excesses as well as the same austerities. In essence, youth today is rebelling against four centuries of repression and exploitation.

Ivan Illich, from much the same survey of history, considers the schools more from the point of view of a world in which artificial hopes are engendered by the promise of what schooling will do for everyone. In a paper titled "A Phenomenology of School," he says:

> Since most people alive today live outside industrial cities, most people today do not experience childhood. In the Andes, you till the soil once you have become "useful." Before that, you watch the sheep. If you are well-nourished, you should be useful by eleven and if not, by twelve. Recently, I was talking to my night watchman, Marcos, about his 11-year-old son who works in the barbershop. I noted in Spanish that his son was still a "niño." Marcos, surprised, answered with a guileless smile: "Don Ivan, I guess you're right." Realizing that until my remark father and son had thought themselves equal, I felt guilty for having drawn the curtain of childhood between two sensible persons. Of course if I were to tell the New York slum dweller that his working son was still a "child," there would have been no surprise. He knows quite well that his 11-year-old son should be allowed childhood, and resents the fact that he is not. The son of Marcos has yet to be afflicted with the yearning for childhood, the New Yorker's son feels deprived.

Illich obviously prefers the Marcos view of things. He is not of course against "education," but against the ritual of "schooling," and by school he means a place where children over a long span of age are obliged to go for nearly all their time, where they are subjected to a required, graded curriculum. Three basic assumptions made by nearly everyone are challenged by this paper. He says:

> Children belong in school. Children learn in school. Only children can be taught in school. I think these unquestioned premises deserve serious questioning.

He offers these contrasting facts:

> We have all learned most of what we know outside of school. Pupils do most of their learning without, and often despite, their teachers. . . . Everyone learns how to live outside of school. We learn to speak, to think, to love, to feel, to play, to curse, to politick and to work without interference from a teacher. Teachers have a poor record for their attempts at increasing learning among the poor. Middle-class parents commit their children to a teacher's care to keep them from learning—on the street, at useful work with adults, or in bad company. Then they complain that most teachers stultify their young. . . . Teachers only get in the way of learning that does go on in school. Students learn subject-matter from peer groups, from access to educational materials, or from chance conversation and observation—sometimes with teachers—and from participation in the formal ritual of schooling, in which students learn to play ever more defined roles. The more the teacher turns from teaching to systems-management, the higher appears to be the educational output of the school.
>
> Half of the people in our world never set foot in school. They have no contact with teachers, and they are deprived of the privilege of becoming dropouts. Yet they learn quite effectively the message which school teaches most effectively: they learn that they should have school, and more and more of it. School teaches them their inferiority through the tax collector who makes them pay for it, through the demagogue who raises their expectations for it, or through the children once they get hooked in it. So the poor are robbed of their self-respect by subscribing to a creed that says school could have saved them. At least the Church gave them a chance to repent at the hour of death. The school leaves them with that expectation which is a counterfeit hope that their grandchildren will make it.

It is not possible, of course, to reproduce the symmetrical development of these arguments; nor can we give just attention to Ivan Illich's ideas for alternative education in a few scattered quotations. We urge readers rather to write to the Center for Intercultural Documentation in Cuernavaca, Mexico, and ask for a copy of *Cidoc Cuaderno* No. 1007, from which these extracts are taken. We close with one more passage which we find irresistible:

> School, by its very nature, tends to make a total claim on the time and energies of its participants. This, in turn, makes the teacher into custodian, preacher and therapist.
>
> In each of these three roles the teacher bases his authority on a different claim. The *teacher-as-custodian* acts as a master of ceremonies, who guides his pupils through a drawn-out labyrinthine ritual. He arbitrates the observance of rules and administers

the intricate ceremony of initiation to life. At his best, he sets the stage for learning as school masters always did. Without illusions of producing any profound learning, he drills his pupils in some basic routines.

The *teacher-as-moralist* substitutes for parents, God or the state. He indoctrinates the pupil about what is right or wrong, not only in school, but also in society at large. He stands *in loco parentis* for each one and thus insures that all feel themselves children of the same state.

The *teacher-as-therapist* feels authorized to delve into the intimacy of his pupil in order to help him grow as a person. When this function is exercised by a custodian and preacher it usually means that he persuades the pupil to submit to domestication of his vision of truth and his sense of what is right.

The claim that a liberal society could be founded on the modern school is paradoxical. The safeguards of individual freedom are all cancelled in the dealings of a teacher with his pupil. When the school teacher fuses in his person the functions of judge, ideologue and doctor, the fundamental style of society is perverted in the very process which should prepare for life. A teacher who combines these three powers contributes to the warping of the child much more than the laws which establish his legal or economic minority, or restrict his right to free assembly or abode.

FRONTIERS

Science and the State

AT the end of the eighteenth century a group of distinguished Americans decided that there ought to be no connection between religion and political power. Since they were the men who labored to make the Constitution of the United States, they established what we now call the separation of Church and State as the law of the land, in the form of the First Amendment to the Constitution. Many years later, Gandhi and his followers, after observing the effects of politically created and maintained public schools, decided that there ought to be a similar separation between school and State. While they sought no law to enforce this division, their efforts in education, along with other work in behalf of the people, were pursued without assistance from government. Much more recently, Ivan Illich proposed as a rule for a modern humanist society: "The State shall make no law with respect to the establishment of education."

In striking contrast to this trend, the revolutionary movements of the nineteenth century largely succeeded in putting very nearly every aspect of human welfare including all education—under political control. Conceivably, the revolutionary movements of the twentieth century may end by accomplishing exactly the opposite. A repetition of the reasons for keeping politics out of religion and education is hardly needed for the literate man of today, but what about other aspects of modern culture? What about Science, for example? Would a separation of science from the State be desirable? Is it even conceivable?

Conceivable or not, an interesting case for applying this rule could be put together. Simply because the links between science, technology, and government are now multiplying at an extraordinary rate, the very idea may seem ridiculous, yet consideration ought to be given to the disturbances at the annual meetings of various professional associations within the past year—disturbances plainly caused by popular resistance to the political implications of "official" positions taken by the associations involved. The most recent of these disorders occurred at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, sparked, it is said, by the choice, for this year's president of the Association, of Dr. Glenn T. Seaborg, who is now chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission. It is evident that the role of the AEC in national affairs has been extremely upsetting to young, socially minded scientists, and his selection as president by the governing council of the AAAS made up of 530 members, brought vocal protest from an activist minority.

What *is* the present relation of science to government in the United States? A recent *Nation* editorial offers this summary:

> . . . a group of top scientists and engineers working closely with government have used the Defense Department and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration as the principal sources of funds, thus tying scientific effort preponderantly to the war/space machine. One result has been to give science in general a bad name. Without knowing the reason, a sizable section of the public has thus grown hostile toward science in general, identifying it with war, pollution and every manner of evil. What is needed, in the interest of "science for the people," is a redirection of science, so that its benefits will outweigh its errors, and its errors can be corrected. Probably the best speech at the AAAS meeting was that of Stewart L. Udall, former Secretary of the Interior. He pointed out that the science establishment failed to alert the country to the coming environmental crisis, and urged Ralph Nader to organize a team of young scientists to make a "dispassionate and intensive study of the National Academy and the whole scientific enterprise in this country." Whether Nader undertakes this or not, it is one of the most sorely needed tasks of government today. What we need is better science and more socially responsible scientists, and stripping power from those apostates who have made much of science a tool of the military.

If this editorial reflects the attitude of the young scientists, then the choice of the head of the

AEC as a target for their disapproval is not in the least remarkable. But if Ralph Nader were to follow Mr. Udall's suggestion, he would undoubtedly show what other recently completed Nader studies—of the Food and Drug Administration, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and the National Air Pollution Control Administration—have so conclusively demonstrated: that Government is not and cannot be an efficient instrument of reform.

Meanwhile, for readers who are curious to know why the AEC is singled out as a whipping boy, there is highly informative reading in Paul Jacobs' article in the February *Atlantic*—Precautions Are Being Taken by Those Who Know," which is "An Inquiry into the Power and Responsibilities of the AEC." This is not a new subject for Mr. Jacobs. He researched it in 1957, and published what he found out in the *Reporter* for May 16 of that year. The present article shows that he has found out a lot more. It seems accurate to say that his evidence indicates a virtually settled policy on the part of the AEC to worry more about its public image as the savior of the nation, offering a great, new source of energy "just in the nick of time," than about the possible damage to public health from radiation and other malign effects of generating nuclear power. Mr. Jacobs writes as a very careful reporter and his conclusion is a quite moderate one. He asks: "Is it possible that nuclear energy as the cure for the power crisis may be worse than the disease itself?" A broader question, having to do with what happens to science when it becomes the servant of the State, seems much more important to ask.

Incidentally, *Environment* for December, 1970, has a review of *"Population Control" Through Nuclear Pollution* by Arthur R. Tamplin and John W. Gofman. Both authors worked in the AEC's Lawrence Radiation Laboratory Biochemical Division, and as a result of their researches found themselves in serious opposition to AEC policies. The title of their book is a measure of their disaffection. The views of these scientists supply much of the substance of Paul Jacobs' *Atlantic* article, and their book is ample evidence of the price paid by science for association with political power.