

## PROCESSES OF CHANGE

A CURIOUS paradox pervades all intellectual operations—all our knowledge—which probably has no adequate explanation in intellectual terms. It is that while everything we know about "the world" depends upon setting limits—that is, upon the fact that the entirety of our experience can be divided up into fairly precise departments—enabling us to make "definitions" and to practice "science," there is still an irrepressible longing for another kind of knowledge, a knowledge which doesn't depend upon limitation and classification. We can say this about it, but add very little more. The tools of speech, which deal in similarity and difference, violate the idea of a reality which is "absolute," subject to no conditions. We know this by simple logic, yet the hope of a "beyond" sort of knowledge persists. It persists, even though it is quite clear that what is "absolute" could never really enter the sphere of our experience, since, should this happen, it would dissolve all limits and destroy the basis of what we think of as our knowledge of the world. Yet there is a philosophical necessity for the idea of the "absolute," since the idea of the "relative" obtains its meaning by contrast with the absolute. Of the latter, we might say that while we cannot "think" of it, neither can we think of anything else without it. By means of the idea of the absolute, we recognize the kind of knowledge we do possess.

Any further pursuit of this subject would turn our discussion into mystical inquiry. Those with an interest in this direction could hardly do better than to read Plotinus, whose communications concerning transcendent knowledge have seldom been equalled in clarity. This is illustrated by a letter he wrote to one Flaccus in 260 A.D., in which he said:

You ask, how can we know the Infinite? I answer, not by reason. It is the office of reason to distinguish and define. The infinite, therefore,

cannot be ranked among its objects. You can only apprehend the Infinite by a faculty superior to reason, by entering into a state in which you are your finite self no longer—in which the divine essence is communicated to you. This is ecstasy. It is the liberation of your mind from its finite consciousness. Like only can apprehend like, when you thus cease to be finite, you become one with the Infinite.

So, if reason is to be our guide, we must return to the field of finite experience, which is a vast scheme of levels or grades of structure, ranging from subatomic particles to galaxies. Our scientific knowledge, of which we are now said to have "too much," is largely the result of dividing up the field and giving concentrated attention to the workings of very limited areas. Inevitably, scientists have felt the isolation of this increasing specialization, and in recent years there has been a noticeable tendency among philosophically-minded investigators to think in more holistic terms—to see, for example, what can be said about the entirety of the field of experience. What have all its many levels in common? The beginnings of answers to this question are provided in the volume, *Hierarchical Structures* (Elsevier, \$12.50), edited by Lancelot L. Whyte, Albert C. Wilson and Donna Wilson, in which some twenty contributors consider hierarchical structure in the inorganic and organic worlds, and in human thought and design. Having participated in a symposium devoted to "Hierarchical Structure in Nature and Artifact," the contributors were all aware of the antiquity of efforts to understand the structure of unity in diversity. As a Canadian educator, Ronald G. Jones, said in his paper:

Throughout the history of ideas the problem of the One and the Many, of part-whole relationships, or order and structure has appeared over and over again. Nicholas of Cusa (15th Century), Giambattista Vico (17th Century), and more recently Cassirer, Whitehead, von Bertalanffy, Koestler, Sorokin, and Polanyi have made this problem the problem. And

this is to list only a few. From among us at this symposium, Lancelot Law Whyte has written that the principle of the union of contrasts relates directly to the most urgent needs of man. The problem of the integration of differentiated parts, of harmony in diversity, is not merely a problem for idle, remote, and academic speculation.

This is what I take to be the concern of this symposium—the inter-disciplinary search for "the idea of structural hierarchy"—a problem with at least a 5,000-year history. But this conference adds a dimension not always present in earlier attacks on this problem. Indeed, this dimension could not have been present, for it requires the highly specialized findings of modern science. Perhaps it will be the contributions from the fields of modern physics and biology that will help us in the personal and social realms.

To make certain that this connection is clearly before us, let me elaborate a bit. It seems to me that the *sine qua non* of man's knowledge, happiness, and existence is to be found in the idea of the reconciliation of differences. It matters little whether we talk about mental health and personality structure or whether we talk in the context of society. It matters little what the size of the society is. It makes little difference whether the society is a marriage, a small group, a large industrial organization, a community, a nation, or many nations, the basic issue is that of the reconciliation of the individual with the group, the organization, the integration of parts into a unified whole. These issues are all matters of totality, wholeness, completeness, unity, order, structure.

Already an effort has been made by John Platt to uncover useful analogies in the change processes of field structures in physics and biology, suggestive of possibilities for restructuring the social relationships of human groups. In the November *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Dr. Platt describes a general characteristic of change in all structures, as determined by a theoretical physicist, David Bohm:

Bohm emphasizes that there is a similar restructuring, by growth, of a complex structure to larger hierarchical patterns with the passage of time, like the growth of large crystals from a mass of small ones under heat and pressure. The growth may not be uniform but by successive small steps as each crystal rearranges suddenly. Likewise in the biological

world, a group of children—or a group of industrial organizations—brought together may rather suddenly develop leader-follower relationships and a defined pattern of roles throughout the group. . . .

Finally, the area of social evolution exhibits the most dramatic and large-scale restructurings of this kind that we know about, such as the sudden collective restructurings that occurred in the Reformation and in the Industrial Revolution. These changes go deeper than ordinary political revolutions because they are not simply an exchange of power from one small group to another, but a thoroughgoing change in philosophy, personal attitudes and ways of work and economic organization in every part of society.

It seems likely that this sort of formal comparison of change processes will continue, bringing more light on what can be thought of as the prerequisites and circumstances of change, and also the concomitants that can be expected, but what these impersonal analyses often leave out is the suffering that is involved for so many individual human beings—persons whose lives are torn, mutilated, and often destroyed in the process. A "thoroughgoing change in philosophy" is far from a casual thing for men and women, either as a personal undertaking or in its socio-historical consequences. The Reformation was marked by vicious wars and merciless persecutions, and the toll of the Industrial Revolution scarred millions of lives. Meanwhile, a characteristic of the "modern" period of history seems to be the hastening of the general process of change for human beings, with shorter and shorter intervals of what we could call "normal function" between cycles of extreme acceleration. When Dr. Platt speaks of "sudden, profound self-restructuring" which unites whole populations "in the creation of change at every level," it seems well to reflect on the paroxysmic character of this experience for many of those who are involved. This becomes even more pertinent when he says: "And the largest of all these changes, in its long-range evolutionary implications, is the world transformation through which all human society is now passing."

To be in the midst of such a change is somewhat different from contemplating its dynamics as an endlessly repeating pattern in nature. Indeed, the challenge is to translate what insight we can glean from the study of nature into some small understanding of the forces which seem to be rending our lives. Moreover, the difference between "natural" and "human" changes will have to be understood. For one thing, molecules moving in a flow-system need and obtain no subjective enlightenment concerning what they are to do when the time for change and restructuring comes. The lesson of all the kingdoms of nature is that a principle of appropriate order, unambiguous and sure, controls the patterned motion and restructuring of all these forms of energy and intelligence. But men, we say, are not men unless they have a voice in shaping the conditions of their lives, or the adaptations they make to the imperatives of change. There is a basic and manifest difference, here, between chemical and even organic change, and the changes in the modes of human life. A man is not a molecule—he is not a "thing." Yet over long periods of time, when human history is examined statistically, close analogies appear between the behavior of things and the behavior of men. This seems beyond debate. What then does it mean, one is constrained to ask, to be *self-aware*?

There will be these repetitive patterns, it may be argued, whatever the subjective judgments of the most thoughtful of men. Does this mean that the reflections "do not matter"? It is entirely conceivable, however, that the reflections have a crucial part to play in the repetitions, affecting the degree or kind of suffering which they impose.

In human life there are factors of value which Nature does not disclose, save, perhaps, by a kind of æsthetic resonance. Matters of dignity, justice, and right play a larger part than anything else in the decisions of some men, although not in those of others. Values exceedingly difficult to give objective definition to are sometimes more

precious than life to such men, while others remain indifferent to them. These differences among men, which are sometimes extreme, set the problem of government and law, and it seems obvious, simply on the basis of common sense, that little more than the coarsest sort of ordering is possible in the terms of politics and constitutions.

The "restructuring" that goes on at this level can hardly be successful except as a result of some vast psychological change involving a deepened moral awareness, an increased self-consciousness and sense of responsibility on the part of large numbers of people. Yet the fact is that we know virtually nothing about such changes save that they take place. The Reformation did involve that kind of a change in moral attitude, and so did the revolutions of the eighteenth century. And the changes did bring restructuring of a far-reaching character in human relations.

What can we say of the present "world transformation" spoken of by John Platt? If in one aspect it represents a transfer of authority from external norms or rules to internal principles of guidance, it should be obvious that the moral obligations imposed on individuals by this change are greater than any previously known. It follows that if the transition is to be at all successful, it will have to be wholly voluntary, and therefore gradual and "unscheduled." Men need time to find out about themselves, to assume self-defined obligations. If they are hurried by impatient moralists, they revolt and may repudiate the whole idea of change, taking angry refuge in obsolete patterns of "security." This doesn't stop the changes from coming—since the old structures have lost their coherence—but resistance to the tide of psychological evolution (if what is happening may be so named) has the effect of raising the cost of the change, in human suffering, almost beyond calculation.

In an article in the *American Scholar* for the fall of 1970, Kenneth Keniston seems to be writing all around this basic subject. His title is

"Youth: a 'New' Stage of Life," by which he means the time in life when people are undecided about their relationship *to* life, *to* society. It is a state of mind rather than an age-group. A young man or woman will say: Here is this field of experience, of confinement or opportunity or both, and I am supposed to go into it, become a part of it, work something out with it; but *why*, and what shall I do? "To repeat: what characterizes youth is not a definitive rejection of the existing 'system,' but an ambivalent tension over the relationship between self and society."

Interestingly, the most useful studies of the young in recent years have been Lawrence Kohlberg's research on moral development and William Perry's investigation of intellectual development. Keniston draws on both these investigators. According to Kohlberg, moral development reaches its peak in what he calls "postconventional" morality, in which the principles of behavior are obtained by a kind of self-reference to the highest ideals of human relations. The apex of intellectual development Perry finds in a full awareness of the relativity of human opinions followed by "a more 'existential' sense of truth, culminating in what Perry terms 'commitment within relativism'."

Keniston by no means suggests that these high realizations are uniformly attained by the young, but only that they do belong to youth at its best; just as, to use another vocabulary, they amount to a description of the self-actualizing human being. To be sure that he is not misunderstood in this respect, Keniston says:

Admirers and romanticizers of youth tend to identify youth with virtue, morality and mental health. But to do so is to overlook the special youthful possibilities for viciousness, immorality and psychopathology. Every time of human life, each level of development, has its characteristic vices and weaknesses, and youth is no exception. Youth is a stage, for example, when the potentials for zealotry and fanaticism, for reckless action in the name of the highest principles, for self-absorption, and for special arrogance are all at a peak.

Having established this balance, Keniston asks:

What, then, would it mean if our particular era were producing millions of postconventional, nondualistic, postrelativistic youth? What would happen if millions of young men and women developed to the point that they "made up their own minds" about most value, ideological, social and philosophical questions, often rejecting the conventional and traditional answers? Would they not threaten the stability of their societies?

Today it seems clear that most youths are considered nuisances or worse by the established order, to which they have not finally pledged their allegiance. Indeed, many of the major stresses in contemporary American society spring from or are aggravated by those in this stage of life. One aspect of the deep polarization in our society may be characterized psychologically as a struggle between conventionalists and postconventionalists, between those who have not had a youth and those who have. The answer of the majority of the public seems clear: we already have too many "youths" in our society youth as a developmental stage should be stamped out.

A more moderate answer to the questions I am raising is also possible. We might recognize the importance of having a few postconventional individuals (an occasional Socrates, Christ, Luther or Gandhi to provide society with new ideas and moral inspiration), but nonetheless establish a firm top limit on the proportion of postconventional, youth-scarred adults our society could tolerate. If social stability requires human inertia—that is, unreflective acceptance of most social, cultural and political norms—perhaps we should discourage "youth as a stage of life" in any but a select minority.

A third response, toward which I incline, seems to me more radical. To the argument from social stability and cultural continuity, one might reply by pointing to the enormous instabilities and gross cultural discontinuities that characterize the modern world. Older forms of stability and continuity have *already* been lost in the postindustrial era. Today, it is simply impossible to return to a bygone age when massive inertia guaranteed social stability (if there really was such an age). The cake of custom crumbled long ago. The only hope is to live without it.

This comes the closest, of anything we have seen, to putting the requirements of the present

ongoing change into the terms of subjective reality. It is still very general, of course, and needs extensive rendering into the quite fragile—from an external view—realities of the new social formations of the age. And it is the spirit and intent of these undertakings, rather than their obvious and sometime ridiculous shortcomings, in which the sort of motivation and direction Kenneth Keniston speaks of is to be discovered.

One way of thinking of the change is as a gradual reduction of the authority of external models or norms, and the growing importance of intuitive and existential feelings about what is right and good. When these are strong, the resulting order will come to resemble more and more the kind of harmony that one observes in nature—the apparently spontaneous collaborations and symbiotic relationships which are guided by instinct, yet give the impression of a wonderful freedom, as in a flight of birds. But when inner counsels are weak or nonexistent, then freedom becomes an unpredictable and frightening prospect, and all the demands of the adherents of the conventional morality for "law and order" take on the substance of common sense.

An appropriate conclusion, here, is suggested by a portion of a letter written by Thoreau to Harrison Blake:

When, in the progress of a life, a man swerves, though only by an angle infinitely small, from his proper and allotted path (and this is never done quite unconsciously even at first; in fact, that was his broad and scarlet sin,—ah, he knew of it more than he can tell), then the drama of his life turns to tragedy, and makes haste to its fifth act. When once we thus fall behind ourselves, there is no accounting for the obstacles which rise up in our path, and no one is so wise as to advise, and no one so powerful as to aid us while we abide on that ground. . . . For such the Decalogue was made, and other far more voluminous and terrible codes.

## REVIEW

### THE SHAPING OF CULTURE

DEEP questions are raised by the concept of nationality, even though the idea of "nation" is now in such disrepute that there is a strong tendency in thought to attempt to do without it. An increasing number of people, that is, would like simply to be members of the world. Yet this involves much more than deliberated moral decision. To "belong" to a national culture is not merely a geographical accident. There are such things as national "traits," quite independent of political power, and the differences described by Ruth Benedict in *Patterns of Culture* are not limited to people who live on islands in the South Pacific.

These matters can be discussed in the spirit of a universal humanism, but even then there are hazards. For there are minority traits or qualities, too, and a MANAS reviewer once got into trouble by quoting approvingly from a current novel a passage which attributed special virtues to black basketball players. The passage was this:

There are only two styles of basketball in America, and of the two the white-boss grimly prevails over the Negro. The loose lost Negro-style, with its reckless beauty, is the more joyful to watch or play, if you can, but it is the white-boss basketball that wins. Even Negroes must play white-boss basketball to win, though fortunately the best ones can't, and end up with both, the Negro coming out despite themselves right on top of the other style. And it is these boss Negro players who are the best in the world, the artists of basketball, the ones every pro team needs two or three or six of if it is to stay beautiful and win.

The critic claimed that this was reverse race prejudice and that one couldn't be too careful in avoiding it. Would he, one wonders, have found equally odious everything that is said about past cultures and peoples, which happens to assign them distinctive attributes? Would he have objected to the often repeated idea that the ancient Greeks embodied a spirit of wonder toward

nature—a feeling which has since been very largely lost?

It seems evident that standards of this sort would jettison much that is valuable in cultural studies, making it impossible to show how daily habits affect or modify character. And the "racial" factor might not enter into these considerations at all. In *The Hidden Wound*, for example, Wendell Berry tells of what he learned as a boy from two older men—his grandfather who owned the farm and Nick the hired hand, who was black. His grandfather was always preoccupied with money problems—how to pay his taxes, how to meet feed bills, how to make the land *pay*. But Nick, owning nothing, had no such worries. From his grandfather the boy learned something of a man's struggle to hold on to his land, which was so intense that his anxieties shut him out from a sense of *living* on it. The black man taught him something else. "From Nick I got a sense of a free intimacy with the place, the possibility of pleasure in *being* there."

This kind of writing about peoples and groups, whether racial, regional, or cultural, is really too useful to dispense with. And today, when the whole question of where a man gets his identity is becoming almost obsessive, we may need to understand the intimately local in order to have some hope of reaching the universal.

Whom should one read to find out about other countries? The question is probably too general, but nearly everyone would agree on the importance of avoiding the "official" spokesmen. To learn about Spain, for example, Spanish writers and philosophers would probably be the best source—Unamuno, Ortega, and Bernanos, for example. What about Mexico?

This question may be embarrassing. The fact is that most Americans know practically nothing about Mexico, which is, except for Canada, our only next-door neighbor. Latin-American experts have long since given up hope of instructing their countrymen concerning the numerous republics to the South. The news coverage is so poor that

when it comes to reading current material about Latin America, knowledgeable persons tell you to subscribe to *Le Monde*!

Well, we have found one book that seems extraordinarily good on Mexico. It is *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (Grove, 1961) by Octavio Paz, a Mexican poet. Curiously, it was a visit to the United States which made Paz think about Mexico with the intensity which is recorded in this volume. In the two years he was there, some of this time spent in Los Angeles, he found comparisons unavoidable:

I remember that whenever I attempted to examine North American life, anxious to discover its meaning, I encountered my own questioning image. That image, seen against the glittering background of the United States, was the first and perhaps the profoundest answer which that country gave to my questions. Therefore, in attempting to explain to myself some of the traits of the present-day Mexican, I will begin with a group for whom the fact that they are Mexicans is a truly vital problem, a problem of life and death.

He means, here, the Mexican population of Los Angeles, which numbers considerably more than a million people. Paz speaks first of "the city's vaguely Mexican atmosphere," which floats in the air, never mixing with the rest of the city, "the North American world based on precision and efficiency." The people, the Mexican people, also "float," finding it difficult to "mix," or not really wanting to. Of some of the youth of this segment of the population, known as *pachucos*, he writes:

They are instinctive rebels, and North American racism has vented its wrath on them more than once. But the *pachucos* do not attempt to vindicate their race or the nationality of their forebears. Their attitude reveals an obstinate, almost fanatical will-to-be, but this will affirms nothing specific except their determination—it is an ambiguous one, as we will see—not to be like those around them. The *pachuco* does not want to become a Mexican again; at the same time he does not want to blend into the life of North America. His whole being is sheer negative impulse, a tangle of contradictions, an enigma. Even his very name is enigmatic: *pachuco*, a word of

uncertain derivation, saying nothing and saying everything. It is a strange word with no definite meaning, or, to be more exact, it is charged like all popular creations with a diversity of meanings. Whether we like it or not, these persons are Mexicans, are one of the extremes at which Mexicans can arrive.

Since the *pachuco* cannot adapt himself to a civilization which, for its part, rejects him, he finds no answer to the hostility surrounding him except this angry affirmation of his personality. Other groups react differently. The Negroes, for example, oppressed by racial intolerance, try to "pass" as whites and thus enter society. They want to be like other people. The Mexicans have suffered a less violent rejection, but instead of attempting a problematic adjustment to society, the *pachuco* actually flaunts his differences. The purpose of his grotesque dandyism and anarchic behavior is not so much to point out the injustice and incapacity of a society that has failed to assimilate him as it is to demonstrate his personal will to remain different.

This report is obviously "dated," but even if the face of minority struggles has changed considerably since that time, the capacity of this writer for observation and understanding wins the reader's confidence. We should say, also, that this discussion of the Mexican population in Los Angeles is but one of several oblique ways in which Paz approaches his subject, which is the Mexican character. The plight of the *pachuco* represents an extreme parallel to the plight of the Mexican:

The history of Mexico is the history of a man seeking his parentage, his origins. He has been influenced at one time or another by France, Spain, and the United States and the militant indigenists of his own country, and he crosses history like a jade comet, now and then giving off flashes of lightning. What is he pursuing in his eccentric course? He wants to go back beyond the catastrophe he has suffered: he wants to be a sun again, to return to the center of that life from which he was separated one day. (Was that day the Conquest? Independence?) It is a form of orphanhood, an obscure awareness that we have been torn away from the All, and an ardent search: a flight and return, an effort to re-establish the bonds that unite us with the universe.

Nothing could be further from this feeling than the solitude of the North American. In the United

States man does not feel that he has been torn from the center of creation and suspended between hostile forces. He has built his own world and it is built in his own image: it is his mirror. But now he cannot recognize himself in his inhuman objects, nor in his fellows. His creations, like those of an inept sorcerer, no longer obey him. He is alone among his works, lost—to use the phrase by José Gorostiza—in a "wilderness of mirrors."

This comparison comes at the beginning of the book, and there is more of this sort of thing, yet it is not "judgmental" or tiresome. There is a sense in which all history really ought to be written as this book is written—to show how the strivings of men are really efforts toward fuller self-consciousness. What is said does not "settle" anything, but is richly provocative. Books of this sort should reach the young, if only because education pursued in the company of such thinking could not possibly be identified with a term of "schooling," and once it gets under way is likely to go on and on.

Octavio Paz's book seeks out the roots of Mexican psychological life in pre-Columbian civilization, showing the persisting influence of Nabuatl culture and religion. In one place he says:

In Teotihuacan the gods also confronted the problem of the sun as the source of life. Only the sacrifice of Quetzalcoatl could set the sun in motion and save the world from divine conflagration. The persistence of the pre-Cortesian myth underlines the difference between the Christian and indigenous conceptions. Christ saved the world because he redeemed us and washed away the stain of original sin, but Quetzalcoatl was not so much a redeemer as a re-creator. Among the Indians the idea of sin is still bound to the idea of health and sickness, personal, social and cosmic. The Christian attempts to save the individual soul, disconnected from the group and the body. Christianity condemns the world, while the Indian conceives of personal salvation only as a part of the salvation of society and the cosmos.

Political history is not neglected by Paz but each epoch of national life in Mexico is related to the consciousness of the people. Some other text might be used along with this book to fill out the facts—Ernest Gruening's history of Mexico is a

good one—but the idea of letting poets and artists do our history-writing for a generation or two is made to seem a very good one by a reading of *The Labyrinth of Solitude*.

## COMMENTARY EXCELLENCE IN THE MEDIA

WHEN Robert Oliver speaks of how the mass media could be made to serve the public interest (see "Children"), and even contribute to a new form of human organization, he doesn't say anything about how this is to be arranged—that is, how tools of communication which have been used for so long to manipulate human beings can be placed in the hands of persons who will use them for directly opposite purposes.

Perhaps this omission is justified in a discussion devoted to ideal ends. Consideration of ends ought to come before the devising of means. Plato's *Republic* would never have been written if he had begun with feasibility.

Yet the question of "power" must be disposed of sooner or later. It is interesting that Mr. Oliver did not mention the BBC, even in passing, as an example of the benefits to be gained from a mass medium in the hands of a noncommercial authority. The BBC is of course controlled by the British Government, and since Mr. Oliver is contemplating the desirability of a stateless culture, a wholly independent source of communications is probably what he has in mind.

What would a stateless society equipped with all the devices of high technology be like? The question makes unparalleled demands on the imagination. It is not difficult to think of rulerless communities which thrive on pastoral simplicity, but a society using the tools of almost limitless power, yet in which no one abuses power or even wants to—this is the extraordinary spectacle which Mr. Oliver seems to imply. We are not objecting, simply marveling at the idea.

So it seems necessary to suggest that the regenerated sort of human beings such a society would require, especially in its early development, would have to protect themselves from the *present* influence of the mass media by managing without them most of the time—as, indeed, we suspect Mr. Oliver himself does. One also

wonders, if the mass media will some day provide stimulation to critical awareness, where the broadcasters and publishers themselves are going to get it, since they certainly don't have it now. This is simply a way of arguing that excellence in the communications of the mass media, if it ever comes, will come as an effect, and not as a cause, of prior excellences which have come into being elsewhere.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves ON THE MEDIA

[Since publication of Charles Reich's *The Greening of America*, the distinction between the two major periods of the American past—the day of the pioneer and the later time of the Organization Man and corporate enterprise—has been made familiar by the Reichian labels of Consciousness I and Consciousness II. We need no instruction in how the power of corporate organization has changed the scenery and circumstances of our lives. Much less, however, has been said about the actual changes in human attitudes during the transition from Consciousness I to Consciousness II. Two sentences from Thornton Wilder (quoted in Review for Feb. 24) seem an accurate account of the basic feelings of the pioneer Americans: "Their sense of identity did not derive from their relation to their environment. The meaning which their lives had for them was inner and individual." This idea, when adopted consciously as a principle, becomes the foundation of all liberalism, all humanism.

The technological society, because of its mania for endless economic "growth," tends to subvert this principle. Since the growth depends upon the continuous stimulation of the desire for more and more "things," an increasing number of people get their sense of identity by purchasing the ingredients of an artificial environment. So it is no exaggeration to say that Consciousness II became a systematic subversion of the most admirable quality of Consciousness I. Any future worth having will have to bring a restoration of this quality.

What follows is a portion of an essay by Robert Oliver which first appeared in Columbia's Teachers College *Record* for November, 1968. This discussion of the efforts of men to obtain an ideal community is informed by the assumption that men are environment-makers, not creatures of any sort of determinism. Mr. Oliver considers some of the problems or difficulties that will have to be overcome by any free society of the future.]

A PERFECT polis, men have usually thought, would need no government; it would be a harmonious anarchy, a spontaneous order in which external government and law had been made unnecessary by the internalization of principle: politics should merge with ethics.

Whether one interprets one's gospel according to Plato, Augustine, Voltaire, or Marx, one holds that the state should wither away. The sin of our politicians—a sin born of desperation—is their belief that their mastery of statecraft and the uses of force in the service of policy is a sign of their political competence. In truth, their practices signify an incapacity to govern, for governing is the art of making recourse to force, physical or psychic, unnecessary in human affairs. Long ago, Plato somewhat stodgily explained in the *Republic* that the prescriptive regulation of conduct was an undesirable way to rule a community. Legislation was at best a stopgap: "the bent given by education will determine the quality of later life, by that sort of attraction which like things always have for one another, till they finally mount up to one imposing result, whether for good or ill." Where men were well educated, there would be no need for prescriptive regulation, for such men would "soon find out for themselves what regulations were needed."

Men have recurrently hoped that a politics of principle can make unnecessary a politics of force. To date, men have at best merely approximated this hope, for their education has never been sufficient to make legislation superfluous. Thus, even Plato had to turn from this utopia to the world of flesh and blood, and in the *Laws* he reluctantly proposed multifarious regulations over the conduct of life. But note how even the enthusiastic exponents of the state thought that it was a surrogate for the yet impossible politics of principle. At most, the state was an orthopedic aid that would help men strengthen their minds and learn to live freely in harmony. Thus, Matthew Arnold wrote not about culture *or* anarchy, but about culture *and* anarchy. In the ideal community, men would live together without the crutch of external restraints; but unless men fully realized their cultural capacities, they would be unable to live harmoniously in anarchy. Certainly, as Arnold saw it, nineteenth-century Englishmen were unable to do so, and to bring themselves closer to a level of culture at which

they could, they should give allegiance to the state, to the representative structure that symbolized the best self of each citizen. But now for many, the established state no longer symbolizes their best selves.

So be it; there is nothing sacrosanct about the state. Developed under particular historical conditions, the state was an effective system for concentrating scarce talent and knowledge and for bringing these to bear on the community's practical concerns. The value of the state to human life was not in its formal structures, but in the fact that for a time it helped intellect operate in human affairs; the state permitted men of reason to act on significant problems of importance to all. If in the future, other systems can perform this function more effectively, so much the better; historic continuity depends not on the structure of the system but on the performance of the function.

In any community and in every community, the problem of judgment is inescapable. If there is a common life, public decisions must somehow be made, for life consists in making decisions about vital problems; and these decisions must be sufficiently wise not to lead the community to destruction. In the last century, the conditions under which community decisions are made have changed profoundly. The combination of widespread education, high literary sophistication, growing leisure, and instantaneous global communications greatly enhances the individual's claim not merely to be represented in community deliberations, but to participate actively. Only time will tell whether this enhanced claim will prove sufficiently strong to prevail against the state and to win the allegiance of men to a new system. But notwithstanding Hegel's hopes, the performance of the state has not been so consistently rational to make us shun putting potential alternatives to the test. This test will be possible only if we do our best to make both the principle of representation and that of participation function as well as they can; and here we arrive at the message of the media.

In times of disorientation, mistakes are often made by those who try to go beyond outworn assumptions to divine the new dynamics of power. A dangerous mistake of this sort is the myth of hot and cool media, the myth that pits electronic media against those of print. Neither moving images nor static ciphers necessarily conduce to either spontaneous emotion or abstract rationality. Emotion and reason are qualities of human activities, not human artefacts; it is a pathetic fallacy for a rhetorician here to commit the pathetic fallacy. Certain minds, not certain media, are perhaps hot or cool, depending on the thinker's character, mood, and intention. The touchstone for all communication is the problem of judgment, the continuous need of man to choose, consciously or unconsciously, to act this or that way in this or that situation. No matter how much man extends himself through mechanical and electronic artefacts, there is no way to discover the qualities of his prospective actions by studying the characteristics of his artefacts, for the qualities of his actions reside not in the artefacts but in his performance with respect to the situation. The original critic of pop culture, Heraclitus, is as acute today as he was 2500 years ago, for he observed that "of all those whose discourse I have heard, none arrives at the realization that that which is wise is set apart from all things."

Technological determinism in the realm of mind is pernicious, and the particular determinism that suggests that print conduces to an individualistic rationalism and that electronics induce a tribal emotionalism is a serious threat to political progress. By so misunderstanding media, one simply serves the old order, the representative state, by giving it a wedge by which it can divide and rule. For too long, men of good will have feared mass communications, seeing in them only powerful agencies for manipulating the thoughts and inclinations of uncritical multitudes. The myth that particular human qualities are the inherent result of the media themselves, not the way in which men choose to use them, encourages

some to use the media mindlessly, and it confirms in others their original fear of these media. These reactions will feed one another, and appearance will seem to validate the myth. Hence, such a self-fulfilling prophecy helps to isolate the media from individualistic rationalism; and so isolated, the media may merely be a terrible tool of tyranny. To the degree that the media are used mindlessly, they will simply help perpetuate the state. But the media need not and should not be used in isolation from intellect.

Participatory politics cannot escape the imperative of intelligence; unless a participatory system proves in practice to be wiser than the representative, the state will not wither. The electronic media are an integral feature of the conditions that may make a new form of human organization possible. But in historic matters, conditions are merely the material cause of events; the efficient, formal, and final causes depend on how men act on the conditions. Despite claims to the contrary, the myth of the media is a reactionary bulwark of the status quo, for it discourages men from seeking to act on the media so as to serve intellect. If mass communications can manipulate the mindless, they can equally stimulate critical awareness. Those truly seeking an alternative to the power state should resist every effort to pit print against the picture; both forms should be brought into an ever more varied effort to provoke men, all men, to sharpen their intelligence, discipline their faculties, and furnish their minds. We have at our command great new tools of communication; and when we learn to use these intelligently, we can perhaps realize man's recurrent dream of culture *and* anarchy.

ROBERT OLIVER

## FRONTIERS

### Displacing Effects of Drugs

SOME of the arguments which come as a result of the widespread use of drugs seem beside the point. For example, the question of whether or not a drug is physiologically "addictive" does not seem anywhere near as important as what reliance on drugs displaces in the psychological life of their users. Further, basing judgments about drug use mainly on reports of physiological effects delegates the decision to "experts," and even if experts have something useful to say, a medical man's report about what is or is not harmful to the body may have little bearing on the actualities of psychological health and human well-being.

Consider, for contrast, the level of Martin Buber's discussion of the subject. In *The Knowledge of Man* (Harper Torchbook), Buber examines Aldous Huxley's advocacy of the use of mescalin. Huxley had maintained that by taking "a suitable chemical preparation," anyone becomes able "to know from within of what the mystics speak." Huxley speaks of mescalin as providing "a flight out of selfhood and environment." Buber comments:

Huxley calls it, to be sure, the "urge to go beyond the self," by which he means that here man escapes the entanglement in the net of his utilitarian aims. But in reality the consumer of mescalin does not emerge from this net into some sort of free participation in common being; rather merely into a strictly private sphere given to him as his own for several hours. The "chemical holidays" of which Huxley speaks are holidays not only from the petty I, enmeshed in the machinery of its aims, but also from the person participating in the community of logos and cosmos—holidays from the very uncomfortable reminder to verify oneself as such a person.

Huxley speaks also of holidays from the possibly repugnant surroundings. But man may master as he will his situation, to which his surroundings may also belong, he may withstand it, he may alter it, he may, when it is necessary, exchange it for another; but the fugitive flight out of the claim of the situation into situationlessness is no legitimate affair of man. And the true name of all the paradises which man creates

for himself by chemical or other means is situationlessness.

This sort of thinking is surely called for on the subject of drugs, and anyone can do it, without requiring the testimony of physiologists. Another example of this approach is provided by Edwin H. Land, inventor of the Polaroid camera, in *Science* for Jan 15. As a scientist and discoverer, Dr. Land found by observing his own psychological processes that there is a natural alternation between outgoing, mixing with others, and heterogeneous activity, and a period of inwardness and concentration. The latter is a time of assimilation, digestion, growth, and often creation. When the need for this inner life asserts itself, he says—

You want to be undisturbed. You want to be free to think not for an hour at a time, or three hours at a time, but for two days or two weeks, if possible without interruption. . . . You wish people would just go away and leave you alone while you get something straight. Then, you get it straight and you embody it, and during that period of embodiment you have a feeling of almost divine guidance. Then it is done, and, suddenly, you are alone, and you have a need to go back to your friends and the world around you, and to all history, to be refreshed, to feel alive and human once again.

He calls the passage from one phase of life to the other "transition from multiple-man to singular-man," and proposes that if the individual has not enriched his inner life sufficiently as multiple-man, he may seek release in an artificial "singular-man" condition produced by drugs:

Drugs in this concept serve not as an escape from one's self but rather to one's self. The use of drugs is a shortcut, which presumably is also a blind alley, for there is no feedback between the product and the integrative process. In the bona fide situation, the interplay between the integrative process and the artistic or scientific product leads to a strengthening of the integrative process and to increased mastery of the technique of willful transition between the multiple and singular modes. With drugs, tragically, the first phases of integration are achieved along with the wonderful sense of relief of being a singular human rather than part of an animal group, only to find that because of the lack of

feedback the process is not self-supporting and self-strengthening. Obviously, we are much too far away from understanding the biochemical differences between the bona fide situation and the synthetic one to hazard any analysis of why one is constructive and the other destructive. The lesson from the hypothesis, however, is that unless we can provide the bona fide techniques of transition, unless we can provide the healthy addictions, disaster will eventuate. Individuals may stay too long in the multiple mode, where in addition to enjoying the rich variegation of the world of feeling, they will also substitute, permanently, the important irrational absurdities of politics, committees, and boards, for the discerning rationality that can exist only in the mode of the singular-man. Even if they do not become drug addicts, they are in danger of becoming habituated to the slap-happy excesses that are as valid for the multiple-man as are magnificence and grandeur.

It should be explained that Dr. Land means by "healthy addictions" the sense of compulsion to withdraw into oneself, to become wholly oneself, and to think intensively about the meanings and possibilities of things. Earlier in this paper, he describes a session he had with some university students in which he spoke of the "wonders of the scientific experience":

I told of the way in which one yearns for a deep insight in some domain; of the strange intuitive program of collecting observations; of the mystery of formation of hypothesis within one; of the competence of the body-mind system to select the crucial experiment; of the excitement of interaction between experiment and hypothesis; of the sense of relief and even of nobility when the hypothesis is proven true by the experiment and the stage set for the next hypothesis.

It was then that one student said to another: "Why, it's just like heroin, isn't it?" This remark, plus participation in a foundation board meeting which was overwhelmed by feelings of helplessness and impotence as the members wondered what to do about the spread of the use of drugs among the young, led Dr. Land to publish this paper.