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RESONANCES OF MIND

IN a book devoted to the religio-philosophical ideas of the North American Indians, Hartley Burr Alexander remarked that we should be at least as generous to the Indians as we are to ourselves. The reason for study of the best of what a people are, or have done, is simple enough: "We judge our own humanity by its white pages, not by its black, especially when we are concerned with what most gives us courage to live or what most deeply explains our understanding of life."

This seems not merely a good but an indispensable rule. The problem of life is not so much what is as what might be. We know a great deal, perhaps far too much, of what is, and almost nothing of what might be, if our inadequate and faltering efforts at change for the better are any measure.

But notable, today, is the lack of a record of what Alexander terms the "white pages." Literature has very largely turned into an endless examination of the minutiae of the commonplace. It seems evident that modern man no longer thinks himself capable of great and good things. There are no more heroes, or almost none, and those that exist remain almost unknown, or without a supporting tradition, which is to say that a new tradition of human greatness has yet to be created, or even begun. In one of the essays in his new book on Elizabethan poets, *Shakespeare, Spenser, Donne* (Viking, 1971, $7.95), Frank Kermode puts the matter well:

> It is sometimes said to be characteristic of our time that we undo the spiritual structures of our ancestors; whatever they sacralize, we desacralize. They retreated from the evident unholiness of the world into images which stored up the strength of those moments when it seemed holy or terrible in a different way. They built in order to make space sacred, and in their rites they abolished the terrors of time, as spring kills winter and St. George the dragon. They made books which were compact of all the world and of all its history, syllabically inspired and, like nature itself, signed with the secret meanings of a god. We build to serve human functions, and not to make models of a divine world; cathedrals that were living bibles, churches proportioned as the music of the spheres. We live, more than any of our ancestors, in a time become linear and patternless. Our books inform or divert in a purely human sense. Where a book continues to be venerable, we attribute its power to different causes: we demythologize, find reasons in nature for its being as it is; we see it as figuring not the whole world of knowledge but dead men's knowledge of the world. It sinks into history, become the victim of our perspectival trick, falls under the rule of time. So we deacralize the world.

But the world is desacralized because man is desacralized, reduced to a thing in his own eyes. Resonances of mind are gone from the world because they are gone from himself. He thinks of himself as an odd isolate, some kind of accident that needs neither character nor explanation, since he has been taught to accept no responsibility beyond survival. Today's ethics are strictly situational—concerned only with the situation of mortality.

Yet modern man must be more than this, since he now looks at other ages and cultures with something like understanding and growing longing. There are branches of modern learning whose best representatives suffer the pain Tolstoy endured when he came to love the Russian peasants but could not become like them, or share their simple faith. To have a critical sense sharpened beyond the capacity for affirmation and belief is the unique intellectual ill, a sub-species, perhaps, of the Promethean ordeal, but for men who have forgotten the myths, or never knew them, it leads too often to no more than narcissistic melancholy. An older wisdom than that of the Greeks might illuminate the difficulty, but who will read the Upanishads today? Yet the

cryptic utterance of the *Katha Upanishad* has application to the paradoxes of mind:

> The Self-Being pierced the opening outwards, hence one looks outward, not within himself. A wise man looked toward the Self with reverted sight, seeking deathlessness.
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> Children seek after outward desires, they come to the net of widespread death. But the wise, beholding deathlessness seek not for the enduring among unenduring things.

Our difficulty with such sayings is that the Self seems a bare abstraction, while the riches of the world are all out there, awaiting attention. But is the world no more than a vast cornucopia, to be pillaged and ravaged until there is nothing left? This is a question which recent experience is now driving many men to ask, but when it comes to wondering what else it may be, they are more hesitant.

It is true enough that earlier generations *thought* they knew about the world, but we found their reading too "anthropomorphic" for our purposes. Men may have purposes, since they work at fulfilling them, day and night, but the idea of *the world* having a purpose, of being a fulfillment of some transcendent meaning—*that.* we held, could only be superstition. And so a great many of the old beliefs about the world proved to be, when subjected to scientific testing. But what of the deep beliefs which came before the superstitions? Was there nothing to those, either? There must be many "white pages" of the thought of the world before it was "modern."

Today, when we have become very unsure of ourselves, and are no longer confident that the world is a smorgasbord awaiting our pleasure, we are losing the habit of condescension to ancient thinkers and "primitive" peoples. And if we cannot go back to ancient times, or turn primitive—no more than Tolstoy could succeed in thinking like a peasant—we still may learn from them.

In a fascinating book on African thought and philosophy, *Muntu* (Grove, 1961), Janheinz Jahn writes briefly of the sources he uses:

> Five entirely different authors—a Belgian monk, a French ethnographer, a North American actress, an African sage who can neither read nor write, and an African scholar who speaks several European languages—these five, from different motives, have presented the philosophical systems of five different peoples—Baluba, Ruandese, Dogon, Bambara and Haitians—who live far apart from one another. And for all the differences in detail these systems agree basically with one another.

As this book has already been reviewed in MANAS (July 5, 1967), we shall not attempt an outline of the African philosophic scheme, but concentrate on what Jahn says about the African idea of Man. Man is of the species Muntu, which means that he is a being of mind, capable of exerting influence or force. "Through Nommo, the word, man establishes his mastery over things." Thus speech is the procreative force:

> If there were no word, all forces would be frozen, there would be no procreation, no change, no life. "There is nothing that there is not; whatever we have a name for, that is" so speaks the wisdom of the Yoruba priests. The proverb signifies that the naming, the enunciation produces what it names. Naming is an incantation, a creative act. What we cannot conceive of is unreal; it does not exist. But every human thought, once expressed, becomes reality. For the word holds the course of things in train and changes and transforms them. And since the word has this power, every word is an effective word, every word is binding. There is no "harmless," noncommittal word. Every word has consequences. Therefore the word binds the muntu. And the muntu is responsible for his word.
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> The force, responsibility, and commitment of the word, and the awareness that the word alone alters the world; these are the characteristics of African culture. When, after long agony, in the middle of this century, poets began to speak African words in European languages, the world began to listen. . . .
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> African poetry is never a game, never *l'art pour art*, never irresponsible. "To practice magic" is therefore a weak expression; the African poet is not "an artist using magic " but a "magician," a "sorcerer" in the African sense. He is the muntu on

> the captain's bridge of the world. Out of the great coherence of all things he calls "things" individually and then they are there. As Césaire writes: "I would find again the secret of great communications, of the great conflagrations. I would speak storm. I would speak river. I would speak tornado. I would speak tree." . . . The word of the poet has not only called the "things," it has *produced* them, it is Nommo, word seed. We *see* the things when we read the verse. . . .
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> The European poet is an individual and expresses what *he* feels, thinks, has experienced, and wants. The African poet is a person, and that means sorcerer, prophet, teacher. He expresses what *must be*. His "I" is not therefore "collective" in the European sense; it is non-individual. He speaks to the community and *for* them. He has a social task which raises him above the community: the most important poets, Césaire Senghor, Rabemananjara, Guillen, Ortiz and many others are politicians who exercise an official function. Their functional character does not prevent them from saying "I," but this "I" is always a "we," and every I-statement includes a binding imperative.

What will come of all this no one can say, but what is important to recognize here is the sense of joint power and responsibility which animates the poet. Who, in the West, since Whitman has written like that? The power of the word to shape the minds of men, to generate the field for self-conscious reflection, for common, cooperative resolve, can hardly be denied. What would India have been without the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana?* The Greeks without Homer? And how would the American stature diminish if Emerson and Thoreau and certain others were subtracted from our literature?

The need for more men of this caliber is obvious enough, yet it is hardly possible to plan for such restorations. As Wendell Berry observes in respect to the use of words, "it is impossible to say what *ought to be* the form of work that is formless." Yet it is quite possible, he also says, to show examples and point out failure, which is what we have been about.

Western man believes that he lives in a world of "things," which he is engaged in counting and classifying and managing in various ways. What cannot be defined as a "thing," or resolved into elements which submit to a "thing" definition, tend to be regarded as irrelevant. Things are utilities and man has only a manipulative relationship to them. When people are regarded as "things," certain mild "moral" restraints are sometimes applied to the methods of manipulation, but the indignity of the manipulation remains. It is this, no doubt, which lies behind all the desacralization Frank Kermode speaks of. Western readers of Edmond Taylor's *Richer by Asia* (Houghton Mifflin, 1947) were probably surprised to find this writer declaring that the people of India regarded the Bikini bomb tests as a blasphemy similar to the criminal medical experiments of the Nazis on prisoners in the concentration camps. They saw the man-made cataclysm of Bikini, he said, as a result of the idolatrous worship of the techniques of science divorced from any ethical goals—"a mob-insurrection against the pantheist sense of citizenship in nature which we share with the Hindus in our hearts, but consider a childish foible." Taylor added:

> Moreover, the Indians, whom history has rendered sensitive to all the nuances of imperialism, would have pointed out to us that in uprooting the Bikini natives from their homes in a kindly manner to make these tests we were not abiding by the laws of humanity but only following the code of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, that instead of treating a backward people as cattle for the slaughterhouse as the Nazis did, we were treating them like the members of a valuable milch herd, but without the reverence for the dignity of manhood which the Hindus feel for the dignity of cowhood.

For more than a generation, American cultural anthropologists have been interested in the Hopi Indians because of the way in which this fragmented tribe of the original inhabitants of North America has preserved its highly intelligent and harmonious way of life. How, then, do the Hopis "think"? Benjamin Lee Whorf found himself obliged to try to answer this question after an attempt to understand their language. Several of the papers in Whorf's *Language, Thought, and*

Reality (MIT Press, 1969) reflect this interest in Hopi beliefs. In one of these, "The Relation of Habitual Thought and Behavior to Language," he devotes extended attention to the thought world of the Hopi people. After showing that Europeans and Americans are mainly concerned with "things," and are therefore strongly given to noun constructions, he explains that the important Hopi words tend to be verbs. He says:

> The Hopi microcosm seems to have analyzed reality largely in terms of EVENTS (or better "eventing"), referred to in two ways, objective and subjective. Objectively, and only if perceptible physical experience, events are expressed mainly as outlines, color, movements, and other perceptive reports. Subjectively, for both the physical and nonphysical, events are considered the expression of invisible intensity factors, on which depend their stability and persistence, or their fugitiveness and proclivities. It implies that existents do not become "later and later" all in the same way; but some do by growing like plants, some by diffusing and vanishing, some by a process of metamorphoses, some by enduring in one shape until affected by violent forces. In the nature of each existent able to manifest as a definite whole is the power of its mode of duration: its growth, decline, stability, cyclicity, or creativeness. Everything is thus "prepared" for by the way it manifests by earlier phases, and what it will be later, partly has been, and partly is in act of being so "prepared." An emphasis and importance rests on this preparing or being prepared aspect of the world that may to the Hopi correspond to that "quality of reality" that "matter" or "stuff" has for us.

Whorf now turns to Hopi acts of "preparation" which include all the great tribal ceremonials. Preparation also includes prayer, meditation, good wishes and good will. Since reality is that which is being prepared, thought and desire are crucial qualities in life; and—

> Moreover, to the Hopi, one's desires and thoughts influence not only his own actions but all nature as well. This too is wholly natural. Consciousness itself is aware of work, of the feel of effort and energy, in desire and thinking. Experience more basic than language tells us that, if energy is expended, effects are produced. WE tend to believe that our bodies can stop this energy, prevent it from affecting other things until we will our BODIES to overt action. But this may be so only because we have our own linguistic basis for a theory that formless items like "matter" are things in themselves, malleable only by similar things, by more matter, and hence insulated from the powers of life and thought. It is no more unnatural to think that thought contacts everything and pervades the universe than to think, as we all do, that light kindled out of doors does this. And it is not unnatural to suppose that thought, like any other force, leaves everywhere traces of effect. Now, when WE think of a certain actual rosebush, we do not suppose that our thought goes to that actual bush, and engages with it, like a searchlight turned on it. What then do we suppose our consciousness is dealing with when we are thinking of that rosebush? Probably we think, it is dealing with a "mental image" which is not the rosebush but a mental surrogate of it. But why should it be NATURAL to think that our thought deals with a surrogate and not with the real rosebush? Quite possibly because we are dimly aware that we carry about with us a whole imaginary space, full of mental surrogates. To us, mental surrogates are old familiar fare. Along with the images of imaginary space, which we perhaps secretly know to be only imaginary, we tuck the thought-of actually existing rosebush, which may be quite another story, perhaps because we have that very convenient "place" for it. The Hopi thought-world has no imaginary space. The corollary to this is that it may not locate thought dealing with real space anywhere but in real space, nor insulate real space from the effects of thought. A Hopi would naturally suppose that his thought (or he himself) traffics with the actual rosebush—or more likely, corn plant—that he is thinking about. The thought then should leave some trace of itself with the plant in the field. If it is a good thought, one about health and growth, it is good for the plant; if it is a bad thought, the reverse.
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> The Hopi emphasize the intensity-factor of thought. Thought to be most effective should be vivid in consciousness definite, steady, sustained, charged with strongly felt good intentions.

The four or five thousand Hopis who survive today represent a kind of living museum of human attitudes which once were spread around the world, characteristic of the ages which came before the scientific revolution, when myth and tradition supplied men's idea of themselves and their potentialities. There is a sense in which the extraordinary intellectual development which

accompanied the rise of science, bringing an almost morbid sharpening of the critical faculties, accomplished a radical purification of abstract thought, but it also limited the capacity for abstraction to reductive thinking, so that the most general "truths" are also the emptiest, from a human point of view.

Is there a form of general truth which remains rich in content? The great myths will perhaps qualify in this respect, since it seems evident that we are unable to live without them. What is now termed the mythopoeic mentality is continually reborn, although little supported by the times, and must seek what nourishment it can find among the remains of ancient literature and the beliefs of primitive peoples. Yet the efforts are made. The writings of John Collier are filled with this spirit, and those who study Eastern philosophy are at last beginning to recognize that they deal with the substance of profound inquiry, seldom if ever equalled in modern speculations. Meanwhile, the shock of the failures of Western civilization may generate a more serious, less merely "antiquarian" mood of research.

It may eventually be realized that there can be no return—or rising—to human greatness without the rebirth of deep convictions concerning the high potentialities of man, and a recasting of the full contents of the heroic literature of the past in a mode that takes into account the ordeals as well as the discoveries of recent centuries of history; but at the same time refuses to succumb to either its conceits or its desperate fears. We cannot, it is true, go back into the past, but neither can we go forward if we remain as we are.

REVIEW
THE MAKING OF PACIFISTS

A BOOK that very nearly every reader can learn from is Barbara Deming's *Revolution & Equilibrium* (Grossman, 1971, $8.95). It is concerned with some ten years of Miss Deming's thinking about the ways to peace and justice. During this period she engaged in a number of the action projects for peace and racial equality undertaken by pacifist groups, finding her conviction of the necessity for nonviolence strengthening throughout. The book chronicles the author's slow discovery of the extent of injustice and misrepresentation in the United States, her disillusionment with "authority," and the choice of non-violent action as the remedy. The term "revolution" in her title indicates her measure of the changes which are needed, and "equilibrium" represents the balance that must be attained by revolutionists if enduring benefits are to result from their struggle. Only the non-violent, she believes, can preserve their equilibrium.

The book is made up of essays written during the sixties, many of which appeared in the *Nation*, some in *Liberation.* Miss Deming explains in her Preface how, at first, she thought naturally in terms of "appeals to power" to persuade those in authority to do the right thing. She no longer believes in this "petitioning" approach. She has studied Gandhi and has lost faith in political power as such. Yet much of this book is given to dialogue with those who rely on power, whether for conservative or revolutionary ends. There is a continuous effort on Miss Deming's part to understand those she reasons with. So, the book has a valiant quality, even though, for some readers, there will be a feeling that something is missing in the argument—a sense of history, perhaps. On the other hand, there are valuable balancing qualities: Miss Deming writes with a deep feeling of responsibility and makes a serious effort to enter into other points of view. By reason of this, even the reader who frequently disagrees may find her book informative and useful and will be likely to trust her as a reporter.

The contents of the book are diverse. The first essay describes a trip to Cuba in 1960, during which she learned why Castro gave up on being fairly reported in the United States. This article, which appeared in the *Nation,* was illuminating of Cuban attitudes and was reviewed in MANAS at the time. A meeting of the Peacemakers—actually, of the New England Committee for Nonviolent Action, in New London, Conn.—began Miss Deming's pacifist thinking. Richard Gregg, author of *The Power of Nonviolence,* was there, along with other peace leaders. This sixteen-day training session in non-violence was reported at length for the *Nation* by the writer. Other essays include the story of SANE, of the Peace Walk from San Francisco to Moscow, an account of the work of the Council of Correspondence, an interview with Earle Reynolds, skipper of the *Phoenix* and *Everyman III*, and reports on the author's experiences in a Birmingham jail. There is a defense of unilateral disarmament, the account of a visit to North Vietnam, and a searching discussion of Frantz Fanon's advocacy of "violence."

The report of what happened on the peace walk as the walkers approached Moscow is especially interesting:

> One can read in the fact that the walkers reached Moscow the lesson that the Russians want peace. One can then add, of course, that they want it on their own terms; and no doubt they do. Plainly the Russians wanted the walkers to enter Moscow on their own terms—were hoping and expecting to convert them along the way to multilateralism. As Lyttle [Brad Lyttle was coordinator of the Walk] puts it, "They could not really imagine that we could walk for three weeks in Russia, enjoy their hospitality, visit their historic places, see the great jump they had made, see how they wanted peace—all this, without coming to accept their position." The pressure they exerted was intense. The pressure of their hospitality was "fantastic." Banquets would appear on the side of the road as if in a fairy tale: tablecloths spread upon the grass, set with china and silverware and flowers; and caviar and wine and decorated cakes;

abundant courses piping hot, served by waitresses; hot water supplied, too, so that they could wash; towels hung from the branches of trees! . . .

The Russians did their uttermost to change the walkers, and turn the walk to their own use, but failed; and here is the very significant point: in spite of this, the team was welcomed m Moscow. Lyttle quotes one of the members of the Peace Council: "If you work with us, we will give you everything!" The Council is the only peace organization the law permits in Russia—if not officially a government organ, is virtually so—and *could* have given them "everything." "I've no doubt," says Lyttle, "that if we had been willing to modify our program a little, drop our unilateral sign, we would have had whole villages turning out for us, and a quarter of a million people in Red Square." But the point is: they refused to alter their stand and, even so, were made welcome. . . .

The walkers' strength, then, lay in their independence of country, their direct address to others simply as other men. *Newsweek's* Moscow correspondent, Whitman Bassow, reports a scene in Minsk's Friendship House where Bradford Lyttle declared from the speakers' stand: "I went to jail because I refused to serve in the U.S. Army. I have protested against American rockets aimed at your cities and families. There are Soviet rockets aimed at my city and my family. Are you demonstrating against that?" "There were murmurs in the crowd," wrote Bassow; "obviously (they) had not heard anyone publicly ask that question in quite that way before."

Working for the Atomic Energy Commission seems to be one way to wake up to the horrors of technological war. Two AEC employees, Arthur R. Tamplin and John W. Gofman, are scientists who did research at the AEC's Lawrence Radiation Laboratory Biochemical Division, and what they discovered led them to write a book called *"Population Control" Through Nuclear Pollution.* The title is enough to show where the authors stand in respect to the dangers, not of nuclear war, but of the production of nuclear energy for any purpose. Twenty years ago, Earle Reynolds was an employee of the Atomic Energy Commission, too. As Barbara Deming tells it:

When he first went to Hiroshima in 1951, it was "simply as a scientist.' He had little interest in world affairs. He went there on the payroll of the A.E.C. to study the effects of radiation upon the children of Hiroshima. He slowly began to open his eyes to the effects of "this relatively small bomb—it would be called a tactical bomb today, in relation to say a fifty-megaton bomb, a pebble thrown against a wall." (If a fifty megaton bomb had been dropped on Hiroshima, there would be "just a large lake there today; the waters of the sea would have filled it up.") He began slowly to open his eyes not only to the damage done on the day the relatively small bomb dropped but the damage that continues to be done to those who were anywhere near. "For those people the war is still not over. People are still dying from the long-term effects. . . . The world as a whole is actually so uninformed—though here is a case history of what happens." People of course visit Hiroshima and see a city rebuilt and flourishing; but it was rebuilt, he points out, not by the survivors but by others, who moved in after the disaster; and even today few of the survivors have the physical or psychic stamina to compete with those who moved in.

When Dr. Reynolds finished his research for the AEC he found that the organization was no longer interested in continuing this sort of investigation. Eventually he became convinced "that the AEC had been transformed from a scientific institution into a propaganda organ for the government—interested in justifying the continuation of nuclear tests, and so in minimizing the dangers of radiation."

In 1958, when the government declared a large area of the Pacific barred to sea traffic because of nuclear testing to be done there, some pacifists endeavored to sail a ship called the *Golden Rule* into the forbidden region, but were immediately arrested. Earle Reynolds arrived in Honolulu at about that time, aboard his yacht, the *Phoenix,* and since he was enroute to Hiroshima and the testing zone lay directly in his path, he made his challenge of the government's right to interfere with the freedom of the seas by sailing into the area. While he was arrested and convicted in Honolulu of violating the AEC regulation, in 1960 the San Francisco Court of Appeals unanimously reversed the conviction by the Honolulu court, holding that the regulation did not have the force of law. The story of this

adventure is told in Reynolds' book, *The Forbidden Voyage.*

Those who have been influenced by the frequent quotation of Fanon's defense of violence would do well to read carefully two of his books, *The Wretched of the Earth,* and the earlier *Black Skin, White Masks.* Barbara Deming's title essay, "On Revolution and Equilibrium," is largely based on this reading. In one place she says:

> I think of the words with which Fanon opens the final chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth:* "Come then, comrades; it would be as well to decide at once to change our ways." I quote Fanon often—because he is eloquent, but also because he is quoted repeatedly these days by those who plead the need for violence. It is my conviction that he can be quoted as well to plead for nonviolence. It is true that he declares: "From birth it is clear . . . that this narrow world, strewn with prohibitions, can only be called into question by absolute violence." But I ask all those who are readers of Fanon to make an experiment: Every time you find the word "violence" in his pages, substitute for it the phrase "radical and uncompromising action." I contend that with the exception of a very few passages this substitution can be made, and that the action he calls for could just as well be nonviolent action.

Violence leads to more violence and the loss of equilibrium in action. And Barbara Deming invites her readers to turn to the last chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth* and to go. over it carefully. "Is he not," she asks, "groping here visibly for a way that departs from violence?" She quotes enough of the closing passages to make her contention seem an entirely reasonable one.

COMMENTARY
LIGHT ON DRUG ABUSE

AN oblique confirmation of E. F. Schumacher's analysis of "growth" economics (see Frontiers) is provided by an interview with a Paris psychiatrist (Los Angeles *Times* for Sept. 21). Schumacher maintains that the unprecedented expansion of the "rich" countries during the past twenty-five years has been responsible for the bewildered discontent which afflicts their populations. Specifically, these countries are harassed by "inflation, unhealthy cities, soaring crime rates, drug addiction, fear of the future." The young, Schumacher adds, are revolting against a "system" which threatens to make them into robots and morons.

The French psychiatrist, Pierre A. Bensoussan, who is regarded as one of the foremost European authorities on the drug question, is convinced that these conditions are leading the young to experiment with drugs. He told the *Times* writer:

> We won't solve the drug problem until we solve the problem of man in his environment, even if we double and triple the number of narcotic agents, even if we double and triple the number of hospitals and facilities dedicated to treatment of drugs, even if we put many more people in jail for drug abuse. The problem is not going to be solved that way.

Purpose and challenge have been removed from life, he maintains, by all the technological barriers between the individual and his environment. Hope of normality, in Dr. Bensoussan's opinion, remains only in areas where it is still necessary to wring survival out of the land. This struggle seems to be over in countries such as France, Europe, the United States, Canada. The physician added:

> In most cases there is a complete break with nature—from the trees, the grass, pure water, sunrise, sunset. Increasingly, we are, more than we realize, living completely artificial lives farther and farther away from the rhythm of nature. . . .
>
> More and more everyday people, young people, feel that when they get into the adult age they will be only offered what Aldous Huxley described in *Brave New World.*, written in the early 1930'S, . . . We have washing machines, we have cars, but we lack an ideal. What we need may not be religion as expressed by some churches but the belief that we have something of value to do in our span of life in this world.
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> I think that is not the only problem for the French and Americans and Germans, but it is a very important, indeed the deepest problem in the occidental societies these days.

Dr. Bensoussan seems to think that if this basic problem, and the drug problem along with it, are not solved, our civilization may disappear, just as the Egyptian, the Inca, and the ancient Greek civilizations disappeared.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
FOR THE LIBRARY

SINCE *Albert Camus and the Men of the Stone* (San Francisco: Greenwood Press, 1971) is not a book many people are likely to come across—only 750 copies were printed and the price is $10.00—and since Camus was a writer with extensive influence among the young, it seemed a good idea to include at least a note about the insight into Camus as a human being which this book provides. Admirers of Camus may want to own it, not only as a rare appreciation of the French writer; but as an exquisite example of the printer's art—entirely appropriate, in this case, since the contents are made up of expressions by compositors, linotype operators, and proof-readers who worked with Camus. To say that they "loved" him would be close to the truth.

Yet these were no ordinary "men of the stone" (the "stone" is the level surface, once a piece of marble or other stone, but now steel, on which the compositor makes up the pages or other material he is preparing for the press). Most of them worked with Camus during the years when he edited *Combat,* the underground journal of the French Resistance during the Nazi occupation. A colleague of those days said:

> There are different kinds of journalists. Some of them have never set foot in the composing room. In my opinion, this is a mistake on their part. Camus was first a copy editor. When he became editor-in-chief, he continued to look after the make-up of each page, to check the final page proofs, and to wait at night for the completion of the page forms, which the "truck" carried away, one after another. In conclusion I think the printing plant was one of the places where Camus was happy.

Camus was born in 1913, in Algeria, and died Jan. 4, 1960, in an automobile accident in France. This book presents what a few workers in the printing trades recalled when they got together to tape-record their memories of the association with him. It was edited by Robert Proix and first published in France in 1962. The translation for the present edition is by Gregory H. Davis, who also contributes an informative introduction.

These men speak of Camus as a comrade, one whose death pained them bitterly. He was at ease among them, and intensely loyal. He went from copy editor to eminent man of letters, but he never forgot the men he had worked with, nor they him. In 1957, he was invited by the Proofreaders' Union to appear before a study group and offer his views on what the relationship between writers and workers ought to be. Those who attended that conference found it an unforgettable experience. Hearing about the event, people came from all categories of the federated unions affiliated with the book and printing trades. He talked about the life of the writer and his need to supplement his income by some other activity. The problem, as set by the meeting, was how to close the gap between the manual laborer and the intellectual. He spoke of the need for freedom of work and cultural freedom, saying that protecting the rights of labor was the same thing as defending the rights of intellectuals. He spoke of having "people's universities," and of the difficulties involved. The following exchange is of interest.

> "In your capacity as a journalist," someone said, "haven't you ever been hampered by the political climate and by orders from your bosses?"
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> "Certainly the act of writing an editorial necessarily involves concessions, as much to public opinion as to colleagues who write in the same paper. This leads to saying less, rather than more. I have therefore never been satisfied working as a journalist: first, because this demands a speed of execution which always annoys me and makes it almost impossible to revise anything; second, because I abhor having enemies, and journalistic polemics invariably end up this way. I suffer perpetually for this reason. You have to admit that we live here in the capital of systematic spitefulness, disparagement, and falsehood. We live continually in the midst of a miserable conspiracy which renders the atmosphere in this country practically unbearable. But what can we do about it?"

A proofreader gave his recollections of this meeting:

> Camus still had his illusions about unions. He was unaware of the cancer of gross materialism in the unions, and he chose to look only at the good side of

things. He saw us better than we are. We were better at that particular moment, pretty much because of him, because we wanted to be simple and real, sort of the way he wanted it. How far away at that moment were our worries about a good salary and what make of automobile we should buy; how remote was our vision of a refrigerator and of status acquired or to be acquired with the boss, our scheming to be recognized as qualified. . . .

Camus was coming back to us. We had seen him leave, go to accept the Nobel Prize. We had seen him in newspaper photos; the flashbulbs had even shown him having a fling with high society, and our hearts were heavy—were they going to keep him? No, he had come back. The bourgoisie hadn't killed him. He was among us with his calm smile—a little ironic, but kind, friendly, telling us not to be sentimental but to know how to be close, to be brothers. . . .

A show-off who considered himself a Marxist tried to trip up Camus by asking him in what ways he thought a writer could serve as a guide to the proletariat. Our friend answered simply that he had never been a guide, that he couldn't dream of being one, and that he felt too much real humility to put himself in the place of a multitude. . . .

In this age when hangmen triumph, Camus, or perhaps we should say the flesh-and-blood Camus, is no longer here. He was no more able than we to prevent that triumph and its very frequent recurrence. But his ideas endure, stronger and more alive than ever.

What did Camus say about a writer?

He also told us that a writer ought to have two occupations, one for earning his daily bread and, the other, the real and absolute one, where he didn't have to cater to public taste and the only worry was not to lie to himself, above all in his thoughts, but also in the way he expressed those thoughts.

Students who have access to this portrait of Camus will gain rare memories of him.

* * *

Lilian Weber, who teaches elementary education at City College in New York, has a review of John Holt's *What Do I Do Monday?* in the *Saturday Review* for Aug. 21 which identifies the particularly rich contribution Holt makes in all his books. After briefly complaining that Holt "has no analysis of organizational possibilities for change," she says:

But Holt does try to help individual teachers. He tries to give them a view of the learning process that will lead them to change their relationship toward the learning child. He turns the learning process inside out—to present so intimate a view of his own personal learning that the teacher will be drawn into empathy, into verification through similar self-examination, and finally into acknowledgement of the undeniable truth of what he describes. It is a personal picture that he draws, and it is a personal response that he wants to evoke.

. . . He gives teachers little or no advice for dealing with [organizational problems]—either in the classroom or in the wider context of the school. By focusing on personal development, he ignores the question of whether change in individuals—one by one—is effective in changing schools.

. . . but the issue I take with Holt, at least in this book, is small. So much of the book is useful, and it is a book written to be useful. It is not addressed to the total changers, the free schoolers. Holt addresses himself to "the kinds of schools most children go to and most teachers teach in—fixed curriculums, regularly scheduled classes, and the like." He says, "There are thousands who, with no risk at all, could do much more innovating or freeing up in their classrooms than they have ever tried to do."

* * *

What should be a useful tool for many teachers is the *Bibliography of Open Education*, edited by Roland S. Barth and Charles H. Rathbone and jointly published by Advisory for Open Education and Education Development Center, Inc., 55 Chapel Street, Newton, Mass. 02160. Ideas which convey the meaning of "Open Education" are "Integrated Day," "Leicestershire Model," and "Informal Infant School System." It means vertical or "family" grouping, and flexibility of time and space. The listings are in three broad categories of (1) Books and Articles, (2) Films, and (3) Periodicals. There are 265 entries in all, and an index. MANAS is listed among the periodicals, with the address correctly given, but is mistakenly said to appear fortnightly. MANAS comes out every week (except during July and August)!

FRONTIERS

Elementary Economics

SOMEBODY with the necessary competence ought to volunteer to read through everything that E. F. Schumacher has written and to select and organize from this material the ingredients of a compact primer on economics for use by young and old. If there is any subject which needs a new beginning, it is Economics, and Schumacher is the man to go to for help.

This seems plain from his most recent address, which was a talk given to a Christian group in England in April of this year. His topic was the present inflationary crisis and what Christians might do about it. His prescription is quite simple. But first he shows what is wrong. Following is the basic diagnosis:

> We have become insensitive to the unwisdom of violence—and by that I do not mean simply violence of man against man. A spirit of violence pervades the whole of our science, technology, economics. It has even invaded our agricultural practices to an abhorrent degree. We need wisdom to teach us to reorientate our science, technology, economics, so that, wherever we have a choice, we shall develop relatively nonviolent practices. "Wherever we have a choice" . . . yes, and dire necessity may well take a hand in this. For to act unwisely means to put oneself into the yoke of necessity. Nothing could be clearer today. The idolatry of wealth has moulded a "system," and this same system now moulds us. It moulds our thinking; it makes us think absurdities, such as that infinite growth in an infinite environment were possible; that we could go on finding and burning as much oil every ten years as in all previous history; that science could cure the sickness of the environment; that the problems of production have been solved; that man's future was one of little work and endless leisure; that man had moved from the age of scarcity into the age of plenty.
>
> Nothing could be further from the truth. The high prosperity of a minority of people in a minority of countries is being purchased by ravaging the earth and robbing it of its once-for-all endowment. Capital is being treated as if it were income. This way of life of the rich cannot spread to all mankind and cannot last. As Gandhi once said: "there is enough for everybody's need, but not for everybody's greed."

What can Christians and others who feel responsible do about a problem of these dimensions? Schumacher answers:

> To work out an economic programme for peace and permanence means to work for a steady-state economy which indeed demands to be filled with creative changes and (to quote Rene Dubos) will offer intellectual possibilities much more challenging than those offered by the kind of rampant growth that has prevailed during the past century.
>
> As I see it, the main task of those who profess Christianity is to define the economic concept of "enough." If there is no idea of "enough," all problems become insoluble. If a Christian knows nothing about "enough," the seed will have fallen among thorns:
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> "And that which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life and *bring no fruit to perfection"* (Luke 8:14).

The point is clear enough. All sciences relating to man and arising from human activities must begin with a moral rationale, since man is a moral being. This restores the role of common human intelligence to all the areas of the social sciences and obliges these disciplines to be founded on clear and simple principles which all men can understand. Specialists will still have a function, but not as formidable technicians whose authority increases in inverse proportion to the extent that ordinary people can understand what they say. They will be helpers and teachers, not authorities at all. Schumacher has himself shown that this is completely possible.

This paper by Schumacher appears in full in the July-August issue of *Resurgence*, an English radical magazine published at 24 Abercorn Place, London, N.W. 8. Much of Schumacher's discussion is given to showing the excesses of economic "growth" in recent years, and its contradictory results. He also shows how committed present-day economic authorities are to the "Growth Ideology":

> "I cannot conceive a successful economy without growth," says Walter Heller, former Chairman of the U.S. President's Council of Economic Advisers.

> "More, further, quicker, richer," says Dr. Mansholt, Vice President of the European Economic Community, "are the watchwords of present-day society," and *"there is no alternative";* we must "make this adaptation." Both Heller and Mansholt are right—in terms of present-day systems and most deeply ingrained philosophies. And yet it is an absolute certainty that this cannot now continue much longer. "We shall be forced (wrote a leading American oil geologist) to achieve some sort of an ecological and technological quasi steady-state. However, I am completely convinced that such a state of non-growth will be so completely incompatible with our present culture that one of the greatest intellectual revolutions of the last 500 years will almost inevitably occur as a consequence. . . ."

What is the theory that will break down as a result of this revolution? Schumacher calls it "Growth Economics," which has replaced the doctrine of *laisser-faire.* Growth-Economics contends that through the promotion of growth, everyone will have enough, so that society will be relieved of "the awkward moral task of having to struggle with the problem of distributory justice." Yet right now, after a period of the most incredible "growth" the world has ever seen, all the world is filled with discontent and there are problems everywhere.

Just what has been the recent growth record? It is almost unbelievable. In the twenty-five years since World War II, industrial output has equalled *all* the production before that time, going back to the beginning of history, Schumacher says. He explains:

> There have never been 25 years like this before, and there may never be 25 years like it again. For 25 years it has been possible to run the economy (of the Western world) at full speed, in fact at continuous acceleration. Economists consider the figures of steel consumption very good indicators of industrial activity. It started on any significant scale about a hundred years ago. In 1870 world consumption was a half million tons. It then took 65 years (1935) to reach 100 million. There it stopped till the end of the Second World War (1945). Since then it has grown from 200 million in 1951 (300m. 1959, 400m. 1964, 500m. 1968) to 600m. in 1970. It may be expected to increase to 700m. in 1973, 800m. in 1976, and to over 1,000m. by 1980.

In terms of actual human benefit, what has been the result of all this undreamed-of growth?

> (*a*) There are more economically miserable people in the world today than there were 25 years ago; more in absolute numbers of course, but also more proportionately.
>
> (*b*) The enormous expansion of the rich countries—about 20% of the world population—leaves them in a state of bewildered discontent—inflation, unhealthy cities, soaring crime rates, drug addiction, fear of the future. In other words, Eldorado has not been found.
>
> (*c*) Human nature, personified mainly by the young, is in revolt against a "system" which, they say, threatens to make them into robots and morons.
>
> (*d*) Living Nature around us is telling us, is telling us in her own unanswerable language that we are straining her too much and she cannot take much more.
>
> (*e*) And finally, the mineral kingdom: being lifeless, it does not revolt and cannot tell us anything—but we can take a dispassionate view. What do we find? The physical limits to growth, in terms of resources are nearer than anybody of any public importance is prepared to believe.

The instruction in Economics which Schumacher provides has a humane content based on common sense. It is needed by all.