

THE ROOTS OF LITERATURE

THE minor argument over whether or not the novel is played out and "finished" as a literary form is not really of much importance, since it assumes the possibility that the human longing for dramatic representation of the meaning and the striving in life can wither and die. It is quite pertinent, however, to remark that the themes which made novels popular a generation ago no longer have much reality. Romantic love has lost its "happy ending" appeal, while the vast readjustment in the relations and attitudes between the sexes has left the meaning of "romance" in flux. A story-teller needs at least some common cultural assumptions which he can rely upon as taken for granted, while raising questions about others, and to locate such a framework today is increasingly difficult. The aims and motives that could be assumed in the past are now all subject to disillusioned questioning. Familiar patterns of achievement are held up to ridicule and even to shame, with the result that novelists find little to write about except moral confusion and disintegration. A new book by John Updike, one of the most successful of present-day writers, brings this comment from a reviewer:

From his first novel, *The Poorhouse Fair* (1958), through *Rabbit Redux*, Updike has been concerned primarily with what he regards as the inability of American religious and social thought and action to fill man's spiritual void. . . . he [now] appears to have abandoned speculation and disputation for the expression of uncertainty, agony, nausea, shock. And, increasingly, as man's nothingness has loomed ever greater for Updike, his novels have moved from constriction of meaning to vagueness to nonexistence at their centers. Correspondingly, the characters are emotionless and mindless as well as godless.

This reviewer concludes that the time has come for John Updike to "make a turnabout." But why, one wonders, is so much critical attention given to such books? Probably because

reviewers have pages to fill in the magazines, and the chroniclers of defeat and disintegration and despair are often very skillful persons in the use of words. There is a further possibility: sophisticated people of affluence, those who can afford to buy books at today's prices, may feel able to "identify" with these tortured characters in some sort of saturnalia of melancholy. In any event, a great deal of space in the serious magazines is given to novels which seem wholly absorbed in the pathology of lives filled with false starts. This, both writer and critic seem to agree, is the way we live now.

But the literature of the times does serve as a mirror of the texture of modern life, and the question then arises: Can we expect the *novelists* to perform a "turnabout"? Isn't this equivalent to asking writers to recast themselves as Leo Tolstoys and William Blakes—men who were much more than story-tellers or poets?

What about "social issues"? Surely there is drama enough here. The answer may be that the social novels of the thirties haven't survived very well. The fight against pollution, for one thing, doesn't go deep enough to generate the mythic correspondences that an authentic human drama seems to require. Perhaps novelists can't do much without the fabric of an at least partly developed *civilization* to supply them with matrices of meaning. What are the best men doing, these days? This might give a clue to how the germs of a new civilization could be recognized. There is one lifework or calling which seems fully endowed with purpose, attractive to men of great ability, and which at the same time should be rich in material for an imaginative literature of the future. We mean the salvaging and healing occupations, in the broadest sense. A brief passage in Bulfinch's *Age of Fable* shows how this might work:

The story of Hercules is evidently very ancient, preceding Homer. There is every reason to think that such a personage really existed, for the imaginative Greek people usually had a material foundation for their myths, and then clothed them with an imagery of poetic fancy. The myth is of great beauty and gives the ideal of human perfection, devoting itself to the good of the human race, and, Prometheus-like, sacrificing self continually for others. In the age and place in which he lived this ideal consisted in physical strength united with perfect self-sacrifice, the second qualities of such a high degree of morality that they were thought divine, and so he is made the son of Zeus by a mortal mother.

The tasks which now lie before the men who have chosen to give their lives to salvage operations and to healing are indeed of Herculean proportion. Consider for example the problems of world food supply, and the need of many peoples of the world to become self-sufficient and self-supporting. Here we might mention E. F. Schumacher, who could doubtless name a dozen others for whom devising means of economic growth which are natural and possible for these populations is the first concern of their lives. Then, most notably among men in the healing profession, there are Viktor Frankl and the late Abraham H. Maslow. Frankl went voluntarily to a German concentration camp—he could have emigrated to the United States—only because he believed he could bring some help and hope to the victims of the Nazi tyranny who were in these camps. And Maslow devoted his life to laying the foundations of a psychology of health and human reconstruction. One thing to notice about such men is that the negative aspects of their environment had upon them only the effect of increasing their efforts to produce changes. They determined to be environment-shapers, not "offprints" of their times. So, if we take a leaf from Maslow's psychology and decide that knowledge of human beings and their qualities ought to be sought among the *best* examples we can find, instead of compiling "averages," then we might say that we have in such individuals a good source of instruction about human nature and purpose. The ideal man, then, whatever else he

may be, is one who devotes himself, like Hercules or Prometheus, to the interests and welfare of others. And we might also borrow from last week's Review the quotation from Henry Murray, which bears directly on this question:

Individuality is something to be built for the sake of something else. It is a structure of potential energies for expenditure in the service of an idea, a cultural endeavor, the betterment of man, an emergent value. . . . An individual self is made only to be lost—that is, only to pledge itself to some enterprise that is in league with a good future; and thereby find itself once more.

We don't need to worry about a "literature" for a civilization which would be founded on this conception of human distinction or individuality. The literature will come of itself, growing out of the lives that are lived. There is of course the problem of generating a field of culture in which such lives begin to be lived because men want to live them. The labors before such men as we have named are Herculean precisely for the reason that lives of a very different sort are lived by the majority of men. Why should this be? The explanation is known and familiar. As C. Wright Mills put it, "men live in second-hand worlds." Most of us accept our conceptions of purpose and meaning from others. The idea that it is necessary to be competitive, aggressive, acquisitive, and go to war at regular intervals to preserve our way of life and standard of living—this view, and all that goes with it, is part of the common circulatory system which supports the mass psyche. Men who resist these beliefs go against the grain of their times, they enjoy forms of awareness and sensibilities not yet developed in the ordinary run of men. It is these few who sound the keynote of great historical changes.

Actually, real discoveries concerning meaning come only to those who are ready to put aside their second-hand worlds and to look at the ordinary experiences of life directly, with unprejudiced eyes. In his last book, *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (Viking, 1971), Dr. Maslow gives some insight into one of his own

"awakenings" in a chapter on Education. After speaking of learning by memorization and conditioning processes, he says:

Far more important for me have been such experiences as having a child. Our first baby changed me as a psychologist. It made the behaviorism I had been so enthusiastic about look so foolish that I could not stomach it any more. It was impossible. Having a second baby, and learning how profoundly different people are even before birth, made it impossible for me to think in terms of the kind of learning psychology in which one can teach anybody anything. Or the John B. Watson theory of "Give me two babies and I will make one into this and one into the other." It is as if he never had any children. We know only too well that a parent cannot make his children into anything. Children make themselves into something.

Maslow began the creation of an important psychological literature which is bringing the fruits of such realizations to a large audience of readers. Yet one cannot help but reflect on the barriers this sort of influence must penetrate, in contrast to the way in which culture was shaped in antiquity—by stories of the gods and heroes told to the young, of whom Hercules is an example. In those days nearly the entire literature was "heroic," and before the coming of literacy the speech of the times was filled with epic expressions taken from the great traditions transmitted orally from the past, and learned by heart by all the people, starting in childhood. Today the communications of the best men must compete with a vast wilderness of triviality in the form of endless printed materials of no importance. In addition, through the development of sociopolitical forms and the advances of scientific technology, populations are counted in millions and hundreds of millions instead of thousands. This means that the formation and fostering of new cultural roots is likely to be far more difficult, although it is at least conceivable that the awakenings of the future will be more broadly based, if a new sort of grass-roots leadership can be evolved.

Meanwhile, it is of particular interest that in his later work Maslow gave increasing attention to the synthesizing ideas of old philosophies and

religions. The more he studied the higher levels of motivation, the more ancient Eastern conceptions of the higher life seemed natural counterparts of what he was finding out, even to the point of providing a vocabulary useful in giving an account of self-actualizing persons. The following is based on notes he prepared for a seminar for graduate students in psychology at Brandeis University in 1967:

Assuming that in any society the stronger would want to help the weaker, or in any case, would have to, what is the best way to help others (who are weaker, poorer, less capable, less intelligent)? What is the best way to become stronger? How much of their autonomy and responsibility for themselves is it wise to take upon yourself if you are the stronger or older person? How can you help other people if they are poor and you are rich? How can a rich nation help poor nations? For discussion purposes, I will define arbitrarily the Bodhisattva as a person (a) who would like to help others, (b) who agrees he will be a better helper as he himself becomes more mature, healthy, more fully human, (c) who knows when to be Taoistic and noninterfering, i.e., nonhelping, (d) who *offers* his help or makes it available to be chosen or not chosen, as the other person wishes, and, (e) who assumes that a good way to self-growth is via helping others. This is to say that if one wishes to help other people, then a very desirable way to do this is to become a better person oneself. Problem: How many nonhelping persons can a society assimilate, i.e., people looking for their own personal salvation, hermits, pious beggars, people who meditate alone in a cave, people who remove themselves from society and go into privacy, etc.?

Maslow has the peculiar faculty of considering ennobling ideas without ever sounding pompous or pretentious. Conceivably, the recovery of authentic vision can come about in no other way. It seems likely that the moral excellences that will nourish tomorrow's world will not be called "moral," but will have some less ostentatious name. But the substance will have to be there, whatever the language. Yet if such changes are to come about, the growth cannot be left to institutions, nor even to extraordinary psychologists. The qualities which become the foundation of human distinction need to be

incorporated among the habits and commonplaces of the family life, so that they can be absorbed spontaneously, the way we now learn as infants to speak and play. Strong and free communities are built in this way, through daily human contacts. Schools, or rather teachers, if the politicians can be made to leave them alone, can help. Finally, Maslow believed that peak experiences are much commoner than people suppose and that everyone is potentially capable of them. Each one of us is able, if he listens, to hear "his drowned out inner voices," and to grow attentive to "the weak commands of his own nature on the Spinozistic principle that true freedom consists of accepting and loving the inevitable, the nature of reality."

REVIEW

A CENTURY OF DISSERVICE?

THE Manual of Arms, Robert M. Hutchins once remarked, is not a "great book." In *Dams and Other Disasters* (Porter Sargent, 1971, \$7.50), Arthur E. Morgan reaches a somewhat similar conclusion. He begins with an effort to explain the small-mindedness, arrogance, and presumption of the Army Corps of Engineers during a century of practice in civilian public works. As a man who has devoted much of a long life to education and the study of the formation of human character, it is natural for Dr. Morgan to look for reasons for the consistently poor performance of the Army Engineers. He found them mainly in the psychological environment of the West Point Military Academy, which is highly resistant to change. There the cadets are molded to acceptance of authority, intense loyalty to the army organization, and are taught the importance of quick decision and determined follow-through. While these qualities may be useful on the battlefield, Dr. Morgan says, they become a serious hazard in the practice of civilian engineering. Why is a whole chapter devoted to the kind of education cadets receive at West Point? The answer is simple. Dr. Morgan is not interested in locating culprits, but in showing that this is not the way the American people should train the men who will some day be responsible for much of the ecological care of our continental home.

Arthur Morgan has many admirers who know him only through his works on education and community. This book gives a clear view of his professional life. One begins to see why he was charged with some of the highest responsibilities ever given to an engineer in the history of the nation. At the beginning, the publisher has added tributes from other engineers, to indicate Morgan's standing in his profession, and in the body of the book, simply to offset the sort of response that can be expected from so powerful a group as the Army Engineers, the author includes

a number of impressive testimonials from leading bankers concerning the value of his judgment and counsel as a hydraulic engineer and specialist in flood control. Through the years he has had a number of encounters with the Corps of Engineers, obliging him to become extremely critical of its policies and methods, with the result that he has been identified by Corps spokesmen as "a trivial publicity seeker" whose proposals and criticisms can be safely ignored. It will be interesting to see whether this book is ignored. In his introduction, Senator Paul H. Douglas says:

Morgan makes his history clear and definitive by an incredibly voluminous documentation of the correspondence, newspaper and periodical stories, and Congressional hearings and reports. To me, he has made out an airtight case, and the Corps in justification to itself will have to prepare an answer.

What should their answer be? If they continue their former policy of abusing their critics, they will only meet with intensified disapproval. For the American public has become convinced by Arthur Morgan's long life of combining high technical competence with a devotion to public service. Those who feel this way will believe that Arthur Morgan should be honored and not run down.

What is in this book? It is the story of blind adherence to outdated ideas in flood control, of costly mistakes and of stubborn defense of anything and everything done by the Army Engineers. It tells of the punishment of innovators, of the persecution of critics, and of the careless destruction of natural beauties and resources. Finally, it is a story of almost inhuman disregard of powerless people, sometimes thousands of them, who happen to stand in the way of some project that the Corps has adopted.

The book has more than 400 pages. Seven chapters are devoted to specific mistakes and follies of the Corps of Engineers. For example, all through the last third of the nineteenth century, the Corps refused to listen to the suggestions and criticisms of civilian engineers concerning the control of the Mississippi River. A book published in 1861, written by A. A. Humphreys, then the Chief of Engineers, on the physics and

hydraulics of the Mississippi, remained the bible of the Corps for more than half a century. The problem of floods was to be solved by building levees—nothing else was of importance. This situation remained unchanged until a great engineer, Herbert Hoover, was elected President. Hoover broke the monopoly of the Corps' power by appointing a rebel as Chief Engineer:

Among the most revolutionary changes, each of which had been repudiated by Humphreys, and vigorously repudiated for sixty years by the Corps, were reliance on the use of the hydraulic laboratory, the adoption of which profoundly changed and improved engineering practice; the acceptance of cutoffs on the Mississippi River by which high water levels are lowered ten or fifteen feet; and the use of reservoirs in Mississippi River system flood control.

There is a chapter on the opposition of the Corps to use of hydraulic laboratories, by means of which engineers are able to solve many problems relating to the flow of water under different conditions, and another chapter on the Corps' long rejection of cutoffs, which are channels across bends in rivers. Since Morgan was himself planner and chief engineer of the construction of the first flood control reservoir in the United States, the chapter on the Army Engineers' resistance to the use of reservoirs for this purpose is a long one, going back in history to the 1850's when the Corps' limited view of flood control was first formulated. A "levees only" policy was stubbornly maintained until Hoover at last intervened:

Finally, it took a great flood and a great President to break the traditional position of the Corps, and force it to accept reservoirs as essential to flood protection for the Lower Mississippi Valley and other areas. The widespread use of reservoirs today by the Corps, and the effectiveness of reservoirs in preventing flood losses, is ample evidence that the persistence of those who, through the years envisioned the benefits of flood control reservoirs, has been well worthwhile.

The first of the specific offenses dealt with is the opposition of the Corps of Engineers to the Eads Bridge across the Mississippi in St. Louis.

James B. Eads, it should be said, was in 1930 selected as one of the five greatest engineers of all time. The others were da Vinci, Watt, de Lesseps, and Edison. At the time of Eads' encounter with the Army Engineers, he was directing the erection of the bridge. The Corps had not yet gained authority over the construction of all bridges across American waterways, but nonetheless objected to Eads' design and sided with the few opponents of the bridge. This was early in the 1870's, when A. A. Humphreys was still Chief Engineer, and the Corps would apparently use any weapon against rivals to its authority. Dr. Morgan writes:

It was not a personal trait of Humphreys alone, but was characteristic of the typical members of the Corps of Engineers who participated in an intensive effort to discredit both the competence and character of James Eads, one of the greatest civil engineers America or the world has produced.

In the attempt to remove James Eads as competitor to the Corps, every type of lying, make-believe, misrepresentation, and effort were made to embarrass him and frighten those who were financing him. Through ex-Corps members in public life, scarcely any kind of threat, abuse and warning of danger was omitted. In this the Chief of Engineers and patron saint of the Corps united with his staff all along the line. When Humphreys took official action leading to the prevention of the building of the Eads Bridge, President Grant expressed great indignation and countermanded that order, thereby saving the building of the Bridge.

Another chapter tells what the Corps did to the Indians of the Three Tribes (Arikaras, Mandans, and Hidatsas), who in 1950 were living quietly and productively in the wooded valley of the Missouri River in North Dakota. They were good farmers and needed little cash income. These people "had one of the lowest rates of Welfare in the United States." An early treaty had guaranteed them 12,500,000 acres of land in perpetuity, but eventually they had only 643,368 acres left to them by Congress. The Army Engineers, already having legislation authorizing construction of the Garrison Dam, in 1949 obtained a law which required that the bulk of the

Three Tribes be moved to the arid prairies. The final law stripped the Indians of nearly all rights and property. They could no longer fish along the river or graze their cattle there; their mineral rights were denied, also their hunting and trapping rights. The irrigation facilities of the dam were refused to them. They were forced to move to an alien climate, a barren land, their community destroyed, the pattern of their lives broken. Dr. Morgan comments:

What occurred as to the Three Tribes in the upper Missouri was not the accident of circumstance. It was the working out of a philosophy of life. An organization, such as the Corps of Engineers, should be especially concerned that not only in its chief functions, but in all functions which concern the life of the people, it should conduct itself in such a manner that it is an asset and not a blight. Great power should carry great responsibility.

Other Indian tribes suffered similarly at the hands of the Corps.

Can the Corps "change"? It seems now to be seeking another public image. Dr. Morgan's two concluding chapters bear on this question, directly and indirectly. One is titled "Insensitivity to the Environment" and deals mainly with the relative destruction of the Florida Everglades by the Corps. The Epilogue again asks the question: Is it reasonable to expect men trained for the emergencies and ruthlessness of war to have the qualities needed for seeing the over-all and long-term needs of the environment?

COMMENTARY

THE CULT OF TOUGHNESS

Two papers by Edith Weisskopf-Joelson, a psychologist at the University of Georgia (Athens, Ga.), throw light on the general cultural resistance to the conceptions of meaning suggested in this week's lead article. (Both papers appeared in the *Journal of Psychology*, one in 1970, the other in 1971.) In the first of these papers, "On Surrender," this psychologist suggests that the often expressed disdain for the idea of "losing oneself in a cause" grows out of the narrow view that only a life devoted to self-interest is "healthy" and "natural." The extraordinary popularity of Eric Hoffer's *The True Believer* reflects this attitude.

Dr. Joelson quotes from Hoffer, adding comment:

"The burning conviction that we have a holy duty toward others is often a way of attaching our drowning selves to a passing raft. What looks like giving a hand is often holding on for dear life. Take away our holy duties and you leave our lives puny and meaningless. There is no doubt that in exchanging a self-centered for a selfless life we gain enormously in self-esteem. The vanity of the selfless, even those who practice the utmost humility, is boundless."

It is indeed true that taking away our "holy duties" leaves our lives "puny and meaningless." However, the conclusion drawn from this circumstance may be that "holy duties" are something which man needs to fulfill his life.

Hoffer also says that faith in a holy cause may be a substitute for lost faith in ourselves. Dr. Joelson points out the equal possibility that "excessive individualism may be a substitute for faith in a holy cause, which is hard to come by in our culture because it is viewed as undesirable."

The other paper, which compares the rigorously "objective" psychologist with the humanistic, open psychologist, proposes that sometimes the man who insists on being "hard-headed" in the name of science "may want to show to himself and to others that he is as manly as his colleagues who are physicists, chemists,

engineers, and the like, by the blatant use of brass instruments." Psychologists who admit that they want to "help people" have been called "bleeding hearts" by others with a strong scientific orientation. "Imagine!" one of the latter once said to her, "Dr. X really wants to help people!" Dr. Joelson observes that "taking care" of other people may seem a feminine role to such men, and therefore be a threatening conception of their profession.

Obviously, the ideal of "toughness" may involve worse self-deceptions than the gentler varieties.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

WHY THE ENGLISH SCHOOLS ARE GOOD

ORDINARILY, we avoid books about educational systems, but since the primary schools of England don't really constitute an administrative system, and since John Blackie's book, *Inside the Primary School* (Schocken, 1971, \$4.95), is filled with so much good information, we decided to give it attention.

Mr. Blackie, now retired, spent thirty-three years as one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Schools. Before that he was a teacher, as were all the other 543 Inspectors who visit the schools of England and Wales. The Inspectors work in the Department of Education and Science, under the authority of the Secretary of State for Education. The schools themselves, however, are maintained by the Local Education Authorities, not by the national state. There are no "state" schools in England.

Nor is the idea of an "inspector" formidable in this case. H.M. Inspectors of Schools come to the schools more to help than to judge:

What do teachers, and through them, the children, gain from H.M.I.'s visits? First and most obviously the teachers gain from having their work seen by, and being able to discuss it with, someone who is a teacher himself, who has seen the work of many other teachers and schools and who is not an employee of the L.E.A. [Local Education Authorities]. The Inspectorate is much sought after and is able to recruit its members from a vast number of applicants. It is very proud of its traditions of independent professional judgment and of its high standards. It can offer teachers a service which helps them to keep up to date, to see their work through the eyes of someone with a wider knowledge than their own, and to know what experiments have been tried elsewhere and how they have fared.

H.M.I. inspects the whole school. He is concerned with the building and everything in it; nothing is considered outside his scope. He never says: "This is not my job." If he finds anything in the building or its surroundings, in the teaching, the

furniture, the equipment, the books, which he thinks is harmful to the children he draws attention to it. H.M.I. has no direct powers. He cannot tell the head teacher what to do, or order an improvement to the premises, but he can and does report his findings to the Department, the L.E.A., the school managers, and last but not least to the school staff. He is completely independent of the L.E.A. and at the same time, because he lives where he works, he can often help the Department to appreciate the local attitude to particular questions.

Mr. Blackie says that the English schools set out on their long road toward improvement early in the 1930's. A necessary condition for growth was provided by the recommendation of the Hadlow Committee that the old elementary school, which had an age-range of 5 to 14, be split in two. The younger part, Mr. Blackie explains, with children of 5 to 11, was to be called the Primary School, while the older children of 11 to 14 would attend the Senior Elementary School. By 1939 a third of the English schools had adopted the change. After the war the senior schools became known as Secondary Modern Schools, and soon the larger Primary Schools were divided again into Infants and Juniors.

The loosening up of the curriculum began with the introduction in 1933 of a new Physical Training Syllabus, which tended to break down the formality that parents had been insisting upon. Then, innovations in art for children, due chiefly to Marion Richardson, brought more freedom. Blackie says:

I remember a headmaster saying to me in 1938: "If these children have so much to say and say it so well in pictorial art, why should we not give them the same freedom in written English?" He did not get further than asking the question, and another headmaster, a few streets away, to whom I had suggested the institution of *one hour a week* during which the children should choose their occupation, replied that this was impossible because they would not know what to do. The log-jam was breaking up very slowly. . . .

How then did the changes come about, if there were so many influences which were hostile to change? Firstly, however gingerly some teachers grasped it, the freedom of the individual head teacher

was genuine. He (or she) had a far wider latitude in deciding what to teach, how to teach it and what books to use than was or is enjoyed by the head teachers in any other country in the world. Secondly, the influences at work on him were becoming more experimental in outlook. The training colleges rather slowly, H.M. Inspectorate more quickly, became the agents of transformation.

This book is about the open classrooms of the best schools in England, as they exist today:

The old type of teacher was all the time rather like an electric current. When he switched on something happened. When he was switched off it stopped. The children had little chance of showing initiative. The sums they worked, the compositions they wrote, the poems they learned, the books they read, were all chosen for them. They did what they were told. . . .

The new type of teacher plays a much more variable role. If you go into his classroom you may find him standing before the class and teaching them, but you are just as likely to find the class busily occupied with a variety of different things—books, writing, painting, mathematics, science—inside the classroom and out—while the teacher moves about among them, answering questions and asking them, offering encouragement, making suggestions, correcting mistakes, helping with difficulties, solving problems. The children are supplying their own current. They are wasting far less time and doing much more work, than under the old system. So is the teacher!

As to how many of the schools are like this, Mr. Blackie says: "What I have described above is of course not universal, but it is not so exceptional as to be misleading and it is becoming commoner. In some areas it is indeed the commonest pattern, in few is it non-existent."

In the county schools, the Local Education Authorities hire the head teacher, and he is responsible to them, but once he is appointed he has "almost complete freedom in deciding how his school is to be run." These days, the county schools are run more and more democratically by the head teachers, with much consultation with the staff. This freedom within the schools has had a lot to do with the excellence of primary education in England. As Blackie says:

In other countries teachers are, to a greater or lesser extent, told what to teach and how to teach it, what text-book to use and how much time to spend on each subject. In England, as we have seen, all this is in practice under the control of each individual head teacher and a good deal of it is decided by the individual class-teacher. Many American exchange teachers are bewildered when they are not handed a "programme" for their classes, and even English people are frequently astonished when they realize how little general direction there is in English schools.

It is evident that the author knows many teachers and head teachers well and has friends among countless children, some of whom write him letters. In one chapter he tells about a school that undertook to excavate and expose the foundations of a medieval village which had been in a meadow adjacent to the school. This done, the pupils accurately measured the walls and identified and described whatever they found on the site. The school then went on to similar exploratory projects:

When I visited this school I was invited, within a minute or two of arriving, by one of the 10-year-old boys to have a look at what he was doing. In the middle of showing me, he suddenly remarked: "The trouble here is we haven't enough time to do what we want. We are trying to get the headmaster to start a night-school for us so we can get on with our work in the evening." It is perhaps worth adding that, judged even by the most conventional standards of neatness, accuracy, and correctness, this school came out very well.

We might add that there is absolutely no jargon in this book. It is written in the language of literate common sense and can be understood by anyone.

FRONTIERS

The Longing for Belonging

ONE of the characteristics of our times is a groping toward what is called, in the catchword of the day, "Community." When the tale of our era is told at last, this form of groping may be regarded as no less significant than movements toward redefinition of age, sexual, and racial relationships, the dismantling of the warfare state, coming to peaceful terms with the natural environment—or, perhaps, it will be recorded that all these forms of motion were but manifestations of the same underlying urge to overcome estrangement in societies grown very large and mechanical.

There was a time, not so long ago as history goes, when nobody talked about Community, or hungered after it, because everybody lived it, all the time, and took it for granted. In a tribal society, one might literally go through his entire life without meeting a stranger. There was some division of labor, based principally on physical differences between young and old, men and women, but within such broad groupings there was very evenly shared responsibility and competence. A man was not confined to making the tools of the hunt or of planting, while other men conducted the actual hunt or planting, while still other men dressed the game, tanned the hides, threshed the grain, ground it into flour, and so forth. To be a man was to be well versed in all the tasks expected of any man; to be a woman was to be competent in all the skills of any woman. If someone died or became disabled, others could and did step in immediately to do whatever needed doing. There were no such things as voluntary groups or organizations a person might join if he craved friendship, or wanted to advance some personal interest. Everyone "belonged" to the persons he was with, every moment of every day; his interests were coextensive with theirs.

To try to pinpoint fundamental social change is vain. We cannot say that there was a "turning

point" with the development of agriculture, the rise of cities, the industrial revolution. But we can say with fair assurance that if the prototypical, small, face-to-face society were placed at one end of a continuum, the nearest approach to an opposite extreme would be the highly industrialized, urbanized, secularized form of social organization which seems to have reached its climax in the United States.

In this kind of society it is possible to go for days, maybe weeks, maybe longer, without meeting anyone who is *not* a stranger. The division of labor is so nearly complete that almost everyone would quickly perish were it not for heat, water, food, housing, clothing, medicine produced by others, whom one has never met, by processes of manufacture and distribution which one does not understand in the slightest and would be utterly helpless to duplicate if thrown upon his own resources. Government is provided by strangers: education is provided by strangers; entertainment is provided by strangers; religious services are performed by strangers. The closest thing to a survival from the Age of Community is the family, and there are those who say that in its modern form this is often scarcely less alienating than other institutions.

But man's longing for belonging has never lessened, through time or space. In the context of huge, impersonal societies, this hunger has sought sustenance through ad hoc voluntary associations. To overcome the alienation of the workplace, employee organizations arose. Trade unions may perform psychological functions more important than their economic functions, although this is not generally recognized. Within the framework of religious institutions, there emerged ladies' aid societies and other groups whose purpose was sociability rather than piety. Within educational institutions, there were fraternities and sororities, athletic teams, and clubs for every interest from chess to skydiving—all by way of compensating for the fact that students did not know and were not known by their teachers or fellow students.

Within political institutions, there arose Democratic Clubs and Republican Assemblies, and a host of left-wing and right-wing splinters which had little or no effect upon events but which fed the need of their respective handfuls of members for some place they could feel comfortable, at home, among friends, relaxed, understood, and accepted.

Anywhere one probes the skin of contemporary society, there is a follicular organization: a bridge club, bowling league, professional association, civic or veterans or farm or youth or social reform group—each, seemingly, with its own newsletter to keep members from feeling estranged if they are not able to attend meetings. The average American probably belongs to half a dozen such groups; altogether, they probably number in the millions.

A fair-minded social analyst must concede that the development of voluntaristic associations has served its underlying purpose to an extent. It has kept most people from feeling so completely alone that they jump off bridges or slash their wrists. But, in fairness, it must also be said that these particularistic organizations have not fully satisfied the fundamental human longing for belonging. There is all manner of evidence that many persons still feel alienated from their work, if they have jobs; from their families, if they have families; from their God, if they have a God; and, above all, from their own powers and potentialities.

Some people do jump off bridges or drink themselves to death. Some people find the new forms of organization so alienating in their own way that they turn upon them. Many cooperative ventures which begin, in a comradely spirit, to overcome alienation in the marketplace or some other dimension of life, end by being rent with bitter factional infighting.

Perhaps the most pervasive and persuasive evidence that traditional voluntary associations are not fully satisfying consists in the phenomenal growth, within the past few years, of groups

which are—or, at least, try to be—more significant, psychologically, than the old-line organizations. The new groups may be distinguished from the old by the breadth, depth, and intensity of the commitment they require of their communicants. The older groups generally do not require very much. Some members may become quite involved emotionally—in the labor movement, for example. But this is not a condition of membership; it is all right if one merely goes through the motions, and many members do.

Not so with the new groups. It is characteristic of Community that it enlists the emotions, demands fealty, penetrates into many dimensions of life. Almost any group which holds out the promise of these qualities seems now assured of a following. People have a need, it appears, to have demands made upon them.

Some groups promise a nearly complete repudiation of the technological society. In rural communes of Mendocino County (California), British Columbia, the New Mexico mesa, and elsewhere, participants strive for a totally reconstituted style of life; obtain virtually all their psychological, economic, and every other form of support from the primary group, try to reduce contact with the outside world to a minimum.

Other communitarians attempt to live in urban settings, but without the usual *anomie* of urban settings, through so-called tribes, collectives, group marriages, and the like. And, then, there are any number of T-groups, encounter groups, sensitivity groups, awareness groups, personal growth groups, whatever they are called, which may properly be considered part of the current groping toward Community.

A "marathon" may last just twenty-four hours, and never convene again, but during that twenty-four hours, participants are expected to concentrate their concerns and loyalties outward from themselves, which is one of the hall marks of Community. Or, to put it another way, part of the nature of communities, whether short-lived or

permanent, is that they break down the extravagant ego.

The wish to submerge the extravagant ego in favor of something outside the self must be very deep-seated indeed. It is difficult otherwise to comprehend some of the gropings and groupings of the day. For example, at the insistence of a true believer, I once attended a meeting which might best be called an exercise in fascist therapy. An entrepreneur had evidently calculated that people are unfocussed and uncertain in this immense, confusing society, and that they would respond if he offered them focus and certainty with a vengeance. He laid down a totalitarian ideology—that "men are only machines," and if one were the right sort of mechanic, he could fix these machines whenever they broke down. Naturally, he proclaimed himself the right sort of mechanic. He demanded absolute, unwavering fidelity to himself and his ideology (he also demanded \$200 a month, cash in advance), and if any would-be initiate questioned the group line, he was physically expelled.

This charlatan attracted hundreds of followers. They were not crypto-Nazis, Stalinists, or other authoritarian personalities. They were simply lonely, unhappy men and women, searching desperately for the legitimate goals which had always eluded them: self-actualization, joy, authenticity, liberation. And when I asked, "How can you possibly find authenticity and liberation by delivering yourself into bondage to a cynical despot?" they resented the question, or patronized me for asking it: to raise the question could signify only that I was suffering from a crippling "hang up." They claimed they had never felt better in their lives, were making progress faster than ever before, etc. In short, how dare I call it fascist therapy when it *worked*?

Well, of course, everything "works." Fight therapy or love therapy; play therapy or work therapy; orgiastic therapy or ascetic therapy. There is apparently nothing the human imagination can devise, no matter how

contradictory and implausible, which does not "work"—provided only that it meets, or appears to meet, the great hunger to belong to something larger than the discrete self. So frantic has this hunger grown in our time that some people are willing to dehumanize themselves totally in other dimensions for the sake of this one dimension. Thus, the Charles Manson family.

So long as it promises to meet the need for Community, anything and everything "works." Or does it? After a weekend encounter group with his subordinates, when a corporation executive returns to his corporate surroundings, is he truly a changed man? Is Scientology really "the road to total freedom," or is it the same illusion of freedom we thought we had when we were children and all answers to all questions were handed down, ready-made, by our parents? After a nude marathon is over, and participants come out of the "weightless womblike warmth" of the pool, and put their clothes back on, what happens when they have to return to a world which is usually not warm, or weightless, or womblike? Can there be such a thing as genuine Community any more, in the anthropological sense of a permanent, all-sufficient, sacred, face-to-face group? Can we really escape from the society which is inside us—in words and syntax and logic we think with; in the very emotions we feel with? Having eaten of the fruit of the tree of knowledge—not just one bite, but heavily and over many years—can we return to Eden?

Some persons believe they can. And perhaps it is true—if they are prepared to go all the way: to sacrifice tremendously; to discipline themselves; to work with almost fanatical dedication; to surrender wholly to some ultramontane faith. A community must apparently revolve around some profoundly religious core if it is to survive amidst the blandishments of a secular society. Some religious communities have in fact survived, and may continue to do so.

But can you have it both ways? Can you pass to and fro, enjoying the best of two radically

disparate worlds? Can you be a communitarian when it pleases you, and individualistic, competitive, egoistic when it pleases you? Can you make these switches without damage to the integrity of your psyche or that of others? One may doubt it, judging from the number of communal groups, made up of dilettantes, which fall apart in a few days to a few months, with nothing to show for it but disillusionment and recrimination. One may doubt it, having seen what can happen when sensitive persons fall into the hands of amateur confrontation groups.

Perhaps the best which can be done by most of us—those of us who are not prepared to join a bona fide religious community Like the Hutterites or a Catholic order—is to build authenticity into the place where we are. Perhaps it is best to resist the tempting thought that we can buy quick and easy surcease from our loneliness at some "Growth Center," as we might buy a cold or a headache remedy cheaply and painlessly at the nearest drugstore.

One suspects there is nothing for it but to look about us, right where we stand, in this our own real life, and work very hard at building commonnesses, communication, Community with those we brush against most frequently. It is not difficult to be intimate—or, more accurately, to think we are being intimate—with strangers we meet in an encounter group which is here today, gone tomorrow. Very easy, and very deceptive, as Fromm reminds us. Fromm wrote *The Art of Loving* in the days before groping took the form of going from encounter group to encounter group. But going from bed to bed, or group to group, the process is essentially the same: self-defeating, running from real disclosure, avoiding the very thing one claims to seek.

The life problem is to be self-revealing, accepting, loving, trusting, over the long haul, with so much as one other human being. If you cannot do that, you have no Community, no matter how tirelessly you may invoke the approved rhetoric. But if you are able to hold

communion with one other person, on an enduring basis, you have a community, whether that person is a husband, wife, sweetheart, son, daughter, parent, brother, sister, friend, or whomever. All the rhetoric, all the questing, artifice, agonizing, become superfluous. The long hunger is met.

And, as the late Abraham Maslow suggested, in that moment, something close to a miracle occurs. When this (or any other) basic hunger is fulfilled, instead of sinking back, sated and complacent, we go on, quite spontaneously, without striving, to build more meaningful and authentic relationships with other persons we meet—colleagues, neighbors, postmen, waiters, the distinguished, the unsung—and now not because we *need* to, but because we *want* to.

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