

OBSCURE SPECIFICATIONS

THERE is an emptiness in modern life that needs explanation. The feeling and fact of emptiness are not in dispute. An inventory of the resulting ills is hardly needed. Milton Mayer recently summed up many of them by saying: "The public pressure that fills the schools with junk is irresistible because we have nothing to resist it with."

A. H. Maslow spoke of the modern world-view in similar terms:

. . . many people are beginning to discover that the physicalistic, mechanistic model was a mistake and that it has led us . . . where? To atom bombs. To a beautiful technology of killing, as in the concentration camps. To Eichmann. An Eichmann cannot be refuted with a positivistic philosophy or science. He just cannot. . . . As far as he was concerned nothing was wrong; he had done a good job. I point out that professional science and professional philosophy are dedicated to the proposition of forgetting about the values excluding them. This, therefore, must lead to Eichmanns, to atom bombs, and to who knows what!

Anyone who reads the papers knows who and what should be added to Dr. Maslow's list of horrible examples—the ones claiming attention during the years since he wrote the above (in 1968). The world is now amply populated by horrible examples—what with assassins and terrorists everywhere, to say nothing of corruption in high office.

This seems to be about all we can find to read about, from day to day. The reading isn't chosen but is *poured* at us by the daily press, by the editors of even good magazines, and by the din of electronic devices—which relieve us of the last frazzled obligation to select or reject the coarse and depressing imagery delivered to us by the media.

Martin Buber agreed with Maslow's analysis—or anticipated it, years earlier—saying that "it is senseless to want to prove by any kind

of argument that nevertheless the denied absoluteness of norms exists." Where there are no shared ethical principles or values, there can be no reasoning. Buber, therefore, concluded—

We are justified in regarding this disposition as a sickness of the human race. But we must not deceive ourselves by believing that the disease can be cured by formulae which assert that nothing is as the sick person imagines. It is an idle undertaking to call out, to a mankind that has grown blind to eternity: "Look! the eternal values!"

Well, if reason is impotent at the positive level, or when the loss of a sense of values is due to widespread infection, what then can we do? Buber believed that only the pain which comes from conscience can rouse the modern world from its moral lethargy. But he also thought that the restoration of heroes, of dramatic examples of human excellence, would be a very great help.

Interestingly, Maslow began his pursuit of a psychology of health, of the psychodynamics of *good* human beings, because of his experience of some exemplary humans. The first influence effective in releasing him from positivist assumption was a sample of normal humanity—his own baby. He looked at the infant and decided, "There must be more to a human than what the behaviorists say!" Then, a little later, he found himself overwhelmingly impressed by two of his teachers. This was the beginning of his study of self-actualization. As he relates in "Self-Actualizing and Beyond":

My investigations on self-actualization were not planned to be research and did not start out as research. They started out as the effort of a young intellectual to try to understand two of his teachers whom he loved, adored, and admired and who were very, very wonderful people. It was a kind of high-IQ devotion. I could not be content simply to adore, but sought to understand why these two people were so different from the run-of-the-mill people in the world. These two people were Ruth Benedict and Max

Wertheimer. They were my teachers after I came with a Ph.D. from the West to New York City, and they were most remarkable human beings. My training in psychology equipped me not at all for understanding them. It was as if they were not quite people but something more than people.

Thinking about these two, puzzling his head over their qualities, making notes, and trying to understand them, he realized that he could make some generalizations about human excellence. This was the beginning of Maslow's new science of psychology. For science does not really exist until there are some generalizations to build upon. Under his development, a science of human excellence, of human achievement, began to evolve.

Buber felt the same need, pointed to the same remedy. The student or adult who suffers from an empty, pointless life—a life invaded by everything trivial and undesirable as a result—needs to have before him examples of rich, useful, productive human activity. A great character teaches by illustrating the possibilities of a full response to experience. As Buber said:

I call a great character one who by his actions and attitudes satisfies the claim of situations out of deep readiness to respond with his whole life, and in such a way that the sum of his actions and attitudes expresses at the same time the unity of his being in its willingness to accept responsibility.

We have our moral traditions, it is true; we have our ethical maxims and the exhortations of those who repeat them. Yet they exercise little effect. Buber has an explanation of this:

Good and evil are not each other's opposites like right and left. The evil approaches us as a whirlwind, the good as a direction. There is a direction, a "yes," a command, hidden even in a prohibition. . . . In moments [of ultimate choice] like these the command addresses us really in the second person, and the Thou in it is no one else but one's own self. Maxims command only the third person, the each and the none.

One can say that it is the unconditioned nature of the address which distinguishes the command from the maxim. In an age which has become deaf to the unconditioned address we cannot overcome the

dilemma of the education of character from that angle. But insight into the structure of great character can help us to overcome it.

Insight into the structure of great character—that is surely what we need, and what Maslow set out to supply. There is much to be learned on the subject, and Maslow's career and his conclusions make a splendid example of one way to go about this learning. He was himself, in his way, a heroic character. He was a major factor in turning modern psychology around—making it over into the study of the distinctively human qualities instead of a focus which deliberately avoids them.

What is the business of human life, according to Maslow? Transcendence of the environment. Not accepting its conditionings, but transcendence.

And what is a human being who transcends the environment? The old-fashioned term is "hero." A hero breaks the mold of the past, chooses a new course, insists on being himself in the face of obstacles and odds.

Ours is a world, then, in desperate need of heroes—heroes as leaders, heroes as teachers, heroes as examples. Would it help to make a little list? Heroes to admire and imitate? Probably not. In a discussion of this sort, it is impossible not to mention a hero or two in passing; we need to do this, but not as the real answer to our quest. There is something odd and interesting about the present age—we want our heroes to hide behind a mask of ordinariness. We are not looking for model men and women who stand dauntless against the skyline, calling out to the world to follow. We have had a couple of thousand years of heroes like that, and have learned from them what we can. The glorified figure is not for us. The ones who look well in posters on the wall do not last. That Peter Pan of Revolution, Che Guevara, was an eighteenth-century hero, working on an eighteenth-century problem in the twentieth century. No mystery about that. No continuing source of wonder. We need heroes

who can't be stylized and then ignored. Maslow put another side of the problem well: "Even when good specimens," the saints and sages and great leaders of history, have been available for study, the temptation too often has been to consider them not human but supernaturally endowed."

Maslow also saw the danger of becoming followers—in the temptation people feel to idolize a cocksure leader, a man who "is able to make a decision and stick to it." Often such leaders are obsessional types and, sensing this pathological background in their behavior, intelligent people are wary of them. But for those who are "confused about right and wrong, about good and evil," and who are "basically uncertain about what they want and what they don't want," it often happens that "the decisive paranoid authoritarian . . . can look very attractive and relieve the follower of all anxiety.

Obviously, then, the right sort of heroes for our time will have to be chosen from among individuals who reject the conventional role of leader, who have a way of turning responsibility for choice back to their admirers. Nor will they use the method of social pressure as a means of pushing a project through to some desirable end. Good ends for human beings, they will say, can never be reached by either physical or psychological coercion. Goals worth pursuing are at the top of a ladder climbed by people with their own strength, following their own vision, with effort maintained by individual persistence. Sometimes such lessons can be learned from apparently quite ordinary people. In *Vermont Tradition*, Dorothy Canfield repeats a story about a local "character" in the small Vermont town of Strafford. Curious about what went on in a revival meeting, he sat down on a bench and listened for a while.

Towards the end, the brass-lunged, hell-fire-predicting revivalist shouted hoarsely at him, "Brother, have you got religion?" To which the Strafford man called back with brisk pride, "Not any to boast of, I can tell ye."

The examples we need are of people like that—those who show, in one way or other, that the thing to do is rely on yourself. This is a time, we say, for decentralization of authority. There is no decentralizing influence in following someone else. We can always learn from others, but we learn the most from those who are impossible to imitate. It follows that deflating the pomp of external heroes is a necessity of the good and useful man, the exemplary man, these days. When Robert M. Hutchins, probably the country's leading educator, had his seventieth birthday, a dinner was given in his honor in New York. Half a dozen preliminary speakers described his achievements in behalf of education and the great books in terms of the highest praise. Then the toastmaster called on Mr. Hutchins. He got up slowly, looked around for a moment, then said: "If what all those people say about me is true, I ought at least to be able to quit smoking."

These are, so to speak, the negative virtues of desirable character. One goes softly in speaking of positive virtues; the fact of the matter is that this is no time for a parade of virtue. We are still undecided about what we want to become, which helps to explain the dilemmas in looking for heroes. After all, the true hero, for our time, belongs not to the present but to the future, and how can we know much about what does not yet exist?

Ortega understood this matter well:

. . . a host of plebeian instincts swarm around the rudimentary hero that we carry within us. For sufficient reasons, no doubt, we usually cherish a great distrust towards anyone who wants to start new ways. We do not demand justification from those who do not try to step off the beaten track, but we demand it peremptorily from the bold man who does. . . .

Since the character of the heroic lies in the will to be what one is not yet, half of the figure of the tragic protagonist is outside of reality. . . . The hero anticipates the future and appeals to it. His gestures have a utopian significance. He does not say that he is but that he wants to be. Thus, the feminist woman hopes for the day when women will not need to be

feminists. But the comic writer substitutes for the feminists' ideal the modern woman who actually tries to carry out that ideal. As something made to live in the future world, the ideal, when it is drawn back and frozen in the present, does not succeed in satisfying the most trivial functions of existence, and so people laugh. People watch the fall of the ideal bird as it flies over the vapor of stagnant water and they laugh. It is a useful laughter: for each hero it hits, it crushes a hundred frauds.

Consequently, comedy lives on tragedy as the novel does on the epic. Comedy was born historically in Greece as a reaction against the tragic poets and philosophers who wanted to introduce new gods and set up new customs. In the name of popular tradition, of "our forefathers," and of sacred customs, Aristophanes puts on the stage the actual figures of Socrates and Euripides, and what the former put into his philosophy and the latter into his verses, Aristophanes puts in the persons of Socrates and Euripides.

Comedy is the literary genre of the conservative parties. The distance between the tragic and the comic is the same as that which exists between wishing to be and believing that one already is. This is the step from the sublime to the ridiculous. The transference of the heroic character from the plane of will to that of perception causes the involution of tragedy, its disintegration—and makes comedy of it.

What makes the present—any present—the source of ridicule and rejection for the potential hero who comes upon the scene? A present is shaped by its unresolved contradictions. They make its tensions, create its dreams, define the issues which are endlessly debated but which cannot be settled except by resolving heroic decisions and acts. The hero of an epoch is one who first resolves the contradictions within himself, achieving a radical unity, and then turns that unity into a source of strength for confronting the contradictions of the age. His heroic character is recognized only by those who sense that he possesses a balance that they long for but have not been able to achieve. In him there is a capacity for action and consistency of purpose they would not have thought possible until they see it in him. Yet, considering the delicacy of these matters, how unproductive it would be to attempt to mark for

identification the heroes we need for tomorrow's encounters! We might put up façades that would hide the most promising examples—left unnoticed because they are still in the ugly duckling stage.

Yet there are certainly hints to be followed. There is a distinct category of individuals, the sort of people who, when pressed, turn out to be heroic, but who insist upon the status of ordinary humans. When Socrates' companions, waiting for him to drink the hemlock, began to weep, he told them to go home and join the ladies. He was casual about his death, refusing to see anything heroic in it. He regarded this outlook as no more than common sense. When Francisco Ferrer's executioners knocked on his cell door, he was writing a work on education. Hearing them, he added a line, "I must stop now—they have come for me." No heroics.

The hero is a champion of Vaihinger's "As if" philosophy. He insists upon living in the world *as if* the right forms of behavior were matters of universal practice. In a mixed-up world, he conforms to the ideal.

We need, Buber says, instruction in heroic development.

He [the teacher] can show that even the great character was not born perfect, that the unity of his being has first to mature before expressing itself in the sequence of his actions and attitudes. . . . The mass of contradictions can be met and conquered only by the rebirth of personal unity, unity of being, unity of action—unity of being, life and action together. This does not mean a static unity of the uniform, but the great dynamic unity of the multiform in which multiformity is formed into unity of character. Today the great characters are still "enemies of the people," they who love their society, yet wish not only to preserve it but to raise it to a higher level.

You do not go about recruiting people for a heroic career as "enemies of the people." It is no one's task to tell others to live in the future. The hero is one who does what he does because he *must*. He tells himself. There may be some benign infection that spreads from his activity, but the spread is of attitude, not act; the acts come

after. Yet the hero, with the help of a few others, may be able to pull a little of the future back into the present, and then that little becomes an island of hope and strength.

Well, it seems certain that we have left the important questions about heroes undecided. This may have been inevitable. The obscurities of heroism are great; but suppose you were to look about for teachers who do not suffer from the emptiness Milton Mayer deplored—people so busy doing what they believe in that hardly any junk is admitted to their classroom, or even to their presence anywhere. If teachers like that can be found, they can be given scope. If the emptiness of thought made by positivism and mechanism does not exist for some humans—if their lives are animated by convictions that move in an opposite direction—away from all the things we can see are wrong—then it might be a good idea to ask them why they do what they are doing.

But probably such questions will prove unnecessary. Usually, the reasons can be seen. Usually, they have a working philosophy, and at least some part of it shows. In human beings, idea and act must come together, sooner or later, and support each other, explain each other. The hero, after all, is simply a man who maintains continuous dialogue with himself, who never runs away from himself. This was the heart of Plato's teaching, Buber's inspiration, Maslow's pedagogy. It is what all heroes have in common. It is as Ortega said:

These men we call heroes . . . aim at altering the course of things; they refuse to repeat the gestures that custom, tradition, or biological instincts force them to make. . . . to be a hero means to be one out of many, to be oneself. If we refuse to have our action determined by heredity or environment it is because we seek to base the origin of our actions on ourselves, and only on ourselves. The hero's will is not that of his ancestors nor of his society, but his own. This will to be oneself is heroism.

I do not think there is any more profound originality than this "practical," active originality of the hero. His life is a perpetual resistance to what is habitual and customary. Each movement he makes

has first had to overcome custom and invent a new kind of gesture. Such a life is a perpetual suffering, a constant tearing oneself away from that part of oneself which is given over to habit and is a prisoner of matter.

REVIEW

YE ARE MANY—THEY ARE FEW

ETIENNE DE LA BOETIE, sixteenth-century poet, lawyer, and friend of Michel de Montaigne, wrote during his law school days an essay entitled *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, an inquiry into the reasons for human submission to tyranny which has become a classic of political philosophy. A new edition of this essay, now called *The Politics of Obedience*, has been made available by Free Life Editions, 41 Union Square West, New York City 10003, with a useful introduction by Murray Rothbard (\$7.95 cloth; \$2.95 paperback). As George Huppert shows in *The Idea of Perfect History*, France in the sixteenth century was a place of remarkable freedom of mind, and of fertile investigation and questioning, especially among lawyers, many of whom became historians. La Boetie, though he died at thirty-two (1563), embodied this spirit as well or better than any of his contemporaries. The essay which made him famous is regarded by Murray Rothbard as a foundation stone of political thought in France, and this is doubtless a just estimate; but more than anything, it seems to us, this work is a musing reflection on the puzzles and contradictions of human nature.

His central question, pursued throughout, is: Why do men submit to tyranny? They don't have to. They could resist, easily throw off their chains, but they don't; or those who do are so few as to be recognized as marvelous exceptions. Human beings love freedom, yet everywhere they give it up.

What strange phenomenon is this? What name shall we give it? What is the nature of this misfortune? What vice is it, or rather, what degradation? To see an endless multitude of people not merely obeying but driven to servility? Not ruled but tyrannized over? . . .

If two, three, if four, do not defend themselves from the one, we might call that circumstance surprising but nevertheless conceivable. In such case one might be justified in suspecting a lack of courage. But if a hundred, if a thousand endure the caprice of a

single man, should we not rather say that they lack not the courage but the desire to rise against him, and that such an attitude indicates indifference rather than cowardice? When not a hundred, not a thousand men, but a hundred provinces, a thousand cities, a million men, refuse to assail a single man from whom the kindest treatment received is the affliction of serfdom and slavery what shall we call that?

Why such supine submission? This is what La Boetie cannot understand, or for rhetorical purposes pretends not to understand. He begins his attempt to account for this human weakness by saying:

Doctors are no doubt correct in warning us not to touch incurable wounds; and I am presumably taking chances in preaching as I do to a people which has long lost all sensitivity and, no longer conscious of its infirmity, is plainly suffering from mortal illness. Let us therefore understand by logic, if we can, how it happens that this obstinate willingness to submit has become so deeply rooted in a nation that the very love of liberty now seems no longer natural.

Infection with susceptibility to tyranny, La Boetie argues, may grow from habit. Adjustment to conquest comes after a time to those born under a tyrannical ruler. Moreover, rulers have clever devices by which they purchase consent. Judicious alternations between the carrot and the stick become persuasive to people in the mass. A horde of retainers multiplies the effect of the ruler, enforcing his demands. There is also the method of seduction by vulgar pleasures. La Boetie describes the policy of Cyrus with the Lydians as an example:

When news was brought to him that the people of Sardis had rebelled, it would have been easy for him to reduce them by force; but being unwilling either to sack such a fine city or to maintain an army there to police it, he thought of an unusual expedient for reducing it. He established in it brothels, taverns, and public games, and issued the proclamation that the inhabitants were to enjoy them. He found this type of garrison so effective that he never again had to draw the sword against the Lydians. . . .

Truly it is a marvelous thing that they let themselves be caught so quickly at the slightest tickling of their fancy. Plays, farces, spectacles, gladiators, strange beasts, medals, pictures and other

such opiates, these were for ancient peoples the bait toward slavery, the price of their liberty, the instruments of their tyranny.

He recalls that when Nero died—"when this incendiary, this executioner, this savage beast, died as vilely as he had lived"—the Romans wore mourning for him, remembering his games and festivals! They similarly honored Julius Caesar—

who had swept away their laws and their liberty, in whose character, it seems to me, there was nothing worth while, for his very liberality, which is so highly praised, was more baneful than the cruelest tyrant who ever existed, because it was actually this poisonous amiability that had sweetened servitude for the Roman people. After his death, that people, still preserving on their palates the flavor of his banquets and in their minds the memory of his prodigality, vied with one another to pay him homage. They piled up the seats of the Forum for the great fire that reduced his body to ashes, and later raised a column to him as to "The Father of His People." (Such was the inscription on the capital.) They did him more honor, dead as he was, than they had any right to confer upon any man in the world, except perhaps on those who had killed him.

There are really two ideas in this essay. First, La Boetie is pointing out that no man or people needs to be enslaved. Tyrants cannot survive mass civil disobedience. This being the case, the victims of tyrants have made themselves victims. But the conquered need not remain conquered. This is the theme that made La Boetie a favorite of anarchist thinkers. The position was put in unforgettable lines nearly three hundred years later by Shelley:

Stand ye calm and resolute
Like a forest close and mute
With folded arms and looks which are
Weapons of unvanquished war,
Rise like Lions after slumber
In unvanquishable number—
Shake your chains to earth like dew
Ye are many—they are few.

The other idea is a heroic conception of human character as the ideal. The solution to tyranny lies nowhere but in the qualities of human character which are resistant to the wiles and

subversions of tyranny. Of those who serve tyrants in order to gain some personal profit, he says:

I am often overcome with amazement at their wickedness and sometimes by pity for their folly. For, in all honesty, can it be in any way except in folly that you approach a tyrant, withdrawing further from your liberty and, so to speak, embracing with both hands your servitude? Let such men lay aside briefly their ambition, or let them forget for a moment their avarice, and look at themselves as they really are. Then they will realize clearly that me townspeople, the peasants whom they trample under foot and treat worse than convicts or slaves, they will realize, I say, that these people, mistreated as they may be, are nevertheless, in comparison with themselves, better off and fairly free. The tiller of the soil and the artisan, no matter how enslaved, discharge their obligation when they do what they are told to do; but the dictator sees men about him wooing and begging his favor, and doing much more than he tells them to do. Such men must not only obey orders; they must anticipate his wishes; to satisfy him they must foresee his desires; they must wear themselves out, torment themselves, kill themselves with work in his interest, and accept his pleasure as their own, neglecting their preference for his, distorting their character and corrupting their nature.
...

Can that be called a happy life? Can it be called living?

One has only to make a few substitutions to see the applicability of La Boetie's analysis to the present. We have, we think, no tyrants to cope with in present-day "free societies." But consider that the businessmen of our time have called their own lives a "rat race." Look at the papers, listen to the commercials over the air and on the screen, and consider whether all the people who write the ads, plan the promotions, compose the jingles have not cast themselves in exactly the role of flunky to tyrants defined in this essay. Surely they are not serving their own conceptions of a worthwhile life in doing this "work"! The peasants are indeed better off!

This book is not really a political book but a study of the problems and issues of human character. The real question is why so few people

care enough about freedom to remain free. Conquest, habit, seduction are hardly a sufficient explanation. The writer lists among his heroes the Spartan youths who, refusing the invitation of Xerxes to enjoy the privileges of Persian rule, said to the king's lieutenant:

You have the honor of the king's favor, but you know nothing about liberty, what relish it has and how sweet it is. For if you had any knowledge of it, you yourself would advise us to defend it, not with lance and shield, but with our very teeth and nails.

After naming others of like persuasion La Boetie says:

These are in fact men who possessed of clear minds and far-sighted spirit, are not satisfied, like the brutish mass, to see only what is at their feet, but rather look about them, behind and before, and even recall the things of the past in order to judge those of the future, and compare them with their present condition. These are the ones who, having good minds of their own, have further trained them by study and learning. Even if liberty had entirely perished from the earth, such men would invent it. For them slavery has no satisfactions, no matter how well disguised.

Needed, it seems clear, are more of such men. How to get them is not a question La Boetie inquired into deeply. Nor does anyone today.

COMMENTARY

CROSS COUNTRY PEACE WALK

LAST Saturday—January 31—a Continental Walk for Disarmament and Social Justice began in San Francisco, and is scheduled to reach Washington, D.C., in September or October. Sponsors are the War Resisters League, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the American Friends Service Committee, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Women's Strike for Peace, Sane, and several other groups, including the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The Walk will be carried on by regional participants who will be met at the end of each link by walkers from the adjoining region. The plan is to cover about thirty-five miles in two days' time. Some walkers may go the whole distance. One objective is: "To raise the issue of disarmament through *unilateral action* as a first step toward pushing disarmament to the top of the public agenda"; another, "to *listen to* people across the country who suffer because we have not disarmed" and to amplify their voices. Headquarters for information about the Walk in Southern California—which starts on March 6 in downtown Los Angeles—is the local War Resisters League office, 3359 Canyon Crest Road, Altadena, Calif. 91001—tel. 213-797-8973

During February the Walk will come down the Pacific Coast, taking a "rest day" in Monterey on Feb. 11. The walkers will reach Santa Barbara for another rest day on Feb. 29, then proceed to Los Angeles. The route from Los Angeles to Blythe (close to the Arizona line) passes through Alhambra, El Monte, and West Covina, then goes to Claremont and Ontario. Next are Riverside and Beaumont, and then the route swings south to West Palm Springs, continuing to Thousand Palms and Indio. There will be a rest day at Blythe, where the Arizona participants will begin the next segment.

Anyone in sympathy with the purposes of the Walk is invited to take part. Volunteers are

needed for a variety of jobs, including motor transport for organizational work.

People in the East may obtain information about the Walk from the New York Office of the War Resisters League—339 Lafayette St., New York, N.Y. 10012 (phone—212-677-5455).

It should be of general interest to Southern Californians that at last there is effective representation of the War Resisters League in the Los Angeles area. Mandy Carter, who has been active with WRL-West in San Francisco, came to Los Angeles a year ago, and now has permanent quarters in Altadena. This regional WRL office is supported entirely by voluntary contributions.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves BEREA COLLEGE

Two colleges were founded in the 1850's, both by reformers. One was Antioch, begun in 1852 in Yellow Springs, Ohio, by Horace Mann, with the avowed purpose of being "not only a home of scholarship and a school for the learned professions, but also a place for training all the latent qualities, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, of both men and women." This is how the late Arthur Morgan, who revived Antioch, spoke of Horace Mann's vision. Unfortunately, as Morgan put it, Mann was "thwarted by sectarianism at every turn." He died seven years later with his dream unrealized. The institution was about to go under when Morgan resuscitated it in 1921, and made it into the vehicle of another great educational dream—the Antioch part work and part study program. Antioch has had its ups and downs, but it continues in the present, and those who value Dr. Morgan's dream feel that it is in some measure being successfully continued there today.

The other college started at about this time was Berea, in Berea, Kentucky. It was brought into being as an interracial outpost in a slaveholding state by determined Abolitionists. As one of the founders said, Berea was intended to give "an education to all colors, classes cheap and thorough." Armed slaveholders forced the college to close during the Civil War, but after the South surrendered its doors were opened again to black and white students, a policy which continued until 1904, when the Kentucky legislature passed a law, aimed at Berea, outlawing all interracial institutions. The students were all white until 1950, when Kentucky's laws were again changed, and black students immediately started enrolling there. Today they make up about twelve per cent of the student body.

What is unique and wonderful about Berea? Its principles are notable enough, but many places of learning have well-sounding principles. The impressive thing about Berea is its practice. A long article by Bryce Nelson in the *Los Angeles Times* for

last Nov. 17 supplies extensive description of what goes on there.

First of all, if you or your family can afford to pay tuition, you can't go there. Berea is only for students who want an education but have no money. Second, if you enroll at Berea you must work on some kind of part-time job from ten to twenty hours a week. Jobs for students in that region pay from 65 cents to a top of \$1.25 an hour. The *Times* writer summarizes:

This year, total student fees and charges for board and room are \$1,235, "which ain't bad," says Jack Hall, a Berea staff member. Students apply their work earnings to these charges. Instruction, the major expense at most colleges, is free.

Children of Berea graduates usually are unable to enroll here because their parents have too much money to qualify. Almost all Berea students are the first generation of their family to attend any college.

All but 20 per cent of the students come from the surrounding area, known generally as Appalachia. The city of Berea has a population of 7,000, and opportunities for recreation are limited to a movie house and a roller-skating rink. Curiously, the college itself can be accounted "wealthy":

Berea serves some of the poorest college students in the country but, with an endowment of \$63 million, it is one of the nation's richest small colleges. It uses income from endowments to pay about 50% of its \$5.25 million annual operating budget and serve its 1,400 students.

The college amassed its fortune by carefully avoiding dipping into endowment for current expenses and by trying to expand endowment by \$3 million to \$5 million per year.

The requirement that all Berea students hold down jobs as well as go to school wins admiration from businessmen: "Among the wealthy persons Berea has attracted as supporters is Col. Harland Sanders, who ran an ordinary restaurant in Berea before he struck it rich in his 'finger-lickin good' fried chicken franchising." There is much testimony concerning the value of the job requirement:

Berea's labor program started as an economic necessity, and is still highly useful in keeping the

college budget in the black year after year. But the program means more than money.

"We believe in the dignity of work. We believe that work which serves others, no matter how menial, is a dignified, even a sacred task," explained Berea president Willis D. Weatherford in an interview.

Every year, the college celebrates its own "labor day" in May. Awards are given for superior performance—such as for the best-kept college building, and prizes are given for the ability to milk a cow the fastest, hammer a nail the fastest, or to split logs with greater precision than one's opponents. Each year the best weaver is awarded a loom.

Returning alumni tell college officials that the labor program is the most important part of their Berea experience. Graduates tell William Ramsey, Berea's dean of labor, that what is important is "the habits I learned, the confidence that I could do anything."

Berea students work at almost anything—from being janitors or tending hogs in the college "piggery", to running computers. Faculty members have paid student assistants, and some students earn money tutoring others.

A young man from Northridge in the Los Angeles area who came to Berea to study agriculture chose the college because he likes the self-sufficient sort of farming that is common in Appalachia. They still plow with mules in many regions. He puts in his work time on the college farm or in the green house; he also works in a coffee house, stuffs newspapers, and raises alfalfa sprouts to sell in local health food stores.

The college itself offers a diversity of jobs:

Berea also has its own plant for Appalachian handicrafts, called Student Craft Industries, and a number of students are paid to work at weaving, woodcraft, broom-making needlecraft, ceramics, and making stone jewelry. Berea's handicraft products provide a noticeable percentage of the total college income each year.

Hotel management majors at Berea work at the Boone Tavern Hotel, a large-town hostelry which the college owns and where a good room costs \$9 a night. Students serve as hotel clerks, bellboys, waitresses and waiters, and are courteous and prompt, although a sign sternly warns, "No Tipping."

Everybody works at Berea because everyone needs and has to, and this makes for fellowship among the students. "You don't have this student with a Cadillac driving down the street and another standing on the sidewalk drooling." Actually, few of the students have cars. There are no fraternities, no sororities, and no football, although the college does well in soccer.

Personal habits among the faculty are abstemious. While there is no rule against drinking, it is not customary at the social events among faculty members. President Weatherford told an interviewer: "I've seen enough men go to pot, start out in social drinking and become a slave to it." The campus mood is liberal toward religion:

Berea exists where people are often outspoken about their religious convictions but the college is not identified with a particular religious denomination. Although a good many of its students come from fundamentalist traditions, former Dean Louis Smith says, "Berea is not fundamentalist or evangelical in its religious teachings."

"We've been religious but liberal at Berea," said Weatherford. Furthermore, he said, "Berea is a college which has a commitment substantially beyond the intellectual commitment. We're not value-neutral. We have an idea of brotherhood here. We don't always pull it off, but we're trying."

Point of incidental interest: William J. Hutchins was president of Berea from 1920 to 1939. Then his son, Francis S. Hutchins, became president, serving until 1967. Another son of William Hutchins is Robert M. Hutchins, former head of the University of Chicago, chairman of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, author of *The Higher Learning in America* and other books.

FRONTIERS

Before and Beyond the Law

THE six huge volumes of *The Ralph Nader Congress Project* (Grossman) have reached print and are now available at \$16.50 a volume—\$90.00 the set. Together they make a total of 2,007 pages, and what, a reviewer may wonder, is to become of them? Who will read them? Surely not the average citizen.

What then is their value? John S. Rosenberg, a Washington-based critic, reporting on these volumes in the December *Progressive*, declares somewhat harshly that they are not worth much. They will not affect either Congressmen or voters, he says. Neither legislators nor citizens, the critic argues, will be able to relate their self-interest to the contents of these books. He continues:

To effect change, Nader must provide incentives for change.

These books on Congressional committees show no understanding of this simple reality. Most of them consist of long "case studies" of various bills meandering through Congress; not surprisingly, in most cases, important decisions are reached in private, where they are heavily influenced by lobbyists for private interests or executive agencies. Each study attacks this process as an evil, without attempting to explain the political reasons for its existence: Congress is a political institution, a forge for compromises, and its members try always to reserve maximum flexibility for themselves. Changing the process implies changing its purposes. . . . Because the books rarely generalize or draw any theoretical conclusions, the great mass of the materials they contain is obsolete and useless.

Five of the books describe the work of the following committees: Judiciary, Commerce, Environment, Money, Revenue; and the sixth is about the control of the legislative process through the rules of both the Senate and the House.

There is point to the *Progressive* writer's comment, yet he overlooks, we think, an essential consideration. Back of the imperfections of Congress are two causes this sort of criticism may

eventually lay bare. First, the general moral character of the American people is reflected in the behavior of Congress, but remains inaccessible to the actions of Congress. Lawmakers do not reform people by making laws, but are obliged to deal with the status quo as well as they can. Second, the Government is too big, too centralized, too remote from problems which are themselves remote from any of the solutions available to individuals, by reason of the massive, generalized impact these problems develop before receiving any public attention.

A look at these books is likely to make such things clear to the thoughtful reader. It may show him that we have been expecting far too much of government for too long a time.

What is the practical function of government, in relation to the problems of human behavior? Government attempts to convert them from moral problems into technical problems, and then to deal with their effects in a practical or reductive manner. Law does not make men personally responsible or honest. Law endeavors to cope with the consequences of irresponsibility and dishonesty. It restrains and averages those consequences. When law is expected and required to do more than it can possibly do, the law-making process weakens, not only practically, but morally as well. This is what the Nader books reveal. We need such books, then, in order to relocate the areas of common effort toward a better society.

We don't suggest that anyone get these Nader Congress books and study them. The earlier Nader books are probably easier to read and absorb, and the lessons are essentially the same. If you read *The Chemical Feast* (on the Food and Drug Administration), *Vanishing Air* (on air pollution), and *The Interstate Commerce Commission* (on transportation), all issued by Grossman, you can hardly avoid the conclusion that the watch-dog approach to the control of social irresponsibility works poorly if at all, and

that the adversary approach in politics and law is wasteful, and in the long run self-defeating.

These are questions especially appropriate for investigation at the end of the first two hundred years of American life. Should we, for example, place less reliance on methods of catching offenders, and give concerted attention to the design of circumstances and patterns of human relations which encourage cooperative and responsible attitudes? Should we stop tinkering with institutions, trying to make them more efficient, and devote our educational effort to increasing individual resourcefulness and finding ways to get institutional obstacles out of people's way?

This isn't exactly the purpose of Christopher Stone's *Where the Law Ends* (Harper & Row, \$12.95), but this new book by the author of *Should Trees Have Standing?* could easily have the effect of turning thought in such directions. Mr. Stone now examines the difficulties of controlling the behavior of corporate enterprises, showing from history why so much of what they do is beyond the conceptual reach of legislative regulation or control. But *Where the Law Ends* is only superficially about laws and law-making. Its actual subject is the moral psychology of individuals and groups. The author shows how the modern corporation subdivided individual responsibility, giving most of it to a legal abstraction not easily called to account, and allowing people to feel comfortable in performing acts to serve the corporation that they would be ashamed to perform for themselves. Mr. Stone wants to restore the *feeling* of individual accountability to the lives of people active in corporate enterprise. He thinks this can be accomplished, at least partly, by certain legal reforms.

Where the Law Ends is usefully informing to the general reader. One learns, for example, how corporations first began as guilds which provided practical advantages to their members while at the same time establishing desirable standards of

practice and excellence in the various trades. The guild did not relieve individual members of any responsibility for what they did. The first corporate enterprise to move in this direction was the East India Company, which in 1611 declared that all trading was to be done *only by the corporation*. Curiously, it was the East India Company, too, which established the custom of giving bribes to customers, according to one economic historian!

"Can we," asks the author, "bring about changes in the corporate decision process so that the way corporations 'think' conforms more nearly to the decision process of the responsible human being?"

This, quite obviously, is the basic problem. As a lawyer and a teacher of law, Mr. Stone does not go back of his defined professional duties. Like all the rest of us, he would like to see human beings become more moral, more responsible, but the job of lawmakers, judges, and lawyers is to make the best of the way things are.

What sensible ways are there, by means of statute, to bring out the best in us, instead of making it seem morally plausible to act indifferently, or even to do our worst? This is Mr. Stone's basic question, his proper area of research. To recognize the limit of accomplishment in this area is to see how much remains for the rest of us to do.