VOLUME XXIX, NO. 14
APRIL 7, 1976

REASON AND RATIONALITY

FORTUNATELY, the modern world—the world of culture and education, of politics and business management—is still quite ignorant of how to change people's minds. In a period so filled with half-baked certainties concerning what men *ought* to think, it would be little short of total disaster for anyone to discover the secret of dictating human opinion. It is true enough that considerable numbers of people can be persuaded of one thing or another by low-grade trickery, and there are other methods, known to priests in confessional boxes and to Pavlovian psychologists, for producing compliance, but this is hardly changing *minds.* Such activities are rather ways of extinguishing or emasculating the mind.

As a matter of fact, short of metaphysical conceptions which the Western world is by no means prepared to consider, we have no comprehensive hypothesis concerning the intrinsic nature of the mind. We could say, perhaps, that the mind is the arena where we experience the competition of intentions which the bundle of "selves" noted by John Dewey presents. Or that it is the integrating instrument for balancing what we desire with what we think we ought to do, and at the same time the ways and means committee for implementing the motives which dominate. But in saying this we should not forget that the mind is also the tool of a Sophocles, a Shakespeare, or a Goethe. In its best development it functions as an ordering principle in acts of creation? generating visionary splendors out of the tumult of emotional life. Yet sometimes, in anxiety or bewildered dismay, it embraces with servile gratitude the orders of some crowned or certified Ozymandias, fully confirming Erich Fromm's account of the fears inspired by freedom. But mind may also focus a resistance movement of stubborn integrities, rejecting as alien any direction that comes from an outside source.

While psychologists have supplied some useful descriptions of how the mind (*some* minds) behave under various conditions, artists and philosophers have been more helpful in amplifying our intuitive understanding of what it means to *be* a mind. Thus Dostoevsky, for example, in *Notes from the Underground:*

> You Gentlemen have taken your whole register of human advantages from the averages of statistical figures and politico-economic formulas. . . . Shower upon man every earthly blessing, drown him in a sea of happiness, so that nothing but bubbles of bliss can be seen on the surface; give him economic prosperity such that he should have nothing else to do but sleep, eat cakes, and busy himself with the continuation of his species; and even then, out of sheer ingratitude, sheer spite, man would play you some nasty trick. He would even risk his cakes and would desire the most fatal rubbish, the most uneconomical absurdity, simply to introduce into all this positive good sense his final fantastic element. . . . simply to prove to himself—as though that were necessary—that men are still men and not the keys of a piano. . . . The whole work of man really seems to consist in nothing but proving to himself every minute that he is a man and not a piano key.

This is a report on what happens when the mind is subjected to the confident manipulations of managers. Yet, left to itself, the mind has problems of its own, quite as difficult to cope with. William James put them well:

> Not that I would not, if I could, be both handsome and fat and well dressed and a great athlete, and make a million a year, be a wit, a *bon vivant,* and a lady-killer, as well as a philosopher, a philanthropist, a statesman, warrior, and African explorer, as well as a "tone-poet" and a saint. The thing is simply impossible. The millionaire's work would run counter to the saint's; the *bon vivant* and the philanthropist would trip each other up; the philosopher and the lady-killer could not well keep house in the same tenement of clay.

James is a great consolation; he enables us to laugh at ourselves for a moment or two. And then we are able to go back to the question of intellectual identity with somewhat better heart.

There are indeed deeper problems. The evident duality of the mind has poles which encompass the entire world of good and evil. We reason about things, decide what is good and just—and true and beautiful—and then improve the human condition by what is called wisdom. But the mind—is it the *same* mind?—also makes traps and prisons and justifies the performance of hideous inhuman acts in the name of reason, necessity, and the patriotic good. War—have a look at the *Pentagon Papers*—is the most obvious example, but there are others. Yet the duality may be dramatically revealed when a man who was, say, an author of the *Pentagon Papers*, during some dark night of the soul suddenly draws back, looks at his work, and cries, *"What am I doing!"* In the mind, the place of final jurisdiction, he discovers that he must right a wrong.

What does he do about it? He heals the split between reason and rationality, you could say. He compels the Aristotle in him to listen once more to the Plato in him.

This duality has been well described by Erich Kahler in *The Meaning of History:*

> Reason is a human faculty, inherent in the human being as such; rationality is a technical function, a technicalization and functionalization of the ways in which reason proceeds. Functionalization makes rationality capable of being detached from its human source, and generalized as an abstract, logical method. Again, this process ultimately goes back to Aristotle's *Organon,* particularly his *Analytics.* But it is only rather recently, in consequence of the general process of specialization, and of the ensuing transformation of consciousness, that rationality has become completely independent of, indeed radically opposed to human reason. And just as the expansion of collective consciousness entails the shrinking of individual consciousness, rationality grows at the expense of reason.

We now know what this means. We see the results everywhere. The dehumanized rationality of method—now enthroned in the computer—displaces individual human reason, declares it juvenile if not delinquent, and puts it out of court. We are warned against this tyranny even in current scientific journals. (See Theodore Sterling in *Science* for Dec. 19, 1975.) Zeus has once more renewed the shackles which render our Promethean intentions impotent, using the very means we devised for putting an end to all theological tyranny—the deliveries of logic and the scientific method.

So what is to be done? *How can we change people's minds?* is the most insistent question of the age.

Plato's counsel was that you mustn't even try to change their minds; what you can and ought to do is to help them to set their own minds free. This was the reason he objected to the enclosure of the Greek mind with Homeric poetry. The mind was enthralled in its compelling imagery by the time a youth reached his majority. Break those chains, Plato said, if you want to think for yourself! Don't consult the mob, the lawyers, or tradition: *Consult only yourself.*

But who, alas, knows enough to dare to consult himself? Plato would have said it doesn't matter; he would have said that no one else is qualified to tell you what you ought to think and do. In technical matters, yes, you can accept help, and probably need it; but in matters of the mind—concerned with what is true and right—you are the only expert Plato will permit to testify.

What then about "education"? Well, Plato thought that since people are affected by the feelings generated by their surroundings, an environment that is harmonious would have the best result. The experience of harmony will help men to live harmonious lives. You don't tell a child what is beautiful—you show him the world, or selected portions of it, and let the corresponding elements in him awaken in response. This was Plato's theory of education for the young, with stress on singing and the dance. The mind should receive harmonic sights and

sounds from every quarter—"like a breeze bearing health from happy regions," so that "some influence from noble works constantly falls upon eye and ear from childhood upward, and imperceptibly draws them into sympathy and harmony with the beauty of reason, whose impress they take."

This is quoted from Plato's *Republic* by Herbert Read, who points out that the harmony of the environment is drawn into the service of the common good, "to bind the community into one." Read (in *To Hell with Culture*) turns from this Platonic vision to modern times, wondering how it can be applied. Education, according to Plato, is "learning to feel pleasure and pain about the right things." His program began with the arts, and later came the Dialectic. But Plato promised no certainty. Read muses:

> It may seem a long cry from the ideal republic of Plato to the realities of a world rent by political passions and living under the immediate threat of universal extermination by atomic warfare. What is the purpose of the arts in such a world? We can only affirm that the purpose is the same as it was in the war-ridden world of Plato; and I know of no other remedy for our condition half so realistic as the education through art recommended by Plato. Men's minds must be changed; that must be the single and insistent aim of all our policies if we are to avoid mutual destruction. How is it possible to change men's minds?—that is the only worthwhile question. But to change them not for the moment or for an immediate advantage: to change them permanently and universally. That is the question; and the only answer we receive at present is that men's minds can and must be changed by moral suasion. I believe this is an illusion.

It is certainly an illusion if the suasion is to be applied by someone—someone who "knows"—from the outside. For then moral integrity must resist, making war on "morality." Read continues:

> What is morality? It is not a state of mind but a mode of action. Our morals are not defined by what we believe but by what we do. The root is the Latin *mos* (pl. *mores*) and originally it meant a way of carrying oneself, physical uprightness, traditional behaviour. Mores were transmitted by custom, by the imitation of parents and teachers, and there was always present a sense of personal responsibility for one's actions. Impossible to trace here the steps by which such *habits of perfection* became codified and generalized into abstractions, into *laws of conduct* to which conscious compliance was exacted—an unreal relationship. The consequence was a weakening of the bonds of traditional behavior. If man is no longer responsible to himself, but to an abstraction, he has a thousand chances to be evasive, to be weak, to be mistaken. If he acts, no longer instinctively and automatically, but by calculation and with circumspection, he tends to act ambiguously and intolerantly.

We are returned by this analysis to the present situation—to the unreality of a world knowing abstractly that morality which does not grow out of personal responsibility is practically worthless, yet, although knowing this, has no idea how to regenerate feelings of personal responsibility. Read says it can't be accomplished by preaching, and he is almost certainly right. Plato proposed the austere example of the Guardians, with reliance on acts rather than words, and Tolstoy probably had something similar in view. Buber, considering the futility of argument with people for whom reason has never had any real authority, felt that the only hope of a collectivist civilization ruled by rationalizations of habit and impulse lies in arousals of individual conscience. But he, too, believed in the power of example. He counseled teachers to study how character is formed in exceptional humans. Needed is recognition of the *unity* of the life of one who has accepted self-responsibility:

> The confusing contradictions cannot be remedied by collectives, not one of which knows the taste of genuine unity and which if left to themselves would end up, like the scorpions imprisoned in a box, in the witty fable, by devouring one another. This mass of contradictions can be met and conquered only by the rebirth of personal unity, unity of being, unity of life, 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.

Why did the ill of relying on outside authority, of the weakening of selfhood and of the

loss of eternal values, overtake the modern world? Buber gives his answer:

> In an understandable reaction against the former domination of a false, fictitious mystery, the present generations are obsessed with the desire to rob life of all its mystery. The fictitious mystery will disappear, the genuine one will rise again. A generation which honors the mystery in all its forms will no longer be deserted by eternity. Its light seems darkened only because the eye suffers from a cataract; the receiver has been turned off, but the resounding ether has not ceased to vibrate. Today, indeed, in the hour of upheaval, the eternal is sifted from the pseudo-eternal. That which flashed into the primal radiance and blurred the primal sound will be extinguished and silenced, for it has failed before the horror of the new confusion and the questioning soul has unmasked its futility.

Buber was speaking for the future more than for his own time. Such optimism is allowed only to Promethean spirits, since they are not daunted by having to wait. His kind of confidence involves a time-scale in which the intervals are marked by heart's awakenings, not calendar years. Yet Buber surely changed some people's minds.

For his last word about morality and mind-changing, Herbert Read turns to Saint-Exupéry. This is a closing paragraph in Read's essay, "The Arts and Peace":

> "The work of Saint-Exupéry is not an argument," writes one of his best commentators (Everett Knight). "It is an example." Thus we return to Plato—at least, to the idea that art can have a moral effect, as action and not as persuasion. Gide once remarked that Saint-Exupéry's great discovery was that man's happiness lies not in freedom but in his acceptance of a duty. Substitute destiny or necessity for duty and Gide's observation is a commonplace of Greek philosophy. Saint-Exupéry is saying something more original than this, something more pertinent to our contemporary dilemma. He is saying that the one thing that matters is the effect of action, of the constructive, the creative effort.
>
> "Constrain them to join in building a tower," says the desert prince to his son in *Citadelle* (*The Wisdom of the Sands*) and you shall make them like brothers. But if you would have them hate each other, throw food amongst them. A civilization is built on what is required of men, not on that which is provided for them. . . . Man is, above all, he who creates. And theirs alone is brotherhood who work together."

Well, is this mind-changing? It is no doubt better than mind-changing, since it represents the circumstances under which people change their minds for themselves. The act of working for and with others has a direct effect on the quality of thought. One may even find oneself accomplishing, on however small a scale, what was once ignored as impossible. Action creates a field of possibilities where none before existed, giving occupancy to a mind which then contemplates further possibilities. The mind's polarity has been changed by action.

Exupéry's counsel, however, if taken literally, seems some sort of "management" sagacity. It has to do with telling people what to do. Constrain them, he said, to build a tower. Get them busy on something together. The common action will make them brotherly. One may think about this and say, "How true!" As a pure illustration of psychological (and moral) law, it is valid and wholly acceptable. But is it acceptable when transferred into the framework of *our* lives, our moral circumstances?

What does the prince advise? To submerge the confusion of one's scattered and unreconciled motives in some worthy project for the common good. To mop up and eliminate personal and social disharmony by engaging in work with others. In the abstract we still agree, but what if the proposition is turned over to the codifiers, the champions of institutional order, purpose and management?

In *If Men Were Angels* (Atheneum, 1972), Milton Mayer explores the American temper on this question:

> If there is one contemporary platitude that pleases us more than another it is that *there* [in Collectivist Tyrannies] man exists for the state while *here* the state exists for man. Breathes there an American with soul so dead who ever to himself has said otherwise? And was not John Kennedy a great American patriot? Who was it, then, who said so

> imperishably, "Ask not what your country can do for you ask, rather, what you can do for your country?"

How do we read Mr. Kennedy? Is he truly another desert prince, filled with wise sayings about the nature of man, or has he, as Milton Mayer suggests, said "something very like the contradiction of the received American platitude that the state exists for man?" And it further occurs to Mr. Mayer that "Mr. Kennedy's hagiographic utterance could have been just as hagiographically uttered by Adolph Hitler or Joseph Stalin."

The psycho-technology of statecraft has intervened, borrowed some primitive wisdom, and turned it upside down. Is then a truth not a truth when it comes out of the mouth of a statesman? How do you tell the difference between reason and rationalization? And how can reason find its way through the maze of legal, technological, and cultural rationalizations which accumulate with computerized rapidity, charting the means to ends long since divorced from any spontaneous and legitimate human intention?

Moreover, there are morally useful truths which are both true and not true, and, one wonders, how should those in charge of mind-changing on a social scale deal with them? Should such truths be left out, simply ignored, or treated as though they have only a single dimension—one unambiguous meaning?

For example, in an essay on "Education of the People," posthumously published, D. H. Lawrence said:

> One man is neither equal nor unequal to another man. When I stand in the presence of another man, and I am my own pure self, am I aware of the presence of an equal, or of an inferior, or of a superior? I am not. When I stand with another man who is himself, and when I am truly myself, then I am only aware of a Presence, and of the strange reality of Otherness. There is me, and there is *another being.* . . . There is no comparing or estimating. . . . Comparison enters only when one of us departs from his own integral being, and enters the material mechanical world. Then equality and inequality starts at once.

Ought a mind-changer to try to meddle with thinking of this sort? On this point or some other? Or ought he to go home and ponder how and when the reason of integral being may legitimately enter the material, mechanical world, and what can be done to save reason from itself after it gets there?

REVIEW
THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

IN *Civilization and Beyond* (Social Science Institute, 1975), Scott Nearing proposes that the radical transformation of human life by the processes of change which began with the Industrial Revolution (about 1750) has reached a point where it may be said that modern civilization is "obsolete." He means that the power put at human disposal by the industrial revolution and its numerous technological extensions has become increasingly self-destructive. A single brief statement from the record of history is sufficient to support this conclusion:

> Disturbing and upsetting products of the revolution in science and technology—the harnessing of steam, the internal combustion engine, the airplane, electronics, plastics, and the release of atomic energy—were used to mutilate, destroy and kill. During the half century that began in 1910, tens of millions were mobilized, fed, taught, armed, and led to the slaughter fields by the masters of western civilization in two long orgies of wholesale destruction and mass murder—1914-18 and 1936-1945. Energies and techniques that might have brought peace and plenty to the human family were used to set fire storms that incinerated property while it degraded humanity to the horrors of mass suicide.
>
> In a very real sense these ghoulish results were the logical outcome of competitive nationalism armed and equipped with the technology produced during the two centuries of the great revolution. War is the most carefully planned, most elaborate and most intensive form of competition—the decisive climax of a life and death struggle for survival.
>
> The great revolution had put into human hands almost infinite possibilities for utilizing nature and improving the social environment. With foresight, careful planning and skillful manipulation of forces and trends the cultivable portions of the planetary land mass might have been turned into a garden of unending plenty dotted with marvelous city centers of light and learning.

This is not what happened. The patterns of "Western civilization" decreed something very different:

> Instead of joint efforts to achieve abundance and security, the most prosperous and most highly developed centers of western civilization consolidated their authority in sovereign states, surrounded them by forbidding frontiers, armed them with the utmost destructive agencies that human imagination and ingenuity could devise, schooled the citizens of each nation in the suicidal formula: "might makes right, every nation for itself and woe betide the laggard and the loser."
>
> The logical ideology of such a formula was egomania, suspicion, fear and hatred. Its outcome was a competitive life and death struggle for wealth and power, with the nation or a bloc of nations as the units of competition.

Why did "civilization" go in this direction instead of toward the ideal? Why did acquisitiveness, egomania, suspicion, fear, and hatred direct the use of modern wealth? Mr. Nearing does not really explore this question. Instead, at the end of his book, he says:

> The Marxist world, in its spectacular rise during less than a century, offers the only workable alternative to declining and disintegrating western civilization. It presents an alternative theoretical program for dealing with the transition from the built-in competitiveness of western civilization to the built-in cooperativeness of a planned, coordinated, federated socialist-communist world order.

The spread of Marxism was indeed spectacular, and only those who remain ignorant of social history have need to ask why, but calling today's major Communist States—and they *are* States—"Marxist" is certainly open to question; and whether the alternative (or alternatives) that will finally replace present-day patterns of civilization ought to be named in terms of the ideological conflicts of the twentieth century is also at issue. Communism, like Capitalism, has its problems. For one thing, while Scott Nearing is every bit as toughly independent and resilient a thinker as Solzhenitsyn, one may be very glad he chose to remain in the United States, since it is quite difficult to imagine him surviving in Russia (to the age of ninety-four), and being able to exercise the same educational influence he has

achieved here, despite the crude inhospitality shown him by official America.

In what terms, then, should the future be envisioned?

The beginning of an answer to this question might be made with a passage from Milton Mayer's book, *What Can a Man Do?* He is recalling here some of his experiences in Czechoslovakia:

> "I am not a Communist, I am a Christian," says Joseph Hromadka. "But I know that it is we, we Christians alone, who are responsible for communism. We had a burden to discharge to the world, and Jesus Christ left no room to wonder what it was. We failed. We 'said, and did not.' And now another power has arisen to take up this burden. Remember that the Communists were once Christians. If they do not believe in a just God, whose fault is it?" Hromadka is talking not in Princeton, where he once served so comfortably, but in Prague, where he serves, perhaps less comfortably, as dean of the Comenius Theological Faculty. All over Eastern Europe one hears the same agonized words from churchmen: "The atheists had to come to teach us the social gospel."

Can atheists teach the social gospel? Without a doubt, and their persuasions made the Communist Revolution. Can they practice it? Of course. The Buddhists are atheists, and Buddhists make good citizens, wherever they are. But what must be questioned is the politics of materialism, and whether anything resembling a social gospel will remain after the thrust to centralized power which has been the aim of Communist revolutions wherever and whenever they have occurred. Right from the beginning of the Bolshevik regime in Russia the Communists systematically stamped out every manifestation of self-rule and community autonomy (as Voline shows in *The Unknown Revolution*), and if the social gospel includes humanization through decentralization of power—if it includes the deliberate fostering of self-reliance and independent resourcefulness and responsibility—then Communism, as practiced in the twentieth century, is not a road in the right direction.

Yet a changed attitude toward things and possessions is certainly in order and necessary. Scott Nearing makes only passing reference to the "intentional communities" that have attempted to demonstrate better ways of life. "At best," he says, "they parallel the life of civilization against which they protest, while they share its problems." It might be added that they may also illustrate a level of social organization where humanist ideals are able to survive, when given the support of energy and invention. In the present, there are many such experiments being carried on, some of them representative of a fresh application of both science and technology, scaled to the level of individual and small community need. Such experiments are rich in developing knowledge concerning the economic foundations of autonomy, and they are also recovering and devising relationships with nature which are consciously cooperative and respectful of all life. These are modes of action which have the greatest survival value for all humanity, but they do not come easily to any of the ideologically guided societies, which are organized on a mass scale and must exercise control by centralized authority. A partial exception, perhaps, is present-day China, where economic decentralization is a government policy. Practically every thoughtful American observer who has been to China recently reports that the rest of the world has much to learn from Chinese social and economic organization.

Socialists don't have to be materialists. They don't even have to be atheists. Edward Bellamy, a great socialist thinker and economic reformer, was no materialist. Jesus has been called a socialist, and one of the best books about recent communitarian socialism in Europe is titled *All Things Common* (by Claire Bishop), a phrase taken from Acts 4:30. Gandhi was something of a socialist, although he preferred to endure the selfishness of individuals to submitting to the brutal, impersonal rule of the State, if one must choose between the two. Nor, for that matter, is Scott Nearing a materialist.

Socialism is a credo which declares that the common human welfare is more important than private property and possessions. In other words, it is common sense. But even common sense, when conventionalized in law, and then enforced by military and police power, turns into something very different. That is why ideological claims and arguments are always suspect. All things common meant for the early Christians a sharing among brothers and sisters. But during Stalin's regime it meant visits by the GPU in the middle of the night. Freedom to pursue happiness and to make his way on the land meant one thing to a New England farmer in 1776; but it exhibited a very different meaning to the Vietnamese farmers when American troops came halfway round the world to impose the one true "way of life."

To be remembered, however, in connection with *Civilization and Beyond*, is that Scott Nearing is a radical thinker who has been true to radical practice for all the days of his very long life. He has never allowed "the system" to prevent him from doing what he thinks is right. Nobody has ever been able to hire his mind or curtail its freedom. He has set an example in living and serious thinking that, if followed by a sufficient number, would soon dissolve all ideological conflict in joyful everyday practice. A reading of *The Making of a Radical* and *Search for the Good Life* will make this abundantly clear. These and the rest of Scott Nearing's books are available from the Social Science Institute, Harborside, Maine 04642.

COMMENTARY
"FEUDAL" FRANCE

THAT the empire of France under Louis XIV can be called a "Welfare State" (see Frontiers) may be puzzling to some readers, who think of the "Sun King" as only an elegant fop who wasted the substance of his country on lavish entertainment at Versailles and in ill-advised military adventures. There was, however, another side to his regime, as his choice and support of Colbert to manage the affairs of the country suggests. An interesting light on Louis' policies is obtained from looking at what he accomplished in Canada.

In 1663, when the French Crown took over the management of New France from an ineffectual private company, reforms politically not possible at home were instituted in the vast Canadian colony. Political offices were no longer sold, but awarded on the basis of merit, and a close watch was kept on the performance of the appointees. With Colbert as his capable adviser and comptroller, Louis set out on a course of socially responsible rule. As W. J. Eccles says in *Canadian Society During the French Regime:*

> The Crown poured in capital, managerial ability in the form of trained administrators, and labour, both skilled and unskilled. It was an excellent example of an intelligent use of resources for the development of an undeveloped area. Much the same methods are being used in various parts of the world today.

Commonly overlooked is the attitude of *noblesse oblige* in that period:

> It is frequently stated that the principal institutions of New France were feudal in origin. This is a term that obscures more than it explains, particularly when it is used in a pejorative sense. . . . One of the dominant features of the older society was the deep-rooted sense of social responsibility that permeated it at all levels; the belief that the state must safeguard the legitimate interests of all ranks in society, not just those of the propertied class. Today, despite opposition from some quarters, we are well on the way to accepting the basic concepts of the welfare state. New France, on the other hand, from the moment the Crown took it over, was a welfare state. This was a fundamental principle accepted by all without question, hence without discussion.

In this book (published by Harvest House, Montreal, 1968), Prof. Eccles presents a picture of administrative Canada under Louis and Colbert in terms of legislation, law court records, and instructions to government officials.

The undeniable good of Louis' regime, this historian says, lasted until its spirit was replaced by the domination of the mercantile element in human affairs.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE SUBJECT, ENGLISH

AN element of luck entered into the success of *Foxfire,* the magazine edited and published by the highschool students of Rabun Gap in Georgia. The first *Foxfire* book sold over a million copies, and the others published since have had similar success. What was lucky about it? Elliot Wigginton, the English teacher who started it all, explains in *Foxfire 3* that he had a brother-in-law who worked for Doubleday, but you could say that the luck was mostly Doubleday's. How often does a publisher get out of Georgia a manuscript that sells by the million?

Most important was the fact that *Foxfire* (the magazine) and *Foxfire* (the book) spoke to the hungerings of Americans all over the country. Countless people look back longingly to the life their grandparents had—savoring its simplicities, its unadvertised felicities, the satisfactions of ingenious self-management on the land. This, of a certainty, is why the *Foxfire* books have caught on. Not many of the readers, we expect, are going to go out in the backyard and make soap by combining hickory ash with the lard that was boiled out of a hog the week before. Not many of them will follow *Foxfire* directions for building a log cabin. But something good is growing out of the *Foxfire* books.

Looking back on the early days, in the Introduction to *Foxfire 3,* Elliott Wigginton says:

> The only way I can see to get our kids committed to our neighborhoods and our communities is to get them so involved in their surroundings that they become determined that the community's destiny will be in their hands, not in the hands of commercial rapists. They must feel that they are essential to the future of their homes. The alternative is to watch them leave, creating a vacuum filled, in our county's case, by ten thousand summer lots all priced so high that even if those kids wanted to come back some day they couldn't afford to.
>
> Until we put together the article on shuckings and house railings (in this volume), none of us realized the extent to which people used to be dependent upon and responsible to each other. We knew that once there were shuckings, but these sounded somehow remote—curiosities of a long-gone day. Now that we've done some real work on the subject, I realize how widespread and pervasive and varied and common these practices were. They were a part of everyone's existence here—and they were a constant part—not a once-a-month variety.
>
> Somewhere along the way, we've lost something fine.

There is a difference between accepting this truth about the past and *feeling* it. The *Foxfire* magazine and books help people to feel it, and the material producing this effect, except for Wigginton's introductions, is practically all by highschool students.

We have already made one report on *Foxfire,* but at the time we didn't have the first volume. We have it now, and the way the work began is of special interest. Hot out of Cornell with an A.B. in English and an M.A. in teaching, Wigginton arrived at Rabun Gap in the Appalachians in 1966. He came there, filled with fire and gumption, to teach ninth and tenth grade English, geography, and odds and ends of other subjects. Three weeks later his English class was a pedagogic shambles, with miscellaneous physical disorder and vandalism to prove that everything was going wrong.

What should he do?

> The answer was obvious. If I were to finish out the year honorably, it would be necessary to reassert my authority. No teenagers were going to push me around. Besides, my course was too important. First offense would be an "X" in the grade book. Second, a paddling. Third, to the principal. Fourth, out of class for two weeks.
>
> It frightens me to think how close I came to making another stupid mistake. First, I had bored them unmercifully. Now I was about to impose a welcome punishment. Two weeks out of that class would have been more pleasure than pain.

> Those who cannot remember the past not only relive it; they tend to impose it, mistakes and all, on others. My own high school—monumentally boring texts and lectures, all forgotten; punishments and regulations and slights that only filled a reservoir of bitterness; and three blessed teachers who let me make things, helped me make them, and praised the results.

So he thought it over.

> The next day I walked into class and said, "How would you like to throw away the text and start a magazine?" and that's how *Foxfire* began.

What would they put in it? The best answer comes from looking at the *Foxfire* books. Wigginton suggested that the students go home and talk to their parents and their grandparents about how life used to be—and in rare instances still is—in the Appalachian mountains.

> So they went home and talked—really talked—to their own relatives, some of them for the first time. From those conversations came superstitions, old home remedies, weather signs, a story about a hog hunt, a taped interview with a retired sheriff about the time the local bank was robbed—and directions for planting by the [zodiacal] signs.

Another ingredient of success was that the magazine had to sell—to pay for itself. That meant a lot of folklore, only a little poetry. "It also meant that the kids had to find the money for that first issue themselves, and that made them more determined to see the magazine go than anything I could have said." . . . They raised enough to print an edition of 600 copies, which were sold out in a week, and then they were able to print 600 more.

> It sounds simple doesn't it? I can promise there were times we almost chucked the whole thing and went back to *Silas Marner*. In our total ignorance we made some colossal blunders. We went broke a couple of times, for one. People like John Dyson and groups like the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines came along and pulled us out of the mud, brushed us off, and wound us up again.

What about education? Wigginton went there as an English teacher, not a promoter of folklore anthologies.

> Is the subject, English, ignored in the process? Hardly. In fact, the opposite is true. English, in its simplest definition, is communication—reaching out and touching people with words, sounds, and visual images. We are in the business of improving students' prowess in these areas. In their work with photography (which must tell the story with as much impact and clarity as the words), text (which must be grammatically correct except in the use of pure dialect from tapes they transcribe), lay-out, make-up, correspondence, art and cover design, and selection of manuscripts from outside poets and writers—to say nothing of related skills such as fund raising, typing, retailing, advertising, and speaking at conferences and public buildings—they learn more about English than from any other curriculum I could devise. Moreover, this curriculum has built-in motivations and immediate and tangible rewards.

At the end, he says:

> It's the same old story. The answer to student boredom and restlessness (manifested in everything from paper airplanes to dope) maybe—just maybe—not stricter penalties, innumerable suspensions, and bathroom monitors. How many schools (mine included) have dealt with those students that still have fire and spirit, *not* by channeling that fire in constructive, creative directions, but by pouring water on the very flames that could make them great? And it's not *necessarily* that the rules are wrong. It's the arrogant way we tend to enforce them. Until we can inspire rather than babysit, we're in big trouble. Don't believe me. Just watch and see what happens. We think that drugs and turnover rates and dropouts are a problem now. We haven't seen anything yet.

This introduction was written for a book which came out in 1972—*The Foxfire Book* (Anchor, $3.95).

FRONTIERS

Colbert's "Reform"

WHEN, in the last half of the seventeenth century, Jean Baptiste Colbert resolved to restore the efficiency and solvency of Louis XIV's Welfare State, he was nothing if not thorough. He stimulated and in some cases organized industry and commerce, set up model factories, and inaugurated minute regulation by central authority of the economic and even the cultural life of France. He reformed the judiciary, improved the police, and reorganized education and the arts. He has been called a great statesman whose main offense was in exercising too much government, and he permitted no interference with his plans. His failures were due almost entirely to the financial drain of Louis' costly wars.

It appears that Colbert knew the most effective way to establish new cultural influences. Reform in architecture was basic, but instead of trying to change traditional methods of training designers he created a new school—the Royal Academy of Architecture, founded in 1671. In an article in *JAE* (*Journal of Architectural Education*) for September, 1975, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre tell how Colbert introduced tendencies in architectural design which continue to this day.

His goal was economic. He wanted the rationalism of the Enlightenment to be the guide in French architecture. The new school he established took the initiative in design away from the guilds, in which there was a minimum of division of labor, and placed it in the hands of Enlightenment intellectuals. Out went the old analogy hetween the human body and the building of wood or stone—another sort of body. Such symbolic guides in planning were replaced by rules discovered through objective observation of nature. Thinking and design according to a human scale were deliberately brought to an end by this change. In their article, "The Mechanical Body Versus the Divine Body: The Rise of Modern Design Theory," Tzonis and Lefaivre, who teach at Harvard, say:

> The trade of every guildsman rested on his acquisition of techniques as well as on the principles that linked architecture to the cosmological order of the world. This situation, and its resulting effects in education, was to undergo radical transformation with the inception of the Royal Academy.
>
> Turning its back on the archaic form of training, the Academy offered a form of education which was theoretical. No training for manual work was included in its courses. The teaching contained lectures on abstract topics principles of euclidean rationality and the empirical procedures advocated by Galilean mechanics. With the exclusion of manual practical skills, architectural education was to be limited to the learning of principles, plans, examples and application, disassociating the abstract field of pure design from that of labor. At the same time the laborer was exempted from any theoretical activities.
>
> What has been said primarily with regard to the professional, educational and methodological development of the French Royal Academy of Architecture can be generalized as a broader phenomenon, occurring throughout all the states of Europe. Although there might not have existed academies or exact equivalents of the "diploma," it is a fact that in the countries of the so-called advancing bourgeois society, guilds were shut down, archaic methods of design shunned, "academic" courses adopted as the new vehicle for education and a new, rational, empirical methodology and conceptual framework developed and put into practice.

What was lost?

> The building *is* a human body: to accept such a concept is to commit oneself to the overall framework of archaic methodology, i.e., sacred harmony as an ultimate warrant, a quasi-deductive logic of inference, a classificatory foundation for the justification of design decisions and authority backings to validate them, and a concentration of the repertory of design decisions around proportion, size, and shape.

Taking the place of these conceptions was a new framework having two variants: "one is the body of the building as a machine, the other is the bodies of the users of the building as machines."

Design was thus released from all symbolic constraints. There were still limits, of course, but

these grew out of design directives based on machine or mechanical thinking. In 1787 an observer remarked, "A hospital room is truly a machine for treating patients." This was the outlook that Colbert established, and the design of public buildings according to this canon, the writers suggest, was "successful in generating the considerable savings and profits that Colbert has envisaged in his project for architectural reform."

Another writer in this issue of *JAE*, Armin Hofmann, who teaches graphic design in Basel, discusses what happened to signs and lettering as a result of the change in attitude toward architectural design. Medieval "signs" were rather symbols gracefully conveying meanings of social function. But with the rationalization of architecture on the "machine" principle, signs became intrusive and jarring elements. This writer says:

> It remained for modern, industrialized man to question his inherent sensitivity for human scale, proportion, distance volume, and temporal unity, only to lose it completely in the end. This loss is apparently the result of a powerful shock caused in man by the conception of a fully technical and automated world. It was realised far too late that the actual essence of the Machine lay in the fact that from its inception it functioned, produced, and—in the case of more advanced automation—evolved without human standards or restrictions.

When human control is lost, conquest becomes the ruling principle:

> Perhaps without wanting to, the advertising industry has accepted a role, based upon these presuppositions, which we must characterize as a fatal one. Such easily industrialized factors as lettering, color, symbology, photography were completely standardized. The graphics industry developed methods through which mass production of any desired form became possible. The foundations were laid for a continuous infusion of visual information. Now, anyone was in the position to start using the suddenly unrestrained media of optical persuasion. So it was not surprising that information conceived in the public interest increasingly fostered a communications battle through private advertising. A flood of information of greater or lesser importance now swamps the modern city-dweller to such an extent that he becomes unable to organize and process it, he is set apart from it—it is thrust upon him.

The result, in designer's language:

> A new picture of the city emerges, one characterized by interchangeable elements which are super-imposed on existing buildings: lettering, logotypes, fluorescent paint, photographs, etc. Lettering and color, whose natural functions are to enhance distance, space, order, materials, instead serve to flatten volumes into planes. Architecture is thus given the degrading function of a mere vehicle for advertising messages. To the extent that their ends are realized, these advertising messages tend to force architecture to meet their standards.
>
> Not only in an aesthetic sense do lettering and images damage our modern cities. In the final analysis they disrupt the inner organization of cities, which were originally founded on humanist principles.

This is one of the many lines of historical understanding now converging to reveal the forces that have distorted modern life almost to the point of nauseous revulsion.