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THE IMPERFECT PARALLEL

THERE must be scores of ways to generalize the human situation, all of them having validity, all in some sense verifiable, but none telling the whole story. One way involves the scientific approach, which is to compile a vast inventory of natural phenomena and processes, leaving out the question of meaning or value as something that is supposed to become self-evident after "all the facts are in." Another approach would be to typify human life as an adventurous quest. This scheme of motivation applies to all, although the varying levels of search and conceptions of goals create an almost unclassifiable miscellany of ends. Whom will you choose for standard-bearer of universal meaning—Rama, Gilgamesh, Galahad, or Peer Gynt?

The legend-makers, the mythopoeists, and nowadays the novelists are as diverse and resourceful as Nature herself, providing a mythic and metaphysical universe which translates the cosmic scene into human terms. Made of the substance of ideas, this conceptual universe is both the chart and the calendar of meaning. We are far from sure, actually, which universe we live in—the physical or the conceptual one. We talk about the physical one as though we belonged to it, but we act out our ideas of meaning as characters in the stories we circulate among our friends, telling why we do what we do. To speak of living lives is to say that we act out myths. Who could live a life without a sense of purpose? Loss of meaning is the only intelligible explanation of death.

Another inclusive generalization might be helpful in the present. We could say that human life is the Ordeal of Reconciliation. An individual needs to work out a scheme of meaning for his own life—the "story" he tells himself—but then, being human, he is compelled to think about the meaning of the world: Does *it* have a meaning, and if it does, how do the two schemes of meaning fit together? This is the ordeal of reconciliation. How can a man feel at home in the universe? How does the individual fit in society? It is easy enough to locate parallels between the whole and the part, but the parallels often break down or are made into justifications of inhuman practice. For example, an intuitive reading of man's relation to society suggests that the individual is a functioning part of a larger, complex organism; but when the social system-builders have finished telling us about the requirements of the Organic State, we find ourselves in a prison run by gauleiters and rationalized by Grand Inquisitors; and then, in self-defense, we run up anarchist flags and declare unending warfare on all systems—and on metaphysics as well—in the name of freedom.

But after a generation or two we discover that abolishing metaphysics converts all humans into atomistic equals, while simple inspection of orderly human life reveals that human beings are *not* atomistic equals. In all good societies there are elaborate psychic differentiations—subtle currents of beneficent leadership and necessary example-setting—establishing endless hierarchies in human relations. We are obliged to admit that these are natural facts and to note that ignoring or denying them—or pretending that these suasions and influences are not the very nerves of the social organism—inevitably leads to faceless, unacknowledged tyrannies in human relations. Freedom is lost because there are no consciously held principles to use for regulating the vital prepolitical processes on which all moral order depends.

There is something about the times which intensifies the need to think, as we say, "holistically"—to reconcile the meaning of our lives with the life of the world and with that of the

human community. What are the parallels? We are vague about this, except for a deep feeling, amounting almost to certainty, that the parallels exist and that we need to know how they work. Perhaps some psycho-spiritual mutation is now at work in the human species; in any event, more and more people are simply tired and disgusted with the acquisitive, every-man-for-himself behavior which we have preached for a century, and justified by the eighteenth-century dogmas of meaning that were supposed to set everybody free. It is evident, then, that we have this growing longing to understand and harmonize ourselves with the world and "people," but that we lack the rationale for doing it. We have no clear hypothesis that relates the meaning of the world (and society) with the meaning we feel to be our own. Such an hypothesis would require an over-all ("unified field"?) theory consolidating both schemes of meaning, and we feel unable to declare any such far-reaching postulates without having more "facts." But meanwhile we are under increasingly strong pressure from "history" (or "nature") to begin thinking in this way.

Why are the assumptions needed so difficult to make? Mainly because, ever since the eighteenth century, we have been declaring to ourselves (as an insurance policy against theological mischief and sacerdotal betrayal) that there is *no meaning* in Nature. Nature, we have insisted, is an extraordinary "accident"—an enormous cosmic machine put there by a series of random physical and biological events that can have only mechanical explanation. Chance is without relation to meaning or value explanation. But today, in the last half of the twentieth century, we find that we can't *live* in a meaningless universe. The assumption of meaninglessness allows and encourages us to behave in destructive, exploitive ways. It degrades our motives, making us feel meaningless, too. In consequence, we *have* to find a meaning for the world in order to establish or confirm the sense of meaning in our own lives, and this is the ordeal of reconciliation.

The problem is to find a stance above or beyond the various contradictions between the patterns of individual and collective activity—to locate a level of synthesis where those differences can be turned into synergistic flowerings.

So far, we are ready only for what may prove useful settings of the problem.

A start could be made with an archetypal version of the meaning of individual life. For this we quote from Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces:*

> The standard path of the mythological adventure of the hero is a magnification of the formula represented in the rites of passage: *separation—initiation—return:* which might be named the nuclear unit of the monomyth.
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> *A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonders: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.*
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> Prometheus ascended to the heavens, stole fire from the gods, and descended. Jason sailed through the Clashing Rocks into a sea of marvels, circumvented the dragon that guarded the Golden Fleece, and returned with the fleece with the power to wrest his rightful throne from a usurper. Aeneas went down into the underworld, crossed the dreadful river of the dead, threw a sop to the three-headed watchdog Cerberus, and conversed, at last, with the shade of his dead father. All things were unfolded to him: the destiny of souls, the destiny of Rome, which he was about to found, "and in what wise he might avoid or endure every burden." He returned through the ivory gate to his work in the world.

And then, according to a later chapter in the paradigmatic story, another set of trials begins. When Plato's new-born philosopher who has left the Cave, who has experienced the full illumination of sunlight outside, and then returned to the shadowy interior to inform its inmates of larger possibilities that light reveals—when he begins with a high heart "to bestow boons on his fellow man"—he finds them resentfully unreceptive:

> Now if he should be required to contend with these perpetual prisoners in "evaluating" these shadows while his vision was still dim and before his eyes were accustomed to the dark—and this time required for habituation would not be very short—would he not provoke laughter, and would it not be said of him that he had returned from his -journey aloft with his eyes mined and that it was not worth while even to attempt the ascent? And if it were possible to lay hands on and to kill the man who tried to release them and lead them up, would they not kill him?
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> They certainly would, he said.

Joseph Campbell seems to approximate the similar confrontation now beginning for present mankind:

> *The return and reintegration with society*, which is indispensable to the continuous circulation of spiritual energy into the world, and which, from the standpoint of the community, is the justification of the long retreat, the hero may find the most difficult requirement of all. For if he has won through, like the Buddha, to the profound repose of complete enlightenment, there is danger that the bliss of this experience may annihilate all recollection of, interest in, or hope for, the sorrows of the world; or else the problem of making known the way of illumination to people wrapped in economic problems may seem too great to solve. And on the other hand, if the hero, instead of submitting to all the initiatory tests, has, like Prometheus, simply darted to his goal (by violence, quick device, or luck) and plucked the boon for the world that he intended, then the powers that he has unbalanced may react so sharply that he will be blasted from within and without—crucified, like Prometheus, on the rock of his own violated unconscious. Or if the hero, in the third place, makes his safe and willing return, he may meet with such a blank misunderstanding and disregard from those whom he has come to help that his career will collapse.

This is enough to bite off. That is, besides the question of whether or not Mr. Campbell is "right" in his general interpretation, we have the immediate difficulty of identifying the hero who has the appropriate illumination for our time, and the one who can teach what we need to learn in something like acceptable language. But whatever the *caveats*, there is still the pressure to develop a comprehensive scheme of meaning for both ourselves and the world. Ready or not, we are compelled to begin.

A look at our circumstances may help to give the decision focus. Our society, unlike those which unwrapped the course of events within a framework of mythic vision, has been based on *ad hoc* empirical doctrines—the tough-minded improvisations of people like John Locke and Adam Smith. We have these drives, they said, and satisfying them is the business of life. They offered rules for the conduct of the business. Well, we have had two hundred years of living by those rules, and are now becoming persuaded that the rules can no longer be made to work. Living by them alienates us both from the world and from one another. We have become hateful even to ourselves. Again, Mr. Campbell puts the situation well:

> The problem of mankind today, therefore, is precisely the opposite to that of men in the comparatively stable periods of those great coordinating mythologies which now are known as lies. Then all meaning was in the group, in the great anonymous forms, none in the self-expressive individual; today no meaning is in the group—none in the world: all is in the individual. But there the meaning is absolutely unconscious. One does not know toward what one moves. One does not know toward what one is propelled. The lines of communication between the conscious zones of the human psyche have all been cut, and we have been split in two.

It seems clear, however, that we can't go back to those wonderful graded unities without *knowing why*. The penetrating rationalism of both our good and our evil had its price—the price of having to know what we are doing, and this heightened self-consciousness can't be abandoned. It has become part of the meaning of our lives. If we are able to return to primitive unity with the world it will have to be done deliberately, and this would be going forward, not back.

One might say, then, that collectively we now have the half-light of those who are half-way out of the Cave, and that present emergencies oblige

us to go back in, while feeling all the uncertainty that only a half-light produces, to do what we can for those who are still locked in position. The semi-blind leading the three-quarters-blind.

A practical account of our situation is given in Walter Lippmann's rather remarkable book, *The Method of Freedom,* published in 1935. He called it "a tract for the times," but its application to the present requires no change in the text:

> . . . the difficulties which arise from the side of political democracy, as it now operates in the United States for example, are formidable because these arise from a deep conflict of principle. Under popular rule the assumption is that government should be governed by popular opinion. But the compensatory method of control . . . requires that the state shall act, almost continually, contrary to the prevailing opinion in the economic world. The question that arises immediately is how and whether the people will consent to a policy which calls for decisive actions which are in their longer interest but contrary to their immediate opinions. Will a democracy authorize the government, which is its creature, to do the very opposite of what the majority at any time most wishes to do?
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> The general problem is, of course, not a new one. The authors of the Constitution were acutely aware of it and in setting up the frame of government they provided checks and balances which would, as they put it, "refine the will" of the people. They had no illusions as to how pure democracy, that is to say government which is immediately responsible to transient majorities, would work. They knew that it meant the sacrifice of the long view to the short view, of the general interest to particular interests of liberty to mass opinion, and of order to the turbulence of crowds. They foresaw clearly all the real difficulties of political democracy, and the Constitution is undoubtedly the greatest attempt ever consciously made by men to render popular rule safe for the nation as a whole, the local community, and the individual.

So, the Founding Fathers came out of their Cave and did the best they could at the time. They gave the world a scheme of organization most suited, as they saw it, for the pursuit of meaning. Why didn't it work better than it did? Why did the manipulators take over? Why did secular versions of Miracle, Mystery, and Authority replace the canny rationalism of the town meeting?

Because, you could say, the democratic experiment left out of its calculations the crucial factor of *noblesse oblige*—the saving quality of the humans who come out of the Cave, who are always needed in sufficient number to make the system—almost *any* system—work. The Founding Fathers were men generously animated by *noblesse oblige.* In their way and time, they were fulfilling the cycle of the return of the hero to the world. But their illustrious line died out from American life, probably because there were no hospitable and fostering influences. The eighteenth-century rules had become the gospel of American life. As John Schaar says:

> America largely meant freedom from inherited authorities and freedom to get rich. Community and society meant little more than the ground upon which each challenged or used others for his own gain. . . . Millions upon millions of Americans strive for that goal, and, what is more important, base their political views upon it. The state is a convenience in a private search; and when that search seems to succeed, it is no wonder that men tend to deny the desirability of political bonds, of acting together with others for the life that is just for all. We have no mainstream political or moral teaching that tells men they must remain Sound to each other even one step beyond the point where those bonds are a drag and a burden on one's personal desires. (*New American Review,* No. 8.)

Need there be further explanation of why environmental legislation often amounts to a travesty of ecological deals?

Democratic government must cope with transient and fickle majorities, a constituency unleavened by the qualities of an enlightened citizenry (platonic ex-cave-dwellers) which alone can make it work. And when, added to this situation, governments engage in Vietnam wars, arrange assassinations, and deceive the people as a matter of policy, even shallow and passion-guided persons suppose themselves quite competent to rule. And then the political scene becomes an arena for glib buffoonery. Sometimes a

succession of ridiculous anti-heroes tries to dominate the stage. But meanwhile the pressure from Nature increases, and serious young men and women feel within themselves the surging renewal of the Quest. They study Nature and they study themselves. Seeing little hope in the organization of States, they work toward the development of environmental and human relationships conceived on the human and community scale.

These people, you could say, are going back to beginnings. We know what they are doing—attempting to demonstrate through personal practice that human beings are able to live in a natural matrix without acting like invaders and conquerors. They are declaring their honorable intentions to the world and to one another. It does not seem too much to say that this sort of living and working, given time, generates fields of larger understanding—areas in consciousness for mythic representation of synthesis between man and the world. They are establishing the mood prerequisite to wider reception of the meanings implicit in the life of the world. They do this by becoming conscious collaborators, and what they learn may eventually be converted into postulates and propositions embodying more inclusive meanings, relating all the living parts of a living whole. A new metaphysical vocabulary should be one natural result, helping to bring a unifying cultural outlook into being.

Then, when children look to parents for an explanation of things, the parents will know what to say. And intuitive insight will be enlarged by rational accounting in what they say. In *The Primitive World and its Transformations* Robert Redfield describes the sense of meaning which once prevailed:

> Primitive man is, as I have said, at once in nature and yet acting on it, getting his living, taking from it food and shelter. But as that nature is part *of* the same moral system in which man and the affairs between men also find themselves, man's actions with regard to nature are limited by notions of inherent, not expediential rightness. Even the practical little-animistic Eskimo obey many exacting food taboos; religious restrictions on practical activity, rituals of propitiation or personal adjustments to field or forest, abound in ethnological literature. "All economic activities, such as hunting, gathering fuel, cultivating the land, storing food, assume a relatedness to the encompassing universe." And the relatedness is moral or religious.

To recreate this understanding in rational terms would be like hanging great chandeliers of mutual awareness within the Cave—the light coming from humans who have generated in themselves a sense of the meaning of the world. The light comes from the fulfillment of lives based on *noblesse oblige*. We know that self-luminous humans exist and work in the world from time to time. There are books to read about such people. They show that reconciliation of the world's and individual human meanings is not impossible.

REVIEW
LIFEBOATS OR ARKS

RODERICK SEIDENBERG, who waged a guerilla war against the closed system logic of his own book, *Post-Historic Man,* would have been delighted by What *Do We Use for Lifeboats?,* a Harper paperback (1976) made of recent contents of *Observations from the Treadmill* (a periodical edited and published by my, in Union, Maine). Mr. Seidenberg saw the mechanistic rationale of technological advance closing in on human freedom, its imperatives threatening to reduce decision-making to a choice among computer programs, but as a quixotically independent soul—he was a conscientious objector to World War I—he fought back against this march of technological determinism from the ambush of his footnotes.

Lifeboats is a name for several energetic programs launched by inventive individuals who are working toward small-scale economic self-sufficiency and ecological balance and who, as a matter of course, are effective educators and teachers as well. The book presents conversations the author had with five such persons—Robert Reines, John Todd, Ian McHarg, Paolo Soleri, and Richard Saul Wurman. The three ingredients which drew him to these men are vision, technical know-how, and action—they are all doing what they believe needs to be done. Reines was born at Los Alamos to a nuclear physicist father at about the time the first atom bomb exploded. He is committed to constructing family dwellings which obtain all the power they need direct from the elements. He is doing this in the middle of a New Mexico desert in what he calls I.L.S. Laboratories (Integrated Life Support), housed in dome structures "completely powered by sun and wind." Robert Reines is a determined man. As an Air Force lieutenant (after graduating with a degree in electrical engineering from Ohio State) he managed to persuade the brass that he ought to do solar energy research, and he won sympathy and support for his efforts by such things as building a solar-powered radio for a music-loving lab director in a position to help him.

John Todd is identified as "the spirit, the dream, the backbone, the reality" of the New Alchemy Institute at Woods Hole, Mass. Since this part of the book has already had attention in "Children" for April 14, we'll say simply that if you've read about what goes on at New Alchemy, the *Treadmill* reporter's account enables you to fill in the outline with the colors needed to make the place come alive. (*Lifeboats* does this for all its subjects.) "I was weaned," Todd says, on "Louis Bromfield's dreams of restoring valleys and making hamlets and peoples thrive on the basis of really good land stewardship." So he went into biology as a graduate student. While working in New Zealand he met a man who was studying malaria:

> The origin of people as scientists in the New Alchemy program is kind of wrapped up in this guy. I always wondered why he succeeded in that concept when everybody else failed until I realized that it was because he convinced them that their fates hung in the balance. It took me years to realize the profundity of that concept.

The chapter on Ian McHarg begins with a recollection of Earth Day—April 22, 1970—and—

> The message of Buckminster Fuller and George Wald and Ralph Nader and Barry Commoner and Paul Erlich and René Dubos and all the others who have been trying to tell us for years that we are just a little cog in a very large and complex system that is both older and wiser than we are but that we seem intent on destroying, ourselves in the process. Ecology is more than a bumper sticker; it is a way to understand the system and our place in its natural order. Without it, there is no food, no space, no energy. Destruction is irreversible.

What would delight Eric Seidenberg is this book's championing of natural systems, in contrast with the sterilizing logic of technological systems. It reports on strenuous and humanly pleasurable efforts to learn the ways of living systems and how to do our part within them:

One of the strongest and most eloquent voices to emerge on Earth Day—actually, the year before, with publication of his book *Design with Nature*—was that of Ian McHarg. Not only to emerge but to endure, for McHarg's is a lifelong struggle against man's attempt to destroy his own environment. Ian McHarg is chairman of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania where he has been building a lifeboat for twenty years.

McHarg devoted the year following Earth Day to talking to gatherings of people about ecology. This was worth doing, he feels, even though other important subjects—race, poverty, bigotry—were left aside. His evaluation of the results of that effort (Earth Day, etc.) is worth repeating:

> But whether a better understanding of the interrelationship of environment with these other areas has developed, no, I think that has not happened at all. We are still living with the illusion that we can deal with energy without dealing with the environment, or you can deal with the environment without dealing with energy, or you can deal with people without dealing with either or deal with energy without dealing with people. This is absolute fantasy and folly. But in terms of short-term gains, the National Environmental Policy Act certainly has transformed the whole business of dealing with the environment in the United States, not because the E.P.A. is particularly intelligent or well run or anything of the sort but merely because the bloody act itself and the requirement that every major institution which receives federal money has to self-review the potential implications for the environment have had an extraordinary salutary effect. And an enormous number of projects that might otherwise have been built are now stillborn because the germinators of these projects—they themselves, the Army Engineers, Bureau of Redamation, you know, Bureau of Public Roads, and so on—go through the exercise of seeing what the consequences are and say we'll never get away with it. And if they try to get away with it they're a threat to the national environment, and the E.P.A. would actually cut 'em down. The E.P.A. hasn't cut very much down at all, but nonetheless the salutary power of the act is extraordinary.
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> Yes, there has been a kind of misleading emphasis on hardware in all this problem-solving. You would expect it, of course, as sort of a Pavlovian response of technocratic man, but I don't think that's been the most important response. The most important response has simply been that the agencies have seen what the consequences are, and so now this whole environmental impact analysis is a mess but the fact that they have done it at all has really caused profound changes. So, you know, it's not a total transformation, but it's a very significant change.

The Italian-born architect, Paolo Soleri (who once served an eighteen-month apprenticeship with Frank Lloyd Wright), is building a vast secular monastery—a model city—in the Arizona desert. Named Arcosanti and designed for three thousand people, the project is kept going by student laborers who pay tuition, and with income from the sales of bronze and ceramic wind bells made on the site. Soleri started in 1956, buying five acres of barren land seventy miles north of Phoenix. The present site is ten acres, on which a twenty-five-story structure is planned.

> His [Soleri's] book *The City in the Image of Man* details thirty arcologies designed for a variety of sites, including cliffs, canyons, deserts, farmland, cold, hot, dams, stone quarries, strip mines, etc. He lectures around the world on arcology. Scale models have been built and exhibited in museums and galleries. He has continued to refine his arcological philosophy, a complex system for the humanistic use of space over-crowded with humans.

A student-worker busy on the construction site said:

> There is a tremendous sense of community here; that's what I like. And also the feeling of a building is much different. You are working on the building and you are constructing, you are making drawings, and it is going up and there is tremendous intimacy in that sort of group also. It happens in India, this sort of thing [the student is Indian], but I don't think it happens much in this country. Many people say it is really exceptional here. I haven't traveled much in this country so I don't know.

This student seems to sense the same lack that James Boggs spoke of to some Michigan University graduate students in architecture last December:

> The reason why it is so hard to get beyond an individualist viewpoint is that the philosophy of individualism is so deeply rooted in the real history of this country. For two hundred years, the American

> people have believed that if each individual pursued his own goals, it would promote the common good of the whole society. Therefore the individuals didn't have to ask themselves whether what they wanted to do advanced the society.

But now they are beginning to ask, because of all the ominous signs that suggest that if they don't think about the common good, there will be no good at all. The full title of the book we have been discussing is—*What Do We Use for Lifeboats when the Ship Goes Down?* So people are asking these questions because of the persistent feeling that the ship is going down. Happily associated with the questions is an intuitive—instinctive and organic—longing to work for the common good. This seems the essential motivation for all the lifeboats the *Treadmill* reporter describes.

Richard Saul Wurman went from teaching architecture to a job with Louis Kahn, who sent him to England to design an entertainment barge for a Pittsburgh man who wanted to put on a series of floating concerts. Now Wurman is an urban planner—a really discouraging area of work, one would think. But this makes the reason for reading about him and his ideas—how he starts out simply by trying to make cities a little more livable for the people who live there; and what, underneath these immediate undertakings, he is trying to get people to see and understand for themselves.

COMMENTARY
AN IRRELEVANT PARALLEL

THE *Scientific Monthly* for April presents an excellent report by Dorothy Nelkin on the science textbook controversy, in which a key example of the sort of material objected to by fundamentalist spokesmen is a social-science curriculum titled *Man: A Course of Study* (MACOS). The writer gives the course (eventually withdrawn because of adverse criticism) this characterization:

> The MACOS curriculum relies on studies of animal behavior and of the culture of the Netlisik Eskimos to explore questions about the nature of human beings, patterns of social interaction and child rearing, and the development of a culture's total view of the world. To the social scientists who worked on the MACOS curriculum the study of animal behavior provided a provocative metaphor to illuminate features of human behavior. The study of a traditional tribal culture showed how human beings as well as animals adapt to a particular environment; in order for the Netlisik to survive in an environment with limited food resources they practice infanticide and senilicide as means of controlling the population. MACOS suggested that in some societies such practices, disturbing as they would be in our own culture, were functional, and that neither behavior nor beliefs have an absolute value apart from their social and physical context.

This somewhat bald summary may not be wholly representative of the curriculum, yet when one considers that it was designed to answer for fifth- and sixth-grade children the questions: "What is human about human beings? How did they get that way? How can they become more so?"—its inadequacy seems quite obvious. The quotation from Robert Redfield (on page 8 of this issue) suggests far better material for helping ten- and eleven-year-olds to understand ,the distinctive nature of human beings. And as for how they got that way, why not make use of J. Arthur Thompson's *Britannica* statement—that in the remote past there must have been "a re-definition and a re-thrilling of the moral fibres under the influence of the new synthesis or mutation—Man"?

One need not invoke fundamentalist puerilities to show the anti-human bias in material which stresses infanticide and senilicide to ten-year-olds, while ignoring precisely those qualities which set humans apart from animals.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

PAYING ATTENTION TO CHILDREN

INSTITUTIONS are supposed to focus scarce benefits—such as knowledge and education—so that people generally can have access to them. Institutions are also supposed to deal with problems that an undifferentiated society has neither the skill nor the inclination to cope with—such as crime and juvenile delinquency. Because of the inadequacies and immaturities of human beings, we can't do without these institutions, but because of the (natural) defects of institutions we are continually having to correct for their harmful effects.

This situation leads to endless arguments, as we know. Every time a problem comes up, we create an institution to cope with it; and usually the institution tries to solve the problem by research to devise the best technique, but if the problem is insoluble with technique—if it is not, at root, a technical problem—then obliging institutions to deal with it makes the trouble spread. It seems evident that the best societies are those with a minimum of institutions. However, this view is offensive to all who regard the state as the only effective means of working for the common good, and who think that an at least moderately utopian society might be legislated into being.

We defend here the simple assertion that the best remedy for institutional failure is the transfer of institutional responsibilities and functions to individuals, wherever and whenever possible. Another remedy would be to give the ingenious, creative, and devoted individuals who are working in institutions as much freedom and support as can be arranged.

These are thoughts generated by a report by Susan Anderson in the *Paris Tribune* (Feb. 10) concerning the work of Larry Dye—a man who, although he drafted the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention and Control Act while working for HEW, was not a college graduate. This is the second half of Miss Anderson's story:

> Armed with six volumes of writings, research projects, grant proposals and recommendations from employers, Dye went to the University of Massachusetts asking them to waive their undergraduate requirements and let him enroll in a master's program. He breezed through in one year, and got a doctorate in education in another year and a half. The university immediately offered him a faculty job.
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> "I taught deviancy in our society, and the role of education in creating it." Ironically, Dye saw Massachusetts as the most blatant example of a system that creates deviant behavior. "It was the only state that incarcerated kids for school truancy, absenteeism and so-called behavior problems. When I got there, 247 kids were locked up for those reasons.
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> Dye found one child who was 13 years and 9 months old but had spent 5 years and 9 months of his life locked up for truancy. "Just think, he'd been institutionalized since he was 8."
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> Thanks to Dye's efforts and the enlightened attitude of Jerome Miller, then commissioner for youth services, the state has no more juvenile institutions. "Kids now go into community programs, sometimes with graduate students in surrogate parent roles if necessary."
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> Street kids need a better sense of identity, and Dye believes the way to develop it is to eliminate institutions. . . . Just thinking up criminal activities requires a lot of energy according to Dye, who believes that such energy can be redirected. "I saw a 14-year-old who had organized a $10,000 hot bike ring. This kid's an entrepreneur." Dye smiled gravely. "There are lots of bright kids who make good choices over their own lives when they leave home. Maybe they need to for survival. But then where can they go?" He argues that, in the United States, people don't pay attention to children who may need help, but who are not part of one's own family.

It seems clear that two sorts of children become delinquent—the rebellious strong and the conforming weak. The strong may try to excel in doing what they see going on around them, or they may reject it to excel in something else. The decisions in these cases are a bit mysterious, but what happens to the conforming weak is easy enough to explain. In 1970 a Vera Institute report noted that most of the hundred thousand persons who come before the Manhattan (New York) criminal court

every year are young. The writer commented: "It is likely that the only successful people most of these defendants had ever known were people beating the system: gamblers, pimps, numbers-runners, narcotics dealers. People who make a legal success of themselves do not remain in the ghetto as examples to the young."

A choice assortment of the rebellious young seemed to find a way to Esther Rothman's Livingston School in Brooklyn (New York), where girls expelled from ordinary public school are sent. Of her student body, Mrs. Rothman said (in *The Angel Inside Went Sour*):

> Call them what you will—socially maladjusted, or emotionally disturbed, or delinquent, or neurotic, or psychopathic, or psychotic, or underprivileged, or troubled, or angry, or spoiled, or victims, or sick, or culturally different, or behavior problems—the fact remains that they cannot be commonly processed and commonly labeled, for they have only three things in common: they are girls, they are adolescents, and they have been in, created, partaken of, and caused trouble in the public and private schools of New York City. One thing for certain. They are not the quiet types.
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> They are committed to rebellion against the facts of their lives, and beyond that, they fit no mold. They cannot be sieved to fit the perforations of an IBM card. They are inspiring examples of outrageous individualism. They dare to be different. They will not be stifled. This is the main reason they are at Livingston. They think divergently, see things differently from the way most people do, reconstruct their perceptions in a way that most people do not. They are truly creative. This does not mean that they are artists or talented in the conventional sense. Some girls are; many are not. Talent and artistry are rare. Creativity is not. We are all born with a potential and a capacity for creativity. Catastrophically, this potential is crushed out of most of us at an early age, first by our parents, later by our teachers.

The key to all these troubles is the lack of genuine community in American life—the lack of spontaneous interest and caring, which is the *meaning* of community, in relation to the young. So we make specialists of those who care, and put them to work in institutions where they have contact with the young. This combines two comparative evils—specialization and institutionalization—to deal with problems that wouldn't even exist in natural and healthy communities.

The road back to community is likely to be long and painful. In the meantime, we might start by assuming that delinquency is everybody's problem and do what we can to remove some small part of it from the hands of institutions. (The existing institutions would function far better with reduced case loads.) What else might be done? Arthur Morgan, who worked to restore and enliven community activity all his life, made a strong effort to revive the Coordinating Council movement after World War II—the war had destroyed it—by calling attention to its many social contributions. This work was begun about forty years ago by a chief of police. He organized informal luncheon meetings of people in government and in service organizations, to talk over particular problems and trends in his city, in behalf of the young. The idea was to pool their knowledge and information with a view to initiating good influences in decaying neighborhoods—a boys' club, or some such activity—to change the aim of energies that were moving in the wrong direction. Many helpful developments grew out of these meetings—all undertaken by resourceful individuals who used the facilities of institutions without being bound by their traditional scope.

What sort of people do such things best? The most direct answer may be—the once rebellious young. Larry Dye is an example. In 1965, at twenty-two, he was serving the last months of his third jail sentence:

> He had spent most of the previous 10 years of his life in jail, beginning at the age of 12 when he was arrested in his native California for drunk and disorderly conduct. At 16, he was caught by the police with a cache of seven rifles, 32 pistols, and 30,000 rounds of ammunition. He escaped from juvenile custody, but his escapades finally landed him one year in a maximum custody institution.

Experience with a film-maker studying prisons helped Dye to turn around and to redesign and redirect his own life. The opportunity to work with the young was his primary inspiration.

FRONTIERS

A Far-off Goal

IN *Silent Spring,* Rachel Carson quoted from Paul Shepard:

> Why should we tolerate a diet of weak poisons, a home in insipid surroundings, a circle of acquaintances who are not quite our enemies, the noise of motors with just enough relief to prevent insanity? Who would want to live in a world which is just not quite fatal?

This focuses the feelings of a great many people who wonder what ought to be done and how they can help. The motives for wanting to help seem a combination of ideal longings—more articulate every day—reinforced by reaction to the ugly and unhealthy circumstances and the vulgarizing tendencies which, largely without our knowing it, have been built into the everyday activities of human life.

Actually, we know intuitively what should happen: the *Zeitgeist* of the age must change. The mood and reflex inclinations of human existence—what is spontaneous in moment-to-moment interests and objectives—must move and respond in another direction. Working toward what-ought-to-be has somehow to become natural and matter-of-course, not something anxiously preached or stridently demanded.

How does reading relate to this need? Good reading is like fertilizer; some of it is immediately beneficial, some serves the long term. Or it is like food which becomes valuable only when it has been assimilated. Assimilation depends on metabolism, and each reader's metabolism is different from that of other readers. So, looking over the masses of material about the care of the environment—more coming in every week—we wonder how much of it can be assimilated. Maybe this sort of reading needs to be prepared in the same profusion that nature manufactures seeds, so that at least some of it will take root.

We have for review two publications, one for the citizen and one for the planner: *To Live with the Earth,* published by the Oregon Environmental Foundation (P.O. Box 42113, Portland, Ore. 97242, $1.00), and *Energy, Earth, and Everyone* by Medard Gabel (Straight Arrow Books, 625 Third Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94107, $4.95). *To Live with the Earth* has 78 pages in twenty-two chapters, providing elementary education for people ready to accept individual responsibility for the welfare of the environment. This manual seems a model introduction to the broad divisions of environmental needs and concerns—energy, land-use, gardening, timber, water quality, waste disposition and recycling, air pollution and noise pollution, and wildlife. The foreword says:

> To become concerned and alarmed about the misuse and degradation of our environment is definitely not hysterical nonsense. It is nonsense to think that it is acceptable to live in a poisoned world.
>
> Using this knowledge to work for a cause we believe in can, of course, be exhausting, time-consuming, and frustrating in itself. But despite seemingly insurmountable odds victories are made and the personal satisfaction in having contributed to an environmental gain renders insignificant all the tribulations along the way.
>
> Efforts to preserve and improve our environment must continue every day. The first requirement is that. we be dedicated and sincere in our desire to keep our world from becoming intolerable through environmental abuse. Second, we should be as aware as possible of the facts of the issues. Emotions should not be discounted but emotionalism is only part of the picture. We must do our homework. Third, we need to assess our life style and our priorities. We should recognize that many solutions to environmental problems will involve time, money, and a willingness to change habits. Lastly, we should realize that the environment won't get any better *unless we do something.*

The section on gardening begins:

> There are approximately 86,000 species of insects in the United States. 76,000 of these are considered "friendly" or beneficial to the gardener. If you feel that the other 10,000 are in your garden, please consider the following hints and ideas.

Buckminster Fuller's foreword to *Energy, Earth, and Everyone* begins:

> This book makes it incontestably clear that it is feasible to harvest enough of our daily income of extraterrestrial energy as well as of the surface eruptive streams of internal Earthian infernos all generated at an inexorable, nature-sustained rate to provide all humanity and all their generations to come with a higher standard of living and greater freedoms than ever have been experienced by any humans and to do so by 1985, while completely phasing out all further use or development of fossil fuels, atomic and fusion energies.

Crusaders as inventive and intelligent as Mr. Fuller have a right to exaggerate now and then, but a reader also has the right to point out that such predictions can come true only if a very large number of people start right now doing all the things that manuals like *To live with the Earth* propose for this is the only way to generate the informed public opinion able to bring about the extraordinary changes required by Mr. Fuller's program. *Energy, Earth, and Everyone* is the fruit of an intensive, month-long World Game Workshop which the author, Medard Gabel, directed. It begins with the total amount of the earth's energy, tells how it becomes available, describes both existing and possible sources of energy, and gives the reasons for and against using or developing these sources. The book digests an incredible amount of information in 160 pages. It is difficult to imagine a more effective presentation of all these facts, relationships and possibilities. The closing section on strategy has this paragraph, explaining in effect Mr. Fuller's "exaggeration":

> The purpose of this document and the research that went into it was not to predict or forecast what is economically probable, but rather what is technologically feasible; that is, what can the current state of collective human experience (know-how) accomplish: "Can current know-how and resources meet the regenerative life-support needs of the world's population in 1985?" and "How?"

Well, it seems fortunate that we have people capable of thinking in these terms. As for readers taking it all in, we might reflect that one of the costs of the bigness and complexity we have all enjoyed is that some people *have* to think in these terms—at least until we have succeeded in converting our technology to a more human or "organic" scale, and made our living-together functions less complex. Conceivably, our ultimate goal should be to conduct our affairs with an intuitive coordination similar to the spontaneous harmony of a flight of birds.