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A RELIEVING THOUGHT

IN these times of grimy little disasters, coming rapidly one after another to make misfortune seem a matter of daily routine, finding relief becomes a task requiring exertion. The situation is much as Robert Heilbroner described it seventeen years ago in *The Future as History.* Nothing now works well for America: "Optimism as a philosophy of historic expectations," he said, "has become a dangerous national delusion." In this 1959 account of the quality and temper of life in the United States—in no way contradicted by his more recent *The Human Prospect*—the social historian gives his reasons for expecting little change for the better in our affairs:

> A critic who assesses the American scene in terms of its alertness to the underlying challenges of our times can scarcely fail to be struck by the general poverty of the prevailing outlook: the men of wealth and power, mentally locked within their corporate privileges; the middle classes, unable to formulate any social program or purpose beyond "getting theirs"; the academicians, blind to the irrationalities of the society they seek to rationalize.

Great changes—which mean real changes in attitude and opinion, to begin with—will be a long time coming, and meanwhile there is the prospect of continuing daily discouragement. Not even rich people's purchased isolation—for the few for whom this is possible—will give immunity to the quality of the times. The exudations of what is going on seep in everywhere. Nature, if not entirely hostile as yet, seems wary and distrustful of man, reacting to his behavior in a warning voice of many keys. And the growing distrust of human beings for one another—shown in the cost of malpractice insurance for doctors, the constant cry for better police protection, and the enormous appropriations for the armaments race—is now a noticeable trend of the times.

What recourse has the individual? As a private person who has a life to live? Since societies are made up of private persons, their needs may be considered as prior. It might be argued that if private persons could discover what they need, instead of pursuing what they want, the problems of society would either take care of themselves or at least gain more manageable dimensions. One possible advantage of giving initial attention to the individual lies in the fact that the actions of single persons have a range of freedom far beyond the sluggish movements of organized groups. And it is beyond dispute that collective action, save for what is done irrationally out of either rage or fear, does not even begin until a few uncommon individuals show the way.

This calls for illustrations. More than fifty years ago, Arthur Morgan, then guiding the destinies of the resuscitated Antioch College, wrote briefly of the value of history and biography as studies for the young. A person without knowledge of the past, he said, "must see the world as commonplace because, except at extreme times, he is going to live among commonplace people who have come to that conclusion." To embrace another view, one must "reach out beyond the years we have into the years of the past, into the significant experiences of the human race." Why, it might be asked, should we give particular attention to the rare, the unexpected, the virtually unique in human affairs or achievement? If we feel a concern for the common good, must not the performance of the masses be taken into account?

There can be partial agreement with this, but the *project* is change, not repetition of the past. And change, in human affairs, comes from a break with the past. We seek health, and health, as defined by Abraham Maslow, means "transcendence of the environment, independence of it, ability to stand against it, to fight it, to neglect it, to turn one's back on it, to refuse to

adapt to it." Quite plainly, examples of health will not be found in the ranks of mediocrity. Health will stand out as exceptional in the commonplace world. Maslow's justification for joining with Dr. Morgan in what to study, whom to seek out as examples, seems logical and complete. He said in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature:*

> If I ask the question, "Of what are human beings capable?" I put the question to this small and selected superior group rather than to the whole of the population. I think that the main reason that hedonistic value theories and ethical theories have failed throughout history has been that the philosophers have locked in pathologically motivated pleasures with healthily motivated pleasures and struck an average of what amounts to indiscriminately sick and healthy indiscriminately good and bad specimens, good and had choosers, biologically sound and biologically unsound specimens.
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> If we want to answer the question how tall can the human species grow, then obviously it is well to pick out the ones who are already tallest and study them. If we want to know how fast a human being can run, then it is no use to average out the speed of a "good sample" of the population, it is far better to collect Olympic gold medal winners and see how well they can do. . . .
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> On the whole I think it fair to say that human history is a record of the ways in which human nature has been sold short. The highest possibilities of human nature have practically always been underrated. Even when "good specimens," the saints and sages and great leaders of history, have been available for study, the temptation too often has been to consider them not human but supernaturally endowed.

We choose Thoreau as a gold medalist to look at, first, because no one supposes he was supernaturally endowed, and second, because imitating him seems either unlikely or impossible. Even his friend Emerson noted that instead of setting out to do great things in the world, Thoreau preferred to be "captain of a huckleberry party." He lacked ambition. And how can you imitate someone who seems to have regarded it as his personal mission to do less and less? Thoreau is our most puzzling great man. Why select him?

He is a good candidate for the reason that he qualifies by Maslow's canon of human excellence. Maslow studied people who were distinguished by how they felt *inside themselves.* The fact that there turned out to be a good correlation between high accomplishment and healthy, wholesome peace with oneself in self-actualizing people is of enduring interest; the accomplishment may have attracted the psychologist's attention, but what he was *after* was their inner state, the kind of dialogue they held with themselves—which often reached its apex in the peak experience. Thoreau, who did everything backwards so far as most of us are concerned, had no quarrel with himself. An extraordinary man!

He didn't feel the gnawing doubts that afflict so many human beings: What ought I to be doing that I am not doing at all? What's wrong with my life? Why can't I be happy? Even "high achievers" have these besetting anxieties. Call it "existential pain," Promethean unrest—whatever title suits, it is a common human affliction, now exacerbated by the invading troubles of the rest of the world.

Curiously, we now look back on Thoreau's time of more than a hundred years ago as an idyllic period of American history. Thoreau died shortly after the firing on Fort Sumter, which began the Civil War. He seemed ready to go, even at forty-five. When the war broke out, he wrote:

> I do not so much regret the present condition of things in this country (provided I regret it at all) as I do that I ever heard of it. . . . Blessed are the days before you read a President's message. Blessed are the young, for they do not read the President's message. Blessed are they who never read a newspaper, for they shall see Nature and, through her, God."

Thoreau was a very special Yankee and to understand him it is necessary to look around the corner of what he is saying. He lived intensely in the world, yet very much above it. It took Slavery and the execution of John Brown to bring him down to earth. America has had no more

independent mind in all her history, and hardly a better writer. In the best (recent) brief essay on Thoreau we know of—Joseph Wood Krutch's Introduction to Bantam's *Walden and Other* Writings—there is this on his works:

> Some of them have been translated into nearly every language of the world, including the Japanese. Nor has he failed to influence many of the most significant of subsequent teachers and reformers. Tolstoy, Gandhi and the early leaders of what was to become the British Labor Party, all acknowledged their debt to him. Even some of the communists have claimed him as on their side. But none of these admirers has been willing to take him whole. They usually concentrate on his criticism of our social and economic system and refuse to accept his alternatives. They disregard his insistence on the primary importance of a life led in communion with Nature and his uncompromising individualism which insists that it is the individuals who must first reform themselves if society is to be reformed, not that a reformed society will reform men. More important still is the fact that most have reversed his emphasis in another respect also. Instead of advocating a simple society they have continued to put their faith in the material abundance and complexity which, so they insist, will be a blessing if it is available equally to all. To Thoreau what they call "a high standard of living" is, as they define it, a curse, no matter how widely distributed. To him it would seem that they, in their own way, are worshiping the same false gods most men of his day fell down before.
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> Whether one accepts or rejects his philosophy, one cannot understand it except as a whole in which the negative criticism of things as they are is intended to clear the way for a vision of things as they ought to be, namely, expressed in a society where intense individualism, "plain living and high thinking," and a love of Nature which is almost religious much more than compensate for the surrender of those supposed goods which a complexly abundant society either provides now or promises for the future.

"Individualism" is now an epithet, but individualism for Thoreau meant making one's own decisions (something of a continual contest in Puritan New England), and his declaration that he came to the world, "not chiefly to make this a good place to live in, but to live in it, be it good or bad," is somewhat belied by a lifetime of effort to make it better by example and what he wrote.

Our purpose, here, however, is to take note of Thoreau's inner contentment—not complacency, but contentment. Mr. Krutch's opening paragraphs give the evidence:

> "I love my fate to the very core and rind." So wrote Henry David Thoreau and nothing could be more characteristic of him.
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> Most men, it seems, are to some extent disappointed and discontented. We complain of our luck, lament that we did what we did, or did not do what we did not. Things might have been better had we been born somewhere else or under some different circumstances. We missed our chance; did not get our deserts. We are trapped in a life which we should not have chosen. Or, as Thoreau himself wrote on another occasion, "The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation." But he, who was unique in so many respects, was unique in this also. "I have heard no bad news." he said. He believed himself to be that very rare thing, a happy man, and he had no regrets.

Why was Thoreau a "happy man"? Mr. Krutch believes that his happiness resulted from his simplicity of life. One can agree that this is the explanation, but still wonder why Thoreau was so devoted to simplicity at a time when the vast majority of Americans were setting their lives on an opposite course. For him simplicity was a matter of taste. He wanted nothing else. He probably would have explained that he wanted little because he was already so rich. "I was born," he wrote, "in the most favored spot on earth—and just in the nick of time, too." Place was both important and unimportant to him. He walked over various parts of New England, took canoe trips, and even visited Canada, but he also said, "I have traveled a good deal in Concord"—a way of suggesting that a person can find both solitude and diversity almost anywhere. "It is vain to dream of a wildness distant from ourselves . . . I shall never find in the wilds of Labrador any greater wildness than in some recess in Concord, i.e., than I import into it."

Thoreau, you could say, was his own kaleidoscope, his environment the bits of glass. He kept turning it to vary, enjoy, and learn from the spectacle. Concord must have been a lovely

place to start with, but one has the impression that Thoreau would have imported his own wonder wherever he had been born. This is a basic mystery about Thoreau; we have to take it as given. Other things about him can be looked at more closely. He followed his heart in his rule of life—*multum in parvo*—much in little—but having made his choice, he gave a long, hard look at himself while carrying it out. His books are his report on the sense he made of his natural inclinations. We could argue here for a bit about natural inclinations—whether it is possible to acquire them, make doing what you think you ought to be doing become natural—but such questions are difficult to settle. One can imitate a virtue, just as one can learn good manners' but this is hardly the same as spontaneous righteousness and instinctive consideration for others. In these matters we do the best we can. But for Thoreau simplicity was a native trait. Our present intention is to understand a little of how he justified it, gloried in it, advocated it.

Actually, Thoreau seemed to live in two worlds, even though, when questioned about a future life, he said simply, "One world at a time." He must have believed in two worlds because he was forever translating. He believed in doing the work of this world because he was in it—he needed no Zen *roshi* to tell him to chop wood, eat his breakfast, wash his bowl. But these things were only shadows—or stepped-down resonances, perhaps—of higher affairs. There was another order of things than the physical; sometimes it seemed that he didn't need to graduate from the physical, he had already arrived at the other order, but, being here, he would live in our world by those higher rules. He talks about this higher order obliquely, in hints and analogies and metaphors. He isn't really definite about such matters, but he seems very sure. It is as though definition in our terms for such things would change their character. He does the ordinary things, but gives them other meanings, and what had meaning for him seemed void of content to the men of his time. Only the impressive sense he makes in *some* relationships compels us to look at his thinking, as Mr. Krutch recommends, "as a whole."

Thoreau must have believed that a difficult idea is best understood if given some unaccustomed disguise. Then, if the reader is intrigued enough to get through the disguise, perhaps some of the meaning will be laid bare. He begins the chapter, "Higher Laws," in *Walden* with a report of a fishing trip. He had been hungry so he went fishing. Then, musing, he wrote:

> I found in myself, and still find, an instinct toward a higher, or, as it is named, spiritual life, as do most men, and another toward a primitive rank and a savage one, and I reverence them both. I love the wild not less than the good. The wildness and adventure that are in fishing still recommend it to me. I like sometimes to take rank hold on life and spend my day more as the animals do. . . . Fishermen, hunters, woodchoppers, and others, spending their lives in the fields and the woods, in a peculiar sense a part of Nature themselves, are often in a more favorable mood for observing her, in the intervals of their pursuits, than philosophers or poets even, who approach her with expectation. She is not afraid to exhibit herself to them.

But in time he found changes going on in himself.

> I speak of fishing only now, for I had long felt differently about fowling, and sold my gun before I went into the woods. . . . As for fowling, during the last years that I carried a gun my excuse was that I was studying ornithology, and sought only new or rare birds. But I confess that I am now inclined to think that there is a finer way of studying ornithology than this. It requires so much closer attention to the habits of birds, that, if for that reason only, I have been willing to omit the gun.

Yet, in that year of the early 1850s, Thoreau pitied "the boy who has never fired a gun; he is no more humane while his education has been sadly neglected." Hunting and fishing, Thoreau thinks, are parts of life a youth needs to go through.

> He goes thither at first as a hunter and fisher, until at last, if he has the seeds of a better life in him, he distinguishes his proper objects, as a poet

> or naturalist it may be, and leaves the gun and fish-pole behind. The mass of men are always young in this respect. . . . I have found repeatedly, of late years, that I cannot fish without falling a little in self-respect. I have tried again and again.

There is in him a change of taste to which he responds; now a bit of bread or potatoes serve him as well, or better, than game or fish. Wondering about this change in himself, which came as an "instinct," he recalls reading that "'some insects in their perfect state, though furnished with organs of feeding, make no use of them;' " and that as a general rule insects in this state—for example the butterfly—"eat much less than in that of larvae." Thoreau concludes: "The gross feeder is man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them."

Something of the reason Thoreau went to Walden Pond is disclosed by this comment on the fishing expeditions of his fellow citizens:

> Commonly they did not think that they were lucky, or well paid for their time, unless they got a long string of fish, though they had the opportunity of seeing the pond all the while. They might go there a thousand times before the sediment of fishing would sink to the bottom and leave their purpose pure; but no doubt a clarifying process would be going on all the while.

Here, in this last sentence, may be all that we shall ever really find out about Thoreau. He lived his life in a way that helped to make his purpose pure. This was his profit and his gain. The changes in taste now being experienced by a portion of mankind—how large a portion, no one knows—may be the fruit of "a clarifying process" that has been going on for quite a while. It is, at least, a relieving thought.

REVIEW
BROTHERHOOD IN AMERICA

THE IDEA OF FRATERNITY IN AMERICA (University of California Press, 1974, paperback, $4.95) by Wilson Carey McWilliams is a work of participatory scholarship. A scholar is supposed to be critical and objective, to restrain his own feelings and opinions in behalf of an impartial account of what he reports on or explores. Mr. McWilliams succeeds in this, yet his own concern flows through the nearly seven hundred pages of this remarkable book, as indeed it should, for what thoughtful human being could devote himself so thoroughly to study of the pursuit of the ideal of the brotherhood of man without raising in himself some of the momentum of the quest? Yet Mr. McWilliams' enthusiasm for his subject is never intrusive or blurring; he is friendly to his sources, but quite able to mark off the different facets of the inquiry and to identify excesses, blind spots, and partisanships.

The fruits of scholarship are one thing, not to be despised; but the true value of a work like this lies in the independent reflections it provokes. Not remarkably, the center or heart of the book is formed by the chapters on such writers as Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Bellamy, and Twain. These were men of imagination, and if the brotherhood of man is ever to be achieved, it will be done by work of the imagination. If men are ever to become brothers to one another, they will have to learn to think of themselves as brothers, and to do this in an imagined theater of action where all the players are present—all the obstacles, traits of character, habits, social limitations, antagonisms and preconceptions which stand in the way. Mr. McWilliams, himself a man of imagination, is very good at ranging these difficulties and noting the evasions and compromises of utopian dreams. He wants a brotherhood that will work, be *real*, and the ingredients are by no means clear as yet, even in idea. What carries us along, what inspires those who work for brotherhood, however imperfectly, is the ardor of the quest.

What do we mean by brotherhood? Why do we seek it? The second question needs no answer. We waste and die without unity with our fellows. Brotherhood, the spontaneous, natural affection among human beings, is a conatus of the soul. The meaning is somewhat more difficult. A little reflection shows that the word has two implications—unity and separation. A family is a unity of units. A brother is both united with and divided from his brother. So also for sisters. The question relates to the human essence, not to the differentiation of sex. The delight in brotherliness could not exist without the separation. It is separation overcome, not obliterated or erased, but given the quality of joining. Why is this joyous? The feeling which comes from uniting anticipates words of explanation, making them unnecessary.

This is a book about acts and ideas. The setting for the acts is the human race in all its parts. How big, you might ask, is the human family? Is universal brotherhood possible or should we start small—with, say, the nuclear family as we know it today? What is a feasible brotherhood of man? Can it be tribal, national, international? The acts described in this book are what men have done in the name of brotherhood, which may or may not have been brotherly in fact. The Civil War is an example. You preserve the Union in behalf of a kind of brotherhood. You put an end to slavery because it violates the good, the rights, the membership in the human family of one portion of the race. Yet the war between the States was a war between brothers. The writers who seemed able to say the wisest things about the general good of mankind, and about brotherhood, were the most deeply tortured by this contradiction. They hated slavery but they could not be wholehearted about the war. This, you could say, is a familiar type of the problem which endlessly recurs throughout Mr. McWilliams' book, appearing in guise after guise.

Is brotherhood always kind? Consider the spectrum of problems implicit in a review of Thoreau's ideas about brotherhood:

> Caught between his emotions and the law of his nature, the desire to know, man dreams of discovering a friend who is his "Friend," a "real brother" who can resolve the tension and drive him to self-realization. Friendship which is genuine, Thoreau argued, expects the best and lays a demanding price on affection. "Friendship is not so kind," Thoreau wrote; "it has not much human blood in it." We love what is best in our friend, hoping that it will free what is best in us; his imperfections not only remind us of our own, they deprive us of a chance at freedom. The very fact that friendship is formed on the basis of common values is something stern and hard. "We have not so good a right to hate any as our Friend."
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> Not surprisingly, then, men's desire for friendship is ambivalent. We are, Thoreau observed, constantly tempted to choose friends on the basis of affection or utility, in which case they become a comfort which is also a snare. Equally, we are tempted to reject friendship with individual imperfect men in favor of some "ideal" friend who does not exist; what we reject in that case is not our friend's imperfections but our own. For most purposes, Thoreau wrote, a man prefers to be treated as "no better than I should be," escaping demands for a greater excellence than the self already attained.

It is one thing to consider such problems in the framework of a stipulated knowledge or wisdom; quite another to regard them in areas apparently unknown to us all. There is the familiar example of the surgeon: Is he a friend? Is he "kind" when he excises a portion of tissue that has outlived its usefulness, gone bad, or even wild? We say he is. But what if he decides to cut away an organ that could be healed and put to needed use—a tonsil, say? We know about these things in principle. The social pressure on the Ugly Duckling was both blind and unjust. But how shall we know whom to tolerate happily and whom to constrain to conformity? Here we use, we say, common sense, because we must; but it should be admitted that progress in such matters, if it exists, will always result from the exercise of *un*common sense. What is brotherhood in the presence of unfamiliar, even frightening, uncommon sense? How shall we cope with the tendency in ourselves to avoid "demands for a greater excellence than the self [has] already attained"?

There are endless subtleties in these things. In his Epilogue, a thoughtful look at the present and the future, Mr. McWilliams says:

> John Schaar and Sheldon Wolin have pointed out that the new rebellion [of youth] draws its legions from those who feel America never had a place for them, not even a "place" which deserves rejection. Socially and politically, of course, this is true, yet for that reason it is misleading psychologically and intellectually. American society formed the emotions and formed the mind of the young; what it denied was precisely the "home"—the community and the alternate tradition which might have made resistance to those feelings and ideas easier and more autonomous. It is no surprise that few advocates recognize the contradiction in arguing that, while the United States is a "sick society" (as indeed it is), the young—who have little or no experience of any other—have mysteriously escaped the infection. It is an old philosophic truth that even those who recognize their illness may have problems in diagnosing it, and even more in selecting the physician of the soul. The "counterculture," as Theodore Roszak very ably describes it, is still no more than that—a negation which is bound up with the affirmation it rejects, the underside of liberalism rather than an alternative to it.
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> Brotherhood has become a major theme, an impassioned assertion and rallying cry, a fact that reflects man's need for fraternity and his knowledge of that need. But as the movements acquire a greater mass base, they become more subject to the general currents of thought in America. Increasingly, fraternity is identified with the immediate realization of the old liberal utopia, a world of total private liberty and the ability to gratify desires in which a fraternal "instinct" will emerge. And as always, that utopia, blind to the nature of communion, is rooted in hatred of the self and fear of the other, a desire to blot out separate identity—revealed all too clearly, in hostility to the "ego."
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> There is more hope in movements for "liberation" than this may imply. But the yearning for "liberation," apart from its obvious roots in liberal individualism, indicates that fraternity in the

> "counter-culture" is a bond of embattlement, of unity against oppression. It suggests how "unfree" most really are in relation to society, and that they sense their condition as one of restriction and exclusion. The generosity that led alienated men to imagine that they had "chosen comradeship" with the oppressed is replaced by the doctrine that the oppressed are free. And both ideas help to restrict the possibility of fraternity.

This struggle for clarity about the means to brotherhood goes on and on. In intellectual or philosophical terms, thinkers such as Emerson seemed to lose the individual entirely by absorption into the One, and what becomes of individuality, and therefore of brotherhood, when individual selves are dissolved? Is brotherhood a means, not an end?

We have neglected large portions of Mr. McWilliams' volume—the anthropology and sociology at the beginning, the roots of righteous longing in the Puritans, and the angry political struggles of the recent past. Why is it that world for the good of man seems to produce the most wrathful persons in history? Why is it that the exceptions to this rule—the Buddhas, the Christs, the Gandhis—are so little understood? Then there are all the in-between categories of human striving and hope, to which the author gives due attention. No literate American should fail to read his book.

COMMENTARY
RESULTLESS THINKING

THOREAU—who by happy coincidence figures in both this week's lead and the Review—was no high achiever. Not as we measure achievement. His main goal, if we can take the word of *Walden*, was to live in ways that permitted the sediment in common activities to sink to the bottom, leaving his purposes pure. Naturally enough, the intensive thinking which occupied so much of his energies seemed to others—even to Emerson—to be without result.

Socrates, as Hannah Arendt showed in her *Social Research* (Autumn, 1971) article, "Thinking and Moral Considerations," also pursued "resultless" thinking. His chief work was to relieve his friends of their carelessly acquired opinions. He did not offer them "correct" views; on the contrary, he said that, like the "sterile" midwives of Greece, he had nothing to impart. Rather he did as Plato said: "he purged people of their 'opinions,' that is, of those unexamined prejudgments which prevent thinking by suggesting that we know where we not only don't know but cannot know, helping them, as Plato remarks, to get rid of what was bad in them, their opinions, without however making them good, giving them truth."

Is, then, the thinking pursued by men like Socrates and Thoreau without benefit? This depends upon how we regard the "purifying" activity. In a progressive age, the sensitizing of conscience seems almost irrelevant. We know what to do, and—

> For the thinking ego and its experience, conscience that fills a man full of obstacles" is a side effect. And it remains a marginal affair for society at large except in emergencies. For thinking as such does society little good, much less than the search for knowledge in which it is used for other purposes. It does not create values, it will not find out, once and for all, what "the good" is, and it does not confirm but rather dissolves accepted rules of conduct. Its political and moral significance comes out only in those rare moments of history when "Things fall apart". . . .
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> At those moments, thinking ceases to be a marginal affair. . . . When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action. . . .

It is the action, Hannah Arendt concludes, which tells right from wrong, beautiful from ugly, and which "may prevent catastrophes."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
PROGRESS AND DEFAULT

CHANGE for the better, it is generally agreed, needs to be preceded by admission of fault, and the best criticism in preparation for change is usually self-criticism. It follows that when the makers of culture and shapers of belief begin to question what they have done and are doing, we may be on the way to better days.

These thoughts result from regular reading of the weekly magazine, *Science*, organ of the American Association for the Advancement of Science. The pages of this journal, from week to week, contain a great deal of self-criticism, especially in the essays and reviews. Some sort of *volte-face* seems to be going on in scientific thinking. Take for example, a book reviewed in *Science* for Sept. 17—*The Conquest of the Will* by Abbe Mowshowitz. This is not the first open restoration of the idea of the will, as part of a book title—Leslie Farber published *The Ways of the Will* in 1966— but the unchallenged use of this word, today, in a scientific journal can be taken to indicate a change of both mind and heart. Briefly, this author, his reviewer agreeing, believes that if we continue to allow computer analysis and conclusions to rule our lives, "we shall be conquered by the very tools we design to liberate us.

How or why? The reviewer, Kenneth Laudon, says:

> Mowshowitz's central thesis is that the growing use of computers in advanced Western societies strengthens ongoing trends and combines with extant political forces in such a manner as to stifle the will of men to change society along more humane lines. Computers lead to centralization of power, loss of citizen participation, invasion of privacy, growth of administrative leviathan, legitimation of technical "experts" at the expense of poets, and a denigration of faith in the wisdom of ordinary citizens.

Elaborating on Mowshowitz's view, the reviewer speaks of science as establishing itself as intermediary between man and nature, "alienating man from direct experience of reality, and ultimately coming to control his perceptions of nature." The author, moreover, holds—

> That the reductionist views of science provided tools for politicians and society only encouraged widespread acceptance of the scientific world view and its ultimate use to facilitate the expansion of power. If the alchemists had succeeded in tapping mystical powers by wringing gold out of lead and tin, the world would indeed have been different.

Conceivably, if there had been better understanding of what the alchemists were really after in their experiments—especially their subjective experiments—the world might have had a chance to be "different," but true alchemical gold was not a primary interest in those days. There seems a little more hope for this understanding today.

Another reviewer in *Science* (July 23), William Kessen, gives attention to a large volume edited by Nathan B. Talbot, *Raising Children in Modern America*. Choosing examples of seriousness and penetration from the 107 contributors to this 590-page work, the reviewer finds much to praise, suggesting that the reader, by making similar selections, should be able to put together "a garland of toughness and beauty" from its pages. "Yet," he feels obliged to add, "at the end, you have only your garland and no clear instructions for thought or for action; like so many of its ancestors, the big book of *Raising Children in Modern America* is not so much a statement of theory or policy as it is a diagnostic document, testifying to a moment in American history."

In short, we are not raising our children very well. The reviewer suggests a growing "ambiguity" in the "commitment Americans have to children." They are no longer, as in our agricultural days, an economic asset. They do not comfort our old age. And the importance of cultural "continuity" is indeed suspect. These melancholy observations recall Albert Rosenfeld's questioning article in the *Saturday Review* for Aug. 7—"Who Says We're a Child-Centered Society?" This writer cites a recent poll which disclosed that 70 per cent of the parent respondents said that, given another choice, they would have no children. Mr. Rosenberg focuses on the neglect of children's health, including the health

of the unborn, and almost the only favorable sign he can find in this area is the current interest in Frederick Leboyer's book, *Birth Without Violence,* as a result of which "the whole childbirth enterprise is being critically reexamined."

One judgment that might grow out of a reading of *Raising Children in Modern America* is that while we give the children poor or little help, we nonetheless expect a great deal of them, and too soon. A contributor, S. H. White, says: "Two principles now widely in use are that *older is better* and *faster is better."* What does this mean? It means that we are not really comfortable with children as *children*—we want them to hurry up and become adults. We want them to behave like ourselves.

We not only want them to behave like ourselves, but also to think like ourselves. John Holt is particularly valuable on this sort of unreasonable demand. Another way of recognizing the same mistake is in the area of what we call "moral education." An excellent book on a difficult subject—*Moral Education in Theory and Practice* (Prometheus paperback, $4.95), by Robert T. Hall and John U. Davis—points out that many educators regard the present as a time of "moral crisis" and are calling for renewed emphasis on "traditional moral values." The authors observe that while this demand is almost universal, practically no one says what these values are:

> We find repeated mention of values and principles in textbooks and teacher's manuals in civics and history, but we have yet to find a book that actually tells students what a value or a principle is. Ideals such as justice, liberty, and equality are mentioned as though students already know what these values are; never are they discussed directly or exemplified. It is apparently presumed that students acquire value concepts indirectly from the subject matter. We doubt, however, that this happens as regularly or as thoroughly as might be desired. In actual fact the teaching of values and ideals of our tradition is for the most part left to chance.

Again the question is *why*? One not-so-obvious answer is that these values, taken together, are very difficult to explain. Adults barely understand them. That is, few adults are ready or able to face the contradictions that result when we try to apply these values in our social or political lives. People talk wisely about education for democracy and citizenship. But this is far more than a simple transmission of "values." Basically, it is a persistent examination of *dilemmas,* the study of conflicting applications of principles.

For example, in *From Colony to Country,* Ralph Ketcham remarks that the government established by the Founding Fathers—

> was to guarantee "unalienable" rights and also to rest on the consent of the governed. That is, it was to ensure eternal verities but it was also to act as the people decided. What if the people, however organized to register their consent, agreed to an abridgment or suppression of one or all of these rights for most or even a few of the people? . . . So at the time of the Revolution not only were the details of the future government unsettled, but serious tensions were implicit in the words of the Declaration of Independence itself.

We don't cope with these tensions very well, as the struggle to desegregate the schools shows, to give a single familiar illustration. But the various problems growing out of conflicting advocacy of principles overflow and reach down into the schools. Ron Jones, now a teacher in San Francisco, tells how a student in a Palo Alto high school challenged a visiting business man who declared that highschool students ought to *study* social problems, not become activists. The student said:

> "Here is a copy of my civics book. . . . There is no mention of the Ku Klux Klan or racism, or labor struggles, or the Vietnam war. Not one word about honesty, or integrity, or even justice."

Almost in despair, the teacher (Jones) cried out to himself: "Where are the parents of these kids? How come children have to bear the moral weight of the nation?"

Is this a part of *"faster is better"?* Or is it confirmation of what Lydia Smith says in *Activity and Experience* that—"the first demand made of the schools—to serve society's ends—has not and cannot work"?

FRONTIERS

A Slow Revolution

OF Albert Einstein the story is told that when a friend from the University of Berlin remarked brightly to him how fortunate it was that his theory had been proved by actual observations, he replied, "Proof! *They* needed it! I never did."

He was, in short, very sure. Often he relied mainly on an intuitive sense of the essential fitness of his ideas. As Gerald Holton says in *The Nature of Scientiic Discovery*, Einstein announced the two basic postulates of Relativity, "almost brusquely declaring them to be hunches that he wishes to elevate to postulates—without even bothering to connect them plausibly with the experimental material." Possibly other physicists were willing to put up with this cavalier attitude toward demonstration because of the rigorously mathematical character of physics. Yet it would be ridiculous to suggest that in physics "proof" is unimportant. Einstein meant only that while the rest of the world, including other physicists, would require "proof," he didn't feel a deep psychological need for it. He was confident he was on the right track.

If we can speak loosely about such matters, we might say that Einstein was mainly concerned with the creative aspect of science—with making discoveries. Confirmation and elaboration belong to what Thomas Kuhn calls "normal science," and A. H. Maslow named "bookkeeping science." This is the area of back-up and reassurance, where originality and sometimes wonderfully fruitful "shots in the dark" are not allowed.

Obviously, human beings need both capacities. In balanced people both the resources for free invention and the skills of careful verification are present. In institutional science the two qualities tend to become separate—that is, the inventive side of human activity tends to drop out of institutions (is forced out, one could say), leaving only the confirming or verifying function. This makes institutions bastions of Establishment views and beliefs. The tensions between creative individuals and establishment attitudes creates what Mr. Kuhn, in titling his book, calls *The Structure of Scientiic Revolutions.*

What might be identified as a slow revolution now in progress in a branch of science is described by J. B. Rhine in the June *Journal of Parapsychology.* His paper, "Parapsychology and Psychology: The Shifting Relationship Today," describes the gradual admission of parapsychologists—people who work on telepathy, clairvoyance, and other aspects of psychic research—into the ranks of the psychologists. As Dr. Rhine puts it: "The place of psi research is no longer on the threshold. The number of people who seriously want it on the campuses today is growing faster than the development of trained personnel to fill the need." This change in attitude toward the idea of "non-physical" reality (*psi* is short for extrasensory communication as evidence of nonphysical reality) represents what seems a vast concession on the part of conventional science, a practical admission that there *is* or *may be* some kind of nonphysical reality.

What is Parapsychology as a "discipline"? It is an attempt to give whatever evidence can be found for the nonphysical a form that is testable according to the standards of existing science. The best evidence is the most adaptable for this purpose. Dr. Rhine makes this plain. He has a section in his paper devoted to the uselessness of pursuing goals in research which are neither provable nor disprovable. These include trying to establish postmortem survival (life after death) and simple telepathy. He calls questions like the body-mind issue, the nature of consciousness, and out-of-the-body or mind-projection experiences "bad-risk" problems which should be shelved until the more demonstrable extra-sensory capacities such as clairvoyance, precognition (seeing the future), and psychokinesis (influencing physical objects by mental means) are well established.

If you think about this differentiation of research goals, as either scientifically feasible or unfeasible, it seems obvious that the unfeasible goals are much closer to essential human wonder and longing. The bad-risk problems, you could say, bear on *philosophical* questions related to the meaning of human life. The "feasible" subjects for research—clairvoyance, etc.—relate to modes of perception more than to meaning. Quite notably, a person can see without eyes or even predict the future, yet not be at all wise. These are "techniques" or perceptive capacities sometimes associated with wisdom, but not a part of wisdom. Wisdom is concerned with meaning and its realization. It is not objective and is hardly convertible into objective terms.

This does not mean that parapsychologists have abandoned wisdom as a goal in their work, but only that they have set it aside in order to be more successful in answering questions such as: What sort of a universe do we have? What kind of intelligence works through human beings?

If a non-physical, "upstairs" story ought to be added to the physical universe, then a whole range of possibilities concerning the nature of man and of natural reality opens up for consideration. These possibilities do indeed have philosophic implications—implications recognized back in the nineteenth century by the early pioneers of psychic research—Sir William Crookes, Sir William Barrett, and Sir Oliver Lodge—who happened to be physicists! They were also in the background, sometimes the foreground, of William McDougall's first proposals for scientific investigation of psychic phenomena. Since McDougall was the psychologist who began the work of psychic research at Duke University, and attracted Dr. and Mrs. Rhine to join and succeed him there, his attitude and motives were part of the genesis of this work. He wrote in 1923:

> Unless Psychic Research can discover facts incompatible with materialism, materialism will continue to spread. No other power can stop it; revealed religion and metaphysical philosophy are equally helpless before the advancing tide. And if that tide continues to rise and advance as it is doing now, all signs point to the view that it will be a destroying tide, that it will sweep away all the hard-won gains of humanity, all the moral traditions built up by the efforts of countless generations for the increase of truth, justice and charity.

Shall we say, now, that since the universities are opening their doors wide to parapsychological research, Prof. McDougall's hopes are beginning to be vindicated? That the demonstrations of clairvoyance and other ESP powers have forced open the scientific mind? This would be plausible, and no doubt partly true. But it seems even more the case that some far-reaching polarization of mind has been affecting the human race for a number of years, making philosophical hungers more demanding. Today, in many areas, the subjective side of human life is claiming more and more attention—a way, actually, of declaring it to be more "objective"! If this is indeed happening, then, Dr. Einstein's exclamation—that he needed no proof—acquires a new significance, indicating readiness for the direct and open asking of philosophic questions. While psychic research by itself may never be able to supply flat answers to such questions, freely asking them might givevital substance to an intellectual and moral atmosphere in which deeper intuitions of reality could arise. True intuitions are bearers of another sort of "demonstration." While they may lack "public" validity, they are also the seeds of all human growth or progress. A science which takes full cognizance of this does not become unscientific or undisciplined as a result.