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THE GENERAL ART

THERE was a time when, if a man had anxieties he could not quell, he sought out those who combined wisdom with natural authority. The hierarchical order under which he lived was an unquestioned analogue of nature and the conceptions which shaped his thinking, obtained from tradition, were no more to be doubted than the sun in the sky. The social matrix seemed to have unbroken continuity with the natural world, and individual longings and feelings of fitness structured the harmony by means of which men connected their sense of wholeness with all larger unity and meaning.

The testimony establishing the fact of this ancient psychic harmony is the entirety of classical tradition and the confirming studies of countless scholars. This tradition continues, although in broken and mutilated form, in the modern age, and is seen in the susceptibility of great numbers of mankind to the certainties of their "leaders," in the unsatisfied longing of the young for someone they can "trust," and is reflected, after appropriate transformation, in the efforts of scientists to isolate and define as reliable impersonal principles what we call the "laws of nature."

This irrepressible need to close the gap between man and the world—or, as we now say, probably trivializing the problem—between the individual and society, affects us in so many ways that to leave it out of our conscious reckoning may be to confine our thinking to the production of one dilemma after another. Such defects have great immediacy, today, in what is felt as the impossibility of ethical wholeness for the individual. A terrible futility dogs the man who cannot believe that his personal action, however constructively pursued, will ever significantly reduce the injustice he sees in the world. This injustice is plainly all about. The daily press reeks of suffering and misfortune on a mass scale. A man may speak wisely to himself of patience and fortitude, but where shall he find the faith to go on? Obstacles, as we know, do not really daunt a human being. A man whose life seems without challenging obstacles normally goes out to look for them. It is lack of meaning, of a sense of accomplishment, which withers human intentions and subverts the will. "Faith" is not a word we use with much confidence, these days; it smacks of artificial assurance and institutional cajolery; yet many men have lived out their lives with the support of unexamined faith, even while making fun of the idea. Men do very well without conscious. faith until the substitute forms of self-assurance begin to break down.

The stand-pat skepticism of the earlier years of this century is obviously a middle-class luxury we can no longer afford. People can get through life without any strong convictions so long as they are coasting on the momentum built up by their forebears, but when the capital of past commitment is used up, and when the structures erected by a simple and forgotten faith begin to crumble from the pressures of internal contradiction, there has to be a renewal.

A look at the practical operations of faith in human life may help to clarify what is involved in its renewal. For some sense of the meaning of faith in past societies we might turn to such books as Joseph Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* or Robert Redfield's *The Primitive World and its Transformations.* This reading makes it plain that the ancient outlook on the world was much more than the result of indoctrination by "shamans" or medicine men. The men of that time were uniformly convinced of a moral continuity which united nature and society. Here we quote only Prof. Redfield's major conclusion:

> If we compare the primary view that has been sketched in these pages with that which comes to

> prevail in modern times, especially in the West, where science has been so influential, we may recognize one of the great transformations of the human mind. It is that transformation by which the primitive world view has been overturned. The three characteristics of that view which have been stressed . . . have been weakened or disappeared. Man comes out of the unity of the universe within which he is orientated now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character and becomes to him indifferent, a system uncaring of man. The existence today of ethical systems and of religions only qualifies this statement; ethics and religion struggle on one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man.

These are general ideas. The poetic account of past faith by another writer brings home more intimately what we have lost. The following is from Richard Hertz (in *Man on a Rock*)*:*

> Karl Buecher collected hundreds of songs echoing the divine animation that springs forth daily under a thousand different skies—songs which people used to sing during the ceremony we call work. Chinese peasants, moving into the mountains every morning to gather tea, sang a hymn in honor of their enterprise, which they compared to a pilgrimage to the Western paradise. The Volga boatmen "accepted the universe," and the women of Madagascar acted, when they cultivated the rice fields, like bayaderes trying to please a god.
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> Miguel Covarrubias, in his book on Bali, describes the bandiars, or cooperative societies as we would call them in our dry idiom; they watched the magic of work unfold with proper art and majesty in their Indonesian eden; when night fell they sent the arpeggios to their tireless orchestras through fragrant vales. . . .
>
> The medieval fraternities of workers in Flanders and Lyons, toiling in the frozen music of crepuscular cities, rolled the stone from the tomb of their narrow space; their triumph over the refractory material of the world was not mere routine, but was understood by them in its vast metaphysical connotations. Work interpreted as spiritual discipline gave these people a superhuman patience, detachment from results.

It would not be difficult, by collecting many such quotations, to illustrate the growing conviction in the present that this sense of rapport with nature and the world is a condition of human survival, the very canon of normality. For the moment, then, let us say that the "truth" of this contention is not at issue. What is at issue is how we may become persuaded of it.

For not only have beliefs about man and the world changed. Institutions have also changed. The cultural authorities are no longer revered authorities. The men labeled wise are no longer wise. The public truth is no longer true. The principle of hierarchy is now seen as the guise of deception and betrayal. To understand this—which means to make human *sense* of it—we need a faith which does not depend upon familiar external reference, and how many people are capable of this? What regenerating confidence can there be for a generation whose saints must all become rebels, and whose moving truths seem lined with nihilistic desperation?

The man looking for something to believe in now knows by instinct that there is no point in listening to anything any "Establishment" has to say. He would like to think that the truth will come seeping into him from his own heart, but how will he *know?* In *Psychology and the Human Dilemma*, Rollo May writes:

> Since we identify neurosis (and many forms of psychosis) only by virtue of the fact that sufferers therefrom cannot fit into our society, and since we understand illness by virtue of our techniques, we are bound to end up with a view of man which is a mirror of our culture and our techniques. This inevitably results in a *progressively empty view* of man. Health becomes the vacuum which is left when the so-called neurosis is cured. On the psychosis level, if a man can stay out of jail and support himself, we call that vacuum health.
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> This empty view of health (filled only by some vague biological assumptions about "growth," "satisfactions of libido," and so forth) has had much to do with the general tendencies in our day toward ennui, passionlessness, emotional and spiritual emptiness. The empty view of health often puts psychiatry and psychology, as well as other forms of science, on the side of making life increasingly more possible and longer at the price of making existence

> more boring. From this point of view we can understand why our patients often show a strange lack of zest for getting better, for they may not be so irrational in suspecting that neurosis is more interesting than health, and that health may be the royal road to apathy.

One might extend this argument, making it case for something called Therapeutic Madness—illustrating it with the Black Muslim article of faith that the white man is the Serpent in the Garden of Eden. Given an easily identifiable source of Evil, with ample support from practical experience, people can organize themselves for resistance and develop impressive personal discipline and dignity in the process. Scapegoating is one of the commonest sources of socio-political morale, and if blaming the Communists for all present and future evil which threatens the United States is not a similarly potent source of unification for the white population, the explanation may be that there is less fact in the charge than there is in the Black Muslim identification of the white race as the origin of the evil experienced by black men.

But why do we have, as Dr. May says, "a *progressively empty view* of man"? The reason is surely that, as Dr. Redfield says, man now "comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will." To look upon nature as something with physical qualities only gives full justification for accepting as truth about nature the conclusions drawn from study of nothing but those physical qualities. Thus scientific truth is consensus truth—the truth upon which all scientists are able to agree because it grows out of investigations enabling them to reach the same result. By means of the abstractions of method, the scientists make sure that objectivity is the test of scientific truth. And this, we may say, creates a *vacuum* in all other areas of human concern.

Now, curiously enough, the spontaneous evaluation we make of a human insight seems based on a canon that differs radically from the scientific canon. The final test of a scientific fact is that each time you demonstrate it, you get the same result. This "same result" is not regarded as monotony or imitation, but as verification and certainty. But the vivid, penetrating expression of a human being is valued for its uniqueness. It is *not* the same as anything else. A great poet does not copy; he sees and declares for himself. His work, we say, is *inimitable*. How, then, do we know that the work is "good"?

Well, often we don't. In time, however, we come to feel some kind of "family resemblance" among great works of art. They speak to an unmediated, intuitive, unconstraining consensus which grows up among thoughtful human beings. This intuitive consensus is often spoiled by being academicized—which here means "scientized"—and when this happens a new start has to be made in the creation of a free cultural atmosphere. The one condition of survival for culture is that it shall not be represented by any constraining establishment. We know all these things well enough, since they are social aspects of the laws of creative activity.

How do we know them? We know them in only one way—by self-reference. Such things are always known by self-reference. In antiquity, when the cultural consensus seemed to have more rigor than it can legitimately have today, such insights, attitudes, and laws of being human were recorded in great scriptures in common idioms. Today, quite plainly, the living idiom for human insight is increasingly an individual idiom. The self-reference must rigorously be *self*-reference. This seems practically a law of survival for human thought, today.

This is not to suggest that there is no truth for modern man in great scriptures. But it is conceivable that every culturally *mediated* truth will be an attenuated truth for modern man. The decline of all establishments as sources of truth may be the most significant negative evidence we have of our evolutionary path.

Is there some other way to speak of these things? Well, scientific truth, for example, is totally mediated truth. For this reason it can be

converted into button-pushing truth by technology. You can enjoy unearned (not personally understood) power through scientific truth. You can manipulate matter, energy, and to some extent men with scientific truth. But the truth that is known at first hand—of which art is a secular symbol—cannot be had at second hand. You can't use it unless you know it for yourself. The sciences concern themselves with the objective aspects of human beings—what can be known about men without *their* knowing it. But the true humanizing distinction of people lies in what they know about themselves.

If we were to start out with this assumption about man, "health" would no longer be defined as what is left when an individual does not break down in some typical way that objective science can notice and enrich its statistics with. Health would be more than statistical evidence of vacuum.

We now begin to see why the ancients made their accounts of everyman into dramas about the *hero.* Conceivably, they knew that, eventually, each individual would have to find his own way to self-reference without the authoritative guidance of his culture. The only important sacerdotal lie—the social Original Sin—is the claim that there can be an institutional substitute for this ordeal—that *somebody else* can do our task of self-discovery for us. A true science of man might declare that this principle of individual self-reference is the rule of salvation, the law of subjective evolution, and as inexorable as gravitation.

But if there can be such reliable truths about man as a subjective being, why haven't they been made plain to us before this? Perhaps because we have not plied ourselves sufficiently with questions about the matter. The history of subjective truth is largely the story of the rubricization of what men have found out about themselves and tried to repeat to others. To rubricize it is to scientize it, to make it easy—turning it into a species of a button-pushing technique. In this form it no longer works, it is no longer even true; but men often do not realize this for generations. As Goethe said, issuing a warning: "One sees only what one already knows."

It is a habit of intellectuals to assume their own great competence in relation to such philosophical tasks and then to object that "the masses" cannot possibly succeed in such difficult self-search. But if this is true about the masses, it may be because the intellectuals have been rubricizing instead of *teaching;* they have been neglecting their own duty—which is to find forms for truth which the masses can understand, instead of misleading them with easy (authoritarian) substitutes.

Political tyrants are manipulators of men. Scientist-technologists are manipulators of matter, and intellectuals are professional manipulators of concepts. These categories have other aspects, but for critical purposes we may think of them thus. Applying here is an illuminating passage by L. L. Whyte in *The Next Development in Man,* one of the early books in behalf of the subjective reality of human beings. It concerns the excesses of manipulation:

> No one willed the social consequences of the industrial revolution. They were as far-reaching as some vast climatic or planetary disaster, yet they were the consequence not of arbitrary circumstances but of human action. The activities of countless individuals were producing results which apparently could not be controlled by any individual or group. A relentless transformation was proceeding of its own accord far beyond the range of deliberate intention, for man was not aware that he was intoxicated by quantity. The essential feature of *laissez faire* was the assumption that the automatic operation of the quantity symbols, through the action of individuals organizing their behavior by means of them, would lead to the satisfaction of human needs. Thus, in a time of general expansion, the new resources of manpower, horsepower, and money power were dominated by private manipulation of the quantity symbols.
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> This is no allegory but a situation characteristic of the organization of behavior in organic communities using verbal and algebraic symbols, that is, in every human community at the appropriate

> stage. A man could sit at a desk in a perverted condition of sustained ecstasy, dream of numerical manipulations, and finally write a check or a cable. Driven by his lust for expansion, by the relentless passion for quantity which is more general than power, or wealth, or sex, and gives man the illusion of possessing all these, without the catharsis of rhythmic relaxation or satisfying achievement, and therefore perpetually lusting for more; haunted by his own frustrated life and blind to the lives distorted by his money apparatus, he commanded the lives of countless men and women. Another nought on an order, and the world-wide machinery of credit operated without scrutiny of purpose or result, and thousands more were compelled to live or compelled to die, to work more or less, to experience once again the instability of their employment. Every check written in this blind passion was a forgery of right, every company registered a conspiracy of theft, every dividend declared the further reproduction of greed.
>
> The world has had opportunity of late to learn that strange allies collect when great issues are at stake. When ignorance and privilege struggle against vision and development, then all the vested interests are found together, however incompatible may seem their overt aims. That is obvious enough in the political field. But when the issue is that of abstract thought, systematic, static, and divorced from life, against the unitary organization of thought as one of the processes that make up the human community, the alliances are stranger still and largely unaware of their mutual cooperation.

This passage is of interest as an order of compelling self-perception in behalf of an entire civilization. It is filled with characterizations of attitude and motive, making it fundamentally subjective analysis. It provides shock of recognition, also. It is a kind of analysis which, if left to objective science, would never be made. It flows from the generalized self-perception of Dr. Whyte's thesis in *The Next Development in Man.* Being one man's self-perception, it is unique, yet the passage rings with the accuracy of its assessment.

What "checks" have we on subjective assessment? On the "insights" of men who write out of general awareness of the human condition? The only checks that exist, and the only ones worth applying, are found in the discoveries and practice of other men doing the same kind of thinking, generating the same stuff of common cultural awareness. The authority of this thinking lies in the self-evidence of reason, in the lucidity of insight that brings confirmation because it quite plainly clarifies, explains, and dignifies man, all at the same time. The "faith" we need is the faith which grows from such activities. It is the only faith we can use. Every man, according to his light, is capable of these activities. There are no specialists in "being human." It is a general art.

REVIEW
SEEKING THE HIGHER GROUND

ALL scientific inquiry—and report of scientific inquiry—makes demands on the reader. The serious reader understands this. When he reads about an experiment some scientist has performed, he realizes that he cannot really claim to "know" about it without doing the experiment himself. The peculiar virtue of the "lab" program of a school like St. John's College is that it brings this lesson home to the student. By having to perform personally some of the great, classical experiments on which physical science is based, the student gets at least a taste of the scientific discipline and begins to know how much he doesn't know about all the other experimenting that is going on. Michael Polan*yi's Personal Knowledge* is a book which extends this realization in critical directions for the reader.

On the whole, there is no argument about this. Actual scientific knowledge is admitted to be personal. The rigor of all the disciplines depends on this view. So does the integrity of the scientist, which we assume and have grown to respect. "We recognize," as Polanyi says, "the note struck by conscience in the tone of personal responsibility in which the scientist declares his ultimate claims." He is saying that he has found these things out for himself, and he is inviting others to make the same discoveries.

Communications which have an intellectual content ought to be regarded with equal seriousness and responsibility. That they are not is doubtless one of the worst of the bad habits of the age. An excuse for slack or superficial attention to intellectual communications may be that they are not concerned with "objective" or verifiable matters, so that accepting or rejecting them is mainly a matter of taste. Yet we know better than this in the extremely subjective communication of poetry. We know that we have to give the poet our deepest attention, to succeed in *feeling* with him, in order to grasp what he means. Not all poets seem worth this effort, of course, and this makes a problem, but if we decide to read a poet, we know that we must open ourselves up to him as widely as we can.

Reading "philosophy" brings another factor of potential confusion. Statements made in philosophy may have a logical symmetry which can be admired without seeking their roots. One can trace his way through the history of philosophy without ever really feeling what any of the great philosophers themselves felt, or ever thinking carefully about the ramifying relationships which great ideas had for the men who expressed them. In intellectual matters, you can skate on the surface of profundity without breaking through to the depths of commitment which gave them life. This is to render philosophy without fruit. Ortega wrote brilliantly on this point:

> To sum up: History must abolish the dehumanized form in which it has offered us the philosophical doctrines. It must incorporate them again in the dynamic interplay of a man s life and let us witness their teleological functioning in it. What if all the inert and mummified ideas which the customary history of philosophy has presented to us arose and functioned again, resuming the part they played in the existence of those who wrestled with them? Would not all those patterns of thought light up with a universal *evidence* to gratify us their historians who revived them, as they gratified the original thinkers and the students around them?

These considerations have direct point in relation to study of the philosophical psychology of A. H. Maslow, which is really a new kind of science—a science which accepts without objectivizing reduction the data of the subjective experience of man. Dr. Maslow proposes that human beings are capable of disciplined observation of subjectivity. The peculiar excellence of his own writings is that they generate awareness—call into luminous intellectual view the architectonic structure of man's psychological nature and intelligence.

This sort of research is against the grain of familiar scientific procedure in psychology, which has been to reduce to visible behavior, or to

enumerate—reduce to statistical description—the subject-matter of psychology. But what Dr. Maslow does as psychology is not against the grain of authentic human longing and aspiration; instead, it makes these moral energies comprehensible by establishing a language for speaking about them precisely, and devises a rigor for grasping what they imply.

A good illustration of these qualities is found in Dr. Maslow's long article, "A Theory of Metamotivation: The Biological Rooting of the Value-Life," in the Fall 1967 issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. Here are presented, with discussion of each one, twenty-eight affirmations about the nature of man which the author regards as "testable propositions." The general thesis of this paper is that those whom Dr. Maslow has called "self-actualizing people" are people who embody in their lives the motivations which distinctively correspond to the values that in universal testimony are held to represent the highest good. It may help to say in introduction that this psychology takes its basic symmetry from the *Peak Experience*—a term to indicate the transcendent state of human consciousness which has been endlessly fruitful in the arts, literature, religion, and in the daily lives of people who, by a combination of intensity and serenity, achieve an extraordinary harmony of being. In this state, a man wants for nothing, having all, having it in ways endlessly diverse; unexpecting, he experiences ultimate delight. This is often called "mystical" or "religious" experience, but Dr. Maslow, to his everlasting credit, remains a naturalist and uses the neutral term *peak* experience to suggest that this is the highest that human awareness can climb. For the purposes of a present science of human possibility, it seems high enough.

Most scientific efforts to get at these states have vulgarized them by trying to "contain" them with some non-psychological explanation. Dr. Maslow does not do this. He makes the peak experience normative. It is the highest order of experience of which a human being is capable; how foolish, then, to try to explain it away! Self-actualization is the style of life characteristic of people for whom the peak experience is a natural fulfillment. Taken together they define the range and display the conditions of psychological health. Dr. Maslow's works are devoted to demonstrating this view of man, in the interest of a deliberated education and growth which would bring such potentialities to birth in all men.

To pursue such an inquiry on a naturalist basis gives a fresh meaning to Josiah Royce's claim that the mystic is the only pure empiricist. A man can feel awe in relation to the peak experience without giving way to the *waugh* of religious emotionalism. He may encounter ecstasy without losing grip on his reason. He may admit the ineffability of pure subjective delight without wanting to turn this into an argument for the supernatural. In the long run, arguments for the supernatural have always proved reductive of man. Nor does it diminish "divinity" to find its practical equivalent potential in man. Dr. Maslow refuses to use the vocabulary which eases escape into what Spinoza called "the asylum of ignorance."

The second of his "testable propositions," and the discussion of it, will illustrate the content and temper of this inquiry:

> *All such* (*self-actualizing*) *people are devoted to some task, call, vocation, beloved work* (*"outside themselves"*).
>
> In examining self-actualizing people directly, I find that in all cases, at least in our culture, they are dedicated people, devoted to some task "outside themselves," some vocation some duty, or beloved job. Generally the devotion and dedication is so marked that one can fairly use the old words vocation, calling, or mission to describe their passionate, selfless, and profound feeling for their "work." We could even use the words destiny or fate. I have sometimes gone so far as to speak of obligation in the religious sense, in the sense of offering oneself or dedicating oneself upon some altar for some particular task, some cause outside oneself and bigger

> than oneself, something not merely selfish, something impersonal.
>
> I think it is possible to go pretty far with the notion of destiny or fate. This is a way of putting into inadequate words the feeling that one gets when one listens to self-actualizing people (and some others) talking about their work or task.

These statements, while seemingly made in a free style, appear in a context of research literature which has described these qualities of human beings in various ways and from various viewpoints, such that the discipline of Dr. Maslow's work gradually grows upon the reader. The fact is that such statements can have much more precision than we think. There is close attention in this research to an ascending hierarchy of levels of motivation, of needs, with vital distinctions that become clear only after reflecting on them. This work requires the same sort of attention that Ortega declares must be given to the study of the history of ideas. The reader, to gain familiarity with this terrain of thought, has need to learn the names that Dr. Maslow has given to its landmarks—its foothills, valleys, and "peaks."

But the fundamental contribution is a psychology that declares the high potentiality of the human being, points specifically to his sense of Promethean mission, illustrates his capacity for the resolution of dilemma, and gives rational, evolutionary frame to the sublime ideas of the heroic, the self-sacrificing, the committed, and, indeed, the invincible.

What good is a science of man which systematically ignores high human possibility because, forsooth, it is "individual"? What kind of blind stupidity has made it possible for the men of our age to accept the blanket denigrations of mechanistic assumption about themselves? Talk about ostriches which hide their heads in the sand! You could even say that such psychological science stands convicted of an extraordinary timidity, and almost total forgetfulness of its once ennobling humanist origins. All the world now calls for heroic behavior on the part of men, and the best traditional psychological science can do is to repeat in bored tones that this is of course impossible, and then it presses a few buttons to prove the plastic submissiveness of the human herd.

The psychology we need, and are at last beginning to get, is a psychology which shows us in the idiom of our own inner experience and longing how man can become the data of his own transformation. Why should we any longer ignore the samples of this development given us in history, merely because they are few? We have enough to lay the foundation of a science of Man. Dr. Maslow enables his readers to believe in *human* evolution—not merely because they would "like" to, but because there are long neglected facts which may be recognized and turned into the tools of growth. Dr. Maslow is of course not alone in this movement of Humanist psychologists, but he has set down more of the grammar of the discipline than anyone else.

COMMENTARY
BUCKMINSTER FULLER'S CREDO

IN *Document Three* of his *World Design Science Decade*, Buckminster Fuller defines the contribution of the designer to world change and reorganization:

> There are two main classes of inventions—those which increase and those which decrease the degrees of freedoms. Because men are born immobilized, there are few invention opportunities for his increased immobilization. These are prisons, traps, strait-jackets, handcuffs, and caskets. On the other hand, there are an infinity of opportunities to invent man s increased mobilization—all the way up to the speed of light—186,000 mps. and in all directions. Means-of-increased-freedom inventing is irreversible.
>
> Inventions occur when individuals, frustrated by circumstances, eschew negative blaming and undertake positive physical environment reforms rather than abstract human reforms. The latter depend precariously only upon moral, ethical and legal codes which are enforceable only by negative penalties.
>
> The silent preoccupations of the artist-scientist, whose inventions subsequently permit mankind to realize his innate potentials, without interference with others, are in marked contrast to political behaviorisms. Political theories apparently assume that there is no alternative to the word, fist and bullet battles between opposing ideologies. Each ideology seeks to reform man. They scheme and labor to impose their respective viewpoints by omni-interfering political, moral, psychological persuasions, furtive corruptions, bullyings, and punishments.

In *Document Two* Fuller tells how he started, in 1927, to figure out how to place design and inventive genius at the disposal of man's peacetime needs instead of war. He soon found out that—

> There were no private, corporate or governmental patrons with inherent need and. mandate to underwrite my investigation. No government existed anywhere that said, "I will employ you and continually foster your attempt to make all world men successful exclusively through design science competence."

Further:

> . . . no scientist has ever been retained, or hired professionally, to consider the scientific design of the home of man;—to consider objectively the ecological pattern of man;—to design ways of employing the highest scientific potential towards helping man to be a success on earth. . . . No scientist has ever been retained to do such a task. Paradoxically, we speak of our times as the *age of science*.

Fuller regards the present as the end of the age of pirates. He calls upon designers and environment-makers everywhere to participate in world-planning for whom the client is all mankind. It is only in our world of nuclear weapons and tense suspicions that this sounds visionary. On a planet endowed with common sense, it would be an expression of simple sanity—needing no argument. Fuller is determined to be sane.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
GROWING UP INTO LIFE

NAT HENTOFF, who contributes to both the *New Yorker* and *Liberation,* has recently been doing fiction for teenagers, and in the *Atlantic* for last December he speaks of how little writers for "the young" seem to know about the lives and attitudes of teen-agers:

> Remarkably absent from most fiction for the young is any real density of perception of the ways in which they look at and react to the adults with whom they live. The corroded marriages; the chronic dreary lives; the business "deals" and income-tax inventions; the squabbles about money, the smallness of "grown-up" satisfactions. I know of no fiction for the young that convincingly digs into the effects of the high incidence of divorce on shifting families, that perpetual stranger in the house, the stepfather; the varieties of ambivalent obligations to the real but outside father; the half brothers and half sisters who have to be coped with. Contemporary American family life is full of broken and loose ends, but where are the books about it in which teen-agers can recognize mazes similar to their own?

We haven't read Mr. Hentoff's *Jazz Country* and don't know how he meets these conditions in his own work, but he is certainly accurate in his catalog of confusions imposed upon the young by the present generation of parents. And he is right, again, in speaking of schools as places of "fear" for many, many children. Not only the ghetto schools make children frightened and apprehensive:

> In a sophomore class in a New York high school which is not known to be rigidly academic, a boy bites his lip to keep from crying because he has received a 67 in a math test. Will he be able to get into a "good" college if this keeps up? And if he doesn't, what will become of him? Is he already a failure?

One gets the impression that the ridiculous rules given to Jonathan Kozol for the selection of poetry for reading by Negro pupils in Boston—"a poem that 'accentuates the positive' or 'describes nature' or 'tells something hopeful' "—are only a coarse version of the more general stereotype of what reading for the young ought to be. Even so, it is a question whether books which reflect their own "mazes" and parental messes are what the children need or want. Perhaps Mr. Hentoff's recollections of his own youth are the best guide: "Thinking back to that distant country, I remembered enthusiasms for Arthur Koestler, Dostoevsky, Thomas Wolfe, and *A Portrait of the Artist As a Young Man."* Maybe there shouldn't be books written for the "teen-age audience." The young with awakening minds don't seem to have serious trouble in finding good things to read.

Another portion of Mr. Hentoff's discussion deals with the curious illusions of professional people who have been trained to understand children. During a tour of children's libraries he had this experience:

> In one junior high school I visited, a librarian took me into her office and cautioned me not to be "too free and outspoken" with the youngsters I was about to meet. "They can only absorb so much," she said. "They have to grow into what life is all about. And I should tell you, they're not very sophisticated. They don't read much or well." For the next two hours, I was hit with a barrage of questions, opinions, and counter-arguments about sex, pot, race, capitalism, Vietnam, religion, violence, non-violence, revolution, black power. I've rarely been involved in so sustainedly intense exchange of views, and at the end I was exhausted because they had forced me to look much harder at the consistency of some of my own convictions than I had for some time.
>
> The librarian was unhappy at a number of turns the conversation had taken, and after a peremptory good-bye, she stalked off. "Hey," one of the younger children said as I started to leave, "have you dug this?" He pulled from his pocket a beat-up paperback copy of *The Autobiography of Malcolm X.*

Well, things are really mixed up. Who is it, after all, that needs to "grow into what life is all about"? Maybe we should stop worrying about "education" and just stand on the sidelines watching it unfold in all its autonomous splendor!

Further light on who knows "what life is all about" comes from a recent *Wall Street Journal* report on the way big business is courting the smarter college graduates——without notable success. The writer, Albert R. Hunt, relates:

> Talks with college officials, students and businessmen reveal the width of the gulf still separating business and many of the talented students it seeks to attract. These young men charge that business cares too little about building a better world and too much about piling up profits, that it gives too little responsibility to its college-educated recruits and that it imposes a stifling conformity on those who enter it.

Great corporations are growing anxious about their "image" in relation to intelligent youth and have begun to stress the "altruistic" side of free enterprise and the "social awareness" of business activities. The students, for the most part, are not impressed. A former college counselor now in charge of "college relations" for a life insurance company told the *Wall Street Journal* writer that the efforts of business to "reach" students are "all too often self-defeating."

> "There's a tendency for business to be pompous and platitudinous in talking with students," he says. "This just convinces many of these kids that their original impressions were absolutely correct. We must talk with them, not at them."
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> David Riesman, professor of social science at Harvard, claims that some businessmen think they can get their story across by pepping up their public relations. "But often the more they say, the less the kids listen."

Last summer Harvard Business School tried a project which brought fifty students from twenty-five universities into close contact with business. They worked at jobs in business for seven weeks. After the experiment was over, the faculty men who ran it said that "only about a half-dozen of the fifty student participants left with a favorable impression of business." The basic contention of the students remains that other "fields of study and work . . . will offer them a chance to serve society in a meaningful way."

This situation has its ludicrous side. A few years ago the main problem of business was to lure customers into stores. Now that, presumably, enough people have become maniac buyers the problem is to lure other people who don't believe in luring into going into business to maintain all this "progress." For the present, business is having to settle for students who get poorer grades. This may be the only way that business will "grow into what life is all about." Statistically speaking.

FRONTIERS

The Environment-Makers

A FEW months ago, MANAS gave attention to the rising star of a group of professionals who prefer to call themselves simply "designers." These are people who, as they are permitted to do so, improve the face of man's environment; and who, in the present, are beginning to realize that they must go much deeper into the structure of both things and men if more than the outside surface of our civilization is to be affected by their efforts. So, the leaders among modern designers are rapidly turning into practical ecologists, although, unlike the academic ecologists, there seem to be no Ph.D.'s among them. Not yet, anyway. One can imagine the embarrassment that would ensue for a designer if someone called him "Doctor"!

Yet designers are thinking like doctors, these days. A certain maturity has been forced on them by the combined practice of technology and design. As Lewis Herber pointed out in his *Anarchy* (78) article, "Technology has finally passed from the realm of *invention* into that of *design*, from fortuitous discoveries into systematic innovations." The meaning of this, for designers who recognize what is happening, is that they are now being pressed to become "planners." It is no longer the task of the designer simply to make things beautiful—he now feels an insistent pressure to make them *good.*

The attack of habitually creative people on the problems of planning is of special interest. The approach of Buckminster Fuller, for example, embodies a Promethean urge which allows for the awakening subjectivity of human beings as much as it pursues practical solutions. But many men of creative intelligence are needed to apply this kind of planning to the problems of the world. This challenge to designers was made plain at the 1966 national meeting of the Industrial Design Society of America, held in San Francisco. One of the speakers, S.P.R. Charter, put the problem in unequivocal terms:

> Since we have allowed our technology to become virtually random yet dominant, the intangible qualities of pleasure and happiness have been, and continue to be, replaced by measurable quantities of devices *for* pleasure and happiness. These human attributes are now becoming increasingly more public than private, more responsive to external acceptances than to inner needs; more controlled, as it were, by devices of persuasion. And the torrent of devices appears to be, at least for the present, never-ending.
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> Because we neither possess nor seek a design-theory for the multiple meanings of Progress, we permit ourselves, through expediency and default, to become actually and spiritually inundated by its multiple tangibilities. We then convince ourselves that pleasure and happiness, inspiration and purpose are measurable in the same manner in which marketplace response is measured. Is it a wonder that we raise technological utilitarianism to the heights of morality and deity?

Another speaker, James Real, a man who has spent years in the thick of practical technological development as a designer-consultant, described the enormous multiplication of both things and sources of energy in recent years, putting "the equivalent of more than 100 human slaves at the disposal, on the average, of every American man, woman, and child." Mr. Real then said:

> The designer hitched tandem to the word "industrial," is an integral and important component in this game of engorgement, and unless he, with his formidable inventive powers, puts more of his thought and energy to the disposition of the products and materials he handles, he will eventually subvert himself quite completely and exist only as a packager and decorator—powerless to influence the often mindless clatter of the industrial machine, whose ends are the urgent concern of all of us.
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> The "glamour" projects which fall his way, such as participation in the so-called problems of the supersonic airplane, are sophisticated child's play compared to the relentless, worldwide urgencies to mitigate the agonies of the short, brutal life of the vast majority of the earth's people. . . . On one hand we face the endless proliferation of things to be gulped on an elaborate force-feed basis by ourselves and a few favored economic enclaves in the Western

> world. On the other, we find massive deprivation and the prospect of the eventual physical revolt of a majority of the world's people.

One might notice, here, that when professional manipulators, as a class, grow up, they begin to talk about the problems of "world management," and then they complain about the recalcitrant human "material" that does not willingly submit to authoritative plans; but when creative people grow up and have their look about the world, if they accept the responsibility that becomes evident from having this look, they seldom complain about "other people" but go into some kind of action themselves.

Designers make their living from clients. There is, then, the practical question: Who will be the clients for putting into effect the composite designers' vision and plan for a better world? The answer given by Buckminster Fuller is that designers ought not to bother their heads about that. If the designers design their designs, make their plans, and complete their proposals—"Never show unfinished work" is an essential rule—the problem of finding clients probably won't exist when the time comes for practical application.

Designers are essentially whole-makers. They know how to create natural form and beauty out of limitation. They know what to leave out and what to put in. These capacities give them a special sort of insight when they start making plans. Designers, in short, are specialists who grow into perceptive generalists because they are men habituated to making appropriate wholes, and because they are used to taking some kind of action. Mr. Real ended his address with this practical proposal:

> I would suggest that this Society each year give a very substantial grant to one or two of its members to get out of the country and look around, with the specific objective of seeing whether or not the professional skills he and his colleagues possess could be applied in any substantial way to alleviate the acute distresses of the world beyond our national borders.
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> I am aware that agencies of our government have, from time to time in the past, utilized the designer—sometimes in laudable ways, such as programs to revivify ethnic and regional crafts. These endeavors flare and fade. My suggestion is directed at diverting one or two mature and knowledgeable people each year from preoccupation with fulfilling the wishes and whims of the technological implosion—the further glutting of the utterly unique American market place—to a period of thoughtful consideration of the needs of the underdeveloped people, to the very selfish and legitimate end that in fifty years there will be people around to design things for.