

## CRITICS AND REBUILDERS

HASTE to erect a scaffolding reaching to heights where moral judgment seems in order is typical of very nearly all serious writing, these days. The passage from description and analysis to specifying indictment is swift and impatient. With so many things wrong, the location of targets is not difficult, and it is far easier to convict men of error than to comprehend the causes of their confusion. All this critical ardor, while evidence of moral perception of a sort, has a peculiarly discouraging effect. In sum, the analytical brilliance of modern criticism and its scathing comparison of present practice with professed ideals point to only one unmistakable conclusion: Save for the critics, who hardly agree among themselves, righteousness is so scarce among mankind that there is practically no hope at all for a better world.

If you say something along these lines to an embattled critic, he will almost certainly try to put you on the defensive. From the stance of his analytical moral certainties, he will demand to know what good there is to be said about *those* people! And since he has great shoals of accumulated moral indignation to support him, you hardly know what to say in reply. The uncompromising context of the criticism silences you.

Is there any alternative to this familiar impasse? Commonly offered is a pollyanna optimism, sometimes in the form of the soothing rituals of religion which make hope possible only by gross neglect of widespread human misery. The fact is that we hardly have language for speaking of a course between tough-minded and soft-headed extremes. So we might ask, what are the mental habits which seem to leave us only a choice between these polarities of evasion? Conceivably, we are afflicted not so much by malignant evil as by the rule of little virtues gone astray—so far astray that tolerant defense of the resulting patterns of behavior often seems a kind of obscenity. So it is easy enough to read off fiery condemnations.

And what marksmen we are in judgment! Go to the archetypes—Cicero's indictment of Catiline, Swift's *Modest Proposal*, or Stevenson's reply to the Protestant deprecator of Father Damien—and you will find no more skillful denunciation than that presently practiced in pointing out the hypocrisies, corruptions, and inhumanities of present civilization. Thus we have, in the end, a crude and unstable balance between wrathful judgment and unimaginative, complacent apathy—the calm of a culture educated by today's "mimetic poets," whose ideas of "morality" are always the same. Southey typified them in a well-known refrain:

"But what good came of it at last?"  
Quoth little Peterkin.  
"Why that I cannot tell," said he  
"But 'twas a famous victory."

Then, on the other side of the ledger, is the conventional radical's disdain for any instruction from the history of bloody revolutions, exhibited by men who are determined to make another. As one of them said recently:

"I have an automatic suspicion of individuals who commend to me their conviction that basic social change is necessary and that revolutionary action is ethically demanded of a human being of any stature, but who wail and moan about past mistakes and abuses on the part of successful revolutions."

Plainly, men of "any stature" are those who love only headless kings, starving kulaks, and expropriated capitalists. This is a moral bookkeeping which insists on balancing despair with raging destruction and will accept no other currency in the revolutionary transaction. Here, too, are feelings of truncated virtue—the sort of virtue which mutters against Gandhi as a bourgeois betrayer of the masses and borrows from Panon his agonized, existential defense of violence. Only the shadow of revolutionary virtue remains to support this kind of righteousness, but men will resort to shadows in a time of general moral bankruptcy.

What is wrong with all these people—both those who are content with the world as it is, and its angry, would-be menders? Would we be far wrong in saying that they suffer from preoccupation with a wornout style of virtues? It may be innocent enough for an eight-year-old suburban to fill his neglected emotional life with the excitement of a cowboy identity, but what will he do a few years later, when he is taught to imagine himself the democratic proprietor of nuclear war-heads instead of a six-shooter? The frontier virtues may now be a ridiculously threadbare inheritance, but he knows no other.

We have of course other sources of rationalization. We can sing John Brown's Body as we fight another "liberating" civil war in Southeast Asia. First we freed the Colonies, using our legendary skill as Indian-fighters on the redcoats; then we turned the industrial weight of the North and Minié balls against deluded white Southerners and freed the slaves; and now we are doing something like that, again, in Vietnam. As Staughton Lynd has explained:

In this way was the idea of holy intervention, hammered out on the anvil of domestic conflict, transferred to application overseas. Willing or unwilling, the world would have a hard time resisting this benevolent imperialism which insisted, as it bombed and strafed, that it had only come to help.

Won't this tired pattern of virtuous action ever wear out? Well, there are signs that people are getting uneasy. But why does it take so long? Can't they see? Haven't there been enough charred and bloodied draft cards to *make* them see? For years one sector of the peace movement has been applying standard operating procedure for making people see the light *quickly*. You do everything you can to make them feel guilty, showing the sharp, nonviolent edge of your contempt. Everybody knows that this is the way to lead people to moral vision. Even the child psychologists have it worked out. They explain that the path to educational progress is by sudden exposure and humiliation in public of little people who ought to know better than to do what they do. So naturally we practice the same thing on big people, too. Anyone who won't learn in this way can

hardly be worth saving. Just *look* at what those people are doing! If they don't like what we say, let them *change*. This is all quite clear. In fact, it makes you wonder why A. H. Maslow (in an interview in the July *Psychology Today*) says that research on hostility and aggression is the most important thing for the next generation of psychologists to investigate. Who needs it?

Just possibly, it would be useful to adopt an entirely different focus for considering such matters—leaving out (for the moment) the urgent dictates of virtue. How, for example, do we know what we know? For an answer to this question we go to Michael Polanyi's little book, *The Tacit Dimension* (Anchor, 95 cents), in which he shows, first of all, that we "come upon" what we know in a way that we can hardly explain. As he puts it:

Gestalt psychology has demonstrated that we may know a physiognomy by integrating our awareness of its particulars without being able to identify these particulars, and my analysis of knowledge is closely linked to this discovery of Gestalt psychology. . . . I am looking at Gestalt ... as the outcome of an active shaping of experience performed in the pursuit of knowledge. This shaping or integrating I hold to be the great and indispensable tacit power by which all knowledge is discovered and, once discovered, is held to be true.

Polanyi elaborates this conception with various developments and illustrations, but he is centrally concerned with the gestalt of *meaning*, through which we gain the feeling of knowing, and on the basis of which we act. There is a sense in which we don't see the particulars of an object while we are *recognizing* it. The recognition is an act of intuitive synthesis, you could say, in which the particulars play only a subliminal role. They are clues, but are not really inspected, although they seem integrated by the knowing. Polanyi enriches this idea by citing earlier thinkers:

German thinkers postulated that indwelling, or empathy, is the proper means of knowing man and the humanities. I am referring particularly to Dilthey and Lipps. Dilthey taught that the mind of a person can be understood only by reliving its workings; and Lipps represented æsthetic appreciation as an entering into a work of art and thus dwelling in the

mind of its creator. I think that Dilthey and Lipps described here a striking form of tacit knowing as applied to the understanding of man and of works of art, and that they were right in saying that this could be achieved only by indwelling. But my analysis of tacit knowing shows that they were mistaken in asserting that this sharply distinguished the humanities from the natural sciences. Indwelling, as derived from the structure of tacit knowing, is a far more precisely defined act than is empathy, and it underlies all observations, including all those previously described as indwelling.

So, after the fundamental recognition, and after the deepening effect of indwelling—"interiorization," as Polanyi puts it—what do we do? Well, one of the things we may then do is to turn our attention to the particulars. This can be a way of getting to know the object even better. We *study* the particulars. And since we can catalog particulars, but not the holistic subjectivity of tacit knowing and interiorization, we characteristically devote minute attention to the particulars, compiling exhaustive descriptions of them, and this is felt to give us a nailed-down, sure-thing sort of knowledge. We get to know all about the little things that go to make up the big thing we initially grasped by tacit knowing. And then we can *tell other people* about the particulars, even if we can't convey through words or description the primary reality of tacit knowing. This wealth of objective information about the parts of a thing is usually called scientific knowledge. Now comes a critically important statement by Polanyi:

We can now see how an unbridled lucidity can destroy our understanding of complex matters. Scrutinize closely the particulars of a comprehensive entity and their meaning is effaced, our conception of the entity is destroyed. . . . Admittedly, the destruction can be made good by interiorizing the particulars once more. The word uttered again in its proper context, the pianist's fingers used again with his mind on his music, the features of a physiognomy and the details of a pattern glanced at once more from a distance: they all come to life and recover their meaning and their comprehensive relationship.

There is thus both hazard and the possibility of greater knowledge in the study of particulars:

But it is important to note that this recovery never brings back the original meaning. It may

improve on it. Motion studies, which tend to paralyze a skill, will improve it when followed by practice. The meticulous dismembering of a text, which can kill its appreciation, can also supply material for a much deeper understanding of it. In these cases, the detailing of particulars, which by itself would destroy meaning, serves as a guide to their subsequent integration and thus establishes a more secure and more accurate meaning of them.

But the damage done by the specification of particulars may be irremediable. Meticulous detailing may obscure beyond recall a subject like history, literature or philosophy. Speaking more generally, the belief that, since particulars are more tangible, their knowledge offers a true conception of things is fundamentally mistaken.

Polyanyi's discussion of knowing continues through many ramifications, but for our purposes we have quoted enough. What he says about tacit knowing and "unbridled lucidity" seems a rather precise development of a very old insight—that of Socrates in the *Phaedo*:

. . . when I was worn out with physical investigations, it occurred to me that I must guard against the same sort of risk which people run when they watch and study an eclipse of the sun; they really do sometimes injure their eyes, unless they study its reflection in the water or some other medium. I conceived of something like this happening to myself, and I was afraid that by observing objects with my eyes and trying to comprehend them with each of my other senses I might blind my soul altogether.

What, then, would happen, in the realm of moral awareness and judgment, if we were to follow the counsels of Socrates and Polanyi, determining to "indwell" and "interiorize" our understanding, not only of the ethical necessities we feel and which impel us to action, but also the attitudes of people who seem not to recognize those necessities, responding to other guides? Would we not soon see, in respect to what seems to us a widespread moral apathy, that the victims of the latter are not so much bad men? or irredeemably cruel or selfish, but men whose involvement with external and peripheral matters results from shallow moral certainty, from a long schooling in knowledge based on "unbridled lucidity"? They, like many of those who disagree with them, concentrate on the petty virtues,

practicing the narrow morality which depends for its focus on attention to well-learned detail (blindness of soul). Yet these people are not, after all, without either virtue or morality. They are confined by their habitual modes of "knowing," and there is little or nothing in their culture to correct these well-seated habits—habits supported by nearly all the conventions and daily reinforced by the public relations techniques of politics, technology, and marketing. Moral condemnation will not peel back the accumulated layers of misdirected moral perception in these people; it only hardens their emotional self-righteousness. What we need, but do not have, is actual knowledge of the processes of moral awakening.

A good illustration of the dimensions of the problem is found in Michael Harrington's article in the July 27 *Saturday Review*, "The Will To Abolish Poverty." Mr. Harrington maintains that the way to end poverty is known, and that, except for the Vietnam war, ample resources exist for doing it. His contention is that the concern and the resolve to do it do not now exist. He uses the demands of the recent Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C.—which had a systematically deprecating press—to dramatize the issue. He speaks first of the need:

That there are hungry people in this fat land is horrible enough. But the Poor People's Campaign also raised the broader, and incredible, point that agri-business has imposed a sort of vested interest in malnutrition upon a large section of the federal bureaucracy. And that is not an isolated instance but a typical case of the relation which so often obtains between private economic power and public policy in this country.

During the winter, the Citizens Board of Inquiry into Hunger and Malnutrition defined the shocking dietary inadequacies which afflict millions of the poor. Since then, there have been attempts to discredit the report—one Congressional Committee haggled over the precise meaning of starvation—but its main conclusions remain very much intact. The Citizens Board pointed out, among other things, that Government food programs had reduced their coverage by 1,400,000 people in the last six years and that "malnutrition among the poor has risen sharply over the past decade."

Next he turns to the popular illusion that the need is being met. There is a general impression that the Federal food programs are administered in behalf of the needs of its beneficiaries. However, the report cited by Mr. Harrington says:

This is not true. They [the food programs] are designed and administered within the context of the national agricultural policy . . . [which] is dominated by a concern for maximizing agricultural income, especially within the big production categories.

Specifically:

What this currently means was revealed in some data on Government subsidies to big farmers released in May when the Poor People's Campaign was already in Washington. Agricultural subsidies totalled \$4 billion in 1967—roughly double the poverty program in the same year. Giant farm corporations were the most spectacular gainers: The Hawaiian Commercial and Sugar Corporation received \$1,300,000, U.S. Sugar \$1,200,000, and three California operators took in a total of \$8,100,000. Another payment was somewhat more modest, but had a political interest. Senator James O. Eastland, a member of the Senate Agricultural Committee and a strong proponent of self-reliance and individualism, got \$157,000 for keeping one-third of his 5,000-acre cotton plantation out of production.

When a food program fits into this scheme for maximizing the income of the rich and corporate farmers, the poor receive a grudging calorie or two. But if their hunger does not happen to parallel the surpluses which the Government underwrites, that is usually just too bad.

This is a long, factual article, and at the end the writer outlines the proposals of Martin Luther King and Bayard Rustin as containing a practical solution. Know-how is not at issue, but will is lacking. The moral attention of Americans has been focused elsewhere for too long a time. Mr. Harrington concludes:

America knows how to abolish poverty. It could be done in less than a generation. But so long as the war in Vietnam continues, there is not a chance that it will do so. Even when peace comes, it will be extremely difficult to bring together a new coalition, particularly because of some of the bitterness which now exists among those who must become brothers in the struggle if the cause is to prevail.

Another perspective on the popular moral ideas of Americans is given by Martin Duberman in an article on Black Power in the Winter 1968 *Partisan Review*:

. . . while the formation of the Black Panther party in Lowndes [County in Alabama] brought out paroxysms of fear in the nation at large, the announcement that General Motors' 1965 sales totaled 21 billion dollars—exceeding the GNP of all but nine countries in the world—produced barely a tremor of apprehension. The unspoken assumption can only be something like this: It is less dangerous for a few whites to control the whole nation than for a local majority of Negroes to control their own community.

Well, for contrast between actual social injustice and moral delusions of grandeur, these illustrations would be pretty hard to beat. Yet they can be beaten, at least in principle, by the centuries-old horror of conditions of the peasants and fishermen of Sicily, where Danilo Dolci began his labors a few years ago. The extraordinary value of Dolci's opinions lies in the fact that they come from a man who is not only an uncompromising critic, but also an activist in social reconstruction. Again we quote the *Saturday Review*—a paper which may not be angry enough to suit some readers, but which gives space to men like Dolci at regular intervals. In his article, "Mafia-Client Politics" (*SR*, July 6), Dolci finds direct analogies between the underworld political control of Sicily by the Mafia and the exercise of power throughout the Western world "under the label of democracy." After developing the parallel at some length, with illustrations of how the system works, he says:

What is needed is total, continuous, strategic commitment to the construction of a new world and the demolition of the one we have outlived; readiness to use one's energy to arouse and enlist new forces everywhere and to take decisive action to stop madmen from doing mad things. What is needed is a new nonviolent revolution.

This discussion is too valuable to be lost in brief quotation. Readers are urged to go to the original article, and to Dolci's books, and especially to James McNeish's life of Dolci, *Fire Under the Ashes* (*Beacon*, 1966, \$5.95), which develops Dolci's

conception of human regeneration and lists his books. He is fundamentally concerned with the awakening of broad moral vision:

Anyone with genuine revolutionary experience knows—and must admit—that in order to change a situation one must appeal, whether explicitly or tacitly, to moral rather than material considerations, for they take precedence, that a call for more clearly defined principles and a higher morality has a powerful force; and that revolutionary action is, therefore also that which helps to evolve a new sensitivity, a new capacity, a new culture, new instincts—human nature remade.

Elsewhere in the *SR* article Dolci says:

Who are the more numerous, the people in whose interest it is to bring about major changes in order to arrive at a world fit for all, or the people who think that it is in their interest to maintain the status quo? If we succeed in interpreting and expressing the deepest needs of thousands, millions, and billions of human beings and help them to gain precise knowledge of themselves and their problems, to start constructive action of every kind, from the lowest to the highest level, and to make their weight count, we shall have succeeded in setting in motion a practical revolutionary force. New people, new groups who reject a secondhand thinking and secondhand living and who are committed to make a better world, already exist. We must lose no time in recognizing them, meeting them, comparing experience with them, and forming new organic fronts together.

The rest of the article is devoted to the means to form organic communities. The reader realizes that Dolci is repeating no "theory," but only what he has found out from experience. He has been very busy "indwelling" with and "interiorizing" the essential longings and common needs of the human race.

## REVIEW

### A GREAT BUT UNDEVELOPED COUNTRY

WHAT is California? Tough "what is it?" questions can hardly be answered except by illustration. You take snapshots, collect figures, and report on varieties of human behavior as well as you can. That is more or less what the contributors to *The California Revolution* (Grossman Publishers, 1968, \$6.50), edited by Carey McWilliams, have done in a book which deals with the expansions and super-antics of the California scene since 1945. Some of the articles are excellent pieces of reporting; several writers find good things to say about the lusty exuberance of Californians; and some ask questions which need to be asked. But nearly all these contributors, including the editor—who has been writing good books about California for years—agree that this state is mainly a place to find out what America is about. This is by no means a new idea. In his introduction, Mr. McWilliams finds a spokesman for it in a magazine article of eighty-five years ago:

As far back as 1883, a writer in the *Overland Monthly* got this aspect of the state's social and political life just right. California, he said, "is in almost every respect an intensification of the American spirit . . . only more so." But one must concede that in the prodigiously fertile environment of California, particularly in Southern California—this innocent phrase, "only more so," can take on some rather alarming dimensions. In California geraniums are tall and sturdy as small trees, sugar beets are the size of watermelons, and, on the same scale, the bigots, fakirs, con men (the late C. C. Julian), prophets, and visionaries are giant-size.

Robert Kirsch, book editor of the Los Angeles *Times*, discussing California's "Cultural Scene," expands on this theme:

Whatever else it may be, California is a microcosm of America in the age of affluence, leisure, and education. Thoreau wrote, "In dreams, we see ourselves naked and acting out our real characters, even more closely than we see others awake." California is America's dream whether the rest of the country is ready to admit it or not. Enough

people vote by airline ticket, bus ride, or Route 66 in their tens of thousands every month, to make the claim believable. And of those who do not come to California, the place inhabits a realm of the imagination. All are caught up in the sur-reality of it, contribute their private visions or nightmares. Someone has said that California is the place where the ideal self comes closest to realization. If this is so, we are given an extraordinary profile of America's aspirations and fears. That is why the cultural scene in California, at any level, is significant to the country at large. They must see themselves, caricatured, perhaps, but reflected nevertheless.

The extraordinary growth in the number of people in California—now the nation's most populous state—is described and in some measure accounted for by D. B. Luten. Will this growth continue to an estimated 72 million Californians in the year 2000? Mr. Luten doesn't think so. The controlling factor, in his view, will be the accumulating ugliness which concentrations of people seem to produce: "*California will stop growing one day because it will have become just as repulsive as the rest of the country.*"

This is something of a keynote for several of the other essays, which bring factual support to the claim that the endless flow of people with their cars and the resulting suburban developments are spoiling the state. Richard G. Lillard writes on "The Soil Beneath the Blacktop," showing that not only the smog is having a fatal effect on California agriculture, wilting the spinach and other edible greens, and diminishing the citrus crop: *People are using up the land:*

In the old and famous parts of California, agriculture is being steadily paved or roofed over. The change in the areas surrounding Ventura and Los Angeles, San Jose and Santa Clara, Sacramento and San Diego is as visible and as significant as that from one geological epoch to another. Though minor California officials—experts—mutter now and then, there is no wide public concern over the destruction of the fertile oases of prime, unparalleled, irreplaceable land. The masses are too preoccupied with bowling alleys, race tracks, and drive-in theatres to care about the soil beneath the blacktop.

Homes and factories are devouring vast garden areas. An appalling statistic: In the late 1950's "for a time earth-moving machinery destroyed 3,000 acres of orange orchard a day."

A kind of "bigger and better" fever seems to afflict even serious writers about California, making you suspect that the good things they say are exaggerated. Inevitably, everything seems a bit brazen—both liberal and conservative politics have a brash style, and the people oscillate from one extreme to the other, often unpredictably. On the plus side of democracy is the "Freeway Revolt" described by Samuel E. Wood. The people are realizing that the California Highway Commission's plans are often as ruthless and unthinking as the policies on a national level of the Army Engineers. In opposition to freeway devastations, there have been community revolts and small victories, preserving historic buildings and rare natural landscapes. But this citizens' arousal is only beginning. It was not until 1962 that a general indictment was published in a magazine, describing "the havoc wrought by the division of highways on the state's beauty and productivity."

Three of the articles are notably optimistic. One is "The Knowledge Bonanza" by Mel Wax, which describes the valiant efforts of the two-year junior and four-year state colleges to meet the demand for higher education. Mr. Wax says:

There is nothing like this, anywhere else in the world. If you're fortunate enough to be a Californian, you can now advance from kindergarten to doctor of philosophy in tuition-free public schools that are said to compare in quality with the best anywhere in the Western world. In quantity, there is no comparison at all.

Some 600,000 students attend California's junior colleges, and 172,000 the four-year colleges.

James J. Degnan writes appreciatively of the new campus of the University of California at Santa Cruz, combining the virtues of the big university with those of the small liberal arts

college—"the most unusual state university in the nation." Grades for many of the courses at Santa Cruz are on a pass-fail basis, and quizzes and tests are held to a minimum. The possibilities of Santa Cruz, in terms of a serious revival of the questions on which a liberal arts education is based, are seen to be great by this writer.

The third encouraging article is a tribute by Scott Thurber to the Sierra Club and its director, David Brower, for becoming an effective force in conservation throughout the West. Founded some seventy-five years ago by John Muir, the Sierra Club actively engages in conservation education and in campaigning on specific issues such as the Grand Canyon. It has developed a strong, intelligent constituency, an informed and militant leadership, and the result has been that dam builders in government and tree cutters in industry are beginning to respect both the good sense and the influence of this organization.

We have saved for last Theodore Roszak's "Life in the Instant Cities," which sets out to be a fair appraisal of the new, giant real estate developments—the creation from scratch of entire cities, whose designers and promoters say that they are determined to avoid the commercial stupidities which have turned so much of California into "an unsightly scab of congested tracts and slurb-lined freeway." Two great projects now under development get the most attention from Mr. Roszak: Foster City, emerging on an island in San Francisco Bay, eventually (by 1974) to have a population of 35,000 spread out on 9,600 acres (no crowding); and Valencia, whose plans call for a city of between 200,000 and 250,000 people on the land of the Newhall Ranch (44,000 acres) about twenty miles north of Burbank.

After studying the plans and reading the literature, Mr. Roszak points out that there is just no place in these communities for people with low incomes. The workers in the industrial park at Valencia will not live in Valencia. The "help" will have to commute. The plans are undeniably

attractive and incorporate some of the recent thinking about city planning. There will be sewers, not septic tanks, buried power lines, and homes will cluster about recreation centers, with intelligent control of auto traffic in behalf of quiet and children's lives. Mr. Roszak summarizes:

Such are the best points in the plans for Valencia and Foster City. Put them all together and what they promise to prospective inhabitants—and this is by far the major emphasis of all the literature for the two towns—is a life of self-contained comfort, active leisure, lavish recreation, luxury and status. The promotional pictures show us happy families putting out for an afternoon sail on the lake or lagoon, children scampering barefoot through groves of fruit trees, housewives strolling about elegant shopping centers, patio barbecues, esplanades, horse-back riding, swimming pool parties, "flower-splashed malls," golf courses, tennis courts. . . . "The finest of all possible worlds (exclamation point)." And that, we may take it, is what these new towns are meant to be all about: such is their vision of the good life.

Mr. Roszak proceeds to some embarrassing questions. Will these towns support theatres? Not really. The Foster City people will go to San Francisco for that. Valencia is seven times bigger, but "the plans for both Valencia and Foster City couldn't be more vague than they are with respect to the culture of the towns."

That is why there is so much hoopla about swimming pools and sauna baths and sailboats. That is the culture of Valencia and Foster City. And it is as much "culture" as mortgage bankers and land developers are going to worry about providing, which is one great reason why it is ludicrous to talk of these projects as "cities."

And that, one may say, is usually what is the matter with California. Things happen all right, but in reverse order. The state is constantly in the throes of growing pains, but hasn't the slightest notion of the meaning of human growth. It knows every version of the pitch for better living but none of the facts of life. But after all, what could you expect of an over-grown community which *lets* bankers and rich farmers lucky enough to inherit large tracts of land plan its cities? Anyway, how would you lay down a design for "culture" on

a drawing board? To attempt it would be something like looking for literary merit in a Sears Roebuck catalog.

One is driven to ask: Why should there be books on such things? Why exaggerate the importance of these people by explaining all the things wrong with them? Or, one might argue that *they* haven't abdicated their responsibility. They never had any. They just had money. And they might prove very good builders if they had somebody to take orders from. You could say that we need books about creating a culture that is independent of bankers and developers far more than we need books about the dreadful mistakes these unimportant people make.

Well, this is just letting off steam. Perhaps there are already some projects in genuine culture under way in California—but if there are, they are still in the embryo stage. And it's pretty risky to write about embryos—they're like the hippies—you never know how they'll turn out.

## *COMMENTARY* **PEOPLE AND POWER**

IT is evident from the book discussed in this week's Review that Americans are, more than anything else, a people who, after nearly two centuries of great pride and optimism, are becoming sick of themselves. This is a painful ordeal. Hardest to bear, perhaps, is the fact that it doesn't overtake all people at the same time. We hardly know what to do about the serious differences in the pace of awakening to the fact that the time has come for far-reaching changes in attitude and behavior.

Many of the "doctors" of our society want to write a single, omnipotent prescription. Their ideas are enormously over-simplified, for how could all people follow a single path of change and reconstruction?

We know much better in the less complicated area of merely intellectual education. We know better than to force the same courses upon all children. We know that their perceptive capacities and powers are very different, more or less according to age. We don't know even this well enough, but we know it somewhat. We set the levels of what we teach children with at least some regard for their relative capacity to grasp complexity.

But we forget this principle almost entirely when it comes to adults. We try to draw up the straight, true doctrine, the final social and moral truth, and then we really *tell* people what they ought to understand and think. Even reformers suffer from the typical American illusion so well described by Tocqueville many years ago: "the American protest on behalf of 'the individual' was rooted in the assumption that all individuals, once free 'to be themselves,' would desire the same things and feel in the same ways." They don't.

A fundamental law of human development is that those who see better can do better. This is a discouraging prospect because, almost invariably, the people who see better are not, as they think,

the people who have the power to do better. So usually, these people go after power, and then the anti-educational compromises of the power-struggle make them lose their sight of what is really better.

What can men without power—power over others, that is—do?

This question brings into view the happy circumstance that the United States is a great big country with a sloppy, loose-jointed, and largely inefficient system of control. People in this country can do a great deal without power, if they would only get at it. And that, incidentally, would also break up the monolithic uniformity in the idea of "what must be done."

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### HISTORY OF AN ABERRATION

AT the end of his Foreword to Howard Adams' *The Education of Canadians: 1800-1867* (Harvest House, Montreal, 1968, \$5.95 ), H. H. Walsh of McGill University has this to say:

As matters relating to education are now shaping up as one of the most important battles of this decade in Canadian history, a detailed account of a similar battle in the mid-nineteenth century ought to be of great interest to all of us who are participating in today's epic struggle. A little of the righteous indignation that Howard Adams feels toward those who frustrated the emergence of a truly liberal school system in the mid-nineteenth century, can well be turned against those who would perpetuate the errors of the last century in a far more perilous era which can no longer indulge in such aberrations as separatism and racial discrimination.

This book is valuable for exactly the reasons given by Prof. Walsh. As for the righteous indignation of the author, it hardly goes beyond the feelings to be expected of a man who knows from careful historical research that cultural and religious egotism is totally without justification, even though historical relativists may be able to point out that the partisan leaders of the period under consideration didn't "know any better." Before anything else, the facts recited by Mr. Adams raise the question: What sort of religion is it that provides its advocates with "moral" reasons for treating the common people as no more than plastic material to be manipulated in behalf of the religious institution and power of a ruling caste? How are we to regard a creed or faith which has in it nothing to suggest that the making of arbitrary decisions over the heads of the rest of the population is simply *wrong*?

A chief defect in "liberalism," it may be, is the placid acceptance of the major institutions of a society, on the assumption that since a great many people are involved, it is democratically correct to assume that they are necessary or good. This sort

of "tolerance" may be appropriate at the political level, since the right to be wrong is an essential of political freedom, but leaving matters of conviction about the nature of man to the coarse measures of sectarian institutions is surely an abdication of moral responsibility at the non-political cultural level. A religion which in practice corrupts man's ideas of man is not a good thing, even though this judgment affords no justification for coercive remedies. Failure to recognize this "beyond politics" moral responsibility will almost certainly deliver the society into the hands of those who are perfectly willing to use both coercion and indoctrination to obtain their partisan ends.

We have seen how this works in practice, again and again, in Western history. In the case of the United States, for example, there has been far too much praise of the devotion of the Pilgrims and Puritans to "religious freedom," and not enough recognition that for them freedom in religion meant freedom to dictate and dominate in matters of belief. Cruelty and even treachery (as in their relations with the Indians) seemed quite correct to these people, so long as they were connected with the service of their "God." As George Williston puts it in *Saints and Strangers*:

... the Pilgrim leaders did not believe in equalitarian democracy though they were moving in that direction. They favored a change in the hierarchical structure above them, but not below. That change in the foundations of society would come in due time, but long after the Pilgrims had gone to their rewards.

Canada has had similar problems, in the contest for control of the minds of the young between the Catholic Church and the Anglican political rulers of Canada. The people were treated as pawns. The British aristocrats determined to maintain themselves in power through control of the educational system of Canada, yet were quick to compromise with the similar interests of the Catholic Church, in order to prevent the emergence of a unified secular system of public education. There were leaders

who struggled to bring such a system about, in Canada, and Mr. Adams' book is mainly the story of their defeat by the wheeling and dealing tactics of political leaders.

Canada, alas, had no Horace Mann. During the period of his activity in the United States, which brought into being the common school system of Massachusetts and stimulated similar developments in other states, Canada fell victim to the power plays of administrators determined to shape the minds of coming generations according to their own ideas. In his summary, Mr. Adams writes:

Education in Canada between 1800 and 1867 was the product of a power struggle among the Anglican Church, the Catholic Church, Legislative Assemblies, and Colonial administrations. The needs and interests of the large class of farmers, labourers and immigrants were seldom given consideration. At the same time, the populace did not actively participate in educational controversies because schools were regarded as upper-class affairs. The public school system of Canada developed in harmony with the will of the churches and for much of the time under the specific control of the Church of England and the Catholic Church.

This history has a special relevance to claims about the "apathy" of the people in relation to government and self-improvement. These people were for long centuries *trained* in apathy by the manipulations of arrogant men. The general working population often cared little for the contentions that were made in their name. The French Canadians hardly realized that their children were being trained to anachronism by an essentially medieval program, while the schools maintained by the British were largely jingo institutions celebrating nothing but British culture. For example:

One of the most celebrated and significant arguments over the national program of education concerned the question of textbooks for the common schools of the colony. Under Ryerson and the Council of Public Instruction, the Irish National textbooks were imposed on the schools of Upper [predominately British] Canada. These manuals—which contained almost exclusively British topics—

glorified British heroes, extolled the excellence of British culture, and intentionally excluded Canadian themes. . . . Compulsory instruction of this character had definite consequences: it fashioned a dependent and colonial mentality subordinated to the culture of the mother country. Until recently, Canadians accepted their colonial institutions and subordinate cultural status readily; today, they are beginning to show signs of dissatisfaction.

Except for the Province of Quebec, the public school programs have remained exceedingly pro-British in both content and spirit. The exalted British theme has continued to prevail in the curricula. A representative topic given in a current High School Social Studies Course is "The Blood of Courageous Adventurers Flows in the veins of an Englishman." It lavishly describes Admiral Nelson as "one of the world's outstanding heroes," who contrived "the greatest victories in naval history." The content is secondary to the prime objective of paying homage to the superiority of the mother country. Similar themes, of course, abound in the Catholic educational system of Quebec toward their own group of colonizers, adventurers and missionaries.

Attitudes toward these abuses are changing, says Mr. Adams, and Canadians, he thinks, now long to have a national identity of their own. But they are also realizing "that they must first create an indigenous culture in order to establish a national identity." Meanwhile, a reading of this book will throw a great light on the causes behind the curious separatist attitudes in Canada, such as became apparent during the visit of General De Gaulle. The Canadians have had to struggle against their own leaders in order to make simple beginnings at being themselves.

## *FRONTIERS*

### **Architecture Without Architects**

THE peak experience is a rare happening. It is, so to say, a vision from a great height, and a man may not have such an experience more than three or four times in his life—if, indeed, he has one at all. But these few elevating experiences seem to be "enough." That is, the individual doesn't need to be continually in a state of archetypal awareness for the symmetries of this sort of perception to inform his being. There is a sense in which he gains immeasurably from even a single glimpse of what lies beyond the barriers of ordinary sense-existence—he has experienced "the good," and he cannot forget it. The best illustration in classical literature of the effects of this experience is doubtless the eleventh discourse of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, which tells how Arjuna is permitted by Krishna to see the wonder of the divine self—the self of all; and he can hardly *stand* more than a moment or two of this vision. Yet ever after he has something to grow up to in his life.

From a "scientific" point of view, we have here an instance of "the problem of the small sample." Why should a man take seriously what he feels and sees so fleetingly, when his "normal" perception—his everyday, practical awareness—provides no such revelations? If the reliable frequency of an occurrence is a measure of its reality, then the peak experience provides a very low order of support for what it discloses. But the man who has had a peak experience may answer this "democratic" argument by saying that no matter how accurately impressive the description of a man's status quo, this hardly has a bearing on the question of where he ought to be going. And if a man were able to *prove* to others the validity of his vision, it would not be an intimation of the future, but some symmetry brought forward from the identifiable past. After all, if counting gives certainty, you will find it only for existing things. You can count the past, but the future is always a work of the imagination.

Yet the past has its wonderful secrets, somehow containing the *germs* of the future. The problem is to recognize these secrets, to pick them out, instead of interpreting the past according to the prejudices and fashions of the present. Books which succeed in reading the past in terms of its spontaneous excellences can sometimes reflect a social peak achievement. A good illustration of this is found in the exhibition catalog for a show at the New York Museum of Modern Art (November, 1964 to February, 1965), titled *Architecture Without Architects*. The show was made up of photographs of dwellings and other structures, all over the world, built by men without the help of "specialists." The keynote of the exhibition is given in the brief caption beneath the first illustration—showing some houses of the Mediterranean area:

Vernacular architecture does not go through fashion cycles. It is nearly immutable, indeed, unimprovable, since it serves its purpose to perfection. As a rule, the origin of indigenous building forms and construction methods is lost in the distant past.

Both the exhibition and the publication were prepared by Bernard Rudofsky. There is a vast corrective of the vanity in specialists' preoccupation with themselves and their times in the first paragraph of Mr. Rudofsky's Preface:

Architectural history, as written and taught in the Western world, has never been concerned with more than a few select cultures. In terms of space it comprises but a small part of the globe—Europe, stretches of Egypt and Anatolia—or a little more than was known in the second century A.D. Moreover, the evolution of architecture is usually dealt with only in its late phases. Skipping the first fifty centuries, chroniclers present us with a full-dress pageant of "formal" architecture, as arbitrary a way of introducing the art of building as, say, dating the birth of music with the advent of the symphony orchestra. Although the dismissal of the early stages can be explained, though not excused, by the scarcity of architectural monuments, the discriminative approach of the historian is mostly due to his parochialism. Besides, architectural history as we know it is equally biased on the social plane. It amounts to little more than a who's who of architects

who commemorated power and wealth, an anthology of buildings of, by, and for the privileged—the houses of true and false gods, of merchant princes and princesses of the blood—with never a word about the houses of lesser people. Such preoccupation with noble architecture and architectural nobility to the exclusion of all other kinds may have been understandable as late as a generation ago, when the relics and ruins of ancient buildings served the architect as his sole models of excellence (to which he helped himself as a matter of course and convenience), but today, when the copying of historical forms is on the wane, when banking houses or railroad stations do not necessarily have to resemble prayers in stone to inspire confidence, such self-imposed limitation appears absurd.

This book is filled with illustrations of the practical genius of builders who learned through experience to meet the need for shelter with the same kind of adaptive efficiency that the human body exhibits—without developing any of the petty sovereignties which specialists claim for their inventions. Architecture without architects represents organic housing—Taoistic housing, you could say. Some of its instruction for modern man is well put by Mr. Rudofsky at the end of his Preface:

Not only is the need for confining the growth of the community well understood by the anonymous builders, it is matched by their understanding of the limits of architecture itself. They rarely subordinate the general welfare to the pursuit of profit and progress. In this respect, they share the beliefs of the professional philosopher. To quote Huizinga, "the expectation that every new discovery or refinement of existing means must contain the promise of higher values or greater happiness is an extremely naive thought. . . . It is not in the least paradoxical to say that a culture may founder on real and tangible progress."