VOLUME XXVIII, NO. 46
NOVEMBER 12, 1975

RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

AS we approach the observance of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution, there is increasing effort to recapture the meaning of that great event. Whatever is made of it by politicians and demagogues, millions of Americans feel, as a part of their heritage, that something splendid, something extraordinary and of great promise for the future of all mankind happened in 1776. In response to this feeling, much will be done in the communities and schools of the nation to deepen our understanding of what was achieved by Americans at the close of the eighteenth century. Even though there are many who feel both shock and shame at what has happened since, the struggle for independence and the early days of the Republic are still an inspiration to the people of the United States. Just as, when Christmas comes around, persons well aware of the degradation of this "holy day" are nonetheless drawn to ponder the significance of a Christ, of a Wise One—to try to cut through all tradition and triviality to some core of meaning in the visitation of mankind by such a Being—so, the anniversaries of the emancipation of a nation make occasion for similar questing reflections.

The final years of the eighteenth century did indeed mark a great change in the affairs of men. If we attempt to speak of it apart from the resulting political events, we might say that the epoch of Revolution gave expression to a new way of thinking of themselves by human beings. They grew in their own eyes in dignity and capacity. They thought of themselves as able to manage their lives, to govern their own affairs, and to deal justly with one another—at least, with more justice than had resulted from the practice of kings. The revolutions of the eighteenth century sought an ordering of human affairs by declared and commonly accepted principles. A veritable galaxy of distinguished men gave voice to those principles in both America and Europe. The Declaration of Independence is as much a philosophical as a political document. It rests its contentions upon an account of the nature of man—his capacities, his endowments, his possibilities, and his rights.

But what, we must now ask, did the Declaration leave out?

No one has written more understandingly of the power of the leading ideas of the eighteenth-century Revolution, or more prophetically of their limitation and incompleteness, than Joseph Mazzini. In his essay, "Faith and the Future" (1835), he declared that the French Revolution was born from "a Titanic, limitless belief in human power and human liberty . . . a manifestation eminently religious, . . . the aim it was its mission to achieve, was the idea of *right.* From the theory of *right* it derived its power, its mandate, the legitimacy of its acts. The *declaration of the rights of man* is the supreme and ultimate formula of the French Revolution."

But "rights," Mazzini went on to say, gave no complete social philosophy:

> The word democracy was inspired by an idea of rebellion sacred at the time, but still rebellion. Now every such idea is imperfect, and inferior to the idea of unity which will be the dogma of the future.

Taking Rousseau as the intellectual type of the age of Revolution, and as the chief formulator of its principles, he charged the French reformer with responsibility for the confinement of revolutionary thinking. Rousseau, he said, like Voltaire and Montesquieu, "had no conception of the collective life of humanity, of its tradition, of the law of progress appointed for the generations, of a common end towards which we ought to strive, of association that can alone attain it step

by step." Rousseau's conception of man's nature was insufficient:

> Starting from the philosophy of the *ego* and of individual liberty, he robbed that principle of fruit by basing it, not on a duty common to all, not on a definition of man as an essentially social creature, . . . not on the bond that unites the individual to humanity of which he is a factor, but on a simple convention, avowed or understood. All Rousseau's teaching proceeds from the assertion "that social right is not derived from nature, but based on conventions." . . . Rousseau has no other program. . . . Stated in these terms the problem contains neither the elements of normal progress nor the possibility of solving the social economic question of our time. . . . The Society of Rousseau, like that of Montesquieu, is a mutual insurance society, nothing more.

Upon what prior principle, then, should the revolution have been founded? Mazzini knew better than to claim certainty on this question, saying, instead: "What is the law? I know it not; its discovery is the aim of the actual epoch; but the certainty that such a law exists is sufficient to necessitate the substitution of the idea of Duty for the idea of Right." The pursuit of rights alone will certainly lead to ruin:

> Right is the faith of the individual. Duty is the common collective faith. Right can but organize resistance: it may destroy, it cannot found. Duty builds up, associates, and unites; it is derived from a general law, whereas Right is derived only from human will. There is nothing therefore to forbid a struggle against Right: any individual may rebel against any right in another which is injurious to him, and the sole judge between the adversaries is Force, and such in fact, has frequently been the answer which societies based upon right have given their opponents.
>
> Is this all we seek? Ought man, gifted with progressive activity, to remain quiescent like an emancipated slave satisfied with his solitary liberty? Does naught remain in fulfillment of his mission on earth, but a work of consequences and deductions to be translated into the sphere of fact; or conquests to be watched over and defended? Because man, consecrated by the power of thought, king of the earth, has burst the bonds of a worn-out religious form that imprisoned and restrained his activity and independence, are we to have no new bond of universal fraternity? no religion? no recognized and accepted conception of general and providential law?

One might minimize this utterance as no more than extravagant rhetoric, save for the fact that virtually everything Mazzini predicts as consequences of the eighteenth-century revolution, based upon the single ideal of liberty and the free exercise of rights, has come true. His big generalizations are accurate, his diagnoses correct. The eighteenth-century achievement, great in its way, was incomplete; its inheritors failed to recognize that the establishment of individual rights was not enough: they came "to regard as a program for the future that which was in fact but a grand summing up of the past."

This, surely, is the sort of thinking that we ought to be doing now, since what was for Mazzini largely prophetic insight is for us painful and embarrassing retrospect. No bill of particulars is needed; books listing and defining our confusions, contradictions and dilemmas come out every week. Yet the problem was clear from the beginning, although not seriously recognized except by the few. Speaking of the implications of the Declaration of Independence, Ralph Ketcham says in *From Colony to Country* (Macmillan, 1974) that the government established by the Founding Fathers—

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

A handful of people, Ketcham shows, understood these tensions and tried to guard against them, but sweeping anticipations of the enjoyment of "rights" set the tone of American life for the next two hundred years. We have no difficulty in seeing the magnified effect of these tensions, and the chief task in the present—

indeed, the condition of survival as well as of restoration—is to decide how we can complete the work of the eighteenth century by finding a remedy. We need to find it first in principle, then apply it in fact.

How is this to be done? The first step is to conceive the vision of what ought to be. Where shall we find an expression of that vision? Actually, it is all about—in dozens, scores, hundreds of books and articles—variously conceived, but always with the essentials in common. The following is a somewhat "nuts and bolts" version, taken from Harlan Cleveland's Introduction to *Human Requirements, Supply Levels and Outer Bounds*, a study by John and Magda McHale, issued recently by the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies:

> The notion that the world community should so arrange its internal affairs so that every man, woman and child at least has life, and perhaps even a chance at liberty and happiness, is consonant with the declared values of most modern societies.
>
> Every industrial nation has a government-guaranteed standard of "enough," expressed as guaranteed income, a minimum wage, a poverty line, job tenure, unemployment compensation, and the like. But despite the exhortations of great religious and political leaders through the centuries, equality of access to the necessities of life has never been operational for the world community as a whole. It quite suddenly is today. A new bargain of planetary scope is in the making—and the bargaining about needs and resources will probe deeply into the distribution of wealth and income both inside and between the "developing" and the "developed" policies.
>
> If the more affluent peoples are asked to modify their living standards and rearrange their priorities, which for most of them may require important changes in life styles and workways, their peoples and especially their political leaders will want to know that the changes are worthwhile, that they give promise of meeting the basic needs of the needy—rather than speculators, brokers, feudal chieftains and military governors. At the same time in the poorer countries, the political courage and administrative drive to be self-reliant (get population growth under control, maximize food production, extend education, assure employment) will also depend on the larger bargain—on assurance that the "advanced" economies don't advance past the limits of environmental prudence, and on large and unpatronizing transfers of resources and technology.
>
> Can it be done? Can our burdened biosphere absorb the shock of taking seriously the incandescent idea that "all Men are created equal"? (Jefferson wasn't sure he meant women too, but we are.) The predicament of exploding population and dwindling resources holds us back from a quick "can do" reply. . . .
>
> The "if" is a question about our collective will to get on with it, our collective imagination to invent the institutions of fairness, our collective capacity to manage interdependence and finance great leaps forward. But it may help to know that the primary obstacle to making good on our 200-year-old pretensions about "all Men" may not be the resistance of Nature after all, but merely the familiar and correctable orneriness of Man.

What are the implicit requirements of this "great leap forward"? First, and quite obviously, we have to get used to thinking of ourselves as citizens of the world. There is no solution at all for separate nations. Planetary interdependence is now an established fact of life. Second, as the ecologists have made plain, we must think of ourselves as children of and collaborators with Nature, no more her conquerors and exploiters. Finally, we must find and adopt other-than, better-than, acquisitive and material goals. Too much makes us sick, never satisfied, and there's not enough to go round when anyone has more than a decent sufficiency. What is a decent sufficiency? We hardly know, but the McHale study on this subject is worth reading.

This, however, is an Aristotelian, a statistical account of the vision, forced into our field of awareness by the damnation that awaits around the corner of "business as usual." It is an empiricist's warning.

The Revolution of 1776 was not brought on by any such influences. What made it happen? We call two witnesses who took part—John Adams and Thomas Paine. Both had large

responsibilities in making the Revolution effective, yet, curiously, they did not admire each other at all.

In 1818 Adams wrote in retrospect on the Revolution to his friend, Hezekiah Niles:

> The American Revolution was not a common event. Its effects and consequences have already been awful over a great part of the globe. And when and where are they to cease?
>
> But what do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war? The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. . . . This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.

"The complete accomplishment of it, in so short a time and by such simple means," he added, "was perhaps a singular example in the history of mankind." What made those "thirteen clocks"—as Adams described the colonies, of widely differing background and character—strike together in "a perfection of mechanism"?

Curiously, the best answer to this question is to be found in study of a work condemned by Adams as "a poor, ignorant, malicious, short-sighted, crapulous mass"—the pamphlet *Common Sense,* by Thomas Paine. For it was this pamphlet—set off from other revolutionary tracts by unique qualities—which, rudely severing the umbilicus which joined the colonists to England, did more than any other single cause to bring about a "radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people."

What did Paine say? He gave rousing, penetrating voice to an idea whose time had come. By prose that reached into and gripped the feelings of the people, he weaned the colonists of their affection for and sense of dependence on the English king. He dissolved the grounds of their loyalty to England. He ridiculed the English constitution, freeing the colonists to believe they could govern themselves with far better order, justice, and promise for the future. His metaphors were sometimes crude, sometimes brilliant, but always effective. His rhetorical flights had all the buoyancy of spontaneous human hopes, and he appealed to ideals already vaguely in the air, giving them visible shape:

> The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth. . . . 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time by the proceedings now. Now is the seed-time of continental union, faith, and honor. The least fracture now will be like the name engraved with the point of a pin on the tender rind of a young oak; the wound will enlarge with the tree, and posterity read it in full grown characters.

In a brilliant essay on Paine's influence, the historian, Bernard Bailyn, says:

> The great intellectual force of *Common Sense* lay not in its close argumentation on specific points but in its reversal of the presumptions that underlay the arguments, a reversal that forced thoughtful readers to consider, not so much a point here and a conclusion there, but a wholly new way of looking at the entire range of problems involved. . . . The dominant tone of *Common Sense* is that of rage. It was written by an enraged man—not someone who had reasoned doubts about the English constitution and the related establishment in America, but someone who hated them both and who wished to strike back at them in a savage response. The verbal surface of the pamphlet is heated, and it burned into the consciousness of contemporaries because below it was the flaming conviction, not simply that England was corrupt and that America should declare its independence, but that the whole of organized society and government was stupid and cruel and that it survived only because the atrocities it systematically imposed on humanity had been papered over with a veneer of mythology and superstition that numbed the mind and kept people from rising against the evils that oppressed them.

If Paine did write in a rage, it was a rage purified by moral conviction and utopian vision. Through it, with matchless eloquence, he moved the American people to be satisfied with nothing less than complete freedom. Paine's vision could not possibly be fulfilled by the Revolution, yet without it there probably would have been no

Revolution, no clean break with the past, and no challenging new beginning.

Today we look on that time with longing, and toward the future with dread. What cry—had we a Paine among us—would speak to our condition now? There would be no place in it for any sort of rage. The rage was a part of eighteenth-century limitation. The enemy is not in any nation or cultural group. The enemy, as Harlan Cleveland put it, is in "the familiar and correctable orneriness of Man." It is in habit and affection, attachments and inherited beliefs. The pressures of circumstance and history can hardly be personified today—no George III exists on whom to place the blame. The call is to the mind and heart to think of ourselves in new terms, and find the means and the strength to support the vision that has been described by so many in so many ways.

REVIEW
ANARCHIST HISTORIAN

AN anarchist group in New York—Free Life Editions, Inc., 41 Union Square West, N.Y. 10003—has issued a complete translation of Voline's *The Unknown Revolu*tion, first published in French in 1947, and later in England by Freedom Press, in a translation (with some sections omitted) by Holley Cantine. Readers seeking an independent grasp of the vast changes wrought in the modern world by the Russian Revolution—independent of ideological slogans and partisan claims—will find this book richly informing. Because anarchists resolutely reject political power and its uses, history written by anarchists tends to be objective and impartial—uncolored by political doctrines resting on coercive authority—and pervaded by manifest intellectual integrity. Anarchist analysis of great social and human struggles does much to reduce such great events as the Russian Revolution to terms comprehensible by the ordinary reader, since it helps to free him from the illusions of power and from the complexity of arguments about what can be done with power. The anarchist writer, if he retains his principles, continually points out what cannot be done with power, and demonstrates its uniformly dehumanizing effects. In short, anarchist writing and criticism is non- or pre-political, which gives it strength in human terms, and weakness in political terms. Yet the salvation of the future may require this sort of weakness. Preserving it is the problem of anarchists.

Voline was born in 1882. He became imbued with revolutionary ideals at nineteen and took part in the upheaval of 1905. Like thousands of others, he was arrested and banished to a place of exile, but he escaped to France. There he came into contact with French Anarchists and in 1911 he joined the Anarchist movement. He wrote and lectured, and in 1915 the French authorities decided to put him in a concentration camp for his opposition to World War I, but he again escaped and came to America. There he remained, writing for the anarchist journal, *Golos Truda* (Voice of Labor), until 1917, when he returned with others to Russia to take part in the Revolution.

Writing in *Freedom* for May 10, Paul Avrich says of *The Unknown Revolution*:

> It was written . . . by an observant eyewitness who himself played an active part in the events that he describes. Like Kropotkin's famous history of the French Revolution, it explores what Voline calls the "unknown revolution" in Russia, that is, the social revolution by the people as distinguished from the seizure of political power by the Bolsheviks. Before the appearance of Voline's book, this epic story has been little told and largely unknown. . . . The most striking feature of this "unknown revolution" has been the decentralization and dispersal of authority, the spontaneous formation of autonomous communes and councils, and the emergence of workers' self-management in town and country. Indeed, all modern revolutions have seen the organization of local committees—factory committees housing committees, educational committees, peasants' committees—in an explosion of direct action by workers, peasants, and intellectuals on the spot, by the people themselves running their own affairs in city and village. In Russia the soviets too were popular organs of direct democracy until reduced by the Bolsheviks to instruments of centralized authority, rubber stamps of a new bureaucratic state.

As Avrich suggests, Voline often gives an eye-witness account of how the Bolsheviks nipped the nascent self-reliance and initiative of the common people in the bud, discouraging ingenuity and group enterprise, and eventually suppressing every manifestation of libertarian tendencies. From this point of view, Voline's book is deeply saddening. As he saw the passage of events, a golden opportunity for a free society was being lost before his eyes, and the sympathetic reader is likely to agree. In effect, Voline says that the Russian people were not prepared for self-rule, that the anarchists had little voice, little access to the masses, and that the people soon succumbed to the carefully planned Bolshevik take-over.

In a passage devoted more or less to "theory," Voline explains:

> To impress the masses, to "conquer" them, it [the Bolshevik, now the 'Communist" Party] made use of display, publicity, and bluff. Moreover, it put itself, in any way it could, on top of a mountain so that the crowd could see it, hear it, and admire it. All this gave it strength for the moment.
>
> But such methods are foreign to the libertarian movement, which, by reason of its very essence, is more anonymous, discreet, modest, quiet. This fact increased its temporary weakness. Refusing to *lead* the masses, working to awaken their consciousness, and depending upon their free and direct action, it was obliged to renounce demagogy and work in the shadows, preparing for the future, without seeking to impose authority.

Here Voline inserts a "philosophical" credo for anarchists:

> The basic idea of Anarchism is simple: no party, political or ideological group, placed above or outside the labouring masses to "govern" or "guide" them ever succeeds in emancipating them, even if it sincerely desires to do so. Effective emancipation can be achieved only by the *direct, widespread, and independent action of those concerned, of the workers themselves,* grouped, not under the banner of a political party or of an ideological formation, but in their own class organizations (productive workers' unions, factory committees, cooperatives, et cetera) on the basis of concrete action and self-government, *helped, but not governed,* by revolutionaries working in the very midst of, and not above the mass, and the professional, technical, defense, and other branches. . . .
>
> The Anarchist idea and the true emancipating revolution cannot be achieved by the *Anarchists as such,* but only by the vast masses concerned—the Anarchists, or rather, the revolutionaries in general, being called in only to enlighten and aid them under certain circumstances. If the Anarchists pretended to be able to achieve the Social Revolution by "guiding" the masses, such a pretension would be an illusion, as was that of the Bolsheviki, and for the same reason.
>
> That is not all. In view of the immensity—one might say the universality—and the nature of the task, the working class alone cannot lead the true Revolution to a satisfactory conclusion. If it has the pretentiousness of acting alone and imposing itself on the other elements of the population by dictatorship, and forcibly making them follow it, it will meet with the same failure. One must understand nothing about social phenomena nor of the nature of men and things to believe the contrary.

It is clear from what Voline says that he is completely convinced that the use of political power to achieve social ends inevitably defines those ends in anti-social and antihuman ways. "One is an anarchist specifically," he says, "because one holds it impossible to suppress power, authority, and the State with the aid of power, authority, and the State. . . . The idea of seeking to carry the masses along with power is contrary to Anarchism, which does not believe that man can ever achieve his true emancipation by that method." In principle, Voline proposes, "everybody is an 'Anarchist'," by which he means that everyone wishes to be free of coercive authority and to determine his own life, and elsewhere he suggests that anarchism is little more than a statement of the basis of human development or evolution.

While the context of Voline's book is intensely political—inevitably, since it is widely supposed that the problems of modern man are essentially political—the value of the book lies in its practical removal of the issues of human development from the political sphere. Yet the reader is bound to ask: "What sort of people would not have been vulnerable to either the persuasions or the pressures of the Bolshevik program?" What sort of people would refuse to submit to political propaganda of any sort, and would insist on intimate, local self-government, self-sufficiency, rejecting the entire range of devices of power politics? There is hardly a more important question.

Voline contends that the Russian people never had an opportunity to show how well they could have governed themselves, since power was seized by the Bolshevik Party, which soon suppressed spokesmen of every other outlook. It is impossible to say what might have happened if Lenin had been an anarchist instead of a follower of Marx, or if revolutionary activity in Russia had been pursued along the lines of, say, Buber's

recommendations. In 1970 the War Resisters League published a leaflet, *On the Resistance,* in which Mike Ferber wrote:

> Martin Buber said something extremely important for all of us, which is that the problem with certain kinds of revolutionary thinking—the kind of thinking which I think can lead us to despair—is to wait for the revolution to happen and *then* make our lives over, and *then* make the new institutions. . . . What Buber described is a kind of building of institutions from below, communities that we can live in and care about, and love one another in, so that if a revolution comes it will be only the final incident, a kind of sloughing off of the shell, to allow space for what has grown up underneath. That, it seems to me, is what we must do.

One might say that the major strength of the anarchist position lies in calling attention to what *won't* work, what *always* leads to disaster and betrayal, in a revolutionary situation. This is a negative or critical strength, typically more recognizable and admissible in an age of analysis and anger at man's inhumanity to man. The positive strength of anarchism is not distinguishable from the positive strength of pacifism, or even liberalism in its original, Renaissance or philosophical meaning. Tolstoy, as Nicholas Walter, an English anarchist, once remarked, "never called himself an anarchist, since he used the word to describe those who relied on violence, but his bitter condemnation of the State makes him one of the greatest of all anarchists, too."

The resources of anarchism, from this point of view, are no more and no less than the resources of human beings for individual freedom—intelligent self-reliance, and respect and consideration for one another. It well may be that the truth and vision in the anarchist outlook will not be widely understood until anarchists free themselves of their *Götterdammarung* psychology and stop writing about all the wonderful things that will happen after the revolution to end all revolutions. What seems missing from the main body of anarchist thinking is direct consideration of the dynamics of individual human change and the pace of social and individual change for the better. The work of both Piaget and Lawrence Kohlberg is crucial to such questions, and also the problem of "character," as shown, say, by Wendell Berry in his discussion of Nate Shaw's *All God's Dangers.* (MANAS, June 25.) The work of Gandhi and his most distinguished followers is also directly relevant. Gandhians, like anarchists, reject Marxism. The anarchists give their anti-statist reasons for this rejection, but the Gandhian, Jayaprakash Narayan, when he publicly renounced Marxism in 1953, explained: "It did not offer me an answer to the question: Why should a man be good?"

Voline should be read with such questions in mind, after which Maslow's *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* might help to bring the problem into sharper focus.

Meanwhile, the framework of the present, from the viewpoint of anarchist goals, was well put by Nicholas Walter in an article in *Anarchy* for December, 1964:

> Utopia is present in topia: the free society is contained within the unfree society. Every gain we hope to make in the future is based on a freedom we already possess, and every loss we fear to sustain in the future is based on a freedom we already lack. We are here and now, and our means are our ends. What is important is not *the* anarchist movement, but anarchist movement—not the free society, but a freer society.

COMMENTARY
THE MATTER OF "VALUES"

THE problem of Americans, in these fateful years, is to find a balance in the argument between the champions of "system" and the advocates of "better men." In principle, the answer may lie in a shrewd comment attributed to Bismarck: "You can run a country with poor laws and good officials, but you can't run a country with good laws and poor officials."

We don't talk much about "character," these days. It seems more comfortable to speak of the need of "values." We are presently coping with the inhibiting effects of a century or more of determined rejection of puritan moralizing. So we use abstract language to refer to sorely needed virtues. We talk about morality at arm's length, using academic generalizations. Some day, this cautious reaching after goodness may come into focus, and then we'll have a functional grasp of what has to be done.

A good example of this search for workable moral language is available in William Lee Miller's *Of Thee, Nevertheless, I Sing*—one of the better books about what is wrong with America. He begins with reluctant adoption of H. L. Mencken's heretical claim that what the country needs is an aristocracy: rejecting the word "aristocracy," he agrees that democracy requires a high order of civic virtue in its citizens.

The issue, here, is in how civic virtue develops. Does it spread, somewhat mysteriously, like the dye added to a solution, evenly penetrating every molecule, or does the diffusion begin through the foci of exceptional individuals who become centers of potent influence?

The answer is obvious: Where would we be, today, without men like John Dewey, Arthur Morgan, and Robert Hutchins, in education? Where would we be without the Gifford Pinchots, the Ernest Gruenings, and William O. Douglases in public life? How much of modern ecological awareness is owed to Ellen Swallow and Rachel Carson? Think what has happened to a generation of intelligent and competent young by reason of the singleminded dedication of Ralph Nader to the common good.

We don't have to call such persons aristocrats, but they are certainly superior humans, in the Confucian sense, in the Gandhian sense: persons who naturally and habitually put themselves in the service of their community and country, refusing arbitrary power, detesting special privilege.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
USES OF LITERATURE

A BOOK we have been reading lately recalled the question asked by Ortega when, back in 1910, he spoke before an audience of distinguished persons in Spain. He said:

> What idea of man should be held by the man who is going to humanize your sons? Whatever it is, the cast that he gives them will be ineffaceable.

It was for this reason that Ortega urged that questions of pedagogy be approached "with religious dread."

Another form of this question might be: How do you decide that someone is a good teacher—the kind of person you would want to go to school to, or have your children influenced by?

Well, the book we were reading, that made this question recur, is an obscure volume first published in Japan in 1927, which went through five (English) editions there by 1941. It is *A History of English Literature* by Lafcadio Hearn. Hearn held the chair of English literature in the Imperial University of Tokyo from 1896 to 1903, and during those seven years gave twice a three-year course with this title. He used notes but spoke extemporaneously, and his students carefully wrote down practically everything he said. The *History*, like that other exquisite collection of his lectures, *Talks to Writers*, also set down by his students, was the result.

The appreciative reader of Hearn finds what he says difficult to forget. This is surely evidence of a good teacher, but what else is there about Hearn that makes him the sort of man who would have a "humanizing" effect on students?

We made a short list of persons in the area of literary study who seem worth going back to, again and again—a very short list of only three teachers, but long enough to settle the question we had in mind. The three are Hearn, Harold Goddard, and Carl Becker (a historian, but also a *literateur*). What do these three teachers do? They seem able to generate in their students—and readers—an affection for the good. But while you are reading them, you don't notice what is happening. Sharing in the work of their minds is so engrossing that you have to take time out to decide why their appeal is so strong.

We made the list to see what these writers have in common, and then decided that Plato put their most distinctive quality well. He said in the *Symposium:*

> The master-physician is he who can distinguish between the nobler and the baser loves and can effect such alteration that the one passion is replaced by the other; and he will be deemed a good practitioner who is expert in producing love where it ought to flourish but exists not, and removing it from where it should not be.

This is obviously desirable, but by no means easy to accomplish. The overt moralist defeats himself. Nobody wants to be told what he ought to love. Tell a child what he *ought* to do and the natural independence belonging to all humans may impel him to do the opposite.

The artist performs the task of the master-physician as some sort of by-product of his own enduring concerns. He converts by accident. Which is to say that he does not "convert," but stirs others to an art of self-discovery. You don't think of an artist in connection with "moral education"—which is the gist of Plato's therapeutic canon—except after exposure, and on reflection, when you realize how much he has helped you to understand and value the good. He has his way of looking at the world, and somehow he infects you with it, although not successfully until you have become independent of his influence. And then you feel great gratitude—you have been in the presence of a teacher. For teaching, as Tolstoy said, is the production of equality. The well-taught student discovers his own competence, his practical equality with the teacher.

Hearn seems to have understood something of how this works. John Erskine, in his introduction to *Talks to Writers* (Dodd Mead, 1927), summarized Hearn's lecture on the "Highest Art" in a few words:

> To prove his point that the highest kind of writing, though pursued for esthetic reasons, will have a moral effect, Hearn cites the experience of love, which furnishes matter for most western poetry, fiction and drama. To

> love another is a moral experience, he says, even if the person loved be unworthy. Certainly it is a great misfortune and a great folly to love a bad person; but in spite of the misfortune and the folly a certain moral experience comes of it, which has immense value to a wholesome nature. The experience is one which very few poets and philosophers dwell upon; yet it is the important, the supremely important, aspect of love. What is it? It is the sudden impulse to unselfishness. Taking it for granted, continues Hearn that some forms of beauty inspire men with such affection as to make them temporarily unselfish, there is little reason to doubt that in future very much higher forms of beauty will produce the same effect. What will those forms of beauty be? Hearn does not know, but the mere suggestion of them reminds us that no one yet knows the effects of certain kinds of beauty which art has already produced. . . . Though he brought no answer, Hearn constantly played with the mystery, and showed that he realized its importance. So long as we do not know what will happen to the man who reads us, we may preserve our peace of mind by pretending the influence of books is a matter of fortune. When we finally discover, however, what effect each kind of writing has, to write in any kind will be to take a momentous moral decision.

This, surely, is akin to the "religious dread" Ortega recommended in thinking about plans for education.

Hearn, without neglecting complexity, brings a simplicity of taste to the study of literature. As a matter of course he compares the baser and the nobler "loves" in literature. He asks continually, what sort of men wrote this verse, those plays, these novels? He never hides his own uncertainty, but leaves no doubt of what he is looking for. His history of English literature for Japanese students had to be simple—these students were not at home in English, but Hearn helps them to become at home in it by comparing English works with Japanese classics and epics.

He begins by looking at the character of the English, telling about their origins in three Germanic tribes—the Angles, the Jutes, and Saxons. Their earliest literature would of course express their initial character, so he begins with that:

> The great virtue for these people was courage; the great vice was cowardice, and it is significant that in the Northern hell the chief place was for cowards and adulterers. But you see these men thought of adultery as a kind of cowardice. For them, sin was weakness and crimes of sense were crimes of weakness—want of moral courage. So, it is not wonderful, that long before these people became Christians their bitterest enemies admired them for their moral ideals. You remember that the Roman historian Tacitus held up as an example to the Romans the domestic virtue and chastity of the Germans. The English modern ideas in regard to woman, home, and the sacredness of the family tie are very much older than Christianity.
>
> All the foregoing implies certain possibilities of tenderness. Fierce as these men were, they could not have been only fierce and crafty. They had two directions on which their affections could be cultivated; and they cultivated them well. One was love of family, another was love of their lords—loyalty. . . . And there was a curious freedom about it. Though the chief had the power of life and death over his men, he did not keep them at a great distance, he was familiar with them—would eat and drink with them, and would join their amusements and songs. Birth was not an important consideration so long as a man was free. . . .
>
> Just as much of the literature of Japan in olden times was made by court poets, or by a *Samurai* in houses of great lords, the old literature of the North took its origin in the palaces of kings and chiefs. It was made mostly by warriors: the poets were soldiers. Later on they might be only poets; but at first the poet was also a fighter; and his poems were chronicles of battles,—songs about great deeds. Gradually different schools of poetry came to exist. Gradually a particular class of singers, minstrels, gleemen came into existence. But the art remained connected in some way with the military profession: even the professional singer was attached as a warrior or attendant to the train of some chief; and the form of the poetry remained substantially the same. It is interesting to remember that the oldest form of this poetry in existence is English. It is not German or Scandinavian. Very much older than any other modern poetry is the old English of the pagan period.

This is the flavor of Hearn on English literature. It grows richer and deeper as he continues, for Hearn knew not only "art" but the entire range of Western—and from Japan, Eastern—ideas. Spencer was his guide in philosophy, which seemed to prepare him for Buddhism. Literature, for Hearn, encompassed the whole of life.

FRONTIERS

Our (Presently) Inaccessible Ills

HOW long is it going to take us to see that our macro-problems—the scarcity of what we really need, the superabundance of what we don't need, the unmanageable abuses in both industry and government, the general loss of control over the conditions, and in some ways the direction, of our lives—are not due to our bad "system" or the low-grade, self-seeking people in office, but to our basic misconceptions about ends and what is good in human life?

A careful reading of "Nuclear Misinformation" by Daniel F. Ford and Henry W. Kendall in Environment for July/August prompted this question. This article is a study of the policies of the Atomic Energy Commission. It is filled with evidence that the AEC has ignored or suppressed important facts relating to the nuclear production of energy, over a period of years. Such agencies, it seems clear, cannot be trusted. Their word is not good. For example, a National Science Foundation-supported study of the AEC's general hearing procedures concluded that—

> despite lip-service paid to citizen participation in governmental decision-making, agency arrogance, expert elitism, stacked deck proceedings, and the consigning of citizens to helplessness before the steamroller of big government are more the rule than the exception. . . .
>
> that, the (AEC) licensing process is one which is geared to the promotion of nuclear plants. . . .
>
> that, because of the composition, predilection, and defined role of (AEC) Atomic Safety and Licensing Boards, citizen group opponents of nuclear power plants are denied substantive due process (of law). . . .
>
> that, the only consensus among all the parties to the (AEC) proceedings appeared to be a general evaluation that the whole process as it now stands is nothing more than a charade, the outcome of which is, for all intents and purposes, predetermined. . . .

Well, you think about that for a while, and then you read the history of the Food and Drug Administration, learning that its founder, Harvey Wiley, a vigorously conscientious and public-spirited physician, resigned in disgust after trying to make the agency do what it was supposed to do, throughout six painful years. Then you read, say, the Nader study, *The Chemical Feast*, for what has happened since in the FDA, and find this even more discouraging. The failures of the FDA bring you into the area of junk foods, on which a great many people try to survive, and consideration of nutrition ushers into view the moral fiasco of the Green Revolution, the growing gap between the rich and poor nations, and the overbearing righteousness of the powerful decision-makers of practically every land who are choosing to continue all these humanly ruinous policies.

Is it sheer cussedness? Was William Steig right, and people are no damn good; or are there some delusions that will not die? The delusion theory is at least a more hopeful way to look at these things. One recalls Walter Prescott Webb's explanation of American culture as growing out of a four-hundred-year frontier-and-boom cycle of history—a cycle which slowed down at the beginning of this century, and is now rapidly approaching what ecologists and economists call the "steady state" of *normal* life. Howard Odum observed that during boom or growth periods, there are bursts of extraordinary "progress"—favoring weed-like development. Weeds are poor in structure and effective but wasteful in their energy-capturing capacities. They make a big, vulgar show but their achievements don't last. Prof. Odum points out that our economic theories have assumed that "boom" conditions are natural and eternal. "Most economic advisors," he says, "have never seen a steady state even though most of man's million-year history was close to steady state."

In short, for about a hundred years, we—we Americans—have been the bigger-and-better and always-more society—and we have grown so big in our institutions, so ambitious in our goals, that very little seems to work well in the present, and

that little may not work at all in the future. This is the verdict of those who seem able to read the signs.

Now that we are beginning to see what is wrong, we find ourselves almost helpless. We are *not,* of course, helpless—not if we want to change our goals. It will be necessary, however, to stop blaming the people we have put in charge they are the really helpless ones, bound by yesterday's indoctrination—and to reorganize our lives on a human scale. Our bureaus and commissions and probably most of our governmental agencies simply cannot respond to human need, but mainly to political and bureaucratic necessity, because they have lost what E. F. Schumacher calls "the human touch."

We have then to change the scale of our social organization. Government will become responsive to human need, instead of to routine, bureaucratic or institutionalized necessities, in no other way. This is Schumacher's argument (in *Resurgence* for May-June):

> You do not have to be an expert in sociology or systems analysis to be able to see that the human factor, as a person-to-person relationship, depends on a certain degree of intimacy, which no one can achieve with large numbers of people. How many people do we get to know as people in the course of a lifetime? If we made a list of them we should find the number surprisingly small—perhaps a few hundred, certainly not a few thousand. . . . The number of person-to-person relationships within a group rise much faster than the number of group members as the group increases in size. Among three people, there are three bilateral relationships; among twelve, there are sixty-six; among a hundred, there are 4,950—more than anyone can keep in his head at the same time. . . . Structures will emerge, and such structures are normally hierarchical, that is to say, there are a number of levels between the top and the bottom. . . . Such structures cannot function without many rules and regulations which everybody, even the top brass has to abide by. It follows that nobody, not even the top boss, can act freely. . . . One of our fundamental needs is to be able to act in accordance with our moral impulses. In a big organization our freedom to do so is inevitably severely restricted. Our primary duty is to stay within the rules and regulations, which, although contrived by human beings, are not themselves human beings. . . .
>
> The bigger the organization, the less it is possible for any member of it to act freely as a moral being; the more frequent are the occasions when someone will say: "I am sorry, I know what I am doing is not quite right, but these are my instructions.' . . . As a result, big organizations often behave very badly, very immorally, very stupidly and inhumanely, not because the people inside them are any of these things but simply because the organization carries the load of bigness. The people inside them are then criticized by people outside, and such criticism is justified and necessary, but it bears the wrong address. It is not the people of the organization but its size that is at fault.
>
> This is a situation of universal frustration the people inside the organization are morally frustrated because they lack freedom of action, and the people outside are frustrated because, rare exceptions apart, their legitimate moral complaints find no positive response and all too often produce evasive, meaningless, blandly arrogant, or downright offensive replies.

The report on the AEC matches perfectly with this diagnosis. Improving people's "morality" may be necessary, too, but this is a most mysterious undertaking. Meanwhile, we *can* have some control over the size of our human associations and organizational tools, and we *should* begin to change them to a size at which what morality people now have can at least have a chance to operate.