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INVITATION TO LEARNING

IN *Science and the Modern World,* Alfred North Whitehead has recourse to Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley to show that poetic awareness of the primary reality of life in nature—its *organic* reality—came far closer to the truth than the mechanistic approach of scientific knowledge. Thus, in the heyday of confident materialism (this book was published in 1926), Whitehead anticipated the sweep of historical change by some fifty years, for today "organic" is the key idea of a widespread popular faith. As the prevailing principle of explanation, Newton's "World-Machine" is now giving way to the fields and hierarchical structures of organism. Whitehead generalized the conception well:

> The doctrine which I am maintaining is that the whole concept of materialism only applies to very abstract entities the products of logical discernment. The concrete enduring entities are organisms, so that the plan of the whole influences the very characters of the various subordinate organisms which enter into it. In the case of an animal, the mental states enter into the plan of the total organism and thus modify the plans of successive subordinate organisms until the ultimate smallest organisms, such as electrons, are reached. Thus an electron within a living body is different from an electron outside it, by reason of the plan of the body. The electron blindly runs either within or without the body; but it runs within the body in accordance with its character within the body; that is to say, in accordance with the general plan of the body, and this plan includes the mental state. But the principle of modification is perfectly general throughout nature, and represents no property peculiar to living bodies. . . .

All, in other words, is organic in nature, all things are connected by related and interdependent flows of energy and patterned activity which emerge in living things as ordered organic hierarchies. The romantic poets felt this truth, celebrating its nuances according to individual perception. That truth is now the vague religion behind the entire environmental movement, which is moved by unembarrassed versions of its primary intuition, supported by moral emotion. It cannot be said that we know "what it all means," but the wonder of life, of organism, we are convinced, is a natural way-station in the great journey toward larger understanding.

Organic interdependency is now for us more than poetic inspiration, basic as that may be. The concept emerges in psychiatric theory and diagnosis, as for example in a book by Harold F. Searles:

> My thesis is that [the nonhuman] environment, far from being of little or no account to human personality development, constitutes one of the most basically important ingredients of human psychological experience. It is my conviction that there is within the human individual a sense of *relatedness to his total environment,* that this relatedness is one of the transcendently important facts of human life, and that if he tries to ignore its importance to himself, he does so at peril to his psychological well-being. . . . By "relatedness" I mean a sense of intimate kinship, a psychological commitment to structural relationships which exist between man and the various ingredients of his nonhuman environment. This experience of relatedness involves a maintenance of our sense of individuality as a human being, a knowing that however. dose our kinship, we are not *at one with* it. The mature human knows that he is irrevocably, irreversibly a member of the human species, and can rejoice as well as despair in this knowledge. It seems inevitable that the human being will experience varied and conflictual feelings about his nonhuman environment, for mankind's position in regard to this environment is existentially a conflictual position. He is grounded in nature, and yet is unbridgeably apart from it.

This seems a good foundation for understanding the human situation as, increasingly, we feel it to be. And here, too, poets may prove the best articulators of our growing awareness. Rilke, for one, wrote movingly of the human sense of separation from nature in "Worpswede":

> Let it be confessed: landscape is foreign to us, and we are fearfully alone amongst trees which blossom and by streams which flow. Alone with the

> dead one is not nearly so defenceless as when alone with Trees. For, however mysterious death may be, life that is not our life is far more mysterious, life that is not concerned with us, and which, without seeing us, celebrates its festivals, as it were, at which we look with a certain embarrassment, like chance guests who speak another language. . . . Nature [acts] irrespective of us, our hopes, our life, with that sublime loftiness and indifference which fill all her movements. She knows nothing of us. And whatever men may have achieved, no man has been great enough to cause her to sympathize with his pain, to share in his rejoicing. . . . The ordinary man, who lives with men, and sees Nature only in as far as she has reference to himself, is seldom aware of this problematic and uncanny relationship. He sees the surface of things, which he and his like have created through the centuries and likes to believe that the whole earth is concerned with him because a field can be cultivated, a forest thinned, and a river made navigable. His eye, focused almost entirely on men, sees Nature also, but incidentally, as something obvious and actual that must be exploited as much as possible.

Here, in a few words, are the essentials of recent history condensed in a poet's insight. Fortunately, Rilke goes on, speaking of those few—poets or painters, composers or architects—"fundamentally lonely spirits, who, in turning to Nature, put the eternal above the transitory, that which is most profoundly based on law above that which is fundamentally ephemeral, and who, since they cannot persuade Nature to concern herself with them, see their task to be the understanding of Nature, so that they may take their place somewhere in her great design." Then Rilke says: "And the whole of humanity comes nearer to Nature in these lonely and isolated ones."

> From this point of view the theme and purpose of all art would seem to lie in the reconciliation of the Individual and the All, and the moment of exaltation, the artistically important Moment, would seem to be that in which the two scales of the balance counterpoise one another. And indeed, it would be very tempting to show this relationship in various works of art; to show how a symphony mingles the voice of a stormy day with the tumult of our blood, how a building owes its character half to us and half to the forest.

D. H. Lawrence, when he came to America, found communion and interchange with Nature. The "mystery" was no doubt there for him, too, but he wrote of rapport rather than separation:

> I think no man could live near a pine tree and remain quite suave and supple and compliant. Something fierce and bristling is communicated. The piny sweetness is rousing and defiant, like turpentine, the noise of the needles is keen with aeons of sharpness. In the volleys of wind from the western desert, the tree hisses and resists . . . . I have become conscious of the tree and of its interpenetration into my life. . . . I am conscious that it helps to change me, vitally. I am even conscious that shivers of energy cross my living plasm, from the tree, and I become a degree more like unto the tree, more bristling and turpentiney, in Pan. . . .
>
> Of course, if I like to cut myself off, and say it is all bunk, a tree is merely so much lumber not yet sawn, then in a great measure I shall *be* cut off. So much depends on one's attitude. One can shut many many doors of receptivity in oneself; or one can open many doors that are shut.

This is an invocation by Lawrence of the Great God Pan. The modern world, he thinks, has done Pan almost to death. Its machines of conquest will have to be abandoned if Pan is to live again. He ends this essay:

> It is useless to glorify the savage. For he will kill Pan with his own hands, for the sake of a motor-car. And a bored savage, for whom Pan is dead, is the stupefied image of all boredom.
>
> And we cannot return to the primitive life, to live in tepees and hunt with bows and arrows.
>
> Yet live we must. And once life has been conquered, it is pretty difficult to live. What are we going to do, with a conquered universe? The Pan relationship, which the world of man once had with all the world, was better than anything man has now. The savage, today, if you give him the chance, will become more mechanical and unliving than any civilized man. But civilized man, having conquered the universe, may as well leave off bossing it. Because when all is said and done, life itself consists in a live relatedness between man and his universe: sun, moon, stars, earth, trees, flowers, birds, animals, men, everything—and not in a "conquest" of anything by anything. Even the conquest of the air makes the world smaller, tighter, and more airless.

> And whether we are a store-clerk or a bus-conductor, we can still choose between the living universe of Pan, and the mechanical conquered universe of modern humanity. The machine has no windows. But even the most mechanized human being has only got his windows nailed up, or bricked in.

Rousseau was one of the first Europeans to declare for the love of Nature, and to urge his readers to seek out her finest places in reverence. But as van den Berg observes in *The Changing Nature of Man* (Norton, 1961), as a result "nature-loving" became first a fad, then an epidemic of fashion, in eighteenth-century Europe. Only after Rousseau's *Nouvelle Heloise* (1761) did the Alps become a "tourist attraction." Western man had not yet been punished by Nature for his crimes of conquest, and perhaps for this reason was not ready to learn to love. Nor did many of his readers take notice of Rousseau's caution with respect to the discovery of man's true nature:

> For it is by no means a light undertaking to distinguish properly between what is original and what is artificial in the actual nature of man, or to form a true idea of a state which no longer exists, perhaps never did exist; and of which it is, nevertheless, necessary to have true ideas, to form a proper judgment of our present state.

What can we conclude from these several quotations? We can say, surely, that we are in the presence of clear wisdom—if a limited wisdom—concerning the human condition and the man/Nature relationship. And we can conclude, further, that these poets and writers have told us, in remarkably brief space, a great deal that science as presently constituted cannot even begin to suggest. What have these writers in common? Why are they so well endowed? Well, they are all men of imagination, able to make us see their thought—so that, in consequence, some structures of inward meaning gain a measure of objectivity.

This is not the sort of truth that is accumulated by observation and experiment; it is, so to say, "created" truth, made by individual men who, as Rilke said, are "fundamentally lonely spirits." Yet even "the most mechanized human being," Lawrence added as an after-thought, "has only got his windows nailed up," and what was nailed up can be taken down.

We go back, then, to Whitehead's analysis and critique of seventeenth-century science, which is still our science in many respects. Here Whitehead explores the consequences of the scientific outlook:

> In respect to material bodies, the qualities of having a quantitative mass, and of simple location somewhere, were held by John Locke to be . . . essential qualities of substances whose spatio-temporal relationships constitute the order of nature. The occurrences of nature are in some way apprehended by minds, which are associated with living bodies. Primarily, the mental apprehension is aroused by the occurrences in certain parts of the correlated body, the occurrences in the brain, for instance. But the mind in apprehending also experiences sensations which, properly speaking, are qualities of the mind alone. These sensations are projected by the mind so as to clothe appropriate bodies in external nature. Thus the bodies are perceived as with qualities which in reality do not belong to them, qualities which in fact are purely the offspring of the mind. Thus nature gets credit which could in truth be reserved for ourselves; the rose for its scent: the nightingale for his song; and the sun for his radiance. The poets are entirely mistaken. They should address their lyrics to themselves, and should turn them into odes of self-congratulation on the excellency of the human mind. Nature is a dull affair, soundless, scentless, colourless; merely the hurrying of material, endlessly, meaninglessly.

Whitehead does not really *mean* this; he means that if you are of the scientific persuasion, defining nature as Galileo, Descartes, and Locke defined it, you cannot adopt any other view. Yet there is nonetheless some substance in his argument. While such self-praise may, today, be moral and emotional heresy, especially for those committed to the Ah Wilderness! Only Man is Vile! credo, the claim that beauty is in the eye of the beholder is no new doctrine, and very difficult to dispose of. In our world, we are the only beholders in evidence, so far.

In any event, the point of our various quotations is that by them the goal of knowledge we long for is redefined. This knowledge grows only from an exercise of the imagination. It is subjective in origin, content, and validity. As hearsay it is no more than a

spur, since there can be no transferable subjective certainty, and those who have made some progress in this direction are indeed the lonely ones.

Yet there are family resemblances—agreements and harmonious resonances—among the insights of the most distinguished imaginative thinkers of history. And from the purified unities of all this thought we get the historic forms of metaphysics—the Buddhist, the Neoplatonist, the Gnostic, and certain of the speculative systems of Western thought, such as the Leibnizian Monadology and the Hegelian system, as well as Schopenhauer's philosophy; and, finally, the coherent if hardly systematic idealism of Ralph Waldo Emerson.

Emerson was indeed the last of the believing Idealists, except for devotees of the revivals of ancient secret doctrines. Those who wonder how it can become possible to "create" knowledge by an exercise of the imagination might find Emerson their best instructor. But to learn from him it will be necessary to cross certain bridges and to disregard certain obstacles. As Wilhelmina Van Ness observes in her (Spring) *American Scholar* article on the tragedy of modern art, there are "metaphysical barriers" or assumptions which separate everyone living in the modern world from the stored wisdom of the past. Howard Mumford Jones remarks that the prophets of psychoanalysis—Freud and Jung—have made it difficult to return to Emerson, and it is true enough that the mood of "objective science," which made a mechanist of Freud and is still evident in Jung, inhibits direct response to Platonic or Emersonian yearnings. To enjoy the full benefit of Emerson's genius it becomes necessary to share in the conviction of men like William Blake, who put his central faith in a single sentence: "A Spirit and a Vision are not, as the modern philosophy supposes, a cloudy vapour or a nothing: they are organized and minutely articulated beyond all that the mortal and perishing nature can produce."

There can be only one legitimate path of return to "the stored traditional wisdom of the world," short of the spontaneous possession of some part of it through intuitive or poetic genius, and the first step on that path may be, as John McTaggart suggested, recognition of "the intense practical importance of our belief on the problems of religion." One means of gaining that recognition is the study of metaphysics, and here McTaggart is a useful counselor. He said in his *Studies in Hegelian Cosmology:*

> The study of metaphysics will perhaps never be very common, but it may be more common in the future than it is at present. The world's leisure is increasing, and much of it may be devoted to study. And if study at present is rarely the study of metaphysics, that is largely because metaphysics seems unpractical. If, however, people find that they cannot have religion without it, then it will become of all studies the most practical. Its results, indeed, may not be more practically useful than those of some other subjects. For some results of study are, in our present civilization, essential to life, and life is a condition precedent of religion. But elsewhere we can enjoy the results without investigating them ourselves. I can eat bread, although I have never learnt to plough or bake. I can be cured of an illness, though I have never learnt medicine. But if—and this is the case at present—I have no right to rely on any metaphysical result which I have not myself investigated, then the study of metaphysics will be for many people the most momentous of all studies. And this may produce important results. For, after all, one great reason why so few people have reached metaphysical conclusions for themselves, is to be found in the fact that so few people tried to reach them.

Rilke thought that in great works of art man and nature "come together in a higher prophetic truth," and that by relying on each other and completing one another, they become a "perfect unity." This is indeed the longing and the project of the artist, as so well illustrated in Annie Dillard's book, *A Pilgrim at Tinker Creek.* The truest metaphysics, one may think, is that intimated by poets, writers, and other artists whose work excites spontaneous agreement of the sort generated by those whom we have quoted in this brief review. It is this extraordinary consensus among those possessed of a freely exercised yet disciplined imagination that invites study of their common ground in the framing ideas of metaphysics.

REVIEW
MORE THAN AN ECONOMIC HISTORIAN

BEFORE beginning Ross Terrill's *R. H. Tawney and His Times* (Harvard University Press, 1973), the reader should get to know Tawney's most notable books, *The Acquisitive Society*, first published in 1920, and *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (1926), for then Mr. Terrill's work becomes the means of answering the question: What sort of man could write in a way that towers over his contemporaries, yet deal so effectively with the practical realities of his own time? Unless these books are read, Tawney's greatness and impact remain vague quantities, and Terrill's work can hardly be appreciated.

The publishers suggest that this study of Tawney's thought has importance for the reason that his life reached from the apex of the Victorian age—he was born in 1880—to the twilight period of the British Empire in the present, when it has "shrunk to a few tourist islands," and when socialist government, for which Tawney campaigned all his life, has become a commonplace. (Tawney died in 1962.) Tawney's criticisms of capitalism seem irrefutable; his influence on British opinion is immeasurable; and the story of his relationships with the movers and shakers of British affairs is a fascinating one; but there is still another dimension to be discerned in this book: why was Tawney able to command the respect of so many, to deepen the meaning of ordinary political conceptions to the point of making them seem eternal verities? And how did he avoid all the familiar traps of ideological thinking?

For this reader, at least, the impression grows that Tawney was like some "old hero" reborn, who brought with him to nineteenth-century England an honesty both piercing and blunt, a moral stamina seldom matched in any age, and a courage so natural that it was hardly noticeable as a special human quality. He made the lines of thought in his time conform to what he was; they did not shape him, although they might color what he said.

An early paragraph in Mr. Terrill's book shows Tawney's quality becoming evident when he was still quite young:

> Tawney left Oxford in 1903, the year the Workers Educational Association was founded, Shaw's *Man and Superman* appeared, and Keir Hardie asked Lloyd George to lead the Labour party. Tawney's head was a caldron of ideas and aspirations. He had missed a First in Greats, which did not much depress him. "My Second," he wrote to Beveridge "will be a grand weapon with which to convince them ('my people') that it's no use my trying to get into the English Civil." His father, hearing of the Second, enquired: "How do you propose to wipe out this disgrace?" But Caird said to Tawney's former teacher at Rugby: "I grant you his mind was chaotic: but his examiners ought to have seen that it was the chaos of a great mind." His intellect was as yet ungelled by the discipline of later immersion in economic history. He also wrote too slowly for exams, "I'm on the floor chewing the doormat," he later said of his agonies of composition.

As with Ruskin and William Morris—both of whom had great influence on him during his formative years—the young manhood of Tawney is the most interesting time of his life. It is as though you can see his stature emerging, day by day. Tawney associated himself with the Workers Educational Association soon after it was formed, and he became a full-time teacher in this form of adult education in 1909.

> Tawney not only lectured to workers but listened to them. His statement that he learned more from workers than at college seems at first a polite exaggeration; as, too, his claim to have learned more from the workers than he taught them. But he probably spoke the sober truth. *The Agrarian Problem*, one of the best books on English history written in this century, was dedicated to Temple and Mansbridge, as officers of the WEA. And though ostensibly a technical treatise, it is also a "book of a movement." In motive and thesis, it issued from the bowels of the WEA as Tawney was shaping the WEA in the formative years before the Great War. Tawney hit on economic history by accident, learned it on the road, and formed his theories on the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in the course of a quest, begun

by Caird's injunction, to see why England had poverty alongside great riches and to do something about it.

While Tawney was technically a good scholar, scholarship was for him always a means, never an end. This side of his work becomes almost invisible by serving so well his larger purposes.

How did he teach?

E. S. Cartwright [class secretary] captured the sense of intellectual adventure at Longton: "the class meeting is over, sitting at ease, taking tea and biscuits provided by members' wives. Talk ranges free and wide—problems of philosophy, evolution, politics, literature. Then R.H.T. reads to us Walt Whitman's 'When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd'; this moves a student to give us his favorite passage from the same source: 'Pioneers! O Pioneers!' Another follows, quoting from a poem of Matthew Arnold that evidently has bitten him. . . . And for some of us as we sit listening a new door opens." It was all very different from universities, where Tawney found that many "make a darkness and call it research, while shrinking from the light of general ideas."

Tawney was an English patrician who found it completely natural to identify with the working class:

Tawney did not look down upon these men, for they were teaching him the facts of economic life. His immense, detailed correspondence with them—they would list for him the family budget, or describe incidents in the mine—shows Tawney on the way to becoming an economic historian. He was tough with them, insisting that they write essays regularly, and some grumbled at this. A student writes that "profit should be done away with." Tawney comments: "Under any 'scientific' socialism, production would be carried out for profit—*necessarily*—tho' the profit is taken by the state for the common good. The only alternative is communism which has enormous special difficulties of its own."

The first part of this book is about Tawney's life; parts two and three deal with his books and ideas and give an evaluation of them. Throughout his life he remained a democratic socialist. The following gives his general political outlook:

Tawney saw in totalitarianism an attempt to freeze history at a certain supposedly optimum point. That might do for communities of ants and bees, which are not subject to change, but not for human beings like "Henry Dubb," whose soul is his own, whose community is subject to more than biological change. Tawney's Christian position made him immune to political claims which implied the freezing of history. Possessing a Christian hope that lay beyond history, he was unlikely to allow a *political ideology* to assume a position beyond history; his mind had no vacancy for an eschatology. He could acknowledge no laws of history independent of the minds of men, envisage no final destination at which conflicts and imperfections would be absent from social life.

Tawney, unlike Laski, Strachey, and most British socialist thinkers of that generation, had no Marxist phase in the 1930s. He had always admired Marx, but he thought some of Marx's followers had made a "theory of the processes of history do the work of a political philosophy." His case here against Marxism rests on the same premise as his case against capitalism. "The one view of Man which is fatal both to Christianity and to any social revolution worth making is that which regards him, not as a being with a capacity, if he will use it, for autonomy and responsibility, but as a machine or a slave." Industrialism treated man as a "hand"; Stalinism treated him as a "cog." In both ideologies, Tawney argued, ends and means were juxtaposed and human creativity squeezed out.

This passage reveals the key to Tawney's moral strength and reliability—his insistence on a conception of man with dignity and strength in it. Terrill calls it "Christian," having for justification Tawney's own usage, yet the beliefs which animated his life were by no means of the orthodox variety. At Oxford, Terrill says, Tawney went through theology speedily, later commenting: "Harnack convinced me that the most acceptable offering to the almighty would be a holocaust of theologians." His actual religious views remained unknown to his friends. After a weekend with the Tawneys, Beatrice Webb remarked that while he seemed to think of himself as a Christian, "in all his sayings and writings, though never denying Christian dogma, he certainly ignores it." He was not a regular church-goer and a closing entry on the question in Beatrice Webb's diary said that "in his religious

opinions, he remains a mystery to his free-thinking friends."

Apparently, the leading ideas which had shaped his character caused him to take what *he* could use of conventional religion, remaining indifferent to all the rest. Tawney was by no means a pacifist; he was almost killed as a sergeant in the first world war; but his thinking on the subject of power has an interesting resemblance to Gandhi's ideas. Power, he said, is the capacity to modify the conduct of others and also to preserve one's own conduct from modification. He then declared that the "ultimate seat" of power is "the soul." Explaining, Terrill says:

> Rejecting the "formal-legal" (constitutional) conception of power as being what governments possess, Tawney offered a social conception. Power, in society, unlike physical power, is dialectical. It cannot be understood apart from the response it elicits or seeks to elicit. Therefore, to destroy it, "nothing more is required than to be indifferent to its threats, and to prefer other goods to those which it promises."

The subtitle of Mr. Terrill's book is "Socialism as Fellowship." Much space is devoted by the author to explaining Tawney's conception of fellowship. A strong passage from *Equality* gives the basic reason for Tawney's advocacy of Socialism. It lies in moral and humanist conviction:

> If men are to respect each other for what they are, they must cease to respect each other for what they own. They must abolish, in short, the reverence for riches, which is the *lues Anglicana,* the hereditary disease of the English nation. And human nature being what it is, in order to abolish reverence for riches, they must make impossible the existence of a class which is important merely because it is rich.

This is not to suggest Tawney believed that socialist politics could guarantee true fellowship. But it would become at least *possible.* What is now wrong and standing in the way of fellowship? Mr. Terrill gives Tawney's answer:

> He considered two factors fundamental; they were the twin serpents in the garden of social thought and practice. One is arbitrary power, the other is functionless property. The entire corpus of his socialist writing was pitted against arbitrary power and functionless property. No socialism would be worthy of the name if it did not dispose of them. They link his historiography and his political writing, as they link both with his basic beliefs about human nature.

Biographical writing which brings light of this sort to the work of a fine mind deserves high praise.

COMMENTARY
SOURCES OF LITERATURE

FOR all the differences between them, it is of interest to notice the kinship of D. H. Lawrence with Henry Thoreau when it comes to their feeling about pine trees. In *The Maine Woods* (Bramhall House, 1950), Thoreau wrote:

> Strange that so few ever came to the woods to see how the pine lives and grows and spires, lifting its evergreen arms to the light,—to see its perfect success but most are content to behold it in the shape of many broad boards brought to market, and deem *that* its true success! But the pine is no more lumber than man is, and to be made into boards and houses is no more its true and highest use than the truest use of a man is to be cut down and made into manure. There is a higher law affecting our relation to pines as well as to men. . . . everything may serve a lower as well as a higher use. Every creature is better alive than dead, men and moose and pine-trees, and he who understands it aright will rather preserve its life than destroy it.

Not the lumberman, nor the tanner who wants only its turpentine, really understands the pine, Thoreau declares, although he will live in a house made of boards and use turpentine to heal his scratches; not they, but the poet, makes the truest use of the pine! Lawrence spoke of the interchange between man and tree, and of the "doors of receptivity" which one may open or close to such sympathetic flows of being. Thoreau and Lawrence were willing to take instruction from pine trees, discovering thereby certain secrets they found it difficult to reveal. Yet their attempts made what we call literature.

We now take leave of our readers for a two-months' interval, until the next issue, which will be dated September 4. For summer reading, as we have before suggested, the *MANAS Reader* (Grossman) is available in paperback for $4.95, plus postage, and plus postage *and* tax in California. The *MANAS Reader* should be ordered from Cunningham Press, the MANAS printer, which handles sales of this book. The address is 3036 West Main Street, Alhambra, Calif. 91801. The material in the *Reader* is selected from articles that appeared in MANAS over a period of twenty-three years. Another book providing material published in MANAS is *On Art and Learning* by Robert Jay Wolff (Grossman Publishers, 1971) and is available from either bookstores or the publisher at $7.95. These essays by Mr. Wolff, who is a painter, embody the fruits of his long career in art and art education.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SCAPEGOATS, ANYBODY?

IN the *Saturday Review/World* for May 18, Stephen Koch turns his review of Mary Dolan's *Our Own Words* into an opportunity for mourning the decline in knowledge and use of what he calls "Standard English." The definition of "good English" as spoken and written in a culture as amorphous as ours is admittedly difficult. Mr. Koch's attempt is probably as good as anyone else's.

> Standard English is merely a consensus about usage derived from the written history of the language in its full linguistic vitality. It is the only variety of English of which this can be said. As such, it is the single key to that history and vitality. Knowing it guarantees precisely nothing; not knowing it condemns one to intellectual provincialism—and condemns without appeal. Not only is one excluded from the richness of the language as a whole and consigned to the stupefaction of regionalism; one is wholly denied historical consciousness—real consciousness of other times and people, above all other modes of thought—and denied all but the most pathetic critical awareness. In a word, one is cheated of the capacity for educated thought.

This may sound remote, even a bit snobbish, but Mr. Koch intends no such impression:

> There is nothing fancy or overwhelming about it. Its fundamental structural habits are very simple, and (except for children born into the most extreme of the; illiterate English dialects) there is no reason why it should not be second nature to anyone of normal intelligence by the age of fifteen. It is strictly a problem for secondary education its classic defender is the schoolmarm forever banishing *ain't.* It has only this claim to fame: It is the fundamental—and indispensable—basis for educated speech, writing, and thought in the English language.

Why is this knowledge of English in decline? Because, Mr. Koch says, it isn't taught. He calls it "strictly a problem for secondary education," but we should say that before that it is a problem for parents. If the parents don't know and don't care, not much can be expected of the schools. Why isn't Standard English used or taught in the schools? There are two reasons, Koch believes. These reasons are probably "complementary," reflecting poles of some fundamental error or lack. One, he says, is the extreme specialization of higher education, in deliberate neglect of education as preparation for life:

> Graduate students find themselves gagging on the recondite without ever really having discovered how to define and satisfy their own curiosity, how to resolve their own perplexity, how to distinguish what is or is not intellectually important, and to whom, and for what. They become "specialists" without ever having acquired the general analytic techniques required for serious thought. In short, they become "specialists" without ever having grasped the relation between the intellect and life itself. *That* is the function of general education, and I believe that in our oceans of schools it is to an amazing degree not taught because the teachers themselves do not know it, do not even believe it exists.

This is a complaint about education as old as Socrates, who offered, it must be admitted, an unpopular remedy. It was well repeated in the sixteenth century by Montaigne, and more recently by Ortega. Montaigne said:

> Let the master not only examine him [the pupil] about the grammatical construction of the bare words of his lesson, but about the sense and substance of them, and let him judge of the profit he has made, not by the testimony of his memory, but by that of his life. Let him make him put what he has learned into a hundred several forms, and accommodate it to so many several subjects, to see if he yet rightly comprehends it, and has made it his own. . . . 'Tis a sign of crudity and indigestion to disgorge what we eat in the same condition it was swallowed; the stomach has not performed its office unless it has altered the form and condition of what was committed to it to concoct.

The organization and method of the graduate school are modelled on the sciences, whose ruling principle, until very recently, has been "Subdivide and ignore." Ortega's criticism of education is aimed directly at the consequence for the student:

> Life cannot wait until the sciences have explained the universe scientifically. We cannot put off living until we are ready. The most salient

> characteristic of life is its coerciveness: it is always urgent "here and now" without any possible postponement. Life is fired at us point-blank. And culture, which is but its interpretation, cannot wait any more than life itself. . . .
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> The internal conduct of science is not a *vital* concern; that of culture is. Science is indifferent to the exigencies of our life, and follows its own necessities. Accordingly, science grows constantly more diversified and specialized without limit, and is never completed. But culture is subservient to our life here and now, and is required to be, at every instant, a complete, unified coherent system—the plan of life the path leading through the forest of existence.

It should be obvious that Mr. Koch's indictment relates to much more than the failure of students to learn Standard English. It is a complaint against the lack of general education, which amounts to the charge that we are without a vital culture, the parent seed-bed from which spring all the excellences of human maturity, including rich, strong, ordered, and flexible language. What is the foundation of a general education? It can be nothing less than a coherent and elevating philosophy of human life.

What else happens when teachers teach only their "specialties"? The answer is provided by Mr. Koch's second explanation for the dying out of Standard English:

> Americans have traditionally fallen into the stupid habit of confusing anti-intellectualism with egalitarianism. In consequence, we have created one of the world's largest and most egalitarian educational systems, shot through with depressing elements of anti-intellectualism. The paradox creates paralysis. . . . Since it is possible to demonstrate that the illiterate dialects of English have their own coherent grammar and structure, that it is quite possible to "conceptualize" in them, who needs it [Standard English]? No, teaching it is a vicious cultural imperialism, an arbitrary humiliation rigged by the middle class to flatter itself—and to baffle and stultify what are called its class and racial enemies. But there is more. Let us recall that we live in a "nonverbal age" (the talk and writing about that one flows nonstop); to be "non-verbal" is a sign of sensitivity or "spirituality." Language is, after all, a prison, a mere "ego-game"; it is spiritually unliberated. . . . blah, blah, blah. Around the educational catastrophe swirls the numbing fog of a politicalized and mysticized ideology of illiteracy.

Where did *this* attitude come from? A case can be made for explaining it as the vulgarization of a great idea of the eighteenth-century revolution—*Equality*. In his paper, "Reflections on Authority," John Schaar observes:

> At the time of the founding [of the American Republic], the doctrine and sentiment were already widespread that each individual comes into this world morally complete and self-sufficient, clothed with natural rights which are his by birth, and not in need of fellowship for moral growth and fulfillment. The human material of this new republic consisted of a gathering of men each of whom sought self-sufficiency and the satisfaction of his own desires.

Pursuit of an ideal of human excellence? Who needs it? We're fine the way we are. Ethics? Ethics tells what we all have coming to us. What else is important?

Who is responsible for all this? The professors? The schools? The government? Wondering about the present-day demand for "relevance" in education, we recalled the reproach of Aurangzeb, a seventeenth-century Mogul emperor of Hindustan, to his old tutor:

> You told my father Shah Jehan that you would teach me philosophy. 'Tis true, I remember very well, that you have entertained me for many years with airy questions of things that afford no satisfaction at all to the mind and are of no use in humane society, empty notions and mere fancies that have only this in them, that they are very hard to understand and very easy to forget. . . . Have you ever taken any care to make me learn what 'tis to besiege a town, or to set an army in array? For these things I am obliged to others, not at all to you.

The point, in case we have not managed to make it clear, is that in a democracy, every man is an emperor. Or, as Pogo would say . . .

FRONTIERS

Notes On Self-Reliance

SINCE reclaiming responsibility for our own lives and welfare is the only sure way to get back authority and power, the increasingly evident trend in this direction is about the most encouraging sign we can see on the present horizon.

Examples?

The Illich-Goodman-Holt effort to restore individual responsibility through non-institutional education is one basic awakening. The natural foods, organic gardening, and diet reform movement is another reclamation of responsibility, which can do nothing but gather more strength. The spreading recognition—undramatic but growing—that prepolitical attitudes are more important than winning elections, together with the continual strengthening of independent thought with themes adapted from the works of great anarchist thinkers, is generating truer ideas of human culture and progress. The vast movement for environmental and ecological reform, now focusing and releasing diversely born moral energies, is giving a great many heretofore frustrated decent people something worthwhile to do with their lives. The changing attitude in medicine—sparked years ago by Alexis Carrel's book, *Man the Unknown*—is gradually turning the attention of doctors toward an understanding of human beings and away from "disease entities." The anti-mechanist, pro-freedom conceptions of the amorphous but still promising reform of humanist psychology show the importance of individual responsibility, and a healthy skepticism is developing among humanist psychologists concerning the significance of academic degrees and professional "certification" (see Thomas Oden's article in the Spring *Journal of Humanist Psychology* on "deprofessionalization" in the field of psychotherapy). Finally, the withering of "status" gained from academic and scientific expertise is second only to the breakup of authority in orthodox religion. There are countless innovations, experiments, and new beginnings in both these areas, mixing fertility with the uncertainty and confusion typical of a time of birth.

Some day, a conscientious scholar will compile the history of the movement begun by Dr. William H. Bates, a New York ophthalmologist of the first decades of this century, who, during his practice of examining some 30,000 pairs of eyes a year, began to wonder if wearing glasses is good for the eyes and if there might not be a better way—a healing way—to deal with defects of vision. Research convinced him that there *was* a better way. In a book that has just come out—*Do You Really Need Eyeglasses?* (Hart Publishing Co., $6.95)—Dr. Marilyn B. Rosanes-Berrett relates:

> Bates opposed the use of eyeglasses with such conviction that he snatched them away from new patients and smashed them. In 1912, he vigorously fought a proposal to fit large numbers of New York City school children with glasses. As a result of his unorthodoxies, the American Medical Association dropped him from membership without announcing why. (Privately, the association charged him with "unethical advertising," but cynics cited pressure from the multimillion-dollar optical industry as the real reason for Bates's ouster.)

Although Bates, in effect, challenged the AMA to investigate his theories and prove him wrong, the AMA never did. Bates died in 1931, his theories neither proven nor disproven by his colleagues.

What were "his theories"? Three paragraphs quoted by Dr. Rosanes-Berrett (probably from Bates's book, *Perfect Sight Without Glasses*) provide a brief answer:

> Defective vision and even such diseases as glaucoma may be influenced by emotional stress and strain. Our eyes do not fail us, we fail them. Relaxed and healthy, we see at our best, which is not necessarily so good as somebody else's best. Tense, tired or ill, we see at our worst. . . .
>
> Avoid strain, relieve stress—and sight will improve, sometimes with astonishing rapidity,

> sometimes slowly. Strain can be avoided by the adoption of certain simple habits in using the eyes. Stress can be relieved by practicing relaxation techniques. . . .
>
> Eyeglasses generally do more harm than good. They are intended to correct errors of refraction—the bending of light rays to focus the rays on the retina. But instead, glasses perpetuate those errors. Errors are inherent in the eye; the eye makes them all the time, especially when looking at unfamiliar objects, but usually corrects them instantaneously. Glasses may make reading more comfortable, but they act as a "crutch," and do not treat the underlying cause of visual error.

It should be said that Bates's professional standing and practice were considered beyond reproach until he declared his "radical" views. He taught ophthalmology in a medical school and was often retained as a consultant in baffling eye problems. His rejection by the profession was, one may say, to be expected. Apart from the inevitable opposition of the optical industry, there was the further reason that his approach involved teaching patients to heal themselves, and this, unfortunately, is not what most people who go to a doctor want. So what Bates proposed had only limited appeal to the public, while not many professionals are interested in practicing that kind of medicine.

Two sorts of people resort to that kind of medicine: Those determined to learn to heal themselves, and those who have tried all orthodox remedies or methods and, having found no hope, look for some discoverer or innovator who may be able to show them how to get well.

Such people are few, but they have been numerous enough and also distinguished enough to generate enthusiastic support for the "sight-training techniques" that William Bates pioneered and others have been teaching in the years since. The most celebrated champion of sight-training was Aldous Huxley, who regained considerable vision after going nearly blind. The fruits of this experience are reported in Huxley's book, *The Art of Seeing.* His teacher, Mrs. Margaret Darst Corbett, who wrote *Help Yourself to Better Sight* (Prentice Hall, 1949), was charged with unlawful medical practice, but was vindicated in the courts, with Mr. Huxley testifying in her behalf. This happened in Los Angeles in 1941.

It seems to us that Dr. Rosanes-Berrett's *Do You Really Need Eyeglasses?* is an ideal introduction to this means of restoring and improving vision. She writes simply, clearly, and unpretentiously. Everything she says is grounded in personal experience. People ready to take on the responsibility of improving their own vision are likely to treasure her book; and after working with the suggestions she makes will probably get a second copy for lending to friends, since success in self-healing often awakens a legitimate missionary tendency.