

## UNPROGRESS REPORT

IN his most recent book, *Escape from Childhood*, John Holt considers the reasons for the breakdown of the authority of the older generation. Children, he says, no longer have reason to trust and have confidence in their parents. So many things have gone wrong. Not just international affairs, but family affairs, too, are a mess. Some years ago, in a remarkable essay, "Reflections on Authority," John Schaar examined this problem in the larger framework of social relationships, reaching the conclusion that the social order has been weakened by the idea that public authority depends entirely on the practical services of government. This, he suggested, cannot be the basis for enduring order, since it puts the achievement of authority on a competitive basis: you vote for the people who will get you what you want. The moral dimension is increasingly omitted. The idea that public authority exists to direct people toward what is right is almost forgotten, so that the satisfaction of desire or appetite tends to be the measure of both individual and social good. Hence the fragility of present-day institutions, which are now largely utilitarian, having only the fickle foundation of promising to supply what we want.

Mr. Holt approaches the question at another level. How do we know when people are in trouble, when they feel depressed or unbalanced from not knowing what to do? The answer, he says, is that we know by looking at their faces. Faces tell us much about the thought and feeling of others.

Children are sensitive to faces. Like all slaves, all powerless people, they learn to look at and read the faces of their rulers in order to sense what will or may happen next. They are good at reading faces. What they see on many of them must make them very uneasy. Erich Fromm wrote somewhere of seeing in a leading picture magazine a photo of a group of people standing at a street corner in a large city. The

photographer had used a long telephoto lens, so that the people did not know they were being photographed. On the faces of most of them were expressions of such horror, pain, fear, and disgust that Fromm first assumed they had just seen a dreadful accident. But no—they were simply standing waiting for a green light. The voices are often no better, the laughter often worst of all. How could one trust or want to be people who look and sound like that?

A generation that does not believe it can make a future that it will like, or trust or love any future it can imagine, has nothing to pass on to and hence nothing to say to the young.

We might pause, here, to explain that Mr. Holt does not think children are truly "slaves," but that adults often treat them like slaves, harshly demanding immediate and blind obedience. His book is written to call such habits to our attention and to urge upon us the rights of children as human beings.

His comment on people's faces is filled with painful truth. You see the sadness, the depression, the frustration of modern life most clearly when, in the careless privacy of crowds, the muscles of the face go slack in tired repose. On streetcars and buses, in the subways, people let their faces tell how they feel most of the time. If, as Herbert Spencer said, "Expression is feature in the making," we see in public places the continual formation of the features of despair, defeat, unsatisfied appetite, and unwilling endurance of disappointment. You can of course go to other places and see other expressions, but the best time to look at faces for understanding people's lives is when their features are passively revealed.

Mr. Holt's reference to the faces of people waiting for a street light to change recalls a chapter in one of Lafcadio Hearn's books on Japan, *Gleanings in Buddha Fields*. It is a

discussion of "Faces in Japanese Art," and at the end he tells about an experiment he tried with Japanese children (probably in the 1890s, since the book was published in 1898). He would show them illustrated magazines from Europe or America, inviting comment. After looking through several copies of one, a nine-year-old boy exclaimed, "Why do foreign artists like to draw such horrible things?"

"What horrible things?" I inquired.

"These," he said, pointing to a group of figures representing voters at the polls.

"Why, those are not horrible," I answered. "We think those drawings very good."

"But the faces! There cannot really be such faces in the world."

"We think those are ordinary men. Really horrible faces we very seldom draw."

He stared in surprise, evidently suspecting that I was not in earnest.

An eleven-year-old girl reacted in much the same way to a picture of a group of American farmers. "Is it true," she asked, "that there are people like those pictures?"

The point of Hearn's report of this "experiment" must be explained. He had been discussing the contrast between Japanese drawing and the work of Western artists. Japanese children, not used to the particularism of Western representation, found it offensive and ugly. Revealing this reaction is the reason for Hearn's experiment, but he also agrees with the children, at least in part. When he first came to Japan, he responded to Japanese art much as most Westerners do. He was puzzled by the absence of facial expression in Japanese pictures. After a couple of years he came to appreciate their charm, but still believed "the apparent conventionalism of the faces to indicate the arrested development of an otherwise marvelous art faculty."

It never occurred to me that they might be conventional only in the sense of symbols which, once interpreted, would reveal more than ordinary Western drawing can express. But this was because I still

remained under old barbaric influences,—influences that blinded me to the meaning of a Japanese drawing. And now, having at last learned a little, it is the Western art of illustration that appears to me conventional, undeveloped, semi-barbarous. The pictorial attractions of English weeklies and of American magazines now impress me at flat, coarse, and clumsy.

The Japanese artist, Hearn explains, draws or paints the type alone, never the individual peculiarities.

Everything in a common European engraving is detailed and individualized. Everything in a Japanese drawing is impersonal and suggestive. The former reveals no law: it is a study of particularities. The latter invariably teaches something of law, and suppresses particularities except in their relation to law.

For his conception of beauty, Hearn borrows from Herbert Spencer, who speaks of the beauty of the portrayal of a head as signifying a perfect symmetry of form in harmony with inner, human qualities.

All those variations of feature constituting what we call "expression" represent departures from a perfect type just in proportion as they represent what is termed "character",—and they are, or ought to be, more or less disagreeable or painful because "the aspects which please us are the outward correlatives of inward perfections, and the aspects which displease us are the outward correlatives of inward imperfections." Mr. Spencer goes on to say that although there are often grand natures behind plain faces, and although fine countenances frequently hide small souls, "these anomalies do not destroy the general truth of the law any more than the perturbations of the planets destroy the general ellipticity of their orbits."

Hearn now draws his conclusion:

Thus we reach the common truth recognized equally by Greek art and by Japanese art, namely, the non-moral significance of individual expression. And our admiration of the art reflecting personality is, of course, non-moral, since the delineation of individual imperfection is not, in the ethical sense, a subject for admiration.

He illustrates the point:

When we exclaim, "What force!" on seeing a head with prominent bushy eyebrows, incisive nose, deep-set eyes, and a massive jaw, we are indeed expressing our recognition of force, but only of the sort of force underlying instincts of aggression and brutality. When we commend the character of certain strong aquiline faces, certain so-called Roman profiles, we are really commending the traits that mark a race of prey. It is true that we do not admire faces in which only brutal, or cruel, or cunning traits exist; but it is true also that we admire the indications of obstinacy, aggressiveness, and harshness when united with certain indications of intelligence. It may even be said that we associate the idea of manhood with the idea of aggressive power more than with the idea of any other power. Whether this power be physical or intellectual, we estimate it in our popular preferences, at least, above the really superior powers of the mind, and call intelligent cunning by the euphemism of "shrewdness."

He arrives at the moral:

A German philosopher has well said, "The resuscitated Greeks would, with perfect truth, declare our works of art in all departments to be thoroughly barbarous." How could they be otherwise in an age which openly admires intelligence less because of its power to create and preserve than because of its power to crush and destroy?

Why this admiration of capacities which we should certainly not like to have exercised against ourselves? Largely, no doubt, because we admire what we wish to possess, and we understand the immense value of aggressive power, intellectual especially, in the great competitive struggle of modern civilization.

As reflecting both the trivial actualities and the personal emotionalism of Western life, our art would be found ethically not only below Greek art, but even below Japanese. Greek art expressed the aspiration of a race toward the divinely beautiful and the divinely wise. Japanese art reflects the simple joy of existence, the perception of natural law in form and color, the perception of natural law in change, the sense of life made harmonious by social order and by self-suppression. Modern Western art reflects the thirst of pleasure, the idea of life as a battle for the right to enjoy, and the unamiable qualities which are indispensable to success in the competitive struggle.

If we can take Hearn for a prophet—and he was right about many things—then the faces

caught by the man with the telephoto lens, so casually marked by horror, pain and fear, were the inevitable consequence of the longings of Western man, much given to admiration of capacities people would not like to have exercised against themselves. Hearn writes as an art critic and aesthete, yet all that he says of faces applies to our inquiry. "How," asks John Holt, "could one trust or want to be people who look and sound like that?" It is a habit among artists and writers to form impressions from such evidence. The English poet, W. H. Auden, who died recently, years ago wrote an article on how much is revealed in human faces. One who had seen a picture of Abraham Lincoln, he said, would have no need to inquire into Lincoln's character, which was plainly written on his face. The artist has a natural confidence in such clues, and a writer may feel that he is able to deduce the course of history from cultural façades.

Literature is filled with this sort of perceptiveness on the part of artists and writers. As long ago as 1829, Thomas Carlyle saw in the machines of the Industrial Revolution an augury of the changes that would take place, not only in the external life of Western man, but also in his ideas and feelings. Writing "Signs of the Times" for the *Edinburgh Review*, he spoke of how the machine had become the metaphor of progress, and how it was already the fashion to adopt a machine-view of both society and man. Carlyle said:

Considered merely as a metaphor, all this is well enough; but here, as in so many other cases, the "foam hardens itself into a shell," and the shadow we have wantonly evoked stands terrible before us, and will not depart at our bidding.

The idea of the world-machine, with man no more than special sort of cog which turns in controlled response to impulses imposed by the environment, was a natural outcome of the psychology of John Locke, who maintained that the contents of our minds are determined by images from the outside. This was the cultural

mechanism in which Carlyle saw the greatest threat:

By arguing on the "force of circumstances," we have argued away all force from ourselves, and stand lashed together, like the rowers of some boundless galley. . . . Practically considered, our creed is Fatalism; and, free in hand and foot, we are shackled in heart and soul with far straiter than feudal chains.

Commenting on Carlyle's essay, Leo Marx says in *The Machine in the Garden* (Oxford University Press, 1964):

One of the remarkable things about "Signs of the Times" is the clarity and cogency with which Carlyle connects the machine as object (a technological fact) and the machine as metaphor (a token of value). In large part his success is due to a tacit recognition of culture as an integrated whole. Like a modern anthropologist, Carlyle is attempting to make statements about an entire way of life, a complex which embraces all the behavior of Englishmen—their physical activities, their work, their institutions, and, above all, their inner lives. In using the machine as a symbol of the age, he is saying that neither the causes nor the consequences of mechanization can be confined to the "outer" or physical world. The onset of machine power, he says, means "a mighty change in our whole manner of existence." This is the insight which would lead him to use the new word "industrialism," and it helps to explain why, from the beginning, the very idea of an industrial society as a unique phenomenon has been tinged by a strong critical animus. The machine represents a change in our whole way of life Carlyle argues, because "the same habit regulates not our modes of action alone, but our modes of thought and feeling. Men are grown mechanical in head and heart, as well as in hand."

Well, we are still in quest of the reason for the horror, pain and fear in people's faces. It is as though, especially in America, a nervous energy has pressed everyone forward—in some direction, at least—and left the rationalization of all this activity to those least capable of understanding it. Meanwhile the poets who loved America hoped that the fury of "progress" belonged to some sort of preparatory adolescence that would eventually give way to a more balanced life. Emerson seemed to expect that scientific advance would be

followed by greater social or political morality, and even Thoreau, inveterate foe of the mechanistic doctrine, wondered whether the locomotive were not the mythic sign of a new race come to make the elements "their servants for noble ends." Walt Whitman, in 1883, in a letter addressed to the celebrants of the 333rd anniversary in the founding of Santa Fe, New Mexico, longed for a great renaissance to take the place of the preoccupation with commercialism:

The seething materialistic and business vortices of the United States, in their present devouring relations, controlling and belittling everything else, are, in my opinion, but a vast and indispensable stage in the New World's development, and are certainly to be followed by something different—at least by immense modifications. Character, literature, a society worthy the name, are yet to be established, through a Nationality of noblest, spiritual, heroic and democratic attributes—not one of which at present definitely exists—entirely different from the past, though unerringly founded on it and to justify it.

Why don't we listen to our poets, artists, teachers, essayists? There is evidence enough that they are often right, and, if wrong, seldom wrong in a harmful way. This seems true, at any rate, of the choicer ones among them. The twisted, saddened faces of the present should be enough to convince us that the doctrines we have embraced and the motives we have tried to live by do not apply to the kind of beings we are, and probably do not apply to any form of life or intelligence. The evidence of failure is all about, now seen in the face of the landscape, too.

What can give us heart at a time like this? Are there still realities or home truths within reach that will do something besides add to our desolation? Possibly so, if we are careful not to ask for or expect too much. For example, in the first number of the *New American Review* (1967), George Dennison, teacher and writer, suggests that human beings are still in process of self-construction. This may be the best way to begin to understand our great and costly mistakes. Dennison says:

. . . we are experiencing ourselves as unfinished moral creatures. At such times we cannot be satisfied with mere statements of moral belief, but must question our wholeness, the unity of organism and belief. If there were no difference between *identity* and *self*—if we had never in our lives experienced nightmare, or temptation, or the yearning for love, or religious conversion, or the fear of nothingness (for in all these experiences the boundaries of the self give way, or threaten to give way, before some larger mode)—then the problem of unity would be a matter of indifference. We would not need to harmonize identity, self, and world. But this very effort is what it is to be a man.

We said that artists and writers, while they may be wrong, are seldom harmfully wrong. Why should this be? It seems true for the reason that they do not pretend to know, to be "wise," or to have "answers." It follows that despite their frequent vanities they are less self-deceived than the rest of us. The best among them admit their confusion, accept their ignorance, and still find occasions for wonderment and awe. Is there a better account of the mood appropriate to self-discovery?

## *REVIEW*

### THE TWO WORLDS OF MAGIC

A FEW years ago a small group of artists, scientists and thinkers concerned about the rapidity of the earth's destruction and the impending disintegration of social and moral values, joined together to form an organization with a name of peculiar significance for our time—The New Alchemy Institute. The Institute's motto is "To Restore the Lands, Protect the Seas, and Inform the Earth's Stewards." Its members seek a world of "decentralized technology based on ecological principles" and are thus particularly interested in the creation of self-sustaining communities. Their first bulletin states, "The New Alchemists work at the lowest functional level of society on the premise that society, like the planet itself, can be no healthier than the components of which it is constructed." In stating this premise (though still in the mechanistic terms so characteristic of modern thinking), the New Alchemists are the inheritors of an old, now debased, and almost forgotten tradition. But the renewal of human concern for the mother of life, our earth, is bringing this old tradition to light once more.

The study of ecology, if approached properly, can give the modern student of nature a new awareness of basic phenomena. We have come again to consider that life on earth consists of great and small cycles—from the majestic, rhythmic pulsations of the seasons to the metabolic and reproductive processes of plant and animal, and that all cycles are interrelated, from the huge to the microscopic. The pattern is with us constantly in the most intimate aspects of our existence: in the inhalation and exhalation of breath, the systole and diastole of blood circulation, in the continuing round of generation, birth, death, decay and renewal of life that governs every cell of each organism. A sign of this awareness is the growing number of international scientific organizations such as the Society for Biological Rhythm Research (in the U.S.) and the

Center for the Study of Fluctuating Phenomena (at the University of Florence in Italy), devoted to examining, correlating and understanding the manifold interactions of cycles, both organic and inorganic.

This belated scientific recognition of the interrelatedness of earthly patterns and cycles is in fact a reformulation for modern times of an ancient idea—that all things on earth are organically connected in a vast, pulsating network. Further, the earth is an organic being, itself in turn reflecting the life of the cosmos. "What is below is above; what is inside is outside." So goes the Hermetic formula, the origin of which supposedly lies far back in Egyptian antiquity. But it is probably as old as human contemplation of nature itself. This cryptically-compressed magical utterance is a motif running through human thought from the pre-literate nomadic religions to Taoism, Buddhism, and Jewish, Islamic, and Christian mysticism.

That the small world is the image of the great world had become such a widespread and universal belief in the past that it became a mere formula, often repeated and little understood. Such a phrase as "Man, the microcosm" has, in this age of debased meanings, lost its original meaning for us. Perhaps now, in the latter part of the twentieth century when science is seeking the synthesis of life in test-tubes and the secret of matter in atomic particles, it is time to remind ourselves of the power this idea has had over the human imagination.

It seems appropriate, then, to return to the past, to try to understand how people viewed the world. One of the clearest statements of the macrocosm-microcosm motif is the following from the *Zohar*, the great thirteenth-century mystical book of Judaism.

For there is not a member in the human body that does not have its counterpart in the world as a whole. For as a man's body consists of members and parts of varying rank, all acting and reacting upon one another so as to form one organism, so is it with the world at large: it consists of a hierarchy of created

things, which, when they properly act and react upon each other, together form one organic body.

What holds this vast "hierarchy of created things" together in "one organic body"? Marsilio Ficino, the Renaissance Neoplatonist, drawing on the same tradition, says it is Love. In his words, "The work of magic is a certain drawing of one thing to another by natural similitude. The parts of this world, like members of one animal, depend all on one Love, and are connected together by natural communion." Like to like—or the system of correspondences, as it was then called—also convinced Leonardo da Vinci in the sixteenth century that

the earth has a spirit of growth; that its flesh is the soil, its bones are the successive strata of the rocks which form the mountains, its muscles are the tufa stone, its blood the springs of its waters, the lake of blood that lies about the heart is the ocean, its breathing is by the increase and decrease of the blood and its pulses, and even so in the earth is the flow and ebb of the sea. And the heat of the spirit of the world is the fire which is spread throughout the earth; and the dwelling-place of its creative spirit is in the fires (which in diverse parts of the earth are breathed out in baths), and sulphur mines, and in volcanoes. . . .

Giordano Bruno, that enigmatic heretic whose heliocentric cosmology fostered the Copernican revolution and caused his own death at the stake, in his obscure and ecstatic writings depicts the earth as being alive, and the world as a beautiful animal. The underlying order of the cosmos was for him, "one circle that comprises the universe, being without bounds. . . ." And "Just as in our body blood and humours run round and back, by virtue of their immanent spirit, so it happens in the world as a whole."

To complete the correspondence, the great world must also be seen in the small. Thus, according to the alchemist of the *Gloria Mundi* (1648),

Man is to be esteemed a little world, and in all respects he is to be compared to a world. The bones under his skin are likened to mountains, for by them is the body strengthened, even as the earth is by rocks, and the flesh is taken for earth, and the great blood vessels for great rivers, and the little ones for

small streams that pour into the great rivers. . . . Whatever else may be discovered inside and outside a man, all according to its kind is compared to the world.

"What is below is above"—tradition has it that Thrice-Great Hermes, the original master of alchemy, spoke the phrase in a dream-vision later recorded in the so-called Emerald Tablet, a fragment of writing from Hellenistic times. It is this document which contains in highly compact form the whole teaching of alchemy, that abstruse and universal ritual of metallurgic transformation, frequently dismissed as a combination of medieval superstition, avarice, and mumbo-jumbo. But are we really to understand this medieval preoccupation with finding the recipe for making gold from base metals as a monumental folly of bemused and befuddled pre-scientific minds? Or does the Hermetic formula point to a deeper meaning, one related to the present task of the New Alchemists?

The literature of alchemy is filled with extravagant and murky phrases—metaphors for the process of transformation and its ultimate goal: the green lion, the coming of the crow, the dying of the king, the philosopher's stone, *elixir vitae*, the red tincture, the homunculus, the chrysoperm, the quintessence, phoenix, hermaphrodite, white dove, fire in the stone. . . . To the unfamiliar ear and eye, the words, fantastic and colorful though they may be, seem determined to prevent any clear comprehension of the undertaking, as if the alchemists were deliberately obfuscating their endeavors to confound the merely curious. There were doubtless many who called themselves alchemists who practiced a decadent obscurantism and whose motives were corrupted by a search for unlimited wealth. And it has been all too easy for the scientific age that followed to dismiss the "Great Work" as a scheme of vulgar, greedy, half-mad charlatans. But alchemy was then a secret art. The vast number of medieval treatises on the subject did seem to obscure rather than clarify the methods of alchemy, perhaps for that very reason. It was a

mystery guild which transcended religious dogmas and sects, and was practiced by Arabs, Jews and Christians without in any way disturbing their own particular beliefs.

If we consider alchemy as its true adepts practiced it, in the light of the magical correspondences of the great and small worlds, we can understand some of the nature of the serious and ennobling quest it was. We can begin to comprehend (though dimly) the symbolic nature of those dense, highly poetic designations and epithets as a way of participating in cycles of cosmic proportions. The philosopher's stone was the transformation, purification and redemption of matter, and the consummation of the work was indeed treasure, as the writings constantly assert. Not literal treasure however, but the "spiritual gold"—the outcome of reverent care and deep meditation on the nature of mineral changes. Since each natural object, whether animal, vegetable, or mineral, was considered a little image of the divine cosmos, and would therefore contain within it a spark of the divine spirit, the alchemists sought in their labor to liberate the highest in the lowest form of matter. Their work was the recovery of the inner essence or gold, which corresponded to the divine spirit in metals.

With our analytic and fragmenting modes of thinking today, it is difficult for us to comprehend this magical conception of the work, with its hidden and anagogical relationships of all things. If we would appreciate the quality of alchemical thought, we must understand such declarations as the following by the German alchemist, Michael Maier, as a kind of densely-packed poetic utterance.

The sun is the image of God, the heart is the sun's image in man. . . . Gold is the sun's image in the earth. [Thus] God is known in the gold.

The "fire in the stone" is at once God, sun, heart, gold, and fire. Artists and poets will immediately recognize this way of looking at the world. In artistic creation, debased though much of it has become, we can still see glimmerings of

this mode of thought. Paul Klee was certainly imaginatively aware of this when he wrote, "the relation of art to creation is symbolic. Art is an example, just as the earthly is an example of the cosmic." And in the words of a more recent artist and philosopher, Irene Rice-Pereira, it is possible to trace the remarkable continuity of the alchemical mode. "Would it be too conjectural," she wrote in 1956, "to assume that, just as the earth was part of the sun, and man is part of the earth, this energy of the sun is an *internal radiating energy* in man?"

We must also seek an explanation of the alchemists' physical methods within the magical world-view. Their main piece of equipment was a translucent spherical vessel called the philosopher's egg, hermetic vase, or athanor. This closed system, a microcosm, was to mirror the great world in the transmutation of matter. The vase was heated, cooled and rotated while the various substances within were seen to undergo physical changes which were also spiritual transformations. Dissolving, coagulating, and recombining within its sealed world, the "spiritual blood" circulated to reveal the heart of matter. The alchemist watched carefully, meditating upon the inner meaning of each change, carefully noting the ascent and descent of mercury, the volatile substance which was the model of spirit in matter. The interactions of metals in their various forms, the distillations from solid to liquid, from liquid to gas, or gas to crystal, all prayerfully tended by the alchemist, exemplified the process of purification in the soul.

But before the soul's purity could shine out in its true nature, a new synthesis had to take place. From the violent conflict of contending substances there had to come a grand reconciliation. The great theme of alchemical literature was this wedding of opposites, the "alchemical marriage" of conflicting contraries from whose union would be born the hermaphrodite. This mysterious figure, portrayed in a variety of forms and embellished with richly symbolic images, is the epitome of the alchemical art: the coming-together



of the masculine/feminine polarities which combine into a higher unity, a powerfully creative unity. Within the hermaphrodite the circle is completed. Here is the enigmatic meeting-place of left and right, arrival and departure, movement and rest. As the blood flows through the heart and is revived, so all change flows through this being. Like Hermes, the hermaphrodite becomes the channel between heaven and earth, the messenger between gods and men.

All the alchemist's work, prayer and efforts were directed toward this goal: to awaken the dormant powers of nature, to reconcile her dynamic conflicts and to assist at the birth of a new and higher consciousness. Through the hermaphrodite lay the path beyond good and evil toward liberation from contending dualities.

Alchemy at its best was a form of spiritual dialectic whose synthesis would need the separation of matter and spirit. All activity can take on a sacred value if viewed in this way. Even the most lowly and, to us, profane task can have a spiritual meaning if one performs it with such awareness. Work which today has become so despised and meaningless for many, could be transformed as in the appealing Hasidic story of the holy shoemaker whose devotion in stitching the upper leather to the lower sole was so intense that his activity became a ritual of binding the upper and lower worlds. So the profound meditation of the alchemists became a sacred ritual of reconciliation and purification. This was the gold into which base metals were transformed. This was the coming together of earth and heaven, the completion of the circle of perfection.

If there are those like the New Alchemists who can restore this forgotten sacred vision to our impoverished awareness, then there is hope for a renewal of the earth. Without the vision and the love it brings, all such labors remain meaningless.

Berkeley, Calif.

BETTY ROSZAK

## COMMENTARY

### SIGNS AND PREDICTIONS

OTHER examples of the insight of artists and writers could be added to those given in this week's lead article.

The French novelist, André Gide, after his second visit to the U.S.S.R., explained how he was made to realize that the Revolution was really "over." While on a tour about the country he passed Gori, Stalin's birthplace, and he went to the post office to send the Soviet premier greetings. He wrote a message, saying, "I feel the need to send you my most cordial. . . , " but the translator objected. It was not proper to say simply "you" to Stalin. Gide should say, "You, the leader of the workers," or "You, master of peoples." The telegram could not be sent, Gide was told, unless rephrased. Submitting, the French writer reflected that this was one more evidence of the widening, unbridgeable gulf between Stalin and the people. Gide noticed that even his own speeches has been touched up and "improved" in this way, in translation. The revolution was indeed over. Status and ceremony were now in charge.

When John Hersey wrote his "Hiroshima" for the *New Yorker*, he only documented the predictions, many years before, of both Heine and Tolstoy. They were the seers, Hersey an accomplished empiricist. And, if, for prophecies, we focus on the nineteenth century, we should include H. P. Blavatsky's little known article, "Karmic Visions," affording authentic depth and dimensions to the meaning of a term which has lately gained a frothy popularity. (This strange allegory first appeared in her magazine, *Lucifer*, for June, 1888.) We should recall, also, the thoughts of the Swiss diarist, Amiel, who wrote in 1851:

The age of great men is going; the epoch of the ant-hill, of life in multiplicity, is beginning. The century of individualism, if abstract equality triumphs, runs a great risk of seeing no more true individuals. By continual leveling and division of labor, society will become everything and man

nothing. . . . The statistician will register a growing progress, and the moralist a gradual decline: on the one hand a progress of things; on the other, a decline of souls. The useful will take the place of the beautiful, industry of art, political economy of religion, and arithmetic of poetry.

What good can more "research" do us, if, when truth is declared, it cannot be recognized by its own authority?

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### HE WOULDN'T TEACH

BACK in 1930, an artist named Van Dearing Perrine migrated to the slope of a mountain in New Jersey and built himself a studio retreat where he could work in peace. He wanted to draw children, so he put up a swing and planted no lawn, hoping to attract children from the little town of Wyoming, N.J. "It worked," he said. The children came, and when they saw what he was doing began to bring crayons and paper to draw with themselves.

After about three months, some twenty parents came to see him. They said that their children had come down with a violent case of "sketching," and why didn't he turn their visits to his studio into an "art class"? Perrine relates what happened in *Let the Child Draw*, published by Frederick A. Stokes in 1936.

I finally told them that I was seriously interested in their children's work; that I did not want to teach them, that I did not feel competent; that I should like to study them; that I should like to find out some things from them myself—something about those impulses that made them want to play with line and color. I should like to take them as a sort of experimental laboratory group—in short, if they, the parents, were willing that I should learn something from their children, even if their children should learn nothing from me, then I would consent to take them.

That was the way our Community Experiment began.

You can't tell much about community development in a book—neither fully nor well, that is. What Mr. Perrine does is give his own convictions and then describe some of the children. First, his assumptions:

Every normal child has creative ability. Most children employ it in their play, especially when in close contact with the elements or where there is time for them to dream or concentrate. Alone the child readily becomes the center of beings, laws, principles built by the creative imagination. With these he

communes, labors, plays, battles; enacting the old drama of creation. It is important not to interrupt or allow the child to become self-conscious or aware that there is anything peculiar in this creative play, for self-consciousness will destroy it.

Most important for this sort of unfolding in children, Perrine says, "is the sympathetic understanding of the parent." An interesting confirmation of this judgment is found in *Art and the Child* by Daniel Mendelowitz, who noticed that the art of Japanese children, who now work in a spontaneous and undirected manner, much as in European and American progressive schools, is art that "frequently reflects a complexity and attention to detail in striking contrast to the hurried and relatively undeveloped quality that characterizes much of the painting of American school children." This writer comments:

Many factors contribute to this difference, but one important one is the traditional reverence in which the Japanese hold the arts and crafts. The Japanese child can throw himself wholeheartedly into the act of painting, undisturbed by the feeling that what he is doing is considered unimportant by the community at large.

The best part of Mr. Perrine's book is his account of how the children worked. One girl joined the group because she drew all the time and her mother felt that she should be allowed to follow this bent. Perrine met with the children on Saturday mornings, and he encouraged them to draw at home and bring him their work. "Pat" responded well:

Each week she brought a generous bunch of work to the studio. The subjects all showed that her roots were forming where they belonged, deep in life and in her own home soil. In fact, Pat's drawings that first year constituted an epic of her own experience with home as a center. . . . from the number of drawings Pat had made, you would think she must have been busy sketching all the time she was not asleep. She even drew a picture of the way the doctor and the nurse looked to her just before the ether cone was slipped over her nose when she had her tonsils removed. In that brief moment she had taken into account that the glass about the light overhead had wire woven through it to prevent its breaking and falling on her.

Perrine gave only encouragement to the children—no "criticism."

One day she [Pat] handed me a drawing which, after inspection, I returned with the comment, "Fine! Tack it up."

A teacher, studying my methods, turned to me and said, "There were six fingers on one hand and seven on the other and they resembled a sunflower more nearly than a hand. How could you say, 'fine'? Would it not have been better to show the child how to draw a hand?"

We went over to the drawing. "Look at those feet," I said. "The employment of an L for a foot, such as used in this drawing, is the lowest form known to have been used by man to represent a foot. Would you criticize this also?"

"There is," I continued, "no point in this drawing but what is open to criticism—even those eyes, that are remarkable when one considers the age of the child. Examine them closely; observe how vitally suggestive they are of the eye as a visualizing function."

"They are," she said, "very unusual."

"What does the wide discrepancy between the rendering of those eyes and those feet signify of the child's psychological process?" I asked. She did not know, but thought it must express a lack of unity.

"It is quite easy to see that Pat focused upon the eyes with a power of concentration unusual in a child of her years, the hands and feet receiving little more than reflex attention. To have criticized either of these negatively at this stage of her development would tend to make drawing less of an adventure and, if persisted in, would in time destroy her power to take little and go deep, substituting for it the fatal habit of scattering the attention. When Pat's highly developed power of attention is brought to focus upon the hand as it is here brought upon the eye, she will draw the hand as well as she drew the eyes.

Later that year Pat showed Perrine a drawing of a boy waiting his turn to dive into a pool. The hand is still a "sunflower." But the next picture, showing him diving, is different. He has "a well-conceived structural hand."

Why? Because Pat loved to swim and dive and she knew that the functional need of the hand in diving was to part the water, and the creative faculty out of its awareness of that functional need

spontaneously builds a better hand than a negative criticism could and has left intact and operative a highly efficient creative faculty.

Here we have an infinitesimal glimpse into the orderly process of this creative faculty and perceive it building in response to an awareness of functional need.

Perrine didn't accept very little children at first, but one day a tiny girl appeared, pretending she had her mother's permission to come. She made color abstractions all morning, until her mother came looking for her. Not seeing the child in the corner, she begged the artist to "take her." "How can I?" he said. "She is already here." He found from such children that "at three or four years of age sensitiveness to color perception is at its height." Unless encouraged and developed, it may then give way to intellectual preoccupations and diminish.

*Let the Child Draw* fully illustrates what its author meant when he told the parents at that first meeting that he wanted to "study" the children, not "teach" them!

## *FRONTIERS*

### A Tough-Minded Utopian

HAVING for notice or review three items by Ivan Illich—two Harper paperbacks and a lecture from CIDOC—and finding them different ways of saying the same thing, we thought it important to try to formulate Illich's underlying theme. Implicit in all his arguments is a basic conception of the nature of man and of human good. He begins by attacking the violation and suppression of man's potentialities by those who enjoy the historical initiative at the present time. This means the excesses of industrial enterprise.

Illich gathers evidence for judgments at a much neglected level of generalization, hoping to turn the quantitative measures of inequity, social disorder, and malfunction in human affairs into morally qualitative or metaphysical conclusions. On the whole, he succeeds. His method is persuasive. His tireless excavations reveal the ugly flaws in the justification of what we think of as "progress," demonstrating that, increasingly, it works against mankind. Then, more basically, he turns to severe criticism of the way men think about themselves and their welfare.

He does not exhort with an inspiring conception of the human enterprise. He does not call yeomen to the colors of a moral revolution. Instead, he makes an exhaustive inventory of the anti-human tendencies of the technological and acquisitive society. One could say that in his way he turns the scientific method against the chief articles of faith of its popular champions and technological protagonists. By looking at human affairs at another level—by raising his sights to the plateau of a holistic humanism—he shows that whenever any sort of technical progress reaches a certain point of complexity, it becomes anti-human. How is that point identified? When means become so dominating and demanding that they control the conditions of human life, they have changed from tools useful for good into instruments of enslavement. In the lecture—given

last April in Edinburgh—Dr. Illich uses medicine as an example:

During the last 20 years, the US price index has risen about 74%, but the cost of medical care has escalated by 330%. Whilst *public expenditure for health* care increased tenfold, out of pocket payments for health services rose threefold and the cost of private insurance eighteenfold. The cost of community hospitals has risen 500% since 1950. The bill for patient care in major hospitals rose even faster tripling in eight years. Administrative expenses multiplied by a factor of seven, laboratory costs by a factor of five. Yet, during this same period of unprecedented inflation, life expectancy for adult American males *declined*. . . .

In the United States, central nervous system agents are the fastest growing sector of the drug market, making up 31% of total sales. Over the last twelve years, the rise in per capita consumption for liquor was 23%, for illegal opiates about 50% and for prescribed tranquillizers 290%. Some people have tried to explain that this pattern is due to the peculiar way in which U.S. physicians receive their life-long in-service training: in 1970, U.S. drug companies spent \$4,500 in advertising, per doctor, to reach each of the 350,000 practitioners. Surprisingly the per capita use of tranquillizers correlates with personal income all over the world. . . .

This is only a fragment of Illich's case, which goes on and on—a case which shows that every excess in technical or mechanical development produces a backlash against human beings. "Schooling, transportation, the legal system, modern agriculture and medicine serve equally well to illustrate how engendered frustration works."

One of the books from Harper & Row is *Tools for Conviviality*, a paperback published last year. "Conviviality" means here the uncomplicated level where tools serve human good, amplifying man's powers instead of confining him to the patterns dictated by system requirements. Throughout Illich invites the reader to reflect on what "the good life" really means, and to recognize that the pursuit of a misconception of the good life makes it absolutely impossible to achieve. He works for the release of people from the debilitating oppressions of their own thinking:

I do not want to contribute to an engineering manual for the design of convivial institutions or tools, nor do I want to engage in a sales campaign for what would obviously be a better technology. My purpose is to lay down criteria by which the manipulation of people for the sake of tools can be immediately recognized, and thus to exclude those artifacts and institutions which inevitably extinguish a convivial life style.

Paradoxically, a society of simple tools that allow men to achieve purposes with energy fully under their own control is now difficult to imagine. Our imaginations have been industrially informed to conceive only what can be molded into an engineered system of social habits that fit the logic of large-scale production. We have almost lost the ability to frame in fancy a world in which sound and shared reasoning sets limits to everybody's power to interfere with anybody's equal power to shape the world.

By showing that what we are doing inevitably goes wrong, by providing numerous illustrations of the self-confining effect of pursuit of conventional goals, and by demonstrating these defeats in many directions and at many levels, Illich works to free the minds of human beings from the bonds of centuries of indoctrination. To get the full value of Illich's work, it is necessary to read him carefully and entire. His impact is cumulative. The combination of his generalizations with CIDOC research and seminar activity makes for effective exposure of a long list of false and misleading assumptions.

Illich's ardor is low key, emerging in the careful reasoning and bite of his arguments. In one place he says he is not "proposing a utopia, but a procedure that provides each community with the choice of its unique social arrangements." He also makes the needed comment that "for the sake of the survival of many people it will be desirable that the transition does not happen all at once." In short, he stresses means, not ends, the ends proposed being suggested by words like "convivial."