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CURRENTS OF CHANGE

AN image useful in thinking about the psychodynamics of our age is that of a great cloud of opinions—of beliefs, feeling-supported attitudes, and interrelated ideas of what is true or "scientific"—floating over our heads. While, unlike a cloud, this constellation of thought and feeling is all around us, feeding, supporting, and in some ways controlling our mental processes, to project it into existence in the sky makes it easier to think about, "objectively." Historians have called this cloud the "mind-set" of an age, and Henry T. Buckle (in his *History of Civilization*) described how changes take place in such vast conglomerates of opinion. Carl Becker began his study of *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* by contrasting the mind-set of the time of Thomas Aquinas or Dante with that of the modern age. The value-charged words of Aquinas—"Divine Providence," "Salvation," "Grace"—have no meaning for a scientific-minded man whose thought is focused in notions of process, function, and relationship. By the early 1900s the cloud of theological rationalism which ruled unchallenged in the thirteenth century had been almost entirely replaced by the factual empiricism and value-free mechanism of the scientific epoch.

In his sociology, *Man and People,* Ortega gives another identification to the cloud of prevailing opinion which dominates an age, supplying its distinctive identity. He speaks of the "binding observance" imposed upon human behavior by the system of common belief. Public debates are won or lost, depending upon the skill with which the contestants gear their arguments to the force of popular assumption. All those who attempt to communicate with people on a wide scale must take this body of opinion into account. Educators as well as manipulators or propagandists use the existing supply of ideas, despite the fact that their purposes may be very different, even opposite. Both Plato and the Sophists, we may recall, drew on the familiar conceptions and imagery of the Homeric tradition.

It should be added that the "cloud" of contemporary ideas is subject to continual change, although the process of change is usually very gradual. Ideas which have become the basis of psychological reflexes stubbornly persist. Yet new thinking feeds into the cloud, unnoticed at first, slowly spreading a modifying influence, revising the significance of well-established notions, strengthening some ideas and weakening others. Meanwhile old conceptions, if not renewed or added to, eventually die away. A dip into the literature of a century ago soon reveals these changes. Not time itself, but the alterations of the forms of thought that take place in time, produce this effect. In a static age, little change may be perceptible over a long period; but then, as a result of various impacts, an overturning of familiar ideas may occur quite rapidly. Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* is a case study of how changes in basic assumptions take place, and how adjustments to the new outlook are consolidated.

There are of course great qualitative differences in cultural changes. Peripheral changes are constantly in evidence. As A. Alvarez has said, "we go through styles in the arts as quickly as we go through socks." These are no more than fashions, significant only in showing that tradition may lose its hold on peoples' lives in times of mental and emotional emptiness. Old ways and habits are then replaced by a swift succession of superficial novelties. What other period can compare with ours in the production and wearing out of clichés?

Actually, if we judge by the newspapers and magazines, we are driven to the conclusion that we live in a cultural vacuum, and that people are hungrily taking into their minds large amounts of cleverly dressed up trivia, such as, for example, the endless articles on politics and political figures or the elaborately pretentious criticism of second-rate fiction. At the same time, one has the impression that beneath this transient faddism far-reaching alterations in human attitude are under way. This is certainly true of the women's movement, which represents, at its core, an authentic awakening on the part of both women and men—an awakening, we may conclude, that cannot be isolated from other dawning perceptions which are masked or only vaguely suggested by terms such as "identity," "creativity," "self-discovery," and "self-realization." Today, unfortunately, no genuine psychological insight or revealing cultural perception can long survive without being appropriated by the modern sophists, who are peculiarly adept in reducing and packaging for the popular market the latest thing in intellectual and emotional commodities. This tendency of our psychologically malnourished society was well described by Herbert Marcuse. In *One Dimensional Man* he spoke of the "homogenization" of all ideas by the commercializing process in industry and trade, to the point where the cutting edge of innovation is immediately dulled by deliberate vulgarization for the "mass market."

Froth, fashion, and desperation make a deceiving mix, leading to the multiplication of cults. A frantic and momentary popularity is enjoyed by somewhat ridiculous prophets who are taken up by the press, then dropped when new "paraclete" figures emerge. Readers are fed a continuous flow of psychological and psycho-religious "discoveries," recalling the press celebration of miracle cures and drugs of which we read almost daily a few years ago. In fact, this ceaseless promotion of "novelty" makes it extremely difficult to determine what is really happening to the "climate of opinion" in our time. We know that it is changing; we know old roots are dying or have died; we know that the new generation has declared a revolt against the past, and we know that the nervous flux of ideas almost certainly conceals deep longings which are poorly identified and almost impossible to define.

For this reason, we plan, here, to start at "the other end," with what seem basic but little noticed changes in serious thinking. Three books serve as tools for this investigation. One embodies dramatic changes in the thinking of radicals about the processes of deliberated social progress. Another deals with the place and part of religion in human life. The third struggles with the turmoil, confusion, and heightened self-consciousness in education. These three areas are obviously ranges of far-reaching causation in human affairs.

In *Revolution and Evolation in the Twentieth Century* (Monthly Review Press, 1974, $10.00), James and Grace Boggs put ethical psychodynamics in the place of property relations as the key to enduring social revolution. These writers, who have been active in the labor and radical movements in Detroit for a quarter of a century, now regard clear ideas concerning human identity and values, the quality and dignity of work, and the meaning of both freedom and equality, as the foundation of the social order of the future. They say:

> During the last two hundred years we have been traveling ahead with gathering momentum to make economic development the governing principle in every decision. Now it is necessary for our very existence that we change directions, that we embark on a new road. The old direction, the old road, created by one philosophy, one set of values, has become destructive not only of others but of ourselves as well. The old concepts have taken us on a road where material things have become not just the means but the very end of human aspirations. We have replaced man/womankind as the end and goal of living with the things we originally created to serve us as means. We now value human beings for their economic possessions rather than for their humanity.

Again:

For many years we thought we had the answers to how this country should be run because we were on the side of the workers, and the workers were destined to reorganize society on new foundations. . . Up to now we thought that politics existed only in a clash between classes. Today we can see that what must be involved in the American revolution is a clash over values. It is not a question of redividing the cake, but of creating a new cake. There is a tremendous clash over what values should be involved in creating this new cake. This is a politics with which few people are familiar, since redistribution of property has been at the root of previous politics.

The Boggs are severely critical of the typical union labor attitude, "Let's get ours," which they see as a barrier to any real social reconstruction. The issue is not wages but expression of the creative capacities of human beings. The issue is not the self-interest of the workers but the opportunity for growth into self-reliant and independent human beings. Workers ought not to pursue the material goals of bourgeois society, but make themselves free of the acquisitive individualism that has become characteristic of the middle class. Meanwhile, the determinism of the old revolutionary movement is rejected:

It is impossible to build a new revolutionary movement until we have gotten rid of the concepts of economic and historical determinism, as previous revolutions in the West got rid of religious determinism. Man/woman can discover how to make a gun that can shoot thirty miles, but we haven't discovered yet what a human being can become, what we can make of ourselves, because we haven't even asked ourselves the question. So people just think of themselves as victims, and the more oppressed they have been by the system, the more they regard themselves as victims and act like victims. . . . Determinism is the negation of revolutionism. "My life has been pre-determined. I can't do anything." If somebody says he/she can't do anything, he/she isn't going to do anything. To do anything, you have to believe that man/woman *can* do things.

This book is written as a primer of thinking about radical social change on the basis of a mature philosophy of human life. The authors are undogmatic, emancipated from past rigidities, and able to show how the kind of thinking they propose would affect the reactionary and static attitudes which have shaped present social relationships. Their outlook is well expressed in the first chapter:

The conflict is not just between rich and poor, not just between one generation and another, but between different concepts of what a human being is and how a human being should live. . . . How should people spend their lives? Is it sufficient to say that capitalism is responsible for the present state of affairs and that we are all its victims? Or is it necessary to develop new conceptions of appropriate social and human relations and then the concrete programs of struggle necessary to realize these conceptions? . . . A revolution begins with those who are revolutionary exploring and enriching their notion of a "new man/woman" and projecting the notion of this 'new man/woman" into which each of us can transform ourselves.

In addition to declaring this clear humanist platform for social revolution, the Boggs give illustrations from the Chinese revolution, the war in Vietnam, and the liberation of Guinea-Bissau, or Guine, showing what they mean by revolution as a process of human and social reconstruction. In this connection, the work of Amilcar Cabral in laying the foundations for the reconstruction of the people of Guine, prior to any attempt to win power, should be especially interesting to readers. James and Grace Boggs emphasize throughout their work the necessity and priority of a radical philosophy of man as the basis for revolutionary struggle.

The second book we have chosen for consideration, *The Sword of Gnosis* (Penguin, 1974, $4.95), edited by Jacob Needleman, is an attempt to find the roots of meaning for human life in the philosophy of religion. Mr. Needleman presents searching essays by René Guénon, Frithjof Schuon, Marco Pallis, Titus Burckhardt, and others, which bring renewed moral and intellectual energy to the quest for spiritual truth. A quotation from Mr. Needleman's foreword indicates the themes in this volume:

Writing in the 1930's and 1940's, Guénon posited the existence of what he called a Primordial

> Tradition, a body of the highest universal truths, or Principles, as he called them, that lie at the heart of every authentic religion. The various traditions are each a manifestation of this Primordial Tradition, and each is a path toward the practical realization of these Principles in the life of man.

Mr. Needleman suggests that Western religion long ago lost touch with this Primordial Tradition by substituting dogma for each man's search for the truth within himself. He calls this substitution a kind of hypnosis of the Western mind, remarking:

> I think modern science was born as a reaction to this hypnosis. That its pragmatic successes soon led it to construct a sub-human metaphysics ought not to blind us to the sacred impulse that originally fed it: the wish to know reality for oneself. I take all true skepticism to be the search for a quiet center within the mind that can resist the pull of subjective opinion, mechanical logic, and authoritarian belief. Nearer to that center of the mind, it seems certain that a double certainty appears—the certainty that there are infinitely higher levels of being to be served beyond and within the human frame. Thus does a form of faith arise alongside the rejection of belief.

This analysis helps us to understand the persistence of the faith in science in a time when science is subject to aggressive criticism and popular rejection.

How, this writer asks, if inner certainty can exist, may it become accessible to us? What barriers stand in the way? Mr. Needleman believes that modern psychology has helped to close out the sources of true perception in ourselves by "persuading us to equate violence of emotion with depth and subtlety of feeling." In effect, we lack the delicacy of thought that would enable us to read the meaning of sacred symbols in ancient tradition. Concerning the present disillusionment with modern psychology, he adds:

> In attempting to free us of neurotic guilt, psychology only helped us for a time to feel comfortable about ourselves, but never to discover the struggle for greater being. . . . The truth is, we lack the touchstone by which to distinguish authenticity. The real hiddenness and the real corruption of tradition stem from the ignorance of this fact.

The discovery of true learning is the objective of *The Sword of Gnosis*. As Mr. Needleman puts it:

> A man who realizes that he has never observed what happens to himself during real learning is in a better position to question the criterion he sets up for a teacher or a teaching. Without asking this question, without realizing that we do not know what learning is, we abandon ourselves instead to finding a teaching with "credentials" both in the sphere of ordinary education and in the far subtler sphere of spiritual work.

We need, this author says, to restore the clear distinction between what is learned from books and what is learned from life. Until we gain some skill in learning from within ourselves, this blindness will continue, and the deep meaning of the common core of all high religion will be lost to us. The book Mr. Needleman has put together deals with ways of thinking about reality and truth. His foreword, while brief, seems an especially valuable guide. The following is an example of the questions he raises for consideration:

> We are surrounded by countless "new religions." . . . How does it help us to be intellectually persuaded in one set of ideas or another? Can a teaching, however authoritative, be true for us if it persuades us to exercise a faculty we do not possess, a faculty that is itself the product of long spiritual work? How many of these "new religions" urge us to accept one set of ideas, to enter into one or another stream of practice, while rejecting others? What is the meaning of the call for choice to men who have no power or real choice? . . .
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> As I see it, . . . it is not the content of our beliefs that makes us an antitraditional society, nor even the forms of our behavior. It is the ease with which we ignore the distinction between two kinds of learning—so much so that the deeper learning, the reception of real experiences for the sake of forging inward connections between the vast scales of reality that are reflected in man, is forgotten. And with it is forgotten the possible evolution of man as a being between two worlds.

The same balance of "certainty" with tentativeness and inquiry pervades Herbert Kohl's *Half the House* (Dutton, 1974, $7.95), an

autobiographical collection of musings on individual and social problems and issues, seen in the environment of the author's efforts in the field of alternative education. It is not easy to characterize this book. Herbert Kohl is looking for the right relation between individual change or reform and community and social reconstruction—a balance that will also allow personal survival. Of necessity, his book lacks the clarity that is possible in broad social analysis or in the generalizations of religio-philosophical inquiry. Its theater of action is situational, the encounters are personal. Yet the thread of consistent intent emerges, suggested by the opening words of Kohl's Preface: "Is it possible to live a healthy life in an unhealthy society? and Is it possible to change oneself in midlife despite one's education and the practical pressures to survive?" His book records a talented man's struggle toward self-understanding, integrity and consistency, while practicing a profession—teaching children—which requires varied relationships with the existing society. It is filled with non-judgmental judgments, impersonal evaluations, candid admissions, and useful comment on human behavior. There are numerous passages like the following:

> It is difficult to live a healthy life in this culture, since we are all in complicity with its worst aspects. Paying taxes, using the freeways, buying more than we need, tolerating someone else's poverty, saving for our personal futures, worrying exclusively about our own children—all are acts of complicity. This is true . . . for me in my home in the Berkeley Hills, and for people in communes, collectives, alternative institutions of any sort. The sustained and responsible attempt to change aspects of this culture leads us into inconsistencies, into supporting what we want to destroy in many subtle and unexpected ways. However, assuming responsibility for this complicity and for our own failures is the only way I know to develop sustained action that might eventually lead to a humane society. This brings a lot of unexpected pain and uncertainty, especially if one is involved in alternative institutions. . . .
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> There is a danger in looking solely outside oneself for an understanding of our pathological society, just as there is a danger looking solely within. The internal and external worlds must change simultaneously if a reconstituted society is to develop.

Those who enjoyed Herbert Kohl's *36 Children* will want to read this book, if only to find out what he has been doing since that experience in Harlem. For our purposes, *Half the House* serves to illustrate various present changes in thinking, since Kohl seems an especially good example of the questing, open, unpretending mind. He is allied with the other writers quoted here by his quality of determined inquiry, free of the drag of old assumptions, yet not unconnected with the longings of men of the past.

These are the qualities which make the three books discussed valuable for recognizing themes and directions in a time of change. While the conceptual language is distinctively different in each one, a common spirit pervades them, and this spirit may afford both encouragement and insight to others. These books have clarity of purpose and contribute to the restoration of individual responsibility.

REVIEW
SOCRATIC PRIORITIES

SOME books seem richer each time you go back to them—a purely subjective response, yet one familiar to most readers. A volume in which this effect seems strong is Paul Friedlander's *Plato—an Introduction* (Harper Torchbook), first published in 1958. Years ago, in a lecture at the University of California in Los Angeles, Friedlander maintained that Plato's *Republic* is more of a psychological analysis than a political treatise a study of the nature of man projected on a political screen. This seemed profoundly true, and a way of meeting the obvious difficulties created by regarding the *Republic* as a program of social action. Plato himself warned against a literal reading at the end of Book Nine, where he has Socrates admit that the ideal city he had been discussing existed nowhere on earth, and probably could not exist; adding, however, that the true philosopher will nonetheless live by its principles, even though the social ideal remains a pattern "laid up in heaven."

In Plato's time, Friedlander points out, to be a statesman or politician was not yet a separate profession, but the common duty of citizens. But Athens had fallen upon evil days, and Plato felt that the city's corruption had made politics hopeless. At the same time, the life of the philosopher is inseparably linked with the good of the polls, in Plato's view. He must act in its behalf. What then should he do? Friedlander says:

> Thus the impossibility of a political career—symbolized in the fate of Socrates—meant for Plato either the destruction of one's life or the demand to build a new life on an entirely different foundation for both the individual and the state. And had not Socrates shown how this was to be done? It was no longer a question of patching up old institutions: it was a question of the remaking of man. Without making man "virtuous," it was impossible to conceive of the *Arete* of the city. Socrates, by constantly asking the question, What is virtue?, had already begun the work of restoration. He alone knew what was necessary: he was the only Athenian practicing the true art of politics. When Plato, through the mouth of Socrates, presented the challenge that philosophers should be rulers or the rulers of the city philosophers, this was not a manifestation of an "excess of philosophical pride," as Jacob Burckhardt called it; it was rather an epigrammatic formulation of a profound insight dawning upon the statesman in Plato as a result of his personal experience at that moment in history and as a result of his encounter with Socrates.

For Socrates, moral realities are the ruling consideration in human life. The search for ethical principles, he shows in the *Phaedo,* has priority. Thus Plato as educator stresses the crucial importance of the "eye of soul" by which ethical truth is known. Mathematics and astronomy are good tools because they "purify and rekindle an organ in every soul when its light is dimmed or extinguished by other interests, an organ better worth saving than a thousand eyes because it is our only means of seeing the truth."

The agony of the quest for moral verity is the central theme of Dostoevsky's works. The worst evil-doing of all results from distortion of moral longing. In *Dostoevsky* (Macmillan, 1947), Janko Lavrin traces this theme through all his major works, showing Dostoevsky to be perhaps the greatest of psychologists. When Raskolnikov (in *Crime and Punishment*) argues that men who bring about great changes in history are willing to "wade through blood" to achieve their goals—in this way offering justification for his own crime—his friend, Razumihin, says:

> "What is really *original* in all this, and is exclusively your own, to my horror, is that you sanction bloodshed *in the name of conscience,* and, excuse my saying so, with such fanaticism. But that sanction of bloodshed *by conscience* is to my mind more terrible than the official, legal sanction of bloodshed."

In the legend of the Grand Inquisitor, Dostoevsky shows that an inverted moral emotion is behind the Inquisitor's rejection of Christ's doctrine of human freedom and responsibility, and for this reason Christ, who makes no answer to the Inquisitor's aggressive arguments, kisses the

old man at the end of their meeting. This is the archetypal confrontation for Dostoevsky, found again and again in his books.

How shall we preserve our conviction that life is not accidental and meaningless, that the moral vision of justice and truth is not finally negated by the "facts of life"? Lavrin says: "Dostoevsky knew only too well that our life becomes sterile and shallow if it is cut off from its deeper transcendental roots," yet he would accept no easy answers. He would only set the problem in the clearest possible terms, as in the ordeal of Ivan Karamazov. Lavrin's book helps the reader to see why Dostoevsky has exerted such immeasurable influence on modern thought, and why his books are not forgotten. The novelist deals with the unsuppressible search for human meaning with such intensity and drama, and such burning honesty, that the reader may involuntarily experience a kind of elevation and purification as a result. To grasp what Dostoevsky is about is at least a minor initiation into the mysteries of life.

This ancient idea—that the foundation of life is and must be in moral values—is now being revived and asserted by scientific thinkers. Take for example the late Jacob Bronowski, mathematician and scientist, interviewed in the Summer 1974 *American Scholar.* Confronted by the claim of G. E. Moore that "from an 'is' you cannot derive an 'ought'," Bronowski called it "nonsense."

> There is an intimate relation, not between what "is" and what "ought to be," but between what we regard as knowledge and how we ought to obtain it. No amount of philosophic sleight of hand can get rid of this relation. . . . There are no such things as complete "is's"; there are no such things as complete facts. . . . Am I to take something which is only a partial view of reality—namely, how I see my hand and my shirt cuff—and be persuaded that the whole of reality can be constructed from it by inventing an entirely new set of entities called "atoms"? . . . a constituent of our world is now the atomic structure of matter. And we believe in that constituent because it unifies ways of looking at my hand. And that is knowledge. But it will turn out to be wrong in a hundred years' time, because knowledge is m a constant state of re-creation and flux. Knowledge is a systematization of those aspects of reality which we catch at the edge of our vision so that they form a coherent set of explanations.
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> How do we do that? How do we get this knowledge? By behaving in a certain way; by adopting an ethic for science that makes knowledge possible. Therefore, the very activity of trying to refine and enhance knowledge—of discovering "what is"—imposes on us certain norms of conduct. The prime condition for its success is a scrupulous rectitude of behavior, based on a set of values like truth, trust, dignity, dissent, and so on. As I say in the book [*Science and Human Values*], "In societies where these values did not exist, science has had to create them, to make the practice of science possible."

How, then, can people talk of "value-free" science? The answer is apparent. Our sort of science does not discuss "values," having already assumed them as a condition of its being. But a great many practitioners of science remain ignorant of these assumptions.

Today, by various routes, there is a return to the Socratic outlook and a renewed facing of the Dostoevskian dilemma. Michael Polanyi in *Personal Knowledge,* and in his more easily readable *Science, Faith and Society,* says much the same thing as Bronowski, adding that there are propositions supporting science which have no empirical verification, and that without them there could be no discovery and no scientific knowledge. As Polanyi puts it in *Science, Faith and Society:*

> The method of disbelieving every proposition which cannot be verified by definitely prescribed operations would destroy all belief in natural science. And it would destroy, in fact, belief in truth and in the love of truth itself which is the condition of all free thought. The method leads to complete metaphysical nihilism and thus denies the basis for any universally significant manifestation of the human mind.

If the best minds among us are moving in this direction, it does not seem unreasonable to predict that a time will come when science *is* again regarded as a part of the Humanities.

COMMENTARY
WHY SHOULD WE DO IT?

THE final paragraph of Frontiers (by Arthur Pearl) supplies a technical account of what the people of the "developed" nations must do if they are to solve their ecological and social problems. "We have," he said, "to reverse our historical view of efficiency."

This needs expansion. In his contribution to *Beyond Keynes* (edited by Joan Robinson), E. F. Schumacher quotes R. H. Tawney to show the underlying assumptions which have produced modern ideas of efficiency. "From a spiritual being who," said Tawney, "in order to survive, must devote a reasonable attention to economic interests, man seems sometimes to become an economic animal, who will be prudent, nevertheless, if he takes due precautions to assure his spiritual well-being." Schumacher points out that this "prudence" has proved wholly inadequate and, in conventional economic theory, is totally ignored. Being a branch of science, Economics deals only with "hard facts." What, then, results?

> The attempt to describe and eventually to control the economic activities of human beings by means of econometric models necessarily requires a ruthless and extreme simplification of the picture of man. Man is seen either as a mechanical robot, whose reactions are ascertainable and predictable like those of mindless matter, or as a "rational" *homo oeconomicus* solely concerned with material self-enrichment. Neither of these two pictures bears the marks of *humanity*. An economic teaching built on such a basis cannot possibly be helpful in solving the economic problems now oppressing us. . . . For every man, in the course of his life, becomes what he thinks, is formed by his thoughts. If what he thinks is narrow and unreal, he himself becomes narrow and unreal.

Here, it seems plain, is the explanation of what is wrong with present ideas of "efficiency." How could a merely prudential regard for certain vague "spiritual" possibilities interfere with the demand for *always more* efficiency in the goals and behavior of an "economic animal"?

If, therefore, we are to do what Mr. Pearl says must be done, we require first a conception of man consistent with the goal of reversing "our historical view of efficiency." The technical diagnosis, while accurate enough, is entirely without the motivating dynamics for this change.

The import of Jacob Needleman's observations, quoted in the lead article, points to the same need for clearer self-understanding.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
CHANGES IN THINKING

THE CHANGING NATURE OF MAN (Norton, 1961) by J. H. Van den Berg is a book which anyone who has to do with children will value. We first came across a quotation from it in Herbert Kohl's *The Age of Complexity,* and later in John Holt. The author is a Dutch existential psychologist who is rich in knowledge of the European cultural tradition and in understanding of human nature making an extraordinary combination. Berg explains his title in the Preface:

> Historical psychology compares the past and the present with the object of finding in what ways modern man differs from man in previous generations. It also seeks the reasons and the causes of the changes.

Dr. Berg's contention—"that nothing is more liable to change than man"—challenges the reader to think of ways in which man does not change. Our conclusion was that what does *not* change in man is the fact that the important changes in him result from the way he thinks of himself. This implies that man is essentially a self-created being—a proposition with roots in the Renaissance Humanism of Pico della Mirandola. That the changes in him should be self-instituted seems a necessity of the idea of freedom, although a requirement which is often overlooked by reason of the complex events which affect our lives. It often *seems* that we are shaped by outside forces. And this appearance has its effect on how we think of ourselves, and how, therefore, we act to change the character of our lives in the world.

Dr. Van den Berg does not occupy himself with these metaphysical questions, but turns a musing eye toward our relations with the young. In a long chapter, "Adults and Children," he discusses what amounts to the discovery of childhood. It came, he seems to think, with the isolation of the child from adult life—with the *segregation* of the child. The result was that conscientious parents began to worry about their children, and wonder how to "bring them up." This attitude produced an entire universe of discourse, endless expertise, and a great deal of anxiety in parents. The change was apparently inevitable or necessary, yet in many ways disastrous to both generations. Now, Berg thinks, we have to learn about children the hard way, the *conscious* way; and since we are determined to try to do what is right, we need science to accomplish what was once well taken care of by nature. As Van den Berg puts it:

> Our understanding of children has become necessary because of a loss of understanding of a different kind, a natural understanding. The psychology of the child, which means scientifically-phrased understanding, is the smallest compensation for the lost natural understanding in the relationship between old and young. In Montaigne's day no one needed a psychology of the child; he was permitted to enter the adult's world early and unhampered, and there was no gap which necessitated a scientific bridge of understanding. There were no playgrounds then; the child played in the streets, among the adults, he was part of their life.

One of the reasons we need "science," now, is the forced separation between children and adults. The spontaneous learning of the child has been made difficult by his changed environment:

> To the eyes of the child, maturity is invisible. In the past, if a child walked through the streets of his town, he could see and hear all around him how trades were practiced, one of which trades he would himself choose later on. The rope-maker, the smith, the brazier, the cooper, the carpenter, they all worked in places accessible to any child; in their houses, in workyards, or somewhere in the open. Today most trades are shut away in factories, where children are not allowed. How can a child know what happens there? His father, when he comes home from work, brings with him at the most a story and a smell, no doubt these are important indications, but they are only indications: the reality itself remains invisible.

We see the justification for Dewey's idea, but the artificiality of a school-created environment for teaching what was once learned naturally soon showed that there is no substitute for life. And

now everyone is talking of the importance of "the community" as teacher—the way things used to be.

Van den Berg's book is filled with common sense, yet he writes of matters by no means obvious to most of us until they are pointed out:

> The adult is inclined to think that he can put himself in the child's existence. As a rule, he is not conscious of the fact that the modern child lives in an entirely different reality. For the adult, life has assumed a definite shape, and it never occurs to him that the child lacks the experience to see it in that shape. Without thinking he assumes that his child lives in the same house as he does, not realizing that while every nook and corner is familiar to him, to the child it is foreign territory, even if the child has his own room to play in, and his own swing, and even his own cupboard. When he takes his child for a walk along the streets of the town, he assumes that the child is treading the same streets, seeing the same houses, and observing the same traffic. The distance which divides maturity from childhood makes it hard to remember how he himself experienced his home and the things around it when he was a child.

Having created a special environment, removed from our own, for children to grow up in, we need lots of books to tell us how to correct for the problems which result. We have to school ourselves to avoid harming our children. The things we do, expecting children to think as we think, seem mostly wrong. In the old days we didn't pay them special attention, and children learned in natural ways, by unplanned exposure, the way so much learning goes on. But now they are cut off from those natural ways. Berg says:

> It is not impossible to feel, that we would make fewest pedagogical and psychological mistakes if we suppressed every spontaneous impulse and substituted its opposite. Are we so extremely unintelligent today? And if we are, how did our grandparents manage? For they had no book to explain the logic of raising children. Or didn't they need those books?
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> To me there is no doubt about it; they did not. They did not need enlightenment, they knew how to act because they acted in a continuity; the child was right next to them, he was part of their mature world. There was nothing wrong with a rap on his fingers or with a disapproving look. This and similar measures from adults could not harm the child; he was mature in the first place. But all this belongs to the past. The tie which binds the child to his parents today is a dubious one. A little too much kindness and the child is caught in a mother or father fixation. A little too much unkindness and the child gets another sort of neurosis. A little too much kindness and a little too much unkindness at the same time whirls it into an oedipus complex, either positive or negative. It is a miracle if the child manages to avoid all these dangers. And it is admirable that parents, in spite of the fact that they are frightened on every side, still manage to find a way so that not every child, without exception, ends up at the psychiatrist's.

There is inevitable distance between the child and the adult. Berg would have that distance diminished at a "natural" rate. Precocious knowledge is devastating to the child; it arrests his development. Knowing what to explain and what to be vague about with children means being able to enter into the child's level of understanding and do what it calls for. Berg illustrates this in a variety of ways. His explanations are anecdotal and at a variety of levels. Sometimes you can't be sure whether he is describing a situation which represents what is, or what he thinks ought to be—but this doesn't matter, since classification of "right" and "wrong" can be seriously misleading.

There are several pages of dialogue between a boy and his father from which a reader might develop a volume or two of his own reflections:

> When my child asks me, "Why are the leaves red?"—it is autumn, we are taking a walk in the woods, the two of us; he is asking why the leaves of the trees are red (Why does he want to know?)—when he asks: "Why are the leaves red?" I say, "Because it is getting colder"—and I forget that I am giving him an answer that he does not understand. For how can my eight-year-old child see the connection between the two so diverse, so entirely different realities, as temperature and color? And so he repeats the question: "But why, Dad?" "Well," I say, "it is autumn, and then it gets colder and then the leaves turn red."
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> Because now I notice myself that I have not been making things very clear (nothing at all, in fact), I add, "The cold changes something in the leaves and

> the stuff into which it has been changed happens to be red."
>
> *Happens* to be! Do I notice that I am taking away from the child a necessary charm of autumn? And yet, I am right. The chemical reaction in the leaf could just as well produce emerald green or sky blue. Of necessary charms I know nothing. . . .
>
> The child is satisfied; the leaves could just as well be sky blue or spotless white; the cold apparently makes such changes and the effect happens to be red. But where does the cold come from? Any father or mother knows that my son is going to ask now, "Why does it get cold in the autumn?"
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> This is an inconvenient question. For I have to think about it myself and when I have remembered I have to transform my knowledge into child size. "Listen, son"—odd words, the child is doing nothing else. But I pronounce them in order to take a breath. . . .

Well, the dialogue goes on and on. Why *do* children ask so many questions? Berg seems to think that to understand this we need to think about men like Galileo and Descartes, and Herbert Spencer's father—all of whom want to explain things scientifically or mathematically, leaving out purposive or Aristotelian explanations. This connection of children's questions with the adult *zeitgeist*—there is surely something to it. Maybe man's nature has changed in this way, and now we need to go back to more "organic" explanations, learning to relate them with cause-and-effect explanations. Perhaps we can learn from children the importance of human meanings. Our children, after all, are mirrors of ourselves, although with some puzzling differences, too.

FRONTIERS
Problems of Conservationists

WHAT is missing in the thinking of most of the ecologists and environmentalists? This question was the focus of a recent conference held by the Conservation Foundation (Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036), bringing together widely differing participants. The comparative success of the environmental movement has stirred attacks by spokesmen of both industry and the inner-city residents. The technologists claim that ecologically oriented controls are weakening our only resources for economic health; the other critics declare that environmentalists are interested only in preserving the outdoor environment valued by upper and middle class people, and that they ignore the needs of the poor who live in the cities. These contentions were examined at length by the forty persons who attended the conference, and both papers and discussion are available in *Environmental Quality and Social Justice in Urban America,* edited by James Noel Smith, published at $3.95 by the Conservation Foundation.

Since the issues and related problems which emerged in this meeting grow increasingly complex as they are explored, we turn to what seems a fundamental observation by Mr. Smith. He maintained that in most cases the environmental approach "is not man-oriented." Explaining, he said:

> The philosophical roots of the environmental movement, such as they are, are found almost exclusively in the contemplation of man's relationship to nature. The emphasis has been on the inter-dependencies of the system, with man portrayed as one small, albeit influential part. . . . Indeed, much environmental thinking is distrustful of the essential nature of man. Most recent environmental legislation is based upon the thesis that unless restricted and prohibited by threat of fine, imprisonment, or social sanction, man will lay waste the natural landscape and defile his own habitat.

These are obvious themes in environmental literature, making inevitable the vigorous reaction from critics who regard the movement as a distraction of public attention from social and urban needs. While environmentalists, with some justice, reply that preservation of the natural environment and reform in the waste and pollution by industry serve the long-term welfare of everyone in the world, they are then confronted with undeniable evidence that the restrictive laws they have been successful in passing have either delayed construction of urgently needed low-cost housing for urban dwellers or increased its expense beyond their reach.

Who should read this book? All who are interested in grasping the genuine complexities of environmental reform, and in recognizing the basis of the resentments it has generated in some quarters. The discussions range over the wide territory of economic debate, marshalling the issues between the Keynesians and the champions of nogrowth theory. The familiar claim that the poor can be helped only by continued economic expansion is effectively challenged by Hazel Henderson, a consultant on environmental affairs. Another contributor, Sam Love, of Environmental Action, Inc., also attacking this view, quotes the following from John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy:*

> It is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the Art of Living, and much more likelihood of its being improved, when minds ceased to be engrossed by the art of getting on.

Sam Love adds:

> Herman Daly, an economist who is doing quite a bit of writing on equilibrium economics now, came up with what could be a classical phrase when he said that the politicians who refuse to deal with the inequities of today's society—by putting off those inequities until tomorrow, on the basis that things are going to get better through continued growth—are

> nothing more than latter-day Marie Antoinettes, saying "Let them eat growth."

Hazel Henderson presents figures to show that recent economic progress, instead of benefitting the poor, has led to even greater inequalities than in earlier years. This experience does not support the claim of conventional economists that continued economic progress or growth must be encouraged to solve the problems of the poor.

One irony in the demands of the angrier social critics of the environmental movement lies in the fact that while they seem to rely mostly on legislative or governmental action to equalize both opportunity and income, at the same time, in many relationships, the government is shown to be ineffectual, unreliable, and often itself guilty of major abuses. The criticisms and complaints of those who speak for depressed minorities may be wholly just, but the remedies they propose may deliver little more than devious frustration.

Peter Marcuse, of the department of architecture and social planning in the University of California at Los Angeles, sets the general problem by citing a RAND study of San Jose which concluded that this California city's growth problems could be met only by acting on several "Utopian" suppositions. RAND, Marcuse says, is exactly right. Only candidly utopian goals can unite the interests of both environmentalists and inner-city residents:

> A different attitude toward the natural environment is linked to a different attitude toward the social environment which after all creates the natural environmental problems with which conservationists are concerned. Exploitation of natural resources will not cease till exploitation of human beings ends. Pushed deeply enough, the goals of conservationists and those with inner-city problems meet. Both are essentially concerned with eliminating fundamental evils caused by a social structure predicated on maximizing the opportunity for private profit, and both must willy-nilly bend their efforts to changing fundamental features of that society if they are to achieve their ends.
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> Yet the long-run interests of the two are basically different if the conservation movement is dominated by its escapist tendency, if it seeks to escape the problems created by the system, rather than to solve them.

Perhaps the most searching comment of all was in quotation from Arthur Pearl:

> It is only in a human services society which is labor intensive, rather than capital intensive, that the resources of the earth will be conserved and human resources be expended for the benefit of human beings. Such a society is less likely to breed war, racism and poverty, these are necessary concomitants of a capital-intensive society. . . . In essence we have a surplus of human beings and a shortage of non-renewable materials: thus, we have to reverse our historical view of efficiency. Those who cry that the ecological crisis is diverting us from a war on poverty, although correct about the ways in which environmental approaches are being commercially manipulated, fail to recognize that a genuinely ecological strategy is the only fundamental antipoverty approach possible in the present and future world.