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MAN—INTERPRETER AND TRANSFORMER

THE critic has various tasks, some of them quite difficult to fulfill, but the most demanding of all is to make visible those faults and defects which his contemporaries hardly see or recognize, mainly because they are so common. In order to achieve this, the critic must establish a framework of corrective values, and then, using this positive background, set out his comparison of what is with what ought to be.

The erection of this affirmative structure cannot be accomplished all at once, or even, sometimes, in an entire work. It may take the critic's whole lifetime to penetrate the defenses of conventional idea-systems, and while he is working on this he finds it necessary to learn a great deal about the psychology of educational communication. If, for example, he discovers some basic flaw or blindness in the prevailing attitudes of his times, he must decide how far back into the area of primary causation he can take his hearers without going beyond their sense of reality. What have become the most unequivocal and self-evident truths for him may fall flat, seeming empty of meaning to others, simply because their level of generality is not yet a part of the conscious experience of most people. In other words, when you move from a description of symptoms to a consideration of why the symptoms appear and what they mean, you need to stay within hailing distance of vital human experience in order to be understood. Of course, if you have a specialized audience, schooled in the matter under discussion, you may be able to go back pretty far. Those who are listening can be expected to have a developed sense of reality for what you are talking about. A group of physicians, for example, can use the shorthand of medical abstractions when considering together the possible causes of an ill with which they are all familiar and probably have treated. But quite other language is required for an audience of laymen.

The same sort of illustration in relation to more common problems is not so easy to supply. One, however, might be taken from the wisdom of Thomas À Kempis. "All men," he said, "desire peace; but few men desire those things that make for peace." There is obviously a basic truth here, but it has not engaged the attention of mankind. For one thing, the level of generalization is too broad. This is not to suggest that À Kempis ought to have done better. Indeed, this is the real problem of criticism in relation to war: What, if anything, *would* be better? In what way can we display what men commonly desire, in order to demonstrate its self-destructive tendencies?

It is not only necessary to be right; one must also be persuasive. After all, being "right" in educational communications is sometimes a handicapping condition; usually, that is, it is better for people to make their own discoveries concerning what is "right," since there is no substitute for conviction individually reached.

We said that Thomas À Kempis' failure to communicate his wisdom was like the failure of a physician to communicate to laymen. It isn't, of course. The medical specialist cannot speak directly to an ordinary person because of the obscurity or the particularity of his language for those who lack experience in the theory and practice of medicine. But À Kempis' failure was rather due to the *generality* of what he said. The two cases are similar only in that both communications fail to be meaningful. For different reasons, neither relates to the familiar experience of people, in the terms of their awareness. To reach from the level of symptoms to where causes lie requires the impact of personal discovery of the relationships involved. Then

study or reflection brings understanding of how causes work to produce effects. This is an act of learning, which makes the basis for action, or for a change in the direction of the course of action.

The responsibility of the critic is to help people to make these discoveries and create for themselves the basis for an act or a change in their lives.

We come now to the consideration of the work of a particular critic, one who has performed the critic's most demanding task all his life, and with impressive personal style and skill: Lewis Mumford. It is a mistake to read Mumford's books only once, or only his latest works as they come out. He has given a working lifetime almost fifty years, now—to building that structure of ideal conceptions about what ought to be, as the foundation for a flow of constructive criticism that began in 1924. We are not now going to go back that far, only to 1951, when Mr. Mumford gave the lectures published a year later as *Art and Technics* (Columbia University Press). In this book the author provides an account of the deflection of human energies and resources into channels which have produced the depressing symptoms of dehumanization which are now evident on every hand. How far back toward the primary causes of these symptoms does Mr. Mumford take us? Far enough, perhaps, for the age in which he is writing, and for the dimensions of his audience, which is quite large. He takes us back to the precincts of his own vision of the good society, dealing, as Theodore Roszak has said, "in the affairs of man with that sense of the divine which has become an impossible embarrassment for our grimly secularized intelligentsia."

In one place Mr. Mumford gives attention to the effect of the endless multiplication of images, through the uncontrolled reproductive power of technology. Ordinarily, we think of the recent advances in printing and the related graphic arts as constituting a great boon to education and culture, permitting the spread of learning and of excellent copies of the finest art forms of every age. Who would question the value of this aspect of modern progress? Mumford does. He does not reject it, but he questions it, pointing out that the incessant flow of images which reaches us has a tendency to cheapen and homogenize sensory experience itself. Curiously, he uses the same adjective, "second-hand," to describe the resulting world or environment that both C. Wright Mills and William Barrett have used in similar or related criticism. Speaking of the barrage of print, Mumford says:

> As the result of this whole mechanical process, we cease to live in a multidimensional world of reality, the world that brings into play every aspect of the human personality, from its bony structure to its tenderest emotions: we have substituted for this, largely through the mass production of graphic symbols—abetted by a similar multiplication and reproduction of sounds—a secondhand world, a ghost-world, in which everyone lives a secondhand and derivative life. The Greeks had a name for this pallid simulacrum of real existence: they called it Hades, and this kingdom of shadows seems to be the ultimate destination of our mechanistic and mammonistic culture.

This constant invasion of our sensory awareness impels us to put up defenses; "people must," says Mumford, "to retain any degree of autonomy and self-direction, achieve a certain opacity, a certain insensitiveness, a certain protective thickening of the hide, in order not to be overwhelmed and confused by the multitude of demands that are made upon their attention." So the producers of these images, to get through to us with their "message," step up the volume, intensify the vulgarity, rely more and more on sheer sensation. The level gravitates to the very dregs of mass appeal, and the sales expert explains that it must, in order to "compete." "This," Mumford remarks, "is a heavy price to pay for mass production."

All this cannot help but reduce the impact of art itself, since the conditions for experiencing it have been all but destroyed. Mumford concludes:

> Behold, then, the so-far-final result of our magnificent technical triumphs in the reproductive arts. We diminish the content of the image: we narrow the human response: we progressively eliminate the powers of human choice: we overwhelm by repetition, and, in order to stave off boredom, we have to intensify the purely sensational aspects of the image. In the end, the final effect of our manifold inventions for manifolding is to devaluate the symbol itself, partly because it comes to us, as a tied-in sale, attached to some other object which we may or may not want; partly because it has multiplied to such a point that we are overwhelmed by sheer quantity and can no longer assimilate anything but a small part of the meaning it might otherwise convey. What is responsible for this perversion of the whole process of reproduction? Something we should have been aware of from the beginning. We have gratuitously assumed that the mere existence of a mechanism for manifolding or mass production carries with it an obligation to use it to the fullest capacity. *But there is simply no such necessity. Once you discover this, you are a free man.*

This is the social principle that must be applied—restraint in the multiplication of images. From the viewpoint of the individual, the principle becomes the discipline of restraint and selectivity in consumption. For, as Mumford says:

> Mass production imposes on the community a terrible new burden: the duty to constantly consume. In the arts, at the very moment the extension of the reproductive process promised to widen the area of freedom, this new necessity, the necessity to keep the plant going, has served to undermine habits of choice, discrimination, selectivity that are essential to both creation and enjoyment. Quantity now counts for more than quality.

The mass production of "art," even when exquisitely reproduced, has the tendency to lead to a casual inspection of what is only another "product," however lovely. There are now so many of them! The uniqueness of the experience is gone. The idea of having, through his work, communion with a man who has put something of the discoveries of a lifetime into that work, has little chance of survival when there is such a multiplicity of works so easily available. How many such moments of "communion" are reasonably possible for a human being? How many can he assimilate? And how could they or even the opportunity for them be mass-produced? What becomes of the qualities of the works of great men when we are surfeited with their copies? Mumford says: "There are certain occasions in life when the aristocratic principle must balance the democratic one, when the personalism of art, fully entered into, must counteract the imperialism, and therefore the superficiality, of technics." Again: "The rarity of the experience is an essential preparation for the delight. Without rhythm and interval there is only satiation and ennui."

It was Blake who said: "Art degraded, imagination denied, war governed the nations." The poet's prophecy has surely been verified in our time. For the fact is, as Mumford says, that with all our superabundance—which, as we now know, cannot long continue—"abundance of energy, food, materials, products, there has been no commensurate improvement in the quality of our daily existence; . . . the great mass of comfortable well-fed people in our civilization live lives of emotional apathy and mental torpor, of dull passivity and enfeebled desire—lives that belie the real potentialities of modern culture."

What then must be done? In the first lecture Mumford makes this answer:

> We must find out how to make our subjective life more disciplined and resolute, endowed with more of the qualities that we have poured into the machine, so that we shall not equate our subjectivity with the trivial and the idle, the disorderly and the irrational, as if the only road to free creativity lay through a complete withdrawal from the effort to communicate and cooperate with other men. When society is healthy, the artist reinforces its health; but when it is ailing he likewise reinforces its ailments. This is probably the reason that the artists and the poets are looked upon with suspicion by moralists like Plato or Tolstoy, who write in a time of decay. Though the esthetic movements of our time—post-impressionism, futurism, cubism, primitivism, surrealism—have taught us much about the actual nature of our civilization, they themselves, from this point of view, are so conditioned by the very disintegration they draw upon for nourishment that

> they are incapable, without themselves undergoing a profound spiritual change, of bringing a new balance and security into our life.

It here becomes apparent that Mumford carries no brief for everyone turning to "art" as a means of salvation. He is concerned with balance and self-discipline, with the sort of man who will do intelligently and well whatever he turns his hand to, because he understands the meaning of doing. Yet the artist has sometimes been an excellent example of the man seeking and practicing balance and discipline, succeeding or not as the case may be. The strangulation of the human spirit implicit in the worship of the machine has been understood by artists for hundreds of years, and the best of them, as Mumford says, "have been in revolt against the machine and have proclaimed the autonomy of the human spirit, its spontaneity, its inexhaustible creativeness." He next remarks that "the religious impulse, suppressed by the institutionalism of the Churches, manifested itself during this period chiefly in the arts, so that the great saints of the last century were as often as not artists, like Van Gogh or Ryder or Tolstoy."

It might be well, after reading this, to look a bit into the lives at least of Van Gogh and Ryder, if only to see what qualifies men as "saints" for Mr. Mumford. The personal stature of Tolstoy is fairly well known, but to realize the quality of men like the other two, not as "artists" who produced "paintings," but as human beings, it is necessary to read something about them, or by them—Van Gogh's letters, for example. Both were men of extraordinary intensity and commitment. They were not just "artists." The single-pointedness which shaped Van Gogh's decisions comes out clearly in his letters to his brother Theo. He was late in becoming an artist. He began at the age of twenty-seven and his enormous output—840 paintings and 850 drawings and water-colors—were all done during the last ten years of his life. Only one painting was sold during his lifetime, and he had no exhibitions. Blows, disappointments, and discouragements followed him everywhere. Yet he painted furiously until the end, doing seventy paintings and more than thirty drawings in the last seventy days of his life. In 1883 he wrote:

> In my opinion I am often *very rich.* Not in money, but (not every day, mind you) rich because I have found my vocation, something for which I can live with heart and soul, and which gives life inspiration and meaning.

Van Gogh's work was the distillation of the life of a man who was both driven and led to do what he had to do. He said: "To be a link in the chain of artists we pay a heavy toll in health, youth and freedom, and we benefit not at all by it, no more than does a horse drawing a coachload of people who are out to enjoy the spring."

Albert Ryder was born six years earlier than Van Gogh, in 1847, and lived as a recluse in New York City. He cooked on an open grate or a small stove, saw only a few friends, and slept on a piece of carpet on the floor. When the famous critic, Sadakichi Hartmann, who could have made Ryder famous overnight, called and stuck his card in the locked door, and then returned later, he found a laconic note from Ryder saying, "I always spend my time looking at the sky at this season of the year." Ryder's brother, who owned a small hotel, found him half-starved in a furnished room and brought him home to the hotel to take care of him. Ryder, to his brother's irritation, fraternized with the servants, and when a waiter with whom he became friendly killed himself after losing all his money on a wild bet at the race track, he painted *The Race Track*, perhaps the best known of his works. Of the painter, Ryder said:

> The artist must buckle himself with infinite patience. His ears must be deaf to the clamor of insistent friends who would quicken his pace. His eyes must see naught but the vision beyond. He must await the season of fruitage without haste, without worldly ambitions, without vexation of spirit. An inspiration is no more than a seed that must be planted and nourished.
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> The canvas I began ten years ago I shall perhaps complete today or tomorrow. It has been ripening under the sunlight of the years that come and go. . . . It is a wise artist who knows when to cry "halt" in his

> composition, but it should be pondered over in his heart and worked out with prayer and fasting.

So these men have much to teach everyone, not merely about "art," but about life and work in the world. This, surely, is Mumford's point. And what a mistake so many have made to take their counsels lightly, because they were "artists"! Mumford, with reason, would have them taken even more seriously because they were artists.

What, incidentally, does Mumford mean by "technics"? He says:

> We ordinarily use the word technology to describe both the field of the practical arts and the systematic study of their operations and products. For the sake of clarity, I prefer to use technics alone to describe the field itself, that part of human activity wherein, by an energetic organization of the process of work, man controls and directs the forces of nature for his own purposes.

Art, on the other hand, "is primarily the domain of the person."

> Art arises out of man's need to create for himself, beyond any requirement for mere animal survival, a meaningful and valuable world: his need to dwell on, to intensify, and to project in more permanent forms those precious parts of his experience that would otherwise slip too quickly out of his grasp or sink too deeply into his unconscious to be retrieved.
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> Because of their origin and purpose, the meanings of art are of a different order from the operational meanings of science and technics: they relate, not to external means and consequences, but to internal transformations, and unless it produces these internal transformations the work of art is either perfunctory or dead. . . . Art at its best discloses heretofore hidden meanings. It tells more than the eye sees or the ear hears or the mind knows. With the aid of the symbol man not merely united time past with time present, but time present with ideal possibilities still to emerge in the future. With the aid of the symbol, man not merely remembered the vanished past: he took in the emergent or the potential future. Beginning in dream, word, gesture, man attempts to establish a personal relationship, an I-and-Thou relationship with every other dimension of his experience.

Toward the end of this book Mumford says: "All that art is and does rests upon the fact that when man is in a healthy state, he takes life seriously, as something sacred and potentially significant." This is the view to which we are finally conducted by Mumford's criticism and illumination of the human condition in the circumstances of the machine-dominated civilization of the present. In relation to the excesses which he has examined in so much detail at the psychological level, he says:

> . . . we cannot solve these problems until we have achieved a philosophy that will be capable of re-orienting this society, displacing the machine and restoring man to the very center of the universe, as the interpreter and transformer of nature, as the creator of a significant and valuable life, which transcends both raw nature and his own original biological self.

Accomplishment in this direction, he maintains, cannot help but be slow, since the right sort of change is bound to be "not merely a challenge but an affront" to the temper of the age.

REVIEW
A RED MEN'S HISTORY

IN 1881, Helen Hunt Jackson published *A Century of Dishonor,* the first book which attempted a full account of the major injustices against the American Indians. The volume is still worth reading. In 1948 John Collier's *The Indians of the Americas* repeated the story of many of these crimes within the larger framework of a comprehensive review of the culture and history of the indigenous peoples of the North and South American continents. Collier's book, however, was as much a tribute to the Indian peoples as an indictment of the whites. As one who worked for Indian welfare all his life, Collier grew increasingly aware of the inner strength of the Indians, and of their capacity to outlast the most devastating attacks. In a paragraph he summarizes the means intended to erase the Indians from the face of the earth:

> There was no method of destruction that was not used against them, and most of them coped with all the methods of destruction. Legal proscription, administrative prescription; military slaughter; enslavement, *encomienda,* forced labor, peonage; confiscation of nearly all lands; forced individualization of residual lands; forced dispersion, forced mass-migration, forced religious conversions; religious persecutions which hunted down the social soul to its depths, and the propaganda of scorn; catastrophic depopulation, which mowed down the native leadership and the repositories of tradition; bribery of leadership, and the intrusion of quisling governments by the exploiting powers. Indian group life—Indian societies—outwore all the destructions.

One other book concerned with the Indians that has been in print for a long time, and ought to be better known, is Felix Cohen's *Handbook of Federal Indian Law,* from which the reader is able to gain a first-hand impression of how American legislators have regarded the Indians in the past. This book is a federal publication available for only $2.00 from the Government Printing Office in Washington. Its author was throughout his life a true friend of the Indians. Other books which give clear accounts of particular phases of white relations with the Indians are George F. Williston's *Saints and Strangers* (for what the Puritans and Pilgrim Fathers did to them) and Carey McWilliams' *Southern California Country* (the early chapters of which tell about the Spanish treatment of the Indians of the Pacific Coast).

This sketchy review of literature about the American Indians is prefatory to notice of a recent book by Dee Brown, *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1970), which tells the story of the decimation of the Indians of North America, mostly between 1860 and 1890, as much as possible in their own words. Portraits of some fifty Indians, mostly famous leaders, illustrate the book, making an important addition to the text. The strong faces of these men have an intensity that seems to belong to another age. It is plain that the Indians, whatever else may be said about them, come of a heroic breed. Mr. Brown's book is a successful effort to tell the story of the Indians' struggle for survival as they experienced it. Their oral culture gave them colorful speech, and their eloquence is impressive in nearly all the confrontations with white officials reported by the writer. Speaking of the thirty years during which most of the action takes place, he says:

> During that time the culture and civilization of the American Indian was destroyed, and out of that time came virtually all the great myths of the American West—tales of fur traders, mountain men, steamboat pilots, goldseekers, gamblers, gunmen, cavalrymen, cowboys, harlots, missionaries, school-marms, and homesteaders. Only occasionally was the voice of an Indian heard, and then more often than not it was recorded by the pen of a white man. The Indian was the dark menace of the myths, and even if he had known how to write English, where would he have found a printer or a publisher?

For his narrative of what the Indians themselves thought and said, Mr. Brown has drawn extensively on the reports of negotiations between Indian spokesmen and civilian and military representatives of the United States Government. Pitman shorthand was coming into use during that period and records were kept of what was said at many of these meetings. The

Indians, he says, spoke freely and candidly, and often made such meetings an occasion for telling about what they had been through in their own terms. Millions of their words are thus preserved in official records. Of the long story he has put together, the author says:

> This is not a cheerful book, but history has a way of intruding upon the present, and perhaps those who read it will have a clearer understanding of what the American Indian is, by knowing what he was. They may be surprised to hear words of gentle reasonableness coming from the mouths of Indians stereotyped in the American myth as ruthless savages. They may learn something about their own relationship to the earth from a people who were true conservationists. The Indians knew that life was equated with the earth and its resources, that America was a paradise, and they could not comprehend why the intruders from the East were determined to destroy all that was Indian as well as America itself.
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> And if the readers of this book should ever chance to see the poverty, the hopelessness, and the squalor of a modern Indian reservation, they may find it possible to truly understand the reasons why.

The main interest of the writer is in the Indians of the plains. He devotes only a few pages to the tribes of the Eastern seaboard and to those of the Middle West like Tecumseh. Detailed accounts begin with the story of the persecution of the Navahos. There are chapters on the Sioux, the Cheyennes, the Arapahos, Cochise and other Apache chiefs, the Modocs of California, the Kiowas, the Comanches, the Poncas, the Nez Percés, and the Utes. Hardest to bear, perhaps, for the reader is the tale of the Ghost Dance religious revival led by Wovoka, who was convinced that with the coming of spring in 1891, when the grass was knee-high, all the Indian heroes and leaders who had died or been killed would return to earth. Christ, Wovoka said, had been badly treated by the whites when he came to earth the first time; and now he had returned as an Indian to the Indians to renew their wonderful past and make everything good. Wovoka taught the Indians a new dance which would help to bring all this about. The dance would cause the return of the buffalo and great herds of wild horses, and there would be a new earth on which only the Indians would live. Wovoka was a Paiute who lived in Nevada, and hundreds of Indians from many tribes came there to see the Messiah and to dance the Ghost Dance. Eventually the dancing became so prevalent on the Sioux reservations that all other activities stopped. Children stayed home from school. Trading stores were deserted, and little or no farm work was done. Government officials became nervous and arrest of the "fomenters" of this new disturbance was ordered. In the resulting disorder, which led to violence, the Sioux leader, Sitting Bull, was killed.

There is a strange sequel to this story, as Mr. Brown tells it. After Sitting Bull had agreed to return from Canada, where he had fled with a band of his people—almost the last of the Sioux to remain free—Buffalo Bill (Cody) invited him to be a part of his Wild West show. The Indian bureau officials were glad to agree—anything that would remove so dangerous a leader from the reservation was acceptable to them. But at the time of the Ghost Dance, Sitting Bull had returned, bringing with him a trained horse that Buffalo Bill had gratefully given him. This, then, is what happened after Sitting Bull had been shot:

> During the firing, the old show horse that Buffalo Bill had presented to Sitting Bull began to go through his tricks, [A gunshot was the signal for him to begin to perform.] He sat upright, raised one hoof, and it seemed to those who watched that he was performing the Dance of the Ghosts. But as soon as the horse ceased his dancing and wandered away, the wild fighting resumed, and only the arrival of the cavalry detachment saved the Indian police from extinction.

What about the title of this book? "Bury my heart at Wounded Knee" is a line taken from a poem by Stephen Vincent Benét, who had the idea from the actuality of the last resting place of the heart and bones of Crazy Horse, the young Oglala Sioux leader who would never be confined to a reservation. At that time many Sioux lived on lands in northwestern Nebraska guaranteed to them by a treaty in 1868. The region was known

to the Indians as *Paha Sapa*, "the center of the world, the place of gods and holy mountains, where warriors went to speak with the Great Spirit and await visions." But gold was discovered in those Black Hills, and at the demand of miners the Army began a reconnaissance of the area without bothering to ask permission of the Indians, who owned it in perpetuity. The refusal of the Sioux to sell the Black Hills to the Government, or even the mineral rights, was vastly irritating to the officials, who decided to move in anyway, with armed force, pay the Indians something for the land, and force them to go elsewhere. The nonconforming Indians were called "hostile" and General Sheridan—to whom the expression, "The only good Indian is a dead Indian," is owed—gave orders which led, finally, to Custer's fatal expedition. Crazy Horse had studied the way the pony soldiers fought and he devised strategy for beating them. As Brown says, when Custer's defeat became known in the East, it was called a massacre. Congress passed a law depriving the Sioux of all their rights to the Black Hills and the Powder River country. The Indians no longer had any rights, the Congress said, because they had made war on the United States. "This," as Brown remarks, "was difficult for the reservation Indians to understand, because they had not attacked United States soldiers, nor had Sitting Bull's followers attacked them until Custer sent Reno charging through the Sioux villages." Crazy Horse and his followers were pitilessly pursued by the soldiers until, finally, being promised a reservation in the Powder River country, Crazy Horse surrendered. Then a series of events ant betrayals led him to see that he was to be chained up as a prisoner. Enraged, he broke away from a guard, and was bayoneted to death. His mother and father buried his bones and heart at a place known only to themselves, near a creek called Wounded Knee. This was in the autumn of 1877.

Thirteen years later, there was another massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee, when a hundred and fifty-three men, women and children were mowed down by Hotchkiss guns, and many others succumbed to wounds, placing the total dead close to 350. This slaughter had been precipitated by the order to arrest the "fomenters" of the Ghost Dance. It was the last major act of military genocide against the Indians. In the twentieth century the war against the Indians has been continued by "other means," as books like Arthur Morgan's *Dams and other Disasters* make clear.

COMMENTARY
"SYMBOLIC" ARCHITECTURE?

IN the chapter on Architecture in *Art and Technics,* Lewis Mumford offers a criticism of the cluster of structures which house the headquarters of the United Nations in New York. Invoking the modern design principle that form follows function, he distinguishes between *human* functions and those which belong to the machine. A building, he emphasizes, is for people, and after praising Frank Lloyd Wright's capacity to subordinate mechanical uniformity to the human person, he turns to the Secretariat Building of the United Nations:

> That great oblong prism of steel and aluminum and glass, less a building than a gigantic mirror in which the urban landscape of Manhattan is reflected, is in one sense one of the most perfect achievements of modern technics: as fragile as a spider web, as crystalline as a sheet of ice, as geometrical as a beehive. On this structure almost a score of the best architectural and engineering minds of our day were at one time or another at work. But unfortunately, the genius presiding over this design was an architectural doctrine altogether too narrow and superficial to solve the actual problem itself. The very decision to make the Secretariat building the dominant structure in this complex of buildings reveals at the start either a complete indifference to symbolism, or a very wry reading of the nature and destiny of the United Nations. With relation to the city itself, a forty-two story building cannot possibly express dominance: it is just another skyscraper in an urban heap of skyscrapers, actually seeming lower to the eye than it is in fact, because the river front where it stands drops sharply below the escarpment above it. With relation to the General Assembly Building, the overwhelming dominance of the Secretariat is ridiculous—unless the architects conceived it as a cynical way of expressing the fact that Burnham's managerial revolution had taken place and that the real decisions are made in the Secretariat, by the bureaucracy.

Mumford's criticism does not end here, but goes on to show how the architects, striving for æsthetic effect, made the north and south sides of the building into unbroken slabs, while a large expanse of window space on another wall is devoted to the women's lavatories, turning most of the offices in the building into "dreary interior cubicles that lack sunlight and air and view." These offices are where the secretaries work, and apparently their well-being was ignored for the sake of an abstract visual splendor. "Surely," Mumford says, "that was a disreputable blunder to make in providing working quarters for an organization that is attempting, on a worldwide scale, to improve the conditions of the worker. In such a building bad working conditions means bad symbolism." Is this skyscraper, he asks, "an eloquent but unintentional symbol of the general perversion of life values that takes place in a disintegrating civilization"?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

ONE of the meanings of "counter culture" ought to be the restoration of basic individual responsibilities which have for too long been in the hands of specialists. There was once a time, for example, when the teaching of the young was a task which belonged naturally to parents and was carried out by them without any fuss. Grandparents, too, had a role in this since, being less active than the parents, they had the time as well as experience. In those days, no one needed to write books on how to use "leisure time."

The excessive professionalization of the care and teaching of the young is probably one of the many serious things that are wrong with modern society. Being able to hire others to meet this responsibility is doubtless back of some of the sick self-centeredness of modern life, while, at the same time, good teachers are often frustrated by the demands of parents who think that as tax-paying citizens they have "authority," even though they are grossly lacking in competence because they don't do any teaching themselves. So, apart from the displacement of this natural function by the vast institutional arrangements of the present, and all the adjustments we have made to them, there are bound to be serious psychological problems to be overcome in the restoration of this responsibility.

Henry Miller has written well on this subject:

> I have noticed repeatedly how frightening to parents is the thought of educating a child according to their own private notions. As I write I recall a momentous scene connected with this subject which passed between the mother of my first child and myself. It was in the kitchen of our home, and it followed upon some heated words of mine about the futility and absurdity of sending the child to school. Thoroughly engrossed, I had gotten up from the table and was pacing back and forth in the little room. Suddenly I heard her ask, almost frantically—"*But where would yon begin? How?"* So deep in thought was I that the full import of her words came to me *bien en retard.* Pacing back and forth, head down, I found myself up against the hall door just as her words penetrated my consciousness. And at that very moment my eyes came to rest on a small knot in the panel of the door. How would I begin? Where? "*Why there! Anywhere!"* I bellowed. And pointing to the knot in the wood I launched into a brilliant devastating dialogue that literally swept her off her feet. I must have carried on for a full half hour, hardly knowing what I was saying, but swept along by a torrent of ideas long pent up. What gave it paprica, so to speak, was the exasperation and disgust which welled up with the recollection of my experiences in school. I began with that little knot of wood, how it came about, what it meant, and thence found myself treading, or rushing through a veritable labyrinth of knowledge, instinct, wisdom, intuition and experience. Everything is so divinely connected, so beautifully interrelated—how could one possibly be at a loss to undertake the education of a child? Whatever we touch, see, smell or hear, from whatever point we begin, we are on velvet.

This extraordinary outburst probably didn't do much for Mrs. Miller, but it makes a point. Education *can* start anywhere, and should. And parents who want to recover the lost art of teaching their own children can certainly begin anywhere, learning from Henry Miller and anyone else. The need is to get rid of the artificial ideas of a fixed curriculum and to use whatever comes to hand. This means transforming the home into a spontaneously educational place. Of course, when it comes to *illustrating* a home like that, you pick an example out of literature or choose one from life if you're lucky enough to know such a family—which has dramatic qualities. The one we think of is from Margaret Kennedy's *The Constant Nymph,* in which there is description of a musician's home where *everybody* seems to be actively engaged in some creative pursuit, so that friends of the family called it "Sanger's Circus," since it was so exciting to visit there. Another example might be the home of Harold Goddard, who taught literature at Swarthmore College for many years. One of his students said this in a collection of appreciations published at the time of his retirement in 1946:

> Through the medium of literature he taught philosophy, psychology, and always the pursuit of meaning and the zest for life that great art is.
>
> The whole Goddard family joined in this. It is correct to refer to a seminar with "the Goddards."

> The family had an exciting symphonic quality which brought alive the search for meaning and beauty which we were learning to impose upon ourselves. The same art spirit ran through Eleanor's music, Margaret's painting and Mrs. Goddard's blue delphinium.

Getting back to Mrs. Miller's question, Where would you begin? Elwyn Richardson's *In the Early World* is filled with answers. When he began teaching in an out-of-the-way one-room schoolhouse in New Zealand, Richardson had the background of an amateur botanist. The children, however, did not contract his zeal for collecting "specimens" of plant life. But on their field trips together, Richardson had noticed streaks of gray clay in the geological formations of the countryside. So, instead of plants, they began collecting clay. They found various sorts, and learned to recognize good clay from poor. What is good clay? Clay is for making pots, and they all had to learn which clay was best for this. They absorbed quite a bit of geology in the process. Richardson had never made a pot in his life, but he read a book or two and began to find out along with the children. They had no kiln, so they made one. Fortunately, it worked. In the testing of the clays, Richardson taught them something about the use of scientific method. Research and experiment began to interest the children, so that soon they were studying air and water temperatures and the quality of the water in the near-by river. They found various things out, going about it in ways which, Richardson says, were "quite scientific."

At another level, say high school or college, the same approach could be followed, which is to pick out something of interest that is at hand and pursue it in all directions. This might be a historical study, or a scientific one, as, partly, the clay proved to be. In *Every Man His own Historian,* Carl Becker describes a man who needs to find last year's coal bill among a pile of papers. It takes him a while, and, looking around, he discovers other things he had forgotten about. This, Becker says, is doing *history*—looking for the data on which the past can be reconstructed. For city children, a statue in the park, or the park itself, might be a starting-point. The story of how Central Park got built, who designed it, and why cities cannot do without parks—this is an essential part of education. One thing, as Miller says, leads to another.

The Franconia College core program, on which we reported some years ago, makes another illustration. The Franconia curriculum (early in the sixties) concentrated on areas of crucial human decision in the past, and then spread out in all directions. As a catalog put it:

> Over the two years we study in depth twelve samples—we bore down into twelve "cores"—of crucial human experience. We choose twelve moments rich in meaning—from the distant past to the present. We search for the heart of these moments by not restricting our tools to those of any single discipline. . . . For example, last fall we started with the moment when Socrates drank the hemlock: an exact moment which is clear and exciting. But this moment, we soon saw, is only the focus of a most complex pattern of forces, ideas, and personalities which existed before and after the event. These needed to be studied. . . . To take an example from the end of the course, we plan to consider Truman's decision to drop the atom bomb on Hiroshima. What were the advances in modern physics leading to the development of the bomb? How much was known about the influence of radiation on living cells? What were the historical events leading to Japan's social and political attitudes at that time? What do we know of the personality and character of Truman, the Commander-in-Chief who was responsible for the final decisions? What are the ethical and religious issues?

The core subjects selected at Franconia seem on the whole sensible enough. The death of Socrates leads to reading of the Dialogues of Plato, Thucydides on the Peloponnesian War, and other texts concerned with Athenian civilization. Another core approach used the execution of Thomas More by Henry VIII as its starting point. In modern times, one might think of other tragic events, such as the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, or even of Caryl Chessman, as the basis of studies in social psychology. One advantage of events more distant in time is that the historical materials are readily available to students, and such studies can be pursued with less prejudice.

FRONTIERS

Unanswered Questions

THE December 1971 issue of *Community Comments*, published by Community Service, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio, is devoted to an inquiry into the effects on human beings of urban living. This is a subject which Community Service has investigated throughout the thirty-six years of its existence, and the present discussion grows out of the apparent determination of government planners and others "to spend billions of dollars on the development of new cities for hundreds of thousands of inhabitants and for renewal of old cities with the expectation that modernized versions of the large city can be made good places to live."

The contributors to this issue of *Community Comments* are Arthur E. Morgan and Griscom Morgan. Arthur Morgan considers the question of urban life and development from a long-term historical viewpoint:

> For about the past four thousand years or more, the human race has been undergoing a repetition on a similar course. A concentration of military power, wealth, or industry, or all of these together, brings about centers of population—our cities. People from rural areas, especially the more intelligent and vigorous, have migrated to the cities to share the greater wealth and other advantages.
>
> Such movement has continued until the contributing rural areas have been stripped of their population. Then the large cities have faded away, sometimes because of war and disease, because of social degeneration, or because of the low birthrate in the city. In this way, during the course of a few centuries, the populations of large cities have largely disappeared and the culture of the area has faded.
>
> Then in time perhaps new populations have come and the process is repeated. Sometimes no new population appears and what was a large city becomes a jungle. In some of the jungles of Southeast Asia are the remains of palaces and temples, but with no present population. The great Inca cities of Peru are now nearly empty. In Central Asia there are empty remains of great cities. The new cities nearby are not populated by the descendants of those who built the earlier cities, but are a new migration.

The point is clear: great cities consume people, and then replenish their populations from rural areas, so that, eventually, they too are devitalized. That is the pattern of history.

Griscom Morgan writes to show how superficially and inadequately founded are recently published scientific claims that the crowding of human beings in cities is not in itself seriously harmful to them. It is one of the conclusions of research by Paul Erlich and Jonathon Freedman, reported three years ago at an A.A.A.S. meeting, and published last year, that the high concentration of people in one place where they are obliged to interact, is the trouble-making factor, rather than population density. This seems to be a way of saying that better urban planning should make bigger and better cities acceptable and desirable. Mr. Morgan brings various lines of other research to bear on the question, pointing to an opposite conclusion, then observes:

> Erlich and Freedman fail to recognize the importance of small social groups in the establishment of healthy interpersonal relationships. They point out that the problem is not necessarily density, but rather the number of people with whom they must interact. Yet they do not make the important and obvious connection that when living in the large city it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to avoid anonymous interaction with literally overwhelming numbers of people. Not only that, but the large population can also hinder interaction that is important. The larger the student body, the fewer the friends children have in school. In a small town one knows the mayor, the city councilman, the chief of police. In the large city a personal interaction with these figures of authority is impossible. An individual comes to feel that he has little control over his life and none over the place where he lives. He tends to feel insecure or hostile and may react in ways that can lead to a disintegration of the social structure. In the small community this needn't happen. By virtue of the smaller size each person can have the satisfaction of being listened to and having influence and responsibility.

> The small community function is an essential to successful living in the metropolis as it is in the rural areas. Just as the Amish and Hutterites have avoided the social and economic disintegration of their society by maintaining rigorous isolation from mass schooling and the mass economy, so a few urban cultures have been able by similar means to survive unimpaired in large city environments. This has been accomplished by a rigorous isolation from the surrounding urban society in small, village-like communities which limit interpersonal relationships and maintain independent culture, economy, and way of life. This has been true of the Surashtra sect within the modern Indian city of Madura. They even have their independent courts and tax system. Where the Surashtras dropped their isolation they too became subject to the characteristic impairment of city living. Robert Atchley of the Scripps Institute informed the writer that the Italian population of Boston is in the same category of effective survival in the urban environment. The Black Muslims have been able to maintain a good morale and quality of living in the ghetto by virtue of their coherence and isolation from the surrounding mass society.

We have said little about the many evidences of the "characteristic impairment" of city living, since its effects are so well known. Griscom Morgan's paper summarizes the major factors involved, such as falling birthrate, nervous disorders, mental trouble, and a wide variety of biological weaknesses. The incidence of violence in crowded areas is of course notorious. One writer speaks of the continuous encounters with "sensory overloads," which result in defenses such as not seeing or greeting other people when they pass in the street. The individual may even "ignore crises, or may stand idly by when some other person is in danger or distress." Yet such defenses, it is said, are obviously "not enough."

In his paper, Arthur Morgan points out that while the great metropolis is not the answer to human need, neither, on the other hand, is the old-time small town, which tends to be narrowly conservative and stultifying to cultural life. He concludes:

> The fact is that civilization has not yet learned how to maintain and increase the proportion of creative and adequate people. For deep-seated biological reasons, . . . great concentrations of population do not maintain themselves and with the existing social habits, the small communities do not indefinitely withstand the departure of their best and most spirited men and women.
>
> Man has not learned how to manage populations and cultures. Is it possible that there are arts of living we have not yet learned?

The books of Dr. Morgan are devoted to exploration of a number of such arts.