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NOT FOR PUBLICATION

ON the back cover of the Dover edition (1954) of Miguel de Unamuno's *Tragic Sense of Life* (written in 1912 and first published in English in 1921), the blurb asserts that in this book the author "makes a strong plea for passion over rationality, heart over head, faith over reason." This claim is superficially supportable but also misleading in effect. Everything Unamuno says is inextricably joined with an appeal to reason; one could say that he is a master of the use of reason, and that, because he is its master, he knows the limit of the capacity of reason and the value of its testimony. That is, he cannot be called to account for an infidelity to reason. The man who uses reason with an understanding of its limits may use it better than anyone else. No careful reader of this book can remain unaware that he is in the presence of a powerful and compelling intellectuality, and there is much more to Unamuno than this.

There may seem a paradox here, yet no paradox exists if intellect is distinctively the tool which can be employed to illuminate the finitude of the areas of its application, and to suggest, by necessary implication, the dimensionless depths which lie beyond. This is surely Unamuno's purpose throughout this work, and it garbs everything he says with a certain splendor. The *Tragic Sense of Life* belongs to the great tradition of human thought—the tradition we have tried to suggest by our title, "Not for Publication"—which means that while many men may have intimations of the thoughts here recorded, most writers fear to set them down. Such wonderings seem "unfinished" or inconclusive. Not until one's ideas are "settled" and can be dealt with firmly or definitely will the ordinary writer feel ready to put them into a form for publication. Not so Unamuno. He will have no settlements too cheaply bought. He is sustained rather by the divine restlessness of his uncertainties. And it is of the vital importance of these uncertainties that he writes.

How different the usual run of books! Other authors will confide their uncertainties only to their intimate friends, perhaps their wives or husbands, or to themselves alone, and then only on dark nights. They prefer to write with bold assurance, telling us what is or is not to be depended upon. They want to say what they think is expected of them. They embrace, you could say, the policy of voluntary censorship.

But the writers in the great tradition find their most precious material in their uncertainties. They are Socratics to a man. What other men suppose to be weakness they adopt as their strength. Tolstoy was a man of this tradition, so was Dostoevski. And so was Blake. These men knew the worth of both sorts of reason, the reason that works within limits and the reason which leads beyond itself. The mysterious dynamics of transcendence make complacent assurance impossible for them. They find that every perfection of form must be destroyed and made over because it is incomplete. Their reason bows before the endless fecundity of life, yet it is reason which eternally shapes all vital activity.

For Unamuno, reason, as he uses the term, means almost always a Cartesian analysis, a manipulation of the deliveries of the senses. He begins his critique of this sort of reason by examining Descartes' insistence upon doubting all but the clear and distinct conclusions of which he could be wholly sure. Unamuno finds Cartesian doubt lacking in depth and dignity. In his own advocacy of doubt or incertitude, he means something quite different:

> No! This other doubt is a passionate doubt, it is the eternal conflict between reason and feeling,

science and life, logic and biotic. For science destroys the concept of personality by reducing it to a complex in continual flux from moment to moment—that is to say, it destroys the very foundation of the spiritual and emotional life, which ranges itself unyieldingly against reason.

And this doubt cannot avail itself of any provisional ethic [such as Descartes found convenient, which was conformity to prevailing "moderate opinions"] but has to found its ethic, as we shall see, on the conflict itself, an ethic of battle, and itself has to serve as the foundation of religion. And it inhabits a house which is continually being demolished and which continually it has to rebuild. Without ceasing the will, I mean the will never to die, the spirit of unsubmissiveness to death, labours to build up the house of life, and without ceasing the keen blasts and stormy assaults of reason beat it down.

This "will never to die," to triumph over death, is something more than the physical struggle for existence. It is Unamuno's idea of the will-to-meaning, of the indomitable affirmation of life itself. In men it takes the form of the longing for immortality, which in practice has many degrees of dilution with motives other than pure, transcendental aspiration. But as an expression of the Promethean urge, the hungering of an unfulfilled divinity within, it may be the highest human longing. Unamuno continues:

And more than this, in the concrete vital problem that concerns us, reason takes up no position whatever. In truth, it does something worse than deny the immortality of the soul—for that at any rate would be one solution—it refuses even to recognize the problem as our vital desire presents it to us. In the rational and logical sense of the term problem, there is no such problem. This question of the immortality of the soul, of the persistence of the individual consciousness, is not rational, it falls outside reason. As a problem, and whatever solution it may receive, it is irrational. Rationally even the very propounding of the problem lacks sense. The immortality of the soul is as inconceivable as, in all strictness, is its absolute mortality. For the purpose of explaining the world and existence—and such is the task of reason—it is not necessary that we should suppose that our soul is either mortal or immortal. The mere enunciation of the problem is, therefore, an irrationality.

Yet curiously, it is in part Unamuno's intent to show that without the idea of immortality, life is a vapid and insipid, an ultimately meaningless affair. And his argument, if it holds water, is surely a higher kind of rational expression. One might here make use of the Greek distinction between the higher and the lower mind—between the *nous*, or spirit, said to be the source of thinking which comes from the godlike side of the human being, sometimes spoken of as noëtic in quality, and the *psyche*, which is held captive by the bonds of mortality and is subject to all the limitations of which Unamuno speaks.

There is a tendency in sense-informed reason to try to make all that it contemplates consistent with its own limitations. Unamuno is in ceaseless revolt against this tendency, although he is obliged to respect its power. He sets the problem in these words:

Veracity, the homage I owe to what I believe to be rational, to what logically we call truth, moves me to affirm, in this case that the immortality of the individual soul is a contradiction in terms, that it is something, not only irrational, but contra-rational; but sincerity leads me to affirm also by refusal to resign myself to this previous affirmation and by protest against its validity. What I feel is a truth, at any rate as much a truth as what I see, touch, hear, or what is demonstrated to me—nay, I believe it is more of a truth—and sincerity obliges me not to hide what I feel.

And life, quick to defend itself, searches for the weak point in reason and finds it in scepticism, which it straightway fastens upon, seeking to save itself by means of this stranglehold. It needs the weakness of its adversary.

From this contradiction Unamuno forges the foundation of his position:

Whither reason does lead me is to vital scepticism, or more properly, to vital negation—not merely to doubt, but to deny, that my consciousness survives my death. Scepticism is produced by the clash between reason and desire. And from this clash, from this embrace between desire and scepticism, is born that holy, that sweet, that saving incertitude, which is our supreme consolation.

There is no voluntary servitude to custom or inherited belief in Unamuno. He has his tools of thought from his age and culture, and these leave their identifying trace, which must be interpreted, but his mind is free. He does not feel the weight of binding observance. He seeks allies only among those who are willing to ask all questions, contemplate all possibilities, with an equal mind. He writes of the inner musings which men who exhibit only certainties—actual or assumed—keep to themselves, as though they would lose their reputation by revealing them:

> In the most secret chamber of the spirit of him who believes himself convinced that death puts an end to his personal consciousness, his memory, for ever, and all unknown to him perhaps, there lurks a shadow, a vague shadow, a shadow of a shadow, of uncertainty, and while he says within himself "Well, let us live this life that passes away, for there is no other!" the silence of the secret chamber speaks to him and murmurs, "Who knows! . . ." He may not think he hears it, but he hears it nevertheless. And likewise in some secret place of the soul of the believer who most firmly holds the belief in a future life, there is a muffled voice, a voice of uncertainty, which whispers in the ear of his spirit, "Who knows! . . ." These voices are like the humming of a mosquito when the south-west wind roars through the trees in the wood; we cannot distinguish this faint humming, yet nevertheless, merged in the clamour of the storm, it reaches the ear. Otherwise, without this uncertainty, how could we live?
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> *"Is there?" "Is there not?"*—these are the bases of our inner life. There may be a rationalist who has never wavered in his conviction of the mortality of the soul, and there may be a vitalist who has never wavered in his faith in immortality; but at the most this would only prove that just as there are natural monstrosities, so there are those who are stupid as regards heart and feeling, however great their intelligence, and those who are stupid intellectually, however great their virtue. . . . I do not understand those men who tell me that the prospect of the yonder side of death has never tormented them, that the thought of their own annihilation never disquiets them. For my part I do not wish to make peace between my heart and my head, between my faith and my reason—I wish rather that there should be war between them!

It is of considerable interest that only those who are at heart Affirmers, like Unamuno, are willing to accept the unstable equilibrium of this position. The Deniers do not seem able to bear the tension of continued paradox and contradiction. They want to slash away at the Gordian knot, to declare that the Problem does not even exist. Unamuno is no enemy of reason; like Blake, he knows that reason has its place and even its cosmic necessities. He holds only that it is not *all*, and when allowed to become all it brings a universal collapse, first of meaning, then of all else.

Unamuno insists upon measure in the expressions of affirmation. Who, he asks, "shall put fetters upon the imagination, once it has broken the chains of the rational?" He answers that the human need to be rational in our communications exercises control:

> . . . there is a way of rationalizing the contra-rational, and that is by trying to explain it. Since only the rational is intelligible, and since the absurd, being devoid of sense, is condemned to be incommunicable you will find that whenever we succeed in giving expression and intelligibility to anything apparently irrational or absurd we invariably resolve it into something rational, even though it be into the negation of that which we affirm.

Further, the quality of the vision gives appropriate shape to the play of the imagination. Speaking of what he means by immortality of the soul, Unamuno says:

> It has nothing to do with a transcendental police regimen or with securing order—and what an order!—upon earth by means of promises and threats of eternal rewards and punishments after death. All this belongs to a lower plane—that is to say, it is merely politics, or if you like ethics. The vital sense has to do with living.
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> But it is in our endeavor to represent to ourselves what the life of the soul after death really means that uncertainty finds its surest foundation. This it is that most shakes our vital desire and most intensifies the dissolvent efficacy of reason. For even if by a mighty effort of faith we overcome that reason which tells and teaches us that the soul is only a function of the physical organism, it yet remains for

> our imagination to conceive an image of the immortal and eternal life of the soul. This conception involves us in contradictions and absurdities, and it may be that we shall arrive with Kierkegaard at the conclusion that if the mortality of the soul is terrible, not less terrible is its immortality.

Here, in principle, is the root of the issue between the Northern and Southern schools of Buddhism, which is often regarded as turning on the question of whether or not there is an enduring individuality in every human being. Such an individuality is morally affirmed, in Southern Buddhism, through the conception of continuing responsibility, yet metaphysically or theologically denied, which seems something of an absurdity. On the other hand, materialization of the idea of individual survival is avoided by this denial. Perhaps this idea was deemed to be too subtle for correct apprehension in popular belief, and therefore flatly rejected. In any event, Unamuno seems well aware of the extreme difficulty in deciding what is *worthy* and therefore capable of eternal life.

In about the middle of the book he generalizes his intentions:

> I hope to gather everything together and to show that this religious despair which I have been talking about, and which is nothing other than the tragic sense of life itself, is, though more or less hidden, the very foundation of the consciousness of civilized individuals and peoples today—that is to say, of those individuals and peoples who do not suffer from stupidity of intellect or stupidity of feeling.
>
> And this tragic sense is the spring of heroic achievements.

Why did he write the *Tragic Sense of Life?*

> Yes, I know well that others before me have felt what I feel and express; that many others feel it today, although they keep silence about it. Why do I not keep silence about it too? Well, for the very reason that most of those who feel it are silent about it; and yet, though they are silent, they obey in silence that inner voice. And I do not keep silence about it because it is for many the thing which must not be spoken, the abomination of abominations—*infandum*—and I believe that it is necessary now and again to speak the thing which must not be spoken. But if it leads to nothing? Even if it should lead only to irritating the devotees of progress, those who believe that truth is consolation, it would lead to not a little. To irritating them and making them say: Poor fellow! if he would only use his intelligence to better purpose! . . . Someone will perhaps add that I do not know what to say, to which I shall reply that he may be right—and being right is such a little thing!—but that I feel what I say and I know what I feel and that suffices me. And that it is better to be lacking in reason than to have too much of it.

What of the validity of Unamuno's reflections?

> I think I can assume that my feeling of life, which is the essence of life itself, my vitality, my boundless appetite for living and my abhorrence of dying, my refusal to submit to death—that it is this which suggests to me the doctrines with which I try to counter-check the working of the reason. Have these doctrines an objective value? someone will ask me, and I shall answer that I do not understand what the objective value of a doctrine is. I will not say that the more or less poetical and unphilosophical doctrines that I am about to set forth are those which make me live, but I will venture to say that it is my longing to live for ever that inspires these doctrines within me. And if by means of them I succeed in strengthening and sustaining this same longing in another, perhaps when it was all but dead, then I shall have performed a man's work and, above all, I shall have lived. . . .
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> Very different, well I know, is the attitude of our progressives, the partisans of "the central current of contemporary European thought"; but I cannot bring myself to believe that these individuals do not voluntarily close their eyes to the grand problem of existence and that, in the endeavor to stifle this feeling of the tragedy of life, they themselves are not living a lie. . . .
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> The reader who follows me further is now aware that I am about to carry him into the region of the imagination, of imagination not destitute of reason, for without reason nothing subsists, but of imagination founded on feeling. And as regards its truth, the real truth, that which is independent of ourselves, beyond the reach of our logic and of our heart—of this truth who knows aught?

It is to Unamuno's dauntless spirit, rather than his "doctripes," although these are far from negligible, that we wish to draw attention. He will neither pretend nor compromise, nor will he give

up the struggle. Even if he declares no "truths" at all, his life is surely of the stuff of which truths are finally made. His ideas about consciousness, Deity, brotherhood, responsibility, spring' from an intensity that makes his reader long for fellowship with thinkers of this sort. Unamuno can be claimed by no party. "My work," he said—"I was going to say my mission—is to shatter the faith of men here, there, and everywhere, faith in affirmation, faith in negation, and faith in abstention from faith, and this for the sake of faith in faith itself; it is to war against all those who submit, whether it be to Catholicism, or to rationalism, or to agnosticism; it is to make all men live the life of inquietude and passionate desire." What is accomplished in this way? Will it be efficacious? "But did Don Quixote believe in the immediate apparential efficacy of his work? It is very doubtful."

As for his determined scepticism or doubt, it seems a twentieth-century brand of Socratic ignorance. There was in him a fire of commitment that never lacked for fuel or strength of intention. His doubts were of a proper sort if they warred against unearned assumptions, undeserved confidence. Here was a man who knew the difference between what he believed and what he knew, and was forever active in reducing the one in order to add to the other, being unashamed of the small progress he felt able to declare. Why should a man be embarrassed by the human condition? Why should he not delight in telling what truth he is able to discern, even if this be mainly an account of his uncertainties? In a world so filled with fraudulent claims' this might grow into a very great truth, one that gives support to another region of his being.

REVIEW
SOME REDEFINITIONS

THE books of Herbert Read are not easy to review. We now have two of them: one, *Anarchy and Order*, first published in England in 1954, and put into paperback last year by Beacon ($2.95) with an introduction by Howard Zinn; the other, *To Hell with Culture* (Schocken paperback, 1963, $1.75), sent to us by a friend. One reason that Read is not easy to summarize or generalize about is that he is not doctrinaire. There can be no complaint about this quality, which requires only that he be read with care. Another reason may be that there remain unresolved contradictions in his thought, difficult to isolate, making the characteristic themes in his writing seem somewhat unrelated. This is an impression gained during several years of dipping into Read's works. But in any event they are worth dipping into.

Sectarian anarchists don't think very highly of Read, although it should be added that sectarian anarchists don't seem to think very highly of most people, which is a strong count against sectarian anarchism, since the anarchist ideal, if it is ever to be realized, must be achieved partly through common appreciation of the good qualities in human beings, and by strong faith in the possibility of their further development. Anarchists, in short, cannot afford to go about displaying contempt for the vast majority of mankind. It makes them ridiculous.

At any rate, Read is an advocate of the anarchist ideal. There is considerable informal discussion of political theory in this book, since Read is able to show that the anarchist ideal is really the ideal of numerous political theories—of both democracy and communism, for example. And there is a great deal of effective criticism of the State. But genuine anarchists, it has always seemed to us, are not really political people. They may talk in political terms, but this is mainly because for centuries politics has been looked to as the solution for human troubles, so that if you want to attract wide attention for what you have to say, you very nearly *must* talk about politics. Yet anarchist politics seems a contradiction in terms. Modern politics is about power—the use of power by some in relation to others. Morality in politics consists in the attempt to justify the use of this sort of power. But anarchism is the rejection of this power—so, anarchist politics is a contradiction in terms.

People sometimes speak of the anarchist revolution. There could reasonably be only two sorts of anarchist revolution. In one case—which is not, after all, very reasonable, either—the anarchist revolution would use power to overcome existing power in order to abolish *all* power, so as to set everyone free from its control. This would be the last great political act—a sort of *Götterdämmerung*—for the purpose of putting an end to politics. It is of course deeply suspect, as a proposal, by reason of the contradiction of the means to the end in view. On psycho-social grounds it seems unlikely that this doctrine could work in practice.

The other sort of anarchist revolution involves the gradual development by individuals of personal and group ways of life that gain immunity to power through their own vitality and moral strength, until, at last, the people are able to shed all vestiges of outside power and control. One might say that they would then have become inaccessible to power, in the Gandhian sense. This is indeed a far-off vision, but anarchists of this persuasion maintain that beginnings of the right sort can always be made, anywhere, any time.

The anarchist critique of present-day society is absolutely unanswerable. Its alternatives, naturally enough, seem vague, uncertain, and therefore unpromising. The anarchist society is difficult to imagine, by reason of the strong objective presence of the evils of existing society. Yet this is no more than a formulation of the problem, not an argument against the idea of orderly self-rule. Toward the end of *Anarchy and*

Order Read quotes Kropotkin on the need for development of the moral feelings in man, as the basis for a free society, then writes:

> Many people are ready to admit the truth of these observations of Kropotkin's, and would welcome a society based, not on power but on mutual aid, but they cannot see how it is to be brought about. Power is a present fact: it is an ugly fact, both in international politics and in commerce. We say that trade follows the flag (by which we mean the guns under the flag), and there are all sorts of undesirable elements—not only dictators and agitators, but criminals and gangsters—that must be kept down by the armed forces of the State. We do not approve of power as a moral principle such people say, but it is necessary as a final sanction for legality.
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> Against this point of view one can repeat that power corrupts, and that the evil its use entails is always greater than the evil it would repress. Can anyone, surveying the condition of the world today, reasonably maintain that the exercise of power has secured any permanent good, any sense of stability or social ease? Power was ranged against power in the First World War, and a tyranny was destroyed by means of power; but from the battlefields of Europe a thousand new evils sprang from the soil and menaced our peace, until power again was invoked to suppress these evils. Again a tyranny has been eliminated, but again evils have multiplied in the wake of war, and our condition relative to any epoch within the memory of man is now infinitely worse. Power has eliminated this evil or that evil, but it has not reached evil at the heart of things: it has achieved nothing positive, nothing creative, nothing which contributes to the well-being of mankind. Must we not therefore conclude, in all soberness and humility, that evil is not overcome by power? Must we not rather turn to that other principle which is embodied in the command: Resist not evil? The doctrine of non-resistance to evil may be hard to understand and difficult to practice but its effectiveness has been demonstrated again and again in the course of history.

Pointing to Gandhi's nonviolent campaign in South Africa and for the independence of India, Read continues:

> . . . consider only its tactics, and we must then admit that the whole conception of power—imperial power, military power, economic power—has been defeated by a man in a loincloth, preaching a doctrine of meekness, of non-resistance.
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> I do not pretend that the alternative to power is easy: it demands immense sacrifice and angelic discipline. But that very sacrifice and discipline will create the ethical atmosphere which excludes the impulse to exercise power. Instead of a multitude of restless individuals, each seeking separately to gain some advantage over his fellows, we become part of something greater than individuality, something wider than a pious sect or an exclusive elite: we become part of one another, in work and in play a cooperative community, in aspiration an indivisible brotherhood.

The problem, then, is educational, in the widest meaning of the term. Read goes back to Plato, showing that Plato was well acquainted with the idea of "conditioning," since the *Republic* is filled with examples of what he conceived to be the best environmental influences for the young. Moral instruction, moreover, in the Platonic scheme, was founded on the harmony of nature, which was embodied in the arts such as music and dancing. Read is convinced that Plato meant morality to be founded on Natural Law, and even if it be argued that Natural Law is by no means unambiguous, and subject to uncertain interpretation, this may be nevertheless far superior to what has been substituted in modern times for Natural Law—namely, the National State as the source of all morality. The State may offer unambiguous rulings, but we are surrounded by and penned in by them in the form of endless statutes, and the drift toward confinement in a totalitarian web of laws is one of the characteristics of the age. Fewer laws and a little ambiguity and uncertainty might be vastly superior to our present condition.

Like every man who writes not only about what is, but about what ought to be, Herbert Read is harassed by the ordinary meanings of words—words he must use, because there are no others, yet which he wants to give extraordinary meanings. Tolstoy had his trouble with the meaning of "art," and many writers have it with the meaning of "love." Read is profoundly

concerned with the relation of art to human life—his *Education Through Art* is regarded as a classic by teachers of art—but he wants "art" and "artist" to have much richer content than they do for most readers. He has the same trouble with "culture." *To Hell with Culture* is not a pleasant title, and even after Read explains what he means by it—he borrowed the phrase from Eric Gill, who said, "To hell with culture, culture as a thing added like a sauce to otherwise unpalatable stale fish!"—the unpleasantness remains. Culture, Read says in effect, is nothing at all, a pretentious fraud, unless it is understood to be the efflorescence of the way life is lived by active, perceptive human beings. The separation of culture from life is always a disaster. The Greeks had no word for "art," as Eric Havelock makes clear in his scholarly study, *Preface to Plato,* and, as Read says:

> The cultured Greeks, it seems, had no word for culture. They had good architects, good sculptors, good poets, just as they had good craftsmen and good statesmen. They knew that their way of life was a good way of life, and they were willing if necessary to fight to defend it. But it would never have occurred to them that they had a separate commodity, culture—something to be given a trademark by their academicians, something to be acquired by superior people with sufficient time and money, something to be exported to foreign countries along with figs and olives. It wasn't even an invisible export: it was something natural if it existed at all—something of which they were unconscious, something as instinctive as their language or the complexion of their skins. It could not be described as a by-product of their way of life: it was that way of life itself.
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> It was the Romans, the first large-scale capitalists in Europe, who turned culture into a commodity. They began by importing culture—Greek culture—and then they grew autarkic and produced their own brand. As they extended their empire, they dumped their culture on the conquered nations.

Later on, he says the same thing about artists:

> *Art as a separate profession is merely a consequence of culture as a separate entity.* In a natural society there will be no precious or privileged beings called artists: there will be only workers. Or, if you prefer Gill's more paradoxical statement of the same truth: in a natural society there will be no despised and unprivileged beings called workers: there will be only artists. "The artist is not a special kind of man, but every man is a special kind of artist."

This is essentially Read's conception of the artist, and one has no difficulty in seeing how it is related to the sort of human communities which, when viewed from the political point of view, can only be called anarchist. Only in a society where power plays little or no part could there be this elimination of ostentatious role. In Read's good society, art is not a separate profession, culture is not a self-conscious attribute, and excellence and high achievement come about spontaneously, sometimes reaching pinnacles which break through all routine "to achieve a timeless universality." "Taste," Read says, in these circumstances, is not shaped by "critics," but "by a continuous assessment of quality such as all craftsmen instinctively direct toward each other's work."

As for the influence of the work of artists and writers on the lives of their fellows, Read says:

> "The work of Saint-Exupéry is not an argument," writes one of his best commentators. "It is an example." Thus we return to Plato—at least to the idea that art can have a moral effect, as action and not as persuasion. Gide once remarked that Saint Exupéry's great discovery was that man's happiness lies not in freedom but in his acceptance of a duty. Substitute destiny or necessity for duty and Gide's observation becomes a commonplace of Greek philosophy. Saint-Exupéry is saying something more original than this, something more pertinent to our present dilemma. He is saying that the one thing that matters is the effect of action, of the constructive, the creative effort. "Constrain them to join in building a tower," says the desert prince to his son in *Citadelle* (*The Wisdom of the Sands*), "and you shall make them like brothers. But if you would have them hate each other, throw food amongst them. A civilization is built on what is required of men, not on what is provided for them. . . . Man is, above all he who creates. And theirs alone is brotherhood who work together."

Read's books are full of material of this sort.

COMMENTARY
THE PRIMORDIAL MYSTERY

HOW, one may wonder, would Unamuno have expressed his sense of struggle, his feeling of irremediable doubt, had he been nurtured on the serener skepticism of the Buddhist tradition? Would he still have wrestled with his fate like a Promethean half-god in chains? Suppose he had been familiar with that classical exposition of the grounds for both belief and unbelief—the Diamond Sutra? Or, more fundamentally, how might he have been affected by the beautiful Rig Vedic hymn which, recalling a past before Time began, asked ultimate questions:

> There was not death—yet there was nought immortal
> There was no confine betwixt day and night;
> The only One breathed breathless by itself,
> Other than It there nothing since has been.
> Darkness there was, and all at first was veiled
> In gloom profound—an ocean without light—
> The germ that still lay covered in the husk
> Burst forth, one nature, from the fervent heat.
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> * * * *
>
> Who knows the secret? who proclaimed it here?
> Whence, whence this manifold creation sprang?
> The Gods themselves came later into being—
> Who knows from whence this great creation sprang?
> That, whence all this great creation came,
> Whether Its will created or was mute,
> The Most High Seer that is in highest heaven,
> He knows it—or perchance even He knows it not.

There must be that which is beyond all human knowing, beyond even all Divine knowing: for the Self which knows is greater than any image or reflection of itself, and remains without comparison, fathomless and unseen, apart by nature from all that can be known. It is indeed of a natureless nature. As the hymn continues:

> Gazing into eternity . . .
> Ere the foundations of the earth were laid . . .
> Thou wert.

It seems appropriate to ask if this ultimate mystery was the ancestor of all Unamuno's lesser incertitudes, and whether, in an age more hospitable to philosophy, awareness of it might have dissolved his tensions.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A SPARTAN IDEAL

WE have now to discuss the one basic reform in education—not only in education, but in all human undertakings—which will give all the other reforms that people propose a chance to work. It is really a very simple idea, and should have been applied a long time ago. We must divide society into two classes: one class to be made up of people who do what they do because they want to, and will do it for this reason and not for any other; the other class to be composed of people who do what they do because they are paid to do it, and chiefly or only for that reason.

This idea first occurred to us while listening, during breakfast one morning, to a Chopin étude which came over the radio. It was really *after* the Chopin etude that the idea was born, for then the announcer came on and said what he had been playing, and he seemed to take away a lot of the joy in the music. For no obvious reason. He had a pleasant, resonant voice. His speech was well modulated and articulated, and at that moment there was no commercial. What was wrong? Well, for one thing, a commercial radio announcer never bubbles with any spontaneous enthusiasm. If he says he has pleasure, it is because someone has paid him to talk about having pleasure. He isn't playing that music because that is the one thing he most wants to do, but because he is paid—and probably paid pretty well—to play it, or talk a little about it. His joys are all to order.

At any rate, if radio stations couldn't pay their help he wouldn't work nights somewhere else in order to play music to people for free. So the question is, would you want such a man to shape the lives of your children? Would you hire him for a teacher? Ortega has asked: "What idea of man should be held by the man who is going to humanize your sons? Whatever it is, the cast that he gives them is ineffaceable." The way a man spends his time, what he is willing or wants to work for, the reason he has for doing what he does—this surely determines his idea of man, his idea of what a particular man—himself—ought to do and be. But the fact is that for much of the time this man is a "pretend" man. He pretends to admire the products he sells; he doesn't even write the nice things he reads off about them. This writing is done by some other "pretend" man or woman in some advertising agency, someone who is paid to praise the product in what is intended to be a persuasive way. These people don't really mean what they are doing—they just mean to be paid for doing it.

So this fact must come out in their "prose" and in their voices. They want you to think they mean everything they say, so they get *unctuous.*

Well, you want to hear Chopin so you put up with it.

But such matters grow more serious when you come to the question of teachers in schools. Only the first class of people should be permitted to teach in schools. There aren't enough of them? True. They don't last in their jobs? True. It is very difficult, sometimes, to tell the difference between a first-class person and a pretender? True.

We don't have any solution for these difficulties, because they are difficulties which need the attention of practically everyone, not just a few embattled reformers. But we might strengthen the basic argument with some sociology.

First of all, the second-class people are all "slaves" of a sort. People who do things that they don't care about, only because of money, are slaves to money. They may get the money, but they are nonetheless slaves. Who was it that said that the only real slave is the man who does not feel his chains?

Now a slave always makes a poor teacher. As Alvin Gouldner says in *Enter Plato:*

> . . . when a child is reared by a slave—as many Greek children were—he soon learns that the slave's instructions are "Do, feel, and be as I say, not as I do, feel, or am." In short, the free Greek child can learn his future role neither by spontaneously imitating nor identifying with the slave who helps rear him; for the child's task is not to become a slave but a freeman and master. . . . The slave's response to this situation is to punish the child for visible deviant behavior which may come to parental attention. . . . The slave is more likely to punish the child for public misbehavior than for private expressions of belief that depart from social conventions,

> all the more so as the slave himself does not accept the convention. In this setting, the child learns that it is not his own private convictions that matter, he learns that punishments or rewards depend less upon what he believes privately than on how he acts publicly. It may be in some part through such early experiences that a child first comes to develop a special sensitivity to the opinions of others and is first sensitized to be a member of a shame culture.

Gouldner has a lot more about the implications of this relationship, and the reader needs to pick out what he thinks will apply, today, but there is great value in considering what he says. It certainly helps one to understand why the teachers who are in no sense wage slaves have risen to such extraordinary popularity among people seriously interested in reform of education. None of these men—teachers like John Holt, Herbert Kohl, George Dennison, Jonathan Kozol—is in education for money. They teach, or do what they are doing, because they *want* to, because they must. There are, of course, many more like them. Not all devoted teachers write books.

A little reflection shows that this rule ought not to apply to teachers alone. The fact is that no one who does what he does only for money can claim to be free. He may *think* he is free, and may argue that having money makes him free, but a man who spends his time, which is really his freedom, doing something which is indifferent or hateful to him cannot be regarded as free. And the behavior of such people is bound to resemble in many ways the behavior of the slave-pedagogues described by Alvin Gouldner. On this basis, looked at statistically, the present society is pretty much a slave society. When you consider the unhappiness of the people, the devices used to find "escape," the bitterness of the young, and the emotional and psychological disorders which are *characteristic* of this society, the proposition is by no means unreasonable. It is certainly not a good society in which to bring up children.

Well, we do what we can, and one thing we can do is to watch out for the first-class citizens, the people who are doing what they are doing because they want to, and establish relationships with them. The society will stop being a slave society only by honoring the free.

The obstacles are many. First of all, the major economic processes of society are geared to the objective of making money. It is difficult for persons with other motivations to support themselves. Yet if a man or woman is determined, a way of doing it can be found. Wonderfully ingenious people like this can be located and they may be the best possible influence on the young. A great many talk a lot about freedom and self-expression and doing fine things, but they expect to be well paid for these activities. This won't really happen. Not in the present society. It may happen in a reconstructed society, but then the idea of being "well-paid" won't have much meaning. To have enough to live on is all that is necessary, and people who do what they want to do are satisfied with that.

What brings out the will to do what you want, no matter what? There is no rule about it, but usually very tough circumstances are involved. For example, read Scott Nearing's *The Making of a Radical*, the story of a man who always did exactly what he wanted to do with his time, and who apparently knew, intuitively and from experience, that if he didn't personally pick up the tab for this freedom he wouldn't be able to keep it. Today Nearing is eighty-nine, and still an actively free man. Read the life of Arthur Morgan (in his wife's book, *Finding His World*) to see how another man created the space of a free life. It can be done. Such men are not shaped by circumstances; they *make* circumstances. That, after all, is the meaning of freedom. It has never been easy to be free. Both these men, Nearing and Morgan, happen to be distinguished educators.

There will be no education worth talking about, except for isolated instances such as we try to find and report on here, until the first-class citizens are honored and upheld as models for the young, instead of all those other people who are really little more than slaves—who do what they do for money. The only people fit to teach the young are people who cannot be bought, who are not for sale, who will wear themselves to a frazzle to keep their independence in order to *give* what they have to give because that is what they believe in and what they want to do.

FRONTIERS

A Note on Planning

WE heard recently about the head city-planner of one of the largest cities of the United States, who, wondering where he should concentrate his efforts, decided to put out a questionnaire to be answered by the inner-city residents, to find out what the people there wanted in a city. He got some answers, but they didn't help him much. The people simply didn't know. They had never thought about things like that. They were so far out of touch with the idea that they could have anything to do with the conditions which surrounded them that what they put down on the questionnaire was almost meaningless to the planner.

This result of the planner's attempt at "democratic" practice seems quite consistent with the doctrine that it is good democratic policy to supply merchandise and entertainment according to "consumer demand," when all that is offered, in both fields (with occasional and usually inaccessible exceptions) is what manufacturers and producers find it is most profitable to themselves to provide. This policy has some similarity to the one adopted by the rulers of Rome in the way of bread and circuses. As Joseph Wood Krutch once remarked, "the Roman emperors decided to try to keep the populace manageably docile by giving them precisely what they wanted, and then the drama gave way to musical vaudeville, and finally almost entirely to gladiatorial and wild beast combats." People who have all their decisions made for them over their heads tend to lose the capacity to decide for themselves. This is what Archibald MacLeish has called "the Great American Frustration"—growing out of the sense that we "have somehow lost control of the management of our human affairs, of the direction of our lives, of what our ancestors would have called our destiny."

It does no great good to go to such people, questionnaires in hand, asking them "what they want." They hardly know what they want; if they did, they would know that no one can "give" it to them. They know, of course, their immediate needs, which are obsessively present in their lives. But planning to make things different in quality requires the development of fundamental strength and vision, as Dolci shows in *A New World in the Making.*

This principle has many applications. In India Gandhi spoke of the need to help the villagers of India with a kind of "nursing," so that slowly the people could learn to regain their self-respect and self-reliance; and then *they* would know what to do. They had been powerless too long for any other sort of help to work.

A review in the *Nation* (Feb. 21) by Philip Reno makes this point in another way. Commenting on Alan Sorkin's study, *American Indians and Federal Aid,* just published by the Brookings Institute, he belittles the idea of studies of Indian opinion in respect to agricultural assistance:

> . . . white men's programs for Indians in agriculture have often failed, and Sorkin recommends that extensive surveys be conducted to determine whether there is enough Indian interest in agriculture to merit large expenditures."
>
> The basic problem with this recommendation is that there is no possibility for economic development of many Indian communities *without* concurrent development of Indian agriculture. How could the relatively many Indians now making a subsistence living in agriculture and stock raising transfer to industries and services? They are the least schooled of Indians. More of them than most persons would think speak little or no English, and a good many who speak English cannot read or write; their skills relate to the land and to the care of animals. And yet it is no wonder that Indian young people express little desire for agricultural life, considering the kind that has been offered them.
>
> Indian people are still more closely tied to the land and more concerned with plants and animals than any other Americans. Offer them appealing alternatives—in technically adequate agriculture, soil conservation, forestry and stock raising. And for heaven's sake do not take a survey until these

> alternatives have been made clear in practical experience. When this has been done, no survey will be needed.

Jonathan Kozol writes in the *Saturday Review* for March 4 on the need for a positive attitude on the part of teachers in the free schools. Apparently, there is something of a cult of pretending to be ignorant or inadequate, so as to be "equal" to the children, in these schools. Kozol writes:

> I believe in a school in which the teacher does not strive to simulate the status or condition of either an accidental "resource-person," wandering mystic, or movable reading lab, but comes right out, in full view of the children, with all of the richness, humor, desperation, rage, self-contradiction, strength, and pathos that he would reveal to other grownups.

Fear of "power" and "authority" can get out of hand:

> . . . fear of power places a premium on mediocrity, non-vital leadership, insipid character, and unremarkable lifestyle. An organization, of whatever kind, that identifies real excellence, effectiveness, or compelling life-style with the terrifying risk of despotism and authoritarian manipulation will, little by little, drive away all interesting, brilliant, and exhilarating people and will establish in their stead norms of communal mediocrity. The label reserved for those who do not learn to respect these norms is "ego-tripper." Without question, there is a need for realistic caution, but not every straightforward, unequivocal statement of position can be construed as an instance of ego-tripping. The perfect way to avoid an ego trip, of course, is to create a community of utterly alienated, dull, and boring people. There is no risk of ego-tripping if there is no ego. But there isn't any life or strength or truth or passion either.

All these problems have something in common. That is, they all have similar solutions. They call for leadership and skillful demonstrations by people who know better ways of doing things than the way they are being done. And this needs to be carried out in a way that does not destroy or interfere with the initiative of those who are moved to learn and act by such an example. This is the art of teaching. There is no formula for how it works.