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AN EVIDENT CONCLUSION

IT is time for a progress report. It is time for some kind of accounting of what we have been able to accomplish since the eighteenth century, when what we think of as our civilization was born. It is time to render such a report to ourselves, as the inheritors of the eighteenth-century vision, for there is now reason to think that either that vision was faulty or incomplete, or that we have been carrying it out very badly in recent years.

The material on which to base such a report is all about. No research is needed. It has all been done and appears in books, magazines, and newspapers. What subjects or general areas should be covered in such a report? The papers are full of numerous subjects that require attention, but the inquiry could begin by considering the expectations of the vision of the eighteenth century. This might unify the issues at the outset.

We turn, then, to Ernest Becker's recent book, *The Lost Science of Man* (Braziller, 1971), for an account of what the brave spirits of the eighteenth century set out to do. It was nothing less than to lay the foundations for a science of man, as the basis for a new order of human life. This was the inspiration which animated the labors of the *philosophes*, and which the Founding Fathers of the American Republic sought in their own way to fulfill. Becker's book is a comprehensive outline and criticism of the history of sociology and anthropology, and at the outset he reveals the roots of these disciplines in the vision of the men of the Enlightenment:

> The science of man grew out of the crisis of the eighteenth century, and the nineteenth century inherited the crisis. It was a *moral* crisis. The medieval world view had loosened its hold on society, and now there was nothing to replace it. Whereas the Church had offered one thing that man needs as much as the air he breathes—a dependable code of behavior for himself and his fellow man—it was precisely this that was now wanting. Society was headed for the kind of chaos that *Homo sapiens* fears most: the chaos of undependable and immoral behavior in his fellow men, the chaos of unregulated, irresponsible social life.
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> The science of man let it be emphasized once and for all had the solution of this moral crisis as its central and abiding purpose. Why build a science of man in society? In order to have a sound basis for a new moral creed, an agreed, factual body of knowledge that men of good will could use to lay down laws for a new social order. When we get a more or less reliable and reasonably rich knowledge of what man is and how things came to be as they are, we will have the basis of a new morality. Not a supernatural morality, like the defunct one of the Church, but a positive morality based on empirically demonstrated facts.

Again, Becker says in another place:

> The Enlightenment wanted a universal history of the development of mankind, and they wanted it for a purpose—the moral purpose of freedom in community. It was the vision of Lessing, Herder, Condorcet, Kant, and all their heirs. Perhaps the best and earliest phrasing of just what the problem was was that by the great Immanuel Kant: it would be the task of future generations to gather together all the vast accumulation of careful empirical historical studies in order to solve the burning problem left by the decline of medieval society, namely, how to have maximum free individuality and maximum community.

As his title suggests, Becker devotes this book to showing how the "future generations" failed in this task, how the motive of service to human good was continually paralyzed by the imperative need of scientists to be "objective" and "empirical." He shows, further, how unlikely it was that the established interests of any organized society since the revolutionary epoch would be willing hosts to a band of critics devoted to altering the social arrangements of the time. Even

so, the inner pressure to remain "empirical" seems to have been fully as effective as the outer pressure of the status quo in disarming social science of the eighteenth-century vision. Because the religious moralists had made such a mess of things—leading, finally, to endless religious wars and then a revolution which destroyed their authority—the men who aspired to create a science of man were determined to remain scientific, which to them meant refusing to listen to speculative or intuitively-based theories which might unify their doctrines and restore the flow of an underlying moral ardor. Yet, being men, the best among them longed for this ardor, and feeling of the need for it sometimes crept into their writings.

But how could this original moral intention be revived and be integrated with scientific disciplines which were continually being fragmented into new technical specialties? Mr. Becker carefully traces these currents of surviving moral inspiration in the writings of leading sociologists. But its expression comes mainly in after-thoughts and significant asides, while the mainstream of scientific opinion remains faithful to the morally neutral view—which was embodied in a presidential speech before the American Sociological Society by William F. Ogburn in the late 1920's:

> Sociology as a science is not interested in making the world a better place in which to live, in encouraging beliefs, in spreading information, in dispensing news, in setting forth impressions of life, in leading the multitudes, or in guiding the ship of state. Science is interested directly in one thing only, to wit, discovering new knowledge. . . .

We leave Mr. Becker's valuable work without in any way suggesting that this brief reference does it justice. His own conclusion, voiced at the end, is that all science in the service of man must be consciously based on the great questions: "What is the meaning of life? What is worth striving for? What may man hope for?" And, like William James before him, he predicts that the science of man will "rediscover its grounding in metaphysics."

But what about our "progress report"? We needed to take note of the considerations discussed by Becker, since it is overwhelmingly apparent that without the vision of which he speaks, with no direct concern for the great philosophical questions, the moral crisis which haunted the eighteenth century now produces even worse disorders.

For example, a correspondent of the *New York Times*, an American, Anthony Lewis, stationed in London, writes to say (*Times*, April 17):

> In my generation we grew up believing in America. We knew there was a fundamental decency and humanity in our country, whatever its wrongs, and openness: The wrongs could be changed by reason and persuasion. The violent anti-American rhetoric of the radicals and the young has therefore repelled us. To call the United States an aggressive country, so tightly controlled that only revolution could change its course, seemed the stuff of fantasy. A general might talk about bombing the Vietnamese back to the Stone Age, but our political system would never allow it.
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> That faith in America has been sorely tested in these last years, but never more terribly than by Richard Nixon's bombing of Hanoi and Haiphong. For the truth is now impossible to escape if we open our eyes: The United States is the most dangerous and destructive power in the world. And its political leadership seems virtually immune to persuasion by reason and experience.
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> It is seven years—seven years!—since Lyndon Johnson began bombing North Vietnam. Literally millions of tons of explosives have been dropped on Indo-China since then, but the peninsula is no more "secure"—secure for the American system that we want to impose on it. Only a fool or a madman could believe, now, that more bombing will bring peace to Indo-China. . . .
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> What is left to say to those who question the very nature of America? After seven years, it is not possible to go on saying that it will all work out, that peaceful change within the political system will have its effect eventually. I cannot believe myself that violence improves the lot of mankind. The only hope

> left is that somehow—in some new form of protest—the decent strain in American life will make itself felt. The alternative is black despair.

From this tortured response of an American newspaperman to a recent development in the Vietnamese war, we turn to a discussion of the *Pentagon Papers* by Hannah Arendt, also in the *New York Times* (April 5). This article is a portion of a chapter in Miss Arendt's book, *Crises of the Republic,* called "Lying in Politics." As she says, the basic issue raised by publication of the *Pentagon Papers* is *deception.* She writes:

> The famous credibility gap has suddenly opened up into an abyss. The quicksand of lying statements of all sorts, deceptions as well as self-deceptions, is apt to engulf any reader who wishes to probe this material, which, unhappily, he must recognize as the infrastructure of nearly a decade of United States foreign and domestic policy.
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> Because of the extravagant lengths to which the commitment to nontruthfulness in politics went on at the highest level of government, and because of the concomitant extent to which lying was permitted to proliferate throughout the ranks of all governmental services, military and civilian—the phony body counts of the "search and destroy" missions, the doctored after-damage reports of the Air Force, the "progress" reports to Washington from the field written by subordinates who knew that their performance would be evaluated by their own reports—one is easily tempted to forget the background of past history, itself not exactly a story of immaculate virtue, against which this newest episode must be seen and judged.

The new forms of political lying, Miss Arendt says, grow out of public relations techniques developed on Madison Avenue, in the advertising business, and the deceptions practiced by problem-solving intellectuals who work in the numerous think tanks around the country. These often scholarly men, she suggests, may have lied mainly from a mistaken patriotism. But they lied not so much for the sake of their country—which was never in danger—but for its "image." As the war wore on, with failure after failure, the problem became one of saving face. Miss Arendt proposes that these extremely clever men became capable of self-deceptions as extensive as the "scenarios" they sought to impose on American opinion:

> In the case of the Vietnam war we are confronted with, in addition to falsehoods and confusion, a truly amazing and entirely honest ignorance of the historically pertinent background: Not only did the decision-makers seem ignorant of all the well-known facts of the Chinese revolution and the decade-old rift between Moscow and Peking that preceded it, but no one at the top knew or considered it important that the Vietnamese had been fighting invaders for almost 2,000 years, or that the notion of Vietnam as a "tiny backward nation" without interest to "civilized" nations, which is, unhappily, often shared by war critics, stands in flagrant contradiction to the very old and highly developed culture of the region. What Vietnam lacks is not "culture," but strategic importance, a suitable terrain for modern mechanized armies, and rewarding targets for the Air Force. What caused the disastrous defeat of American policies and armed intervention was indeed no quagmire but the willful, deliberate disregard of all facts, historical, political, geographical, for more than twenty-five years.
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> The first explanation that comes to mind to answer the question "How could they?" is likely to point to the interconnectedness of deception and self-deception. . . .

Miss Arendt continues, showing how the preoccupation with image-making frees policy-makers from all touch with reality: they are concerned with psychological effects, not facts, and eventually the facts are ignored as unimportant. Miss Arendt concludes by speaking of the importance of publication of the *Pentagon Papers,* as a lonely "good sign" on a very dark horizon. The reports involved were ordered by Secretary McNamara, to discover what had gone wrong with the war. She finds it of some significance "that this massive and systematic effort at self-examination was commissioned by one of the chief actors, that thirty-six men could be found to compile the documents and write their analysis, quite a few of whom 'had helped to develop or to carry out the policies they were asked to evaluate,' that one of the authors, when it had become apparent that no one in government

was willing to use or even read the results, went to the public and leaked it to the press, and that, finally, the most respectable newspapers in the country dared to bring material that was stamped 'top secret' to the widest possible attention." Miss Arendt agrees that Robert McNamara's request for this report "may turn out to be one of the most important decisions in his seven years at the Pentagon," and she adds:

> It certainly restored, at least for a fleeting moment, this country's reputation in the world. What had happened could indeed hardly have happened anywhere else. It is as though all these people, involved in an unjust war and rightly compromised by it, had suddenly remembered what they owed to their forefathers' decent respect for the opinions of mankind.

Reflected in these discussions by a reporter and a scholar is awareness of the dissolution of the moral authority which once acted as a check on the excesses of human behavior and which relied upon reference to moral principles outside the existing system of government and law. Those principles can be thought of as working answers to the great questions referred to by Ernest Becker—What is the meaning of life? What is worth striving for? They represent the transcendental ground of man's thinking about moral obligation and what he *ought* to do.

This transcendental ground was present in the early formulations of the Founding Fathers of the United States, who, as John Schaar has pointed out in his "Reflections on Authority" (*New American Review*, No. 8), "saw the Constitution as a partial embodiment of that higher order called the Laws of Nature and of Nature's God." But the idea of a "higher order" is now almost entirely forgotten. "We have," as Schaar says, "no mainstream political or moral teaching that tells men they must remain bound to each other even one step beyond the point where those bonds are a drag and a burden on one's personal desires." The claim of government to allegiance is now little more, in principle, than the claim which the production of "results" has upon pragmatic intelligence. Nothing is to be done because it is intrinsically "right," but only because it works, pays off. And tough-minded people, schooled in scientific objectivity, taught to respect only "facts," have the authority of scholarship and learning behind them in these attitudes. It is by this means that the "management of opinion" gains respectability, and that the distinction between morality and image is first blurred and then entirely lost. Schaar has a searing passage on the social result:

> The main point remains: modern man has determined to live without collective ideals and disciplines and thus without obedience to and reliance upon the authorities that embody, defend, and replenish those ideals. The work of dissolution is almost complete, and men now appear ready to attempt a life built upon no other ideal than happiness: comfort and self-expression. All ideals are suspect, all other straints and disciplines seen as snares and stupidities, all collective commitments nothing but self-imprisonments. . . .

Another item for our "progress report" is provided by James Vorenberg, in his article, "The War on Crime: The First Five Years," in the May *Atlantic*. Mr. Vorenberg is a professor of law at Harvard and five years ago he was executive director of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. With the members of the Commission appointed by President Johnson, he had studied "crime" for two years and made "more than 200 specific recommendations to overhaul our system of criminal justice." What has happened since can only be described as appalling. The figures on crime for 1960-65 were bad enough. During that time there was a 36 per cent increase in crimes against property and a 25 per cent increase in crimes of violence. These developments were blamed on the numerous young people who commit most crimes, since the post-war "baby boom" generation was then growing up; further, there was better reporting of crime, it was said. Mr. Vorenberg continues:

> But the figures for the last five years of the sixties have convinced all but the most skeptical that

> something more ominous than population changes or reporting errors is involved. By 1970 the rate of crimes against property had increased 147 per cent for the decade and the rate of crimes of violence had increased 126 per cent. And the latest FBI figures show that during the first nine months of 1971, there were further increases of 10 per cent for violent crimes and 6 per cent for property crimes compared with the same period in 1970. In the past five years self-protection has become the dominant concern of those in our cities and suburbs, evidenced by the rapid growth of a multi-billion-dollar-a-year private security industry and the emergence of the German shepherd as the second most popular breed of dog.

Mr. Vorenberg's analysis is long and detailed, with considerable attention given to the vast number of arrests of persons on drug charges. He says, for example, that "almost half of those in jail" in some cities are addicts, and that "One judge in Washington found that 75 per cent of the defendants brought into court on felony charges were addicts." He points out that while it is commonly assumed that anti-crime measures will be effective according to the amount of money spent by law-makers, the state of mind of the people is far more important than anything the Congress can do in this direction:

> Neither improving the criminal justice system nor relieving addicts of the additional economic pressure to commit crimes that their addiction imposes on them is likely to make much difference in crime rates if millions of people believe that crime is their best route to a decent life. We rely for self-protection more than we usually recognize on moral restraints based on a sense that each member of society has a stake in obeying the law. The sense of belonging to a community that underlies much of this moral restraint is undermined if the conduct of the rich and the powerful is characterized by selfishness, and if the government appears to have little concern for the plight of those whose life is difficult. . . .
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> It would be a tragic mistake to assume we can look to the law enforcement system to control crime if other restraints disappear. To understand this we need only look at the situation from the point of view of the potential criminal. The odds against the police catching the average burglar—either at the scene or later—are probably no better than 50 to 1. And if he is arrested, he has a good chance of having his case dropped or of being put on probation. A middle-class citizen with a reasonably comfortable life may be deterred by these odds; he has too much to lose. But 25 million people in the United States live below the officially defined poverty line. In a society where television commercials are constantly reminding us that every self-respecting American should be driving a new car and flying off to a Carribean vacation, crime may seem like the only good bet for those whose lives are little more than a struggle to survive.
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> Even if we double or quadruple the effectiveness of law enforcement (and there is no reason to think we can) and reduce the odds proportionately, it may still be a good bet. Crime will be a worse gamble only when people have decent enough lives on the outside so they are unwilling to risk arrest and conviction.

This is the social-justice approach to the reduction of crime, and there is much to be said for it, but it has only the pragmatic sanction in its favor—a slender reed, so long as the present example of the rich and the powerful continues. And the most influential example for many people will surely be the policies of the rich and powerful *nations,* which is hardly one of self-denial and response to principle in behalf of the common good.

Meanwhile, the record—largely a record of failure—remains. How much "empirical evidence" do we need in order to be persuaded that a human society cannot order its affairs without a conception of life and meaning which draws on deep moral convictions which have their source in realities which lie beyond the concrete facts of physical existence? Is it possible to have a philosophy of meaning which does not offend the scientific spirit? Can we think of a practice of science which does not depend upon denying the transcendental longings of man? These are questions we have hardly begun to consider.

REVIEW
MORE ON REALITY THERAPY

WILLIAM GLASSER, like most other human beings, is strongest and most valuable as a writer when he speaks out of his own insight and experience, and least useful to the reader when he is theorizing in order to build some sort of logical foundation under his conclusions. In *The Identity Society* (Harper & Row, 1972, $5.95), Dr. Glasser proposes that the half billion people of the Western industrialized societies (who are about a seventh of the world's population) recently entered the phase of development which he calls the "identity society," as distinguished from the "survival society" in which they have been struggling for the past 10,000 years. Before that, they and all others were in what he terms the "primitive identity" stage, when, according to modern anthropological theory, man lived by a hunting economy. The difference between the "survival" and the "identity" way of life is described in economic terms, since conditions, Dr. Glasser believes, dictate which one shall prevail. In the identity society of ancient times, human beings lived amiably in cooperative relationships because, as hunters, they did not need to own land.

Today, after ten thousand years of competition and aggression, simply in order to survive, our technological affluence has made it possible for us to give more attention to being who and what we are, than to staying alive, but this requires changes we are not ready to make. Dr. Glasser offers this explanation:

> All the institutions of our society were, and for the most part still are, geared to this 10,000-year-old way of existence. We have neither understanding nor preparation for the new social stress that in the last twenty years has caused most of our young people and a surprising number of our older people to spend much of their time and energy pursuing a role independent of any specific security goal. They are trying to gain a successful identity—a pleasurable belief in themselves and their own humanity and the companionship of others in ways not necessarily related to work. Evident in hindsight as early as 1950, this change was caused by affluence, by political concern for human security and human rights, and by increased communication, primarily television, which directly or indirectly urges people to enjoy themselves and to lead a better life. These three forces combined to increase actual security and to decrease everyone's concern for security, thus weakening the power hierarchy. As the power hierarchy weakened, almost all young people and many older people took advantage of the opportunity to escape the rigid goal orientation that insecurity had always made necessary for everyone below the top of the power structure.
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> Led by the young, the half-billion people of the Western world have begun a rapid, turmoil-filled evolution toward a new role-dominated society, the *civilized identity society.* Less anxious about fulfilling goals to obtain security within the power hierarchy, people today concern themselves more and more with an independent role—*their identity.* Arising from our need for involvement, identity or role is either totally independent of goal or, if goal and role are related, role is more important.

This is Dr. Glasser's theoretical basis for what is to come, but various other views of the present stage of the human condition are entirely possible, and some of them more appealing, and perhaps more consistent, actually, with Dr. Glasser's own first principles as a therapist. Even though no one ever quotes Hegel any more, the German philosopher provided a conception of the meaning of human life that affords a great deal more dignity and inspiration than the idea that now, at last, our technological development permits us to be self-realizing human beings. After all, there have been such persons in every period of history, and these distinguished exceptions to the conditioning process may be more representative of human possibility than mass behavior. Hegel believed that the struggle and trials of human life arose out of the effort of the universal spirit to come to self-consciousness, this potentiality being the peculiar evolutionary endowment of man. An active stirring of this primary *conatus* may be the explanation of the present widespread longing for self-realization, and if it takes on universal dimensions in rare individuals who devote

themselves to the welfare of others, this, too, can at least be understood in terms of the Hegelian conception. No "conditioning" theory, for example, will account for Dr. Glasser, or various others whose lives are devoted to human good.

The meat of this book is in its fresh discussion of Reality Therapy. The reader may find some matters over-simplified, yet he will also realize that the writer is a man who makes himself useful to literally *thousands* of children and young people. He is giving much of his time to helping people in public institutions and the public schools, and no reader with common sense can fail to see how sound Glasser's general principles are for this purpose. First and foremost, he appeals to the responsible intelligence in the human being. His principles of "therapy" could be called the laws of constructive human relationship. They can be applied by anyone; the professional therapist, he says, is simply one who "elects to help people with strong identifications with failure who are beyond the competence of most nonprofessional people." The professional, in short, is a man who never gives up. What does Dr. Glasser mean by "failure"?

> A child with a failure identity, that is, one who lacks a concept of himself as a loved and worthwhile individual, will not work for any long-term goals. . . . his life is full of pain, and he lives in a haphazard, erratic struggle to get rid of the pain. Long-term goals seem foreign to a person just trying to feel comfortable today and tomorrow. Even if the child gains a successful role, if he does not, sometime between the ages of twelve and twenty, achieve some reasonable goals that will support his role, he will slowly lose his successful identity. Many parents have been unable to help their child make this important transition from a successful personal role to working toward goals that further confirm his successful role.

The author lists seven principles of Reality Therapy. First is involvement and active concern for the one needing help. Second is the need for a change in behavior, not just talking about change. Then comes the need for evaluating behavior. Then there is planning it. Another principle is commitment. The seventh is no punishment.

In connection with "involvement" he considers an objection often made: What good can you do seeing a person for an hour once a week? This might be the case with a therapist in a large institution. There is this answer:

> Although at first glance an hour a week may not seem like a lot of personal attention, it is. Many people, husband and wife, parent and child, in their ordinary busy lives do not get more than an hour a week of warm, exclusive time with someone with the skill of using this time to get involved. A suggestion I make to many parents having difficulty with a child is to devote an hour a week—the hour I would give to the child if he saw me—just to the child, doing what he wants to do. Although following this suggestion usually helps the child greatly, it is disheartening how many parents refuse to make this seemingly simple effort.

When seeing a patient, Glasser discourages interminable discussion of the patient's problems:

> The less we talk about his depression, drug taking, and suicidal gestures and the more we discuss the possibilities that are open to him, the better he feels. It is tempting to listen to his complaints because they are so urgent. Doing so may reduce his pain and make him feel better for a while as he basks in the attention his complaints have gained him. If he does nothing to change his behavior, however, his pain will return and he will grow disillusioned with therapy. Also, to gain continued attention, he may behave more and more irresponsibly so that he has something valid to complain about. If we then listen with renewed interest, we only compound the error. Later, when we try to discuss other subjects, he will resist because he has been getting his failure reinforced and his pain temporarily reduced with each new complaint that was heard.

There is one observation which seems to have wide application today:

> In my experience, most individuals who feel failure gain strength more readily by conforming to the ongoing morality and laws of society; later, when they are stronger and more successful they may wish to defy them. The job of the Reality Therapist, when discussing morality and law and the patient's role in society, is to bring oat everything that he can about them relevant to the decision that the patient must

> make. Then, if the patient chooses an action to protest the war that leads to jail, he has made a rational, not an emotional, decision.

The relationship of the therapist is always a positive one. After a failure or a mistake, there is no talk of blame, the attention being turned to the remaining options. Excuses are not considered or weighed, since they only allow escape from responsibility—a way out. Punishment is similarly useless and irrelevant:

> The purpose of punishment is to change someone's behavior through fear, pain, or loneliness. If it were an effective means of getting people to change, we would have few failures in our society. Many incompetent and irresponsible people have been punished over and over again throughout their lives with little beneficial effect. Instead punishment reinforces their loneliness. Confirming their belief that no one cares about them, it drives them further into self-involvement and increases their hostility or their isolation or both. . . .
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> Punishment was devised by people with power, and power thrives on punishment, threat, and isolation. In a survival society, powerful people use punishment to keep control. In the identity society, however, internal control is needed instead of external control, Successful people believe punishment will change behavior because they fear failure themselves, but failures do not fear failure, they identify with it.

Dr. Glasser points out that most prison officials agree that 85 per cent of the men in custody are not dangerous. These people are assured of continued failure by the penal system. "More than 400,000 men and women are warehoused in over-crowded prisons across the country, prisons that, with rare exceptions breed only failure, antagonism, and hostility." Nor has imprisoning them helped us:

> Even though prison population is rising, society is not safer, because there are enough new criminals each year who, when added to the hostile people released, more than make up for any safety provided by an increase in the prison population. The belief that the existence of prisons increases our safety is seriously disputed by a California study that shows that of 60,000 crimes of personal violence reported in 1966, only 1,700 adult offenders were committed to prison. Jailing these few criminals (3 per cent) could not add much to our safety.

Dr. Glasser has worked out a plan as an alternative to the prison system which deserves attention. All in all, he has produced another extremely practical book, useful to both individuals and society.

COMMENTARY
SOURCES OF NEW VISION

WHEN, as quoted in "Children," Willis Harman refers to "the possible emergence of a new dominant 'paradigm'—a basic pattern of perceiving, thinking, and doing, associated with a particular vision of reality," one might think that he is speaking in other terms of what Ernest Becker (page 1) terms "the one thing that man needs as much as the air he breathes—a dependable code of behavior for himself and his fellow man . . . the basis of a new morality." And it seems likely that the changes which for Dr. Glasser (see Review) have produced the new "Identity" society are also those which caused Dr. Harman to suspect the advent of "a socio-cultural revolution as profound and pervasive in its effects on all segments of society as the industrial revolution, the Reformation or the fall of Rome."

Mr. Becker points to the failure to ask basic philosophical questions, Schaar to the elimination of moral idealism in thought, and Harman warns that modern decision-making will break down unless there is more brotherly love among men, and concern for nature and the earth.

This week's lead article ends by saying that we have hardly begun to consider the actual ways and means for filling the vast emptiness which has resulted from all this undeniable neglect of the foundations of the moral life. Yet there *are* some few beginnings. E. F. Schumacher, for example, an eminent economist, has declared that economics as a science must look for guidance to moral principles, and has suggested certain Buddhist or Gandhian ideas as the basis for a humanistic economics. Lynn White, Jr., has proposed a far-reaching religious reform among Christians, such as adopting the reverence for life shown by St. Francis, and which is found expressed, also, in ancient pagan faiths. Aldo Leopold maintained that even "enlightened" self-interest is not good enough to accomplish what needs to be done in relation to cooperation with the natural world and its creatures. It is necessary, he said, to learn to love the earth if we are to have a harmonious existence on it.

If these men are right, then moral considerations are not derivative issues to be dealt with after the hard facts of existence are met, but primary. They come first, even as Socrates maintained. Yet for modern man, this means that moral ideas must be shown to have a scientific ground. Involved are new ways of thinking about both science and morality.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WHAT SOCRATES MIGHT SAY

THE sudden changes in the attitudes of the young have been matched by sudden changes in the conditions of human life, although it would be difficult to find much of a connection between the two sets of changes. Already the rebellion of the young has brought about extensive response from educators, but the changes in the world, while quite apparent, are being recognized more slowly, and adjustment to them is still largely in the talking stage.

The talking, however, is beginning to get serious. A writer in the San Francisco *Examiner* for March 19 summarizes the gradual awakening:

> To a widening array of the national media, from *Playboy* to *Fortune* to the *Wall Street Journal* to the *National Observer*, there is beginning to come the belated discovery that the Great God Growth, which Americans have worshipped for generations, seems to have feet of very crumbly day. The news did not begin to register in the executive suites of Manhattan until it was sanctified by the computers at MIT and published with formidable diagrams and statistical tables in such impressive volumes as Jay Forrester's *World Dynamics* and the new MIT team study, *The Limits to Growth.*
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> Yet the same message has been proclaimed for years by a few lonely prophets using only common sense—and maybe a slide rule: A finite earth cannot support infinite growth.

So now even the newspapers are full of warnings and sage comment on the radical changes in human attitudes that are becoming necessary to "human survival." The warnings are no doubt necessary, and there is some advantage in having them come from rather august sources, such as, in one instance, Sicco L. Mansholt, president of the commission of the European Communities which form the Common Market. Mr. Mansholt believes that the nations of the Common Market should free themselves of rule by the idea that "economic growth" is their over-riding goal. Writing in the *Christian Science Monitor* for April 18, John Lambert remarked:

> The spectacle of the president of the commission telling the world's press, "Gross national product is the devil," and advocating a new tax system to favor "clean" products and ones that can be "recycled" is one to surprise and confound ardent left-wingers in the candidate countries who have convinced themselves that the Common Market is a capitalist club devoted all out to growth with all its fallout of economic centralization and environmental damage. . . . Only a week after he became president the commission approved far-reaching practical proposals for a community approach to environmental pollution by industry.

Another *Monitor* reporter, David Francis (*Monitor*, Feb. 10), summarized the address of Willis W. Harman of the Educational Research Center at Stanford, before the recent White House Conference on the Industrial World Ahead. History, Dr. Harman said, "gives little reason to think we can escape without the accompanying threat of economic decline and disruption of social processes considerably greater than anything we have experienced or care to imagine." This report continues:

> Dr. Harman finds several indications that "the industrialized world may be experiencing the beginning phase of a socio-cultural revolution as profound and pervasive in its effects on all segments of the society as the industrial revolution, the Reformation or the fall of Rome."
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> The engineer-physicist points to three major reasons for the plausibility of such change:
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> Society's problems seem to require changes in cultural values for their satisfactory solution.
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> Technological and industrial successes create new problems. For example, success in reducing infant mortality has contributed to excessive population growth. Technology-created affluence brings resource depletion problems. New materials, such as plastics, interfere with natural recycling processes.
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> Dr. Harman reckons there is a flaw in the decision-making system. Individuals are encouraged to choose on the basis of their own short-term, imprudent self-interest, instead of their long-term, enlightened self-interest.

> In big words, perfectly reasonable micro-decisions are adding up to largely unsatisfactory macro-decisions.
>
> Dr. Harman finds several signs in the industrialized nations of the possible emergence of a new dominant "paradigm"—a basic pattern of perceiving, thinking, and doing, associated with a particular vision of reality.

Dr. Harman finds that humane values are becoming not only moral but functional imperatives, and adds: "The decision-making system will break down without an increase in the amount of caring for fellow man, for future generations, for nature, and for planet Earth."

If you collect clippings of this sort over the period of a few years, as one helpful reader has done, the total effect can be impressive. Here is another *Monitor* story (July 13, 1970) reporting on a Geneva conference on Technology and Man's Future, sponsored by the World Council of Churches. At this meeting a Korean scientist wondered: "Can we really have a technology with real brotherhood built into it, built into its inner logic?" A Japanese thinker suggested that Westerners might learn from the long-despised East:

> For example, he asked, "may we not be in trouble with pollution because technologists generally take a limited view of nature? This springs directly from thought modes of the West, where modern technology originated. These, in turn, were molded by the West's Christian tradition."
>
> Perhaps the best way to cope with pollution, Prof. Mushakoji said, would be to adopt the principles of some Eastern philosophies of love for all nature, reluctance to harm any natural thing. If we want to take adequate account of nature, perhaps we should admit that we weren't meant to control nature but harmonize with it.
>
> The third world tends to see Western technology as men acing it as well as nature. Speakers from developing countries hammered at this theme throughout the conference.
>
> Such resentment goes beyond the technology gap which is steadily widening the prosperity gap between rich and poor nations. It views the West's technology as an exploiter, an aggressor.

Well, what has all this to do with education? Education will certainly need to get involved—is already involved, to some extent—in meeting the extraordinary need for changes in attitude.

What, for example, would Socrates have to say about our education, our civilization, were he alive today? It seems likely that he would insist that modern man has sought for knowledge everywhere except where he needs to look, and that he has become fatally intemperate as a result. This is the judgment of Kenneth Richmond, in *Socrates and the Western World*, a book published in the United States by Citadel in 1955. In one chapter, this author extrapolates from the Socratic outlook:

> To the extent that modern man has lost touch with his own inner life, the suggestion that he has ceased to be temperate is not so wide off the mark: he has become a creature of the World of Appearances, so much so that any vision of the Intelligible World is denied him. His tragedy is not in having a one-track mind, but in having committed himself to a life that is lived on one plane. His life is conceived in terms of Becoming and cannot easily be understood in terms of Being. . . . If Socrates held that Athenian education was worthless because it failed to pay attention to this "mysterious identity, which is a hidden thing that no techniques can reach," how much more worthless would he have found our own! In his day, after all, the formal processes of education were of comparatively minor importance. So far as life in the 20th century is concerned, they have become so decisive as to be almost the whole story.

Socrates, then, might address us in this fashion:

> I spent the greater part of my life trying to persuade people that the only knowledge worth the possessing was that which enabled them to pursue the good life. It seems to me that in mistaking the superficies for the real thing you have gone to inordinate lengths to defeat your own ends. Your zeal in extending the field of positive and empirical knowledge is altogether admirable, but you are to be pitied, for far from being at home in this field, you are more lost than any people in the course of history. You complain of the overcrowded curricula of your schools, and no wonder! They are like balloons blown up with air. This desire to give pupils a bit of

> everything is worse than forlorn. What use is it your looking for a common core, seeing that your knowledge admits of no certainty and your various educational theories of no unifying principle. If you were to ask my opinion in the matter I could only repeat the advice I once gave in another connection. "Try to make sure of one accomplishment: in other words the knowledge as far as in you lies of what you wish to do." To be sure, such advice is unacceptable to you: you are so taken up with second causes that you have no time to consider what it is you wish to do. You are caught in a squirrel's cage of your own manufacture. Can it be that you dare not stop to ask where it is all leading because in your heart of hearts, you are terribly afraid that the answer is "Nowhere"?

This does not solve any practical problems? Of this Socrates was well aware. As he once said:

> Now if in the debates that we have just held I had been found to know what our friend did not know, it would be right to make a point of inviting me to take up his work; (*i.e.,* the training of youth)—but as it is, we have all got into the same difficulty, so why should one of us be preferred to another? In my own opinion, none of us should, so perhaps you will allow me to give you a piece of advice. I tell you this, gentlemen—that we ought all alike to seek out the best teacher we can find, first for ourselves (for we need one), and then for our boys, sparing neither expense nor anything we can do. But *to leave ourselves as we now are, this I do not advise.*

FRONTIERS

Question about Institutions

A CANADIAN reader has detected what seems to him some faint-heartedness in our discussion of "institutions," and writes to say:

> You seem reluctant to draw one ultimate conclusion about institutions. You speak admiringly of Ivan Illich and his emphasis on the necessity of "disestablishing schools," and yet continue to reveal successful (?) experiments within institutionalized education. Why do you not draw the ultimate conclusion of your premise and acknowledge that *all* institutions are failures and no longer deserve support? . . . After all, what would Socrates and Tom Paine think?

There must be dozens of ways to consider the implications of this question, and a full examination of the problem of institutions would go on forever, since it is an aspect of the problem of human nature. The quality of men determines the quality of institutions in any population. Since our correspondent speaks of institutions as "failures," he implies that perhaps they once were not, but have gone bad; so the question may be rather, how do we get and preserve *good* institutions? After all, it is difficult to read history without concluding that institutions are necessary to the functioning of the social organism. Human beings differ in capacities and willingness to assume responsibility, so that every social formation inevitably develops foci of particular functions among its members, as a completely natural evolution. These functions can be called "infrastructure," and might be individually named institutions. Abolishing them is hardly possible. Reforming or replacing them is at least conceivable. Tom Paine was one of the Founding Fathers who created the political institutions of the United States. He would have had his colleagues do better than they did, for example by outlawing slavery, but they lacked his moral vision. Socrates was devoted to the city of Athens, which had been mother and father to him; his interest was in improving the quality of the human beings of his time, since there could not be better institutions without better men.

What is a better institution? One that does not obtrude its function and presence upon the primary affairs of human life and growth. An institution is a social tool; it becomes evil only when it gains and flaunts sovereignty, frustrating human intentions and development. Then the need is to replace it by an inner discipline, a subjective infra-structure developed in those who find ways to live without the increasingly corrupt services it performs. But to set out to *destroy* institutions which a great many people have not yet outgrown is to leave them without supports to which they have become accustomed, and may need in order to survive.

Iconoclasts in religion and revolutionists in government have the obligation to prepare viable, functioning alternatives to what they propose to abolish. Illich, incidentally, says that there is no need to destroy the public school systems, that they are doing this themselves, almost unaided. The important thing, as we see it, is to recognize the vital importance of the functions which institutions now perform very badly or not at all. Only in a society of symmetrically developed, balanced, and truly cooperative human beings will institutions function smoothly and "invisibly," as do the organs of the human body.

An entirely different account of institutions is given by Laurens van der Post in *The Dark Eye in* Africa:

> No human being or society, however self-sufficient and rational it may appear, can live without institutions that deal with those aspects of life which cannot be explained rationally. No community can be left indefinitely outside in the night of the human spirit in the beast-infested jungle which lies beyond the conscious fortifications which civilization raises for *us* in life. If a community cannot get within the protection of those fortifications by fair means, then it will do so by foul. If civilized reason and conscious strength will not aid it, then animal cunning and brute force will.

This may be a fragmentary insight, but it gives food for thought. It was written in a discussion of the terroristic activities of the Mau Mau in Kenya, years ago.

Our reader also quotes from a recent MANAS article an interpretation of Prospero's action at the end of *The Tempest:*

> "It may be time for Prospero to leave his charmed island and return to the city he deserted long ago, and which needs his help and his wisdom." While I acknowledge that the genuine (Platonic) philosopher has a moral obligation to return to the Cave, I cannot see what seeking to salvage the cities will accomplish.

In a *good* society men would declare one excellent reason for having cities, or places where a great many people gather: to have contact with the learned, the wise, and the good. That, to our way of thinking, is the only serious excuse for a city. But cities are not now of this sort. One might argue that perhaps they never will be if wise and good men stay away from them. Socrates, incidentally, said that he found pleasure in the city, but Athens nevertheless put him to death. The wise do not desert the places where many men are, because they are ugly, unpleasant, and destructive in tendency. The wise go where they think they can do the most good. So with Socrates, and so, perhaps, with Prospero. So, also, with Krishna, who says in *The Bhagavad-Gita:* "Whatever the path taken by mankind, that path is mine, O son of Pritha."

It should be evident that we are not defending the stupidities of institutions or making excuses for the anti-human qualities of urban concentrations of population. We are saying, rather, that these are forms of human expression which have accumulated the dark harvest of generations of indifference, neglect, and acquisitiveness, and that attacking the forms as intrinsically evil will not bring any lasting change.