VOLUME XXV, NO. 25
JUNE 21, 1972

# THE TRUTH TO COME

IT is apparently possible to declare an essential truth about social institutions—the fact that they are made by men—and then to neglect that truth forever after, while pursuing endless analyses of how institutions shape, confine, and distort human life. The effects of institutions on people are cause-and-effect phenomena, and we know how to describe them in detail. They represent the objectified aspect of human experience. Our disciplines and studies, that is, are good at reporting effects, but they have almost nothing to say about human beings, per se, apart from the influences which are believed to make them what they are. In short, we have no discipline dealing with creative activity, with origination, with man as a causal power and self-determiner. This area of life is of course mysterious. But we should add that *all* the important areas of life have some mystery about them. However, declarations of mysteries are not the style of a scientific civilization. The focus of the age is on methods of *dispelling* mysteries, and technical progress has decreed, as we know, that getting further knowledge is a matter of teamwork, of collaboration in research, of getting the best people together to consider a problem and then to solve it.

A good illustration of this approach to our common difficulties is found in the recent deliberations of a gathering of eminent persons on "Central Influences on American Life," a seminar sponsored by the National Commission on Marijuana and Drug Abuse. The participants, among whom were Jacques Barzun, Kenneth Boulding, Jay Forrester, George Harris, Rollo May, Jonas Salk, and other talented individuals, were invited to try to define "the cultural climate in which drug usage is increasing." One might say that they did pretty well, in terms of what was expected of them. At a level of broad generalization, they described what they saw to be wrong with the existing cultural institutions of the United States. Here we rely on a long article in the *Wall Street Journal* for April 4, summarizing the report of the seminar.

An "over-riding influence" in contemporary America was said to be "the declining capacity of our institutions to help the individual find his place in society." There seems to be no "fulfillment" to look forward to. The social system "no longer inspires in people a feeling of purpose, meaningfulness, and so on." There was the comment that the individual is increasingly "dependent on the system," while his work is diminished in meaning. No longer is there a stirring image of the distant future—no longer will the family farm be occupied by generation after generation; now we have "retirement plans." The sense of belonging to a community has been lost, and mobility has done away with face-to-face living and the natural confrontations of intimate community life, so that people only "play parts," in relation to others and do not get to "know" them. The sense of selfhood suffers as a result. The young are presented with an *a la carte* "menu" for diversity and constant change, yet everything is controlled by vast organizations, so that they begin to doubt the meaning of their own lives. Power keeps on flowing away from the individual to vast conglomerates, enormous universities, big government, and the individual finds he must "lean on society." Bureaucracy has replaced the more human functions of the clan, the family, the village. The management of people by authority depersonalizes, so that identity and fulfillment are permanent problems. The vast social issues of the time—poverty, racism, drug abuse—are more than government can cope with, and as this becomes evident a loss of faith sets in, bringing not merely dissent, but cynicism, anger,

and revolt. Broadening the base of comment still more, a seminar member said:

> In the same way we are getting universities that can't teach, families that can't socialize, and police forces that can't catch criminals. In every case, the same issue is involved: The subject of authority questions the legitimacy of authority and the exerciser of it is unable to find—very often doesn't even try to find—a defense, because he feels in himself a sympathy as do so many parents, with the challenge.

The report ended with consideration of the fact that authority is breaking down because it lacks the ethic from which it was derived—and systems of ethics, morality, or religion come out of the depths of man's nature, beyond the reach of rational analysis or inquiry. "We are all looking for values that have deep roots as we attempt to sort out the durable from the ephemeral."

This seems a sage enough observation, for an ending, but why, then, spend so much time in analysis and criticism of institutions? Who, actually, is reached by such discussions? What is the audience for "objective" sociological analysis? Who can *do* anything about these matters in the terms in which they are described? Why not speak directly to men, to people, as the makers of institutions?

The seminar members might ask, in turn, "Well, what do you want us to say?"

We shall have to return to this question. But first we need to look at some of those eager reformers, the young, who have no rivals in their disgust and contempt for the present state of affairs. It is quite possible, of course, to "justify" this reaction, in objective terms. The seminar report alone might be sufficient. Yet after some exposure to a "solution" popular with many young people the quest for a piece of land in some still unpolluted region—one is reminded of an aside by Paul Goodman in one of his *New York Review of Books* articles (April 10, 1969):

> The young are quick to point out the mess we have made, but I don't see that they really care about that, as if it were not their mankind. Rather, I see them with the Christmas astronauts flying toward the moon and seeing the earth shining below: it is as if they are about to abandon an old house and therefore it makes no difference if they litter it with beer cans.

So, for a great many of them, there is no sense of bond with the rest of the human race. They want out, feeling no responsibility to help clean up the mess, since older people are going about the task so sluggishly themselves, or not at all. One could say that the ancestral ethic is gone for them, too. Meanwhile the young want a clean place on earth, not a long course in scavenger and salvage activity. There are wonderful exceptions of course—about the same in number, no doubt, as there are in the parental generation.

The seminar report spoke of the threat to identity in the enormous, faceless institutions of the present. There can be little doubt but that the young feel this threat intensely. In *The Uses of Disorder,* Richard Sennett shows how the ardent secular puritanism of many of the young may be understood as a phenomenon of late adolescence. There is a natural desire, he says "to create so clear and unambiguous a self-image" that one can become "immune to the outside world." Mr. Sennett continues:

> The jarring elements in one's social life can be purified out as unreal because they don't fit that articulated object, that self-consciously spelled-out set of beliefs, likes and dislikes, and abilities that one takes to be oneself. In this way, the degree to which people feel urged to keep articulating who they are what they want, and what they feel is almost an index of their fear about their inability to survive in social experience with other men.
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> The seekers after purity in more religious times seemed revolutionaries to the men around them. The Puritans, or the millenarians of an even earlier era, were impatient with the ills of the temporal world and acted to make it over—or at least the swatches of it they controlled—in their own image. Indeed, today one of the easy clichés about some young revolutionaries is that their desire for purity in the society and in themselves creates the revolutionary drive.
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> But hidden in this desire to purify one's identity to others and oneself is a conservative tendency. The known in these schemes of identity is so insistently

> taken as true that new unknowns which don't fit are excluded. Reality cannot be permitted to be other than what is encompassed in one's dearly articulated images of oneself and one's world. The obvious result, then, is that the material for change, change in one's feelings, one's beliefs, one's desires, is greatly weakened in a life because new events or experiences are being measured in terms of how they correspond to a pre-existent pattern. The advent of unexpected experience is not permitted a reality of its own; the fear involved in the identity process prohibits men from feeling themselves free historical beings. Thus does this passion to create a clear self-identity act to conserve the known past in the face of a disturbing present. The historical turn, the event or experience that doesn't fit preconceived feelings and one's sense of place, is deflated in its "truth value." Because of this fear, the more comfortable, the easier dicta of the past are made the final standard of reference.

Looked at in this way, the desire for "purity" may be seen as timidity and arrested development:

> Men can abandon any attempts at personal experiment out of the conviction that they already know what any experiment with their own lives will lead to. For making things coherent means imagining they are known and understood by the simple act of an individual's will. Thus the principle of security and regularity comes to be enshrined, through the willful delusion that the young person, or the older person who carries the scar from his youth, has somehow already tested all possibilities open to him. In this way, the forces behind purification, forces of fear, lead the young person to enter adult life in a state of bondage to security, in self-imposed illusion of knowledge about the outcome of experiences he has never had.

It should not be concluded that Mr. Sennett regards this analysis as explanatory of all the revolts of youth, but only that these psychological currents are often present, and that recognizing them may lead to more understanding of these troubled times. It is the wish to remake the world—or imagine that it can be remade—in one's own image, simply by an act of willful rejection, that is at issue, here.

Again, of course, there is the objection that this is a discussion *about* young people, addressed to others; it has its uses; but solutions will hardly come in this way. So the question remains: What really should be said?

Just ninety years ago, Leo Tolstoy completed the brief work which marked a great turning-point in his career—the agonized psychological autobiography he called *My Confession.* Tolstoy, like the intelligent and literate men of our time, had recognized the sickness of his age. He was overwhelmed with disgust for the society in which he lived, and which had been so kind to him. It was all empty and meaningless, he found. It lived only by rules of pleasure-seeking and self-interest. He felt driven to suicide, yet paused to ask himself if he had overlooked something which might give him an answer to his questions. What were his questions? They were the questions which the seminar we quoted earlier intimated as important, by speaking of the need for ethical foundations, but did not formulate or inquire into. Tolstoy wanted to know the meaning of his life. He wanted to know why it seemed so senseless. He brooded:

> "Well, I know," I said to myself, "all which science wants so persistently to know, but there is no answer to the question about the meaning of my life." But in the speculative sphere I saw that, in spite of the fact that the aim of the knowledge was directed straight to the answer of my question, or because of that fact, there could be no other answer than what I was giving to myself: "What is the meaning of my life?"—"None." Or, "What will become of my life?"—"Nothing." Or, "Why does everything which exists exist, and why do I exist?"—"Because it exists."
>
> Putting the question to the one side of human knowledge I received an endless quantity of exact answers about what I did not ask: about the chemical composition of the stars, about the movement of the sun toward the constellation of Hercules about the origin of species and of man, about the forms of infinitely small, imponderable particles of ether; but the answer in this sphere of knowledge to my question what the meaning of my life was, was always: "You are what you call your life; you are a temporal, accidental conglomeration of particles. The interrelation, the change of these particles, produces in you what you call life. This congeries will last for some time; then the interaction of these particles will

> cease, and that which you call life and all your questions will come to an end. You are an accidentally cohering globule of something. The globule is fermenting. This fermentation the globule calls its life. The globule falls to pieces, and all fermentation and all questions will come to an end." Thus the clear side of knowledge answers, and it cannot say anything else, if only it strictly follows its principles.

So Tolstoy found no help in objective science, nor in speculative philosophy either, which ended in Schopenhaurian pessimism. He inquired into every form of traditional wisdom, but no answer came, since he was too intelligent for the familiar escapes and self-deceptions. At last he began to wonder about the serenity of the hard-working poor, who seemed to know the meaning of life although they could not speak of it. Finally he concluded:

> I saw that the question of what my life was, and the answer to it, that it was an evil, were quite correct. What was incorrect was that the answer, which had reference to me only, had been transferred by me to life in general. I asked myself what my life was, and received as an answer: "An evil and an absurdity." And indeed, my life—that life of pampered appetites and whims—was meaningless and evil, and so the answer, "Life is evil and meaningless," had reference only to my life, and not to human life in general. . . . I saw that in order to comprehend the meaning of life it was necessary, first of all, that life should not be meaningless and evil, and then only was reason needed for the understanding of it. I comprehended why I had so long walked around such a manifest truth, and that if I were to think and speak of the life of humanity, I ought to think and speak of the life of humanity, and not of the life of a few parasites of life. This truth had always been a truth, just as two times two was four, but I had not recognized it because, if I recognized that two times two was four, I should have had to recognize that I was not good, whereas it was more important and obligatory for me to feel myself good than to feel that two times two was four. I came to love good people and to hate myself, and I recognized the truth. Now everything became dear to me.

Interpreting Tolstoy freely, we might say that the first principle for understanding the meaning of life, and laying the ground of sustaining ethics, involves taking a stance in behalf of life and acting on it. It is not an intellectual formulation. Tolstoy, let us note, wasted no time on plans for the reform of institutions. He addressed his thoughts to himself. He wanted to know what *he* could do to change things. It did not occur to him to look elsewhere for responsibility or for the necessary changes. It was native to him to regard men as the creators of their institutions. There is a sense in which he rejected even *social* modes of action, because of the dilutions or even abdications of the free, individual intelligence which are commonly involved. As he wrote years after (in 1894) on the question of the abandonment of war:

> But the free man often says to himself: "What can I do against this whole sea of wickedness and deception which engulfs us? What use is it to express my opinion? Better not to think of these obscure and tangled questions. Perhaps these contradictions are the inevitable condition of all the phenomena of life. And what is the use of my struggling alone with all the evil of the world? If anything can be done, it is not by one alone, but only in association with other men." And abandoning the mighty weapon of thought and the expression of it, which moves the world, every man takes up the weapon of social activity, regardless of the fact that every form of social activity is based on those very principles with which it is laid upon him to struggle, regardless of the fact that when he enters on the social activities existing in the middle of our world, every man is bound at least to some extent to depart from the truth, and to make concessions by which he destroys the whole force of the mighty weapon which has been given him. It is as though a man, in whose hands a sword of extraordinary keen edge has been put, should use the blade to knock in nails. . . .
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> If only free men would not rely on that which has not strength and is never free—on external power, but would believe in what is always powerful and free—in truth and the expression of it. If only men would boldly and clearly speak out the truth that has already been revealed to them of the brotherhood of all nations and the criminality of exclusive devotion to one's own nation, the dead false public opinion upon which all the power of Governments and all the evil produced by them rests would drop off of itself like dried skin, and make way for the new living public opinion which only waits the dropping

> off of the old husk that has confined it in order to assert its claims openly and with authority, and to establish new forms of life which are in harmony with the consciences of men.

How many men, it will be asked, are capable of the moral splendors Tolstoy embodied and recommended? For a beginning, one would be enough. Measure, if you can, the extraordinary influence of Leo Tolstoy in giving hope and strength to lovers of freedom and peace throughout the world. And while others are looking around skeptically, to count the potential Tolstoys of the present, if everyone capable of doing something along the lines he proposed would do it, instead of writing or reading papers on the defects in our institutions, the beginning of changes in our society might be evident in perhaps a few weeks.

For Tolstoy declared the truth of what men can do, if they are so minded. There is not only "objective" truth—which is truth established in the past. Unborn, unrealized truth also exists, in the vision of men such as Tolstoy. To honor it and apply it, to live by it as best one can, however "prematurely," is to help to bring it into being—to serve, in one way or another, in the Socratic midwife function. And considering the reports on the state of the nation, there could be no more honorable undertaking, surely none more urgently needed. As Maslow put it just before he died:

> It is possible to love the truth yet-to-come, to trust it, to be happy, and to marvel as its nature reveals itself. One can believe that the uncontaminated, unmanipulated, unforced, undemanded truth will be more beautiful, more pure, more truly true than that same truth would have been had we forced it to conform to a priori expectations or hopes or plans or current political needs or current intellectual fashions.

# *REVIEW*
## JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

FEW books of personal reminiscences are as pleasurable to read as Joseph Wood Krutch's literary autobiography, *More Lives Than One.* Mr. Krutch is no longer with us, and his familiar column, "If You Don't Mind My Saying So," in the *American Scholar,* has been replaced with essays by René Dubos, but he left many books which are worth reading more than once. He was a man whose life of the mind was based upon a few fundamental ideas, and his central convictions, as this book shows, did not alter much during a period of enormous external changes. While he seemed to enjoy appreciation and approval in a normal way, he was never carried away by a sense of self-importance. At the end of *More Lives Than One,* which was published by Sloane in 1962, he wrote:

> I am a member of a distant minority. My opinions, tastes, and preoccupations would seem foolish or perverse to the majority, even if it took the trouble to inquire what they are. I grow no crops; I produce no goods; I have, indeed, done nothing to increase our prosperity. Even as an entertainer I have never attracted an audience large enough to count for much in a society where the majority is supposed to rule. Judge as that majority judges and I am a parasite who has never done anything for the society which has supported me. Yet it has permitted me to live comfortably by my own modest standards—far more comfortably than those similarly misfitted into other societies of the past or present.

Why was he so favored? A careless American generosity, he thinks, is the answer, or half the answer. The other half he borrows from Samuel Butler's explanation of why Englishmen are willing to support their Vicars—"because they felt they were hiring someone to be good for them 'vicariously'." This account of his "good life" seemed confirmed by experience:

> Many of the men of affairs I meet seem to take much the same attitude toward me. They have no time for literature, philosophy, or the appreciation of nature, but they are glad to have someone else look after these things for them. But most, I think, are just easy going.

This, no doubt, is the wry truth of the matter. And Krutch, we think, takes the right sort of cognizance of it. It would not have pleased him for some righteous-eyed reformer to have declared that the time had come for *Society* to reward the valuable services of devotees of literature, philosophy, and nature, by full public recognition and a proper system of compensation. For that has been done before. Devotions of the sort to which Mr. Krutch gave his life could easily be ruined by official recognition. Their quality, along with that of mercy, cannot be bureaucratically strained. What was possibly the most ancient social system the world has known—the caste system of the Hindus—gave teachers and lovers of the truth the highest place in society, and not even the safeguard of making them at the same time "beggars" dependent upon gifts from the people could prevent the corruptions which finally resulted from this official theocratic arrangement.

At the risk of presenting Krutch simply as a humanist hot-gospeller, instead of the civilized, urbane, and extremely enjoyable writer that he was, we take a passage from his preface to the paperback edition of *The Modern Temper,* the book which first attracted wide attention to him in the spring of 1929. In respect to the book's thesis, he wrote a quarter of a century later:

> I find myself asking three questions: (1) Do educated people continue to believe that science has exposed as delusions those convictions and standards upon which Western civilization was founded? (2) Is the ultimate cause of the catastrophe with which that civilization is threatened this loss of faith in humanity itself? (3) Is it really true, as I once believed, that there is no escaping the scientific demonstration that religion, morality, and the human being's power to make free choices are all merely figments of the imagination?
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> To the first two of these questions the answer still seems to me to be "Yes." Despite the so-called revival of popular religion which amounts to little more than the acceptance of the church as a social

institution; despite also a perhaps increasingly strong undercurrent of psychological and sociological protest against determinism and relativism, the most prevalent educated opinion is still that men are animals and that animals are machines. One kind of intellectual may respond to this conviction by embracing the creed of atheistical Existentialism which is the tragic solution proposed in *The Modern Temper*. A larger group turns optimistically toward experimental psychology, the techniques for sociological conditioning, and the methods of indoctrination developed by the manipulators of the media of mass communication, and hopes from them for the creation of a Robot Utopia whose well-adjusted citizens will have comfortably forgotten that their forefathers believed themselves to be Men.

But neither the one group nor the other rejects the assumption that Western man, traditionally endowed with reason, will, and a valid sense of value, is an exploded myth. And because this conviction still prevails among educated men I still believe it true that it poses the most serious of all threats to our civilization and is, indeed, the ultimate source of most of our specific dilemmas—as it is, for instance, of our dilemma in the face of communism which embodies the really logical conclusion to be drawn from the premises which so many nominally anti-communists share with their formal opponents.

The modern temper itself has developed somewhat, especially in the direction of that attempted "adjustment" to dismal assumptions which makes Social Engineering rather than Existentialist resignation the dominant religion of today. But the description which I gave of the origins of this temper, and the consequences likely to follow from it, seem to me as valid as they ever were. It is only my own attitude toward it which is different. What I described and shared in I still describe but I no longer accept it. Hence the situation which *The Modern Temper* presents as hopeless does not now seem to me entirely so, though by the diagnosis I still stand.

Even the editor of the *Atlantic*, Ellery Sedgwick, who published many of the chapters of *The Modern Temper*, disagreed with Krutch's views. He printed the material because, he said, it was ably presented, but as a pragmatist wrote to Krutch: "my fundamental objection to your ideas is that they lead directly away from all enthusiasms and ferments which are at the bases of the creeds that work." Fortunately, Krutch lived long enough to see that confidence in "the creeds that work" diminish greatly.

What positive view did Krutch have at that time? In a small book, *Art and Experience*, written in the early '30's, he said:

> If Love and Honor and Duty can be salvaged, then someone must write about them in a fashion which carries conviction. If we are to get along without them, then someone must describe a world from which they are absent in a fashion which makes that world seem worth having. And it is just the failure to do either of these things quite adequately which reveals the weakness of contemporary literature.

Krutch was born in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1893. He attended public school there and then attended the State University, which was near his home. He went to graduate school at Columbia in New York, where he earned a doctorate in literature. He taught for a while, then became drama critic of the *Nation*, serving in this capacity for twenty-eight years. He also did such chores as covering the Scopes Trial in Dayton, Tennessee, for the *Nation*—which did not endear him to Tennessee newspaper editors. Later in life he migrated to Arizona, where he wrote the distinguished nature books for which he is now chiefly remembered.

After the Scopes trial Krutch published *Edgar Allan Poe: A Study in Genius*, which attracted the attention of New York psychoanalysts. Always of independent mind, he tells of an encounter with Alfred Adler, whom he found quite pompous:

> Myself: I have read a number of your books and they all seem to me to rest upon a non sequitur.
>
> Adler: What do you mean?
>
> Myself: Well, the first seven chapters describe how very abnormal all the great men have been. Then the last chapter says "Therefore let us be normal as possible."
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> Adler: I still do not understand the point of your remark.
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> Myself: Suppose a writer, or for that matter any man, finds himself psychologically troubled but

functioning very successfully. Wouldn't it be dangerous for him to have himself psychoanalyzed?

Adler: I would not like to answer the question directly. But I will say this: the only two leading psychoanalysts who have never themselves been analyzed are Dr. Freud and myself . . . and I think we have made the greatest contributions to science.

Krutch's intellectual life began at the age of twelve. Taken to hear an Episcopalian Bishop on the occasion of his annual visitation to Knoxville, he listened to a fiery attack on Herbert Spencer. Naturally enough, he borrowed Spencer's *Synthetic Philosophy* from the library the next day, and was for four years "a devout Spencerian." The idea of the Unknowable captured him completely. He came to realize that—

Much of the Unknowable is so much more important than most of the Knowable that even guesses about it are more interesting and more fateful than positive knowledge about the rest. What, for instance, one finds oneself believing about the nature of the beautiful and the good does more to determine conduct, as well as the whole tenor and color of existence, than all one can know about the stage history of *Hamlet* or the function of hormones.

Krutch speaks of the simple service of libraries in *having* such books, against the day when someone will discover them and begin a new life of the mind. He relates how the historian, Carl Becker, told him of finding a copy of *Anna Karenina* in a small library in Iowa, and remarks how important it was that the librarian "did not tell him it was 'not for his age group'." When he asked if it was a good book, she said simply, "Well—it's a very *strong* book." Krutch comments: "That library would have been justified by its fruit even though no one else had ever read its copy of *Anna Karenina."*

We end these few notes by quoting the author's defense of books:

Just suppose that the radio, the phonograph, the film strip, and all the rest of it had been in existence since the Fifteenth Century but that books had just been invented. What a marvelous advance in communication that would be! And how many advantages the book would be seen to have over any previously known means, including ready availability and the possibility of wide choice. What comes over the air is chosen for you by somebody else and you must receive the communication at a particular moment, or not at all. A book, on the other hand, you can choose for yourself and you can read it at your own convenience. It is always available while a broadcast is gone, usually forever. And how much more economical in time a book is! Deduct from a half-hour broadcast the musical fanfare, the station announcement, the sponsor's commercial, etc., etc., and you can learn by five minutes with a book more than you can get in a half-hour broadcast. "Why," we would say, "this marvelous new invention, the book, just about makes the radio obsolete."

But perhaps the greatest of all the advantages of the book as a means of communication is simply that by reading you learn to read, become more and more capable of receiving more and more completely subtle and complicated communications. By listening to the radio or looking at film strips you become only more and more passive, less and less capable of giving your attention.

# *COMMENTARY*
## FATE OF THE HERO

THERE is haunting paradox in the fact that men with the greatest capacity for lifting up our hearts, for providing vision and inspiration, are often the ones who are stricken down by their times. They attract so much antagonism that they are viciously attacked, and sometimes killed; or they are denounced as false prophets, jeered as "impractical," or simply ridiculed and ignored.

Yet we return to them for a moral sustenance we do not find anywhere else. We praise and echo them, but find endless objections to following their example. Often it is said that the rejection they experienced was not really "necessary." Socrates could have been more "tactful" before the Athenian jury. And Tolstoy—his dream of human brotherhood and peace was, after all, only a dream. Why did he have to press his contentions to such *extremes?*

Speaking of tragedy in literature, Ortega muses on the typical audience reaction to the final fate of the hero:

> Let us listen to the effect that drama produces on the ordinary spectator. If he is sincere he will have to confess that it really seems a little unlikely to him. Twenty times he has been tempted to get up and advise the protagonist to desist, to abandon his position, because the plain man very sensibly thinks that all the bad things happen to the hero through his persistence in such and such a purpose. By giving it up, he could make everything turn out well and, as the Chinese say at the end of a tale, alluding to their former nomadism, could settle down and raise many children. There is no fate, then, or rather what happens is fated to happen because the hero has caused it.

This is Ortega's point: "Fate" does not make the tragedy, but the hero, by insisting upon living his vision in the indifferent present, brings his fate upon himself. This is what Ortega *means* by heroism. The hero wills to live by his vision, although he "does not say that he is but that he wants to be." Ortega continues:

> As something made to live in a future world, the ideal, when it is drawn back and frozen in the present, does not succeed in satisfying the most trivial functions of existence; and so people laugh. People watch the fall of the ideal bird as it flies over the vapor of stagnant water and they laugh. It is a useful laughter: for each hero whom it hits, it crushes a hundred frauds.

But the hero's refusal to give up his ideal awakens the faint-hearted dreamer in every one of us. The hero violates the rules of mere reaction or "adjustment"; he is not a positivist; he believes in the free volition of human beings, and his unyielding faith produces the tragic outcome. The act of creation cannot be completed, save in the dreams of others unable to forget what he tried to do.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves
### CHASTENING REMARKS

THROUGH the kindness of a friend, we have been able to leaf through the pages of a delightful book, *The Uses of the Imagination*, by William Walsh, first published in London in 1959, and in America by Barnes & Noble, in 1966, as a paperback. Mr. Walsh is (or was) professor of education at the University of Leeds.

This is an excellent book to dip into. The first chapter, "Coleridge and the Age of Childhood," starts out:

> We are accustomed to think of the twentieth century as the age in which children have come into their own. We can point to the elaborate studies devoted to children and the degree to which the arrangements of life are accommodated to them. We are apt to contrast our own century, with its extensive knowledge of children and its anxiety to do justice to them, with the nineteenth century when the relation of the adult to child was apparently so formal, rigid and uncomprehending. It is surprising, therefore, that if there is one respect in which many major writers, both British and American, in the nineteenth century notably excel those of our own day, it is in the power with which they perceived and communicated the life of the child. Wordsworth, Coleridge, Dickens (at his best), Mark Twain, Henry James appear to have been endowed with a faculty for divining the experience of childhood and a capacity for realising it in words against which we can set only a well-intentioned but external sympathy with children and a pertinacity in collecting information about them. It is significant that no major twentieth-century writer (if we think of Henry James as the last great nineteenth-century novelist) has written with power and conviction of the world of childhood with the exception of Lawrence, who was peculiarly gifted by genius and disposition to undertake such a theme. There is also, on another scale, the minor exception of Walter de la Mare.

We are grateful to Mr. Walsh for this chapter, since it has helped to rescue Coleridge from the ominous cloud spread by a recent book (*The Damaged Archangel*) which maintains that Coleridge was a dreadful plagiarist, and one who, moreover, kept claiming that others were copying from *him.* Well, one soon tires of writers who find out the flaws of a man who has done great work, and then spend most of their time talking about these flaws, as though they were more interesting or important than what the man achieved. In this case, half the book, one reviewer reports, is given to Coleridge's involvement with plagiarism. Having enjoyed Coleridge both as poet and thinker—his *Biographia Literaria* has philosophical passages of great depth and inspiration—we felt, after reading a review of *The Damaged Archangel* which was equally preoccupied with "plagiarism," that if Coleridge stole some of his stuff, he certainly knew what to steal!

John Holt and others have written about the "messing about" which is an essential to small children, and which ought never to be denied them. Apparently, Coleridge, too, understood this well:

> In the infancy and childhood of individuals (and something analogous may be traced in the history of communities) the first knowledges are acquired promiscuously.—Say rather that the plan is not formed by the selection of the objects presented to the notice of the pupils; but by the impulses and dispositions suited to their age, by the limits of their comprehension, by the volatile and desultory activity of their attention, and by the relative predominance or the earlier development of one or more faculties over the rest. This is the happy delirium, the healthful fever of the physical, moral and intellectual being—nature's kind and providential gift to childhood. In the best good sense of the words, it is the lightheadedness and light-heartedness of human life! There is indeed "method in't," but it is the method of nature which thus stores the mind with all the materials for after use, promiscuously indeed and as it might seem without purpose, while she supplies a gay and motley chaos of facts, and forms, and thousand-fold experiences, the origin of which lies beyond the memory, traceless as life itself, and finally passing into a part of our life more rapidly than would have been compatible with distinct consciousness and with a security beyond the power of choice! . . . Promiscuously, we have said, and seemingly without design: and yet by this seeming confusion alone could nature . . . have effected her wise purpose, without

> encroachment on the native freedom of the Soul and without either precluding, superseding, or overlaying the inventive, the experimentative, the combinatory and judicial powers.

There is a lot of "health" in this book, if health is conceived to be an essential naturalness, going behind conventional abstractions. The chapter titled "The Writer as Teacher" is devoted to D. H. Lawrence, and this, too, is a kind of rescue the rescue of a man of delicate perceptions and often profound observations from the oversimplified image of the author of *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Mr. Walsh prepares the reader for some of Lawrence's less popular ideas by quoting Lionel Trilling, who remarked in *The Liberal Imagination* that to the writers commonly accounted "the monumental figures of our time . . . the liberal ideology has been at least a matter of indifference." Trilling continues: "All have their own love of justice and the good life but in not one of them does it take the form of the ideas and emotions which liberal democracy has declared respectable." Lawrence, for example, felt that the popular idea of equality led to a confusion of politics and education. In a brief treatise, *Education of the People*, published after his death in *Phoenix*, Lawrence wrote:

> Here then is the new ideal for society: not that all men are equal but that each man is himself. . . . Particularly this is the ideal for a new system of education. Every man shall be himself, shall have every opportunity to come to his own intrinsic fullness of being. . . . We must have an ideal. So let our ideal be living, spontaneous individuality in every man and woman. Which living, spontaneous individuality, being the hardest thing of all to come at, will need most careful rearing. Educators take a grave responsibility upon themselves. They will be priests of life, deep in the wisdom of life.

Mr. Walsh gives a summary of some of Lawrence's ideas:

> Lawrence had no patience with those who would trace every defect to the existing system. The system is only the organisation of our intentions, past and present, and the first stride in modifying the system is to change ourselves: but many who want the first are unwilling to undertake the second. Organisation and system are inevitable for they are the direct expression of the organic differentiation present in the least speck of rudimentary life. "There must be a system: there *must* be classes of men: there *must* be differentiation: either that, or amorphous nothingness." Our choice is not between system and no system, but between one like ours established for the purposes of material production, and therefore a mechanism, a social machine, and an organic system of human life capable of producing "the real blossoms of life and being." And since we do not want revolutions and cataclysms, let our reformation begin at once with a new system of education, "a forming of new buds upon the tree, under the harsh foliage."

One can see, here, why those who think in terms of "law" have called Lawrence a "proto-fascist," yet he was neither thinking nor speaking in terms of man-made organizations or coercion, but rather of honoring and fostering the spontaneous expressions of difference, through which natural hierarchy comes into being. What should never be compelled can nevertheless come about naturally, just as human excellences declare themselves and win respect and emulation, generating a natural authority in human relations—an authority which is soon lost if it is misused. Lawrence is speaking of matters which cannot be written into constitutions. Nor, as Walsh says, was he advocating an "extreme and disorderly individualism." Lawrence wrote:

> Which doesn't mean anarchy and disorder. On the contrary, it means the most delicately and inscrutably balanced order, delicate, intricate, complicated as the stars in heaven, when seen in their strange groups and goings. Neither does it mean what is nowadays called individualism. The so-called individualism is no more than a cheap egotism, every self-conscious little ego assuming unbounded rights to display his self-consciousness. We mean none of this. We mean, in the first place, the recognition of the exquisite arresting *manifoldness* of being, multiplicity, plurality, as the stars are plural in their starry singularity.

For evidence of where Lawrence found the greatest reality, Walsh closes his chapter on Lawrence with a portion of a letter he wrote in 1917:

> The world doesn't matter, you have died sufficiently to know that; the world doesn't matter, ultimately. Ultimately, only the other world of pure being matters. One has to be strong enough to have the just sense of values. One sees it in the old sometimes. Old Madame Stepinak was here yesterday. I find in her a beauty infinitely lovelier than the beauty of the young women I know. She has lived and suffered, and taken her place in the realities. Now, neither riches nor rank nor violence matter to her, she *knows* what life consists in, and she never fails in her knowledge.

Mr. Walsh claims great importance for literature in education. The book he has produced *is* powerful supporting evidence. His argument is this:

> . . . of all studies that of literature is the discipline which most intimately affects the character of a person's self, which most radically and permanently modifies the grain of his being. This is important at all times; it is urgent in our own when other traditions are weakening and dissolving and the tradition of literature is one of the few still active and life-giving. Perhaps the tradition is most important because it embodies with depth and subtlety a vision of humanity, and the teacher must have a rich and complex perception of the humanity it is his task to improve, a vision of its possibilities for triumph and disaster. The one essential professional qualification for a teacher is that he be educated, and no one can be considered educated who has not come under this supremely civilising influence.

# *FRONTIERS*

## "A Separate, Independent Order"

IN an opinion dissenting from the April ruling by a majority of the Supreme Court, which rejected the attempt of the Sierra Club to block construction of a ski resort at Mineral King in the Sierra Nevada, Justice William O. Douglas maintained that the voiceless realities of nature have a right to representation in behalf of their survival. The court's majority held that the Sierra Club had failed to show that it or its members would be harmed by the ski resort, having simply asserted other "value preferences." In Justice Douglas' view, however, this decision ignores the real problem, which "is to make certain that the inanimate objects, which are the very core of America's beauty, have spokesmen before they are destroyed."

The claim that most of these areas are already under the control of governmental agencies charged with administering them in the "public interest," he said, can have little force in such matters. "Public interest" has too many shades of meaning to serve the cause of environmental preservation. Persons who frequent such rare and beautiful places "should have standing to defend those natural wonders before courts or agencies, though they live 3,000 miles away." They know the values and "will be able to speak for the entire ecological community." They would speak in behalf of the "Land Ethic," which Aldo Leopold saw as enlarging the boundaries of the community "to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively, the land." The voice of the existing beneficiaries of these environmental wonders should be heard, for—

> Then there will be assurances that all the forms of life . . . will stand before the court—the pileated woodpecker as well as the coyote and bear, the lemmings as well as the trout in the streams. Those inarticulate members of the ecological group cannot speak.

Justice Douglas writes with a natural eloquence on this subject, since he has been a nature and wilderness lover all his life. And his conception of appropriate advocacy for nature before the courts seems right and good in a man of his profession and role. Yet one may also reflect on how much better it would be if the attitude he shows were truly widespread, for then the rights of nature would need no defense in courts of law.

Embattled clubs and wilderness societies are, after all, a poor substitute for spontaneous reverence for nature felt in the hearts of the people. One might even say that if a decent respect for the wonders of nature has no more potent support than what can be found in the courts, our situation is indeed perilous and, what may be worse, the remedy is not understood. We say that the remedy is not understood because court action involves preoccupation with power and emphasis on the "watch-dog" function of protective agencies, whether private or public. It should be evident to us by now that the "adversary" approach to all such problems, and the seeking of power in order to suppress or control anti-social action, are in the long run self-defeating. What is required is a fundamental change in attitudes at what William James would have called the "molecular" level, affecting peoples' lives at their roots.

Arthur Morgan speaks of the same thing in his books on the importance of community. In contrast to this way of looking at the formation of human character and the shaping of motivation, control sought through the courts is only the coarsest sort of regulation, and cannot touch the real springs of human action. It seems quite possible that if more attention had been given to community reconstruction, along the lines of Morgan's proposals, we would not now be confronted by the spectacle of, on the one hand, an increasingly inhumane and dangerous nation-state and an inflexible, profit-oriented technology, and on the other a Luddite generation of youth, thoroughly alienated from the doctrines of power and economic progress, and indifferent, as well, to

the crying need for new beginnings which have some relationships with existing social and economic processes brought forward from the past. An article in the March, 1979, *Community Comments* discusses community rehabilitation in practical terms:

> It is possible to develop within the old economic order a separate, independent order of the economy that is committed to ethical values and disciplined social solidarity. Many minority groups have to one degree or another demonstrated its feasibility—such as the Seventh Day Adventists' rural communities, the Mormons, the Amish, the Black Muslims and other less sectarian communities over the nation.
>
> In the dominant society, investors with capital ownership have no loyalty to the nation or community of their origin but will invest without regard to the harm that will come from this investment. Where investors assume social responsibility for their wealth they can contribute to the new order, realizing that to hold stock in unethical corporations is to share in their unethical conduct. Landowners can in America, as they have done in India, share with the landless. Consumers can recognize their responsibility in the ways they spend to supply their income needs, and can divert their purchasing power to ethical sources of supply. In such ways the culture and purposes in a community can change the entire pattern of social and economic life.

The discussion goes on, showing the effects of the absorption of local businesses by vast conglomerates which are indifferent to local problems and needs. A number of illustrations of sound practice, against the grain of the times, demonstrate the moral strength of enlightened community economics and the beneficent atmosphere it creates. None of these achievements could be accomplished by passing laws. They represent rather the "subordination of self-interest to the common interest and human brotherhood." The writer continues:

> In many American communities a remnant of integrity keeps alive the spark of social and economic health. We will cite you some examples from among Ohio communities. In the town of Scio, for example, a pottery firm had gone out of business leaving hardship in the town. A workman took the initiative of reorganizing the firm as a community corporation and the community built it into a very successful endeavor. A tool-making firm in Leetonia has for generations been making fine tools sold in hardware stores. Many times the firm has been asked to sell their industry to conglomerate corporations as another of the town's leading industries had done, but they will have nothing to do with this form of economic prostitution. Their community has, in turn, resisted the State Department of Education's demand that they consolidate their school system with that of a nearby city. Social and economic health still prevail to a significant extent in this town.

Ethical attitudes are really indivisible, and these are some of the ways in which they are generated. There is a vast middle area between the extremes of ruthless, centralized power and purely selfish corporate finance, and the contemptuous "opting out" response of many of the young. It is in this middle area that changes can be made and new patterns of action developed. And this middle area, it may also be noted, is populated by the majority of the human race.