

A CONSENSUS OF TWO

IF historians ever get around to defining the ages of man in terms of the forms of human attention—telling what people during a given period held to be of importance and gave their energies to obtaining—then the time from the day of Archimedes until almost the present might be called the Eureka Period. The story goes that this founder of the science of physics in the West—he lived from 287 to 212 B.C., in Syracuse, a city of Sicily—as he stepped into his bath one day, noticed that some of the water ran over the edge of the tub. He suddenly realized that this would be a way of determining whether silver, a lighter metal, had been added to the gold crown of his king, since silver of the same weight as gold would displace more water. The famous Roman architect, Vitruvius, relates:

When the idea flashed across his mind, the philosopher jumped out of the bath exclaiming, "Heureka, heureka!" and, without waiting to dress himself, ran home to try the experiment.

"Heureka" means "I have found it." Eureka is the motto of the state of California, by reason of the gold discovered there.

This has been the mood, the animating principle of the modern age, becoming evident in the period historians call the Enlightenment. While the Enlightenment was at first a cultural awakening inspired by German philosophers, its spirit soon merged with the enthusiasm for scientific discovery, and by the nineteenth century had led to the expectation that modern progress in science and invention would transform the world into a material Utopia. With heavy-handed Teutonic assurance, J. A. Etzler published in London in 1842 a book with the title: "The Paradise within the Reach of all Men, without Labor, by Powers of Nature and Machinery. An Address to all intelligent Men." The machine was coming to be regarded as the practical extension

of Aladdin's lamp—the open sesame to all utopian dreams—which would, as Etzler said, enable man to accomplish, "without labor, in one year, more than hitherto could be done in thousands of years." He would be able to "level mountains, sink valleys, create lakes, drain lakes and swamps, and intersect the land everywhere with beautiful canals, and roads for transporting heavy loads of many thousands of tons." The application of machines would provide man "with means, unheard of yet, for increasing his knowledge of the world, and so his intelligence;" and he would "lead a life of continual happiness, of enjoyments yet unknown," and "free himself from almost all the evils that afflict mankind, except death, and even put death far beyond the common period of human life, and finally render it less afflicting."

Whatever the cautions of philosophers and poets, the idea of progress popularized by the Etzlers won the day. And while, during the early days of scientific discovery, the machine was only a practical application of the findings of the "natural philosophers," by the twentieth century science had become no more than the Research and Development branch of technology. Etzler's logic reigned supreme, as Lewis Mumford shows in *The Myth of the Machine*. What began as the love of truth about the natural world when placed under the guidance of Bacon's rule ("Knowledge is power"), became the love of production. In a summarizing conclusion, written only a little more than a century after Etzler's panegyric appeared, Mumford described the lethal flaw in the reasoning of the mechanizers:

The chief premise common to both technology and science is the notion that there are no desirable limits to the increase of knowledge, of material goods, of environmental control; that quantitative productivity is an end in itself, and that every means should be used to further expansion. . . . Because of the success of the sciences in widening the domain of

prediction and control, in penetrating the hitherto inviolable mysteries of nature, in augmenting human power on every plane, we face a new predicament derived from this very economy of abundance: that of deprivation by surfeit. . . . As science approximates more closely the condition of technology, it must concern itself with contemporary technics' great weakness: the defeats of a system that, unlike organic systems, has no built-in method of controlling its growth, as every living organism must, a dynamic equilibrium favorable to life and growth.

No one questions the immense benefits already conferred by science's efficient methodology: but what one must challenge is the value of a system so detached from other human needs and human purposes that the process itself goes on automatically without any visible goal except that of keeping the corporate apparatus in a state of power-making, profit-yielding productivity. What is now called "Research and Development" is a circular process.

Has not the time come, Mumford asks, to put an end to the "invention of inventions"? The technique of developing machines to satisfy every need, he shows, depends upon closed system thinking. It is a method appropriate for dealing with physical things, but the excitement that resulted from the triumphant march of technology had turned its methodological assumptions into a philosophy of life. Since machines are so successful, we need only make everything in our lives over on machine principles, so that we can control their activity and push their development as we please. Progress is having whatever we want. Social systems based on this idea require that humans become automata, parts for the efficient manipulations of engineering skill. There is no room for independence in a closed system.

The point of Mumford's analysis is that a machine "philosophy" is rational insanity. It makes of man the creature and victim of his own creations. The rule of mechanization is the ultimate, self-destroying heresy, for the reason that organisms are *open* systems. Their openness makes them originators. Mumford's book is a disciplined inquiry into the question: What are the rules of order for the open system of human life?

There were a few other writers who, early in this century, saw what Mumford saw and set down similar warnings. In 1939, in Nazi Germany, Friedrich Georg Juenger completed a book with the title, "The Perfection of Technology," subtitled, "The Failure of Man." It is a study of the submission of all human life to technological process. A single paragraph (from an English translation issued after the war by Regnery as *The Failure of Technology*) shows the all-pervasive effect of technological assumptions:

To be "socially conscious" today means nothing else than to maintain faith in machinery and organization. Social consciousness is the kowtow of man before the ideology of technological progress. The craving for security may well call forth powerful organizations, but to give man real security is entirely beyond their power. This is not just because the only real security we can ever possess depends upon ourselves and, being our individual responsibility, cannot be delegated to others; this is not only because these organizations merely distribute or spread poverty, but because these organizations are in themselves already expressions of poverty, worry, misery, and like all scarcity organizations they mushroom just as fast as unorganized wealth declines.

Juenger was quite as aware as Wright Mills of the procrustean adaptation of all social functions to the needs of the socio-economic machine. He describes the "human" side of technology:

The physician who taps an automobile driver for blood in order to learn whether the driver has taken alcohol is an official of the work organization, he watches over its undisturbed function, just like a traffic policeman, or a judge who metes out a fine in case of traffic violations. Ability and aptitude tests do not test the capacity for independent thought, but the capacity to react mechanically to some mechanical stimulus.

So, in the present, we have the clear realization, more widespread every day, that what the Western world, following Bacon, Galileo, Descartes, and Locke, regards as knowledge is not enough. The assumption that human beings will use this knowledge wisely and for human good—without, as Mumford puts it, a "built-in

method of controlling its growth"—has brought us to the brink of irremediable disaster.

A question must now be asked: What is the root of the power that we obtain through science and technology? The answer is simple enough. The power is rooted in the mind. It is the power of ideas. Galileo conceived an *idea* of how physical objects move and developed it into a general law, just as Archimedes had laid the foundations of hydrostatics by grasping the meaning of the displacement of his bath water, and his recognition of the *principle* of the lever—"Give me whereon to stand and I will move the world!"—was the first step in the exact science of mechanics.

These were formulations in abstract terms of what we call laws of nature. They are propositions about the nature of things which can be verified in practice. Galileo's enthusiasm was infectious. Don't read old books and believe what they say, he counseled. Study the Book of Nature and apply mathematics to what you find. Mathematics is the language of nature. Mathematics, be it noted, is pure abstraction. This is to say that while ideas are not "real things," ideas rule the behavior of things. Are they not then more "real"?

This is of course the old argument between Aristotle and Plato, the great bone of contention for centuries of the Middle Ages, and the modern world, while rejecting Aristotle's mistaken notions in physics, sided with him on this deeper question of what is real. Things, we said, are the only reality, and ideas are but images held in our heads of the things all around us. Ideas which have no "concrete referents," which do not refer to things which can be examined, picked up, experimented with, or carefully observed, represent nothing real. They are creations of Fancy. Morality is only a social expedient. All the moral qualities—such as the self-restraint Mumford called for—have only pragmatic value and can be changed around to suit our developing needs.

No one of serious mind accepts this reasoning any more. It has not worked, and reliance on it for a century or two has created countless personal and social problems, now verging on psychic ruin. What, briefly, has happened? We could say that after a thousand years or so of belief in abstract ideas—theological ideas—which were increasingly recognized to be sterile in human relations and ineffectual or downright wrong concerning the physical world—the architects of a new way of thinking proposed another system of belief, founded on ideas that *work*. Thus was born the age of science and technology, substituting "I have found it!" for "I believe!" as the testament of faith.

Today another age is striving to be born. Perhaps we can name it in advance, the Age of Balance. Musing on this question, Wendell Berry (in *The Unsettling of America*) reviews his own thinking:

I began . . . by trying to make a clear distinction between living organisms and the skills of technology and its mechanisms, and to say that the living aspect was better than the mechanical. I found it impossible to make such a distinction. I thought of going back through history to a point at which such a distinction would become possible but found that the farther back I went the less possible it became. When people had no machines their technology was all of a piece. It stayed that way through their development of more sophisticated tools, their mastery of fire, their domestication of plants and animals. Lives, skills, and tools were culturally indivisible.

The question at issue, then, is not of distinction but of balance. The ideal seems to be that the living part of our technology should not be devalued or overpowered by the mechanical. . . . At some point in history the balance between life and machinery was overthrown.

The versatility of the power of making abstractions is evident here. They have a "constructive" application as scientific laws, but the same power enables us to criticize their use. The idea of balance is an abstraction. So are the ideas of sympathy, altruism, community, cooperation, and peace. Yet they have no

"concrete referents." Physical propositions can be immediately tested in experience, as Galileo showed to his everlasting fame. But moral ideas, while we may admire their embodiment in individual humans, lack unambiguous pragmatic sanction. If you collect a choice variety of moral virtues and attempt to force them in a closed system of human behavior, totalitarian tyranny results. There can be, we find, no such thing as a coerced morality. The balances in human life have to be individually sought. They are possible only in an open world.

This may tell us something about our minds. First of all, they are dual. The abstractions—ideas about the nature of things, how they work—relate to both process and balance. The process abstractions apply to things, while the abstractions relating to balance and meaning apply to the intangible realities of our lives. The very substance of the moral life seems to consist in a kind of voluntarism, a freedom to choose, which dies or disappears with any attempt to make it function in a closed system ruled from the outside.

Yet we can't help but seek an order for good human life on which we are able to rely. Our minds insist on this search. The spontaneous excellences of individuals who live by some intuitively divined inward rule illustrate the goal, but do not supply the means of reaching it. There seems a sense in which we cannot live without abstractions—general ideas of both process and meaning—yet cannot live with the consequences of the way we apply them, or have applied them in the past. How shall we get balance?

Peter Abelard was almost certainly right. He maintained that we have a collection of general ideas called concepts. The correspondence of these concepts with the realities of experience is the test of their truth. There is then the apparent world, in all its complexity, and there is our collection of concepts *about* the world, and about the meaning of things; and then, by what is for us mostly hypothesis, there is the invisible world of reality and truth which we hope to approximate

through our concepts, but perceive only through fleeting, intuitive glimpses.

A useful statement of this situation was provided by Louis J. Halle at the beginning of *Men and Nations* (1962):

We men identify the ideas of propriety that each of us respectively entertains with the *Logos*, each of us basing his allegiance to them on the belief or assumption that they represent what is right in terms of what God or nature intended. "There is," says Cicero, ". . . a true law—namely right reason—which is in accordance with nature, applies to all men, and is unchangeable and eternal. . . . It will not lay down one rule at Rome and another at Athens, nor will it be one rule today and another tomorrow. But there will be one law, eternal and unchangeable, binding at all times upon all peoples. . . . The man who will not obey it will abandon his better self, and, in denying the true nature of man, will thereby suffer the severest penalties."

Cicero identifies his own views of human propriety with this natural law on the assumption that the logic of his own mind was the "right reason" which corresponded to it. The difficulty is that the logic of other men's minds has represented "right reason" otherwise, thereby arriving at other views of human propriety. The *Logos* itself may be the same at Rome as at Athens, tomorrow as today; but the identification of it by the men of Rome has been different from the identification by the men of Athens, and the identification made by the men of one age has been abandoned in favor of another identification by the men of the next.

The experience suggests that, unlike Cicero, we should distinguish between the ideas that we have in our minds and the *Logos* itself. The *Logos* remains largely unknown: the ideas in our minds represent only our partial apprehension of it, or our supposition of what it must be.

The partial apprehensions we call science are checked by fact and by reason. But this sort of checking is technical; it does not guide us to the control, restraint, and balance that we require for use of scientific knowledge. Here we need "right reason," but cannot be sure what it is. "Right" reason is not public truth. Some of the old religions—those of the East especially—seem once to have had such a foundation, and we try to

understand these religions in a technological way, since we would like to have closed-system certainty in our religion; but there is so much ambiguity in ancient metaphysics that we lose track of the content.

Is there any way out of this dilemma?

Well, we might investigate the difference between checking up on scientific ideas and verifying metaphysical concepts. A scientific idea makes a precise statement about particular things. It is not a scientific idea, philosophers of science insist, unless it can be either proved or disproved. Moral or ethical conceptions, on the other hand, have reference to the opposite end of the scale of reality—the region where things or life and being are not separated and sharply identifiable, but are linked together by graded unities reaching up to the absolute unity or Platonic One. Another kind of awareness is required simply to *see* in this region, and to recognize confirmation of metaphysical ideas. There is a second-degree sort of check-up concerning this area, however. It may be taken as a rule that those who are able to see in this region never make grandiose claims. They want no eager believing, which is as frustrating to human development in the moral sphere as coercion is in the everyday world.

This is a way of thinking which seems to throw light on the Buddha's apparent indifference to metaphysics, and also on the Gandhian approach to truth. The Buddha was not without metaphysical conceptions—hardly different from those of the Upanishads—yet he would not encourage development of a "technology" of spiritual growth. Precise conceptual systems would get in the way of real vision, make men less able to live out in their lives what truth they already knew. He wanted them to deserve knowledge of transcendent truth and grow into it by living lives of service to others. Gandhi had a similar conception of teaching and human development. He knew that the men of Athens and the men of Rome would continue to have different ideas of truth. So he made *Ahimsa* the

foundation of education: Be harmless before all else. He said in effect, Pursue the Truth, but don't fight about it. *Do no harm*. Socrates said practically the same. It is better, he taught, to suffer wrong than to do wrong.

If anyone at all has been able to reach up to the *Logos*, or the realm of Truth, it was surely the Buddha, and perhaps Plato did, too. Yet the Buddha refused to teach all that he knew—because, he explained, this would only fuel the arguments of the conceptualists. And Socrates told those who came to him that he knew nothing, really, and could not "teach." Yet the counsels of these two, to imperfect but aspiring humans, seem virtually identical.

REVIEW

LAFCADIO HEARN—AN APPRECIATION

READERS who have found both aesthetic pleasure and intellectual nourishment in the works of Lafcadio Hearn will want to know about a book we have come across recently—*An Ape of Gods: The Art and Thought of Lafcadio Hearn*, by Beongcheon Yu, a Korean scholar, published in 1964 by Wayne State University Press (Detroit).

Why the frequent attention to Hearn in these pages? The most obvious reason is the lyric beauty of his writing. Hearn writes for both the illumination and the enjoyment of his readers. But he is sharing, not merely instructing. You don't ever feel that Hearn is explaining from some high eminence matters which we ought to know about. Rather he is a man who spent his life in making discoveries and could not resist telling about them. He was determined to tell about them as well as he could.

Our own experience of Hearn began with a reading of *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields*, which first came out in 1897. One story in this collection is perfect for reading out loud—even to children, except for a few big words. It is about a little boy and his grandfather, and how they saved the people of a village from the onslaught of a tidal wave. The gratitude of the survivors was such that they made the old man "A Living God," which is the title of the story.

Hearn is an unpredictable writer. The miscellany which makes up *Gleanings* is full of surprises. One piece tells about Japanese children, who all draw, and another describes the distaste of the young for the work of American magazine illustrators. Then there is the extraordinary report of a Japanese boy who remembered his previous incarnation. Katsugoro's description of his parents in that birth was verified by an official investigation. (Interestingly, according to Theosophical metaphysics, so rapid a rebirth is possible only in the case of one who had died in

childhood, since in such case the soul would lack material for a normal after-death state—lasting a thousand years, according to Plato!) Hearn's remarkable essay on Nirvana is also in this volume, and in "Within the Circle" he seems to write as one who actually knows about such things.

Beongcheon Yu gives little attention to Hearn's life, having ample material without repeating the labors of his biographers. Among these we especially liked *Lafcadio Hearn* by Vera McWilliams (Houghton Mifflin, 1946), which erects a splendid background for the study of his writings. This shy little man with only one eye (an accident in his youth put out the other) endured much pain throughout his life, yet worked like a hero, creating literature which is really unclassifiable. Prof. Yu knows this, which makes the literary part of his book so worth reading. Hearn is Hearn, just as Blake is Blake, and comparisons of such men with other writers are no help at all.

Hearn was a lover of beauty and truth. He saw so much beauty in the world that his account of truth takes on a wonderful subtlety. He has his rages as well as his enthusiasms, but both grow from intensity of conviction. There may be a bias or two—Hearn was unable to appreciate Walt Whitman—but the delicacies of his understanding of the literature of both the East and the West make him an ideal guide. With Hearn for mentor, using his *History of English Literature* (1927), one finds nothing formidable about the vast amount of reading Hearn must have done to write this two-volume study. He records his pleasure and gives the reasons for his enjoyment in a way that spurs the reader to go eagerly to the books. Hearn moves from wonder to wonder, yet his judgment is measured and he often counsels the reader on what may be left out. That Hearn is a fine teacher is sheer coincidence. He writes as a friend, and this may explain why his students at the University of Tokyo, where he lectured from 1896 to 1903, thought so highly of him. The

History of English Literature is made of his lectures, given without notes, as are several other of his posthumously published books on literature. Of the latter, *Talks to Writers* is perhaps the best, or of the most interest. It contains his comparison of Scandinavian and French novelists and his discussion of Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* During his life Hearn would not permit publication of this material, carefully taken down from his lectures by devoted students, since being extemporaneous, he thought it to be without "form," but the spontaneous clarity of what he said at once engages the reader's attention. What comes through is Hearn's appreciation of fine reading and the pleasure he finds in encouraging others to read.

Hearn was much more than a *litterateur*. His life may be seen as a quest for truth and understanding. He absorbed the rich materials of Eastern thought, but there was not a sectarian breath in his body. He knew the importance of freedom of mind and of faithfulness to an impartial ideal. He was a modest man, yet so committed to what he believed was true and right that he rose to a greatness difficult to duplicate among men of letters.

Hearn was born in 1850 and came to the United States at the age of nineteen. He worked for a while as a printer, then did newspaper work. He was literary editor of a newspaper in New Orleans when, in 1890, Harper sent him on assignment to Japan. He decided to stay, and eventually married a Japanese lady who gave him a family. He came to love Japan—the old Japan which he knew from living in the country and teaching in small schools. Without being blind to the limitations of traditional Japanese culture, Hearn saw the value in the old ways, and tried to explain to his students the price Japan would pay for "modernization." Prof. Yu explains:

He was convinced that poetry is superior to history; and yet poetry and history, we may add, are not disparate, for history, by becoming part of poetry, becomes also truth. Hearn's personal sufferings may lead us to conclude that the Japan of his books is

essentially a romantic one, that his enthusiasm for Old Japan is a poet's anachronism, that his nostalgia for the past is but his incapacity to cope with the changing world; and that all he attempted was an escape from civilization. This view, however, is the result of a superficial understanding of Hearn's deliberately complex approach, especially of our failure to discern the fact that the antithesis of two Japans, new and old, is as vital to all his Japanese studies as the twofold theme of Buddhism and evolution.

Here the idea of Hearn as philosopher appears. The conception of Evolution as developed by Herbert Spencer (whose works he had absorbed) was enlarged by the spiritual insight of Buddhism. Science, for Hearn, was not the mad race of progress made possible by technology, but an idea of comprehensive human development, matched by a corresponding external evolution. He looked at the Westernization of Japan with the eyes of a Carlyle or a Gandhi. As Prof. Yu says:

All his life Hearn was compelled to witness the world in transition, whether in America, the French West Indies, or Japan. As he saw two Souths, old and new, in America, so he recorded two Japans, old and new; as he noted the white invasion into the Indies, so he foresaw the peril of the Occidental encroachment upon the Orient. His sympathetic mind was capable of feeling the dire dilemma of the natives under the incoming civilizations alien to their own. The dilemma, he knew, was fundamentally tragic because it was inevitable and it was there wherever he went. Its most telling pattern he saw in an iron-clad battleship anchored off the shore of his kingdom of beauty, and could not help expressing his sense of storm:

"Our ten naked oarsmen once more bend to their cross-handled oars, and recommence their ancient melancholy song. And as we glide back, there comes to me the prodigious cost of that which we went forth to see, the magnificent horror of steel and steam and all the multiple enginery of death,—paid for by those humble millions who boil forever knee-deep in the slime of the rice-fields, yet can never afford to eat their own rice! Far cheaper must be the food they live upon; and nevertheless, merely to protect the little that they own, such nightmares must be called into existence,—monstrous creations of science mathematically applied to the ends of destruction

Underlying Hearn's work was a great and civilizing purpose. He labored for and dreamed of a union between the East and the West. He thought that the West could grow into its own only by learning from the East, and that the East needed to learn how to distinguish between the good and the destructiveness of the West and to acquire the good. Prof. Yu takes this from one of Hearn's works:

. . . the promise of international coalescence in the West suggests the probability of far larger tendencies to unification in the remoter future—to unification not of nations only but of widely divergent races. The evolutionary trend would seem to be toward universal brotherhood, without distinction of country, creed, or blood. It is neither unscientific nor unreasonable to suppose the world eventually peopled by a race different from any now existing, yet created by the blending of the best types of all races; uniting Western energy with Far-Eastern patience, northern vigor with southern sensibility, the highest ethical feelings developed by all great religions with the largest mental faculties evolved by all civilizations; speaking a single tongue composed from the richest and strongest elements of all pre-existing human speech; and forming a society unimaginably unlike, yet also unimaginably superior to, anything which now is or has ever been.

This is the vision which pervades Hearn's writing, yet introduced with the delicacy and strength of a fine artist—never didactic, yet moved by a hardly conscious moral strength.

COMMENTARY
ONE MAN'S SUCCESS

When he strove to perfect life as art, his life itself tended to become an allegory of man's destiny.

WE use this space to give Beongcheon Yu's concluding tribute to Lafcadio Hearn (see Review):

The secret of Hearn's permanent appeal lies in the fact that he always remained an artist whether he was assuming the role of a critic, a teacher, a traveler, or a man. . . . Hearn remained an artist, and consequently his voice was authentically his own with a ring of truth. Here it is well to recall Coleridge's words: ". . . deep thinking is attainable only by a man of deep feeling." . . .

Hearn's great gift was soul sympathy, the secret of the artist as a translator. His life was a long, tortuous process of testing those many intimations every artist can utilize if he listens carefully. In order to remain faithful to the singular presentiments that were the dictates of his existence, Hearn set out to search for his own medium of utterance. When he accepted his failure in fiction he probably knew it was but an episode, no matter how painful, in the long search for his own medium. He was right in using translation as this medium and enlarging it as far as he possibly could. Out of his lifelong search grew his twice-told legends, his critical writings, and his travel books; for these were his translations in the best and largest of the words a result of his attempt to recreate the body and the spirit, the essence of his given subject. . . . he was a rediscoverer of those old mysteries that are man's. Here is the ultimate significance of Hearn the man and the artist. Breaking through his narrow artificial cult of art, he voyaged further, to the point where it was possible to reconcile life and art once again. . . .

His was a soul in many ways more than usually handicapped. His was a life frustrated continuously as a result of his quest of certitude and peace. He was not unaware of personal limitations and flaws. His life and work, it seems to me, is a record of how successfully one can overcome them. He described his method as learning "to take all possible advantages of his myopia—to utilize his physical disability to a good purpose." With the imperfections common to us all, he fought all his life to make a virtue of necessity. His life is thus exemplary of what Wordsworth meant by "glorious gain." Turning flight into search, exile into pilgrimage, Hearn lived out his life on his own terms, as all his writings attest.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

THE CHILD IS THE BOOK

HOPING to find a fresh idea or two about education, we went to *The Journals of Bronson Alcott* (edited by Odell Shepard). The expedition was not especially fruitful. Going back a hundred and fifty years, to the early days of the Transcendentalists, can be stimulating, but how does one translate the ardors of that time into the language of the present? Alcott was a wonderful teacher, but the difference in the times seems almost impossible to bridge. It makes you wonder how Alcott would express himself if he were among us today.

This is the entry in his journal for Sept. 21, 1828:

The province of the instructor should be simple, awakening, invigorating, directing, rather than the forcing of the child's faculties upon prescribed and exclusive courses of thought. He should look to the child to see what is to be done, rather than to his book or his system. The Child is the Book. The operation of his mind is the true system. Let him study these carefully and his success is sure. Let him follow out the impulses, the thoughts, the volitions of the child's mind and heart, in their own principles and rational order of expression, and his training will be what God designed it to be—an aid to prepare the child to aid himself.

Alcott had a hard time with both parents and the communities where he taught. Before he was thirty he had lost all belief in the doctrine of Original Sin, the Trinity, and the Divinity of Jesus, although he decided to make Jesus his model for his own life and his work as a teacher. Not remarkably, the parents and the preachers of that time objected to such ideas being communicated to children. After years of teaching, having been obliged to close his school because the pupils were withdrawn, he decided that his primary task was to educate the parents. These are entries during 1834:

The poets, not less than the philosophers, are the most effectual teachers of morality. Both should be read in order to do justice to the imagination and reason. The novelists also should be added. I find my mind more and more disposed to replenish itself from the stores of fiction. Facts are too sterile unless connected by the invisible bond of cause and effect, or clad in the vivid hues of the fancy. Like the leafless trees in winter, they are the mere memorials of the summer blossom and autumnal fruit. . . .

May we not believe that thought gives life and meaning to external nature, that what we see, hear, feel, and experience around us acquire these properties by the self-investing power of our spirits? Is not the living Spirit of all things in our spirits, and do they not, through the vivid action, the picturing, life-starting agency of this same spirit, rise up, tinted and shaped, before us, even as in starting from the bed of rest the external world becomes visible to us with the opening of our eyes—not so much to let in the light as to let out our spirits upon the scene which they color and animate with beauty and life?

The reality is in the mind. Sense but gives us an outward type of it, an outward shaping to reduce it to the cognizance of the understanding, and in space and time to substantiate the indwelling forms of our spirits. We throw ourselves outward upon nature that we may the better look at ourselves, and this process is rendered more conscious to us in the act of waking than in any other.

Reading this book is a visit to a land of hope and glory. Emerson and Thoreau are on almost every page. Whitman comes in again and again. The editor, Odell Shepard, notes that in his recognition of the greatness of these three, long before they were famous, Alcott was far ahead of his time. He wrote of Emerson in 1837:

The day shall come when this man's genius shall shine beyond the circle of his own city and nation. He shall flash across the wide water and receive the homage of other peoples. Emerson is destined to be the high literary name of this age. Other men we have who chaffer in the nooks and corners of this wide sea, and whose wares are peddled in this place and that; but this man's genius is cosmopolitan, and shall be in demand wherever man has risen above the mere mechanics and utilities of life. . . .

Honorable-notion and sham-image killer is he! Up-turner of all time-worn and vulgar associations thickly strewn over the soil of our land, now all

exposed to the light of day by his shining and driving share. Drive on thy team, young and hopeful artist, till not ever a stone or sod shall not have been presented in a new aspect and new relation to the radiant orb of day!

His grandiloquent optimism may embarrass us, but one cannot help envying Alcott's capacity for splendid expectation.

What are the reasons for reading a book like this? Well there is this problem of translating it into modes of expression that people nowadays would be able to understand. But the best reason is given by Arthur Morgan:

A person without history or knowledge of the past must see the world as commonplace because, except at extreme times, he is going to live among commonplace people who have come to that conclusion. . . . The only way to get the sum and substance of human experience is to reach out beyond the years we have into the years of the past, into the significant experiences of the human race.

The Journals of Bronson Alcott are a window into an "extreme time" of the American past. Getting "the advantage of years without having the years," Morgan said, is the substance of education. He also said: "Education should protect the individual from the limitations of the group mind." Alcott made a valiant attempt to do this.

Is there any education today that has something of the quality Alcott sought to impart? Has anyone "translated" his spirit into the ideas of our own time? This is a risky question to answer, but we think of a school begun about a century after Alcott's wonderful experiments—a school founded in Moylan, Pennsylvania, in 1929 by a determined band of parents and teachers. During the early days, when the weight of the Depression was on the whole country, Grace Rotzel, a founder and the school's director, said:

One word will sum up the principles that underlie the School in Rose Valley. That word is integrity. I am not using it in any negative sense of goodness, but in the original meaning of the word. An integer is a whole number, or complete entity. Integrity is the state of being whole. A whole child

has poise, sincerity, alertness and physical vigor. Lacking these, he lacks integrity.

He may know how to read, do sums, play the piano, and entertain adults; but if he lacks sincerity and independence of mind, or a good sound body, his growth is not healthy; he is not gaining in integrity, and therefore his education is wrong. This definition of education is generally accepted by teachers and parents everywhere. That is, it is accepted as a definition, but it is a long way from being accepted in practice.

There are a large number of parents and teachers who would be willing to sacrifice a great deal of poise and sincerity if only their children would show off well. And not a few who wouldn't worry if their children were pale and anemic if they would only read and enjoy the best books. The task of a school then is to keep constantly in mind the picture of the whole child and to see that growth is balanced.

What does this mean in the planning of a curriculum? It means turning upside down the notions of the traditional school and beginning at the opposite end. We start with activity. The shop is the center of the school. With lumber and tools and an intelligent man who can meek children's needs, the school has made the first important step toward a growing environment.

The three R's are tools to be mastered, but they are means and not ends. When and where they should be acquired must depend upon the child's needs. It would be as silly to say that school exists to teach the three Rs as that man exists to make money. Just because the world is a bit bottom-side-upish at present, we are not convinced that money is the goal, and that man's life is merely the getting of it. It should not be. . . .

The necessity for integrity dictates a policy concerning treatment of children. It eliminates marks. If you want your child sincere, you will not confuse him with bribes, marks, or blue ribbons. The reward eliminates the educational value; it takes attention away from the intrinsic reason for doing the act, and sets up an artificial reason. Confusion results. . . .

The rest of this talk is worth reading. It is in Grace Rotzel's book, *The School in Rose Valley*, available from the School, still going strong, at School Lane, Moylan, PA. 19065.

FRONTIERS Good Things Happening

use of trying to change the way the world is going when the people in charge of decision-making

usually asked with anguish and some bitterness. It is especially difficult to answer because practically

beginning to be so awkward, so impractical and so very unlike the utopian description of the way *ought* to be.

way in terms of countless *intermediate* which are gradually being undertaken in the numerous spaces between and around the things

activities have generated a coherent culture which is finding expression in several publications—

there, people are doing right. The publications represent grassroots activity—on the land, in the

The material in them is restorative of faith and hope because they are filled with demonstrable

together, and what may happen when they do.

In every issue of (six year for \$8—published by the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, 1717 18th St.,

D.C. 20009) there is a Progress Report—news from around the country on independent

going an effective recycling program involving thousands of home-owners who are now sorting

to one garbage can a week. Everyone saves by this plan. In California, the city of Santa Barbara,

Environmental Council, has begun a program of metal, glass, and paper recovery from trash that is

for local garden programs, tree plantings, and

nature trails. The Santa Barbara Recycling Center

investment. "The program has become a state and national model for a community-based effort to

resources, produce jobs, and put money into the local economy."

has a comprehensive urban agriculture program, *Philadelphia Green*, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society:

There are now over 200 community vegetable

lots and tend to the planning. . . . New projects, such as city trees and sitting parks, have been introduced. over 25 city blocks of street trees

concrete and provides the trees, while residents dig the holes and do the planting.

by prosperous people. But the number of them, and of the people participating, becomes

In a recent issue of *Rain* year—2270 N.W. Irving, Portland, Ore. 97210),

more difficult sort of change among the poor in slum areas. The health of any urban community,

responsibility, as distinguished from the claim of "rights." The demand for rights, while

power—like the State—which makes people its dependents. Housing, Karl Hess shows, "presents

and responsibilities at a practical level." He says:

To organize to provide housing is one thing and, make housing possible could be a more vigorous and healthy activity and it would be based, I believe, on a responsibilities.

A living example of this sort of shift can be seen

Although it has received some generous support from

federal funds, it got started and derives its main energy from a notion of responsibility. In that neighborhood, a group mostly of Latin-speaking people got together to take over an abandoned apartment house and recondition it for the use of people in the group. The idea enlarged until, now, the people are branching out into community gardening, light industrial production and construction generally. They are building their own lives and community—not asking that one be provided for them.

One objection to this, from a sharply differing ideological point of view, is that poor people should not be forced to make up with their own energy the deficiencies of a system that has for so long exploited or oppressed them. To be stuck in such a position is to forever spend time building variations of old power structures, re-oriented but not otherwise changed. The shift toward the East 11th Street approach is to shift toward building a new world inside the shell of the old and not just trying to make the old one viable.

Last fall, in *Compost Science/Land Utilization* (\$15 for six issues a year—Box 351, 18 So. Seventh St., Emmaus, PA. 18049), the editor, Jerome Goldstein, described the sludge composting plant that will be built this year for Philadelphia. More and more large cities, apparently, are seeing the light, which accounts for the existence of this useful magazine. New Jersey last year dedicated its first sludge composting plant in Camden, which became "the first American city on the East Coast to cease disposal of its sludge residue in the ocean." Meanwhile a consulting firm has suggested a ten-ton-per-day pilot plant for New York City, with the composted material accumulated to be used to restore and develop soils in the city's parks. Mr. Goldstein comments:

Of all the alternatives being offered for waste management, composting will benefit the most from large doses of public participation. The reason—composting is a process that recycles nutrients in urban wastes back onto the land in a *controlled* and *environmentally sound way*. That's a solid benefit for people in both Urban America and Rural America.

Not Man Apart (publication of Friends of the Earth, \$15 a year—124 Spear Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94105) for November/December,

1978, is devoted to the fundamental needs of soil and agriculture in the United States. Lester Brown (Worldwatch Institute) writes on the loss of top soil through wind and rain. Wes Jackson (Land Institute) proposes the reclamation of prairie soil by the widespread planting of perennial grasses. He says:

Because sunshine is dispersed rather evenly over the earth because nature's three-dimensional solar collectors called green plants, with an efficiency in the neighborhood of one to two per cent are also dispersed; because these collectors are so critical to the rest of life forms, including humans and because the land for growing these collectors in the US is eroding at the rate of nine tons per acre per year on the average: any who advocate a sunshine future or soft energy path must ultimately adopt a land ethic which embraces an energy ethic.

What is bound to impress the reader of these various magazines is how the activities they describe, and their proposals, relate and unite in perfect fit for the common good.