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"A GENERAL UNDERSTANDING"

DOORS to the thinking that will illuminate the world of tomorrow open in various ways. The only benefit of angry revolutions, which seldom accomplish more than pain and the betrayal of human longing, is the discrediting of established authority, removing the obstacles to new avenues of thought. But this thought is itself an evolution, a living growth, whatever the iconoclasms which opened the way to its development. Emancipating thinking is now so much in evidence that keeping track of its currents would be like trying to make an inventory of the signs of spring. Offering an example or two is all that can be done.

The sciences, however, are filled with them. One by one the most eminent scientists of the present are making apologies for the mistaken assumptions on which their disciplines proceeded in the past. Not the least of these is Claude Lévi-Strauss, a leading cultural anthropologist of our time. His apology—effectively presented in *The Savage Mind*—is for the presumptuous claim or supposition that primitive peoples, taken as types of the remote human past, are unable to think scientifically, as we do. These people, he says, long considered to be capable of only the low-grade intelligence needed for physical survival, are quite equal to what we call "disinterested thinking"—thinking about meanings which go far beyond immediate personal need—and they proceed, he points out, "by intellectual means, exactly as a philosopher, or even to some extent a scientist, can and would do."

This is from Lévi-Strauss's most recent book, *Myth and Meaning*, in which he continues:

> To say that a way of thinking is disinterested and that it is an intellectual way of thinking does not mean at all that it is equal to scientific thinking. Of course, it remains different in a way, and inferior in another way. It remains different because its aim is to reach by the shortest possible means a general understanding of the universe—and not only a general but a total understanding. That is, it is a way of thinking which must imply that if you don't understand everything, you don't explain anything. This is entirely in contradiction to what scientific thinking does, which is to proceed step by step, trying to give explanations for very limited phenomena, and so on. As Descartes has already said, scientific thinking aimed to divide the difficulty into as many parts as were necessary in order to solve it.

In short, the scientific theory of knowledge is pluralistic, maintaining that we can have certainty about some things without knowing about others, and that the facts of science are independent of philosophy or ideas of general meaning. The slogan, "Don't think, find out," is of the essence of this outlook. This naïve empiricism has been widely criticized, especially in recent years, and by no one more effectively than by Michael Polanyi, whose *Personal Knowledge* (1958) endeavored to show that all science grows out of a personal sense of meaning. He calls this initial stance of the investigator "tacit knowing," the implicit intuition of meaning with which we all begin any search for knowledge. When this sense of meaning is put aside, science, Polanyi says, loses its way in an excess of "objective" detail. The result is what he calls "unbridled lucidity."

> . . . an unbridled lucidity can destroy our understanding of complex matters. Scrutinize closely the particulars of a comprehensive entity and their meaning is effaced, our conception of the entity destroyed. . . . The declared aim of modern science is to establish a strictly detached, objective knowledge. Any falling short of this ideal is accepted only as a temporary imperfection, which we must aim at eliminating. But suppose that tacit thought forms an indispensable part of all knowledge, then the ideal of eliminating all personal elements of knowledge would, in effect, aim at the destruction of all knowledge. The ideal of exact science would turn out to be fundamentally misleading and possibly a source of devastating fallacies.

This seems a way of saying that when scientific thinking is divorced from general ideas about the universe and man, it deliberately undertakes the service of what Socrates called the "unexamined life," with consequences which are now the target of so many critics. The applied science of the day may be accurately defined as the technique of power, of getting what you want, with virtually no attention to the question of what is good to have. Science, in short, refuses to take cognizance of the moral struggle in human life, on the ground that this struggle, if indeed it exists, is made up of subjective factors which cannot be rendered into measurable realities. This puts the potencies of scientific discovery up for sale to the highest bidder, in the currency of either wealth or power—reflecting an all-or-nothing view of truth.

This situation makes a very good case for what Lévi-Strauss described as the primitive outlook—"if you don't understand everything, you don't explain anything." The strength of the case becomes clear if we rephrase the requirement of "total understanding"—which no one, after all, can claim—in what seems a clearer expression: a deep conviction concerning the meaning or purpose of human life, with justifications confirmed in both intuitive and practical ways. This may sound pretty vague, but some substance can be given the idea by quoting from another cultural anthropologist. In *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (Cornell University Press, *1953*), Robert Redfield said:

> Primitive man is . . . at once in nature and yet acting on it, getting his living, taking from it food and shelter. But as that nature is part of the same moral system in which man and the affairs between men also find themselves, man's actions with regard to nature are limited by notions of inherent, not expediential, rightness. Even the practical, little-animistic Eskimo obey many exacting food taboos, religious restrictions on practical activity, rituals of propitiation or personal adjustments to field or forest, abound in ethnological literature. "All economic activities, such as hunting gathering fuel, cultivating the land, storing food, assume a relatedness to the encompassing universe." And the relatedness is moral or religious.

This seems a rather precise illustration of what Lévi-Strauss means by "a general understanding of the universe." Prof. Redfield goes on to contrast this outlook with the pluralistic conception of scientific knowledge:

> If we compare [this] primary world view . . . with that which comes to prevail in modern times, especially in the West, where science has been so influential, we may recognize one of the great transformations of the human mind. It is that transformation by which the primitive world view has been overturned. . . . Man comes out from the unity of the universe within which he is orientated now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character. . . . The existence today of ethical systems and of religions only qualifies this statement; ethics and religions struggle in one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man.

Why did the designers of the scientific method rule out moral conclusions from the goal of their undertakings? The answer to this question goes back to Aristotle, who insisted that knowledge, in order to be recognized as knowledge, must be capable of apodictic expression—that is, in the form of compelling and indisputable truth. In other words, only *public* truth is truth. Objective demonstration, which commands assent, is the only acceptable measure.

The appeal of this argument is evident enough. Why bother with, pay any attention to, ideas that will never have more certainty than individual opinion or conviction? It seems wholly natural to a powerful segment of human nature to prefer as "truth" ideas that *compel* acceptance. This is truth you can win arguments with. You can *settle* things.

Easily overlooked was the Platonic criticism of this persuasion, briefly explained by Robert E. Cushman in *Therapeia* (Chapel Hill, 1958):

> . . . wherever apodictic knowledge is asserted, there denial of liberty to dissent is implied. The Aristotelian reduction of metaphysical knowledge to the hypothetical and apodictic variety has always

> carried with it the implication of conformity; for where propositions are demonstrably cogent, conscientious objection is irrelevant and on occasion intolerable. But for Plato cogency is not anticipated in regard to the ultimate object of knowledge. What is required is not *apodeixis* but transformation of *ethos.* And furthermore it is precisely the case that in this domain there can be no knowledge unless it is conscientious.

Morality, as Plato contended, lies in the area of *necessary* uncertainty. Human freedom, and therefore all actual human growth, depend upon individual decision, and the sure-thing argument is not instructive, only coercive.

Again, what did Levi-Strauss mean by "total understanding"? The best simple explanation might be the single word *Karma,* which is the foundation of the Buddhist system of thought. Karma is the moral law of cause and effect. Men act according to their lights, their moral inclinations or shortcomings, and nature or the world responds in kind. Can we actually trace the workings of Karma in all their immeasurable complexity? Hardly. Yet the Buddhist *feels* the truth of the law, and the metaphysical thinker finds its moral symmetry deeply persuasive. It is a theory of "total understanding," even if for believers it can have only fragmentary confirmation. Ancient or "primitive" man was largely convinced of this idea. Redfield called it "Immanent justice," meaning "that retribution for my faults which I believe will fall upon me out of the universe, apart from the policeman or a parental spanking." If one does something that he knows better than to do, a mishap will overtake him, sooner or later. A faith of this sort may be child-like, naïve, or tritely mechanistic, but it may nonetheless exercise a more constructive influence on conduct than any man-made law of restraint could provide. The positive aspect of this faith would be its encouragement to live in harmony with the moral law, as befits a good human being.

But now we have done with such possibilities, having adopted Aristotle's sure-thing criterion of truth, letting all else go as not worthy of attention.

Yet the doors keep opening. Levi-Strauss invited us to look at ancient or primitive man with fresh understanding of how he differed from and how he was the same as ourselves. He had less capacity for abstraction in his "science," less mathematical insight, less technological power, but he made his limited capacities subservient to an overall, unifying view, an ordering principle of his existence. He believed in moral responsibility.

Well, as everyone says, we can't go back to a primitive life, but it remains entirely possible to go forward to a "general understanding" of the world appropriate to the modern condition. In *Harper's* for November, the novelist, John Fowles, presents his reflections on "Seeing Nature Whole," contrasting scientific abstraction-making with the work of the artist who responds directly to the natural world. Implicit is substantial recovery of the values of the past, plus the best of modern subtlety and insight. Fowles is firm in his conviction that we shall never obtain a "general understanding" of nature so long as we approach her in a utilitarian mood. After some notes on the classifying mania of Linnæus, the great eighteenth-century botanist, the novelist confesses to having been an orthodox amateur naturalist in his younger days:

> I became slowly aware of the inadequacy of this approach: that it insidiously cast nature as a kind of opponent, an opposite team to be outwitted and beaten; that in a number of very important ways it distracted from the total experience and the total meaning of nature—and not only of what I personally needed from nature, not only as I had long, if largely unconsciously, begun to feel it (which was neither scientifically nor sentimentally, but in a way for which I had, and still have, no word). . . . what I gain most from nature is beyond words. To try to capture it verbally immediately places me in the same boat as the namers and would-be owners of nature—that is, it exiles me from what I most need to learn. It is a little as it is in atomic physics, where the very act of observation changes what is observed; though here the catch lies in trying to describe the observation.

To enter upon such a description is like trying to capture the uncapturable. . . .

Our fallacy lies in supposing that the limiting nature of scientific method corresponds to the nature of ordinary experience.

Ordinary experience, from waking second to second, is in fact highly synthetic (in the sense of combinative or constructive), and made of a complexity of strands, past memories and present perceptions, times and places, private and public history, hopelessly beyond science's powers to analyze. It is quintessentially "wild," one might say unphilosophical, irrational, uncontrollable, incalculable. In fact, it corresponds very closely—despite our endless efforts to "garden," to invent disciplining social and intellectual systems to wild nature. Almost all the richness of our personal existence derives from this synthetic and eternally present "confused" consciousness of both internal and external reality, and not least because we know it is beyond the analytical, or destructive, capacity of science. . . .

I do not believe nature is to be reached . . . by turning it into a therapy, a free clinic for admirers of their own sensitivity. The subtlest of our alienations from it, the most difficult to comprehend, is our eternal need to use it in some way, to derive some personal yield. We shall never fully understand nature (or ourselves), and certainly never respect it, until we dissociate the wild from the notion of usability—however innocent and harmless the use.

In process here is the liberation of man from the utilitarian strait-jacket, and from the blindness of thinking that "knowledge" is only what can be demonstrated objectively or put into unambiguous words and figures.

The conception of knowledge implied by John Fowles comes very close to the ancient Upanishadic idea. In a discussion of education, Vinoba Bhave said:

True education is that which is experienced, tasted, digested. What can be counted and recorded is not education. Education cannot be doled out; it cannot be weighed and measured.

In the *Upanishads*, the praises of ignorance are sung side by side with the praises of knowledge. Man needs not only knowledge but ignorance, too. Knowledge alone, or ignorance alone, leads him into darkness. But the union of fitting knowledge with fitting ignorance is the nectar of eternity. The world is so filled with the matter of knowledge that men would go mad if they were to attempt to cram all of it into their heads. The ability to forget is just as necessary as the ability to remember.

Comparing the artist with the scientist, Fowles says almost the same thing:

In science greater knowledge is always and indisputably good; it is by no means so throughout all human existence. We know it from art proper, where achievement and great factual knowledge, or taste, or intelligence, are in no way essential companions; if they were, our best artists would also be our most learned academics. We can know it by reducing the matter to the absurd, and imagining that God, or some protean visitor from outer space, were at one fell swoop to grant us all of knowable knowledge. Such omniscience would be worse than the worst natural catastrophe for our species as a whole; it would extinguish its soul, lose it all pleasure and reason for living.

This is not the only area in which, like the rogue computer of science fiction, some socially or culturally consecrated proposition—which may be true in its social or cultural context—extends itself to the individual; but it is one of the most devitalizing. Most mature artists know that a great general knowledge is more a hindrance than a help. It is only innately mechanical, salami-factory novelists who set such great store by research; in nine cases out of ten what natural knowledge and imagination cannot supply is in any case precisely what needs to be left out. The green man [an image borrowed from W. H. Hudson's *Green Mansions*] in all of us is well aware of this. In practice we spend far more time rejecting knowledge than in trying to gain it, and wisely so. But it is in the nature of all society, let alone one deeply imbued with a scientific and technological ethos, to bombard us with ever more knowledge—and to consider any questioning or rejection of it unpatriotic and immoral. . . .

The threat to us in the coming millennium lies not in nature seen as rogue shark but in our growing emotional and intellectual detachment from it—and I do not think the remedy lies solely in the success or failure of the conservation movement. It lies as much in our being able to admit the debit side of scientific revolution, and especially the changes it has effected in our modes of perceiving and of experiencing the world as individuals. . . . As long as nature is seen as in some way outside us, frontiered and foreign,

> *separate*, it is lost both to us and in us. The two natures, private and public, human and nonhuman, cannot be divorced; any more than nature, or life itself, can ever be truly understood vicariously, solely through other people's eyes and knowledge. Neither art nor science, however great, however profound, can finally help.

The door opened by John Fowles leads to attitudes and feelings which restore to us the feeling that we have knowledge in and of ourselves, freeing us of dependency upon technicians whose special information, when misconceived as human knowledge, distorts both our view of the world and our idea of ourselves. The psychological consequences are far-reaching:

> We lack trust in the present, this moment, this actual seeing, because our culture tells us to trust only the reported back, the publicly framed, the edited, the thing set in the clearly artistic or the clearly scientific angle of perspective. One of the deepest lessons we have to learn is that nature, of its nature, resists this. It waits to be seen otherwise, in its individual presentness and from our individual presentness.

If we delegate to others the responsibility of verifying or authenticating what we accept as "knowledge," then we delegate to others, also, the responsibility which always attaches to what we know. When we give away our responsibility, with it goes our freedom. Knowledge becomes a *corporate* affair, no longer really ours, making it both difficult and heretical to act on our own. There could be no greater revolution than resolving to change all this, to begin to do our own knowing—knowing which grows out of our own feeling and thinking. It is to this vista of restored human capacity that John Fowles opens a door.

REVIEW
TERRA INCOGNITA

A GOOD way to get at the content of one new book we have for review—*Consciousness: Brain, States of Awareness, and Mysticism* (Harper & Row, $6.95), edited by Daniel Goleman and Richard J. Davidson—would be to start reading at the back. This broad area—the subject of Consciousness—is so all-inclusive, so basic, and at the same time so "intangible," that the learnedly empty verbiage written on the subject often exceeds the good material. So one picks up such a book with some wariness, meaning to put it down if the contributors too easily depart from some kind of intellectual *terra firma*. "Consciousness" is indeed a word to conjure with, and the problem is to figure out whether or not the one who writes about it has a clear sense of responsibility to the reader.

At the back of this book is an essay by Huston Smith, who is a responsible writer. His last paragraphs give the reader insight into the great change the modern mind is going through, on which the whole book is in a way a progress report, soberly written, perhaps too soberly, with testimony from many quarters. Dr. Smith says (in an extract provided from his book, *Forgotten Truth*):

> As long as modernity was captive of an outlook presumed to be scientific but in fact scientistic, reality was taken to be as science mirrored it. Now that it is apparent that science peers down a restricted viewfinder, we are released from that misconception. The view that appears in a restricted viewfinder is a restricted view.
>
> Since reality exceeds what science registers, we must look for other antennae to catch the wavebands it misses. What other antennae are there? None more reliable than the convergent sensibilities of, in Lovejoy's characterization, "the greater number of the subtle speculative minds and of the great religious teachers" that civilizations have produced and, we have added with Eliade, that archaic societies have produced as well. Lovejoy's crediting of the hierarchical outlook to the subtler of human minds gains force from the fact that, writing as he did in the heyday of scientism, he thought the hierarchical outlook mistaken. When we combine (a) the fact that it has been the subtler minds which when not thrown off balance by the first flush of the scientific breakthrough, have gravitated to the hierarchical view with (b) the further fact that, from the multiple heavens of Judaism to the storied structure of the Hindu temple and the angelologies of innumerable traditions, the view was reached convergently and independently, as if by innate tropism, by virtually all known societies; when, to repeat, we combine these two facts and bring them into alignment they entitle us to regard a tiered reality as man's central surmise when the full range of its experience is legitimated and pondered profoundly. Constituting until recently, through both rumored and recorded history, what we have ventured to call the human unanimity—the phrase overstates the case slightly, but not much—it presents itself as the natural human outlook: the view that is normal to man's station because consonant with the complete complement of human sensibilities. It is the vision philosophers have dreamed, mystics have seen, and prophets have transmitted.

One might say that this book is a compilation of contributions, mostly by scientists, meant to indicate what sort of hospitality legitimate and responsible science can afford to present innovative thinking about human nature and its psycho-spiritual potentialities. The writers are well known and respected in their various fields. If you want to know what present-day investigators have to say about brain function, you get a good idea from this book, including an extract from Wilder Penfield, and also David Galin on the right and left hemispheres. There is a section on dreams and sleep which holds some interest, but unfortunately omits references to J. W. Dunne's *Experiment with Time*, which certainly deserves recognition as scientific in spirit. We learn from William Dement about brain waves during dream and deep sleep, which seem to perform an energy ballet recorded on a tape, but that some dreams are demonstrably prophetic gets no attention. So the book is cautious enough! There are various reports on "altered states of consciousness," with material by Aldous Huxley, Charles Tart, and Milton Erickson,

concluding with Raymond Moody on recollections of the "I almost died" experience.

To extract usable meaning from all this diversity seems rather difficult, yet the book has value as an account of what is now being said about consciousness. The best parts, for this reviewer, at any rate, are at the back of the book, in the section on evaluation. Here Jacob Needleman writes on "Psychiatry and the Sacred," noting the pained admission by professionals in psychotherapy of a growing sense of inadequacy. The hunger for self-transformation finds little nourishment in our society:

> No one suffers from this lack more than the psychiatrists themselves, more and more of whom despair over their inability to help other human beings in the fundamental way they once dreamed possible. Faced with the accelerating pressure of technology upon the normal patterns of human life, faced with the widespread effects of modern man's twisted relationship to nature, and yearning for a coherent purpose in living, they have come to see themselves as being in the same situation as their patients and the rest of us. . . .
>
> A large and growing number of psychotherapists are now convinced that the Eastern religions offer an understanding of the mind far more complete than anything yet envisaged by Western science. At the same time, the leaders of the new religions themselves—the numerous gurus and spiritual teachers now in the West—are reformulating and adapting the traditional systems according to the language and atmosphere of modern psychology.
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> With all these disparate movements, it is no wonder that thousands of troubled men and women throughout America no longer know whether they need psychological or spiritual help. The line is blurred that divides the therapist from the spiritual guide. As one observer, speaking only half facetiously, put it: "The shrinks are beginning to sound like gurus, and the gurus are beginning to sound like shrinks."

After a helpful discussion of why this should be, Dr. Needleman says:

> In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the concept of mysticism was developed in order to classify a part of the self that science could not explain. Later, the same forces that classified mysticism eventually defined mind and, as we have said, the mind became an object of scientific exploration. Mysticism was pushed even further aside while the mind as a whole was naturalized—that is, understood as part of the biological organism. That there is such a mind, which functions as part of the biological organism, was always known and given various names in the traditional teachings disturbances of this physical, biological mind, the species mind, were always treated by the traditional physician-priests, whose task it was to distinguish the sufferings of the physical mind from the yearnings for growth that emanated from the private mind, or soul.
>
> Today, however, with the influx of fragments of traditional teachings and with the current disillusionment in the sciences, techniques for treating the physical mind of man are being joined without real guidance to ideas and methods that pertain to the individual, private mind that was always understood to be rooted in another level of reality—a mind, a consciousness, that is said to have a life independent of the motivations that constitute the ego of the human being.

There seems here an evident confusion of both means and ends. Dr. Needleman points out:

> At the heart of the great traditions is the idea that the search for truth is undertaken for its own sake ultimately. These traditional teachings in their entirety propose to show man the nature of this search and the laws behind it—laws which, as I have suggested, too often get lost in our enthusiasm for ideas and explanations that we have not deeply absorbed in the fire of living with all its suffering and confusion. Psychotherapy, on the other hand, is surely a *means* to an end—to the goal we have called happiness.

The tension between life as a spiritual quest and the hedonistic pursuit of a "good time" produces all sorts of illegitimate "psychologies," to which the glamor of religion is often added. How this will all work out in our aggressive, pragmatic, results-oriented and philosophically traditionless society remains to be seen. There are bound to be casualties, as well as a few discoveries. The evolution of a disciplined yet unconfining philosophical religion is in itself difficult enough, but for us the hazards and problems of the attempt are compounded with

impending socio-economic disaster, exacerbated by intercultural stresses of race and class.

It seems unfortunate that two authors—two who saw the basic issue of this great transition with great clarity—are omitted from the book: Michael Polanyi and Abraham Maslow. Maslow, however, is mentioned in a paper by Andrew Greeley and William McCready on the high incidence of "mystical experience" in a population of fifteen hundred people to whom the writers presented questionnaires. The result of their investigation was clearly confirmatory of Maslow's ideas. They found that about 600 persons, or two fifths of those asked, reported having a strong mystical or peak experience. "About 300 said they had had it several times, and 75 said they had had it often." The experience had this general characterization:

> The core of the event is *knowing* something or Something. The joy, peace, heat, light and other such aspects of the experience are perceived as the result of the "knowledge." The truth of what they "know" is unshakable conviction even if they are not able to put such truth into precise language that would have any meaning for those who have never experienced like episodes. "It was like a rose blooming in the snow and my life has never been the same."

Giving up for a moment their "sociological agnosticism," these writers suggest that during the experience "a person is absorbed in an intimate though transient relationship with the basic forces, cycles and mechanisms at work in the universe." The *Enneads* of Plotinus might be a good book for them to read.

COMMENTARY
SURELY GOODNESS...

THE contradiction or paradox discussed by Jacob Needleman (see Review) takes many forms. We want to be spiritually enlightened—have self-knowledge—and at the same time be comfortable and at least modestly prosperous. Is it reasonable to think that the two go naturally together, or is that assumption a great mistake?

It is certainly the case that humans have transcendental longings of varying intensity, and equally clear that they want to avoid pain and enjoy the comforts of affluence. Isn't it reasonable to think that a "good" man earns satisfactory circumstances?

But is "goodness" as we have come to define it the same as spiritual knowledge? And is prosperity the appropriate result of knowing the truth about self and the world?

Dr. Needleman proposes that few psychiatrists have faced such questions for the reason that they lack both background and conviction concerning the twofold nature of man. He asks:

> How can the patient be led to a normal, happy life without crushing this other, hidden impulse that can bring human life into a radically different dimension—whether or not a person ever becomes happy or self-sufficient or adjusted in the usual sense of these words? For the development of consciousness in man may not necessarily entail the development of what would be called a "normal," "well-adjusted," or "self-sufficient" personality.

What are the requirements for clarification of a question of this sort?

The question is not new, but almost totally neglected in our time. It frequently emerges, however, in analogues. For example, the president of a university was proudly conducting a visitor through its large, new library. When he pointed to the numerous works on philosophy which had just been acquired, the visitor nodded 'politely, then said: "Very fine, but do you have Plato on the faculty?"

An older version of the question is the allegory of Job. Job's "friends" insisted that the disasters which overtook him were evidence of moral offense—he deserved punishment. Job disagreed, but was puzzled, as we are often puzzled by virtue in material distress. The idea that riches betoken sanctity is at the root of the acquisitive society. But Job felt he was right—not a sinner—and his friends turned out to be wrong. Job is vindicated in the story, but how about us? Insisting on an acceptable answer to this question may be the reason we must wait . . . and wait . . . and wait. . . .

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE MORAL IMAGINATION

MANAS is from time to time the grateful recipient (for review) of the large volumes appearing as part of the series, *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, issued by the Publications Division of the Ministry of Information, Government of India. Volumes 73 and 74, just arrived by sea mail, cover the period from Sept. 12, 1940 to Oct. 10, 1941—when, for Gandhi, one issue had become paramount—"the right to preach against war as war or participation in the present war." The British, naturally, at that time had little liking for Gandhi's uncompromising pacifism and advocacy of non-violence. These books are filled with Gandhi's correspondence on the subject—letters to his friends and co-workers, and letters to his various opponents, including not only British administrators but Adolf Hitler as well, to whom he wrote a long letter, which began:

> DEAR FRIEND:
>
> That I address you as a friend is no formality. I own no foes. My business in life has been for the past 33 years to enlist the friendship of the whole of humanity by befriending mankind, irrespective of race, colour or creed.
>
> I hope you will have the time and desire to know how a good portion of humanity who have been living under the influence of that doctrine of universal friendship view your action. We have no doubt about your bravery or devotion to your fatherland, nor do we believe that you are the monster described by your opponents. But your own writings and pronouncements leave no room for doubt that many of your acts are monstrous and unbecoming of human dignity, especially in the estimation of men like me who believe in universal friendliness. Such are your humiliation of Czechoslovakia, the rape of Poland and the swallowing of Denmark. I am aware that your view of life regards such spoliations as virtuous acts. But we have been taught from childhood to regard them as acts degrading humanity. Hence we cannot possibly wish success to your arms.
>
> But ours is a unique position We resist British Imperialism no less than Naziism. If there is a difference, it is in degree. One-fifth of the human race has been brought under the British heel by means that will not bear scrutiny. Our resistance to it does not mean harm to the British people. We seek to convert them, not to defeat them on the battle-field. Ours is an unarmed revolt against the British rule. But whether we convert them or not, we are determined to make their rule impossible by non-violent non-cooperation. . .
>
> But we would never wish to end the British rule with German aid. We have found in non-violence a force which if organized, can without doubt match itself against a combination of all the most violent forces in the world. In non-violent technique, as I have said, there is no such thing as defeat. It is all "do or die" without killing or hurting. It can be used practically without money and obviously without the aid of science of destruction which you have brought to such perfection. It is a marvel to me that you do not see that it is nobody's monopoly. If not the British, some other power will certainly improve upon your method and beat you with your own weapon. You are leaving no legacy to your people of which they would feel pride.

Gandhi concluded this letter, written on Christmas Eve of 1940, by saying:

> During this season when the hearts of the peoples in Europe yearn for peace, we have suspended even our own peaceful struggle. Is it too much to ask you to make an effort for peace during a time which may mean nothing to you personally but which must mean much to the millions of Europeans whose dumb cry for peace I hear, for my ears are attuned to hearing the dumb millions? (Vol. 73.)

We have all these books by Gandhi—several feet of them, in a row on the shelf—and we wonder from time to time what might be the best use to make of such material. Because of the difficulty of predicting what Gandhi will say, in a letter or article, it occurred to us that he provides an extraordinary example of "man thinking"—thinking in order to apply the purest principles to the morally mixed-up times in which he lived.

In an article in a *Hindi* journal in September, 1941, he discussed this matter of principled decision:

It is a good augury that votaries of non-violence often raise questions of principle. Man advances through such spirit of inquiry, but there is a prerequisite condition to it. The inquiry should not be like that of a person who strains at a gnat and swallows a camel. Raising such questions profit only him who is ever vigilant in major matters and whose practice keeps pace with the progress of the principle.

Let me illustrate what I mean. A certain khadi bhandar received an order for woollen blankets from the military. The bhandar authorities asked me whether they could accept it. I replied that they could. The question of principle raised was whether it did not amount to helping the war.

As a matter of abstract principle, it will have to be conceded that the acceptance was a breach. But in that case, we must leave India and every country engaged in the war. Because we help war in purchasing the very food we eat. We do the same when we travel by train or buy postage stamps. Our use of the currency itself is an aid to war. In fact we are hardly able to do any act which is free from the taint.

The truth is that no one is able to act upon a great principle, like that of non-violence, in its entirety. Like the geometrical line, it can only be imagined, but never drawn. In practice, we have to be content with drawing only such fine lines as we can with our instruments. There is no wall that can be called "straight" according to Euclid. It is the same with ahimsa. We must put it into practice as best we can.

It would have been easy for me to forbid the sale of the blankets. It was a question of only a few thousand rupees, a small amount for an establishment whose turnover is in lakhs. But the prohibition would have been a matter of shame. Where should I draw the line from which such prohibitions should commence? If I were a grain merchant, should I decline to sell it to soldiers? Or, if I were a chemist, should I refuse to sell quinine and other drugs to them? If I should, what could be the reason for my doing so? Does my ahimsa prevent me from entertaining such customers? In other words, does it require me to look into the occupations of my customers? The clear reply is that provided I deal in goods which conduce to the welfare of society, I may not look into the occupations of my customers. This means I may sell my innocuous articles even to soldiers. (Vol. 74.)

Elsewhere Gandhi compares military physical training with discipline for ahimsa. Physical fitness, he points out, is the only thing of interest to army administrators.

> Old men, women, and raw youth are not regarded as eligible. Nor are those suffering from disease fit to be chosen . . . But the standard is quite the contrary for selecting recruits for a non-violent body. The chief thing to test is the candidate's mental fitness. And so such a body may have old men, women, raw youth, the blind and the lame, and even lepers, and it would bid fare to win. The ability to kill requires training. The ability to die is there in him who has the will for it. . . .
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> But to say that lepers and children are eligible for a nonviolent army is not to say that a non-violent person need have no regard for physical fitness. Ahimsa requires certain duties which can be done only by those with a trained physique. It is therefore most necessary to consider what kind of physical training a non-violent person should receive.
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> Very few of the rules applying to a violent army will apply to a non-violent body. A violent army will not have its arms for show but definitely for destructive purposes. A non-violent body will have no use for such weapons and will therefore beat its swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, and will shrink from the thought of using them as lethal weapons. The violent soldier will be trained in the use of violence by being taught to shoot. The nonviolent soldier will have no time for this pastime. He will get all his training through nursing the sick, saving those in danger at risk of his own life, patrolling places which may be in fear of thieves and dacoits [armed bandits], and in laying down his life, if necessary, in dissuading them from their purpose. (Vol. 73.)

It is not necessary to agree whole-heartedly with everything Gandhi says in order to learn from the way he thinks, noting his use of the imagination in deciding what he must do.

FRONTIERS

Once Again: Small Is Beautiful

IN *The New Reformation* Paul Goodman wrote at length on the alienation of people toward the professions. He told about a course he gave at the New School for Social Research (New York) on "Professionalism," in which he invited a physician, an architect, engineer, journalist, and humanist scholar to contribute. These seasoned professionals described the various obstacles in the way of honest practice of their profession. The members of the class were not in the least receptive:

> To my surprise, the class unanimously rejected my guests. Heatedly and rudely, they called them finks, mystifiers, or deluded. They showed that every profession was co-opted and corrupted by the System, that all significant decisions were made by the power structure and bureaucracy, that professional peer groups were only conspiracies to make more money. All this was importantly true and had, of course, been said by the visitors. Why had the students not heard?

They were unfair and wrong not to listen to the explanations of the frustrated professionals, but Goodman couldn't make them see why. The alienating realities, he said, had put the students, admittedly immature, in a nihilist mood.

A review article in *Landscape* (Autumn, 1979) by Marilyn Davis and James H. Davis illustrates what people seeking homes endure at the hands of professionals, who increasingly dictate the conditions and design of housing:

> Escaping from this professional influence is more and more difficult. Kenneth Boulding, in paraphrasing George Bernard Shaw, states, "Every profession is, at least to some extent, a conspiracy against the public." Here lies one of those unspoken agreements that are built into all trade groups. A conspiracy defines housing as an issue only dealt with and considered by housing professionals: planners, designers, developers, and social scientists. In these essays [under review] housing does not exist beyond that produced under the direction of professionals. User needs do not exist outside those measurable by professionals. Dwelling patterns do not exist outside those approved by professionals.
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> Laura Nader, in her work with the Carnegie Council on Children, for example, discovered when she talked with school superintendents and principals that their interests were in the financial problems of education. Parents and teachers wanted to talk about classroom learning. The children were concerned with playgrounds and toilets. Without diverse input, the professional planner might see the school only as a financial institution.

These writers remark that the decline in urban America has been worst during the time of HUD's (Housing and Urban Development's) greatest expansion, and that the most noticeable result of the rash of building standards, requirements, and programs has been that they "have greatly increased costs and complicated the building process."

In a recent paper, "The Professional Problem," John McKnight sees evidence of a revolt of "clients" who are tired of having their lives managed by professionals. Minorities are asserting themselves, declaring that the people appointed to better their condition are themselves the problem. Patients are breaking out of the niches allotted to them by orthodox medicine and going to acupuncturists, chiropractors, and nature healers. Meanwhile the "caring" professions, Mr. McKnight points out, are growing by leaps and bounds. "In many states, for example, the Medicaid budget for medical service to welfare recipients is now larger than the budget for direct cash grants to the recipients."

Criticism is already very direct. It is pointed out that as a result of their expanding role professionals are becoming both inefficient and arrogant, and in some cases do harm. Elaborating the "arrogance" charge, McKnight says:

> This position suggests that the nature of the profession is inherently elitist and dominant. Given the professional powers to define problems, treat them and evaluate the efficacy of the treatment, the client as a person has been a residual category in the process. As professions have become integrated into large-scale specialized systems, financed by public funds and insurance plans, the professional has

> increasingly secured a guaranteed annual income. The consequence is that the client's residual role as a volitional purchaser of service, or even as a human being in need, has disappeared and the professional is free to use the client without pretense of humanistic service. The resulting arrogance, magnified by the modernized systems of assembly line, multi-service "care" that institutionalize the individual professional, has evoked consumer movements.

Mr. McKnight doesn't see much hope in attempts at reform. The trend of our society is in a direction which will make the performance of the professional grow worse instead of better:

> Professional reform is unlikely because our current approaches to economic growth and national stability depend upon the development of more professionalized service of the same kind we are currently experiencing. In 1900, approximately 10% of the paid work force "produced" services. In 1978, 63% of the work force is in the service industry with 14 million people in professional service work. Daniel Bell's projections suggest that by the year 2,000, the service work force will represent 90% of the employed. If his projections are correct, during the next 21 years, nearly 25% of America's work force will be translated from goods to service "production" jobs. This translation will provide jobs for two of the major groups that will be entering the work force during these decades—women leaving the home-force and the graduates of higher education with expensive postgraduate education that promises them professional roles.
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> All the forces in our economy are now programmed to create a geometric increase in the number of professionals while the goods production sector is designed to replace the labor of Americans with machines and foreign labor.

The only encouraging part of Mr. McKnight's report was the response of young professionals to the charge that they are "manufacturing need" for their services. They do not defend this expansion, but ask instead, "What do you think I could do that would be worth doing?" (Paul Goodman would have been delighted by this!)

Mr. McKnight is looking for ways to "dissolve" the professional problem. One remedy was offered years ago by E. F. Schumacher (in "The Critical Question of Size," *Resurgence*, May-June 1975). "Small units," he said, "are self-administrating in the sense that they do not require full-time administrators of exceptional ability; almost anybody can see to it that things are kept in reasonable order and everything that needs to be done is done by the right person at the right time." Very few professionals are needed in small communities, and those whose practice is essential tend to be honored and loved by those whom they serve.