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THE EMERGING CONSCIOUSNESS

THE one thing that all serious observers now agree upon is that the human world is in the midst of a great change. Political faiths and social forms are in flux. The truths declared by the authors of constitutional arrangements, while not denied, have lost their impact and capacity to inspire. Exploiters and conqueror types have no audience or followers. Total revolutionists are recognized as dangerous true believers who mistake iconoclasm and destruction for growth. The ideologies are all suspect, their appeal now being limited to those who can be captured by slogans. The educated and reflective members of society have become deeply ambivalent in their attitude toward scientific knowledge. Too often science arms self-interest instead of increasing the common good. Its practical successes have displaced normal human concern for realities which science does not admit. The feeling is widespread that the human race has got far off the track of its natural development and that desperate necessity may soon require reorientation in all departments of life.

On the other side of the ledger are various healthful signs. Increasingly articulate movements are devoted to understanding and cooperation with nature. New forms of human association are sought with ardor by a growing number of people. Feelings of ethical obligation are filling the void left by worldwide disenchantment with the motives and social patterns established by acquisitive habits. The *mood* of responsibility precedes attempts at explaining or justifying the positive aspects of many of the changes now going on. The moral necessity of the new attitudes is the prior reality, and our inadequate intellectual constructions do not begin to do justice to the feelings we have. Concepts, one might say, have the same sort of limitations that institutions exhibit in social function. They are the tools of consciousness, but also become the prisons of thought, just as institutions confine us to the past. Yet we cannot do without either concepts or institutions. If we knew how to form self-questioning concepts and self-regenerating institutions, our pains and troubles would probably be over.

Consider, for example, the way we think about the role of religion and religious institutions in modern life. Religion, we say, is concerned with the highest truths we can know. It follows, then, that people must be free to choose their own religion. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion." This amounts to saying that each one is his own religious authority, and that while religions or religious ideas may possess and exercise great moral authority, they can endow no one with coercive authority in the name of religion. The political state has and uses coercive authority; therefore, in the United States, there is traditionally an absolute separation between church and state.

In practice, this has meant that, under the law, some activities are held to be "religious" in character, and therefore immune to external control. How are they identified? Almost entirely by the fact that people who call themselves religious perform those activities. Attitudes and beliefs which have an evident social or secular consequence are sometimes claimed to be and defined as religious. An example is the refusal of the members of the peace churches to take part in war. This rejection of military duty was allowed by the Selective Service Act of 1940 to those who could show that they were conscientious objectors "by reason of religious training and belief." Qualifying under the law was often quite difficult for young men who did not belong to a peace church, or any church at all. Getting a change in this provision took years. Little by little, through

repeated court actions, the definition of conscientious objection was broadened.

How, after all, could a country which guarantees freedom of religion as a constitutional right presume to define who is "religious" and who is not? Yet the situation remained awkward for administrators of the draft act. How do you tell whether a man is "religious," unless he has a connection with a religious institution? If a person is entitled to invent his own religion—a right implicitly granted by the First Amendment—then *anyone* can claim to be a conscientious objector! So the administrators of the draft continued to make it tough to qualify as a C.O. The Vietnam War, of course, created many more such problems for the Government, since conscientious objection seemed mere common sense to a very large number of those of draft age. And how, indeed, in the twentieth century, do you distinguish between "religious" and "moral" motivation?

What does this mean? It means that external or objective definitions of religion are gradually losing their significance.

Is the First Amendment thereby extended in application to include all conceptions of morality, or is it simply nullified by too broad an interpretation?

What, again, do we mean by "religion"? Obviously, whatever it may mean to thoughtful individuals, for the body politic and in law it means something that can be separated from other aspects of life. What cannot be defined in law does not exist for law. Unless definition of religion is possible, the First Amendment becomes empty rhetoric, and we shall not like to admit that this is now the case. Freedom of religion is a justifiably proud attainment of American society. There is no overt, legal thought-control in the United States. There are lots of pressures and suasions, but no control. Freedom of religion is good, and we shall insist that it continue to be a right of all citizens.

Yet there is a sense in which the separation of religion from other aspects of life is artificial, even ridiculous or nonsense, for how can you separate in law what is united in life? The question has never been fairly answered because of the unmistakable anarchist implications in any reasonable reply. The potential contradictions in the thinking behind the First Amendment have been tacitly tolerated because law based on it will become either totalitarian or impotent if we admit that religion of some sort enters into every act of human life.

Interestingly, in a recent decision, the United States Supreme Court obliquely made such an admission. In the *Harvard Educational Review* for February, 1976, Stephen Arons, a Massachusetts attorney, discusses the implications of the Court ruling in *Wisconsin vs. Yoder*, in which the right of the members of an Amish community to keep their children out of public high school was affirmed. The Court held that conforming to the Wisconsin compulsory education law would compel the Amish to violate their religious convictions and the value system based upon them. In giving the Court's decision, Chief Justice Burger said:

> They (the Amish) object to the high school and higher education generally because the values it teaches are in marked variance with Amish values and the Amish way of life; they view secondary school education as an impermissible exposure of their children to a "worldly" influence in conflict with their beliefs. The high school tends to emphasize intellectual and scientific accomplishments, self-distinction, competitiveness, worldly success, and social life with other students. Amish society emphasizes informal learning-through-doing, a life of "goodness" rather than a life of intellect, wisdom rather than technical knowledge, community welfare rather than competition, and separation rather than integration with contemporary worldly society.

The Chief Justice, one might say, is to be congratulated on his insight into qualities which have been preserved over centuries by religious groups such as the Amish. He has rendered them into language we can all understand. In fact, the

Court is quite evidently in tune with the times. America shows by this decision of our highest court that we do indeed believe in the freedom of religion. But a basic question remains: Are the values referred to by the Chief Justice distinctively "religious," or could they be honored and cherished without any reference to religion as we think of and understand it?

Mr. Arons gives a direct answer:

> . . . none of the value conflicts the Court cited—competitiveness versus cooperation, intellect versus wisdom, or disagreement over the status of manual work, for example—is necessarily religious. Any non-Amish family might be equally committed to such values and see them as threatened by state-sponsored socialization in schools. Religion provided the constitutional nexus between the plaintiff's injury and the state's policy, but the evidence the Court found compelling also supports a broader doctrine: Any conflict between public schooling and a family's basic and sincerely held values interferes with the family's First Amendment rights. Thus, even though the opinion was couched in terms of religious beliefs and practices, the Chief Justice's recognition of the various elements of value inculcation, none of which is itself of religious character, has the effect of eroding the meaningfulness of the distinction between secular and religious values upon which the Court has relied so heavily.

In short, humanist or cultural convictions have logically the same standing in this Supreme Court decision—in effect, the law—as religious convictions. We—through the Court—have taken religion into our hearts, and more significantly, into our minds, and have said that religion is simply what we feel to be right. The decision removes all denominational distinction. This, we might now say, is just fine, but it has the practical effect of making compulsory education above the elementary school level unenforceable. This is the logical consequence of the Yoder decision, but it may be years before independent, religiously unaffiliated parents are able to take full advantage of it and teach their children at home, if they wish, without being charged with violation of truancy laws. They probably will be found guilty through *lack* of association!

Mr. Arons provides a different analysis:

> The history of religious liberty and persecution prior to the writing of the First Amendment pointed clearly to religion as a prime source of these basic values and to religious intolerance as a prime source of factionalized governments and oppression. This view must be translated for a modern America in which religion is no longer basic. The great issues of conscience and belief are no longer fought under religious banners. Instead, they concern racial and sexual equality, the allocation of power, institutional alienation, and the basic conceptions of human worth underlying economic systems. The principle of neutrality indicates that the transmission of beliefs about such issues must be insulated from government sanction if repressive systems in schooling and society are to be avoided.

This is the practical equivalent of coming out for abolition of compulsory public school education, for how could officials and administrators purify the curriculum of every trace of partisanship or political indoctrination?

In her visionary conception of the ideal social order, described in *The Need for Roots*, Simone Weil gave the broad philosophic foundation for this mode of thinking, showing how it would be practically applied:

> Generally speaking, all problems to do with freedom of expression are clarified if it is posited that this freedom is a need of the intelligence, and that intelligence resides solely in the human being, individually considered. There is no such thing as a collective exercise of the intelligence. It follows that no group can legitimately claim freedom of expression, because no group has the slightest need for it.
>
> In fact, the opposite applies. Protection of freedom of thought requires that no group should be permitted by law to express an opinion. For when a group starts having opinions, it inevitably tends to impose them on its members. Sooner or later, these individuals find themselves debarred with a greater or lesser degree of severity, and on a number of problems of greater or lesser importance, from expressing opinions opposed to those of the group, unless they care to leave it. But a break with any group to which one belongs always involves suffering—at any rate of a sentimental kind. And just as danger, exposure to suffering are healthy and

> necessary elements in the sphere of action, so are they unhealthy influences in the exercise of the intelligence. A fear, even a passing one, always provokes either a weakening or a tautening, depending on the degree of courage, and that is all that is required to damage the extremely delicate and fragile instrument of precision that constitutes our intelligence. Even friendship is, from this point of view, a great danger. The intelligence is defeated as soon as the expression of one's thoughts is preceded, explicitly or implicitly by the little word "we." And when the light of the intelligence grows dim, it is not very long before the love of good becomes lost.

At this point, the "practical" man who knows a little history and something of human nature will resist, exclaiming, "No society can exist without effective organizations—no more than we can think without concepts!" Concepts and institutions are indeed inevitable at our stage of human development. But it may not be inevitable that we regard the concepts as embodying the whole truth, or the institutions as agencies sure to do good. Institutions are a means of concerted action—not necessarily good. If we begin to regard concepts and institutions simply as tools—or as stepping stones—instead of solutions, they might give us far less trouble.

For more light on the relation between religion and society, we turn to a brief account of the history of Sri Lanka—formerly Ceylon. An editorial in *Asian Action* for last July-August gave this summary:

> This island was self-sufficient in food until the advent of the Western Empire Builders who changed the economy of the country.
>
> The message of peace and tolerance of the Buddha coupled with the desire of the monarchs and the people in the past to produce abundant supplies of food resulted in a cultural pattern that served as a driving force in Sri Lanka.
>
> The national chronicle *Mahavamsa* records in detail the efforts made by each of the monarchs who ruled the island to construct vast reservoirs and intricate systems of irrigation channels to ensure success in food production.
>
> They also spent much time, energy and wealth in the provision of great religious monuments dedicated to the observances of the Buddhist religion. Religion and agriculture blended beautifully to produce a rich cultural heritage.
>
> The village Temple was the all-important social, cultural, educational and religious center and the incumbent monk played a great role in leadership. Self-help or "Shramadana" produced all the labour necessary for the construction and maintenance of vast irrigation works. Cultivation operations and community projects were all successfully attended to with "Shramadana."
>
> The Colonial rule destroyed the fabric of Society and the plantation economy introduced by the Imperial rulers damaged the cultural patterns. With some effort one could yet discover traces of the ancient cultural patterns in some of the remote villages. To discover these rich cultural patterns and infuse life into them is a task that needs all our attention.

What about separation of Church and State in a place like Sri Lanka? Would it make any sense? What sort of state and what sort of religion require it?

The distinctive reality of the present may be that we are trying to go behind even such important questions to the roots of both concepts and institutions in human nature. Buddhism, in its original form of undogmatic, self-reliant moral philosophy, may have been a historical anticipation of the present epoch of intense self-consciousness we spoke of at the beginning. One contemporary psychologist, Julian Jaynes, who teaches at Yale, has written a rather extraordinary book to show that the kind of consciousness now more in evidence every day, amounts to a definite change in the modes of human thinking. The comparison he makes between past and present attitudes reveals the great contrast between religion or religious reality as something outside ourselves, and the feeling, now so common, that we can and must govern our own lives, devise our own "revelations," and even become our own gods.

Early in his book, *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind* (Houghton Mifflin, 1977), Mr. Jaynes says:

> We are conscious human beings. We are trying to understand human nature. The . . . hypothesis we have come to . . . is that at one time human nature was split in two, an executive part called a god, and a follower part called man. Neither part was conscious. This is almost incomprehensible to us.

He means that in the past much more of our lives was lived without self-conscious attention to either our acts or our thoughts, and feelings. Noticing what we do and how and why we do it occurs only during self-conscious intervals. But today we are becoming more self-conscious, assuming for ourselves the authority that once belonged to Zeus or Jehovah:

> We, at the end of the second millennium A.D., are still in a sense deep in this transition to a new mentality. And all about us lie the remnants of our bicameral past when the gods were rulers, all humans followers. We have our houses of gods which record our births, define us, marry us and bury us, receive our confessions and intercede with the gods to forgive us our trespasses. Our laws are based upon values which without their divine pendance would be empty and unenforceable. Our national mottoes and hymns of state are usually divine invocations. Our kings, presidents, judges, and officers begin their tenure with oaths to the now silent deities taken upon the writings of those who have last heard them. The most obvious and important carry-over from the previous mentality is thus our religious heritage in all its labyrinthine beauty and variety of forms. The overwhelming importance of religion both in general world history and in the history of the average world individual is of course very clear from any objective standpoint, even though a scientific view of man often seems embarrassed at acknowledging this most obvious fact. For in spite of all that rationalist materialist science has implied since the Scientific Revolution, mankind as a whole has not, does not, and perhaps cannot relinquish his fascination with some human type of relationship to a greater, wholly other, some *mysterium tremendum* with powers and intelligence beyond all left hemispheric capacities, something necessarily indefinite and unclear, to be approached and felt in awe and wonder, and almost speechless worship, rather than in clear conception, something that for modern religious people communicates in truths of feeling, rather than in what can be verbalized . . . and so what in our time can be more truly felt when least named . . .
>
> Thus, as the slow withdrawing tide of divine voices and presences strands more and more of each population on the sands of subjective certainties, the variety of technique by which man attempts to make contact with his lost ocean of authority becomes extended.

This seems a profoundly important clue to the deeper aspect and subtleties of the great change now in process. At this point we can use no more than clues.

REVIEW
ANTHOLOGY OF RELIGION

IF, as some sage has remarked, there are as many gods in heaven as there are people on earth, then the gods speak with many voices, echoing every accent of human longing and fear. Yet there are recurring themes. The religious teachings which have come down to us from both high and primitive cultures express common affirmations and repeat familiar anxieties. The gods have a family resemblance to one another. So do conceptions of the human soul. But souls are not simple and alike; some are heroic affirmers of immortality, others mournful and suppliant. The gods, moreover, often seem dual in character, disturbingly like humans in some respects.

Who can make sense out of all this? The confusion may be less bewildering if we assume that all that we know or can be told about the gods comes to us through the distorting lens of human nature, and that the confusion is ours, not the gods'. The confusion, then, is the project, something to be overcome. We have encouragement that this is possible from the fact that some of the most memorable expressions of human wisdom have a religious origin. There have been those who found their way. And the feeling that there is a way seems native to human beings, whatever they may cry out in despairing moments.

Mircea Eliade's *From Primitives to Zen—a Thematic Sourcebook of the History of Religions,* first published in 1967, and now a Harper & Row paperback ($8.95), is an invitation to inquiry into how men have sought their way. The book may be regarded as representing a kind of transition in attitudes toward religion. For many years books about the religions of the world were little more than special pleadings in behalf of one particular religion, usually Christianity, ending with the conclusion that what *we* believe is plainly the best. Then came a period when historical studies were pursued for their own sake. We as scientists, the scholars seemed to say, will help you to know what the peoples of prescientific times believed. Since they are our distant ancestors, there is a value in knowing how far we have come from those childlike faiths.

But now, in these unsettled times, the men who write books about the great religions seem to respond to a deep undercurrent in the thought of all mankind, pressing once more the questions: What is truth? If a man dies, will he live again? How did the world begin? What will put an end to our troubles?

From Primitives to Zen is a book which quietly encourages the reader to feel out what may be true in past belief and religious conviction. It is of course quite scholarly. The author and editor for years taught a course in the history of religions at the University of Chicago and felt the need to supply an anthology of religious texts concerning the gods, the origin of the world, and conceptions of death and the afterlife. (There is not much on Judaism or Christianity for the reason that readers are expected to be familiar with the teachings of these religions, while including extracts from the Bible would have made the book too large.)

To acquaint the reader with what may be found in this volume, we quote at random. First, then, from the words of the "High God" of Egypt, taken from a Middle Kingdom (1250-1580 B.C.) Coffin Text (all quotations are either from religious texts or scholars who give summaries):

> I was [the spirit in?] the Primeval Waters,
> he who had no companion when my name came into existence.
>
> The most ancient form in which I came into existence was as a drowned one.
>
> I was [also] he who came into existence as a circle,
> he who was the dweller in his egg.
>
> I was the one who began [everything], the dweller in the Primeval Waters.
>
> First Hahu [the wind, which separated the waters and raised the sky] emerged for me
> and then I began to move.
>
> I created my limbs in my "glory."
>
> I was the maker of myself, in that I formed myself according to my desire and in accord with my heart.

This seems a universal theme—that the world came into being through primordial desire, or the will to be. Circle and egg are universal symbols of being and becoming. Everything begins in the "waters" of space. At the beginning the Manifested One is only one—Brahm sole meditating in the Night. As the *Rig Veda* has it: "Desire first arose in IT, which was the primal germ of mind," and sages saw that mind connects being with nonbeing, or "entity with non-entity."

Cicero, in *The Dream of Scipio,* in which Scipio Africanus the Younger encounters the shade—or more than a shade—of his dead grandfather, gives a Greek view of immortality and the cosmic relations of the soul. Scipio the Younger tells of his terror, then says:

> Nevertheless, I . . . inquired of Africanus whether he himself was still alive, and also whether my father Paulus was, and also others whom we think of as having ceased to be.
>
> "Of course they are alive," he replied. "They have taken their flight from the bonds of the body as from a prison. Your so-called life [on earth] is really death. Do you not see your father Paulus coming to meet you?"
>
> At the sight of my father I broke down and cried. But he embraced me and kissed me and told me not to weep. As soon as I had controlled my grief and could speak, I began: "Why, O best and saintliest of fathers, since here (only] is life worthy of the name, as I have just heard from Africanus, why must I live a dying life on earth? Why may I not hasten to join you here?"
>
> "No indeed," he replied. "Unless that God whose temple is the whole visible universe releases you from the prison of the body, you cannot gain entrance here. For men were given life for the purpose of cultivating that globe called Earth, which you see at the centre of this temple. Each has been given a soul, [a spark] from these eternal fires which you call stars and planets, which are globular and rotund and are animated by divine intelligence, and which with marvellous velocity revolve in their established orbits. Like all god-fearing men, therefore, Publius, you must leave the soul in the custody of the body, and must not quit life on Earth unless you are summoned by the one who gave it to you. . . .

Fulfillment of duty, Paulus told his son, would eventually become for him "a highway to the skies, to the fellowship of those who have completed their earthly lives and have been released from the body and now dwell in that place which you see yonder . . . which you, using a term borrowed from the Greeks, call the Milky Way."

An account of the beliefs of the American Indians, by Ake Hultkrantz, relates:

> . . . the Indians of North America believe that man's spirit has its ultimate origin in the deity himself, either through creation or partial emanation. In a couple of cases, it is true, the father of the child has been stated to beget the soul as well as the physical embryo. But these exceptions are few, and are probably the products of a speculation that has tried to fill a gap in the existing knowledge of the soul or souls.

Pre-existence and reincarnation, this writer says, are beliefs reported "from practically all parts of North America."

Lloyd Warner describes an Australian conception of the soul:

> Each Murngin man and woman has two souls. One is looked upon as fundamental and real, and is felt to be the true soul, the soul from the heart, while the other is considered a trickster, of little value, and only in a vague way associated with the "true man." The first is the birimbir or warro, and the second is the mokoi or shadow soul. . . . It is in the symbol of the soul and its relation to the sacred and profane elements in Murogin civilization that we find mirrored the structures and values of society. The soul supplies the eternal element to the cultural life of an individual Murngin. It lifts man from the simple profane animal level and allows him to participate fully in the sacred eternal values of the civilization that was, is, and shall be.

In the view of Empedocles, man is a fallen demi-god:

> There is an oracle of Necessity, ancient decree of the gods, eternal and sealed with broad oaths; whenever one of those demi-gods, whose lot is long-lasting life, has sinfully defiled his dear limbs with bloodshed, or following strife has sworn a false oath, thrice ten thousand seasons does he wander from the

> blessed, being born throughout that time in the forms of all manner of mortal things and changing one baleful path of life for another. . . . Of these I too am now one, a fugitive from the gods and a wanderer, who put my trust in raving strife.

Edward Conze provides a suggestive text on the Buddha as a Tathagata, or "spiritual principle":

> Although the Tathagata has not entered Nirvana, he makes a show of entering Nirvana, for the sake of those who have to be educated. . . . Although I do not at present enter into Nirvana, nevertheless I announce my Nirvana. For by this method I bring beings to maturity. . . . In the conviction that the Tathagata is always at hand they would not exert their vigour for the purpose of escaping from the triple world, and they would not conceive of the Tathagata as hard to obtain.

There are nearly 650 pages of texts and commentaries in Mircea Eliade's book.

COMMENTARY
THE ALLEGIANCE TO THINGS

INEVITABLY, the account of modern man given by Emerson in 1837, in his "American Scholar" essay, recalls another essay written a hundred and twenty years later by Erich Fromm. "Man," said Emerson, noting his reduction to mere practical functions, "is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things." Fromm wrote (in the *Saturday Review* for March 16, 1957):

> Man is not a thing. He cannot be dissected without being destroyed. He cannot be manipulated without being harmed. And he cannot be manipulated artificially. Life in its biological aspects is a miracle and a secret, and man in his human aspects is an unfathomable secret. We know our fellow man and ourselves in many ways, yet we do not know him or ourselves fully because we are not things. The further we reach into the depth of our being, or someone else's being, the more the goal of full knowledge eludes us. Yet we cannot help desiring to penetrate into the secret of man's soul, into the nucleus of "he."
>
> Psychology can show us what man is *not*. It cannot tell us what man, each one of us, is. The soul of man, the unique core of each individual, can never be grasped and described adequately.

Emerson spelled out what happens to us when we think of ourselves (and others) as "things" and behave like things. We are ridden by our craft and our souls are subject to dollars, while the scholar only echoes the thoughts of other men.

Although few of the articulate writers of our time take either Emerson or Fromm seriously, they take very seriously the pain caused by the insistent allegiance to things. Today's tough-minded righteous journals are filled with accounts of how so many are deprived of the things they need, giving details on the sinners who do the depriving. These indictments are accurate enough. You can find guilt everywhere, and it goes on and on.

These writers, in short, will never run out of material. But will what they write bring remedies? A hint from Emerson suggests what needs to be done. "But, unfortunately," he says, "this original unit, this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops and cannot be gathered."

Useful inferences from this diagnosis are not really obscure.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
BOOKS: THEORY AND PRACTICE

IN a recent issue of *Tract* (No. 24), a Canadian teacher asks: "Can we Think Outside Technology?" The text of his essay on this question is learned, yet useful, and we have been trying to figure out how to repeat its point without burdening the reader with a difficult vocabulary. The claim that the writer, George Grant, rejects is that the computer—technology's finest flower—is a neutral instrument we can either use wisely and well, or turn to anti-human applications. He seems to be saying that the computer speaks only the language of finiteness, of material reality, and that therefore it stacks the answer to whatever question we put to it by requiring the use of these terms. He suggests that relying on computers renders us unable to think in any other way.

Mr. Grant says in one place:

> Let me concentrate my essential point in a criticism of a recent writing by Professor C. B. Macpherson. In his "Democratic Theory," an early section is entitled "The race between ontology and technology." It is just such words that I am trying to show as deluding. Macpherson identifies ontologies with "views of the essence of man," and writes of "a fateful race between ontological change and technological change." One might ask is not technological change an aspect of what is, and therefore not something other than ontological change? But what is above all misleading in such words is that they obscure the fact that every act of scientific discovery or application comes forth from an ontology which so engrosses us that it can well be called our western destiny. Technology is not something over against ontology; it is the ontology of the age. It is for us an almost inescapable destiny. The great question is not then "the race between technology and ontology," but what is the ontology which is declared in technology? What could it be to be "beyond" it, and would it be good to be "beyond" it?

If we accept that the computer expresses the essence of technology, then we can say that the language of technology is always quantitative, and that technological thinking can have no encounters with uncountable reality. This is a way of saying that, according to technology, the incommensurable—what cannot be counted—is not *real*. If, within the measurable or countable, there is somehow a subtle presence of the immeasurable, technological thinking must ignore it. If there is an eternity behind the succession of moments, the computer can give no hint of it. If an immortal spirit hides in a tenement of clay, no calculating machine will ever suggest to us that our bodies are but garments.

Are computers then evil devices? Only when we assume that computer "thinking" is the only real kind of thinking. But with us the habit of doing only quantified thinking is very strong.

The problem is by no means new. Emerson made it the basis of his essay, "The American Scholar." He began by repeating an old fable, to the effect that "the gods, in the beginning, divided Man into men, that he might be more helpful to himself; just as the hand was divided into fingers, the better to answer its end." In other words, since we live in a finite world we need finite means, particularized means, to deal with finite particulars. But then we are trapped in the maze of particulars, confirming our fate with plans for escape in the language of particulars.

The trouble is, Emerson suggests, that while Man is one, his experience is through the many:

> Man is priest, and scholar, and statesman, and producer, and soldier. In the divided or social state these functions are parcelled out to individuals each of whom aims to do his stint of the joint work, whilst each other performs his. The fable implies that the individual, to possess himself, must sometimes return from his own labor to embrace all the other laborers. But, unfortunately, this original unit this fountain of power, has been so distributed to multitudes, has been so minutely subdivided and peddled out, that it is spilled into drops and cannot be gathered. . . .
>
> Man is thus metamorphosed into a thing, into many things. The planter, who is Man sent out into the field to gather food, is seldom cheered by any idea of the true dignity of his ministry. He sees his bushel and his cart, and nothing beyond, and sinks into the farmer, instead of Man on the farm. The tradesman scarcely ever gives an ideal worth to his work, but is

> ridden by the routine of his craft, and the soul is subject to dollars. The priest becomes a form; the attorney a statute-book; the mechanic, a machine, the sailor a rope of a ship.
>
> In this distribution of functions the scholar is the delegated intellect. In the right state, he is Man Thinking. In the degenerate state, when the victim of society, he tends to become a mere thinker, or, still worse, the parrot of other men's thinking.

We have now quite evidently reached Emerson's degenerate state and are ridden by the routines of our most advanced craft. The craft is expected to do tasks it cannot possibly accomplish. The same is true of our institutions. They cannot possibly help us out of our reliance upon them.

Intuitive men and intelligent reformers see this and urge us to get rid of them, do without them. Deschool society, Ivan Illich says. Free yourself of the authority of the learned professions, and of doctors and lawyers, too. Children can learn without schooling, John Holt says.

Emerson speaks at length of the idolatry of books. But he begins with a tribute:

> The theory of books is noble. The scholar of the first age received into him the world around; brooded thereon; gave it the new arrangement of his own mind, and uttered it again. It came into him life; it went out from him truth. It came to him short-lived actions, it went out from him immortal thoughts. . . .
>
> Yet hence arises a grave mischief. The sacredness which attaches to the act of creation—the act of thought—is transferred to the record. The poet chanting was felt to be a divine man: henceforth the chant is divine also. The writer was a just and wise spirit: henceforward it is settled, the book is perfect; as love of the hero corrupts into worship of his statue. Instantly the book becomes noxious; the guide is a tyrant. The sluggish and perverted mind of the multitude, slow to open to the incursions of Reason, having once so opened, having once received this book, stands upon it and makes an outcry if it is disparaged. Colleges are built upon it. Books are written on it by thinkers, not by Man Thinking; by men of talent, that is, who start wrong, who set out from accepted dogmas, not from their own sight of principles. Meek young men grow up in libraries believing it their duty to accept the views which Cicero, which Locke which Bacon have given, forgetful that Cicero, Locke, and Bacon were only young men in libraries when they wrote these books. . . .
>
> Books are the best of things, well used; abused, among the worst.

Why "the worst"? Because they involve us in supine belief by their high reputation. Yet books also help us to set ourselves free.

In *The Lifelong Learner* (Simon and Schuster, 1978, $8.95) Ronald Gross provides an illustration. A retired lawyer, Norman Macbeth, relaxing in Switzerland in 1959, the centenary of publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*, began reading four paperbacks on evolution. They were good ones:

> As a result of this reading Macbeth noticed some striking contradictions between what he had understood biologists to believe about evolution and what these leading experts actually said. Prompted by these four paperbacks, he was stimulated to make further inquiries. "The next phase in my education took place over dinner tables. If conversation lagged, I asked friends whether they knew that Darwinism was going to pieces, that there was no struggle for existence and that scholars no longer spoke about the survival of the fittest. The responses were illuminating. They showed blind and universal faith in the doctrines learned many years earlier in college survey courses, . . ."
>
> Macbeth's learning project on evolutionary theory resulted in a brief book, *Darwin Retried* (Delta, 1973). Essentially a probing analysis of the four paperbacks he started with, his book argues that "classical Darwinism is dead" and that biologists no longer affirm the mechanisms of evolution that most of us still suppose to be true: survival of the fittest adaptation, natural selection, the struggle for existence.

If we could learn from nature directly, instead of going round about with books which are in turn refuted by other books, we might be much better off. But we feel more comfortable with a Cicero or a Darwin to refer to. The good reformers in education are always the ones who urge us to keep on doubting, testing, never giving up on self-reliance, to see how much, actually, we are able to do and know for ourselves. Happily, reformers write books. Books to abolish books—some day.

FRONTIERS

In a Day's Mail

FROM F. J. Waldrop, a reader in West Virginia:

> An older man, unaccustomed to driving in a large city, found himself in big city traffic, with a good car that would not start when the light said go. Cars were honking, whizzed by on either side, barely missing him, while he sweated helplessly trying to get his car to go. Then a young man appeared at his side, asked his trouble; volunteered to push him with his own car, out of traffic before a filling station. That done the youth asked him if he might look at the car's motor. "Go ahead," the man said. "You can't hurt it." Triggering with the motor a little, the youth said, "Now try it." And the motor seemed O.K. Looking around, the man saw that the youth had disappeared before he could even thank him. . . .

From a page by Dan Hirsch, sent in by Ellery Foster (Minnesota):

> I recently spent several months in the presence of beauty so intense that I felt only perpetual awe and gratitude. I had been severely depleted, emotionally and physically, by my activism, this sense of connection with the poor and wounded, and needed to take some time off to do some reflection and "recharge my batteries."
>
> So I traveled for a few weeks, camping by lakes and waterfalls, backpacking far into the Sierras with their breath-taking snow-covered vistas and immense quiet. . . . I spent days without speaking a word, just drinking in the silence; I walked in the company of the great trees and delicate ferns; I split wood for heating, finding truth in Thoreau's observation that "splitting wood warms you twice"; I read poetry aloud in front of a great fireplace at night and did physical labor during the day; and I became close with some people of great wisdom, simplicity, and caring. I return a different man.
>
> During this time away, sheltered in the heart of the world's goodness, a passage from Camus kept running through my mind as though there were in it the seed of a great truth I had not yet let sprout. Camus, never afraid to confront either the absurdity in life or the beauty of sun and sea, wrote: "Yes, there is beauty and there are the humiliated. Whatever the difficulties involved, I should like to be unfaithful to neither the one nor the other." Perhaps in that statement is a key to fronting with greater directness that which makes life worth living and that which makes living difficult for so many people throughout the world. . . .
>
> We can try to be faithful to both, to the redwoods and seascapes on the one hand and to the sufferings of our sisters and brothers on the other. To be faithful one must love both; to love both we must run from neither, to run from neither we must enjoy fully the beauty of this world and resist mightily its destruction.

From Emily Schwalen, of Oakland, Calif.:

> "The Plan" is an idea working for additional peace by lessening the worldwide economic system through receiving donated land in sub-tropical and tropical zones and planting the property with food foliage which can cycle to fruition without cultivation. The land will be deeded permanent public domain. Also, the plan educates people about the value of planting food foliage, especially on their private and public property.
>
> The Plan is working to establish a Santa Cruz County (Calif.) nursery for propagating fruit and nut trees for transplanting to public areas such as parks, schoolyards, along bicycle routes, trails, riverbanks, etc. How might MANAS help to spread this idea to other communities?

From BFH in Ithaca, New York:

> Lately I've been thinking much about man's relationship to the earth (after reading "Roots of Culture" I immediately read *The Unsettling of America*). Tonight I suddenly realized that an idea of conservation—that of using home-sourced organic fertilizer—came to me through a Dennis the Menace comic book. I must have been no more than eight when I read about Dennis' trip back to colonial times. When crops faltered, Dennis suggested using dead fish around the plants. It, of course, worked (at least in the comic book), and that one incident stuck in my mind. . . .
>
> People like Charlotte Chorpenning (who wrote *Twenty-One Years with Children's Theatre*) sensitize us to the effects of the seeming trivialities of everyday affairs . . . like reading a comic book, or taking a child to a play. . . .

From Berkeley, Calif., we have the 1978 Report of the Farallones Institute, which begins with a page by its founder, Sim Van der Ryn, presently California State Architect, who says:

The magic of dreams is that they move us but seldom take their whole form in reality. When they do it is time to dream some more. Four years ago, the idea embodied in the Institute—-that of creating places in both city and country where people could learn to build and live in an ecologically sane environment—was just a dream and now it has largely become a reality. Our Berkeley Center has attracted some 50,000 visitors to see how the urban home can be freed from the deadening dependence on centralized exploitation and waste through a living connection to the nurturing values of soil, sun, biological growth and decay. The Rural Center has provided an opportunity for some scores of young people to learn the practical arts of husbandry and land stewardship in a modern rural context.

Of course, neither of these dreams is complete; they will continue to evolve. The question is, in what direction, and how? In all of history, cities have been consumers of the earth's fertility and out of that rich dowry they have produced most of what we know as modern culture. Our need for cities is as real as our need for wilderness. At issue is how to redesign our cities into socially and ecologically stable forms. If we are unable to do this, then our cities will fall and take our society with them.

I have always believed that to the extent we have the power to affect our lives, change begins within each individual heart and mind, transforming one's space first and moving out from there. Through the work of our Institute and many other groups, the possibility for significant restructuring of our neighborhoods, communities and institutions has been seeded. Now we must begin to take bold steps to place our scientific and technological understanding of whole systems into a broader social context.