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READING THE SIGNALS

PEOPLE read for various reasons. Some pick up the morning paper hoping to get information that will have a bearing on the increase or conservation of their assets. How, they wonder, should I invest my funds to keep them from dwindling? What side should I take on this public issue? Will the declared policies of a certain candidate serve my interests? Can I believe him? (Isn't any office-seeker by definition almost unbelievable?)

A Roman sort of concern with public stability and order may attract others. They hope for restoration of a predictable world in which prudence, thrift, and everyday dependability provide their expected rewards without serious interruptions. At another—perhaps higher—level is the wondering of minds made uncomfortable by lack of a general idea of how things work and the direction in which they are moving. Still another outlook is represented by people determined to close the gap between what is and what should be. Here the categories of need seem limitless, but the common denominators obscure.

And so on. The reasons for reading are as numerous as the directions in which the mind is able to go, and they combine in various proportions and strengths according to idiosyncrasy. If there is balance in the way they go together in a single human being—a hierarchical, not a statistical, balance—there is likely to be a corresponding balance in what the individual chooses to read, and what he does with his life, and this usually means that he will belong to no party or crowd. There are not many such persons, but they exist.

Those who write about what is going on in the world reflect similar categories of concern. Here the possibilities of balance tend to be lost, mainly because the writers, in order to gain hold on an audience, concentrate on one sphere of interest alone. This is the inevitable process of abstraction practiced in a highly organized society which for justice relies on adversary techniques. Knowledge is identified only in terms of its specialties, and specialties are developed by experts who become technical if not moral partisans of a single outlook. They may have balancing views as individuals—or the possibility of balancing views—but they don't write to establish balance. Their professional identity is created by their work as specialists. In short, the culture of an organized, specialist society is almost certain to be a culture without a conscious principle of balance.

Yet the concern of some specialists is quite broadly expressed—as in the inquiry, for example, into the meaning of current history. A discussion of meaning requires a sense of either implicit or explicit balance. Values must play a part. Any attempt to write about what is going on in the world involves taking a position somewhere in the hierarchy of ends and interpreting events by the values which there prevail. Louis J. Halle, a historian, wrote in the *Virginia Quarterly Review* (Autumn, 1967) on the requirements of writing current history. He distinguishes current history from journalism by the fact that newspapers publish what is "newsy" or entertaining, while good historians are concerned with events likely to have "historical consequences"—that is, events which involve our future and which we need to understand. Values, in other words, make the true substance of their study of history.

Mr. Halle speaks of a "fundamental difficulty" encountered by the historian of contemporary affairs:

> To explain it, let me resort to an analogy from other fields of academic study than that of history. In the physical sciences, and also in communications theory, a distinction is made between chance effects,

> on the one hand, and, on the other, effects that are not chance effects but that represent, rather, something meaningful—such as, say, a systematic trend. The chance effects are called "noise"; the effects that mean something are called "signals." The problem in all fields where this applies is to distinguish the signals from the noise—in the parlance of radio-telegraphy, to distinguish what is being purposefully broadcast from the static that, at times, threatens to drown it out.
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> The closer the historian is to the period with which he is dealing, the harder it is for him to hear the signals for the noise. If he tries to abstract what has historic significance from the reams of stuff he reads in the newspapers every day, he will be unable to do so, because, at such close range, the noise drowns out the signals. The noise, however, does not carry far, so that if he can only back away from his material he will find it fading out rather rapidly, until at last he gets himself to such a distance that only the signals reach him.
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> The ability to distinguish the signals from the noise, at close range, is what is required of those who write contemporary history. It is an aptitude that some historians have in greater degree than others. We may as well call this aptitude by its common name, "insight." It is essentially the same insight as we find in great poets and dramatists. To be a truly great historian, a man must have something of Shakespeare in him.

This helps quite a lot. It may seem a platitude to declare that we need to locate reading written by persons with insight, yet something like this must be said over and over again. It needs repetition even though a Platonic paradox is involved: you have to *have* insight in order to recognize writers with insight! Maslow knew about this aspect of the human condition:

> As Emerson said, "What we are, that only we can see." But we must now add that what we see tends in turn to make us what it is and what we are. The communication relationship between the person and the world is a dynamic one of mutual forming and lifting-lowering of each other, a process that we may call "reciprocal isomorphism," A higher order of persons can understand a higher order of knowledge but also a higher order of environment tends to lift the level of the person, just as a lower order of environment tends to lower it. They make each other more like each other. These notions are also applicable to the interrelations between persons, and should help us to understand how persons help to form each other. (*Sign, Image, Symbol,* Kepes, 1966.)

These statements are both metaphysical propositions of great importance and expressions of common sense. If you fill in the blanks you have a macro-micro theory of human progress and human development, a theory of education, and an implicit value system for guide.

A "Shakespearian" endowment of this sort is plainly necessary for anyone who tries to tell the difference between the signals and the noise in present-day events. Mostly the people who write seriously about current events hide their personal value system, cautiously revealing only its implications in their work. They don't want to expose their deep convictions to the harsh mockery of tough-minded iconoclasm. Yet there are times when a brave declaration of one's values is needed. It gives courage to others.

It is easy enough to show that a well-grounded value system is prerequisite for identifying the signals in current history. The signals are units in the stream of meaning. They relate to something worth knowing about, and selection of what is worth knowing about depends upon the values one holds—what one believes is good for humans, either individually or for all. The enlightened man reads events according to his value system. The Buddha, an enlightened man, interpreted the prevailing, everyday lot of his contemporaries in terms of the Four Noble Truths. Plato, another enlightened man, read the events in Athens and the Greece of his time as crying out for the study of justice and the acquirement of virtue. Socrates saw that people act mostly out of impulse, passion, or in imitation of popular idols, and he introduced the idea of a human self able to draw back from impulse, to reflect, criticize, weigh, and choose. Plato also taught a scale of development for human beings. The development begins, he said, with the adoption of correct opinion. Correct opinion has then to be confirmed

by personal verification. The pursuit of confirmation is the calling of the philosopher.

There is little hope, socially, for the world, Plato maintained, unless rulers become philosophers or philosophers become kings. Philosophers, he intimated, are men on the way to godhood. This evolution was for him a part of the natural order of things. The climax of the Buddha's system of human development is the emergence of the *Bodhisattva*—the man or human who has perfected himself and lives only to help others. Like Plato's Guardians, the Bodhisattva is a teacher of mankind.

If we suppose the Buddha and Plato to be right—and we need to choose *some* scheme of value interpretation if we are to say anything at all about the meaning of history—we can then turn to either the past or the present scene with the beginnings of confidence. Actually, most people who study history make assumptions of this sort, whether consciously or not. But if we take the problem set by Louis Halle—that we attempt to trace out the historic significance in the reams of stuff we read in the papers—we may be deafened by the noise. We might then ask what we can find out about the *meaning* of, say, the nineteenth century. What then must we do? Go to the library and start reading the papers published a hundred years ago? We might decide to do that for a while. To know a historical period you have to soak in it, as Vico said. But along with the soaking, a sensible adviser might say, read the books of Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. These great novelists can be regarded as distillers of the meaning of the nineteenth century. They were Promethean spirits who suffered greatly and fashioned insight out of their pain. They displayed in living form—embodied in their characters—the spirit of aspiration and showed the obstacles that it confronts. Their books are filled with the drama of human awakening. Ivan Karamazov's uncompromising and undiluted compassion for the suffering of the innocent—a cruelly cheated or abused child is its symbol—still resounds in the thought of decent human beings. Tolstoy's social criticism keeps bubbling up, decade after decade, in the expressions of the best men of our time. These two writers, while quite imperfect men, had the courage to come to grips with the evils that they saw. They knew something of themselves and they learned what needed to be known of the nineteenth century. They left a great inheritance to the twentieth century—still powerful and often renewed as for example in the work of Solzhenitsyn, whose Tolstoyan inspiration is well known.

We don't today have novelists of the stature of Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, but we have some fine essayists worthy of standing with them—a Roszak and a Berry—and some others of an earlier period in this century, among them Aldo Leopold (not to forget Lewis Mumford, still among us) and Joseph Wood Krutch. And there are writers, today, who embody a fundamental change in outlook since the nineteenth century. The signals which now come through have a two-fold character. They represent change and the senders are conscious exponents of it—that is, they are both contemporary historians and generators of change. We have in mind the writers just named and also some others, among them Ivan Illich. Illich is perhaps the best example—the easiest to use as illustration—of a thinker and writer who devotes himself to closing the gap between what is and what ought to be, as he sees it. His temper, direction, and contribution embody the change, and the change is evident in new threads across the gap he works to close. It is not the same gap as that which dominated nineteenth-century reform and revolutionary thinking.

Until even the middle years of the present century efforts toward both revolution and reform sought equity in the division and distribution of *things.* The idea was to spread around the things to which each one is entitled, and to obtain the power to spread around more of them (progress). The ethical basis of these movements was entirely

a matter of the distribution of goods and services. The capitalists, echoing Darwin and Spencer, declared that successful private acquisition (energetically getting rich as the means to survival) is the fundamental virtue revealed by natural law, from which all the niceties of social morality must take their limits. The socialists, also locating ultimate value in things, declared that everyone should have them more or less equally, and sought political (state) power to achieve a just distribution. The socialist argument has been persuasive, as the revolutionary events of the twentieth century make plain. But for reasons too numerous to mention, socialism or communism has not ushered in the millennium, or anything like it.

Ivan Illich and other present-day reformers see matters differently. In the past many good men and true campaigned against economic slavery. Illich has no admiration for economic slavery, but his primary concern is with psychological slavery, which affects the poor, the middle class, and the rich alike. The psychological slavery of the rich has a luxurious veneer, but they are as much victims of the delusion of the "commodity self" as anyone else. Illich attacks the Consumer Religion and counts its abuses with a fine Aristotelian fervor—he assembles the evidence of mounting dehumanization, of ourselves, by ourselves, and then makes generalizations which have the full support of facts. Behind his indictment stands a remote ideal of good human life, seldom spelled out, but there, and subconsciously appealing.

In his latest book, *The Right to Useful Unemployment* (London: Marion Boyars, 1978, £3.95), he says:

> In only a few decades, the world has become an amalgam. Human responses to everyday occurrences have been standardized. Though languages and gods appear to be different, people daily join the stupendous majority who march to the same beat of the mega-machine. The light switch by the door has replaced dozens of ways in which fires, candles and lanterns were formerly kindled. In ten years, the number of switch-users in the world has tripled; flush and paper have become essential conditions for the relief of the bowels. Light that does not flow from high-voltage networks and hygiene without tissue paper spell poverty for ever more people. Expectations grow, while hopeful trust in one's own competence and concern for others rapidly decline.

The decline of human capacities in believers in the Consumer Religion is everywhere apparent:

> Development has had the same effect in all societies: everyone has been enmeshed in a new web of dependence on commodities that flow out of the same kind of machines, factories, clinics, television studios, think tanks. To satisfy this dependence, more of the same must be produced: standardized, engineered goods, designed for the future consumers who will be trained by the engineer's agent to need what he or she is offered. These products—be they tangible goods or intangible services—constitute the industrial staple. . . . On the banks of the Seine and those of the Niger, people have unlearned how to milk, because the white stuff comes from the grocer. (Thanks to the more richly endowed consumer protection, it is less poisonous in France than in Mali.) True, more babies get cow's milk, but the breasts of both rich and poor dry up. The addicted consumer is born when the baby cries for the bottle: when the organism is trained to reach for milk from the grocer and turn away from the breast that thus defaults. Autonomous and creative human action, required to make man s universe bloom, atrophies. . . . Although hard to imagine for those already accustomed to living inside the supermarket, a structure different only in name from a ward for idiots, the choice is essentially the same for both rich and poor.

We have here an essentially different—one could call it "revolutionary"—way of thinking about the nature of human beings and their good. Yet Illich is but putting into words what a great many people already feel inchoately and longingly within themselves. The commodity culture is a dead thing from the stomach up. Its delusions are fertile multipliers and are having devastating practical effects. People are miserable and hardly know why. Illich can explain this, but thinking is required to understand his explanation, to see how these things work.

Well, human beings are able to think—thinking is about their only real distinction—even if they are laggard and lazy in doing it. More and more people are seeing the point of such criticism. Let the economists agonize about inflation; let the military men in the Pentagon worry about the Russian military machine; and the labor leaders storm about technological unemployment, since they, no more than the capitalists, want to see people learn to raise their own food, nurse their own babies, and in general reorganize their lives around their own natural capacities. The survival of existing institutions depends upon continued denaturing of man. So, as time goes on, Illich's diagnosis will become more and more persuasive. One result will be that common folk will eventually begin to organize their own lives instead of trying to organize others in order to gain "power." Power has only a short-term future. Since it is founded on ignorance, and feeds on ignorance, it eventually destroys itself.

What is the only lasting replacement of power? It is Intelligence, which is the result of thinking.

There are, for example, these undeniable facts, collected by Ivan Illich, to think about:

> All through history, the best measure for bad times was the percentage of food eaten that had to be purchased. In good times, most families got most of their nutrition from what they grew or acquired in a network of gift relationships. Until late in the eighteenth century, more than 99 per cent of the world's food was produced inside the horizon that the consumer could see from the church steeple or minaret. Laws that tried to control the number of chickens and pigs within the city walls suggest that, except for a few large urban areas, more than half of all food eaten was also cultivated within the city. Before World War II, less than 4 per cent of all food eaten was transported into the region from abroad, and these imports were largely confined to the eleven cities which then contained more than two million inhabitants. Today, 40 per cent of all people survive only because they have access to inter-regional markets. A future in which the world market of capital and goods would be severely reduced is as much a taboo today as a modern world in which active people would use modern convivial tools to create an abundance of use-values that liberated them from consumption. One can see in this pattern a reflection of the belief that useful activities by which people both express and satisfy their needs can be replaced indefinitely by standardized goods and services.

They can't; it doesn't work; and dawning human intelligence in the present is beginning to recognize this verdict from the accumulating breakdowns of the standardized Consumer Society.

This is the main signal coming through from current events—a signal more and more easily distinguished from the noise produced by the conventional experts of the day. Happily, there are a few other experts who hear the signals and are eager to interpret them to a growing audience. E. F. Schumacher was one who laid bare the fallacies of conventional economics and pointed in his own way to the same truths that Illich repeats. There are others in other fields—Barry Commoner is one—who are putting the meaning of the signals into reliable books—books that people are reading. *Food First* by Lappé and Collins is rapidly becoming the bible of readers who are alarmed about world food supply and the imminence of famine around the world.

But Nature is the really great communicator, these days—both inside nature and outside, visible nature. Her; signals keep coming through, not yet loud and clear enough for a great many people, but repetition—and Nature endlessly repeats herself—finally gets results.

Some very good contemporary historians are now taking down the signals and putting them into an avalanche of books and articles. Sooner or later, they will be understood.

REVIEW
REDISCOVERING THE GREEKS

TWO books we have been reading in lately—the kind that are enjoyable wherever you open them—are *Gods with Bronze Swords* (Doubleday, 1970) by Costa de Loverdo and *Earth, Air, Fire and Water* (Simon & Schuster, 1962) by Alexander Eliot. Loverde's book is an investigation of "The Historical and Archaeological Foundations of Greek Mythology," Eliot's is subtitled "A Personal Adventure into the Sources of our Life and Legend." The first book tracks the myth to past historical events; the second uses myth as a launching pad for imaginative reflections. Both contribute greatly to the meaning of the expression, "cultural heritage."

At the outset Mr. Loverdo wrestles with the meaning of the word "myth."

> Dictionaries offer various alternatives: "characteristic or narrative of an age of heroes or fable" or "tradition presenting, in allegorical form, some great natural, historical or philosophical event."
>
> It is the historian's task to extract the original fact from its envelope of fable.
>
> Everyone agrees that stories transmitted orally become transformed into legends of the miraculous. At Roncesvalles, for example, we are invited to admire the ten-meter-high rock cleft by Roland in his attack with Durandel. You could drive your donkey through the gap, supposedly made by one blow of his sword. Does that mean the knights of Charlemagne must be relegated to the ranks of pure fable? For a long time, however, this was the treatment given to proto-history by qualifying it as mythological.

This writer finds a historical basis for the story of Pegasus, the flying horse, and for the exploits of Daedalus and Icarus, who escaped from Cretan tyranny on wings. Pegasus, he says, stood for ships which have sails for wings, and Daedalus, according to ancient report, was "the first man to use sails on ships in place of oars." Sounds a bit prosy, and perhaps some myths were indeed dully factual in their mundane origins. Actually, Mr. Loverdo doesn't grind the edge of wonder off the Greek myths, but shows the use made of a certain sort of fact. Correcting Max Müller, who was fond of using solar imagery to explain much of ancient lore, Loverde says that the philologist neglected "the process by which myths are created: the pagans deified any mortal whose deeds were memorable."

> The mechanism is always the same: we Christians create our saints according to very similar criteria. (Herakles was deified for his Labors; St. George was beatified for "slaying the dragon.")
>
> For the subject of the myth, too, the end result is always the same: a seat in heaven.

No Westerner believed in the historical foundation of myth until Heinrich Schliemann (1822-1890) trusted Homer and relied on Pausanius and then dug up ancient Troy. After that a new spirit entered archaeology. What if the ancients told the truth, working a mythic change in it to deepen the meaning of human events?

> Of course, the further back one goes in time, the more uncertain become one's conjectures, but Perseus is only five reigns older than the Atreidae [Homer's name for Agamemnon and Menelaus, brought up by their grandfather, Atreus], who are now accepted historical figures.
>
> Denying his existence, or that of Jason or Herakles, when excavations have confirmed those of Agamemnon and Priam would be tantamount to conceding that a given set of grandsons had lived, but not their grandsires.

So now there is a new rule for researchers into the past:

> "In archaeology, whatever makes sense and is rational in the traditions is accepted as true until disproven."
>
> And, if one knows how to read them, it is plain that Homer, Pherecydes, Apollodorus of Athens, Hesiod and Diodorus Siculus never supposed for one moment that the heroes whose exploits they were recounting were "mythical."

This is a book which weaves together the skeins of fact underlying myths and legends. Happily, in order to do this the author has to repeat all the old stories in order to make his case.

The net result is to begin to take their authors seriously. Men of learning no longer insist that we must disbelieve the ancients. There is a sense in which recognizing history in myths adds to the credibility of mythic meanings.

Meanwhile, throughout this book, there are delighting odd facts—this, for example, on the Olympic Games:

> There are 192.27 meters between the two lines (starting and finish lines for relay racing): the length of the Olympic stadium. It was Herakles who determined its dimensions, for it was he who marked off the distance on the field "placing his feet one in front of the other six hundred times."
>
> These were footsteps, not strides, giving us the measure of the heroic foot, which later became the Olympic foot: 0.32 meters. And also, by inference, Herakles' height: approximately 1.65 meters. (Herodotus' estimate [six feet] would seem to be an exaggeration.) Since the average height of the men of that day was 1.55 meters or less (judging by the lengths of their bathtubs and tombs), and he towered a full ten centimeters (4") above them, he could fairly be regarded as the giant of the age.
>
> But smallness had no adverse effect upon the strength of the Bronze Age athletes, attested to by the weights and dumb-bells in the museum at Olympia, the discus of the famous pentathlon champion Asklepiades (241 B.C.), and the stone weighing 143.5 kilograms, which Bybon raised above his head with one hand in the sixth century B.C. (a record that has never been equaled)—tangible evidence of the performances achieved by the Olympionites.
>
> For what reward? "Herakles offered a crown (of scented leaves) to the winner of the games, as he himself had never taken payment for his services." (Diodorus.)
>
> In that he was telling a white lie, at least, for he had tried to obtain some form of remuneration from Augeias. However, the principle was a good one: instead of gold and silver medals, simple laurel wreaths. The promoters of today's Olympics have not respected this proviso, any more than modern nations at war have observed the truce which was also a rule of the ancient games.

The laurel, incidentally, came into being when Peneus, a river god, transformed his daughter Daphne, a beautiful nymph who aspired to follow Diana's example, into a dark green plant to protect her from the passionate pursuit of Apollo. In his sorrow, the sun god always wore a wreath of laurel and made it the prize for athletes and musicians who took part in his festival.

Alexander Eliot begins his book by repeating a question asked by his wife, which changed his life completely: *What will you do, Alex, what will you do when there are no more museums?*

He had been a writer about art—a very good one, it seems—but the challenge in the question led him to change his profession. Now he would write about life, with the classical heritage of art and literature as an avenue of approach instead of the object and end. This is to say that he becomes a myth-maker. Happily, he knows well the Greek myths which Loverde explores, and the paths in these two books often cross each other. It is especially interesting to read them together. Loverde's book demonstrates the leap from fact to a sense of ultimate meaning—what Northrop Frye speaks of in *The Stubborn Structure*, pointing out that science cannot enter our lives as an energizing force except in the form of myth. To affect our lives from within, scientific hypotheses have to be rendered into mythic terms, "as parallel or translated forms of themselves." This, indeed, is what the ancients did with history. "The language of concern is the language of myth, the total vision of the human situation, human destiny, human inspiration and fears."

Alexander Eliot does something similar, using the Greek vocabulary. Loverde tells us of Herakles' roots on earth. Eliot finds the hero an ideal fulfillment of human destiny. After an account of his Labors, he says:

> One yet greater offering did Heracles bring to all the ages and all the world, an idea that has worked and will work a transformation of humanity itself. This really won immortality for Heracles: the determination to be heroically of use. He thirsted for renown through service. And the name of Heracles lives because he lived up to it. . . . Heracles had never claimed to be a god on earth. He was passionately human, serviceable, direct. But Earth became his

steppingstone to godhood. Heracles showed what one man can do. He earned divinity.

Another passage illustrates the Greek balance between mythic meanings and scientific knowledge—a balance achieved by Plato in an exemplary way:

> The citizens of Delos once sent a delegation of suppliants to Delphi. Their island was having a long run of inexplicable bad luck, and they begged Apollo for a remedy. Easily found, said the Oracle. They need only double the size of their chief temple at home! So the islanders set to work with a will. Soon they had exactly doubled their temple's length, width and height. Whereupon their troubles also multiplied. Confusion reigned, and with it some regret. Delphi's full glory was already on the wane at that time. The island's bright young men eventually formed a second delegation to a different sort of shrine: Plato's brand-new Academy at Athens. The philosopher elected to receive them in his garden; he listened with care; he agreed that times had changed. Intellectual adventure was in the air now. One really should try to keep up with things. The Oracle had told them specifically to double their temple, but they had made it eight times larger! Plato then led his inquirers to the same garden gate by which they had entered, and said goodbye. Circling the Academy building, they may have noticed the inscription over the front door: *You cannot enter here unless you know geometry.*

The Oracle gave wisdom from heaven, but the Delians couldn't use it because they had neglected to learn the language of the earth.

COMMENTARY
A "SIGNAL" ABOUT MAN

WHILE A. H. Maslow is named as a founder of humanistic psychology in this week's "Children" article, and quoted in the lead, his importance as a seminal influence makes quotation from his last major book editorially appropriate. Early in *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (Viking, 1971) he described the theoretical basis of his lifework:

> What I am frankly espousing here is what I have been calling "growing tip statistics," taking my title from the fact that it is at the growing tip of a plant that the greatest genetic action takes place. As the youngsters say, "That's where the action is."
>
> If I ask the question, "Of what are human beings capable?" I put this question to this small and selected superior group rather than to the whole of the population. I think that the main reason that hedonistic value theories and ethical theories have failed throughout history has been that the philosophers have locked in pathologically motivated pleasures with healthily motivated pleasures and struck an average of what amounts to indiscriminately sick and healthy, indiscriminately good and bad specimens, good and bad choosers, biologically sound and biologically unsound specimens.
>
> If we want to answer the question how tall can the human species grow, then obviously it is well to pick out the ones who are already tallest and study them. If we want to know how fast a human being can run, then it is no use to average out the speed of a "good sample" of the population; it is far better to collect Olympic gold medal winners and see how well they can do. If we want to know the possibilities for spiritual growth, value growth, or moral development in human beings, then I maintain that we can learn most by studying our most moral, ethical, or saintly people.
>
> On the whole I think it is fair to say that human nature has been sold short. The highest possibilities of human nature have practically always been underrated. Even when "good specimens," the saints and sages and great leaders of history, have been available for study, the temptation too often has been to consider them not human but supernaturally endowed.

Here, one could say, is a "signal" from contemporary history, showing how the science of man is undergoing revolutionary change. Maslow is saying, quite simply, that if you want to know about human beings, study their health and strength, not their pathology. This is surely the foundation stone of the Herculean psychology of tomorrow.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HUMANISTIC PSYCHOLOGY

FROM time to time we get letters from young people who want to study Humanistic Psychology and ask for suggestions about where to go. We haven't been able to say very much in reply. First of all, in an area with so much scholastic diversity, the only sensible course is to go to school to a particular person, not a department. For reasons that will become evident, we have been hesitant about making such suggestions, although, back in the early 60s, we once or twice said it might be a good idea to write to A. H. Maslow at Brandeis. This seemed to work out fairly well, or interestingly, as in one case.

The problem was—is—that most of the inquirers were really hoping to find an "ideal" school, and the fact is, in a time like this, there aren't any. There may be a "right" place to go for a particular student, but in order to recognize it one needs the kind of maturity that most people acquire only much later in life. We think of three written examples of such maturity. The first is a watershed article—really a classic—written by Henry Murray on his personal discovery, years ago, of Carl Jung. He began by comparing the vitality of the analysts—their earnest efforts to "understand the most intimate and telling experiences" of people's lives—with the academic psychologist who "spends most of his time away from what he talks and writes about."

> He labors over apparatus, devises questionnaires, calculates coefficients, writes lectures based upon what other anchorites have said, attends committee meetings, and occasionally supervises an experiment on that non-existent entity, Average Man.

But as an admirer of Jung, he is also critical of orthodox psychoanalysis:

> . . . the question is, have the Freudians allowed the *id* enough creativeness and the ego enough will to make any elevating declaration? What is Mind today? Nothing but the butler and procurer of the body. The fallen angel of the soul has been put to rout by the starker theory of the soulless fallen man, a result—as Adam, the father of philosophy, demonstrated for all time—of experiencing and viewing love as a mere cluster of sensations.

By saying such things in an article in the April 1940 *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Henry Murray identified himself for the coming generation as a founding father of humanistic psychology. This splendid example of Man Thinking about Man should be read by anyone considering a career in psychology.

The second article we have in mind is made of a series of admissions and declarations by Carl Rogers back in 1952 (published in the Winter 1958 issue of *Improving College and University Teaching*—quarterly of the Graduate School of Oregon State College). Almost at the beginning, Dr. Rogers said:

> It seems to me that anything that can be taught to another is relatively inconsequential, and has little or no significant influence on behavior. . . .
>
> I have come to feel that the only learning which significantly influences behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning. Such self-discovered learning, truth that has been personally appropriated and assimilated in experience, cannot be directly communicated to another. . . .
>
> As a consequence of the above, I realize that I have lost interest in being a teacher.
>
> When I try to teach, as I do sometimes, I am appalled by the results, which seem a little more than inconsequential because sometimes the teaching seems to succeed. When this happens I find that the results are damaging. It seems to cause the individual to distrust his own experience, and to stifle significant learning. . . .
>
> As a consequence, I realize that I am only interested in being a learner, preferably learning things that matter, that have some significant influence on my behavior.

Well, Carl Rogers is also one of the principal founders of Humanistic Psychology. Can he, as a teacher, be true to what he says here? Can anybody teach without teaching? The best example of efforts in this direction was given by Socrates, who managed it by saying he didn't know much of anything and claimed to be only a

midwife of other people's ideas. Ortega gave a similar example in his essays and his advice to teachers: *Don't* presume to "transmit the cultural heritage," which is little more than hearsay, but devote all your energies to stirring up the hunger to know. Nothing else matters.

The third article is current—"The Technology of Humanism" by Richard Farson in the Spring issue of the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology.* It seems a severe criticism—if not an attack—of Humanistic Psychology, but as you read along you realize that Mr. Farson is actually charting the realities of the human condition, giving some illustrations from his own profession. What does he say?

First, that Humanistic Psychologists have become weak in theory. Except for the pioneers—Rogers, Maslow, Lewin, May, Moustakis, Allport, Kelly, Goldstein, and Bubler—they work almost entirely in "therapy," and are continually inventing novel therapeutic "technologies." Farson says:

> Largely because it is so heavily weighted on the side of application, it seems to me that humanistic psychology has fallen victim to many of the problems which it was introduced to correct. For example, one of the clearest calls for humanistic psychology in the early days was in response to the dominant psychology of the time which we accused of "fragmenting" or dehumanizing people by subjecting them to a technology designed to fix them, problem by problem, part by part. We argued that no matter how compassionate the motive or humane the goal, in the slavish devotion to that technology, the person as a self-purposive human being was somehow diminished. Yet now we have developed much the same problem in humanistic psychology. Like the behaviorists of the sixties, we have become obsessed with our new technology, which, to my mind, fragments people as much as do the approaches of those whom we criticized.
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> We currently boast a repertoire of more than 200 major "ways of growth" each containing dozens of specific techniques. I think it is lamentable that most people identify humanistic psychology as the collection of these techniques. Techniques are precisely what humanistic psychology is not about. Yet we cannot stop inventing them, and once invented we cannot refrain from using them on every problem we encounter. As Abraham Kaplan points out in his "law of the instrument," if you give a little boy a hammer he will find much that needs pounding.

Here Mr. Farson is verifying what Carl Rogers said. Techniques can be *taught.* They are, therefore, as were the skills taught by the Sophists, marketable:

> Our need to appeal to large numbers of people for our livelihood has helped to produce a large number of features which I consider to be unfortunate—showmanship, rhetoric, mystification, oversimplification, easy answers and quick results. When we are dependent on popular approval we cannot avoid a tendency toward giving people what they will pay for. By and large, people will not pay for a serious discussion of the complicated predicaments of everyday life, but they will pay a good deal for a good show, a dramatic performance, an intensive experience, a turn-on, a simplistic answer to life's problems, and most of all, for what they hope will cure them.

This article provides thirty pages of depth analysis of the current practice of humanistic psychology, and one might say that its publication in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology is* evidence of the health of the movement.

After reading these three articles one might turn to a new book, *Humanistic Psychology: A Source Book* (Prometheus Books, 1978, $16.95), for an up-to-date account of the thinking and work of humanistic psychologists. The editors are David Welch, George Tate, and Fred Richards. There is a valuable foreword by James B. Klee, who with A. H. Maslow formed the psychology department at Brandeis in 1951, and the contents include key papers by Maslow and Rogers, as well as one by Viktor Frankl. This is a large book (450 pages) with numerous contributors and representation of several points of view. The section on the environment has an article by Sam Love, and under economics there is Schumacher's "Economics Should Begin with People, not Goods." Readers looking for orientation in humanistic psychology will find help in these pages.

FRONTIERS

Spreading the Word

LAST week, in this space, we called attention to Leopold Kohr's showing that "overdeveloped" nations are bound to devour both the health of their people and the resources on which the future depends. There is a naturally healthful size—varying with local conditions—for human societies, and when this scale is exceeded self-destruction begins. Prof. Kohr, an economist who now teaches at the University College of Wales, argues from history and analogy that excessive size dooms both cities and nations. His books, which combine cultural anthropology with economic analysis, include *Development Without Aid* (Christopher Davies, 1973), *The City of Man* (University of Puerto Rico, 1976), and *The Overdeveloped Nations* (Davies, and Schocken in the United States, 1978). Something of Prof. Kohr's temper and approach is conveyed by what he told the Puerto Ricans in *The City of Man*. He had been teaching at their university, and after stressing the importance of economic self-sufficiency for the people of the island, he explained its practical basis:

> Now, it will be said that self-sufficiency may be all right for small communities but not for the vast populations a modern economy must nowadays provide for. This is correct. But the thing to do then is: to condemn as outmoded not self-sufficiency but the vastness of populations. In other words, instead of integrating these populations into ever larger units and common markets, one must divide them into so many parts that each will be small enough for self-sufficiency to produce all that is needed for the good life.
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> However, since the main condition of self-sufficiency is that its economy be unburdened by transportation costs, even a relatively small community such as Puerto Rico would still be too large as long as it maintains its present degree of traffic-generating integration and centralization. For even in dissociation from the United States, the transportation system needed for linking up all its interdependent regions is so enormous that it could never be provided from its own resources.
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> If Puerto Rico is to achieve self-sufficiency, it must therefore loosen not only its external economic ties with the United States but also the intra-Puerto-Rican ties existing among its own regions. This could best be achieved by the political dissolution of the country's centralized structure into a loose federation of perhaps 20 or 30 inward looking highly autonomous mountain and coastal states.
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> The advantages would seem to be obvious. In the first place, most of man's problems, taking their dimensions from the size of the society they afflict, can be solved with infinitely greater ease on a small local rather than on a large national or world scale. As the Prime Minister of Little Liechtenstein once told me with the pride of people doing things alone: "By the time a big country *learns* of a disaster, we are halfway through mending the damage."

There is hard thinking in all of Prof. Kohr's works, but none of it grim. When citing authorities in support of decentralization—he calls it the "small-cell" principle—he finds Noah the first exemplar (the Ark was a small community), and adds other illustrations:

> Then there was God who in wrath dismembered the United Nations of the Tower of Babel, and gave us the languages so that we should be happy in separation rather than kill each other by our constant effort to live in purposeless unity. There were Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas Aquinas. There was Plato who thought the limit of a population should be 5,040. Thomas More's self-sufficient towns in Utopia were to hold a maximum of 6,000 families Charles Fourier's *phalansteries:* 600 families or 1,500 to 1,600 individuals; Robert Owen's parallelograms: 500 to 2,000 members. William Morris wanted London dissolved into a number of self-sufficient villages separated by woodlands, which would certainly have solved all traffic problems. John Stuart Mill envisioned a loose world federation of small self-sufficient socialist communities. Justice Brandeis thundered against "The Curse of Bigness." Andre Gide, expressing his faith in the destiny of small nations, said the world, as in Noah's time, "will be saved by the few." And the same conclusion, to seek salvation in separation rather than in unification, derives economically from such renowned modern scholars as Raul Prebisch or Gunnar Myrdal.
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> Thus, from Myrdal to God, none of whom, with the exception of God, is usually considered a reactionary, testimony could be marshalled to the

> effect that Puerto Rico is economically viable, but not as a unit. It is viable in its parts. For only its parts are blessed with small enough dimensions that would permit not only independence in self-sufficiency but self-sufficiency in affluence.

Prof. Kohr uses statistics when they are helpful to an explanation, but his argument rests on spontaneous insight into how human societies and all living things work. He writes in terms of everyday experience, although he often brings in the particularized knowledge of planners and officials in order to prove a point. His books ought to be adopted as the texts used by students of economics and social science the world over—at least until the time when we no longer need to teach such common sense. Fortunately, the influential *Nation* (May 27) has given Kohr's latest book (*The Overdeveloped Nations*) a fine introduction to the American intellectual community, where it may eventually earn a place where it belongs—beside E. F. Schumacher's *Small Is Beautiful.*

The month of May must have been a good time for such beneficent infiltration to take place. In its issue of the same date (May 27) the *Saturday Review* accorded serious attention to Sim Van der Ryn's *The Toilet Papers.* The *SR* columnist, Thomas Middleton, gave an account of Mr. Van der Ryn's work with the Integral Urban House of the Farallones Institute, then told about his book:

> The first time I plucked it off the rack, I said, "What a repulsive title" and put the book back. Now, having read it, I see that my initial reaction was a bit foolish, though understandable. Unfortunately, my reaction was I think typical of what most people's initial reaction would be. That's a shame, because the book and its ramifications are important. . . .
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> The flush toilet has for a long time been one of the outstanding symbols of civilized living, and understandably so. . . . But all that stuff has to go somewhere, and it wasn't long before all our major rivers and some of our coastal waters were so full of it that they weren't fit to dive into and in some places the fish that survived weren't fit to eat. . . . Van der Ryn estimates that the wastes discharged every day into the Pacific by the city of Los Angeles could provide enough nutrients to grow 5,000 tons of vegetables.
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> Obviously, the "civilized" world is so committed to flushing everything into the ocean that we won't be able to bring about a massive reversal; but ecologically workable principles seem much more in tune with the way the world is supposed to work than do the principles imposed upon the planet by our industrial and technological revolutions.

The common sense of "the way the world is supposed to work" is getting around.