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THE INVISIBLE TREASURE

AFTER his judges had delivered their verdict of death, Socrates took some pains to explain to those who had voted for his acquittal why he regarded his fate with indifference, if not with anticipation. Although, by exercising his wits, he might have made a defense that would have got him off, he preferred dying, he said, to using such methods. Moreover, the prophetic voice by which he had guided his life said nothing to deter him from his fatal course. So, he concluded, it would be better for him to die. Even if death is actually the end, it should be as welcome as a sound sleep. On the other hand, if dying conducts one into the presence of the just and great of the past, it should be doubly welcome. There was even gaiety in Socrates' expectations:

> Put it this way. How much would one of you give to meet Orpheus and Musaeus and Homer? I am willing to die ten times over if this account is true. It would be a specially interesting experience for me to join there, to meet Palamedes and Ajax, the son of Telamon, and any other heroes of the old days who met their death through an unfair trial, and to compare my fortunes with theirs—it would be rather amusing, I think. And above all I should like to spend my time there, as here, in examining and searching people's minds, to find out who is really wise among them, and who only thinks that he is. What would one not give, gentlemen, to be able to question the leader of that great host against Troy, or Odysseus, or Sisyphus, or the thousands of other men and women whom one could mention, to talk and mix and argue with whom would be unimaginable happiness? At any rate I presume that they do not put one to death there for such conduct, because apart from the other happiness in which their world surpasses ours, they are now immortal for the rest of time, if what we are told is true.

These amiable—not to say convivial—musings have considerable power for the reader since they exhibit the serenity of a man unaffected by the shadow of death. Socrates set an example for all the world, the example of a man who thought it better to suffer than to do wrong, who believed an unexamined life was not worth living, and who, feeling no grudge against his accusers, simply told them that if they thought that they could evade criticism of their wrong way of life by putting people to death, there was "something amiss" in their reasoning. As a last word to those who had condemned him, he said:

> This way of escape is neither possible nor creditable. The best and easiest way is not to stop the mouths of others, but to make yourselves as good men as you can.

There is something about the figure of Socrates—that little man with a somewhat grotesque face—standing there before all those people, telling them exactly what he thinks, and why, that captures the imagination. Who can measure the influence of the deep simplicities of his thought on the people who, through long centuries after, read about him in Plato? We can't attempt to list the scholars and others who have studied and written about Socrates and reanimated Platonic ideas—there have been too many of them—but one thing is plainly noticeable: they all seem to have acquired certain qualities that set them a little apart from other writers. They all seem to have become really *good* men—people you would like to know or go to school to. These writers are often treasured by the people that come across them, who are likely to look up everything they have written.

Another sort of influence, on people who are not "readers," is illustrated by the sometimes dramatic response to the example of Socrates. A housewife who happened to attend a Great Books seminar on the *Apology* exclaimed: "He didn't *care* what they did to him; he knew that he was right, and said so. I didn't know there had ever been people like that!" This was for her an exciting discovery. She had never met a man like

Socrates. Her inarticulate longings for a human ideal began to take shape along the lines of the Socratic example.

We know about these things, of course. We know that Ideas have Consequences. This is why we give the schools a curriculum beyond the mere tools of literacy. We transmit the cultural heritage—what the great have found out about life. It would be better, perhaps, to make a curriculum of questions instead of answers, as Socrates did, but the people who plan education are believers in "progress." They suppose that when you teach people answers you give them a headstart, so education has become the technique of weighting down the minds of the young with the thoughts of other men. Even Socrates has trouble surviving the dulling effects of this program. His temper of independent discovery is not a goal of modern educational management.

Needed, as some present-day critics are pointing out, is the kind of teaching which helps students to acquire *leverage* for dealing with the weight of what they have been taught. But it's very hard for a teacher to hold a paying job if he starts doing something like that. No one gets along well in this world by asking questions which have no established or acceptable answers.

There are various ways of setting this problem. For example, June Goodfield, a historian of science, asked in a recent paper (*Science*, Nov. 11, 1977):

> Did the Shakespearean plays, with their almost God-like insight into the way that people behave, make people understand more, make people act better, make people feel more humane? It was with considerable surprise that I learned from David Daiches that the same people who went to the Globe Theatre or to any Elizabethan or Jacobean play, and saw these marvelous dramas with their rich poetry and their human understanding, would at the same place in the same afternoon watch a monkey tied to the back of a horse, chased by dogs who slowly bit it to death. This was their favorite occupation between the acts. For there is a large gap between appreciating the wonders of artistic imagination and going out and doing likewise, as there is between knowing ethical norms and going out and doing likewise, which no amount of discussion of "is" and "ought" will alter. This is my main quarrel with F.R. Leavis—the myth of the redemptive power of great works of art; the belief that by teaching a small group of elite to appreciate Lawrence and George Eliot you will change civilization. You won't at all—not by this alone.

June Goodfield has some further evidence:

> I am not at all convinced that somehow, from a study of the great thinkers of the past alone, we automatically get access to moral virtue. It is disturbing but nevertheless true that people can be extraordinarily sensitive to music and poetry and not necessarily apply this to their daily lives. Steiner has reminded us how people returned from a day's work in the concentration camps and then put Mozart on their gramophones. . . . Max Black reminded us of the exquisite capacity of philosophers to argue questions of ethics and morality in the most rigorous and convincing style, but he went on to say, "If I wanted to know whether an action I proposed to take was right or wrong, I wouldn't ask my professional colleagues, I'd ask my wife." Stoppard equally reminds us how Lenin, when he felt himself moved by the Appassionata Sonata of Beethoven, rigidly turned away, saying, "We've just got to hit people."

That was Lenin's idea of leverage. Socrates was a flunky of the bosses. Yet, if you think about it, this is only a way of showing that human beings become victims of moral blindness. They don't see the *point* of what great artists have been trying to say. But sometimes, unpredictably, they do. It was after looking at a great book—a classical work—that John Keats exclaimed,

> Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
> When a new planet swims into his ken
> Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eye
> He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
> Looked at each other with a wild surmise
> Silent upon a peak in Darien.

Keats, of course, was not "civilization." Civilization is what needs changing, we are told, and Keats needed little if any changing. Trying to change a man like Keats should probably be a punishable act. It's all those other people who need attention.

What sort of attention? That is what everyone is asking, these days, or what the writers of books about the future are asking. Well, as some of these writers say, we have to tell people what will happen in the future if we do *this,* and what will be almost inevitable if we do *that.* In a paper in the Spring 1978 *Alternative Futures* (published by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute), William Nichols and Charles P. Henry say:

> The planners try to extrapolate from trends visible in the present to predict various alternative futures, and then subject these alternatives to exhaustive analysis. Necessarily, such analysis must be heavily, although not exclusively, quantitative; and it must be simplified to be manageable. The result is that such thinking about the future is usually conservative: it assumes no large change in the locus of power, no radical shift in the patterns of conflict. In short, contingency planning is actually a way for managers of existing institutions to try to assure themselves that the future will not be radically different from the present.

In other words, no leverage. The sort of "progress" here anticipated is a step-by-step affair that can be controlled and directed by alert managers—an expectation that is at odds with much of our historical experience. Indeed, revolutionists, arguing from Leninist doctrine, maintain that progress grows only out of violent conflict, and the question arises: What *is* progress, anyhow? How do you measure it? Has it been reached when a liberal constitution is adopted (even if neglected in practice), or when the rate of consumption of luxuries exceeds the "quality of life" of most other nations?

Nichols and Henry believe that the time has come for "a redefinition of progress itself"—which would be leverage indeed—and quote from Richard Frye some suggestions for looking at ourselves and our accomplishments with changed eyes:

> . . . have we not perhaps asked the wrong questions of the Orient in antiquity, as we still do today? One asked why the Orient remained behind the Greeks, as we ask today why the Orient remains undeveloped. Is it not more appropriate to ask why the Greeks developed as they did or why the Renaissance and the Industrial Revolution made the Occident what it is now? In other words, perhaps we should explain why the West is abnormal while Asia and Africa have developed as expected in the course of history. Then the West today would be over-developed rather than the East under-developed. These may appear to be glib words, but if we change our perspective perhaps we can understand some things better in the present as well as in the past. (Richard N. Frye, as cited by Adda Bozeman in *Conflict in Africa*, 1976.)

If this proposal is not sufficiently unsettling, there is the further question of whether we should take improved social institutions as a measure of progress, or regard the *reality* of progress as evident only in the way people think and feel. For example, a reviewer in the *Christian Science Monitor* for June 14, reporting on Solzhenitsyn's *The Gulag Archipelago—Three*, notes the Russian novelist's conviction that only in the concentration camps was there the spirit of freedom, and that the camps were permitted to exist because "there was no public opinion outside." But in the camps, there was love, and even a kind of practice of freedom was born. The reviewer comments:

> Solzhenitsyn believes that had the Soviet people responded as the prisoners did, had they actively opposed the terror, Stalinism could not have come into being.
>
> The difficulty with this argument is that the prisoners, unlike Soviet citizens on the outside, formed a community. They had knowledge and they were able to share their experiences. And when they rose against their guards, they felt they had nothing to lose. Stripped of everything but life itself, they were mentally free in a way that the "free" Soviet citizen was not. In this, as in his earlier books, Solzhenitsyn stresses that during the Stalin years the only free people in Russia were those who had lost their "freedom."

Thoreau would of course have agreed. So, also, would the French poet, René Char. After the Liberation of France from the Nazi invaders, Char spoke of having to return from the colorful existence of the Resistance to "the 'sad opaqueness' of a private life centered about

nothing but itself." In order to take part in the life of the "liberated" French, he would have to *reject* the "treasure" of his years as a Resistance fighter.

In *Between Past and Future,* Hannah Arendt inquires into the meaning of this sense of deep loss afflicting the men of the Resistance:

> What was this treasure? As they themselves understood it, it seems to have consisted, as it were, of two interconnected parts: they had discovered that he who "joined the Resistance, found himself," that he ceased to be "in quest of (himself) without mastery, in naked unsatisfaction," that he no longer suspected himself of "insincerity," of being "a carping, suspicious actor of life," that he could afford "to go naked." In this nakedness, stripped of all masks—of those which society assigns to its members, as well as those which the individual fabricates for himself in his psychological reactions against society—they had been visited for the first time in their lives by an apparition of freedom. . . .

What are we to do with such incontestable facts of the human condition? That war, for one thing, seems to supply a leverage wholly absent during "peace"? Our familiar theories of progress have absolutely nothing to do with the quality of being Char speaks of—his wonderful "treasure"—yet what good, really, is any sort of progress without it?

On the other hand, not everyone would experience this treasure in the same circumstances, or even long for it. It was a subjective thing. Moreover, it took an invasion by an alien army to make the extreme conditions for having this experience. The poet and his comrades in arms might not have known anything about the wonder of a community held together by daring if the Germans had left France alone. How can "progress" be related to such accidents of history?

Is all this, then, no more than the exploitation of charged words? Or is it rather the case, as Nichols and Henry suggest, that a great deal of what has been written and read about Progress and "changing civilization" has been a game of words. We talk about progress and change without having any worthy meaning for what these words suggest. It would, moreover, be terrible to have to admit that war "brings out the best" in human beings. We know that this is no formula for progress, since war also brings out the worst in people and on a much larger scale.

Actually, for an even smaller minority than the Resistance fighters, life itself is a sufficient challenge to bring out the best. Why is this? Should progress, we must ask, be defined in terms that only these few can understand, since they seem to know the truth of the matter? Do we have a choice only between elitism and vulgarization? But ought we to label as elitism what we find in the *Bhagavad-Gita,* or the Sermon on the Mount, or in the writings of men like Tolstoy and Thoreau?

It will still be asked: Who listens to such men? Is it any use to keep on repeating the psycho-moral wisdom of the past? If the arts, drama, and literature embodying this wisdom have no more effect than Shakespeare's plays had on the rank and file of Elizabethan audiences, what point is there in great effort to keep such works before the eyes and ears of so indifferent a world?

Brooding on this question, Martin Buber wondered what appeal moral vision could have for modern populations. "It is an idle undertaking," he said, "to call out, to a mankind that has grown blind to eternity: 'Look, the eternal values!' "

> Men who have so lost themselves to the collective Moloch cannot be rescued from it by any reference, however eloquent, to the absolute whose kingdom Moloch has usurped. One has to begin by pointing to that sphere where man himself, in the hours of utter solitude, occasionally becomes aware of the disease through sudden pain: by pointing to the relation of the individual to his own self.

We need only to reflect on the impetus that is born from hearing, at the right moment, the Sermon on the Mount, and from the timeless insight of the Gita. Like the Buddha, these works speak only to those who are touched by longing, whose days are afflicted by existential pain.

The Eternal Values are a constant presence in the world of feeling and idea—a leaven that is always there, ready to work its ferment wherever humans, from whatever cause, have become ready to fill the vacuum in their moral lives. No one knows when that moment will occur, nor can it be planned. Yet events seem somehow to be collaborators in the production of historic change. A mix of pain, combining external and internal ingredients, brings the mixed response of inner and outer relinquishment together with inspiration. All over the world, people are saying: "I want to be free!" They are also saying: "I'm tired of being poor when the others have so much!"

No matter that, for pure philosophy, this expression is a contradiction in terms. Human life is very largely shaped by the dilemmas of contradictions in terms. And human progress—the sort of progress we can hope to understand and work for—seems to be working toward some level of permissible compromise—permissible only for the reason that we do not see that it *is* a compromise. The achievement of and acting upon honest conviction is the thing.

A text from a recent book has application here. In his *Choosing and Changing* (E. P. Dutton, 1978, $7.95), Richard Grossman asks why *compromise* has "such a poor track record in human history." The answer is that compromise works only for hopes mixed with illusion. It has legitimacy from seeming necessary. *"Compromise,"* says the writer of this thoughtful book, "is *the strategy for resolving public and private conflict; but conflict that is truly personal does not lend itself to compromise."*

Progress, then, in the definition that now emerges, is the movement toward resolutions or solutions which have less and less of illusion, and therefore of compromise, in their terms and goals. Without *some* compromise, there could be no noticeable change, yet the elimination of compromise is the only human force behind genuine progress.

REVIEW
CALIFORNIA INDIANS AND . . .

GARY SNYDER is both a poet and a mythopoeist. He is also other things, once one of the San Francisco "beats," and a Buddhist of sorts, but most of all he is a man who digests—makes part of himself—the stories, myths, and folklore of the American West, turning this material into forms of living tradition. More than art is needed to give new life to old myths. A certain depth or stature seems required, and also a common touch. Gary Snyder is able to put together everyday anecdote with timeless themes without the one interfering with the other—indeed they support each other—making the result something that people (including young people, perhaps mainly young people) can enjoy without feeling put upon by some pretentious excavator or transmitter of the Cultural Heritage.

The last of the six essays by Gary Snyder in *The Old* Ways (published by City Lights, Lawrence Ferlinghetti's book store, 261 Columbus Ave., San Francisco, Calif. 94133, at $2.50) is about Coyote (and Coyote Man), a legendary character in Western Indian tradition who combines something of Prometheus with a great deal of Loki. Snyder is especially good on the California Indians, who need a good word said for them. Earlier in the book he shows how he thinks and tells a little about himself (in a talk he gave somewhere):

> Yesterday, (who was it), David Antin, I believe, told how the Tragedians asked Plato to let them put on some tragedies. Plato said, "Very interesting, gentlemen, but I must tell you something. We have prepared here the greatest tragedy of all. It is called The State."
>
> From a very early age I found myself standing in an undefinable awe before the natural world. An attitude of gratitude, wonder, and a sense of protection especially as I began to see the hills being bull-dozed down for roads, and the forests of the Pacific Northwest magically float away on logging trucks. I grew up in a rural family in the state of Washington. My grandfather was a homesteader in the Pacific Northwest. The economic base of the whole region was logging. In trying to grasp the dynamics of what was happening, rural state of Washington, 1930s, depression, white boy out in the country, German on one side, Scotch-Irish on the other side, radical, that is to say, sort of grass-roots Union, I.W.W., and socialistic-radical parents, I found nothing in their orientation, (critical as it was of American politics and economics), that could give me an access to understanding what was happening. I had to find that through reading and imagination, which led me into a variety of politics: Marxist, Anarchist, and onwards.
>
> Now I would like to think of the possibility of a new humanities. . . .

The humanities, according to Snyder, are supposed to shake people loose from a wornout vision and introduce a new one. That is what they accomplished during the Renaissance, and the same inspiration is needed today. These essays show what he means by humanities.

First, then, about the California Indians:

> When the early mountain men, explorers, then pioneers, cattle ranchers, moved into this Great Basin country a hundred and fifty years ago, they found, particularly on the west side of the Rockies, peoples, Shoshonean and others (Salishan peoples in the Montanas) that they regarded with some contempt, as compared say with the Indians of the plains, the Indians who put up a lot of fight and had a more elaborate material culture. The Shoshonean people of the Great Basin and the California Indians have received the least respect and have been accorded a position at the bottom of the scale in white regard for Indian cultures. The California Indians were called "diggers." The early literature is really contemptuous of these people. Ignorance of the California Indians is extraordinary. I find that very few people are aware of the fact that the population of native people in California was equal to native populations in all the rest of North America north of the Rio Grande, and the greatest density of North American Indian population north of Mexico was in Napa County and Sonoma County California just north of San Francisco Bay. The image of California Indians as shiftless, and as having no interesting material culture persists, although they had elaborate dance, basketry, feather-working, ritual systems. That irony, then, is that these people who were the least regarded,

have left modern poetry with a very powerful heritage—Coyote.

Well, we can't do Coyote justice in a review, so we'll leave him to the readers of *The Old Ways*, except for the Promethean side of his doings. The Loki traits are prominent, but Prometheus, after all, tricked the powers that be and brought fire to humans. So did Coyote:

> The Mescaleros say he found where fire was kept. It was kept by a bunch of flies in a circle, and he couldn't get into the circle, but he was able to stick his tail in there and get his tail burning, and then off he scampered and managed to start some forest fires with his tail, and that fire kept running around the world, and people are still picking it up here and there. So he's done some good things. He taught people up in the Columbia River how to catch salmon. He taught people which were the edible plants.

Gary Snyder also writes generally on "The West." Anyone who lived the first part of his life on the East Coast and then came West to California has no trouble remembering the light that would come into people's eyes when told about the planned migration. It isn't just cowboys or Pacific surfing or Hollywood romance and Beverly Hills—it's something better even than dreams of El Dorado—but *what?*

> Nobody wants to say. So I'll offer my interpretation of that, hoping that I have proper credentials at least by being from an old Western family, who did what I would consider Western things, used Western speech, and had a certain kind of Western attitudes. A certain set, there are several sets. The usual literature of the West is concerned with the period of exploitation and expansion west of the tree fire. This is what we mean when we talk about the "epic" or "heroic" period of the West. A period of rapid expansion, first-phase exploitation. It is not a literature of place. It's a history and a literature of feats, of strength, and of human events; of specifically white, English-speaking American human events. It's only about this place by accident. The place only comes into it as a matter of inhospitable and unfamiliar terrain; Anglos from temperate climates suddenly confronted with vast, treeless, arid spaces. Space and aridity; confronting that and living with it is a key theme in Western literature, but only incidentally. It could just as well be an Icelandic saga or a heroic epic of Indo-European people spreading with their cattle and wagons into any other unfamiliar and new territory as they did in 1500 B.C. when they moved down into the Ganges River Basin or into Greece. The West, then, presented us with an image of manliness, of vigor, of courage, of humor, of heroics which became a very strong part of our national self-image; perhaps the strongest part, the most persuasive, the one which has been most exported to the rest of the world.

Snyder tells how it felt to grow up as a boy in Western country, and what happened to the country afterward. He also tells story after story of Coyote's exploits—which, as we said, we haven't room for—and then explains why he writes about him:

> Coyote, as said, was interesting to me and some of my colleagues because he spoke to us of place, because he clearly belonged to the place and became almost like a guardian, a protector spirit. The other part of it has to come out of something inside of us. The fascination with the trickster. A world folk image of the trickster, suppressed and altered in some cultures; more clearly developed in others. For me I think the most interesting psychological thing about the trickster and what drew me to it for my own personal reasons was that there wasn't a clear dualism of good and evil established there, that he clearly manifested benevolence, compassion, help, to human beings, sometimes, and had a certain dignity; and on other occasions he was the silliest utmost fool; the overriding picture is old Coyote Man, he's just always traveling along, doing the best he can.

Making Coyote come alive again involves the mythopoeic art, and Gary Snyder, having empowering reasons, is able to do it.

COMMENTARY
THE MODERN TRAGEDY

THE comparison drawn by Gary Snyder (see Review) between the settling of the American West and the descent of the Aryan peoples into India, long ago, is a good one to make. Without this sense of historical process, repeated again and again, sometimes the beginning of a great civilization, which is then followed by climax and decline, populations too easily become victims of the egocentric predicament. They suppose themselves unique. The culture of the humanities is a protection against such delusions of nationality and race. There may be immortal souls, but there are no immortal nations, and it seems a basic weakness of Western thought that modern history is written and read largely as the chronicles of particular nations, as though the sole importance of human events and experience were in fulfillment of a mere national destiny. Quite conceivably, an "under-developed" culture may be a better vehicle for rich human experience than what Richard Frye (see page 2) terms the "over-developed" West. Writers like Gary Snyder contribute to a sense of proportion in these matters.

This week's "Children" article provides another sort of comparison—of the far more fundamental idea of "culture" developed in the discussion circles under the guidance of Paulo Freire, with the artificial ideas of the "technological world." Actually, true ideas about culture may be easier to foster among poor peasants than among the working classes of the United States, where there are no simple examples of the transformations of natural materials into the resources of culture. The "backwardness" of the "advanced countries" in these terms is poignantly illustrated by an almost forgotten novel, *The Doll-Maker* by Harriet Arnow, published by Macmillan in 1954 (Avon paperback). This is the story of the slow erosion of the life of a talented and capable woman who left her home in Appalachia to join her husband in Detroit where he had a wartime factory job. From a farm she went to an urban slum, bringing her children. Here all that Freire says of the dehumanizing effects of mass production is portrayed in agonizing detail, showing the mutilation of this family in everyday life. There is heroism in the story, which makes it worth reading. The woman fights for the integrity of her family's life, and for the integrity of her craft. She was a force for humanization, yet was frustrated in practically all her relationships.

This story is a fine example of the obscure realities of modern tragedy. Simple nobility is worn down by circumstances beyond human control. The benefits of catharsis seem almost impossible to discern. The pain is stoically endured and the woman never gives up. If ever a human deserved to triumph over circumstances, she did, but it was impossible. The tragedy was not alone hers.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE SCHOOL OF THE WORLD

THE great Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, was a child of oppression. Born in Recife, in 1921, he came to know the effects of hunger as a schoolboy. The ever-present longing for food made him listless and he fell behind in his work. There was, however, another effect. As Richard Shaull says in his foreword to *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed,* this boyhood experience "also led him to make a vow, at age eleven, to dedicate his life to the struggle against hunger, so that other children would not have to know the agony he was then experiencing."

In undertaking this heroic task, Freire came to realize that while extreme poverty is a human disaster, far worse is the state of mind in which people regard themselves as helpless to change the circumstances of their lives. The teacher of the poor, he saw, must not try to print on the minds of the peasants the ideas he has himself acquired. Knowledge is not opinion or a collection of facts about the objective world. Knowledge is the turning of perception into action, and the perceptions of each one begin with his own field of personal awareness.

Not the idea of the world, then, but the idea of self must first undergo change. And the change must result from personal self-discovery. The teacher tries to indicate a path to self-discovery.

What is the situation of the poor in Brazil—the poor everywhere? Freire gives this account in *Education for Critical Consciousness* (Seabury Press, 1973):

> Excluded from the sphere of decisions being made by fewer people, man is maneuvered by the mass media to the point where he believes nothing he has not heard on the radio, seen on television, or read in the newspapers. He comes to accept mythical explanations as his reality. Like a man who has lost his address, he is "uprooted." Our new education would have to offer man the means to resist the "uprooting" tendencies of our industrial civilization which accompany its capacity to improve living standards.
>
> In our highly technical world, mass production as an organization of human labor is possibly one of the most potent instruments of man's massification. By requiring a man to behave mechanically, mass production domesticates him. By separating his activity from the total project, requiring no total critical attitude toward production, it dehumanizes him. By excessively narrowing a man's specialization, it constricts his horizons, making of him a passive, fearful, naive being. And therein lies the chief contradiction of mass production: while amplifying man's sphere of participation it simultaneously distorts this amplification by reducing man's critical capacity through exaggerated specialization.
>
> One cannot solve this contradiction by defending outmoded and inadequate patterns of production, but by accepting reality and attempting to solve its problems objectively. The answer does not lie in rejection of the machine, but rather in the humanization of man.

The spirit in which this goal is pursued is described early in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed:*

> Because it is a distortion of being more fully human, sooner or later being less human leads the oppressed to struggle against those who made them so. In order for this struggle to have meaning, the oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather the restorers of the humanity of both.

How does this work begin? The difficulty with attempting to answer such a question briefly, in a review, is that it makes a sort of "package" out of an endlessly varied activity in which the teacher must enter into the lives of the people, learning to feel and think as they do. This means understanding the intricate web of their lives and recognizing the connections which underlie their decisions. It comes down to helping them to become free to think differently about themselves, and not trying to vivisect their psychological universe, which can only be altered by themselves.

The contrast between nature and culture is basic to Freire's approach. Culture is what human

beings add to nature, which is given; culture is the transformation of the environment. The object is to give awareness of—

> the active role of men *in* and *with* their reality; the role of mediation which nature plays in relationships and communication among men; culture as the addition made by men to a world they did not make; culture as the result of men's labor, of their efforts to create and re-create; the transcendental meaning of human relationships; the humanist dimension of culture; culture as a systematic acquisition of human experience (but as creative assimilation, not as information-storing); the democratization of culture; the learning of reading and writing as a key to the world of written communication. In short, the role of man as Subject in the world and with the world.

These abstract generalizations are not of course used in the program, although their meaning must be felt in the language of experience. And some generalizations—the idea of "culture," for example—are essential.

> From that point of departure, the illiterate would begin to effect a change in his former attitudes, by discovering himself to be a maker of the world of culture, by discovering that he, as well as the literate person, has a creative and re-creative impulse. He would discover that culture is just as much a clay doll made by artists who are his peers as it is the work of a great sculptor, a great painter, a great mystic, or a great philosopher; that culture is the poetry of lettered poets and also the poetry of his own popular songs—that culture is all human creation.

Discussion in the culture circles formed by Freire begins with familiar realities, showing how man through work constantly "alters reality."

> By means of simple questions, such as, "Who made the well? Why did he do it? How did he do it? When?" which are repeated with regard to the other "elements" of the situation, two basic concepts emerge: that of *necessity* and that of *work;* and culture becomes explicit on a primary level, that of subsistence. The man made the well because he needed water. And he did it because, relating to the world, he made the latter the object of his knowledge. By work, he submitted the world to a process of transformation. Thus, he made the house, his clothes, his work tools. From that point, one discusses with the group, in obviously simple but critically objective terms, the relations among men, which unlike those discussed previously cannot be either of domination or transformation, because they are relations among subjects.

The excitement of self-discovery is evident in the participants. They even noticed that they were not being shown anything "new," but were remembering out of their own experience.

> "Tomorrow," said a street sweeper in Brasilia, "I'm going to go to work with my head held high." He had discovered the value of his person. "I know now that I am cultured," an elderly peasant said emphatically. And when he was asked how it was that now he knew himself to be cultured, he answered with the same emphasis, "Because I work, and working I transform the world."

In this approach, learning to read became something far more important:

> From the beginning we rejected the hypothesis of a purely mechanistic literacy program and considered the problem of teaching adults how to read in relation to the awakening of the consciousness. We wished to design a project in which we would attempt to move from naiveté to a critical attitude at the same time we taught reading. We wanted a literacy program which would be an introduction to the democratization of culture, a program with men as its Subjects rather than as patient recipients, a program which itself would be an act of creation, capable of releasing other creative acts, one in which students would develop the impatience and vivacity which characterize search and invention.

The "generative" words around which problems are developed are obtained by the teachers from the people themselves. There is confidence in the people and in their power to learn. "I have the school of the world," said an illiterate peasant, which made his teacher ask, "What can one presume to 'teach' an adult who affirms, 'I have the school of the world'?"

FRONTIERS

Makers of the Present

THE criticism of today combines exposure of what we have done to other people with equally searching accounts of what we have done to ourselves. (Wendell Berry's *The Hidden Wound* is a fine example of this.) A recent book on the Consumer Culture (*Captains of Consciousness* by Stuart Ewen) tells how modern advertising has "commodified" the conception people have of themselves—"not merely about their physical allurements, cleanliness, breath and body odor, but about status, family authority, even love and death." Artists saw all this years ago. Walter Benjamin, a brilliant German Jew who died tragically in 1940, understood the modes of this self-alienation and how its infection spread. He wrote in *Reflections* (quoted by Todd Gitlin in the *Nation* for July 8-15):

> In the convulsions of the commodity economy we begin to recognize the monuments of the bourgeoisie as ruins even before they have crumbled. . . . The collector is a true inmate of the interior [household]. He makes the transfiguration of things his business. To him falls the Sisyphean task of obliterating the commodity-like character of things through his ownership of them. But he merely confers connoisseur value on them, instead of intrinsic value. The collector dreams that he is not only in a distant or past world but also, at the same time, in a better one, in which, although men are as unprovided with what they need as in the everyday world, things are free of the drudgery of being useful.
>
> Opinions are to the vast apparatus of social existence what oil is to machines: one does not go up to a turbine and pour machine oil over it; one applies a little to hidden spindles and joints that one has to know.

Well, there are spindles and spindles, and different levels of joints. Good ideas also get spread around. Back in 1965, when E.F. Schumacher first began talking about intermediate and appropriate technology, not many people were ready to listen. But the time had come for events to collaborate with him and he kept on, looking for the right spindles and locating "the joints that one has to know." He must have found them, for today his thinking is a manifest force in the world, while the reforms he proposed are increasingly regarded as simple common sense. In a long article verifying Schumacher's major contentions, Robert Toth (*Los Angeles Times*, June 18) begins by listing the now obvious mistakes of U.S. "aid" programs:

> —Large tractors introduced into Pakistan by Western experts allowed farm owners to work more land with less labor, so they bought more land and, in the process, displaced tenant farmers. This put 40% of all farmhands in one region out of jobs and forced them into urban squalor, with little increase in crop productivity per acre.
>
> —An artesian well drilled on the southern fringes of the Sahara for nomadic herdsmen lulled them into staying too long in the area `when the drought struck. Traditionally, such nomads move at the first signs of drought. This time, when the herdsmen, caught in the technological trap, finally decided to migrate they could not catch up to the receding foliage before their herds died.
>
> —The vaunted "green revolution," in which high-yield strains of rice and other crops have increased food output, has also increased the income gap between big and small farmers. The new strains require irrigation and the use of more fertilizers and pesticides, all of which raise production costs. Large land owners can afford it, but small ones, particularly in nations where credit systems are biased against them, cannot take advantage of the advanced technology.
>
> —From the Philippines to the Barbados, new mothers have been shunning breast feeding in favor of powdered formulas, even though they have no clean water for mixing them, no fuel to boil the bottles and nipples and no sanitary storage facilities. The babies do not get the nourishment and immunities of their mothers' milk, and the unsterilized and often diluted formula exacerbates the malnutrition and diarrhea that are chronic in Third World infants. Some mothers reportedly stretch a four-day supply to four weeks. Others have substituted corn starch and cocoa for the formula, and one Nigerian woman used plain water in the belief that it was the bottle and the nipple that provided the nourishment.

What was the origin of these once so impressive but now plainly misbegotten enterprises? In a generalizing article on late nineteenth-century moguls in industry and finance (*Saturday Review*, July 22), David Koskoff tells what made men like Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, Andrew Mellon, and John D. Rockefeller tick. Their claims and self-justifications became the themes of more sophisticated twentieth-century corporate rationalization:

> Their respect for the law was principally a respect for the law of the jungle. Those with a little sensitivity latched onto Social Darwinist writings as a rationale and moral justification for public-be-damned actions. . . . The entrepreneurs of the Gilded Age were not inventors—there were no Edisons, Wrights, Westinghouses among them. Rather, they were supreme organizers, with well-ordered minds and fearsome energy. All believed, or claimed to believe, that the continued consolidation of industry into fewer and fewer and bigger and bigger units was in the best interests of mankind, as well as of themselves. . . .
>
> In the act of pursuing self-interest, they pushed the United States to a higher form of economic organization, at a faster than normal rate of growth. Like so many hormone shots, their enterprises brought the country to economic maturity at a rate of speed that was shocking but bracing to the national system. . . . The example set by such magnates inspired many young people to be productive for themselves and their country.

The portraiture, however simplified, seems accurate enough, although the writer's language is morally ambivalent. He seems to think that these domineering industrialists and bankers did us some good for a while—got us *going*, so to speak. It remained for E. F. Schumacher to show *where* we have been going, and what our "progress" has done to us and to the rest of the world.

The young of the present generation—a century or so later—are able to find very different examples, because of the efforts of a remarkable set of pioneers. The contrast is nothing if not striking. Today the energies of capable men and women are aimed in another direction, and we are beginning to recognize the practical strength of ideas founded on human and natural good.

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