

SOMETHING THAT MIGHT WORK

THE arts, it is often said, are representations of life. Sometimes art is called an imitation of life, but imitation is likely to be no more than a copy of external form, made up of the transient and superficial, the accidents and trivia, of appearance. Imitation may reproduce only a snapshot of one scene in an endless sequence of episodes, without touching the underlying meaning, if meaning there be. Representation seeks to capture and reveal the hidden form of meaning, by careful selection of happenings or juxtapositions in a drama in which both artist and spectator play parts. The idea of art is thus an idea of self-instruction, locating and symbolizing meaning behind the confusions of life.

In *Irrational Man*, a book which investigates Existentialism, William Barrett traces this view of art to Aristotle:

The classical tradition in literature, deriving from Aristotle's *Poetics*, tells us that a drama (and consequently any other literary work) must have a beginning, middle, and end. The action begins at a certain point, rises toward a climax, and then falls to a denouement. One can diagram a classical plot of this kind by means of a triangle whose apex represents the climax with which everything in the play has some logical and necessary connection. The author subordinates himself to the requirements of logic, necessity, probability. His structure must be an intelligible whole in which each part develops logically out of what went before. If our existence itself is never quite like this, no matter; art is a selection from life, and the poet is required to be selective. However, it is important to note that this canon of intelligible literary structure—beginning, middle, and end, with a well-defined climax—arose in a culture in which the universe too was believed to be an ordered structure, a rational and intelligible whole.

But what if the conception of an orderly universe no longer holds our faith? What if it collapses into the random motion of atoms in the void, and organic life is, as Darwin taught, a vast

accident with no purpose of its own, its meaning no more than the uses we devise? What then should or must the artist do for representation? As Barrett asks:

What happens if we try to apply this classical Aristotelian canon to a modern work like Joyce's *Ulysses*, 734 pages of power and dullness, beauty and sordidness, comedy and pathos, where the movement is always horizontal, never ascending toward any crisis, and where we detect not the shadow of anything like a climax, in the traditional sense of that term? If Joyce's had been a disordered mind, we could dismiss all this as a sprawling chaos, but he was in fact an artist in superb control of his material, so that the disorder has to be attributed to his material, to life itself. It is, in fact, the banal gritty thing that we live that Joyce gives us, in comparison with which most other fiction is indeed fiction. This world is dense, opaque, unintelligible; that is the datum from which the modern artist always starts. The formal dictates of the well-made play or the well-made novel, which were the logical outcome of thoroughly rational preconceptions about reality, we can no longer hold to when we become attentive to "the things themselves," to the facts, to existence in the mode in which we do exist. If our epoch still held to the idea, as Western man once did, that the whole of reality is a system in which each detail providentially and rationally is subordinated to others and ultimately to the whole itself, we could demand of the artist that his form imitate this idea of reality, and give us coherence, logic, and the picture of a world with no loose ends. But to make such a demand nowadays is worse than an impertinence: it is a travesty upon the historical being of the artist.

Here is displayed the meaning of the word "modern"—although by now the term has lost virtually all meaning, as it must as the years go by. But within our lifetime modern means the acceptance or recognition of unpredictability instead of order as our environment. It means that it has become impossible to make sense out of our lives as collaborations with the larger meaning of the world. Hence the disturbing conclusions of

Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Sartre, and some others who have sought to make some kind of armed truce with the inexplicability of it all. Yet there are writers who have experienced the fires of senselessness and found a refined feeling of hope, mostly from within themselves. Two generations of such thinkers may be represented by the essayists, Joseph Wood Krutch and Theodore Roszak. From *littérateur* Krutch became an amateur naturalist who recognized beauty and order in the life of the desert, while Roszak located the testimony of meaning in the threads of living ideas held by thoughtful men throughout history.

In recent years, however, the impact of events has seemed to confirm the apostles of senselessness. The bleak stoic faith of the existentialists gives little support save to authentic heroes, and as disorder spreads the confrontation with bitter and unconnected brute facts of existence is becoming a common experience. A book we have been rereading, *Part of a Winter* (Crown), which came out in 1978, presents something of this feeling in the fragmentary autobiography of what is supposed to be an ordinary man, but now seems most unusual, at least in the telling. In an early chapter, under the heading: "Memo to Western Civilization—*please pick up your trash on the way out,*" the author, a Coloradoan, George Sibley, says:

. . . every time I start trying to look "objectively" and generally on three years or a decade or a week of life in this world, I realize anew what an irrelevant effort objective generalization is. We are fed study after study, poll after poll, and I think they are supposed to help us cope somehow or another; but I swear the only ones that are useful are the ones where the bias is obvious, because then I at least know where the pollster lives. . . . I eventually have to come back to confront the fact that it isn't *the* world that is going to hell; it is *my* world that is going to hell, or going mad . . . and not a block away is a smug fellow who can't understand my consternation, everything is just fine in *his* world.

I look around me in the world today, and I don't believe it is just advanced latent paranoia on my part

that sniffs out "walking madness" nearly everywhere I go.

During a weekend in July, 1965, on a balmy evening in Chicago, he arrived at "what seemed to be a splendidly rational and well-formulated decision to destroy myself."

What seemed most attractive about the idea was that the destruction was not to be complete, the idea was just to eliminate a great deal of dead weight. I had the instinctive sense that it wasn't life that was intrinsically bad; it was just *my* life that was ridiculous, closed off from real experience, bad not because it was sinful, but bad because it was *safe, niggardly, pale, weak, unimaginatively ordinary, and generally duller than doorknobs*. The idea then was to die and be reborn immediately on my own terms; or to be more specific, I wanted to destroy Lieutenant George Sibley, oh five triple two nine two one, a/k/a one nine three two five two oh four eight, Bachelor of Arts (Master of None), white, Anglo, sometimes Protestant, virgin, middle class, intellectual, innocent, bright, clever, normal; and open up a clear path to the future for—well, for something else.

And so I walked out of a barracks at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, that Sunday evening with a change of clothes rolled up in a tidy bundle, and got into my ordinary, dependable, generally dull, secondhand Rambler, and, as the proceedings under the Code of Uniform Military Justice put it later, "absented myself without proper authority from the place of duty at which I was required to be."

After a couple of pages of private dialogue with Henry David Thoreau on the Reason for Civil Disobedience, Sibley gets around to the fact that the Army turned him loose with an Honorable Discharge because they didn't know what else to do with him.

I was so free that it no longer mattered to be right, or even understood. The Army shrinks said it was a tendency toward masochism; I wanted to be punished, wanted to suffer for the sins of the world. . . . But in arriving at that conclusion, the psychiatrists became the unwitting accomplices of my freedom. I received a "written reprimand" from the Commanding General of the post for my actions, and I did *lapse* for a bit. I answered his reprimand with a letter that would have got me ten years per word in a more innocent age without psychiatrists. But there was that report: he *wants* to be punished—so the

worst thing we can do to him is not punish him. Let him go. Let go. Let go.

The best things in this book are the asides which Sibley records when he isn't wondering how to make sense of the world, and uses the sense he has already extracted; for example:

Ah freedom! Let it ring! People were announcing from the universities, pulpits, and city-hall steps that it wasn't true, that America wasn't the land of the free. They pointed to residual chronic racism, the draft, Vietnam, economic inequality, sexual chauvinism, and the like, and said that a country plagued with such things could not claim that its people were free. When apologists for America said where else in the world would you be free to bitch so much and still stay out of jail, Marcuse tongued the Doublespeak of "repressive tolerance." And people began hurling themselves against barricades or policemen, to prove they could go to jail and were therefore not free.

But however honorable and brave their efforts were—those of the protectors and apologists alike—the whole thing didn't really have much to do with "freedom." The elimination of racial intolerance requires the instillation of racial tolerance. What's that to do with freedom? The best possible resolution for the Vietnam conflict was eventually chosen: to stop the conflict so Vietnam could get about. working on its resolution. Nothing there about freedom. There are certain things we can grant each other: to the oppressed, tolerance; to the peaceful, the right not to fight; to women, access to the same bag of worms that we men are so happy and fulfilled by; to the meek and the weak and other "unequals," a head start and a stacked deck if the strong are feeling especially magnanimous. But nobody gives us *freedom*—because if you want freedom, you just take it; it's right there, take all you want, no limit.

What did Sibley do after he got out of the Army? He entered a calling which comes naturally to men of his responses to life—he became an editor. He started a weekly newspaper in a small Colorado ski-resort town, and managed somehow to break even. He now—and perhaps then—understood exactly what newspapers are and do:

The function of a modern newspaper (not necessarily its intended function but certainly its effective function) seems to be to tie up the senses and

the mind in a consideration of abstractions, conventions, and other mind-born structures which have no reality other than that which we grant them. The Dow-Jones. The Executive, Legislative, Judicial, and the Candlemaker. The Federal Reserve, the Floating Dollar—these abstractions and conventions were, once upon a time, conceived of as means for dealing with certain realities around us. But the newspapers make them realities unto themselves: no longer the means of our prevailing but the ends that insulate us from a more real world. We tune our sensibilities to the printed page, where we learn that the big board is slipping, or that recent polls indicate that so-and-so has an edge over whosis in California, and our day is ruined. . . .

But what began to bother me a great deal, during my newspapering years in Crested Butte, was the almost "gravitational" inevitability with which I found myself beginning to sound more and more like the standard, run-of-the-mill newspaper. The sum and total of my experience there was the conclusion that I wasn't editing the newspaper; I was being edited by what a newspaper is.

Sibley is not a physicist; he is not a "philosopher of science"; his interest does not lie in explaining the existentialists to us; but he can't avoid wondering what meaning the world has, whether for us or for itself. In a section on mining and geology and the natural forces which shaped the Rocky Mountains, he says:

Yes, great were the glaciers and mighty the ice—but sometimes we don't do so bad ourselves. It took the glaciers tens of thousands of years to grind out their bowls, but they didn't have such sophisticated technology as we do. We've managed some respectable gouges in a little under three hundred years—counting just the Industrial Revolution; if you want to include all the time it took us to tool up for the work—say eight or ten thousand years. "Civilization is the possession of instruments, material and social, for accomplishing all sorts of things, whether those things were worth accomplishing or not."

But what *are* we accomplishing? That's where I start getting antsy. I am not like Thoreau and the Sierra Club, mooning over some lost Eden, a pastoral paradise I never knew and would not be at home in. But neither am I in there hump, hump, humping for the greater glory of progress and the GNP. I don't think I can be accused of wanting to both have my cake and eat it. I have lived these last ten or fifteen

years in a state of genteel poverty that even Henry would probably have grudgingly acknowledged as being on the right track, and it hasn't been so unbearable that I want to change too radically for the better. . . .

All I want to know is this: are these tremendous accomplishments—the creation of cirques on a par with glacial work, the piling up of great moraines of rubble and rust—somehow worth it in what they bring us in the passing? I have, as I said, largely stopped reading the papers, and I've always avoided the television news like the latent alcoholic obeying a sixth sense to avoid that first drink, so I don't know what good news I've been missing . . . but the street-talk this year has all been about the incredible fact that the coal-miners don't seem to want to go down and dig the glorious coal for the glorious future achievements of America! And everywhere I go—into stores, into groceries, into the discount temples—I find the set smile or the more honest glumness that seems to whisper behind the eyes *Don't tell me about it, I'm just in it for the money*. I hear we're going to get a tax break so we'll all have more money to spend, thereby cranking up the economy: we'll consume more, we just aren't creating those cirques and moraines fast enough. . . . Jesus God, are we on some kind of *timetable* or something? When we are working at maximum efficiency, this civilization of ours, what will our rate of consumption be? One mountain per decade, One per year? Two per year?

A final comment at the end of the book:

If we want predictability, regularity, uniformity, standardization, homogeneity, just remember what the New England farmers said: "The Ice Age isn't over, the glaciers just went back for more rocks."

As it turned out, I gradually came to realize that my real problem, here, at the apex (or maybe just a little past) the greatest of all civilizations so far, was the same basic problem that confronted the oldest of ancient men: How do you put together, out of all this vast potential, something that might work?

Sibley may sound light-hearted, but he wrote a serious book. He has a Thoreauvian concern with the ways of the world, lots to object to, but no list of Public Enemies. He has no authorities either, no scriptures to quote, no moral mandates to declare. Yet in a way the book is a contrapuntal duet with Thoreau as the other voice. This works well enough, since Thoreau's

writing is really a collection of musings, talking to himself, and so is Sibley's.

This, we think, is a healthy kind of existentialism. Unlike the "modern" artists, it doesn't insist that life no longer has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and replace the symmetry of classical expression with a lot of random shots in the dark. It seeks authentic beginnings, endurable middles, and climactic endings, if they are to be had.

Crimes there may be, against both nature and man, but as members of the human race we have a common guilt, and our innocence is for the most part the result of timidity or lack of opportunity.

The thinking in this book, and in some others of our time, seems a going back to square A and trying to reflect with only the assumptions that spring from our hearts and cannot be denied without self-betrayal. To do this requires, of course, that we look all the going assumptions over, taking note of their origin, and then considering their validity. We have to choose, since there can be no life without assumptions, and the testing of assumptions seems a matter of both history and current events.

What shall we say of assumptions about the world? Is it enough only to look at the world, identify and measure its forces, then pick and choose its offerings as one might in a cosmic cafeteria? Or has the world something to say to us—something harmonic with the feeling in our hearts? We are admittedly weak in this art of translation. And as Melville warned, there is "an immense deal of flummery" in the claim that "you must *live in the all*." But then he added in a postscript in this letter to Hawthorne: "N. B. This 'all' feeling, though, there is some truth in." But how and when, and how much?

Yet the song of the heart never wholly dies away. Listening to it without prejudice, with awe, perhaps, but without fear or suspicion is the genius of the poet, and using what is heard with balance is the capacity of the sage.

REVIEW

INTELLECT AND NOUS

SOME books—not, however, many—need to be read again and again, as a cow grinds away at the cud in its mouth. One such book is Hannah Arendt's *The Life of the Mind*, two volumes now bound in one (Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, paperback, 1978, \$9.95). It is a study of thinking, as might be expected, and the key idea is the distinction between thinking and knowing, which runs throughout the book. Usually this distinction is blurred, for reasons which are evident, yet drawing thinking apart from knowing is crucial to understanding ourselves. This idea is not of course the author's discovery, as she shows, but is likely to be found wherever there has been serious inquiry into the nature of thought.

In one place she introduces this difference by contrasting science with "real" thinking, saying that science is only an elaborate form of "common-sense thinking," in pursuit of a descriptive and demonstrable account of what we learn from observation of nature. Hannah Arendt writes:

The faculty of thinking, however, which Kant, as we have seen, called *Vernunft* (reason) to distinguish it from *Verstand* (intellect), the faculty of cognition, is of an altogether different nature. The distinction, on its most elementary level and in Kant's own words, lies in the fact that "concepts of reason serve us to conceive (comprehend) as concepts of the intellect serve us to apprehend perceptions." In other words, the intellect (*Verstand*) desires to grasp what is given to the senses, but reason (*Vernunft*) wishes to understand its *meaning*. . . . As the German translation of the Latin *perceptio*, the word *Wahrnehmung* used by Kant (what is given me in perceptions) and ought to be *true* (*Wahr*) clearly indicates, truth is located in the evidence of the senses. But that is by no means the case with meaning and with the faculty of thought, which searches for it; the latter does not ask what something is or whether it exists at all—its existence is always taken for granted—but *what it means for it to be*. This distinction between truth and meaning seems to me to be not only decisive for any inquiry into the nature of human thinking but also to be the necessary

consequence of Kant's crucial distinction between reason and intellect.

In Hannah Arendt's usage, truth applies only to conclusions of fact. The demonstrations of science are *compelling—apodictic*, as the Greeks put it—once seen not subject to dispute. But meaning, the sense of which leads to feeling of value, and to judgment or decision, can hardly be publicly settled. Meaning, then, is the goal of philosophers, while facts are the treasure of the scientist. That is why philosophers seem to make little or no "progress," while scientists accumulate great mountains of facts, and then, on occasion, proceed to do with them things that horrify us by their defiance of meanings that seem quite obvious.

Yet the two modes of thinking are closely related. Hannah Arendt says:

By drawing a distinguishing line between truth and meaning, between knowing and thinking, and by insisting on its importance, I do not wish to deny that thinking's quest for meaning and knowledge's quest for truth are connected. By posing the unanswerable questions of meaning, men established themselves as question-asking beings. Behind all the cognitive questions for which men find answers, there lurk the unanswerable ones that seem entirely idle and have always been denounced as such. It is more than likely that men, if they were ever to lose the appetite for meaning we call thinking and cease to ask unanswerable questions, would lose not only the ability to produce those thought-things that we call works of art but also the capacity to ask all the answerable questions upon which every civilization is founded. In this sense, reason is the a priori condition of the intellect and of cognition; it is because reason and intellect are so connected, despite utter difference in mood and purpose, that the philosophers have always been tempted to accept the criterion of truth—so valid for science and everyday life—as applicable to their own rather extraordinary business as well. For our desire to know whether arising out of practical or purely theoretical perplexities, can be fulfilled when it reaches its prescribed goal, and while our thirst for knowledge may be unquenchable because of the immensity of the unknown, the activity itself leaves behind a growing treasure of knowledge that is retained and kept in store by every civilization as part and parcel of its

world. The loss of this accumulation and of the technical expertise required to conserve and increase it inevitably spells the end of this particular world. The thinking activity on the contrary leaves nothing so tangible behind, and the need to think can therefore never be stilled by the insights of "wise men."

This seems a way of saying that progress in the grasp of meaning is always an individual affair—such progress is undeniable: we do have wise men—but the insight of the wise is simply not transferable, a source of frustration for the advocates of doctrinal religion. The words of the wise may be endlessly repeated, but these echoes grow emptier and emptier, with no discernible effect on human conduct. And lately it has been brought home to us that progress in the accumulation of facts and skills of manipulation of natural forces *without* a corresponding growth in wisdom may be the making of the most frightful destiny.

Hence the importance of the distinction between meaning and the cognition of facts, and the timeliness of such books as Hannah Arendt's. She makes the distinction again and again, saying:

The transformation of truth into mere verity [fact after fact] results primarily from the fact that the scientist remains bound to the common sense by which we find our bearings in a world of appearances. Thinking withdraws radically and for its own sake from this world and its evidential nature, whereas science profits from a possible withdrawal for the sake of specific results.

Again—

Thinking, no doubt, plays an enormous role in every scientific enterprise, but it is the role of a means to an end; the end is determined by a decision about what is worthwhile knowing, and this decision cannot be scientific. Moreover, the end is cognition or knowledge, which, having been obtained, clearly belongs to the world of appearances; once established as truth, it becomes part and parcel of the world. Cognition and the thirst for knowledge never leave the world of appearances altogether; if the scientists withdraw from it in order to "think," it is only in order to find better, more promising approaches, called methods, toward it. Science in this respect is but an enormously refined prolongation of common-

sense reasoning in which sense illusions are constantly dissipated just as errors in science are corrected.

Where can we find an example of a *thinking* human, one to study as a model? Seeking an answer to this question Hannah Arendt says:

Best suited for this role would be a man who counted himself neither among the many nor among the few (a distinction at least as old as Pythagoras), who had no aspiration to be a ruler of men, no claim even to be particularly well fitted by his superior wisdom to act in an advisory capacity to those in power, but not a man who submitted meekly to being ruled either; in brief, a thinker who always remained a man among men, who did not shun the marketplace, who was a citizen among citizens, doing nothing, claiming nothing except what in his opinion every citizen should be and have a right to. Such a man ought to be difficult to find: if he were able to represent for us the actual thinking activity, he would not have left a body of doctrine behind; he would not have cared to write down his thoughts even if, after he was through with thinking, there had been any residue tangible enough to set out in black and white. You will guess that I am thinking of Socrates.

The author goes on, characterizing Socrates for the reader. He did not pretend to any knowledge. He was, by his own account, a perplexed man who felt very ignorant, and who became for this reason a "gadfly" who provoked others to say what they thought, in the hope of improving the minds of both, only to find that they were even more confused but did not know it. The Socratic "improvement" was to bring them to a realization of their condition. Finally, he claimed to be a midwife for the birth of ideas. He knew nothing and would not teach, he said, but would help others to think and to propose ideas. Thus our inheritance from Socrates is a mode of search, a way of self-questioning.

Yet Socrates confessed to one talent—that he knew how to love, to find lovers as companions and to seek above all the love of wisdom. And he also believed in the silent dialogue one holds with oneself. He had two positive propositions which he would defend.

The first: "It is better to be wronged than to do wrong," to which Callicles, the interlocutor in the dialogue [the *Gorgias*], replies as all Greece would have replied, "To suffer wrong is not the part of a man at all, but that of a slave for whom it is better to be dead than alive, as it is for anyone who is unable to come either to his own assistance when he is wronged or to that of anyone he cares about." The second: "It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than that I, *being* one, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict me." Which causes Callicles to tell Socrates that he is "going mad with eloquence," and that it would be better for him and everybody if he would leave philosophy alone.

Thinking is indeed the dialogue we hold with ourselves. We close our notice with Hannah Arendt's discussion.

To Socrates, the duality of the two-in-one meant no more than that if you want to think, you must see to it that the two who carry on the dialogue be in good shape, that the partners be *friends*. The partner who comes to life when you are alert and alone is the only one from whom you can never get away—except by ceasing to think. It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong, because you can remain the friend of the sufferer, who would want to be the friend of and have to live together with a murderer? Not even another murderer.

COMMENTARY

PREREQUISITE FOR THINKING

WE have noticed, through the years, that material first appearing in some magazine or scholarly journal, when reprinted in a book by the writer, sometimes seems to lose its pep and ginger. The authors may have rewritten and condensed at the request of the publisher, or have tried themselves to be more "concise."

This applies to some extent to the quotations from Hannah Arendt's *Life of the Mind* in this week's review. While reading this book—which is not exactly easy—recollections of what she said fourteen years ago in *Social Research* (Autumn, 1971), issued by the New School in New York, where Hannah Arendt taught, kept popping up. After reviewing her paper "Thinking and Moral Considerations," we decided that its content became the heart and soul of her book. Passages are often parallel, but we miss in the book writing like the following:

The Athenians told him [Socrates] that thinking was subversive, that the wind of thought was a hurricane which sweeps away all the established signs by which men orient themselves in the world, it brings disorder into the cities and it confuses the citizens, especially the young ones. And though Socrates denies that thinking corrupts, he did not pretend that it improves, and though he declared that "no greater good has ever befallen" the polls than what he was doing, he did not pretend that he started his career as a philosopher in order to become such a great benefactor. If "an unexamined life is not worth living," then thinking accompanies living when it concerns itself with such concepts as justice, happiness, temperance, pleasure, with words for invisible things which language has offered us to express the meaning of whatever happens in life and occurs to us while we are alive.

Socrates called this quest for meaning *eros*, a kind of love which is primarily a need—it desires what it has not—and which is the only matter he pretends to be an expert in. Men are in love with wisdom and do philosophy because they are not wise, just as they love beauty and do beauty as it were because they are not beautiful. Love, by desiring what is not there, establishes a relationship with it. . .

Where does this leave us with respect to our problem—inability or refusal to think and the capacity of doing evil? We are left with the conclusion that only people filled with this *eros*, this desiring love of wisdom, beauty, and justice, are capable of thought—that is, we are left with Plato's "noble nature" as a prerequisite for thinking.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

PASSAGES OF TRANSITION

READING in last summer's *Tilth*—a regional quarterly devoted to the interests of farmers in the Pacific Northwest (\$12,00 a year, 4649 Sunnyside North, Seattle, Wash. 98103)—we found a story by Mark Musick, one of the *Tilth* editors, which praised Richard Critchfield's most recent book, *Villages* (Anchor, 1981). Having reviewed one of Critchfield's other books, *The Golden Bowl Be Broken*, which was good, we got *Villages* from the library and have been reading it recently. You can't call it enjoyable—there's too much pain in the villages around the world—but what the writer says about the life of the people, of whom he becomes very fond, is engrossing. This might be a book for some family reading out loud. Critchfield has chapters on the villages of India, which were preparation for Musick, who early this year became the *Tilth* representative in the U.S. delegation to the International Exposition of Rural Development held in February, 1984, in New Delhi. One of Musick's aims was to establish links between the *Tilth* membership (members receive the magazine) and some Indian villages. He starts his account with some good news:

Fifteen years ago India was being written off as a hopeless basket case, doomed to self-destruction from poverty and famine. Yet Critchfield reports that a new India is emerging which is likely to surprise the world. Rather than the famines which were widely predicted, India has doubled food production in the past fifteen years, and is on the verge of becoming a major food exporter by the turn of the century. India is now nearly self-sufficient in grains, and has food reserves and distribution systems capable of averting starvation from the droughts and natural disasters which periodically afflict that sprawling sub-continent.

This transformation has been made possible by a gradual shift in emphasis from industrial development and urbanization to food production and the improvement of life in rural villages. India, which once represented desperation and despair, could come to represent the hope of the future. And it

is for this reason that it was chosen as the site of the International Exposition of Rural Development.

(We are sending a copy of this report to the editor of a Gandhian journal in India, asking for confirmation or comment. Critchfield is an admirer of Norman Borlaug and says nothing critical of the Green Revolution.)

Now to Critchfield and his account of what it was like to live in the African village of Neetil, surrounded by the Nuba Mountains of the Sudan. His host was Kuwa, "a giant of a man, ebony black and as tall and muscular as the Nubian slave of Western mythology." Kuwa raises sorghum. Critchfield tells this story:

A week before I left Neetil, Kuwa and I went to see the old Sultan, who, long stripped of his political power in the tribe, lived in seclusion at the end of a rocky gorge. . . . As we neared a cul-de-sac at the end of the gorge we could see a compound of grass huts enclosed by the usual thorny bush. Several of the huts were larger and grander than those in the village, but the roofs were rotting and everything had a tumbledown look; there was a general air of decay. At the time of our visit Sultan Ahmed was said to be nearing the age of one hundred. . . . He seemed frail and feeble now. . . . "Whenever the people come to see the Sultan and ask for help," Kuwa said by way of introduction "he will ask God to bless them." From the look of things, few came any more.

As if reading my thoughts, the Sultan spoke. "Whenever a man comes to visit me, I will allow him to come, if he comes with good in his heart." He shut his eyes for what seemed a long time; when he opened them again he stared fixedly in Kuwa's face.

"I am dreaming again of famine and disease, Kuwa," he said. "I have had such dreams for seven years now. What does it mean? Through my dreams at night the prophecies have always come to me, whether there was to be an illness or famine or evil in the land, all these things. Seven years ago we used to go down to the river places at night. There we made our sacrifices. The *aro* spoke to us and we followed its ways. In the past times, the people used to come to me and we would go down to the river at night and follow the *aro*. Whether they were ill, or going to die, or some evil was going to come to them. And I cured those men there. Now the harvests are poor and the land is not fertile and the rains are few these seven years. Why? The people have become

Moslems. They are leaving their faith. They do not follow the *aro*". . . .

As we walked home, Kuwa was lost in thought. At last, groping for words, he broke the silence. "The people have always seen the Sultan as the instrument of God," he said. "It is better to let a religion, especially a tribal one which is both a faith and a way of life, die out slowly from feebleness and old age, than to try to destroy it all at once." In the old man, but in Kuwa too, you could see the griefs and pain a man feels when everything he believes in starts to crumble into nothing.

Years ago, in *Man in a Mirror*, Richard Llewellyn described another kind of transition in another part of Africa. He reproduces the thought of an African tribesman, a chief's son who had a European education, as he reflects on the past of his people, wondering what the future might hold.

Thinking of all the generations of lion-killers while he crossed the plain, Nterenke began to realize with an increasing dismay which he found almost comical that the Masai intellect held not the least notion of physical science or any mathematical process higher than the use of the hands and fingers. He amused himself in trying to imagine how he might try to teach Olle Tselene the theory of the spectrum. Yet every tracker knew the value of sunlight in a dewdrop because the prism told where the track led and when it had been made. How the eye saw the colors or why the colors were supposed to exist was never mystery or problem. They had no place anywhere in thought. But all male Masai from the time they were Ol Ayoni, had a sharp sense of color from living in the forest and choosing plumage for the cap. Color became a chief need in the weeks of shooting, and comparing, and taking out a smaller for a larger bird, or throwing away a larger for a smaller, more colorful. He wondered where the idea of color began, or why a scholar should interest himself. Mr. James had taught that sound politics led to a rich economy where people earned more money for less hours of work, and so created a condition of leisure needed by inventors, whether mental or physical. The Masai had always enjoyed an ample economy, if it meant a complete filling of simple needs and after the animals were tended, there was plenty of leisure. Yet there were no inventors of any sort. There was a father-to-son and mouth-to-mouth passing of small items that pretended to history, and a large fund of forest lore that might pass as learning, but there were

no scholars, no artists, no craftsmen in the European sense.

The effect was to lock a growing mind in a wide prison of physical action and disciplined restriction that by habit became accepted as absolute liberty.

The Masai are a pastoral and hunting tribe of Kenya.

Still another transition was described by the French farmer, Creveccœr, who lived in New York in the eighteenth century:

An European, when he first arrives, seems limited in his intentions, as well as in his views; but he very suddenly alters his scale . . . he no sooner breathes our air than he forms new schemes, and embarks in designs he would never have thought of in his own country. . . . He begins to feel the effects of a sort of resurrection; hitherto he had not lived, but simply vegetated; he now feels himself a man, because he is treated as such. . . . From nothing to start into being, to become a free man. . . . What a change indeed! It is in consequence of that change that he becomes an American.

But there are later chapters in this story. As Paul Riesman has put it in *Sign, Image, Symbol* (Brazilier):

To the extent that modern man lives completely within his civilization, . . . he lives within a sterile dream world. The dreams are not his own dreams—he is afraid to dream his own dreams. Once fabricated, the forms of civilization have no power to grow in their own right and interact with the human being who lives in them. The only things which grow and change in themselves are organisms, whose meanings and purposes are unknown, to be discovered. . . . Fabricated objects and meanings do not have this property. Growth is a process which can take place only in some kind of interaction or transaction between two different organisms. Thus man living in civilization stifles his own growth, and if he is sensitive to this, falls into deep despair.

This last report is in another key, yet seems accurate in describing a familiar psychological path. What are the options for people moving in this direction?

FRONTIERS Progressive Undoings

IF it is true, as claimed, that every third person in the country, or a total of 75 million Americans, has some sort of symptom, major or minor, that can be traced to an allergy, then a book which came out recently, *The Type 1/Type 2 Allergy Relief Program* (Tarcher, paperback, \$6.95), should be of interest to a large audience. The authors are Alan Scott Levin, a medical doctor, and Merla Zellerbach, a patient, or former patient, and a writer. They have written a book which may not be of initial interest except to one in three, yet if anyone starts reading it he or she will probably go on for quite a while.

A natural question is: Why are there now so many sufferers from allergies? Such troubles are hardly mentioned in accounts of life a hundred years ago. Are we getting hypersensitive for some mysterious reason, or is it that the planet is more messed up than it used to be? The authors say, for example:

Building and ventilation techniques have changed so drastically for the worse because of energy conservation that it is not unusual for a working person to breathe contaminated air filled with toxins and infectious particles for four to eight hours at a time. This was unheard of even twenty years ago.

The vast increase of chemicals in our environment, foods and medicines has greatly altered the body's ability to rid itself of toxins. The number of untested chemicals used to make everyday products keeps multiplying. Soil, air, and water are polluted with chemical wastes. Even our homes, which have been overinsulated in well-intended attempts to save energy, act as sealed pockets of hazardous fumes.

These factors have changed the character of illness and disease so much that the average physician can no longer rely on past case histories or textbooks but must depend on the immediate observation of the patient.

What does the title of this book mean? It means that allergies have two general causes, with no sharp line dividing the classes. This distinction

becomes familiar to doctors from experience with patients, but has not been written about before.

To be specific, a Type 1 person is anyone with "traditional" allergic responses to pollens, dust, animal dander molds, bee stings, wool and other natural fibers, and some foods. Type 1 patients sneeze, wheeze, cough, scratch, ache and look puffy, because the primary target organs for Type reactions are the nose and respiratory system, the skin, eyes, ears, gastrointestinal tract, and, occasionally, the brain.

In contrast, a Type 2 person reacts mainly to chemicals in the environment and to foods and their additives. Symptoms vary widely and seem unrelated to conventional notions of allergy. The most surprising and dramatic Type 2 reactions are the cerebral and behavioral responses, which include migraine headaches, confusion, memory loss, personality changes, mood swings, hyperactivity, and depression.

In general, the suggestions for relief seem based on common sense. It is evident that the sufferer from an allergy can usually take steps that will restore the immunizing function of the body. This book should be widely useful.

Another kind of affliction, also due to "modern progress," has overtaken the people who live on the slopes of the Himalaya mountains in India. The original forest cover of these hills has been increasingly removed, with the consequence of landslides which take the lives of humans and animals and overlay fertile fields with sand and gravel. The grassroots Chipko Movement to defend the trees against invasion by commercial lumber interests has been the response in India, led by villagers whose lives depend upon the forests. In the January 1984 *Gandhi Marg*, an Indian journalist, Sundarlal Bahuguna, tells the story of long foot marches undertaken by the Chipko people to generate support for the preservation of the trees and to visit areas where the inhabitants had organized against invasion of the forests. In the village of Pokhari, after a landslide disaster, some young people formed a Village Uplift Society and took charge of the problem. They prohibited grazing in the

endangered area, hired a guard, and fined those who broke the rules.

Now there is a forest panchayat [ruling council of elders] to manage the forest, but the rules framed about fifty years back are still followed. For some years there was a guard to look after the forest and each family contributed food grains for his pay; now two families in turn look after the forest.

"We are safe now. There is no danger of landslide. We have a dense oak forest nearby from which we get leaf fodder and fertilizer. There is water in the stream and we can grow vegetables," remarked Mrs. Anandi Devi, President of the local Mahila Mandal when I visited the village in June 1980.

The people of another village, after a landslide and a flood in their region, persuaded the Maharaja to permit them to form their own Panchayat to manage the forest, and they, too, have secured protection by caring for the oak forests which have a special role in soil and water conservation.

India's forests are managed by trained foresters, but as Bahuguna asks, "for whom?"

During our 4870 km-long Kashmir Kohima Chipko foot march we could see monoculture of pines, especially chir pines, in the middle Himalayas. Chir pine was dear to the British rulers, who came as traders in this country. When they reached the Himalayan foothills they found it useful for turpentine industry. It was as early as 1809 when Rutherford on behalf of the East India Co. established the first turpentine factory in the foothill town of Kashipur. The Governor-General requested the ruler of Nepal to allow extraction of resin from Garhwal, Kumaon and Doti. . . . The other use of chir pine was for railway sleepers. Now it has become all the more useful as a raw material for paper Industry.

Bahuguna draws a conclusion:

The history of forest management in India as a whole and the Himalayan region in particular is the sad story of raising mono-crop commercial crops at the cost of soil and water, the two basic capitals of mankind. Now there are hardly any forests, because a forest is a community of living things, in which are trees of different species, each specie supporting the other. . . . In mono-culture forests you do not find other species but a clean forest floor. This has

accelerated the incidence of soil erosion, occurrence of landslides, drying up of rivulets and water sources, irregular flow of rivers, spread of deserts from the hills to the southwards scarcity of fodder and fuel, and ultimately uprooted the people from the soil.

The Chipko movement represents a spontaneous uprising of the people to restore their forests and to become responsible for conservation. They have organized camps to undertake planting projects and education in ecodevelopment. Sunderlal Bahuguna may be written at the Chipko Information Centre, Navajivan Ashram, Silyara, Tehri-Garhwal, U.P., India.