

REQUIRED READING

THE books to which we return again and again—why do they ask for and obtain such attention? Books are written to inform, in one way or another. Required for a book is an observer and what he observes. In the books we read more than once, what is observed is usually people. The writer tells what they are like, and in the telling reveals what he is like. If he or she is of a certain sort, this telling compels attention for the reason that it seems able to enter into and grasp something of the nature of the people described. They become more than a part of a mass of "others," so that the reader, who will think of himself as among those who are told about, feels understood. There are few pleasures which come close to the joy of being understood, so we return to the books which reveal this understanding.

Contemporary writers say that modern man is "fragmented." They mean that his parts are not in natural relation; some of them work hardly at all, while others have become of exaggerated importance. He is fragmented, then, in terms of some conception of wholeness and appropriate coordination of his parts. For example, the typical modern man is not in the least like a Yankee farmer of a century ago. It would take him years to learn how to grow his own food. He has no idea how to site and build a house for himself and his family. He doesn't go out in the woods to get fuel for his stove and fireplace. He walks, not for transport but in play. He may have hundreds of books, but he hardly reads any one of them with the concentration of a sparsely educated man of the mid or late nineteenth century—or of a man still another century earlier, who may have had the Bible, John Locke, and perhaps something by Tom Paine.

That is one comparison, and there must be others more telling, but they all depend upon changes in the environment, on the kind of

demands it makes of the individual. The charge that we are "fragmented" usually means that the progress which has so altered our circumstances and the demands life requires be met have made unified purpose very difficult to pursue. The goals which, taken together, represent our progress are unrelated. If we adopt conflicting goals, we fragment ourselves. If we reject them, we are likely to be cut into pieces when we try to live under modern conditions with other human beings. One able to do so must be both ingenious and heroic, and have far more patience than anyone else.

This line of reflection leads us back to Thoreau, and to a collection of Emerson's essays which includes his recollections of Thoreau. These latter appeared as an introduction to Thoreau's posthumous book, *Excursions*, brought out in 1863, a year after his death; here, his friend and mentor tells how Thoreau achieved wholeness of life, and of the price he paid, although for him it was no price but the way he wanted things to be.

He interrogated every custom, and wished to settle all his practice on an ideal foundation. He was a protestant *à l'outrance*, and few lives contain so many renunciations. He was bred to no profession; he never married; he lived alone; he never went to church; he never voted; he refused to pay a tax to the State; he ate no flesh, he drank no wine, he never knew the use of tobacco, and, though a naturalist he used neither trap nor gun. He chose, wisely, no doubt, for himself, to be the bachelor of thought and Nature. He had no talent for wealth, and knew how to be poor without the least hint of squalor or inelegance. Perhaps he fell into his way of living without forecasting it much, but approved it with a later wisdom. "I am often reminded," he wrote in his journal, "that, if I had bestowed on me the wealth of Cræsus, my aims must still be the same, and my means essentially the same." He had no temptations to fight against,—no appetites, no passions, no taste for elegant trifles. A fine house, dress, the manners and talk of highly cultivated people were all thrown

away on him. He much preferred a good Indian, and considered these refinements as impediments to conversation, wishing to meet his companion on the simplest of terms. He declined invitations to dinner-parties because there each was in everyone's way, and he could not meet the individuals to any purpose. "They make their pride," he said, "in making their dinner cost much; I make my pride in making my dinner cost little." When asked at the table what dish he preferred, he answered, "The nearest. He did not like the taste of wine, and never had a vice in his life. He said,—"I have a faint recollection of pleasure derived from smoking dried lily-stems, before I was a man. I had commonly a supply of these. I have never smoked anything more noxious."

He chose to be rich by making his wants few, and supplying them himself. In his travels, he used the railroad only to get over so much country as was unimportant to the present purpose, walking hundreds of miles, avoiding taverns, buying a lodging in farmers' and fishermen's houses, as cheaper, and more agreeable to him, and because there he could better find the men and the information he wanted.

Actually, in his books and essays, Thoreau wrote about little else than the contrast between wholeness and fragmentation. Quite plainly he thought that we fragment ourselves. We do it first with our habits of mind, and eventually those habits grow up into institutions that *enforce* the habits, leaving us no choice. In *Life without Principle*, Thoreau wrote:

Not without a slight shudder at the danger, I often perceive how near I had come to admitting into my mind the details of some trivial affair,—the news of the street; and I am astonished to observe how willing men are to lumber their minds with rubbish,—to permit idle rumors and incidents of the most insignificant kind to intrude on ground which should be sacred to thought. Shall the mind be a public arena, where the affairs of the street and the gossip of the tea-table chiefly are discussed? . . . It is important to preserve the mind's chastity in this respect. Think of admitting the details of a single case of the criminal court into our thoughts, to stalk profanely through their very *sanctum sanctorum* for an hour, ay, for many hours! to make a very bar-room of the mind's inmost apartment, as if for so long the dust of the street had occupied us—the very street itself, with all its travel, its bustle, and filth, had passed through our thoughts' shrine! Would it not be an intellectual and moral suicide? . . .

What is it to be born free and not to live free? What is the value of any political freedom, but as a means to moral freedom? Is it a freedom to be slaves, or a freedom to be free, of which we boast? We are a nation of politicians, concerned about the outmost defenses only of freedom. It is our children's children who may perchance be really free. We tax ourselves unjustly. There is a part of us which is not represented. It is taxation without representation. We quarter troops, we quarter fools and cattle of all sorts upon ourselves. We quarter our gross bodies on our poor souls, till the former eat up all the latter's substance.

With respect to a true culture and manhood, we are essentially provincial still, not metropolitan—mere Jonathans. We are provincial, because we do not find at home our standards,—because we do not worship truth, but the reflection of truth,—because we are warped and narrowed by an exclusive devotion to trade and commerce and manufactures and agriculture and the like, which are but means, and not the end. . . . When we want culture more than potatoes, and illumination more than sugar-plums, then the great resources of a world are taxed and drawn out, and the result, or staple production, is, not slaves, nor operatives, but men,—those rare fruits called heroes, saints, poets, philosophers, and redeemers.

The environment that fragments us is of our own making. In this Emerson agreed wholeheartedly. In a lecture he gave in 1838 in Boston, he said:

. . . it is a lesson which all history teaches wise men, to put trust in ideas, and not in circumstances. We have all grown up in the sight of frigates and navy yards, of armed forts and islands of arsenals and militia. . . . This vast apparatus of artillery, of fleets, of stone bastions and trenches and embankments, this incessant patrolling of sentinels; this waving of national flags; this reveille and evening gun; this martial music and endless playing of marches and singing of military and naval songs seem to us to constitute an imposing actual, which will not yield in centuries to the feeble, deprecatory voices of a handful of friends of peace.

Thus always we are daunted by appearances; not seeing that their whole value lies at bottom in a state of mind. It is really a thought that built this portentous war establishment, and a thought shall also melt it away. . . . We surround ourselves always, according to our freedom and ability, with true

images of ourselves in things, whether it be ships or books or cannon or churches. The standing army, the arsenal, the camp and the gibbet do not appertain to man. They only serve as an index to show where man is now; what a bad ungoverned temper he has; what an ugly neighbor he is, how his affections halt; how low his hope lies. He who loves the bristle of bayonets only sees in their glitter what beforehand he feels in his heart. It is avarice and hatred; it is that quivering lip, that cold, hating eye, which built magazines and powder houses.

It follows of course that the least change in the man will change his circumstances; the least enlargement of his ideas, the least mitigation of his feelings in respect to other men; if, for example, he could be inspired with a tender kindness to the souls of men, and should come to feel that every man was another self with whom he might come to join, as left hand works with right. Every degree of the ascendancy of this feeling would cause the most striking changes of external things: the tents would be struck; the men-of-war would rot ashore; the arms rust; the cannon would become street posts; the pikes a fisher's harpoon; the marching regiment would be a caravan of emigrants, *peaceful* pioneers at the fountains of the Wabash and the Missouri.

The reader is drawn back to Emerson and Thoreau by reason of their appeal to the imagination; they are not only sources of fine writing; they stir and open the mind. Another reason is that the authors do not write as specialists. While the words they use are not "ordinary," they are common enough. It is true that they wrote for a literate public, but the *mode* of their discourse has a wide appeal. You never feel shut out from their intentions by reason of a novel jargon. Ortega had this mode; so did Schumacher; today Wendell Berry speaks in this way to an increasing audience. They all address the best in human longing, and since to speak to the best requires a certain profundity of thought, we find them worth going back to. As writers they are unfragmented, and it is that part of us that responds.

To take an example, Ortega writes about human beings in a way that enables the reader to recognize himself, even to deepen his understanding of himself. While Ortega is writing

in the form of generalization, the meaning of what he says is easily particularized by the reader. Early in *Man and Crisis* he says:

If man's intelligence were truly what the word indicates—the capacity to understand—he would at once have understood everything, and would have no problem, no laborious task ahead of him. So then, it is not said that man's intelligence is actually intelligence, on the other hand, there is no doubt about the task in which man is irremediably engaged, and therefore it is surely that task which defines his destiny.

That task, as we have said, is called "living"; the essence of living is that man is always existing within an environment, that he finds himself—suddenly and without knowing how he got there—projected into and submerged in a world, a set of fixed surroundings, into this present, which is now about us.

In order to sustain himself in that environment he is always having to do something. But this something is not imposed on him by the surrounding environment as is a phonograph's repertoire by the disks it plays, or as the line which a star traces is imposed by its orbit.

Man, every man, must at every moment be deciding for the next moment what he is going to do, what he is going to be. This decision only he can make; it is not transferable; no one can substitute for me in the task of deciding for myself, in deciding on my life. When I put myself in another's hands, it is I who have decided and who go on deciding that he will direct me; thus I do not transfer the decision itself, but merely its mechanism. In place of deriving the norm of my conduct out of that mechanism which is in my own intelligence, I take advantage of the mechanism of another's intelligence. . . .

Man cannot take a single step without anticipating more or less clearly his entire future, what he is going to be, that is, what he has decided to be throughout his life. But this means that man, who is always obliged to do something in the circumstances that surround him, has in deciding what he is going to do no other course than to pose to himself the problem of his own individual being. When we meet a neighbor it does not take great perspicacity to note how he is guided by that self which he himself has chosen, but which he never sees clearly, which always remains a problem to him. For when each one of us asks himself what he is going to

be, and therefore what his life is going to be, he has no choice but to face the problem of man's being, of what it is that man in general can be and what it is that he must be. But this, in turn, obliges us to fashion for ourselves an idea, to find out somehow what this environment is, what these surroundings are, this world in which we live. The things about us do not of themselves tell us what they are. We must discover that for ourselves. But this—to discover the self of things and one's own being, the being of everything—this is none other than man's intellectual business, a task which is therefore not an extrinsic and superfluous addition to man's life, but a constituent part of that life.

The eternal quest "to find out somehow what this environment is, what these surroundings are," is pursued by each of us individually, but also in concert, in groups. The value of a group effort becomes obvious when we consider how each one of us must wonder about the validity of what he finds out. Is it true? Do others who have sought and worked as I have reach the same conclusion? The importance of consensus in defining our surroundings goes beyond the personal reassurance obtained. In science, for example, which until recently has been regarded as the best or only means for the determination of truth, the goal is an impersonal account of the nature of things. This undertaking, in which researchers all join, ultimately depends upon the sense of moral obligation of scientists. While they follow rules of procedure and have primary assumptions, a personal commitment to the truth that is sought is the heart of the matter. Without it there could be no science—or, for that matter, any society.

This is the contention of Michael Polanyi, chemist and sociologist, author of *Personal Knowledge*, and *Science, Faith and Society*, a much shorter work with the same intent. One goes back to Polanyi's books because of the fertility of his discussion of how science proceeds and on what it depends. He says in the latter work:

The authority of science resides in scientific opinion. Science exists as a body of wide-ranging authoritative knowledge only so long as the consensus of scientists continues. It lives and grows only so

long as this consensus can resolve the perpetual tension between discipline and originality. Every succeeding generation is sovereign in reinterpreting the tradition of science. With it rests the fatal responsibility of the self-renewal of scientific convictions and methods. . . . We can generalize this to other modes of discovery in literature, in the arts, in politics. All these can advance only fragmentarily by the efforts of individuals organized essentially on the lines of scientific life. The community must guarantee the independence of its active members in the service of values jointly upheld and mutually enforced by all. The creative life of such a community rests on a belief in the ever continuing possibility of revealing still hidden truths. . . .

Scientists must feel under obligation to uphold the ideals of science and be guided by this obligation, both in exercising authority and in submitting to that of their fellows, otherwise science must die.

It would thus appear that when the premisses of science are held in common by the scientific community each must subscribe to them by an act of devotion. These premisses form not merely a guide to intuition, but also a guide to conscience; they are not merely indicative, but also normative. The tradition of science, it would seem, must be upheld as an unconditional demand if it is to be upheld at all. It can be made use of by scientists only if they place themselves at its service. It is a spiritual reality which stands over them and compels their allegiance. . . .

When each scientist largely relies for his views and information on the work of many others, and is prepared to vouch for their reliability before his own conscience, then the conscience of each is borne out by that of many others. There exists then a community of consciences jointly rooted in the same ideals recognized by all. And the community becomes an embodiment of these ideals and a living demonstration of their reality.

All this, Polanyi shows, applies to the social community, of which the scientific community is a special case. Polanyi points to the moral foundation of all human communities:

If people begin to lose confidence in their fellow citizens' love of truth, they may well cease to feel obliged to pursue it at a cost to themselves. Considering how weak we all are at times in resisting temptation to untruthfulness and how imperfect our love of truth is at the best, it is the more surprising that there should exist communities in which

confidence in the sincerity of all should be upheld to the extent shown by their practice of objectivity and tolerance among themselves.

The love of truth and confidence in their fellows' truthfulness are not effectively embraced by people in the form of a theory. They hardly even form the articles of any professed faith, but are embodied mainly in the practice of an art—the art of free discussion—of which they form the premisses.

What is Polanyi really saying? He is saying that the hope of some scientists that their method would eliminate the fallibility of the "human" factor in the quest for knowledge cannot be fulfilled—that scientific truth, like all other conclusions reached, depends upon moral integrity. Michael Polanyi's demonstration of this is so thorough-going that his works are a source of inspiration and encouragement. They all attract the reader to frequent inspection and review. It might be said that he is above all a moral psychologist with a strong scientific background, very much like A. H. Maslow, who admired him and brought him to this country as a lecturer. In his preface to *The Psychology of Science*, Maslow said of Polanyi's *Personal Knowledge*: "This profound work, which is certainly required reading for our generation, does much of what I had planned to do, and solves many of the problems which had concerned me."

REVIEW ORWELLIAN ECHOES

THERE seems a sense in which political reformers suffer confinement from the same sort of limitation that afflicts medicine. For the great majority of practitioners in the healing arts, disease is what attracts attention. Health, which we all have in some degree, needs no attention for the reason that a healthy person's body works well. Medical literature, therefore, is almost entirely devoted to the definition of and prescription specific for particular ills. So with politics. The ill-health of the social community is its natural subject. The justification for this focus is of course the charge of injustice and the pain it causes to so many. If a writer attempts to get behind these ills—which are numerous and which, when superficially corrected, reappear in other forms—he is accused of not *caring* about the plight of the sufferers, and he finds it difficult to gain an audience from people who are, naturally enough, engrossed with their pain.

The writers who try to focus on the ideal or goal of a healthy society are called utopians, and that may be true enough, but then we need to distinguish between the utopias which might be or are attainable and those which are dreams of wish-fulfillment. Occasionally someone who has the habit of looking for societies which already exhibit some utopian traits puts together considerations which show from actual experience how a utopia might be made to come about, and this, if well-done, gets serious and even enthusiastic attention from perceptive minds. An example is Ruth Benedict's distinction between societies with "high synergy" and those with "low synergy."

What is synergy? The dictionary says: "the combined healthy action of every organ of a system." The combined action is "such that the total effect is greater than the sum of the two [or more] effects taken independently." Using the colorless and unexciting terms of sociological analysis, Ruth Benedict wrote:

Is there any sociological condition which correlates with strong aggression and any that correlates with low aggression? All our ground plans achieve the one or the other in proportion as their social forms provide areas of mutual advantage and eliminate acts and goals that are at the expense of others in the group. . . . From all comparative material, the conclusion that emerges is that societies where non-aggression is conspicuous have social orders in which the individual by the same act and at the same time serves his own advantage and that of the group. . . .

I shall speak of cultures with low synergy where the social structure provides for acts which are mutually opposed and counteractive, and cultures with high synergy where it provides for acts which are mutually reinforcing. . . . I spoke of societies with high social synergy where their institutions insure mutual advantage . . . and societies with low social synergy where the advantage of one individual becomes a victory over another, and the majority who are not victorious must shift as they can. (Quoted by A. H. Maslow in *Farther Reaches of Human Nature*.)

Commenting, Maslow says:

This synergy principle is so important, not only for the tantalizing possibility that this comparative sociology also opens up the way for a supra-cultural system of values by which to evaluate a culture and everything within it, not only because it furnishes a scientific basis for Utopian theory, but also for more technical social phenomena in other areas. . . . I would say that no Utopia can be constructed henceforth by the knowledgeable person without making peace with the concept of synergy. It looks to me at this time as if any Utopia, or Eupsychia (which I think is a better name), must have as one of its foundations a set of high-synergy institutions.

Unfortunately, the dystopian novels are the ones which become best-sellers, the classic example of which is George Orwell's *1984*, which has lately received much attention because other writers last year began asking whether Orwell's predictions came true. One such book is *1984 and After*, edited by Marsha Hewitt and Dimitrios I. Roussopoulos and published by Black Rose Books in Canada (3981 boul. St-Laurent, Montreal, Quebec H2W 1Y5). Among the eleven contributors are a number of well-known anarchist thinkers such as Murray Bookchin and George

Woodcock, and the rather brilliant critic, Noam Chomsky. The theme of Orwell's volume is the domination of individuals by the state, which practices nearly every conceivable form of aggression against the people. Orwell seemed to think there was really no hope of anyone successfully resisting such domination, which gave his book a morbid fascination. He tells the story of a man who did try to resist, but failed completely.

The editors say in their introduction:

For its domination of society to be successful, the Party had to annihilate the individual's capacity to think, to make distinctions between concepts, so that one would be unaware of the very existence of the boot that stamps on the human face. There are certain facts, certain realities the Party did not want people to recognize, for example that two plus two make four. An analogous situation that pertains to North America is the Viet Nam war; consider how the people of North America were not supposed to think that the U.S. had "invaded" Viet Nam, as Noam Chomsky argues in an essay that follows. He tells us that in not "thinking" in terms of an American invasion of Viet Nam, the American people could not properly grasp the meaning of that war, because the conceptual framework of the collective understanding was distorted from the outset with the *a priori* exclusion of an American invasion and aggression in Viet Nam.

This is what 1984 is really about: the disappearance of that critical consciousness which allows an individual or society to discern differences, or to make critical comparisons and find alternatives. . . .

What Western society lacks is the self-conscious recognition of its own unfreedom and implicit authoritarianism. Whatever recognition there is, is diminishing; yet authoritarianism is increasing, although it has always been there. Our various social institutions—governments, schools, families—teach us that we are free, so that we do not learn to perceive the limitations of our freedom in the existence of domination and control. Yet what is it that children are taught as soon as they are born, from the family, through the education system and in the work place? They are taught to be respectful of, and to obey authority, *for its own sake*.

In his contribution, Noam Chomsky draws a comparison between the Soviet method of thought-control and the propaganda techniques common in the United States. He begins by describing an almost unbelievable happening in Russia in our 1984:

Last May a remarkable event took place in Moscow. A courageous newscaster, Vladimir Danchev denounced the Russian war in Afghanistan over Moscow radio in five broadcasts extending over a week, calling on the rebels "not to lay down their arms" and to fight against the Soviet invasion of their country. The Western press was overwhelmed with admiration for his startling departure from "the official Soviet propaganda line." In the *New York Times*, one commentator wrote that Danchev had "revolted against the standards of double-think and newspeak." In Paris, a prize was established in his honor to be given to "a journalist who fights for the right to be informed." In December, Danchev returned to work after psychiatric treatment. A Russian official was quoted as saying: "He was not punished, because a sick man cannot be punished." . . .

What was remarkable about Danchev's action was not merely the protest, but the fact that he referred to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan as "an invasion." In Soviet theology, there is no such event as "the Russian invasion of Afghanistan." Rather, there is a "Soviet defense of Afghanistan" against bandits supported from abroad. . . .

For the past 22 years, I have searched in vain for even a single reference in mainstream journalism or scholarship to an "American invasion of South Vietnam." In the American doctrinal system, there is no such event. There is no Danchev, though in this case it took no courage to tell the truth, merely honesty. Even at the peak of opposition to the US war only a minuscule portion of the articulate intelligentsia opposed the war on grounds of principle—on the grounds that aggression is wrong—while most came to oppose it well after leading business circles did, on the "pragmatic" grounds that the costs were too high. Popular attitudes, incidentally, were rather different. As late as 1982, over 70% of the population (but far fewer "opinion leaders") regarded the war not just as a mistake, but as "fundamentally and morally wrong," a problem known as "the Vietnam syndrome" in American political discourse. . . . Few academic scholars were more critical of US policy than John K. Fairbank, who informed the American Historical Society in his

December 1968 presidential address, a year after the Tet offensive had convinced much of the corporate elite to abandon the effort to subjugate South Vietnam, that we entered the war in an "excess of righteousness and disinterested benevolence," but it was a mistake to do so, as events showed. Few dictators can boast such total conformity to Higher Truths.

One thing we noticed in reading *1984 and After* was that we had forgotten, since reading Orwell's book, the biting character of the dialogue which the current writers quote from it, and the sharp delineation of the working of subservient minds. Memory of the book easily becomes a blurred cliché on totalitarian practice, losing nearly all its particularity and force. For this reason the comparisons offered in these essays become absorbing, giving new life to Orwell's work. Chomsky says at the end of his contribution:

Propaganda is to democracy what violence is to totalitarianism. The techniques have been honed to a high art far beyond anything that Orwell dreamt of. The device of feigned assent, incorporating the doctrines of the state religion and eliminating rational critical discussion is one of the more subtle means, though simple lying and suppression of fact and other crude techniques are also highly effective. . . . For those who stubbornly seek freedom, there can be no more urgent task than to come to understand the mechanisms and practices of indoctrination. These are easy to perceive in the totalitarian societies, much less so in the system of "brainwashing under freedom" to which we are subjected and which all too often we serve as willing or unwitting instruments.

Actually, the criticism in this book is so accomplished and interesting that it fills the mind of the reader and spurs him to become a private propaganda detector, with feelings alternating between cynicism and despair. But by reason of the intensity of these feelings, there is a wide abyss between such thinking and thoughts about how to work toward a more synergistic society. The two ways of thinking are on different levels of consciousness, with little to help us move from one level to the other. Writing which would assist in this transition is hard to find.

COMMENTARY A FAMILIAR RULE

EVERY vice, a philosopher of the nineteenth century declared, is a virtue carried to an unlawful extreme. It would be hard to find a more incisive and penetrating comment on the paradoxes involved in everyday experience.

Take for example the "objectivity" held to be so important in the practice of science. As an attitude, objectivity is obviously a virtue, and not only in science. It means fairness in the formation of opinion, justice in the shaping of conviction, and impartiality in judgment. By means of this stance, scientists are able to trust one another, and as Polanyi shows (see page 7), without it there could hardly be any science at all.

How does objectivity turn into a vice? It becomes a vice when carried to the unlawful extreme of mistaking objectivity for motiveless observation. The human being, whether or not a scientist, is animated by the quest for meaning. He wants what he discovers to make sense. His idea of making sense may vary considerably from what other investigators regard as sense, but both he and they are more than static, purposeless observers. He is quite capable of pursuing his quest without prejudice, but he cannot do so without feeling and hope. Isolation from prejudice is possible, but not isolation from purpose. The one is virtuous, the other vicious.

As a vice, objectivity is the attempt to dehumanize the observer, to render him a moral cipher, and to pretend that his reports have no guidance from prior assumptions and interests. The man without interests simply does not exist. There are no naked, unadorned facts, but only facts that have been defined in terms of prior experience. Anything we can call factual has a background of association with humanly formulated ideas. A scientist can attempt to assess the justifications for that association, but he cannot strip what he looks at of all relation to other facts and their framework of meaning. An

object without connection with anything else would be totally invisible to us.

In this week's "Children," Jacques Barzun shows that objectification of literature has rendered it more and more meaningless. He calls this a curse, which is a close relation of vice.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

CRITICAL NOTES ON TEACHING

DESPITE his good manners and careful choice of words. Jacques Barzun's November *Atlantic* article on culture and the university is devastating in effect. The academy, in short, has very nearly made culture a thing of the past. He starts by explaining what he intends by the word culture, which can mean almost anything. "By now," he says, "the word has been used with so many different meanings that it is bound to create in any alert reader some degree of confusion."

The anthropologists started the trouble by using *culture* to mean all the modes of belief and behavior of a tribe or people. The word *society* was available, but it looked as if pre-empted by the sociologists; the younger science wanted a word of its own. From the anthropologists the public picked up the word *culture* in its overarching meaning, and then proceeded to re-apply it, inaccurately, for various purposes.

Prof. Barzun gives the meanings he attaches to *culture* and *education*:

I use the two words exclusively in their original and honorific sense. Culture and education are qualities found in persons, who have first been taught to read and write and then have managed against heavy odds, to cultivate their minds, to educate themselves.

What are the heavy odds? They grow out of the tendency of the university to divide culture, which is *one*, into separate parts which have been made into private territories by academic departments. The territories are governed by professors who are specialists, and occasionally cultured individuals by rebellion. Cultured teachers are rare, often because they are old and were able years ago to establish resistance to the subdividing trend. What did they escape?

The expert specialist takes a little subject for his province—and remains a provincial all his life. But there is worse. By this delegation of culture the importance of art and the humanities is shifted to a new ground. These good things are no longer valuable for their direct effect on the head and the

heart; they become valuable as professions, as means of livelihood, as badges of honor, as goods to be marketed, as components of the culture industry.

If you go to school to such people, instead of gaining culture you are recruited into one of the specialties.

The collector of paintings is a mine of information about his collection; the chamber-music player can talk at length about the string-quartet literature; the devotee of Jane Austen is soon recognizable as a reader of novels who has never heard of Dickens—and so on for ballet, film, sculpture, and architecture; or crosswise, for the ancient, medieval, and other centuries, styles, or schools. The interest displayed is scarcely cultural; it is not for self-cultivation; rather, it is, in sociological idiom, a leisure-time activity, like being a baseball fan. Both hobbies generate the same pedantic miserlike heaping up of factual knowledge. One illustration tells the tale: there are said to be more than 300 societies devoted each to a single author, the membership being made up almost entirely of amateurs who do the research, meet and confer on points of scholarship, and inevitably publish a newsletter.

Of the philosophy departments in universities, Prof. Barzun says:

The few thousand academic philosophers in the world do not stint themselves, they maintain more than seventy learned journals. But in the handful that cover more than one subdivision of philosophy, any given philosopher is no longer capable of reading more than one or two articles in each issue. This hermetic condition is attributed to "technical problems" in the subject. But are they technical? Are they problems?—or only word-spinning untranslatable into discourse? Since William James, Russell, and Whitehead, philosophy, like history, has been confiscated by scholarship and locked away from the contamination of cultural use.

If an ordinary person happens to pick up one of the specialized journals, whether of philosophy, or even literature, he is likely to feel that he doesn't know what they are talking about, and is woefully ignorant. But often the ignorance is theirs, not his. They are blinded by their specialties, while he, who naturally thinks more broadly, but lacks their vocabulary, blames

himself. He shouldn't do this, but he will never be told so by his teachers.

Barzun drives his point home: "The truth is that art and culture do not belong in a university. It cannot be a home for them, because culture and scholarship are diametrically opposed." Scholars are translators, organizers, correctors of texts. They are not readers of texts in the sense of cultivated minds. They *may* be, but their profession does not require it, even frowns on it.

The professor tells a story he heard from a student:

In third-year Greek the philologist-classicist opened the course by saying, "Gentlemen, we shall begin with the most interesting play of Euripides: it contains nearly every exception to the rules of Greek grammar."

Nobody can fail to note in this remark the dire ambiguity of the word *interesting*—the shift from what Euripides intended and what the Athenian audience expected to the meaning that *interest* holds for the analytic mind and the Alexandrian scholar. Both interests are genuine and legitimate, but they are not the same, and the more abstract rarely leads to the more concrete. This fact might be called the curse of education: I mean the curse of abstracting and systematizing in order to teach. It is characteristic of our age to reduce every human concern to labels and rules and set up a course in it—two courses, ten courses, at which point we have a school, and a dean, a new profession, and a diploma.

One more passage:

As things stand now, the new is brought on campus and dissected before the body has had time to cool; and though the young doubtless enjoy the "relevance" of the various novelties, that pleasure is dimmed by the required application of methods. As for the sense of continuity of contrast with earlier models and masterpieces, it is nonexistent, owing to the double interference of remoteness in time and the uniform brunt of analysis. To be sure, exceptions occur whenever some cultured mind gives a course; but it is fair to say that the modern student, the "major" in English or American studies or in one of the other departments, has no cultivating encounter with the works of art he or she has been assigned. George Eliot has been read for the plight of women or for images of running water, the Post-Impressionists

testify to sordid society and individual alienation; the rise and fall of the sonata form demonstrates that no music should have been written after 1830.

Cultivated individuals who happen to be teachers have hard choices today. They would like to be able to do the work as it should be done, but, like other normal human beings, they want to marry and settle down. It may become evident to them that to do what they love and know how to do is a way of almost literally starving to death. There have been a few heroic experiments in this direction: Black Mountain College was one; Emerson College in California another. Paul Goodman made some wild and wonderful proposals: among them the idea of renting one or two rooms near a college with a good library and hanging out a shingle which tells what the teachers plan to do and the kind of students they want. D. S. Carne-Ross (of Boston University) frames his dream of the teaching of the classics and the humanities in *Instaurations*, a fairly recent book, with a proposal for a community of scholars who will raise their own food and live in solar dwellings, and do a lot less teaching, but of the right sort, as a result. Ortega's plan for the Aspen Institute, while it probably called for funding in the grand manner, was conceived in this spirit, involving simplicity and intensity in study and austerity in life.

Teachers, it seems clear, can do very well without an institution, except for the library, but if they could start out they might be able to accumulate a surprising number of paperback books. Where will the students come from? They are surely out there, but most of them struggling to make ends meet. Maybe an all-around collapse is required to bring them together.

FRONTIERS

Questions about Juvenile Delinquency

WHAT is juvenile delinquency? Is there a remedy and can it be defined? Why is there so much more juvenile crime now than in the past? Is this entirely or only partly an environmental problem? If it is all environmental, then what point is there in speaking of the "responsibility" of the young? If we are actually ignorant of the answers to most of these questions, what course should be followed by individuals or groups (agencies) who undertake to help children with delinquent tendencies?

Libraries are filled with books and papers addressed to these questions, but still the offenses increase. The best brief discussion of this subject (that we have seen) is in the Fall 1984 issue of *Betterway*, a paper issued (for \$2.50 a year) by Betterway, 700 Middle Ave., Elyria, Ohio 44035. Betterway was founded about nineteen years ago by Tom Peters. It has homes for boys and girls who have been in trouble with the law, has lately acquired a farm of 150 acres with lots of woods and a stream, and runs a restaurant and a gift shop in Elyria. Many of those who come there are later placed in foster homes.

The lead article in last fall's *Betterway* begins with basic questions:

Why do some young people come to places like Betterway and find that their life goes better after they leave? Why do some lives get no better or even get worse?

Of course the same thing happens in the adult world. Adults seek help with personal and social problems from various agencies and systems. Some are helped; some are not.

Both national and Ohio studies have given Betterway a high rating on its record, summarized in another article:

About 80% of those who come here are making it in life, even though it is rough and bumpy for most. About 20% get into serious trouble again and go to jail or an institution. Of this group, about 10% get

out of the justice system after a few years and become like the other 80%.

This leaves 10% who continue disruptive lives and go in and out of jail for years, probably all their lives. Some in this group ended up living on skid-row, and some commit suicide. To our knowledge about thirty people are dead who were here, most dying in violence or suicide.

About 2,500 have been at Betterway, and currently 250 come here to live each year. That means that 50 get in trouble for a while, and 25 forever, from each year's group.

Who among the young need or get help of this sort?

Basically, those who did not fit in as productive young people or adults: Those boys and girls who are disruptive in their neighborhoods and schools, or who hurt themselves by using drugs or alcohol or through other self-destructive acts.

The community disruptions by young people range from stealing, to vandalism, to rape and even murder.

Adults may do the same, but with greater intensity and greater skills, based on years of effort.

In some types of disruptiveness, the community reacts and forces help on the person, even locking him up behind steel bars and electric fences if necessary to prevent certain behavior.

In some types of behavior the person seeks help voluntarily. They go to social agencies, public or private, created to help with their kind of problem. . .

In all these hundreds of social agencies, institutions and jails, what do the staffs or workers do to help the client? How do they know what "works"?

The truth is people don't know what works in most cases. Is self-help the answer, like Alcoholics Anonymous, Weightwatchers, Recovery Inc., Gamblers Anonymous?

From another article:

We have always wondered if the things we do day by day, make the difference, or if the key is the attitude and style of the staff, or if the key is in the readiness of the young person to take advantage of help. We seem always to conclude that it is combinations of the above which can lead to success.

The word success itself is elusive. Many of the young people who come to Betterway will never be wealthy or hold high status jobs or be high achievers. They do not have the family connections or the educational and emotional backgrounds to do that well in life. But we hope they will stay out of jail, have a reasonably happy marriage, have children and enjoy them, hold a job that is interesting and pays enough to live, and renew ties with their own parents and brothers and sisters so they can be with them at holidays weddings, and funerals.

Betterway is a private non-profit social service program trying to help young people in trouble or without a home. "We have boys and girls, ages 12 to 21." Where do they come from?

Young people come to Betterway from Juvenile Courts County Child Welfare Departments and the Ohio Department of Youth Services. They can come from any county in Ohio or other states. They live in our group homes, foster homes, or if over 18 our independent apartments. All the locations have full-time staff. Volunteers who want to give a summer or a year are also at Betterway, receiving room and board and a stipend. Colleges also use Betterway for intern training for future social workers, psychologists, and others.

Youth stay at Betterway anywhere from a few weeks to years, depending on their situation.

What about the studies of agencies trying to help delinquents? Betterway relies mainly on its own experience, but sometimes is guided by studies such as one made at Harvard, another at the University of Michigan. The Harvard study, done by the Gluecks, showed that "the less social services look like social services the better they help." The Michigan research suggested that the most successful programs offered "long term relationships with warm adults teaching firm ways to get along in life."

Betterway has found that the best method is a combination of all methods. The appearance of being a social service is minimized; it operates without labels or titles. Friendliness and common sense do the rest. They don't feel sure of much else.