

## THE DECENT ELITE

THE English farmer and writer, John Seymour, has done a new book, *The Forgotten Arts*. Its introduction, "Wonder of Work," appeared in *Resurgence* for January-February of this year. In it he asks:

Are we justified in using articles, no matter how convenient it may be for us to use them, that we know were produced in conditions which bored and even stultified the human beings who had to make them? Surely it must be possible to produce the things we really need without causing our fellow humans to live and work in such surroundings?

There are other ways to think about these articles we find so "convenient." In a collection of essays, *The Man-Made Object*, edited by Gyorgy Kepes (Braziller, 1966), another Englishman, Michael J. Blee, an architect and designer, speaks of how hand-made objects of daily use may be regarded by their owners.

For the primitive his wooden bowl is valued, fingered, felt, and known; a true man-made extension, his spoon a prehensile extension of his own anatomy. Each of his few possessions has a similar intense reality each is necessary and life-enhancing. It is surely experientially relevant to ask to what extent such identity can be offered or demanded of the trivia of materialistic society, the paper plate, the plastic spoon. If identity depends wholly on scarcity, slowness, familiarization, frequent contact, then the contemporary urban environment denies all possibility of such experience.

The Norwegian philosopher, Sigmund Kvaloy, draws a similar comparison, contrasting his bedroom in a Norwegian mountain valley farm with the room in which his son now sleeps in an urban dwelling in Oslo. (Also in *Resurgence*, September-October 1984.)

When I look back I have a lot of fabulous memories of the room in the old log house where every single piece of timber had been individually shaped and I knew whom among my own relatives had done it. . . . Every night there would be something new with me to give life to all those

fantastic patterns that surrounded me on the walls and ceiling, the natural patterns in the wood, always impressing upon the mind the rhythms of living growth. They inspired adventure stories that grew incessantly in my mind, bridging waking existence and dreams.

The situation today is different. Look at my son's room, which is a "bed-and-media chamber." On the surface it looks colorful; closer scrutiny reveals it as an expression of the mass production of the Industrial Growth Society. We have a Buddha here, pointing to "Spiritual Values" and a "cosmopolitan attitude," a Buddha printed in four million copies on washable, glossy plastic, made in Tokyo. Every item in the room is expressive of the standardization and commercialization of the world of this growing child. There ~s nothing here that challenges him to be self-creative, to use his own hands and senses in direct interplay with the naturally complex material and spiritual world.

Another passage in Kvaloy's article, while not wholly relevant, is too interesting to leave out. It has to do with the structures in which people live.

The Sherpa and Tibetan houses are living beings for which the builders take responsibility on an everyday basis. The house is meant to be repaired every day. It is built light so that the forces of nature, like wind, are permitted to show their force, but in such a way that it's always the parts that are quickly, almost effortlessly rebuilt. The roof blows off in strong winds, the way it's meant to, but that means that the much more important skeleton of the house remains untouched, and the family puts the roof back. I've watched it happen on several occasions. Putting the roof back is like putting your hat back. You don't feel terrible having to do that. This is the strategy formed by necessity in a non-affluent society.

Next he speaks of the modern architect's drawing which has to be thrown away because the designer or draftsman spoiled it with a coffee or tobacco stain.

The same is the case with a modern house. If one day the passersby observe a crack in the wall—a scar on that pure smooth face—they can't bear it because it's part of a structure where the cracks of

time are supposed not to have relevance. Western architecture is built to make you believe that time has stopped and that withering or death is no more. To keep that illusion going, however, presupposes a global robber economy, a systematic plundering that is now emptying the earth's last resources at an exponential pace, scooping up energy and materials and people around the globe to desperately preserve structures that are contradicting time the process of life. Man is here living by contradicting himself at his existential roots. On the personal micro-level something like this would be called insanity, probably labelled as schizophrenia.

In contrast to this, to regain sanity, I propose the *philosophy of positive decay*. Accepting decay means accepting life. It's another word for eco-philosophy.

Still another way to consider the characterless monotony of mass production involves thinking about the people who assemble the parts of radios and other electronic devices. This used to be a low-paying job in various parts of the United States, but now many of the assembly plants have migrated to the Far East. For a time, these transplant industries, as Jane Jacobs has named them, were in the southern states where labor was docile and cheap, but lately they have been going to the Pacific Rim—Singapore, Seoul, Taipei, and Hong Kong. We think of the plants in these cities as "sweat shops" where the workers are poorly paid and mostly women. But occasionally one reads about the women workers who, for the first time in their lives, have enough money to feed their families and to dress in something besides rags. And eventually the wages go up as local manufacturers start in business and labor acquires some independence. Even though the products they make mean little or nothing to them, the lives of these people are transformed for the better. No doubt high technology devices are more sensibly manufactured by mass production.

The case for this view was generally put more than thirty years ago by Lyman Bryson in *The Next America* (Harper, 1952):

The world is megalopolitan not by spiritual choice but by reason of technologies, meeting human wants. If we want shoes and schools and medical services for everyone, we have to depend on mass

production for most of our material goods, and have factories to work in. We can hope to learn temperance, but it is sentimental to think of having modern longevity and comfort without having modern assembly lines, and those assembly lines create just that change in scale in our economic and social units which makes institutional involvement a part of our experience. The collectives enlarge and the impersonal nets of stimuli envelop our lives; this becomes, day by day, more the condition of the whole world.

Yet at the beginning of his book Mr. Bryson had given the other side of the argument:

The advancement of our machine culture has taken away from the individual these two basic opportunities of individuality, the power to make decisions in some of the important aspects of living and the personal skill that is built into one's fingers and eyes and nerves by learning and practice. The merely material aspects of our living, now collectively controlled, are not the most important, since they are material, but what has been taken away from us in making us machine tenders instead of workers cannot be surrendered if we are to be fully human. We cannot live democracy without making responsible choices. Can we, by taking thought, get back democracy as a process, and skill as experience? We can go deeper into the present situation by looking at what the mass groups have done to our ordinary lives, and consider first the loss of personal choice in collective action. We can find evidences of that loss in our ownership, in our work, in our national politics—in every large-scale group.

We now return to John Seymour and his advocacy of objects fabricated by artisans. "The use of artifacts made from natural materials," he says, "gives a pleasure far in excess of the pleasure we derive from simply doing the job. The form, the texture, the subtle feel of such artifacts, together with an awareness of their origins—in trees, a crop growing in the field, part of the hide of an ox, part of the living rock—add greatly to the pleasure of seeing and using them." Then, as to cost, he says:

Hand-crafted goods often cost more than the mass-produced equivalent initially, but do they in the long term? Surely it is more economical to pay money to a friend and neighbor—a local craftsman—to make something good for you than to pay a little less money for some rubbishy mass item produced far

away and God knows by whom? The money you pay your neighbor may come back to you. By helping to keep your neighbor in business you are enriching your own locality. Furthermore, you are increasing the sum of real enjoyment in the world, for your craftsman almost certainly enjoys making the article for you and you will certainly enjoy owning and using it. The operative in the factory may enjoy the wages he or she gets but the work, well, no.

Now people who seek for and demand articles made by craftsmen and women are often described as elitist. Well we are, of course—the charge is completely justified. And the nice thing about elitism is that anybody can be an elitist if he or she wants to be. Come and join us! There is plenty of room in this elite, room for all in fact. Nobody has to put up with mass-produced rubbish. The stuff simply did not exist two hundred years ago and human beings got on perfectly well, and lived 'til they died, as we do today. There are people who can't afford to join our elite, I hear you say. Oh yes they can—all they have to do is make out with fewer unnecessary articles than now. The word elitist is used nowadays as if there is something shameful about being a member of an elite. I would find it shameful not to be a member of this particular one.

In principle, John Seymour's argument seems sound. In an affluent society even the "poor" are able, as he says, to get along with "fewer necessary articles," but the motivation for doing this may come hard. Reflective individuals may be able to eliminate the TV set or the radio, or the status-imparting gadget in kitchen or bathroom, but the "other-directed" behavior of those who make up the mass society is never affected by the independent reasoning such changes require. And for the really poor—the inner city minority populations—the articles made by hand by craftsmen are usually quite out of reach. People who have home shops where they make fine furniture depend upon the wealthy to buy what they produce, and craftsmen skilled in making exquisite leather goods such as men's wallets, fine belts, or work in silver and semi-precious stones for jewelry after Hopi or Navajo models—they all know that only wealthy purchasers can afford to buy their products.

There is an illustration of this difficulty in recent history. Back in the 1960s, when militant blacks took part in the Civil Rights campaign in the southern states, becoming active in voter registration, they were often fired from their jobs. "Get off the place," one worker for a Mississippi plantation was told. "You're messed up in voter registration and I don't want to have anything to do with you." Before long there was a sizeable number of black unemployed in Mississippi—men and women resourceful and courageous in temperament. These people joined together and organized producer co-ops, making quality leather and suede pocketbooks, hats, belts, totebags and pouches, patchwork quilts, carpet bags, childrens' and adults' clothing, stuffed toys, and miscellaneous items for wear and household use. They were helped in these undertakings by Jesse Morris of the Poor People's Corporation of Jackson, Mississippi, organized for this purpose. Morris understood both the production problems and the methods of marketing required for such goods. The Liberty Outlet House was formed in Jackson to handle the items at wholesale and to devise an appropriate catalog, listing and illustrating what the co-ops produced. In 1966 there were nine such co-ops in Mississippi, and the Outlet provided technical assistance, financing, and training for the crafts people, many of whom were women. Stores were opened in New York and Boston. Early in the operation of these Liberty Outlets it was realized that marketing was almost entirely dependent upon well-to-do urban Bohemians who wanted hand-made goods. The black crafts people wanted what they produced to be used by the black poor of New York and Roxbury, but they simply couldn't afford such items. The special stores set up in poor neighborhoods, with prices as low as possible, couldn't survive.

One might argue, however, that this is natural enough in a time of transition—if transition is what is happening. What else are the wealthy good for, besides being patrons? Why shouldn't craftsmen keep themselves alive in this way?

Those who try to change the ways of an upside-down society are bound to be confronted by numerous anomalies and be obliged to live with practical compromises everywhere except in their long-term intentions. For human beings, sudden and total change in one's personal habits is not merely difficult, it is impossible. Let us do what we can. And those few to whom John Seymour addresses himself will show the way.

So, back to Seymour again. In one place in this long article he tells about craftsmen he has met—"in Ireland where I live, in Wales where I used to live, in England where I was born, in France, Germany, Austria, Italy and Greece, and even in the Middle East and in Africa."

Some of these people were poor—some were struggling for a living, but poor or not they had one thing in common—they enjoyed their work. They took a great pride in it and, if you showed an intelligent interest, they loved to show what they were doing and how they did it.

The older craftsman still has that ancient attitude to the reward for work that used to be universal but is, alas, now seldom found. And that is the attitude that there should be a fair reward for good work. Nowadays the predominating attitude is "I charge what the market will bear." I will never forget the time I finally persuaded that great craftsman Mr. Harry King, the boatbuilder of Pin Mill in Suffolk, to build me a 14-foot wooden dinghy. This was soon after the Second World War when it was hard to find craftsmen to make such an item. For a long time he refused but finally he relented.

"How much will you charge for her?" I asked. Later I learned that you do not ask such people how much they will charge, at least not in Suffolk.

"Three pun' a foot," he snapped.

"But Mr. King, everyone I have been to charges *four* pounds a foot! You must have made a mistake?"

"Three pun' a foot's my price. If you don't like it you can go somewhere else!" he replied. "I don't hev to build ye a dinghy!"

The real craftsman does not need more than enough. In our times of social mobility, everyone is after more than enough. We no longer ask "what is our product worth?" or "how much do I need?" but "how much can I get?"

That is the psychology of the market, which dominates our lives. Those who dislike it and won't apply it, and those who can't see how to cope with it, as in the case of the family-size farmer, go under. Reliance on the market produces the kind of a society we have now—a society in which you have great difficulty in finding what you really want, a society in which you are required to be indifferent to the victims of a system which cares nothing for either excellence or justice, a society which has regarded war as the remedy for all major problems, but now can no longer do so, and is bewildered and helpless because there seems no other way to practice the exploitation upon which the market system depends.

We take John Seymour's conclusion as our own, and ask, what does it take to persuade people that he is right?

Whether mankind just gets fed up with a way of working which is boring, and sordid, and produces ugly things, or whether the constraints imposed by the dwindling resources of our planet finally halt the Gadarene rush to the cliff's edge, in the end, if mankind is to survive at any kind of level of true civilization, the craftsman must triumph.

The only whole and happy life possible to a woman or man on this planet is a life in which *work*—honest and noble *work* is the greatest joy. Leisure yes, but leisure can only be a joy if it is true leisure, which means leisure from work. Just constant idleness—the idleness of the unemployed—is not leisure at all but is a corrosive and corrupting thing. That good craftsman, Eric Gill, once wrote: "Leisure is secular, work is sacred. The object of leisure is work, the object of work is holiness. Holiness means wholeness."

## *REVIEW*

### THE CASE AGAINST DAMS

THIS week we direct attention to a large double issue (Vol. 14, Nos. 5-6) of the *Ecologist*, edited by Edward Goldsmith and Nicholas Hilyard in Cornwall, England. Four feature articles, two by the editors, are devoted to the follies of large-scale dams. These are scientific studies and together constitute the most conclusive analysis of the subject since Arthur Morgan's book, *Dams and Other Disasters* (Porter Sargent, 1971), which is mostly a devastating exposure of the mistakes of the U.S. Army Engineers.

In their editorial introduction, Goldsmith and Hilyard say:

On the face of it, there is every reason to suppose that large-scale irrigation schemes have much to offer the hungry. Certainly, irrigation agriculture is the most efficient farming system in the world, producing high yields on very small areas of land. At present, 200 million hectares [one hectare equals 2.47 acres] are irrigated—but the UN Food and Agricultural Organization argues that unless another 100 million hectares are brought under irrigation by the turn of the century, starvation will be widespread. Others maintain that even that rate of expansion will leave many hungry.

That is the popular and political case for building big dams. The articles in this (1984) issue of the *Ecologist* explode very nearly every claim made in behalf of irrigation dams. The editors go on, saying:

But setting up large-scale irrigation schemes is exorbitantly expensive—in some areas, it costs as much as \$10,000 to irrigate a single hectare of land—and in order to earn foreign exchange to pay the bills, irrigated land is invariably used to grow cash crops for export, generally to the industrialized world. The rural poor have thus been the last people to benefit from large-scale irrigation schemes. Iran's Dez Dam, for example, was intended to provide over 200,000 acres of irrigated land to small farmers in Khuzestan. In the event, however, the land went almost exclusively to foreign-owned companies which cultivated crops for export. An executive of one of the companies involved was quite candid about how

he viewed the scheme: "They develop the water and we come and farm it."

It is a story which has been repeated time and again the world over. In Senegal, over 370,000 hectares are to be irrigated under a massive scheme to develop the entire Senegal River basin. Between 75,000 and 98,000 hectares will be irrigated by the Diama Dam near the coast and a further 255,000 hectares by the Manautali Dam, 1000 kilometres upstream. Officially the scheme is intended to promote "communal rural development." In reality, the setting up of small farms in the Manautali area will have ceased by 1987; after that date, all the resources are to be devoted to expanding the area under large farms.

A well-informed critic remarked that "the decision has been made to favour large-scale mechanized agriculture, with its imports of fertilizers and pesticides, in order to produce crops for export. All at the expense of the individual small holder." Such policies are now given as the cause of the disastrous famines which ravaged the Sahel (Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal, and Upper Volta) since the late 1960s. The land, moreover, is under-fertilized and over-irrigated, leading to rapid depletion and salinization. "Beyond a certain point, plant life can no longer survive and eventually the whole area becomes covered with a white saline crust. The land is effectively dead." Over 50 per cent of the world's irrigated land, according to the UN Food and Agricultural Organization, "now suffers from salinization." The editors ask:

What do rural peasants get in return for having their land turned into salt-encrusted desert and the food they grow exported? The answer is precious little. Unable to grow crops for themselves, they must buy food in the open market. But as more and more land is taken over for cash crops—or simply degraded to the point where it can no longer be farmed—so less food can be grown for local consumption, inevitably pushing up the price. So too the increasing costs of production as peasant farmers get hooked onto the treadmill that is modern agriculture . . . further inflate the price of food. The result is widespread starvation, hunger and malnutrition.

How can this fatal process be stopped?

Unfortunately, to persuade Third World governments to abandon plans to build water development schemes is a lost cause. The "think big" mentality is just too firmly entrenched. The only way to prevent their construction is to appeal directly to donor governments, to development banks and to international aid agencies without whose financial help the schemes could not be built.

A major objection to big dams is the spread of certain diseases they are likely to make possible by the creation of storage lakes. Most readers have come across references to the infectious disease, schistosomiasis (also called bilharzia), but have little idea of its effects. A section in the *Ecologist's "Briefing Document"* gives the following account:

In 1947, an estimated 114 million people suffered from schistosomiasis. Today, 200 million people are affected—the equivalent of the entire population of the USA. The disease is caused by parasitic flatworms known as "schistosomes." Three common species infect man: *S. Haematobium*, *S. Mansoni*, and *S. Japoni*. The larvae of the schistosomes develop within the bodies of freshwater snails.

When people swim or wade in water contaminated by infected snails, the larvae bore through their skin and enter their blood stream. From there they move to the liver, where they mature in a few weeks and mate. The resulting eggs leave the human body via urine or faeces.

The eggs of all three species tend to spread to various organs while still in the body. They have been recovered from the brain, the spinal cord, the lungs, bladder, appendix, rectum, uterus, spleen and liver. The dramatic spread of schistosomiasis over the last 35 years is largely the result of large-scale water development. Such schemes provide habitats for both fresh water snails and the schistosome parasite. The connection between schistosomiasis and water projects is so well established that professor Gilbert White a leading authority on ecological problems, writes:

"The invasion by schistosomiasis of irrigation schemes in arid lands is so common that there is no need to give examples. The non-invasion of schemes where the disease exists is exceptional." Not only is the snail vector's habitat greatly extended by water development projects but the conditions are also created for much longer breeding periods.

—In Kenya, schistosomiasis now affects almost 100 per cent of the children living in irrigated areas near Lake Victoria.

—In the Sudan, the massive Gezira irrigation scheme had a general effect of 60-70 per cent in 1979, with the rate among schoolchildren reaching over 90 per cent. All in all, 1.4 million people were affected.

—After the building of the Aswan High Dam, the infection rate rose to 100 per cent in some communities.

Few doubt that the disease is on the increase. Letitia Obeng of the United Nations Environment Programme warns that the current incidence of schistosomiasis is "only the thin end of the wedge."

Like so many technical discussions, this account of schistosomiasis says little of what the disease actually does to human beings. For this we go to Hassan Fathy's *Architecture for the Poor* (1973). Calling it bilharzia, Fathy says of its ravages in Egypt:

Bilharzia kills, eats away a man's strength, poisons his life, his work, and his recreation. Bilharzia is the greatest single cause of those defects that pull down our peasantry: the apathy and lack of stamina that are as marked in the social life of the people as in their labor. . . . Water, which gives life to man and crop, gives man bilharzia too. Whenever he goes into the water of canal or pond or rice field, whenever children splash about in the puddles of a drained irrigation ditch, whenever a woman washes her clothes in the river, bilharzia strikes. How can the peasant keep away from the water?

The snails which harbor the infectious worm thrive in the still waters of the artificial lakes created by dams—hence the increase in the rate of infection in areas close to the lake made by the Aswan High Dam. Such lakes also favor the spread of malaria, since they are breeding grounds for the *Anopheles* mosquito which is host to the malaria parasite.

The longest article in this issue of the *Ecologist* is a study of Sri Lanka's "Mahweli Scheme," now under construction in the island, previously known as Ceylon, off the coast of India. The writer is L. Alexis. Involved are five dams which "threaten ecological stability in a large

portion of the country's interior." One Sri Lankan critic, a biologist, Ranil Senanayake (with a degree from the University of California), says that a government announcement invited the lease of the soon-to-be irrigated lands by multi-national firms.

He noted that this would lead to a new type of agriculture similar to that practiced on the government-run estates and plantations. Two forms of agriculturalists were emerging. "The first, the multi-national agribusiness having a much greater economic and political strength than the second, the individual Sri Lankan farmer. The multinational growers will demand regular supplies of water to maintain their resource-expensive irrigated plantations. . . . When the amount of water available to agriculture becomes limited by industrial draw-off, there will rise a situation of competition for water between the agribusiness and the individual farmer. . . . global experience has shown us what happens in such a competition. The individual farmer, lacking political and economic power, loses out."

In a concluding article the editors, Goldsmith and Hilyard, take up one by one the twelve arguments presented by engineers to justify big dam construction, showing that they are all faulty, ill-founded, and fallacious.

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**COMMENTARY**  
**A READER WRITES**

IN the May 20 issue of MANAS, we quoted at some length from an article in the *American Scholar* (Summer, 1984) by Christina Sommers, her point being that certain "moral educators" give courses in "values classification" without any reference to the idea of "virtue." Her point seemed important, her examples persuasive.

We now have a letter from a reader in Oregon who says that in looking through past issues he came across the quotations from Christina Sommers and was troubled by her criticism of one man, Sidney Simon, whom he knows well and thinks highly of. We reproduce a portion of our reader's letter since it reveals factors which even just criticism may overlook. We have nothing to retract, only something to add. Our reader says:

Sid believes that a value is a deeply held belief that generates action. . . . In *Meeting Yourself Halfway* Simon says a value must be: (1) chosen freely, (2) chosen from among alternatives, (3) chosen after due reflection, (4) prized and cherished, (5) publicly affirmed, (6) acted upon, and (7) part of a pattern that is a repeated action. A number of values clarification techniques have been developed to assist the student in determining what he or she values based on the above framework.

In his recent workshops, Sid is working with participants to develop an awareness for living a life of voluntary simplicity. He may use a values clarification technique called *Baker's Dozen*. People would be asked to list 13 electrical appliances they personally use; then they would be asked to draw a line through the three they could most easily live without.

Sid is able to help people focus on critical life issues in a manner that is unobtrusive. It's a gentle prodding that follows a thread. Whether it's voluntary simplicity, nuclear resistance, or weight control, he provides the space to reflect. Simon is one of the best teachers I've come across, and I've come across a lot of them.

While this program hardly replaces Socrates' inquiry into the nature of virtue and his effort to

discover whether it can be taught, the observations of this reader seemed worth considering.



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves CRITICS ... ADMIRERS

IN the *Community Service Newsletter* for March-April the editors present an article by Donald Harrington on "The Effects of Modern Communication on the Small Community." Early in this paper the writer gives the statement of a foreign visitor to this country, who said:

Frankly, I could hardly believe my eyes when I was in the United States—the kind of things you showed on television. If the things you show are representative of the kind of life you have in America, God help you! All the killing and beatings and cheating and swearing and wife-stealing and immorality! A nation can't help being judged by the things it's interested in.

But what is most surprising to me is that you apparently have no idea of the kind of harm this is doing to your children. They sit in front of the TV sets for hours at a time and take it all in. What kind of food is this for tender young minds? And you wonder why you have a juvenile delinquency problem. Surely your capitalists, who put on these TV programs, must have some conscience and could be persuaded not to make money out of deforming children's minds. Capitalism isn't just an unjust economic system. It's a way of life which leads to the corruption of important values. Television is just one example.

Yes, this was said by a Russian. But which one? It was Premier Khrushchev. Who was he talking to? Norman Cousins.

Arthur Koestler is also quoted:

Nor did the extension of the range of the sense organs through radio and television increase the intellectual range of the human mind, its powers of abstraction and synthesis. It seems rather that the reverse is true: that the stupendous amplification of vision and hearing caused a rapid deterioration of the intellectual and moral content of communication. In the new generation born into the age of television, not only the habit of reading, but the faculty of thinking in abstract, conceptual terms seems to be weakened by the child's conditioning to easier, more primitive forms of visual perception. *The dangers of this regression from the conceptual to the perceptual,*

*from abstract language to picture strip language, are less obvious in the immediate future, but in the long run no less grave, than the spectacular increase in (man's) destructive power.*

In *The Informed Heart*, Bruno Bettelheim has something to say about the effect on children in "the long run":

Children who have been taught or conditioned to listen passively most of the day to the warm verbal communication coming from the TV screen . . . are often unable to respond to real persons because they rouse so much less feeling than the skilled actor. Worse, they lose the ability to learn from reality, because life experiences are more complicated than the ones they see on the screen, and no one comes in at the end to explain it all. Conditioned to being given explanations, he [the child] has not learned to puzzle for one of his own. He gets discouraged when he cannot grasp the meaning of what happens to him and is thrown back once more to find a culprit within predictable stories on the screen.

If, later in life, this block of solid inertia is not removed the emotional isolation from others that starts in front of TV may continue in school. Eventually it leads, if not to a permanent disability, then to a reluctance to becoming in learning or in relations to other people. . . . This being seduced into passivity and discouraged about facing life actively, on one's own, is the real danger of TV, much more than the often assinine or gruesome contents of the shows.

Television, in short, according to these observers, is a kind of poison. The critics keep pointing this out, but it seems to have almost no effect on parental decision. The adults, after all, watch it too. Meanwhile the people that manufacture television sets and the people who make and put on the programs don't seem to worry at all about this kind of attack on the industry that pays them so well. It does about as much harm to their sales as the note on cigarette packages (smoking may threaten your health) does to the tobacco industry. Warnings have never had much effect on humans. Only personal experience counts for most of us. Only the adult who discovers what it does to him or her stops looking, and then gets rid of the box. Only people who decide that it is time to stop profaning their minds are still able to make up their minds. The "regulation" Mr. Harrington calls for at the end of his

article will not, cannot, work. No American businessman is without the talent to get around regulations, as, say, the history of the Food and Drug Administration demonstrates beyond doubt. (See Turner's *The Chemical Feast*.)

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With fair regularity we break faith with John Holt to tell about some school where the teachers behave like parents. One such place is the School in Rose Valley, started by teachers and parents about when the depression hit, and still going strong. They get out a *Parents' Bulletin* that is a treasure trove on teaching and learning. The Winter 1985 issue presents the memories of some parents and teachers (often the parents became teachers). One of these, who had been a student, writes:

I don't believe I really appreciated The School in Rose Valley until I became involved in teaching myself. . . . That is not to say that my time as a student at SRV wasn't enjoyable; we didn't know you weren't supposed to enjoy school. I remember with pleasure the plays, the camping trips, and the assemblies, with stories by Grace and Billy Price that kept us enthralled.

It was the Depression, and nobody had much money, but again we didn't know it was a problem. Many fathers had time on their hands, and many of us had fun helping them build the school buildings. Looking now at the old pictures of fathers and kids sawing and hammering, all of them with their shirts off, it is clear that no one had to worry about being overweight.

It is interesting that most of my really vivid experiences have a painful component; probably that's why I still have them. Some episodes were simply traumatic. Jesse Holmes and I had a Tarzan act where we swung from one limb to another about 15 feet up in the apple tree between the Main building and the parking area. My younger brother Sam tried it, and although the area was not bricked over at that time, he managed to break both wrists. . . .

I went on to a number of very good schools (Swarthmore High, Wesleyan, U. of P.), and certainly didn't hesitate to speak out as I went along (does any Rose Valley graduate?), but I also had no difficulty in working within the system. It is only as I have spent the last 25 years teaching in a medical school that I found myself getting increasingly angry over the

things that we do wrong. It is fascinating that the American Association of Medical Colleges has just spent over half a million dollars to have a blue-ribbon task force tell them what they should be doing, when they could have gotten the same conclusions by simply observing Rose Valley for a few days: "Learning begins with experience"; a curriculum must be flexible enough to meet individual needs; the facts a student takes away are not as important as the recognition that he must continue to educate himself for the rest of his life.

In another contribution a Rose Valley teacher takes "a walk through each classroom" and reports:

Allison's three-year-olds are great collectors and observers, taking sharp-eyed walks through the woods in fine weather, finding shapes that seem to stand up to be noticed: fern seed heads and grapevines curled around themselves to make "twisters." The children collect and identify these finds, then bring some of them together in crafts. Sunlight shines through their mobiles of red leaves, rosehips, feathers and moss. . .

Walking into Steve's classroom, you might think the main topic of study for second, third and fourth graders is the creation of the world, according to Hieronymus Bosch. Clay work is everywhere, running heavily to masks, mermaids and gargoyles. Sue Tiedeck's workshop on soft sculpture dolls is also enthusiastically attended. All those little doll arms and legs projecting from nearly every cubby, along with the clay faces grinning up from every flat surface, giving a cheerfully inchoate air to the place.

The School in Rose Valley is at School Lane, Moylan, Penn. 19065. It was founded (more or less) by a group of disillusioned parents, with Grace Rotzel as inspiration and principal for many years. Grace Rotzel's book, *The School in Rose Valley* (Johns Hopkins, 1971) tells the story of a school which began in 1929 with twenty-nine children.

## FRONTIERS

### Reflections on Abraham Maslow

[These are remarks by Richard Grossman made at a conference of the Association of Humanistic Psychology in San Francisco last March.]

TWENTY-FIVE years ago today Abe Maslow was not celebrating. He was, in fact, adding up the numbers of the rejections he had received from book publishers who had been reading the papers that were to become *Toward a Psychology of Being*. In the first week of March, 1960, that total reached seven. (So much for the cognitive insights of book publishers.) It may have been this sort of experience that led Abe to define progress as "progressively higher problems to be unhappy about." In any case, a little less than a year later, those papers were accepted by Van Nostrand, so his personal satisfaction coincided with another event that heartened him: the publication of the first issue of *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*.

Now, that much-rejected manuscript, *Toward a Psychology of Being*, though it can not be said to be as popular as it was in the days when it filled the pockets of almost as many blue jeans as the books of Ché Guevara, is still available, still the dictionary of a whole rainbow of ideas that have crept into the national water cooler so pervasively that the key phrases in it are almost American shorthand—self-actualization, peak experiences, the hierarchy of needs, metamotivations, the holistic/dynamic concept—and dozens of others. Somehow, not as much attention has been paid to another term Abe used as a heading for Part I of *Toward a Psychology of Being* a sub-title I think was at the core of his ambition, and that was the most important of the many flags he carried: "A Larger Jurisdiction for Psychology." He could arrive at that summary phrase at the age of 52, I think, because he had known since he was 17 that there were what he called "boiling and philosophical things bubbling in him." A year after that, at 18, he had what he described four days before his death as "a truly big breakthrough of awe and admiration when he read William Graham Sumner's book, *Folkways*. Abe's recollection was that it was "a kind of cold chill and

hair-standing-on-end peak experience, not just happy, but mixed with vows, with a feeling of littleness, and incapability, and the like. "The point was," he wrote, "that the vow—that's what it would have been called 500 years ago—was also a resolution (as my ethnocentrism dropped away like old clothes, and as I became a citizen of the world in that one evening) to do as Sumner had done, and for some reason that I can't fathom now, I swore to myself that I would try to, or that I *would* make that kind of contribution to philosophy, to psychology, and to anthropology. If I had been in King Arthur's court, I suppose I would have kept vigil beside my sword before the altar all night long. But that was exactly the spirit of it."

As fond as Abe was of respecting the grandiose vision—in himself and in others—he knew, as we do, that the "contribution," as he called it, was not to be completed by one person. He meant his ambition for a "larger jurisdiction for psychology" not only to be the organizing theme of his professional life, but also an invitation to others to make *their* share of contribution to that expansion. For himself, when he weighed his own role, he saw himself in two different images—either the self-confessed "butterfly," flitting from flower to flower, or as an intellectual Daniel Boone, a reconnaissance man, scouting out the territory, often, as he acknowledged, "ahead of the data, impatient with the numbers, following hunches, intuitions, and inner-impulse voices."

Whether we have filled the intervening years since Abe's death with enough research and replicable applications of his ideas is a subject that will surely arise more than a few times in the next few days of this conference. But whether the vogue for his sort of daring speculation and high flying is in ascendancy, as he believed it to be, or in disfavor, as much modern criticism suggests, is really irrelevant. Abe was right in pointing out to others who shared his vision that they should beware the ephemeral—what he called the "journalistic tradition"—and should commit themselves instead to the "long tradition," to working for and speaking to the "unseen audiences," the ones always symbolized for

him by his grandchildren, his great-grandchildren, and his great-great-grandchildren.

So for those who drank from the wellsprings of his ideas, and still crave to confirm or disconfirm, as Abe would say, some elements of his unfinished, but comprehensively-intended theory of human nature, there is still much work to be done in that "long tradition."

For those who work in aspects of medical care, the real exploration of Abe's "health model" is only now underway. Particularly for those of us who work with indigent populations, the question of the relevance and practicality of educating the so-called "higher goals" of self-actualization in the face of still ubiquitous economic poverty, and social and environmental degradation, remains a daily issue. What Abe liked to call "B-Medicine" is hard to practice in the South Bronx, and those who think it is worth doing are doubly stressed by the reality of immediate impoverishment and the urge to elicit inherent, "instinctoid" strengths.

Similarly, it is more of a challenge than ever to advocate, let alone manifest the ideas of confluent education in an era in which ketchup has been officially declared a healthy school lunch. Likewise, the animation with which Abe envisioned "Eupsychian Management" runs the risk of being trivialized into one-minute industrial Nirvana, or being employed as an internally humanistic strategy for the purpose of making patently non-humanistic products, weapons, and public policy. And even as newspapers record that Abe's ideas are being invoked again in some sociological studies of altruism, those same newspapers are dominated, as most public affairs are dominated, by reports of the triumphs of the mechanistic manipulation of language, things, and people, and a mass resurgence of the tendency Abe rightly called "sophomoric rubricizing and dichotomizing."

Let this not be taken as mere wistfulness that the world is not being run by self-professed Maslovians, or that we have some obligations, out of our affectionate and respectful memory of him, to stay in the trenches fighting for his causes, or "winning one for *our* Gipper." Abe needs no further

eulogies, nor an association merely of old cronies who will dedicate themselves to wielding his cudgels. But for those of us who bathed in the streams of his thoughts—yes, even in his slogans and catch-phrases that his critics liked to call "swollen word-chains of existential goodies"—there is much to be done in the way of phenomenological research, and much to do where we live in the corners of education, art, medicine, business, science, politics, and yes, even academia. Whether we label it as such or not, much of that work will derive from Abe Maslow's words ideas, and passions. And as he did, we must lament that our biological natures do not permit us the 150 to 200 years that are really needed to do it.

Shortly after the happy confluence of *Toward a Psychology of Being* finding a publisher and the issuance of the first copies of *The Journal of Humanistic Psychology*, Abe made another optimistic note about the movement that was declaring itself Humanistic Psychology. He wrote that, "one nice thing about this Third Force psychology is that there is no Pope, so all the dangers of sectarianism and parochialism can be avoided." As I look around this room twenty-five years later, I think he was right—though I can't help suspecting that we may have established a College of Cardinals. But if there is no single Pope, or succession of them, surely in a secular, humanistic, truly democratic Olympus of the giants of psychology, there are a few special chairs eternally reserved for the seminal and the great. And one such chair surely belongs to Abe Maslow.

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