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THE AMERICAN GARDEN

THERE is a mood in the air today which could hardly have been discerned a few years ago—a way of thinking about life and meaning that recognizes and accepts responsibility for far more than human beings became used to under the direction of the scientific scheme of things. Consciousness, for one thing, is coming to mean a fundamental constituent of nature and life, and not a late arrival on the scene, somehow generated by the interaction of molecules. Specifically, we are thinking of something said by Frederick Turner, a humanist professor in the University of Texas, and quoted in last week's MANAS. "I believe," he said, "we must trust human intention more than human instinct, since intention evolved out of and as an improvement upon instinct."

Can we, indeed, be wiser than our instincts? Is there a level of our being which is expressive of realities beyond the senses and where peculiarly human action takes place? This is not of course a new idea. In the West it originated with Plato and has been repeated by a few influential thinkers since, although without much effect on the currents of dominant opinion. The shapers of the modern mind have been Darwin and Huxley, Marx and Freud, not to forget Adam Smith and his numerous followers. And in the area of biological life—which is all the life there is for most biologists—instinct is the guardian of nature and the guarantor of its future. But now Professor Turner says (in *Harper's* for August):

> We must take responsibility for nature. That ecological modesty which asserts that we are only one species among many, with no special rights, we may now see as an abdication of trust. We are, whether we like it or not, the lords of creation; true humility consists not in pretending that we aren't, but in living up to the trust it implies by service to the greater glory and beauty of the world we have been given to look after.

But since Mr. Turner is a manifestly intelligent man we must say that he can't mean this literally, but rather that we *could be* lords of creation, and then do what he thinks we should. Earlier he had warned: "But if intention is thus to be trusted, it must be fully instructed in the instincts that are its springboard and raw material; otherwise intention may do more harm than good." And we know that, up to now, it has. As a few years ago Lynn White, Jr., put it in *Machina Ex Deo:* "With the population explosion, the carcinoma of planless urbanism, the now geological deposits of sewage and garbage, surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order." We must, Prof. Turner warns, instruct ourselves, and this, he says, means turning "not only to the human sciences but also to the species' ancient wisdom as it is preserved in "myths, rituals, fairy tales, and the traditions of the performing arts."

To go to myths, rituals, and fairy tales is probably the best advice, yet, locked away in the works of certain of the founders of the human sciences are all but forgotten counsels that fit in well with the Turner prescription. We are thinking, first, of a passage in the letters of Charles Darwin, in which he seems to desert the instincts for what he regarded as a better sort of guidance. Writing to Alfred Russel Wallace early in 1864, Darwin said: "But now for your Man paper, about which I should like to write more than I can. The great leading idea is quite new to me, viz. that during late ages, the mind will have been modified more than the body; yet I had got as far as to see with you that the struggle between the races of man depended entirely on intellectual and *moral* qualities."

Then, Thomas Huxley, Darwin's famous defender, declared in his lecture, *Evolution and Ethics*, given in 1894:

> Cosmic evolution may teach us how the good and evil tendencies of man may have come about; but, in itself, it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than we had before.
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> . . . The influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more

rudimentary its civilization. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process, the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best. . . . The practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive.

Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combating it.

So that the full import of this statement may be realized we take from William McDougall (in *The Riddle of Life*, 1938) a measure of its significance:

Huxley, the most effective champion of Darwinism, an acknowledged leader of British biology in the later nineteenth century, the most positive of the Positivists, who had eloquently celebrated the iconoclastic thrusts of the mechanistic biology, in his famous Romanes Lecture (*Evolution and Ethics*) delivered at Oxford near the end of his life, revoked the main feature of his earlier teaching and called upon mankind to defy the laws of a mechanical nature which throughout his life he had so effectively expounded as all-sufficient. In essentials his new position was identical with that so well stated a little later by Robert Bridges, the poet: "Man is a spiritual being; the proper work of his mind is to interpret the world according to his highest nature, to conquer the material aspects of the world so as to bring them into subjugation to the spirit."

In this matter Huxley was a true child of his time. In his own person he lived the mechanistic triumph and later repudiated it as not in the end tenable for a rational and moral being; though it is probable that he himself never realized to the full the implications of the revulsion in which he thus took part. For that revulsion in the name of ethics, that rejection of the mechanical theory of man, meant the rejection of all the principal conclusions which the biologists of his school had so confidently announced, and the throwing open again of all the great questions, such questions as man's place in nature, the factors of evolution, the core of truth in all religions, and the essential validity of ethical principles.

We may note that practically all "the great questions" McDougall lists here form the subject-matter of Prof. Turner's article.

What, then, are the "human instincts" to which, he says, "human intentions" are superior? While the classification of instincts has been controversial and subject to strenuous debate among biologists and psychologists and psychoanalysts (or was a few years ago), our *Britannica* (1953) gives McDougall's teaching as "widely accepted," and his "instincts" are probably what Prof. Turner has in mind:

His list includes: the instincts of fright or escape, pugnacity, repulsion, curiosity, self-display, submission, sex, acquisitiveness, the parental instinct, the gregarious instinct the hunting instinct. To these must be added: imitation, play, certain simple instincts showing themselves in early childhood, the natural appetites, and possibly the wandering instinct. This enumeration is based on the view of instinct as natural impulse. Writers who approach Instinct from the behavior side, like Thorndike, for example, enumerate many more, while the psychoanalysts, though making extensive use of the notion of Instinct, rarely attempt any enumeration at all. S. Freud, the leader of the psychoanalysts, employed the term "wish" in a sense which is practically equivalent to "impulse" or "instinct."

Where did instincts come from, how did we get them? We hardly know. Instead of looking the matter up in some biology text, we go to a remarkably good book on the subject, *Instinct and Intelligence* by R. W. G. Hingston (Macmillan, 1929). The author, a major in the British Army, spent seventeen years in the oriental tropics studying the instincts and intelligence of insects. As Bertrand Russell remarks in his introduction, "The book is fascinating reading." In his closing chapter Major Hingston attacks the question of origins, pointing out: "We are up against the immediate difficulty that instincts leave no trace of their history. I mean we have no fossil instincts, nothing analogous to the records of the rocks which throw so much light on the evolution of structure." Where, then, can we look? Only, he says, in behavior as we experience it

today. He thinks that instincts are inherited habits, quoting Darwin, who said when any habit becomes inherited, "then the resemblance between what originally was a habit and an instinct becomes so close as not to be distinguished." Hingston gives examples of habits that become virtually instinctive—riding a bicycle, for example. He says:

> So this is what we find in ourselves. That those actions which come closest to instinct—so close that their working seems essentially similar—have had their foundation in deliberate efforts. In fact, automatic behavior has come from behavior that was first intelligent.
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> Of course it is a valid objection that this species of automatic action is not in the strictest sense an instinct. Instincts, we have seen, are of racial origin; they are born with the individual. Automatic habits, on the contrary, commence and get fixed during the individual's life. Nevertheless, they come very close to instinct. They are automatic and unconscious In fact, they represent in the development of the individual what instincts are in the development of the race. Now, we know that individual development is a rough epitome of racial development. Hence will the development of individual automatism suggest how racial automatism has evolved.
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> What, then, does it suggest? That instinct began in a reasoned act. That this act, through being continually repeated, tended to lose the reasoning element and to become more and more unconscious. As this process continued through generations, the mental machinery by which it worked got more indelibly engraver in the mind. And in the end it became automatic—in other words, it became instinctive. Of course we must not forget the fact that any evolutionary process of this kind will be subject to the laws of Natural Selection. If the instinct is useful it will develop; if it is harmful, it will disappear.
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> In the nature of things it cannot be demonstrated that this has actually taken place. Creatures die; they may or may not leave some record of their structure, but one thing they cannot leave is any trace of their old instincts. But we can see how this mode of development might easily have been brought about. . .
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> Of course this view will be immediately rejected by those who see in the insect world no sign of intelligent behavior. But I am confident that intelligence exists. In fact, not only do I find intelligence, but I regard the deliberate acts of intelligence as the source of every instinct.

It is high time we get back to Prof. Turner and his splendid projects. We have taken his suggestion and endeavored to find out something about the instincts which we are to transcend. He thinks that we should formulate our intentions and fulfill them. He also thinks that intentions evolved out of instincts, whereas Major Hingston thinks the reverse, but this may not be so important. We should say, of course, that Prof. Turner is not ready to *abandon* the instincts, but to follow them selectively. And if you read the chapter in Major Hingston's book on "The Folly of Instinct," you can see why. Intentions, however, are not "automatic" like instincts. What, then, will be the guide of the intentions? "Myths, rituals, and fairy tales," he says—our "ancient wisdom."

The teaching of myth is of behavior beyond self-interest, and fairy tales tell of fulfillments which transcend the transactions of material life, of dreams which "come true." Now we shyly conceive of such realizations, but we do not "believe" in them. Yet they are spiritual possibilities. We must keep and use our instincts for the limited ways in which they serve. How would the heart keep beating without the instinct engraved in organic formations? How could we care for our bodies without our hungers and our pains? Yet there are visions no body has even been aware of, instructions that the cells and organs have never received.

Prof. Turner's rhetoric reaches in this direction. "Is it not," he asks, "unwise to hold the Constitution hostage to an erroneous claim that equality is an empirical fact?"

> The wording of this phrase (we "hold" these truths to be truths) suggests a wiser alternative that equality is something we stipulate as a ground rule, perhaps as a corrective to our natural inequality.
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> Other distortions have been created by the notion of natural self-interest. Modern sociobiology, anthropology, and psychology show that self-interest is not the fundamental human drive but only one of several, which include deeply instinctive impulses toward altruism, sacrifice, agonistic behavior, gregariousness, and loyalty. The entirely self-interested individual is clearly a grotesque pathological aberration produced by extraordinary circumstances, the exception that proves the rule.

> Perhaps those circumstances might be reproduced if the impersonal state or corporation were totally to supplant the community (which is what Pol Pot, a devoted student of Rousseau during his years in Paris, was trying to do in Cambodia), but the last few years have shown how durable, indeed how unexpectedly flourishing, are the ethnic, religious, and microcultural communities in the heart of the modern world.

He is saying that the child can be greater than the parent, that we can alter or replace our dream with a greater vision.

> We do not need to accept our myth of nature and culture. The state of America is the state of being able to change our myths. We can forge in the smithies of our souls the conscience of our race, a project James Joyce gave up as impossible for Ireland. . . .
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> To create, to use our technology—our "art," as [Shakespeare] calls it—is as natural to us as breathing—if we do it in the right way. Let us accept our self-consciousness as appropriate to us, and rejoice in its occasional absurdity, rather than attempt to escape into a kind of prelapsarian spontaneity. Our spontaneity must be found at the heart of our self-awareness, and nowhere else. It is not enough to be, as Coleridge put it, "wisely passive" before nature; we know from quantum theory that reality reveals itself only to the active questioner. And if acting is natural to us, then we may achieve in action a contemplative absorption that is as wise as any meditative trance.

The garden is Turner's archetypal model for what we must do, and gardening, as recent figures show, comes naturally to us. "As one moves about the flower beds, weeding, propagating, pruning the apple tree, shifting the rock in the rock garden an inch or two to make room for the roots of a healthy *erica*, one becomes a subtle and powerful force of natural selection in that place, placing one's stamp on the future of the biosphere. . . ."

> The creation and use of other technologies, even those of steel and glass and oil and electricity, need be no different. It is all gardening, if we see it right. If we distrust our technology, we distrust our own nature, and nature itself. And this distrust inevitably makes us helpless and passive before the technical powers of others, and resentful, and disenfranchised. Let us seize our powers to ourselves: our artistic and aesthetic capacities, which make use of the whole brain, not just the anxious calculations of the linguistic centers in the left temporal lobe. . . .
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> The time is ripe to begin planting the American garden. This demands an assessment of such cultural resources as already exist. America has access not only to the great European traditions of gardening but also the glorious legacies of the Chinese, the Japanese, and the Indians. One large and unique role that the American garden can fulfill is that of synthesis, of harmonious and fertile juxtaposition of past and foreign cultures.

It may seem that Prof. Turner grows extravagant, dreaming ad lib without regard for the indubitable facts of life. Yet one fact that needs attention is that we have very nearly forgotten how to read Utopias—we have so few of them today. A Utopia is a romantic study of options, what we might do if we all put our hearts in the driver's seat. These options are not vain speculations, but actual possibilities. Bellamy's *Looking Backward* was written almost a hundred years ago, and it became a book that gave hope to countless thousands. In his preface to his life of Edward Bellamy, Arthur Morgan gave several pages to the influence exerted by *Looking Backward* and *Equality* on readers at the turn of the century, many of them young men who became legislators who successfully applied what they found in these books. "Various New Deal policies," Morgan remarks, "would seem to have been taken almost directly from the pages of *Looking Backward."* In the middle years of our own century we had books like *Brave New World*, *Animal Farm*, and *Nineteen-Eighty-four*, which exercised influence of another sort. The anti-Utopias, like the Utopias, had their effect.

We take from Arthur Morgan a statement of what may well be a psycho-social law:

> The most immediate handicap to human progress is lack of a vision and of expectation, hope and desire, and will, rather than lack of those forms of intelligence which are expressed in formal reasoning. Unless a picture exists of what might be, formal reasoning will concern itself with other and familiar issues.

REVIEW
PHYSICIANS . . . AND FOOD

THE waning of a great historical enthusiasm leaves an emptiness which is eventually filled by a sense of new discovery in which, at first, we may participate by reading in books and journals animated by the ardor of going on to better things. Then we may be caught up in the emotion of the discovery and become a part, an agent, of the change going on.

Something of this sort, historically speaking, is now proceeding, with books coming out which announce the reality of the change and give evidence of its necessity. Those acquainted with the processes of cultural history realize that the best vision seems to occur before the change is accomplished and consolidated, when minds which have freed themselves of the past range freely over the prospects of the future, sometimes recognizing that what is wanted is not a contemptuous dismissal of what has been, but the achievement of a balance of the new with what is good in the old. While that freedom of mind is sure to be largely replaced by new conventions, with what amount to slogans pretending to the role of genuine insights, yet, in the interval when the need for change is first discovered, we may see something like a brief golden age in the realm of ideas.

We might call the age that is now passing the cycle of the Enlightenment, which reached its most degraded and vulgarized form in our own time; yet the Enlightenment, in its beginnings, had its golden aspect. This side of the Enlightenment is recognized and perceptively recorded by Ernst Cassirer in *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (Princeton University Press, 1951), in which he shows the balance sought by its best representatives.

Here, in a review department, we are concerned with those who describe and express the ongoing historical change by writing books. The latest book by Jacob Needleman, *The Way of the Physician* (Harper & Row, $15.95), is concerned with the practice of medicine. He thinks it ought to change in character and direction. Medicine, he finds, is science-oriented and technology-dominated. There is seldom, today, he says, the flow of an inner kind of healing energy from doctor to patient. In a dialogue he reports toward the end of the book, he says:

> Only a mind with a force at least equal to the intelligent energy of the body can influence the body from within. In illness, it seems to me, the instinctual mind needs energy so that the process of self-healing can proceed. The physician can give or, rather, call forth that energy that exists somewhere in the body in a kind of reservoir. . . . Dr._____ has some of that force within him, of this I have no doubt. Great physicians always have it and have had it throughout all times and cultures. We do not recognize it in our science nowadays, and where it is spoken of in unorthodox medicine, one despairs of finding the scientific precision necessary to do more than stumble upon it accidentally and afterwards merely to imagine things about it. It can be understood in such a foolish way that the idea of this energy causes far more harm than good, encouraging people to dream of healing without accepting the medical treatment, external though it may be, that is available.
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> This external kind of treatment that proceeds on the basis of logical deductions and ordinary sense-observation is indispensable, and it is such treatment that modern medicine has developed through the application of scientific theory and method. I am sure that if the legendary Asclepius existed, even he had need of an accumulation of external information and observation. There are strictly mechanical, machinelike aspects of the human body that function quite passively and automatically. One needs knowledge of this passive aspect of the body.
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> Modern science gives us knowledge and information about the automatic aspect of nature and the universe. It does not intend to and can never succeed in giving us knowledge of the active forces in the universe, forces to which the terms *conscious, intentional,* and *purposive* can truly be applied. It is wrong to try to wring this kind of knowledge from science or to blame it for not providing us with it. About the human body, therefore, science also gives us knowledge only of its passive or automatic aspects. It is wrong to blame modern medicine for not giving us knowledge of a kind it cannot possibly provide.

As I understand it, in order to fully treat certain diseases, it is necessary to deal with both forces in the human body. In certain cases, dealing with only one or another force will succeed or will succeed to a limited extent, enough to support the continued function of the organism. But in other cases, and in all cases where complete healing is sought, it is necessary to bring both the active and the passive forces within the body into their proper balance.

In another place he has a doctor speak:

"So, what we're good at doing now is making diagnoses, getting people over acute episodes, and supporting them through chronic diseases. We may not be improving the quality of their lives at all. And we do all this at an enormous cost. Whether this cost is justified or not really has up to now been a question that society has not confronted—because technology and medicine have been taken at face value as being important and necessary and valuable, without regard to the cost. But now new social pressures are being brought to bear on the cost question.

"It is also important to look at the effect of medical technology on medical education, as well as its effect on the hospital-physician-society relationship. And last of all on the relationship between the individual patient and his doctor.

"In medical education, the student from the first days is introduced to technological and scientific medicine in a way that almost entirely eliminates what we've been calling here the art of medicine. The enormous advances in technology and the need to keep up with them has made it very difficult for people in the process of education to get a feel for the art of medicine.

"Concerning the relationship of the hospital, the doctor, and society, the explosion of technology has caused enormous outlays of money in what some people have called the medical arms race. It's not rare for somebody in the hospital to tell the administrator that they need a certain piece of equipment in order to be as good as the hospital next door. It's not unusual for an administrator to come to a department to tell them that if we get this piece of equipment we'll get more patients. However, it's highly unusual for an administrator or doctor to look at that equipment after a year has passed to find out if it ever did anybody any good, except to increase the billing. And with this in mind, advances will continue to be made and machines will continue to be bought. And this may not be bad, provided they do serve a useful purpose. Technology up to now has not been questioned. And that's been the problem."

The structure of Dr. Needleman's book (he's a professor of philosophy, not an M.D.) has the form of his recollections of a doctor that took care of his family, whom he first saw at the age of five. Needleman almost became a medical doctor and his interest in medicine has led him to many contacts with the profession—as a teacher and questioner. The author achieves a genuine intensity of inquiry through his conversations with doctors and a long-distance, subjective dialogue he carries on with the physician of his childhood. This is a book especially good for medical men to read.

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The work of Ecology Action, formerly in Palo Alto and now in Willits, Calif., where experimental gardens are developed and maintained, is known to MANAS readers from a number of earlier articles. The moving spirit of this group is John Jeavons, author of *How To Grow More Vegetables* ($10.00) and *The Backyard Homestead* ($11.00). The address is Ecology Action, 5798 Ridgewood Road, Willits, Calif. 95490. The fundamental idea is the production of a healthful food supply—a maximum of harvest from a minimum of land. In its recent book *One Circle,* by David Duhon, an exhaustive study of the principles of nutrition along with the gardening methods developed by Jeavons and his colleagues, Jeavons writes in a concluding section:

> During the last fourteen years Ecology Action has done many things to help others help themselves by trying to get the needed "tools" in place in time. Its techniques are now being used by an estimated one-half million people in over a hundred countries, mostly informally and in some formal situations including the Peace Corps. Countries where it is being practiced include Australia, Canada, Botswana, the Peoples' Republic of China, Japan, Togo, Mexico, Tanzania India, England, Zambia, Kenya, and the Philippines. . . . As Ecology Action has released each of its new and pioneering findings, they have often been met initially with skepticism. For example, the

> reduced water application seemed overstated—but within five years this was accepted. Double-dig, raised growing beds were strange to many—yet they have often become the norm.
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> In its ongoing quest to discover and document the smallest area on which one person can be self-reliant while maintaining soil health on a sustainable basis, Ecology Action has several long-term objectives. We hope these objectives will begin to be fully developed within the next ten years. . . .

One Circle—which relates nutritional needs to the gardening methods developed by Jeavons—pursues the purpose of all Ecology Action work, which is to teach teachers. As the author, David Duhon, says in his foreword:

> The sort of special people who are needed to transfer this information are "cultural amphibians," world citizens who can empathize with and learn from the world as a whole whether they travel the world or never leave their home village. This might be the development volunteer who goes overseas to teach and finds herself the one who is enriched. It might be the student from Botswana who has come to the States to learn, but teaches lessons of thoughtfulness, compassion and insight to all who cross his path. It might be the person who succeeds within an American multinational corporation, and then later uses the skills he has developed to head a major development in his own country.

The book instructs in nutrition at virtually every level. The reader can take from it general ideas for self-guidance, or go on to master what is known of this difficult subject. It is a fundamental text which sells for $7.95 by Ecology Action.

COMMENTARY
A DIFFICULT BUT NECESSARY PROJECT

THE book by Major Hingston, spoken of in this week's lead article, would be a good one to read as a way of understanding other problems discussed in this issue. We are thinking in particular of the chapter, "The Folly of Instinct," and also of the way in which human tendencies which now fly in the face of common sense are shaped. They seem in some cases to become compulsions simply because of the way we have behaved for so long that it seems impossible to us to do things in another way.

What are some of these compulsions? In Review, Jacob Needleman is quoted on the tendency in modern medicine to rely on technology rather than the human perceptive power of the doctor, showing what has been the result. He quotes a doctor who tells what we are good at—getting people through acute episodes and "supporting them through chronic diseases," but at enormous cost. This doctor points out that up to now technology has not been questioned, "And that's been the problem." Nor has the ever-growing cost of medical care been questioned, because the expensive machines in use and being developed are regarded as all-important.

Then, in Frontiers, Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson point out that machines are in effect ruining agriculture, reducing the organic to the inorganic, concentrating on "production" with less and less attention to care of the soil—and all this makes people servants of the system instead of the other way around.

In "Children," K. S. Acharlu shows how reliance on the State has replaced the natural independence of the Indian people, thus shackling their welfare to authorities that can have no better than a political motivation. The practical result is given in the first paragraph quoted from his article—weakening to all.

Our habits, in short, are being transformed into mindless instincts—an unreasoning reliance on authorities and technologies. But as Frederick Turner makes clear, the blind following of authority—as Pol Pot followed Rousseau (or thought he was following him) in the slaughter of so many Cambodians—can lead to terrible excesses, while dependence on technologies can render us unable to imagine alternatives to a machine civilization which has already weakened the social and moral fabric of our society.

The remedy is not an abandoning of the use of machines, but in not relying on them entirely and using them wisely.

But our habits, which may have had reason behind their formation, have hardened into reflexes, making us no longer free to choose. Prof. Turner's point is that America is a land where change is natural and acceptable, and when our habits, turned into instincts, become destructive, we should be able to recognize this and free ourselves from the past. He says:

> We do not need to accept our myth of nature and culture. The state of America is the state of being able to change our myths. We can forge in the smithies of our souls the conscience of our race, a project James Joyce gave up as impossible for Ireland.

Joyce, a pessimist if there ever was one, may have given up on Ireland, but George Russell didn't, and he spent years working with the farmers of Ireland, teaching fellowship and cultural rebirth!

Speaking to Americans, however, Prof. Turner says:

> To create, to use our technology—our "art," as [Shakespeare] calls it—is as natural to us as breathing—if we do it in the right way. Let us accept our self-consciousness as appropriate to us. . . . Our spontaneity must be found at the heart of our self-awareness and nowhere else.

The peoples of the world once looked to America for encouragement and new ideas. Now they are mostly afraid of us. But if we practice the right kind of pioneering, we might become leaders once again.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

WHO SHOULD CONTROL EDUCATION?

SCHOOL is a word with a wide continuum of meanings—all the way from an almost sacred content at one end to a profane epithet at the other. Where we place it depends on the part it plays in our lives. This being the case, some remarks about schools in *Gandhi Marg* for last June, by K. S. Acharlu, editor of *Gandhi Vigyan* and an educator, should be of interest. Writing as a Gandhian and a teacher, he says (in "Education and the State"):

> The school as a place for the education of the young in its present form is not ancient tradition in our country. It is a modern superstition that the structured school and the college are the only means of education. Another strange development of modern times is that the state, represented by its political groups, planners and administrators should control the public educational system from the primary to the university stage. The control by the State assumes different forms, prescribing the curriculum, directing the methods of teaching, conducting examinations, awarding degrees and controlling mass communication media. The curriculum is dictated by the political and economic needs of the State. The text books control the ideas which should mould the minds of children who are expected to read what the State wants them to learn. The children are not trained to think for themselves what they think would be useful for their lives. They are encouraged to obey rather than question, accept rather than seek. The politics of power demands that the State educational system promote the conformist and not the self-asserting intellect.
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> It is relevant to ask why the State is so particular to control the education of the people. It is simply a question of survival for the State to do everything within its power for as long as possible. Moreover the schools are a low-cost organization for its propaganda. For, lakhs upon lakhs [a lakh is a hundred thousand] of teachers trained in special institutions become cheap service stations for carrying on faithfully the industrial, economic, and social policies of the political power of the State.

Is Mr. Acharlu calling for the abolition of public education? He is. He is, that is to say, calling for the coming into being of a Gandhian sort of society—not a mass society, in which community and community enterprises are almost unimaginable, but a society made up of villages. Such a society, he goes on to show, once existed in India, and what has been can be again, if enough people want it. But first he continues with his indictment of the State:

> History reveals that governments are not interested in the expression of truth and therefore take steps to make ineffectual the power of truth. They tremble before the inherent power of truth and strive in every way to counteract or suppress it. A free university wedded in every way to independent thinking and pursuit of truth is the fountainhead of social and moral revolution. It is obvious that a State which does not want to commit suicide cannot be interested in the promotion of revolutionary ideas. The State therefore with the objective of perpetuating itself plans the educational structure in such a manner that-the youth are denied a liberal education which will promote freedom of thinking.
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> Education aims at the good life, and politics is the last place to seek to find it. Moral and spiritual reform is not a matter for the legislatures. We do not go to Parliament to help us lead a life of plain living and high thinking. Education is vision and lies beyond the radius of political planning and administration. Education and power go ill together. Real education can take place only when power is absent. Where human relationships prevail, power has hardly any place, for in the presence of power and directed by power human functions wither away and die. The modern State rests on the logic of power and force, while education should be built on the laws of love and peaceful living. The modern power State is therefore least equipped to handle and direct the education of children and youth for a free society.

There are many things that power can do—lift weights, build bridges, construct dams, blow up cities and, we are told, whole civilizations. But power cannot make people learn, nor can it make peace and encourage cooperation. The proposition, then, is elementary: education should be divorced from power.

People will say, "But we must be practical. We are very busy and probably incompetent to teach our children." This is unhappily true of a great many parents, but not of all, and the incompetent don't have to stay that way. For those who wish to inform themselves in this area, a reading of the books by John Holt, and those he recommends, is in order, especially his *Teach Your Own,* which is about teaching your own children at home. Thousands of parents are already doing it—doing it with notable success, and many of them feared they couldn't when they set out to try.

But what about the masses? Well, we can all begin, right now, to evolve a society that has no "masses." It will take time, of course. It took time to build our public school system, a hundred and fifty years ago, more or less, and it will take time to unbuild what we have become so dependent upon. Just as it will take time to reduce the public debt, which is ruining us all, to what it was in the last century. (Revenues exceeded expenditures from 1875 to 1893.) The question is, do we really want to run our lives and help our children to do so?

This question is a fundamental one for India, as it is for us. Acharlu says:

> It is a well-known fact that we in our country have copied and adopted many features of the British system of education. But we did not accept, much less appreciate, the British educational policy of "freedom" in education, and the absence of State control in educational planning. The country schools, by and large, have freedom to decide how the school should be run, choose the textbooks and adjust the curriculum to suit the children's needs. There are State Inspectors of education, no doubt. But they have no executive powers or authority. They visit schools more to help than to judge. The teachers freely discuss with them their educational problems and are often grateful for the guidance offered. The Head of the institution has real, genuine freedom to plan the school curriculum and the programs.
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> The most unhappy situation in our country is the strong belief among people that nothing good can be done except through the instrumentality of the State. This attitude turns all efforts for good into a political enterprise.

What does Mr. Acharlu propose? He proposes what Gandhi proposed, what Vinoba proposed.

> Indian tradition holds the teacher, the torch-bearer of knowledge, in high esteem. He was called an Acharya, i.e., one who practiced in life what he preached and was a model of conduct. Acharya Vinoba has said that the Vedas employ the beautiful term "gatuvit" [pathfinder] to describe the teacher. In our ancient land the teacher, as the repository of knowledge, in moral, social, and philosophical matters, was held in reverence. Kings and emperors, when they were assailed by doubts about the contradictions of life, whether in public or private affairs, sought the advice of these Acharyas. They made pilgrimages to the forest universities and in reverential humility sought light on the intricacies of dharma [duty]. It is teachers of this category who played a significant part in contributing to the fundamental unity of the country and in creating a social and religious revolution in society. They were the prophets of the time and their task was to inspire and guide people by example. . . .
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> Education in India will attain respect as of old only if it gets free from the shackles of State action and control. In ancient India no monarch dared to have control over knowledge. It was the teachers, Acharyas and Jnanis, that had control over education.

FRONTIERS

Two Farmers on Agriculture

WE have a society which habitually measures all good things in terms of dollars—money. As a result, we assume that what we want or need can always be bought with money. It can't, of course, but we go on making this assumption because we don't know how else to measure our needs. And we try to convert all our needs into things which are purchasable because getting money to purchase them—or trying to purchase them—is about all that we know how to do.

This may work in relation to things which *can* be purchased, but it doesn't work at all in getting what we really need. Learning this is probably the most important lesson that the experience of the twentieth century can teach us. The best example of this learning process in the present is almost certainly in agriculture—our modern, scientific agriculture, which seems to be failing on almost every front. The question is why.

In the *East-West Journal* for August, Thom Leonard interviews Wendell Berry and Wes Jackson on American agricultural practice. Both Berry and Jackson are farmers; they are also thinkers, reformers, critics, and practitioners of what is likely to prove the sustainable agriculture that will support future generations. They advocate radical changes in the way we regard the growing of food. Asked if he sees any evidence of a positive trend in the practice of agriculture, Berry, author of *The Unsettling of America*, said:

> Well, the positive trend right now is the negative trend. The system we've got is failing. The failure of it has to be seen and understood before we think of anything else. I think that understanding is pretty widespread.

A great many people may be beginning to realize that the system is failing. The better newspapers carry story after story on the plight of the small and medium-size farmers, but they don't say much about what needs to be done because the papers, alas, are part of the system. Full recognition is what is required, and that, indeed, would be "revolutionary." It is often said in official circles that the failing farmers are inefficient and that we'll all be better off when they are weeded out. Berry comments:

> They've been saying that for forty years. It's utterly callous and cynical to keep saying that the failure of the system is weeding out the failures of the system. You go on that way and you re not going to have anything left.

Wes Jackson comments:

> It's a way of saying that people are to serve the system. It's incredible to me that we are talking about *people* who are supposed to serve the system. If we were to talk about that in Marxist terms, there would be an outrage in this country. The United States of America, which hates Marxist-Leninist doctrine, is willing to say that with no tongue firmly in cheek. . . .
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> There's no disposition, in other words, to correct the system in favor of the human. The official policy is to sacrifice the humans in order to preserve the system.

It is no intrusion to draw attention here to *Farm Gate Defense,* a book about the plight of both Canadian and U.S. farmers, by Allen Wilford, who is one of them. This is a book on how the cards are stacked against men and women who love the land, want to raise food crops and animals, and about why so many of them are forced into bankruptcy these days. The big, successful farmers mine the land, using the system to drive their competitors out of business while they are exhausting the soil and creating a terrain which will probably make many of the next generation hungry and without any way to get enough food to stay alive. If we wait until we learn this from "experience" it will be too late. (*Farm Gate Defense* is available from New Canada Press, 31 Portland St., Toronto, Ontario M5V 2V9.)

Berry wonders if people will be willing to begin to make changes before they are actually hungry. He says:

> The assumption is that in order to survive farmers need to be as good money managers as

> bankers. Apparently it has never occurred to anybody that somebody who is really doing a good job as a farmer may not have time to become a student of banking. It's quite possible for people who are not bankers to be excellent farmers.

Well, if good farmers go out of business, where can we find other good farmers? Berry replies:

> The soil is a renewable resource as long as we have it. When we don't have it, it's a nonrenewable resource. That's exactly the same for farming people. They're renewable, as long as we have them. Once we've lost them, they're nonrenewable, just like petroleum or coal. What the industrial economy does is work to reduce the organic to the inorganic. It sees life as of no value except as something to be mined. And what this economy does is to take the organic world and inorganic world and treat them as the same. It reduces life to an inert, marketable quality. Inert, expendable, and exhaustible. . . .
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> The priority now ought to be on helping farm people who want to farm to stay in farming. And to help the children from farm families to remain in farming. Because they know a little. Some of them don't know as much as their parents and grandparents knew a generation ago when farming was more diversified, but they know some. And they're worth saving because of that. The idea of promoting a large scale return of city people to the country is . . . that's very difficult to contend with. What are you going to do? Turn all of those people loose to learn by experience, by trial and error the cost of a lot of topsoil and a lot of unhappiness to them? . . .
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> The communities are the best reservoir of the traditions and the knowledge. And newcomers into farming would stand to learn more from the communities than they would from any deliberate government-sponsored education effort.

To say that anybody can farm is like saying that anybody can play the violin. Wes Jackson, a farmer all his life, says:

> I'm just now beginning to get some overall view of the 160 acres that the Land Institute bought. [Jackson researches plant genetics at the Land Institute.] We bought that quarter section in 1982. So we've had the piece all of '82, '83, and '84, and we're now into the '85 growing season. It requires going around the perimeter of the place. And then going over different parts. Right now we're not winning—in terms of getting that place so that it is non-erodible, so that it is verdant overall, so that it can accommodate its highest and best use.

It is well to read these men to get some idea of how it feels to be a farmer, and of farming's importance to us all. Both have written books, and their latest, which they edited together with Bruce Colman, is *Meeting the Expectations of the Land* (North Point Press, $12.50).