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ORTEGA ON EDUCATION

IN 1949 Ortega y Gasset came to Aspen, Colorado, to speak on Goethe at the celebration of the Bicentenary of the German poet. While there he talked with Walter Paepcke (of the Container Corporation) about the latter's idea for a place of education, *"something* like a university," as Ortega put it, which would be called the Aspen Institute for Humanistic Studies. Paepcke later wrote him about this plan, asking for suggestions, making a similar request of Robert M. Hutchins. In October, then in Madrid, Ortega replied at length. Twenty-five years later, in 1974, Ortega's son, Soledad Ortega, publisher of *Revista de Occidente,* founded by his father in the 1920s, issued a pamphlet containing this letter, in both Spanish and English. In it Ortega set down his key ideas concerning what education ought to be, what it is for, and also gave attention to what it should be like in America.

Since Ortega's thinking is not clearly understood, it seems well to review this pamphlet. Summing up at the end of his recommendations, the Spanish philosopher said: "the idea would be to establish a Superior School designed to educate young people, chiefly Americans, in the conscience that they are to be a group of the minority who later on will be called to influence all walks of American life." Implicit here is the meaning of Ortega's entire career as philosopher, educator, essayist, and reformer. The education of man is for the purpose of enabling humans to learn the meaning of their lives and to live useful lives in the community, setting an example of vision and responsibility.

In his intellectual biography of Ortega, Robert McClintock (of Teachers College, Columbia University) has a fine passage on Ortega's early convictions in working for the regeneration of Spain in the teens of this century:

> He discouraged corporate action on isolated problems; he opposed the kind of academic specialism that would have helped to increase the power and improve the efficiency of the administrative and technical bureaucracies; he relied on spontaneous, rather than organized effort to improve the nation. . . . Spontaneous civic action is not something that mysteriously erupts from a people, without rhyme or reason; like any other form of action, it is willed with care, and it becomes effective only with the delicate use of reason. Such action is spontaneous, and it is opposed to the institutional, because its power emanates from the personal activities of a variety of individuals, each of whom acts as an individual, not as a corporate official or follower. Thus, even though our personal activities may have great social consequences and are the result of careful deliberation, they are called spontaneous because, from the point of view of any institutional authority, they are initiated in accord with our own intimate intent rather than the will and convenience of official policy. Independent, spontaneous activities gain a civic significance whenever men separately inform their personal acts with purposes that are widely shared by others. All of Ortega's social theory was premised on the conviction that spontaneous civic action was fundamental and that institutional action was secondary and conditioned by the spontaneous.
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> Ortega made the opposite assumption from that which seems to have been made by most social scientists. Rather than say that personal choice was possible only within certain interstices of institutions, he said that formal institutions were possible only within certain spontaneous matrices. Institutions were effective only when they were legitimated by a prior spontaneous concord, it was futile to try to engineer it by the deft or brutal manipulation of formal programs. Instead, one had to try to concert the spontaneous commitments of capable persons; as these persons independently informed their activities with common goals, a significant public potential would begin to become manifest; and as the prominence of this potential increased, more and more persons would define their aspirations with respect to it. On the basis of this concord, a new effective set of institutions could be established.

Beneath the surface, these were the themes of Ortega's address, given at twenty-six, before the distinguished members of the Society "El Sitio" in 1910, who had asked him to propose what he thought Spain needed to do to recover from its depressed state. Spain, he told them, was a land where ideals had died away. "Among us," he said, "there has been an improper separation of the politics of action from the political ideal, as if the former could have meaning orphaned from the latter. Our recent history makes patent the point of misery to which an active politics free of political ideals leads." How will ideals be restored? Through learning and teaching. McClintock summarizes:

> He would call on his audience to turn away from official politics, not in overt rebellion, but in a spontaneous creation, one in which private citizens accepted responsibility for the art of governing and spread ideals of public life that would transform the country despite the moral inertia ensconced in the government. "What should it be?" Ortega would put to them. "What is the ideal Spain towards which we can orient our hearts . . .?"

What about the school he proposed for America, nearly forty years later? He started with an account of the "culture" of this country:

> The industrial technique of the United States has flooded the market with wonderful objects. Thanks to them, the *comfort* of the American existence is extremely high. Nevertheless, I have the impression that the American suffers from an excess of comfort. . . . [comfort] is desirable and essential so that the human individual, free from material hindrances, can devote himself to being a man; that is to say, allow his inner self to live intensely and give himself fully to thinking, imagining, loving and feeling. Man is "inwardness." Now we could call a certain amount of comfort excessive as long as it does not produce this effect and man does not give himself to comfort instead of himself. I think I can be understood if I say that in my opinion the American *handles too many objects.* The circle of his personal life is too much taken up by implements, devices, gadgets. During my trip to the States I had the impression that the American runs the risk of getting lost in objects. . . . For it is not a question only of their handling and taking care of them, but of worrying excessively about them, desiring them, getting excited about them, being obsessed with their production and acquisition, sacrificing for their sake too much of oneself, of one's excitement, imagination, attention, energy. . . .
>
> Hence, in my opinion, education, education in the new Superior School, must be *characterized* by the quality of discomfort. The students shall lead a highly austere life in every sense; they shall enjoy very few conveniences as long as that discomfort cannot result in a shortage of their working capacity and joy. . . . Through the New School we shall succeed in making it fashionable in America not to do without objects but to *be capable of doing without them gladly.*
>
> Its Spartan character shall not be confined to that which I have called "austerity" but it shall rather consist of the students being obliged to develop their power of resistance through physical exercise and of the *continuity of certain efforts*. A part of the system of school duties shall be a certain forced labor, not of an ornamental nature but useful to Aspen: opening up roads, building bridges, arranging gardens, constructing houses and community centers. In Hamburg, where I went from Aspen to speak on Goethe, the air raids destroyed the University. Well, the building where I spoke has been perfectly rebuilt, brick by brick, by the students themselves!

Next he presented an Orteguan idea that has been much misunderstood by careless reading. American life, he said, for historical reasons is lacking in "the forces that are socially aristocratic. Notice that I say socially and not politically aristocratic."

> That is the reason why it lacks, that is, it possesses in insufficient quantity *a quality which is characteristic and essential in every truly strong people,* namely elegance. . . .
>
> I said that, educationally, the School will promote a "Spartan" style in teaching and fomenting austerity. But Sparta did not consist only of austerity and all that I have included in that concept: energy, hardness, continuity in effort, endurance, etc., but it also implied to every Greek this other attribute: elegance. When the Greek thought of intellectual dexterity, "atticism" was the word that came to mind, but when he wanted to think of elegance the word that came to him was "dorism." The elegant side in Helenic culture was always "doric," which was Sparta. The second educational principle should therefore be: Elegance.

> This must penetrate, influence man's entire life, from his gestures and ways of walking, through his way of dressing, through his way of using language, of carrying on a conversation, of speaking in public, to the most intimate side of *moral* and intellectual actions. . . . Whoever takes the trouble to analyze which features make a mathematical reasoning elegant will understand, as if suddenly struck by the lightning of intellection, *everything* that I have hinted at about the *vital human* virtue called "elegance." . . .
>
> Aspen is, and above all can be to a high degree, the most elegant summer resort—"the glass of fashion and the mould of form," as Shakespeare says. This genuinely elegant world has to be attracted precisely by the Spartan side of Aspen, that is, they shall be made to consider it elegant *not* to count on the big luxurious hotels, theaters, etc. On the contrary, during the summer season they will shape their elegance of luxury upon the elegance of austerity.

Now comes a comment which every reader who has deliberately set about molding his own character will appreciate:

> It is not necessary for the students to have individual and direct contact with those persons who build up their "select world"—select for their "social elegance" or their high intellectual position. It is enough for the students to see them live. This living of such persons—men and women—irradiates their example upon young souls to a sufficient degree even if the personal relationship does not take place. This happened in Europe fifty years ago: in many places—for instance, at the "fashion days" at the theatre and at the great scientific and literary ceremonies—young people had the opportunity to *see*, merely *see* such exemplary figures; and that acted upon them without their realizing it, with the character of models to be imitated. The disorganized, vulgarized form of social life in the last years has caused this possibility to disappear; above all, very young women, girls, have not been able to find the opportunity to receive the formidable, decisive impression that the *presence of a model produces.* It is convenient for the girls to see such exemplary women from a certain distance, to see them being, moving, showing their good *manners.*

So far we have spoken only of those matters which, in Ortega's view, relate to the formation of character, for him the central concern of education, as it was for Pythagoras and Plato, for Bronson Alcott, and in this century Arthur Morgan. Still, there are things to be taught, or foci of learning to be designed. Agreeing with Paepcke that the center should be *something like* a university," but in reality quite different, Ortega said: "I am able to free my imagination if I set aside the word and keep its nuclear meaning: advanced studies and education." This meant being free of the many "commitments" of the university—"frightful for their variety and number"—making it possible to "picture a superior school which would be very *limited in its instruction* but highly concentrated on educational efficiency and with a clear, definite, attractive *pedagogical, thus human, style,* endowed with great allure for the best American conscience. It would be . . .

> A Superior School of Humanities. . . . I understand by Humanities not only the traditional humanities—which are summarized in the study of Greece and Rome—but all those matters which are concerned with the human fact specifically, including—and even primarily—their most current problems.
>
> The reasons which invite us to attempt it are: there is in America an extremely unbalanced state as regards education in favor of naturalistic (not humanistic), physical, biological and technical education. The idea then would be to concentrate on the cultural themes which are insufficiently *treated* in the American mentality. . . .
>
> The Superior School of Humanities should not be—at least for the moment—a research center but an attempt at synthetic science. In my *Mission of the University* I postulate the urgent need of creating the science of synthesis, that is, a type of scientific intellectual work which specializes in creating in all subjects "synthetic bodies of doctrines" to make possible *education in a total synthesis of human life.* . . . the New School would offer a quite limited number of disciplines. Physical and biological sciences would be reduced to a single matter.

Ortega added that the students would need to learn more Latin and Greek, and that such courses could be taught by the same professors who lecture on the major subjects. Further—

> The synthetic teaching would be made on the basis of a *library with very few* but masterly chosen volumes. This scarcity would not have a sense of deprivation, of deficiency but, on the contrary, a

> deliberately positive sense; for the aim would be to teach how to read, that is, to *really absorb* an important book, applying also to reading the principles of concentration or condensation and synthesis. The idea is to attempt an education and culture which are pure nerve, without adipose tissue and lymphatic exuberance.

Quite evidently, Ortega is describing the kind of education he obtained for himself. No reader of his works can have failed to wonder at his perceptive knowledge and masterful use of classical literature, and his penetration in developing the meanings of Latin and Greek terms. This is one of the delights of reading him carefully. At the end of his letter he presses the need for a meeting place in Aspen which can hold a thousand people, saying:

> The premises need not, nor must they have, more than a ground floor, with walls and ceiling of the least costly architecture. I do not think it should be difficult to obtain good restaurant facilities, etc. The grounds of the premises must be terraced so that everyone can see each other within the enormous space. I know you will smile, but I have good reasons to believe that this humble physical detail is *vital* to the project which these pages briefly suggest.
>
> The greatest sin of what has for centuries been called "spirit"—I detest the word cordially—has been almost always to forget that it cannot exist without the so-called "matter" and of not having the necessary humility to count on matter.

Our remaining space will be devoted to correcting a widespread impression that Ortega was some kind of "elitist," although he did believe in the aristocratic ideal, by which he meant an aristocracy of human character. This misconception of him dates from the appearance in 1932 of his *Revolt of the Masses,* the book which made him famous. In it he uses the term "mass-man," over and over again, and inattentive readers, including reviewers, jumped to the conclusion that he felt contemptuous toward the common people who make up "the masses." Robert McClintock has several passages which show how mistaken this idea has been, as well as indicating his educational goal. As McClintock says:

> Ortega generally spoke of mass-man and meant by the term a character type, not a social class. Social status was irrelevant as the sum of mass-men, the masses included for Ortega all men whose personal character was inert, all who placed no demands on themselves, all who made no effort to excel, to become special by-fulfilling their highest potentialities. If one must, however, make an invidious class distinction, Ortega suggested that the upper classes, in the socio-economic sense, had in them the higher proportion of mass-men, a condition that was to be expected since members of the upper classes most fully enjoyed modern abundance with all the debilitating effects affluence has on character.

Again,

> Mass man is that person whom we each are when we make no special demands upon ourselves. When life was comfortable, flourishing, this ordinary self would rest content; no upsetting feature of existence would drive mass man out of his natural complacency. In prosperous periods, mass man accepted himself as he found himself and spent his life doing what came naturally. The problem, of course, was that civilization did not come naturally: it was an artifice created through discipline and effort, and of those who were to partake in it, civilization required that they either be exemplary and create their goals freely or be apt and respond authentically to men who could lead them out of themselves. . . .
>
> Being satisfied with himself, mass man had a closed mind: he was content with whatever mental furniture he happened to possess. Traditionally, the mass mind was closed, but humble. In contrast, contemporary mass man was distracted by wealth, yet he still lacked real leisure, and in this state he had begun to believe he could have theoretical opinions. The effects in intellect were awesome. As Ortega described it: . . . mass man "meets a partisan fact that passes him by and he catches it as he would an autobus: he takes it in order to travel without fatiguing his own legs." No longer willing to leave culture to the few who had the time for it, the masses lost their sense of intellectual limitation. Thoughtlessly, they made a market-place of thought. In result, the ideas held by the mass man were not genuine, for they were not achieved by disciplined intellection based on the principles of reason.

Education, for Ortega, meant using the resources of the world in order to learn how to make demands on oneself.

REVIEW
VARIOUS THINGS

LIKE the rest of America, we get our share of junk mail, and vainly wonder at times how its arrival might be stopped. Our own token solution—to do business only with people we have found out about by some other means than advertising—will bring its benefits only in the long term, and only if it spreads, and meanwhile, through the discourtesy of the post office, we suffer being trashed. But once in a great while something comes that we are pleased to have. The latest in this category is a book catalog of Cahill & Co., apparently a family publishing business at 145 Palisade Street, Dobbs Ferry, N.Y. 10522—a small town on the Hudson River a little south of Tarrytown. The Cahills, we gather, buy stocks of fine books that haven't sold as they should, and also do a little publishing of their own, keeping worthwhile items in print. The selection of books on writing seems especially good, starting with Fowler on usage, and ending with William Zinsser's heroic report on how an old and tired journalist of some fame dared to learn how to use a word processor—which tempted your reviewer, but not enough.

Listed in Fernand Braudel's history of *Civilization and Capitalism*, reputed to be among the best, although at a price we'd rather not repeat, but there are sets of Jane Austen's novels and Anthony Trollope's in paperback at reasonable cost. Poems by Eugene Field are available in cloth, and the *Book of Greek Myths* for children of five and after by Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire sounds just right ($7.95 in paper). The recipes for prairie meals used by the people in Laura Ingalls Wilder's "Little House" stories have attraction, and the wonderful fantasies of Tolkien, Lloyd Alexander, and C. S. Lewis have a page in the catalog.

Especially claiming our attention is the listing of a book we read recently, *The Name of the Rose* (cloth, $15.95), but couldn't decide what to say about it here, just taking an extract for possible use. The catalog says:

> Umberto Eco, Italy's leading expert in semiotics [theory of signs and symbols], has written a riveting narrative of monks and murder. In 1327, in a wealthy Benedictine abbey, a series of grisly murders takes place. . . . A learned Franciscan, Brother William of Baskerville, . . . sets out to unravel the mystery. But to call *The Name of the Rose* a detective thriller is a bit like calling *Moby Dick* a fish story.

In our extract from this book William is explaining to his protégé how he is thinking about "the case" of the murders.

> "Adso," William said, "solving a mystery is not the same as deducing from first principles. Nor does it amount simply to collecting a number of particular data from which to infer a general law. It means, rather, facing one or two or three particular data apparently with nothing in common, and trying to imagine whether they could represent so many in stances of a general law you don't know yet, and which perhaps has never been pronounced. To be sure, if you know as the philosopher says, that man, the horse, and the mule are all without bile and are all long-lived, you can venture the principle that animals without bile live a long time. But take the case of animals with horns? Suddenly you realize that all animals with horns are without teeth in the upper jaw. This would be a fine discovery, if you did not also realize that alas, there are animals without teeth in the upper jaw who, however, do not have horns: the camel, to name one And finally you realize that all animals without teeth in the upper jaw have four stomachs. Well, then, you can suppose that one who cannot chew well must need four stomachs to digest food better. But what about the horns? . . . "
>
> "But what have horns to do with anything?" I asked impatiently "And why are you concerned with animals having horns?"
>
> "I have never concerned myself with them, but the Bishop of Lincoln was greatly interested in them, pursuing an idea of Aristotle. Honestly, I don't know whether his conclusions are the right ones, nor have I ever checked to see where the camel's teeth are or how many stomachs he has. I was trying to tell you that the search for explicative laws in natural facts proceeds in a tortuous fashion. . . . I line up so many disjointed elements and I venture some hypotheses. I have to venture many, and many of them are so absurd that I would be ashamed to tell them to you. . .

> Now for the events of the Abbey I have many fine hypotheses, but there is no evident fact that allows me to say which is best. So, rather than appear foolish afterward, I renounce seeming clever now. Let me think no more, until tomorrow at least."
>
> I understood at that moment my master's method of reasoning, and it seemed to me quite alien to that of the philosopher, who reasons by first principles, so that his intellect almost assumes the ways of the divine intellect. I understood that, when he didn't have an answer, William proposed many to himself, very different from one another. I remained puzzled.

We, too, were puzzled. Is this a good book? Well, it is a book hard to put down.

A while back we asked for and received a review copy of *Fine Print,* a quarterly review of the arts of the book started ten years ago in San Francisco (P.O. Box 3394, S.F., Calif. 94119). There is something delighting to the eye in well-chosen and well-arranged type on fine paper. Good book design bespeaks respect for books and reading materials, and *Fine Print* is filled with examples of the crafts of type design, type setting, and bookbinding. There are articles on the origins and history of typographic forms, and numerous reviews telling about related books and magazines. Here is a paragraph from a review on bookmaking and design in India:

> There is something self-limiting and even paradoxical about the subject matter of Losty's work. As he points out in his introduction, the dominant Hindu civilization of India has traditionally emphasized the oral utterance, transmitted through memorization, as opposed to the written word. The earliest mention of writing in the literature of India, from around the fifth century B.C., refers to materials and tools but their main use seems to have been in commercial accountkeeping and informal messages, rather than for literary or religious texts. Thus, "India's literary tradition is older by 1,000 years than the earliest references to writing." Written texts only became important with the development of the Buddhist and Jaina heterodoxies; but for the Hindus, "the primacy they accorded to sound rather than writing did not allow them to be seduced from the oral tradition, which affected not only religious and philosophical texts, but also works of literature, the law, and numerous other fields." Not only epic poems of great length, such as the *Mababharata* and the *Ramayana,* but also a highly developed linguistic study of the phonetics and grammar of Sanskrit itself, were elaborated and transmitted by *oral means.* The degree to which traditional Hindus have always drawn on the capacities of the human memory can hardly be grasped by us modern literates, to whom writing seems an absolute necessity. However, as the modern South Asian writer Ananda Coomaraswamy has said, "Necessities are not always goods in themselves . . . some, like wooden legs, are advantageous only to men already maimed."

The Gandhi books keep coming out, a recent one being *Fighting with Gandhi* (Harper & Row, $12.95) by Mark Juergensmeyer, who teaches religious studies in the University of California in Berkeley. The author justifies his title by saying in his preface:

> Gandhi was a fighter. Whatever else one might say about him—that he was a saint, a clever politician, or simply an irascible, skinny little man—one must say this: he liked a good fight.
>
> That fact alone upsets the image of the pacifist as passive. No doubt there are such people, but Gandhi was not one of them. "Where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would choose violence," he once said, not because he advocated bloodshed, but because he favored engagement. He had little respect for passivity as such. Gandhi's own moral standards developed in times of action as well as reflection; they often grew out of stormy political and social debates.

Well, yes. But the familiar feeling-tone of the word "fighter" does not apply to Gandhi and here serves only the iconoclastic purpose of the writer. He wants, he says, to make use of Gandhi's ideas, and he does this in ways that often seem to bend Gandhian conceptions to his own convenience. Lacking is an essential element—the fact that Gandhi was and is an *inspiring* man. It seems reductive of him to separate the Gandhi of ideas from the Gandhi of history. As antidote to this effect, we suggest a reading of Horace Alexander's *Gandhi Through Western Eyes,* recently restored to print and available from Quaker centers with book stores and New Society Publishers in Philadelphia.

Fighting with Gandhi focuses on a dispute over a property line between a man and a woman, ringing the changes on how they might settle their quarrel. Throughout the book the author returns to this dispute again and again. It is handy enough, and imaginatively treated, but somehow belittling in implication. There is plenty of quotation from Gandhi, all turned to the author's purposes. In his preface he says that the thoughts are Gandhi's but their use and arrangements are his own, and that "they emerge with a consistency that Gandhi himself did not always attain." But the effect may be a bit too neat!

The book ends with a series of imaginary conversations—between Gandhi and Marx, Gandhi and Freud, and Gandhi and Niebuhr. There is also a dialogue between Gandhi and Gandhi, with the ideal Gandhi reproaching the man Gandhi for his inconsistencies and shortcomings in an exchange of letters. In all these matters, the Gandhi of history would be better to consult. Juergensmeyer is no Walter Savage Landor.

COMMENTARY
ALTERNATIVE READING

A USEFUL redressing of balance came out in the May 1984 issue of *Science 84.* In "Computer Worship" Joseph Menosky proposes:

> What the computer literacy movement seems to be mostly enriching is its backers: sellers of computers and computer programs; promoters of retraining courses for workers and teachers; and writers and publishers of the industry's books and magazines. Last year, for example, U.S. schools spent nearly $500 million in personal computers and programs.

The writer describes the busy goings-on at the Eastside Occupational Training Center just outside Baltimore. With unemployment as high as 20% in some parts of the Baltimore area, there are plenty of applicants for retraining in "computer literacy" and word processors. Some of them no doubt have high hopes, but a realistic observer involved calls it "a Band-Aid." Although computers will supply some jobs, their number is limited, and there are now about nine million persons unemployed in the U.S. Menosky says:

> Nevertheless, the proselytizers continue their insistent chorus Senator Chris Dodd of Connecticut believes that learning about computers can improve a person's job prospects for tomorrow, because "by 1990 an estimated 30 million jobs in a broad range of fields will be computer related."
>
> Such proclamations arise from a widespread misconception. The "30 million" figure includes any job even distantly related to computer technology—from grocery store checkers using a bar code reader to retailers selling home video game cartridges. These people, comprising the overwhelming majority of the 30 million, will need no formal computer instruction to do their jobs.

There is more needed debunking along these lines, but the most important comment comes at the end:

> The computer may well have some limited role in education. But the issue is whether the current, costly, national craze is justified by what the machines can truly accomplish. . . . Daniel McCracken, the textbook author and computer scientist [says]: "What is computer literacy more important *than*? Wouldn't you really trade that knowledge edge for the ability to write a coherent English paragraph?"

Next Menosky quotes our favorite authority on computer use:

> Those profiting from the computer literacy movement have convinced themselves of its value. But MIT computer scientist Joseph Weizenbaum—only partly in jest—suggests an easier approach to the question. "Take the great many people who've dealt with computers now for a long time—for example, MIT seniors or MIT professors of computer science—and ask whether they're in any better position to solve life's problems. And I think the answer is clearly no. They're just as confused and mixed up about the world and their relations and so on as anyone else."

The foregoing extracts from the *Science 84* article are taken from the Summer 1984 issue of the *Utne Reader,* which has grown from 16-page monthly newsletter to a full-dress "alternative reader's digest" which will come out every two months with 128 or more pages of material condensed from the magazines in which MANAS finds so much good material. The introductory price for a subscription is $18.00 a year—six issues. Eric Utne, the publisher, has his enthusiasms, but we are grateful for that, since this gives his paper its editorial sparkle. Most MANAS readers will probably appreciate his selections. The address: *Utne Reader,* P.O. Box 1974, Marion, Ohio 43305.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

OUR HIDDEN CURRICULUM

EARLIER this year a columnist in the *Brattleboro Reformer* (Vermont) saw reason to repeat what Dr. George Gerbner of the Annenberg School of Communications (University of Pennsylvania) has found to be television's "hidden curriculum," which he identifies as America's "new, technologically based, corporate religion." Here are some of the plot "situations" casually introduced, with the programs named in parenthesis:

> Boss Hogg wanted to run his various rackets without interference, so he hired a crooked deputy named Coogan. ("Dukes of Hazzard.")
>
> A sadist named Carter Chapman murdered a doctor, then kidnapped a beautiful woman who had been suspected of the murder. ("Riptide.")
>
> Eva Parada, president of a country friendly to the United States, is stalked by revolutionary assassins who oppose capitalist investments in their homeland. ("Blue Thunder.")
>
> Jack accidentally smashed up Janet's car, then pretended he had amnesia to avoid facing the music. ("Three's Company.")
>
> A prison escapee plotted to murder Jennifer, using a camera rigged with explosives. ("Hart to Hart.")
>
> An escapee from a mental institution got a job as a hospital orderly and killed five wealthy men, leaving a snapshot of each victim nearby. ("Matt Houston.")

"Entertainment," Dr. Gerbner says, "is the most serious and important undertaking of society." He calls it an educational process, "the cultivation of conventional morality . . . the teaching of what is right, what is pleasing, of what doesn't challenge or upset anybody." He says that "violence is 10 times more likely to occur on TV than it is in real life," and asks, "What does our entertainment teach us?" He replies:

> For one thing, Gerbner says, by showing so many crises resolved by force, it teaches "the lesson of power," often belittling the skills of compromise and cooperation. . . . heavy TV users tend to over-estimate the amount of violence in society.

The Gerbner theory of "mainstreaming":

> We are becoming more alike in proportion to the amount of TV we watch. Until TV came along, cultural indoctrination was more varied. Books, movies, magazines, stories told in the home—all served to create diversity. Now, with seven hours of TV washing over the average family every day, we hardly have time for meals, not to mention other forms of amusement.
>
> Gerbner calls TV a religion—meaning an underlying, generally unchallenged set of beliefs, many of them hidden even from those whose business it is to propagate them. And there is no "religious freedom" where TV is concerned. "Americans," he points out, "are not free to try other televisions." We can turn on the set, of course, but our friends and neighbors will not, and they will transmit the beliefs.

Here some people may try to recall the "good" programs they have seen, in defense of having a TV set somewhere around. But as for setting an example, to friends and relations and whatever children come around, we prefer Wendell Berry's "negative" reaction as a form of personal protest. He says in *The Gift of Good Land:*

> You can quit doing something you know to be destructive. It might, for instance, be possible to take a pledge that you will no longer use electricity or petroleum to entertain yourself. My own notion of an ideal negative action is to get rid of your television set. (It is cheating to get rid of it by selling it or giving it away. You should get rid of it by carefully disassembling it with a heavy blunt instrument. Would you try to get rid of any other brain disease by selling it or giving it away?)

* * *

We have some quotations to introduce from Karin Neuschutz's *The Doll Book* (Larson, Burdett, N.Y. 14818, $8.95). It would be better to reproduce some of the photographs of dolls this Swedish child psychologist tells how to make—so simple, so attractive, so inexpensive—but the quotations are rather special too. She is all for dolls which lend themselves to childhood imagery,

instead of the slick and perfected plastic ones bought in a store. The manufactured dolls spoil imaginative play the way a literal movie can spoil a great children's story. The only thing this book might be bad for is the retail toy business. It will inspire parents to make their children's toys; it might even make fathers want to learn how to sew a little, just to make a doll or two. What could be more constructive? For a beginning, then, the author says:

> In German, the word for doll is the same as for pupa. What a wonderful symbolism that every doll is a pupa!—out of which a butterfly can arise, if we only give soul to the doll, give it life.
>
> There are children who see the butterfly in every pupa. They feel for all little animals and dolls and can't do without any of them. Others decide for one doll, and then keep it as their most beloved toy throughout childhood.
>
> It's important that parents treat dolls with the same respect with which they treat real people. That's why it's so wrong to let children get sloppy dolls that they can hit and box when they feel angry. If the doll is an image of the human being, it must get the same tender care as the children; otherwise it's easy to suspect that you can hit human beings, too.
>
> In Swedish, the word "docka" (doll) means wound-up yarn. In the second half of this book we will learn how to make simple yarn dolls.
>
> Making the doll soft and simple with only dots for eyes and mouth gives the child freedom to add what is missing.
>
> The stereotyped smile of a plastic doll imposes itself on the child and generates an artificial mood. The cloth doll, on the other hand, changes its expressions according to the mood of the child. It could even be converted to being a boy after first having been a girl (which certainly is unusual)! It doesn't offer the same physical resistance as a corresponding change would meet with from a naturalistic plastic girl. The cloth doll is shaped by play.

One soon sees why so many thousands of this book have been sold in Sweden. The writer is for do-it-yourself solutions, not just to save money, but because they are almost invariably better. There is great variety in this book—even a fine short chapter on how to help children who can't or don't know how to play, and insight, all along, on other problems. There is this on doll houses:

> We can help the children install a simple doll house in a box or on a bookshelf. Homemade furniture made of little boxes and pieces of wood stimulates the child to make more. You can make the finest little household utensils out of beeswax; the child can make little paintings for the walls; older children can weave rugs in a weaving frame.
>
> If given a fantastic doll house with lights in all the rooms and a thousand details, the child will very likely sooner or later let the dolls move out of the house with some furniture and move into a strange little corner. It's more challenging to the imagination to see how you can arrange things temporarily than to play in the ready-made doll house. Fine doll houses are probably expressions of a grown-up's desire to play, but for children they usually end up being curios.

* * *

There is a government pamphlet that ought to be lying around for easy reading in every home, especially where there are young people. It is *Conquest of the Land through 7,000 Years* by W. C. Lowdermilk—Agricultural Information Bulletin No. 99, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Soil Conservation Service. It once cost all of forty-five cents and, if available, probably doesn't now cost much more. Lowdermilk was for a time Assistant Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, the most respected among farmers of all the branches of the Department of Agriculture. This report of a study he made in 1938-39, going to the areas he writes about, deals with the conservation of land and its opposite throughout our historical period. "His immediate mission was to find out if the experience of these older civilizations could help in solving the serious soil erosion and land use problems in the United States." It could and would help if we would learn from his experience. The booklet has thirty pages, is colorfully written and well illustrated with photographs.

FRONTIERS

A Tibetan Land

LADAKH is a region about the size of Austria, the northernmost part of India, a part of Kashmir, "wedged between China, Tibet and Pakistan." The population of about 100,000 is basically Tibetan, with an infusion of Indian blood. Their language is a Tibetan dialect and they are mainly Tibetan in culture and religion, with loyalty to Lhassa, formerly the residence of the Dalai Lama, although there is an overlay of Islam resulting from past conquests. It is a country of villages, mostly at about 11,000 feet in elevation, and annual rainfall is about four inches. Peter Bunyard, an editor of the *Ecologist*, found the Ladakhis of particular interest because of their almost ideal community life until about 1975, when the Indian Government opened the area to tourists—about 15,000 a year—some of whom "hike" in while others fly and then take buses on new roads, "rushing from one monastery to the next," sometimes leaving a trail of debris behind them. Meanwhile, under the influence of India, "development" is slowly proceeding, with mass manufactured goods replacing traditional ones. It is cold country and—

> New houses are being built of concrete blocks and are provided with kerosene heating, while on the land agro-chemicals are increasingly used. The demands for more water are being met through the construction of concrete irrigation pipes, despite problems with frost cracking in winter, and through pumping water from bore holes. Tractors are now being imported although most Ladakhis still plough, till and harvest using their traditional beast of burden, the dzo [a cross between a yak and an ordinary cow].

For the account of the changes in the life of the Ladakhis Peter Bunyard draws on Helena Norberg-Hodge, a linguist who came there on a job almost ten years ago, became fascinated with the people and soon returned.

> Over the years she has witnessed a slow transformation in Ladakh from a way of life that was totally self-sufficient to one increasingly dependent on the outside world, for cash for fuel, for education, and for technological gadgetry including pumps and electricity. . . . As Helena quickly came to appreciate, the Ladakhi way of life, at least up until 1975, was completely self-contained and sustainable. The population, too, appears to have been remarkably stable, a feature of the social system which combines flexibility with an intuitive sense of environmental limits. . . .
>
> The problem is that once development starts almost everyone wants to get on the bandwagon with a subsequent breakdown of communal ties and cooperation. And whereas in the past everyone participated in the maintenance and construction of irrigation canals, today Ladakhis see the Government constructing permanent structures out of concrete and bringing in more water to increase productivity in the fields. On the face of things the new imported ideas appear better and it is not surprising that Ladakhis from one village, seeing the improvements carried out in a neighboring village, want a similar treatment.

While some of these improvements may be appropriate, Helena Norberg-Hodge says:

> "The paradox is that life in Ladakh has been totally free it has cost no money to live; whereas the slightest development in the modern sense requires money and creates a value for activities that previously have been taken wholly for granted. Ironically too, Ladakhis will only remain in control of their own lives while they are outside the cash economy. Once in, despite the illusion that money confers freedom of choice, they will in fact find themselves on a treadmill."
>
> The notion of poverty hardly existed before; today, it has become part of the language. When visiting an outlying village some eight years ago, Helena asked a young Ladakhi where were the poorest houses. "We have no poor houses in our village," was the proud reply. Recently Helena saw the same Ladakhi talking to an American tourist and overheard him say, "If only you could do something for us. We are so poor."

Interesting confirmation of what this Ladakhi said in his youth is found in Marco Pallis's *Peaks and Lamar* (London: Cassell, 1939). Pallis lived in Ladakh for a while in 1936 and gives several chapters to description of the happy, uncomplicated life. In one place he says:

> The peasant houses were a never-ending joy throughout Ladak, with their combination of the

> qualities of amplitude, solidity, classical plan and appropriate detail. A mean or cramped or ill-constructed dwelling was never to be seen, while a fair proportion of the bigger ones made us feel positively envious. This was true of every village through which we passed. Nowhere else have I seen any houses to compare, on an average, with those of the Ladakis.

What makes this story worth telling is the effort to help the Ladakhis gain perspective and respect for their past:

> To redress the balance, Helena has started using the local radio and bringing in books and literature from the outside world to show Ladakhis that the reason tourists come to their country is because they hope to find there the very values that they have lost in their own societies and have come to cherish. She therefore tells Ladakhis how in the industrialized western world people are trying to create close-knit communities that are basically self-reliant; how they are looking for non-polluting technologies such as composting lavatories, and solar heating systems; how brown bread and other whole foods are now increasingly being consumed, and that people actually pay a lot of money to get exercise. All of those things, community, wholesome food, are freely part of the Ladakhi heritage.
>
> Much of what Helena has said and campaigned for in Ladakh ties in well with Buddhist beliefs concerning the relationship between individuals and a sustainable, life-enhancing economy. A Ladakhi Ecological Development Group now exists and the local government has given a prime plot of land in the center of Leh [the country's capital] for a center to be built. Work on the site has begun and the building is to have a library, restaurant, and exhibition of low-impact technologies with working examples.

What is most noticeable about the Ladakhis? Their happiness, Helena Norberg-Hodge says. "That happiness is deep-rooted and sincere, and such a contrast to the way our own lives are ridden with stress and anxiety." As to the present drive and inevitability of "development," she believes "the Ladakhis have as good a chance as any in accepting only those aspects that can be incorporated into the culture without destroying it."

We have been quoting from No. 1, Vol. 14 of the *Ecologist*, the first of this year's issues. The address is Worthyvale Manor Farm, Camelford, Cornwall PL32 9TT UK. Subscription $28.00. Helena Norberg-Hodge is a member of the Adjunct Faculty of World College West, in the San Rafael area of California.