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INSIGHT IN SCIENCE AND IN PLATO

INSIGHT is defined by Webster as keen intellectual vision embracing "the power to see below the surface and to understand what is not evident to the average mind." The minds of scientists, average and otherwise, have given us all our scientific knowledge of the universe. When great scientists seek the truth, their minds penetrate deeply into the nature of things to give us not only more knowledge but also new intellectual visions of reality. Such scientific insight strengthens belief in the seemingly unlimited capacity of science to understand the nature, workings, and origin of the universe.

That the universe consists of bodies in space which are amenable to objective scientific investigation is an obvious, common-sense statement of fact about the physical reality we know. However, the twentieth-century revolution in physics, which included Einstein's discovery that matter and energy are equivalent and interconvertible, provided radically new insights into the nature of the universe. Many physicists now regard ultimate reality less as matter than as fields of energy, whose ever-changing patterns and interactions only manifest themselves to our senses and instruments as material bodies. Seeing the universe as a dynamic whole engaged in a ceaseless play of energy, and realizing that observation necessarily implies interaction with the observed, they are now recognizing themselves as inseparable from their observations, thus blurring the distinction between subject and object. A few physicists even see striking parallels between modern physics and some of the basic tenets of Eastern religion, mysticism, philosophy, and cosmology. Yet none of these more subjective and holistic insights into the nature of reality has yet had much influence on the general advance of twentieth-century science, whose prodigious achievements have largely depended upon rigorous materialism and objectivity.

Apart from physics, scientific understanding of reality is primarily based upon objective description of material bodies, the phenomena associated with them, and the natural laws characterizing their behaviour. Be they atoms, molecules, chromosomes, cells, pine trees, whales, rings of Saturn, or galaxies, they are all part of the physical universe with which science is concerned. The energy associated with heat, light, electricity, gravity, motion, and chemical reaction is regarded as a manifestation of the essential properties of these material bodies, without which there would be no energy at all. In thus considering matter the source of energy, science tacitly assumes that matter constitutes, if not ultimate reality, the most fundamental reality knowable to man. This basic assumption rests upon the eminent success of the human mind to observe, describe, measure, and explain the physical world.

How, then, does science deal with mind itself, this nonmaterial reality which eludes objective observation, description, measurement, and explanation, yet upon whose proper functioning depend not only scientific comprehension of the world but also life's well-being and achievement? The presence of consciousness in the universe presents a serious problem to science, whose methods of investigation are inadequate to penetrate its essential nature. Often scientists silently evade the problem or attempt to account for mind as a kind of epiphenomenon—a secondary product of the biological evolution of the physical body that can trace its origin back to the primeval living cell. Thus the life sciences assume that the physical necessarily preceded the mental. That the evolution of life seems to have culminated in vast intellectual and cognitive powers of human minds seeking the truth is

considered a happy, but strictly fortuitous, development in a world of matter that is continually and purposelessly changing in blind obedience to physical and chemical laws.

Science now supposes that the physical universe originated 10 to 20 billion years ago in a Big Bang, which marked the origin of matter and energy and even space and time. It further supposes that depending upon the unknown cosmic balance between gravity and total mass, the universe will undergo either endless expansion or endless periods of alternating expansion and contraction. This mechanistic, deterministic, fatalistic view of the cosmos sees our own minute solar system and the life and mind which this planet supports headed for certain extinction as the blind and irrevocable forces of nature play themselves out.

The more materialistic and objective science became, the more it felt bound to dissociate itself from religion and ethics. While the important scientific insights of the past coexisted with belief in divine creation and purpose and morality, scientists now tend to regard religious and ethical convictions as superfluous projections of the mind. The existence of divine reality and moral law plays little or no role in the pursuit of contemporary science mainly because scientific education has stressed the necessity for rigorous separation of science from questions of first or final cause, purpose, virtue, and value. Everywhere scientists and non-scientists alike suffer from the delusion that neither religion, philosophy, metaphysics, nor ethics have any part to play in the advance of science.

Can it really be a delusion when scientific advance has been so extraordinarily rapid and when contemporary man looks first to scientific knowledge, expertise, and insight for the fullest understanding of the universe and his place in it? Science had admittedly had enormous success in penetrating the immensities of space, the intricacies of living and non-living entities, and the realm of sub-atomic particles. But in pointing to these remarkable achievements, scientists mistake a part of reality for the whole and are deluding the collective consciousness of mankind. They want man to accept a false premise—that the supreme value of scientific insight rests upon the most valid knowledge of nature of reality. Scientific insight is not, however, supreme; nor is contemporary science even concerned with the highest reality. The cumulative wisdom of mankind shows that much more in the universe is knowable than science allows. Most scientific insight is, in fact, of limited evolutionary value because, in neglecting the reality of the spiritual realm, scientists are deeply ignorant of what is, has been, and will be.

What, then, is that spiritual reality which the mind of the scientist believes it can do without? Any answer to this question will require profound, ongoing consideration of the elusive problem of what has been called the mortal mind and the immortal soul, especially in relation to the life and death of the body. Understanding the spiritual also requires belief in—or, more accurately, knowledge of—a divine power capable of illuminating and guiding human consciousness. Obviously, mere absence of matter cannot characterize the spiritual. The revolution in physics, which compelled many a physicist to see energy, rather than matter, as ultimate reality, did not automatically compel them to think spiritually, nor did it necessarily provide them with spiritual insight. As Plato demonstrated 2000 years ago in his elucidation of the nature and destiny of the soul, authentic understanding of the spiritual derives from awareness of a divine ethic and from making the ethical choices required for a virtuous life. As an enlightened nineteenth-century Christian maintained, "Every step towards goodness is a departure from materiality, and is a tendency towards God, Spirit.[1] That many scientists neglect this theocentric dimension and its evolutionary imperatives relating to good and evil is evident in their increasingly immoral desire to manipulate and control physical life and to produce ever more sophisticated instruments for

its destruction. Despite its formidable advances science, denying spiritual illumination and guidance, remains a dark and fragmented vision of the whole.

The theoretical physicist, David Bohm, has penetrated more deeply than most of his colleagues into what is. Conceiving matter and mind and the Big Bang as but tiny ripples on a vast sea of unmanifest energy beyond space and time, he has unequivocally equated the unknown source of this energy with what is mysterious, sacred, and holy. He even speaks about compassion in the cosmos, equating the ultimate nature of the universe with an energy of love.[2] Describing its unceasing flow as fortuitous movement in an endless variety of ways, Professor Bohm apparently does not, however, consider the possibility of evolutionary purpose and direction. His insight is nevertheless spiritual as well as scientific, harmonizing as it does with ancient religious truths about the cosmic significance of love.

Another contemporary physicist, Fritjof Capra, also sees the universe as a unified whole of constantly changing energy patterns and likens the new ideas about unavoidable subject-object interaction to religious mysticism. As Bohm's, Capra's vision fails to see evolutionary purpose or goal. Evolution is instead considered to be open and indeterminate, dependent upon complete freedom of choice. Capra finds some parallels between Teilhard de Chardin's evolutionary vision and his own, yet in one important sense goes beyond to stress ecological awareness as an evolutionary and spiritual imperative.[3]

The biologist, Charles Birch, likewise combines a holistic vision of evolving life with ecological issues. Together with the theologian, John Cobb, Birch treats from a Christian perspective the oppressive ideology of objective, materialistic science from which he rightly feels life must be liberated.[4] Yet he, too, sees no single cosmic purpose, no pre-established evolutionary goal, no moral absolutes: his ethic of life is based upon values being created and transformed "moment by moment" according to changing situations and relations. He feels that if life has any purpose, it is only to increase the richness of its experience. At the same time he states that life is God.

Thus a number of contemporary scientists hold that ultimate reality cannot be dissociated from the mysteries of spirit. Holistic insight of this kind, now accepted by only a minority of scientists, may well presage the emergence of a new scientific world view that will become increasingly compatible with religious and ethical consciousness. If, then, scientific insight is already expanding holistically towards the transcendent reality of the spirit, does science have any need of Plato at all?

It does. For platonic insight embodies certain truths that are vague or even absent in the minds of most scientists now bringing science closer to religion. What Plato did in his spiritual approach to consciousness was to demonstrate perhaps more clearly than anyone before or since that the human mind is capable of recognizing ultimate reality as a supreme Good that gives to human life a predominantly ethical direction. That man's evolving consciousness is to be more fully permeated and sustained by the divine Good is a profound insight which seems to spell out a single cosmic purpose. Plato's Idea of the Good is not, however, susceptible of precise articulation. Plato himself, while comparing the Good directly to the sun and indirectly to God as the sacred, transcendent mystery that holds everything together, never attempted to delineate its essential nature. In calling it the Good but refusing to speak of its specific goodness, he indicated that the nature of ultimate reality is difficultly expressible, if not ineffable. He did, however, envisage in the spiritual realm beyond the finite physical world of change eternal essences like justice, courage, temperance, piety, and beauty, all of which are far more real than material entities. Variously called absolutes, universals, forms,

ideas, and ideals, their existence makes the still higher reality of the Good more intelligible and desirable to the human mind and presages a more just, harmonious, and beautiful world.

Another of Plato's remarkable insights, which in recent years was strikingly delineated by R. E. Cushman, was that it really is the Good that every man, consciously or subconsciously, most loves and longs for. Plato believed that every man has within a spark of divinity—some inner light—that seeks its Source. The human race is thus being drawn to transcendent reality, and were Plato alive today in this scientific, democratic, permissive age that widely rejects divine authority and direction, he would surely reiterate his conviction that the supreme satisfaction of any human soul, whether in the body or not, lies in its increasing knowledge of, and participation in, the divine Good. Perhaps Plato considered the eternal absolutes or even love itself as mediator between the human and the divine. However this may be, he saw that a soul impelled upwards by love of the Good can recognize the absolutes as real manifestations of a divine ethic. It is evolutionally significant that Plato, in contrast to many of those now envisaging the future course of human development, also accepted the doctrine of reincarnation. Each earthly life, accordingly, was spiritual education, and the soul's remembrance of what it had previously glimpsed of spiritual essences enhanced its ethical consciousness in the embodied state. And on one point platonic doctrine is wholly unambiguous—sooner or later a reincarnating soul learns that the Good is imposing moral obligation upon it.

Thus, according to Plato, mankind is to become more godlike, and therefore more real, through its progressive acquisition of virtue. His world was, in fact, sustained by this final cause, purpose, and goal. To envisage the striving of the soul towards moral perfection is not only platonic and Christian but reflects the common spiritual essence of all authentic religions and religious philosophies. But science, eschewing the realm of the spirit, still maintains that ethical character has nothing to do with the pursuit of scientific truth. Even contemporary religions acquiesce in the claim that the advance of science is actually hampered when scientists fail to maintain strict moral neutrality.

In contrast, "Plato believed that the subjective (moral) quality of the inquiring human is more important than the external, measurable qualities of an object in the determination of truth."[6] He also believed that the world is permeated by spirit and cannot be properly understood without cognizance of the higher reality of the Good and the eternal absolutes. Their goodness floods the familiar world of our senses as it awaits discovery by human consciousness and insight. The Good, like the sun, illumines all.

If this omnipresent light be what men most desire, why do so few see it? Why cannot all of us remember what we have seen? Why does the human race exhibit so many different levels of conscious awareness of spiritual reality? All answers relate to the fact that most of us are still dominated by powerful egoistic thoughts and inclinations that keep us partially blind and forgetful of what we have seen and learned. Many lifetimes on earth are needed for the purification of the soul. The ethical heterogeneity of any given population indicates the presence of souls (and their corresponding states of consciousness) in all stages of moral purification, where the most spiritually conscious are assumed to be those who have experienced the greatest number of reincarnations.

That the majority of contemporary scientists are blind to spiritual reality does not necessarily mean they are more egotistical than non-scientists but that they have deliberately turned away from the inner and outer light in the mistaken belief that their profession requires them to do so. Plato's insights, uncovering the deepest longing of the soul for the higher reality of the Good and the good life, may yet profoundly influence science. They are, in a sense, an extrapolation of the

subjective recognition by the physicist that regardless of his moral character, he is an essential part of his investigation of reality. He is, of course, just that, but with Plato he can be, and do, much more. For platonic participation in higher reality recognizes goodness as the spiritual ground of the universe, thus enabling the scientist to become an ethically purified seeker of the truth.

Obviously, the sophisticated procedures and instrumentation now used by physicists and biologists are not designed to reveal or create spiritual goodness either in the observer or the observed. But the mind of the scientific observer is potentially able to transcend its amoral and immoral limitations and to recognize the hierarchical nature of things. A truer, more holistic vision of the universe and its different levels of reality requires insight that can relate science to questions of good and evil and final cause. Nor can scientific investigation long survive without a more fully developed conscience. Any glimpse, however momentary, of the spiritual light that illumines the universe reveals a relation between the pursuit of truth and the divine ethic; it may also reveal that the highest levels of reality culminate in the Good that sustains the universe. Without awareness of this vision, the scientist cannot be expected to enhance in any significantly spiritual way his profession, the object of his invesigation, or that minute part of reality that he himself is. But if science were to be pursued by more ethically conscious scientists, we could look forward to its progressive spiritualization and a truly integrated and evolutionally successful search for truth.

Since most scientific minds at present see no connection whatever between science and platonic doctrine, is there any chance in the foreseeable future that scientific insight will include Plato's vision of the Good? It would seem so. We stand at the threshold of a new age of religious awakening, and mankind's collective consciousness may already be slowly turning towards what Plato saw: life's striving towards self-transcendence and the higher reality of spiritual light. When an inner spark finds its outer source, some of the darkness of the world is dispelled. Biologists, the students of life, may soon be actively facilitating its further ascent.

According to Plato, only that insight having divine and human goodness at its core is truly authentic. In its inevitable encounter with philosophy and religion, the scientific conscience faces radical transformation. An integrated, spiritualized science of life, everywhere advancing by ethical imperatives, will then know its fairest flowering.

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NOTES

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REVIEW
SOME WISDOM FROM THE (RECENT) PAST

ONE of the "older" books in our library, to which we often return, is Harold Laski's *The Dangers of Obedience,*a collection of essays valuable not only for their subject-matter, which seems of enduring importance, but also for the author's order, sense of justice, and clarity of expression. Published by Harper & Brother, the book came out in 1930, and our copy is somewhat the worse for wear. It once belonged in the public library of one of New York's five boroughs, as a bookplate and insolent perforations of several pages of the text proclaim, the final indignity being the penciled inscription, "discard," on the title page. Librarians have their space and storage problems, but it seems outrageous that excellence is apparently no barrier to throwing books away. Perhaps we should be grateful, though, since by means now totally forgotten we acquired the volume for probably only a few cents.

A sample from the title essay:

> We demand from men that they should follow the herd; we suspect them if they express doubts of the tradition. We choose as governors available men, which means that we deliberately prefer those who have not displayed a skepticism of convention. No English statesman could continue to lead his party if he announced a doubt of the virtues of monarchical government. No American candidate for the presidency could, without certain defeat, explain that he disliked the presidential system. . . . Sacco and Vanzetti were punished not for the murder they denied, but for the anarchism they professed. We have replaced medieval intolerance of religious by intolerance of political and economic creeds. The state has become in sober fact Leviathan; and millions of men and women accept its decisions without scrutiny as obliging them merely because of the source from which they emanate. Our danger, indeed, is that the conventional is becoming the infallible. . . . An acceptance of injustice to others is the price we pay, and are prepared to pay, for our own safety. We have an inner sense that, were we to protest, the tale of tragedy might be told also of ourselves; and we repress instinctive sympathy with those who suffer because our neighbors do likewise. Yet silence is acquiescence; and a failure to protest injustice only makes us the less vigilant against invasion of our own freedom.

Such warnings never go out of date. When they are expressed with Laski's skill, they should not be permitted to go out of sight.

His third essay, "The Recovery of Citizenship," while more than fifty years old, seems addressed to the present. It is a closely reasoned argument for decentralization, with accompanying return of responsibility to the citizens. The situation to be corrected is this:

> The average man does not seem to feel that politics are his concern. He prefers to be acted for, rather than to act himself. He does not, either coherently or effectively, feel himself to be part of the actual process of government. He thinks of his rulers as persons apart from his normal life dealing with matters he can hardly hope to control. He has a sense that the more ample the size and functions of the modern state, the less opportunity he will have to take any important part in the disposal of its business. The number of those who can occupy office, whether central or local, is necessarily fractional; and political significance comes to most, as Rousseau saw, as a brief and pitiful moment at election-time.

However much we sympathize with those who feel too busy to attend to issues of government and national policy, the fact remains that policy may now be a question of survival—for that is what getting ready for and threatening nuclear war amounts to. How, then, can citizens recover their responsible role? Laski suggests, not entering politics in order to do things as they ought to be done, but activities in behalf of the *polis*, the local community, which become capable of strong influence on political decision. He says:

> Alongside political institutions but partially adapted to the needs of our time, men have built innumerable voluntary institutions to express deeply felt needs which have escaped the categories of political expression. . . . They lack, for the most part, the compulsory formalism of legal institutions. They depend, much more surely than the political state, upon their power to satisfy the wants of their members. They respond, simply because they are

> voluntary in origin, much more quickly and fully to the experience they embody. . . . as we use the experience they embody, we bring into contact with the state the fused wants of innumerable citizens whose wills can hardly hope, in any other articulate and coherent form, to reach the central focus of power.

For an example Laski speaks of trade unions, which were certainly a necessity of our social evolution. Today one might think of the various associations devoted to a better use of the natural environment; the emergence of groups demanding a nuclear freeze is another example. The competence of the state is far more limited than we suppose:

> The state, as a general rule, translates into law merely those wills that are strong enough to make effective their power of self-expression, and its legal process converts automatically power into right. Yet, obviously, it is essential to inquire whether those wills deserve, on the facts, the expression they receive. For the whole implied purpose of a democratic system is its assumption that each individual citizen is, equally with any other, entitled to find the avenues of satisfaction fully open to him. . . .
>
> Our business is, as best we may, to make the experiences of men, and the demands they build out of those experiences, available directly, instead of indirectly, to the state as coordinator. They cannot themselves be allowed to dominate the process of government. But they can be given such an integral relationship with that process as to make it far more certain than now that the felt wants of men have been properly weighed in the making of decisions which affect them. From one angle of vision, this means an effort at the decentralization of the modern state, a return to wider local responsibility and powers, and the discovery of suitable areas upon which to confer them. For no one can look at the present over-burdened legislature in England or France or America without seeing, as Lamennais said, that centralization results in apoplexy at the center, and anemia at the extremities.

Laski recommends a variety of what he calls "advisory committees." He gives an example:

> An advisory committee on education should, at least as to the majority of its members, be nominated by associations of teachers, of superintendents of education, of parents. These can speak with an authority to which no personal nominee can ever pretend. When they suggest, or criticize, or investigate, there is behind them an already organized and alert opinion which assures attention for what they have to say.

Today, organizations of teachers and administrators may be too bureaucratized and dominated by "system" to serve well in this way, and it would be better for the committee to be made up chicfly of parents, adding a John Holt or two, if they could be found—and if they would serve, which may be doubted. But Laski's idea, in essence, is the voluntary assumption by groups of citizens of responsibility as local consultants, advisors, and advocates. If a local press with these motives could gain support much might be accomplished.

> When a measure came before a municipal council or a legislative assembly, we should then have the assurance that it has been discussed and dissected by those who were to be affected by its results. We should know that it had not been brought forward without being subject to the criticism of representative opinion upon its probable consequence. We should end a good deal of ignorant legislation and we should make at least supremely difficult a good deal of corrupt legislation.

Here it is pertinent to recall Hannah Arendt's observation (in *On Revolution*) that as a result of the excitement and interest which attended the adoption of the U.S. Constitution, the vital function of town meetings tended to be ignored and neglected. Emerson, in the next century, called them "the school of the people" and Lewis Mumford later declared that the failure of the Founders to incorporate the township into either the federal or state constitutions was "one of the tragic oversights of post-revolutionary political development."

COMMENTARY
REGENERATING NEIGHBORHOODS

TODAY there is something of a renaissance of neighborhood consciousness, with the formation of self-help groups around the country—consistent with Harold Laski's proposal. (See Review.) A Washington newsletter, *Conserve Neighborhoods*, recently pointed out:

> City departments are typically organized along functional lines, like parks and recreation, streets and highways, sanitation, housing, health and welfare. Such divisions may be the most efficient way to run citywide programs, but they also insure that each department has only a limited concern for any one neighborhood. Although all city services come together at the neighborhood level, no single department is responsible for coordinating the disparate services or overseeing the neighborhood's welfare. As a result, city services sometimes contradict rather than complement each other and bewilder residents.

When residents get together and act in behalf of cleanup, landscaping, and tree-planting, the neighborhood improves by an organic process growing out of common concern. In principle, this is precisely what Laski recommends. In favor of voluntary advisory groups, he says:

> Here, at least, is a real way of preventing the atmosphere of administration from degenerating into the issue of orders, on the one hand, and their indifferent acceptance on the other. It provides means for utilizing the services of men who now avoid public life, either because they are unwilling to undergo the process of election, or because their interest is not in the general complex of governmental functions, but in a single aspect of that complex. The system popularizes the administrative process by widening the area of persons who are competent to scrutinize it. It provides a constant interchange of opinion between the center and the circumference of government. Because the system is advisory and not executive in character, it leaves simple and intelligible the ultimate institutions, and it does not make authority degenerate into anarchy by the indefinite division of power.

Interestingly, Laski proposes that businessmen begin to hold themselves to a set of standards similar to the professions of law, medicine, and engineering, recalling Justice Brandeis's suggestion that business be made into a profession. Here and there one sees a tendency in this direction, and this idea—also embodied in the works of Peter Drucker—is a good one.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE WRITER S ROLE

IN the *New York Times Book Review* for Nov. 14, 1982, the novelist, Shirley Hazzard, considers what it means to be a writer. What she says might be expected from the author of *The Bay of Noon*, a story reviewed in MANAS something over ten years ago (April 12, 1972), in which, among other things, she examines the military mind as it operates out on location—that is, in foreign lands. It becomes evident from what she says about writers in her *Times* essay that she thinks the poet, novelist, or essayist provides the cultural expression of a valuable human capacity—to draw back and reflect. That is what the writer does for his readers—not so much for as to them—inviting collaboration.

Two very nearly classical texts give her support—one from Simone Weil. In her essay on the *Iliad* she spoke of those who—especially before or during military action—"do not impose on their movements that halt, that interval of hesitation, wherein lies all our consideration for our brothers in humanity." The other text is by Ortega in "The Self and the Other" (in *Dehumanization of Art*, Princeton University Press), where he speaks of the human's capacity to "suspend his direct concern with things, detach himself from their surroundings, ignore them, and subjecting his faculty of attention to a radical shift—incomprehensible zoologically—turn, so to speak, his back on the world and take his stand inside himself, attend to his own inwardness or, what is the same thing, concern himself with himself and not with that which is *other*, with things."

The affair of the writer, Shirley Hazzard says in effect, is with that *"halt,* that interval of hesitation," which the mind may extend into a life work. The writer articulates the wondering that comes during this interval, he helps us to do what must be done if we are to remain human. (Ortega warns that remaining human is by no means easy, a judgment that the good writer invariably confirms.) Miss Hazzard says:

> Articulation is central to human survival and self-determination, not only in its commemorative and descriptive functions but in relieving the soul of incoherence. Insofar as expression has been matched to sensation and perception, human nature has seemed to retain consciousness. A sense of deliverance plays its part in the pleasure we feel in all the arts and perhaps most of all in literature.
>
> I say most of all in literature because language, unlike the other arts, is a medium through which we all deal continually in daily life. William Butler Yeats said that "if we understand our own minds, and the things that are striving to utter themselves through our minds, we move others, not because we have thought about those others, but because all life has the same root." In its preoccupation with the root of life, language has special responsibilities. Its manipulation, and deviation from true meaning, can be more influential than in the case of other arts. And there are always new variations on old impostures, adapted to the special receptivity of the times.

In short, in the hands of writers, the very integrities of civilization are at stake. Writers constitute themselves the major educators of their age, and their responsibility, as Simone Weil suggests in *The Need for Roots,* is very nearly priestly. Miss Hazzard is concerned with the environmental pressures on the writer which make fulfillment of that responsibility resemble a heroic task.

> In our era, even the multiple possibilities for valid approaches to truth through language are themselves circuitous and increasingly insistent on their successive claims to be "definitive." In repudiating such pretensions from the Realists and other self-styled "schools," Flaubert said, "There is no 'true.' There are merely different ways of perceiving truth." . .

She joins with an illustrious company of critics of the use of words, including Emerson, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Norman Cousins, and Wendell Berry.

> The task of the poet or novelist is to convey states of mind and of being as immediately as possible, through language. Immediacy of language is not always or necessarily simplicity although simplicity is a highly desirable and immensely difficult literary instrument. Valery says that of two words, we should always choose the lesser. But we don't always have a lesser word that meets our need—although it can be said that veracity tends to express itself with an eminent simplicity, in art as in life; just as discursiveness can often be an index of falsehood.

Let us note in passing that the artist finds it necessary to bring in the virtues even in discussion of what seem matters of "technique."

> Without diminishing the merits and advantages of brevity, however, literature cannot be looked on as a competition to employ as few words as possible. Rather it is a matter of seeking accurate words to convey a human condition. And of deploying words so that tone, context, sound and syntax are ideally combined. That is the proper and agonizing business of literature, in which much of the writer's suffering originates: "the intolerable wrestle with words and meanings," as T. S. Eliot called it. Every writer who is serious about his craft experiences a sense of profaning pure meaning with unworthy words.

Miss Hazzard shows the value of a knowledge of cultural history—and illustrates what may be the most important way of reading it.

> Our words, whether in literature or in life, are accepted as a revelation of our private nature, and an index of the measure of responsibility we are prepared to assume for it.
>
> Even the most imposing speech can, of course, be a confession of evasion. Evasion is rooted in fear, just as responsibility arises from conviction; and the sense of private responsibility through words has proved very hard to maintain. George Orwell said that in order to write fearlessly, one must think fearlessly; and for this it is necessary to have an independent mind. We see that the medieval forms of class and collective responsibility provided a shelter that has been sought ever since through linguistic distortion and pretension.

Peter Abelard used this fear of nonconformity against William of Champeaux, pointing out that William's Platonic reasoning, of the "Realist" school, verged on the pantheist heresy, and he had better be careful. He was, and Abelard took his job. Today, conformity exercises other persuasions:

> Our modern age is peculiarly afflicted in this way. Along with the transforming powers of technology and the mass society, there developed in the 19th century a sort of Industrial Revolution in human expression—an increasing tendency to renounce personal opinion in favor of generalized or official opinion and to evade self-knowledge and self-commitment through the use of abstractions: a wish, in fact, to believe in some process of feeling more efficient than the human soul. There was also an associated new phenomenon of mass communications and mass advertising—that is, of new words and usages not spontaneously but speciously brought into wide circulation as a means of profitably directing human impulse. . . .
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> This measure of renunciation of independent and eccentric views that accompanied the growth of mass culture has inevitably infected esthetic matters. The public has been encouraged, in some quarters, to put its faith in a self-appointed critical authority that, in the words of one modern critic, will "deal expertly" with literature and other arts, relieving readers of time-consuming burdens of private response and private choice. . . .
>
> A body of attitudes has developed that seeks to neutralize the very directness to life that is nurtured by art, and to sever the private bond, the immortal intimacy, that has existed between reader and writer. The great writers do not write as if through intermediaries. The new phenomenon is notably one of explication rather than comprehension—the concept of art as a discipline to be contained within consistent laws, the seductive promise of a technology to be mastered by those who will then be equipped to dictate and regiment taste. . . . As an ominous result we are getting, in literature, an increasing response not to poems and novels but to interpretations. . . . While the students of such interpreters can—and do—expound their mentors' views by the hour, it has become very rare to hear them spontaneously quote a line of poetry.

In her conclusion, Shirley Hazzard makes clear her link with Ortega:

> The attempt to touch truth through a work of the imagination requires an inner center of privacy and solitude. We all need silence—both external and interior—in order to find out what we truly think. I have come more and more to value the view of Ortega y Gasset that "without a certain margin of tranquility, truth succumbs." However passionate the writer's material, some distance and detachment are needed before the concept can be realized. In our time, the writer can expect little or nothing in the way of silence, privacy or removal from the deafening clamor of "communications," with all its disturbing and superfluous information.

One wishes such declarations were more frequent. Shirley Hazzard helps all who hope to have something to say to others to understand their situation and to take into account the obstacles to being "direct" and "independent." Even "righteousness" in its popular forms takes on the rhetorical rules and techniques of the "enemy." That is why the authentic artist and writer may remain "undiscovered" for a considerable time. There is, one hopes, some appropriate way of getting these ideas across to students.

FRONTIERS

What Keeps Us Healthy

[Eight years ago (in MANAS for Feb. 19, 1975) we quoted from a paper by N. G. Dormaar, a Canadian physician who examined the various breakdowns in existing society, and ended by saying: "Self-control, coupled with accountability, will be the basis of a healthy human eco-system. We now have a copy of a letter written by Dr. Dormaar, portions of which make what seems a splendid Frontiers article, in the form of a review-essay—presented below.]

ARTHUR KOESTLER introduced the idea of the holon (*Janus*, Random House, New York, 1978). From the extremely small, the particle—which is not really a particle at all but energy, not "apart from" the total universal energy—from the particle to the universe, there is endless repetition of systems within systems, fields within fields. Each system is independent. Each system is made up of independent systems and each system is part of a larger system which, on its level, is also independent. Our bodies are made up of millions of cells, each doing its own thing. The body as a whole controls these cells only to some extent. Control is a two-way street. These cells existed before the body did (in a historical sense) and the body represents the cells as much as it rules them. In becoming a body, the body has not changed the pre-existing nature of the cell. The body uses the cell as it was and is; it does not expect the cell to change its nature. Each cell nucleus in turn is a system made up of smaller life forms, each with its own DNA, each independent. These life forms existed before the cell did (in a historical sense).

Here is the fine line which I seldom see recognized. Sure, there will be one world all right, just as sure as at one point in history all these separate cells started forming a body, and then the world will have a consciousness of its own. It will even "rule" the cells to some extent. But the cells will not cease to exist. They will pretty well continue their own independent existence, much as they have for thousands of years. It is at this very point where the one-worlders have gone wrong: The last independent system before the whole-world system, the last holon, is not the nation-state, and it is not the independent human being. We have lived in tribes and small villages for thousands of years, probably hundreds of thousands of years. Now that we have entered a prolonged period of pain, this millennia-old experience drives us back into small communities. Why can the Futurist not see that? Why for that matter do futurists totally ignore the reality of prolonged economic and societal chaos?

What we must do is recreate the tribe, the multi-family, the village, with its complete, functioning, independent system, before the next higher system, the next holon, can fall into place. The next holon is still not all of humanity.

The next holon is the region. Only then comes humanity. I think that the nation-state will either disappear or that it will have a greatly reduced function. That means the restoration of local economy, local food production, local industry, local energy, local architecture based on local resources, local customs, local culture, a local penal system and a local power structure. We must recreate this local system consciously and deliberately. The world will again look like a colorful mosaic, held together by a global communication system which is now falling into place.

Another important book is *Growing Young* (McGraw-Hill, 1981), by Ashley Montagu. Most recent animals—recent in evolutionary time—are specialists. When the circumstances change they die out because there is no more place for their specialty. The only exception turns out to be Man. Our specialty is adaptation. And adaptation of course is the specialty of the young, the young of all species. They have to adapt to whatever circumstances happen to be when they are born. So, in order to be specialists in adaptation, we stay young . . . except that our culture has taught us to behave old. But that is only culture, and culture is skin deep. In the first hundred pages Montagu proves his point by looking at bones, et cetera. Then he spends the next hundred pages on

what it means for us to be young. He looks at twenty-six traits that set the young apart. Interestingly, most of those traits also set Man apart. These are specifically human traits, but our culture tells us to abandon them when we grow up. Also interestingly, most of them are essential for intimate human contact. All these traits are needed for tribal living. The need to love, the need for friendship, sensitivity, the need to think, to know, to learn, to work, to organize. Curiosity, the sense of wonder, playfulness, imagination, creativity. And so on.

Finally, these are also traits that keep us healthy. You know that health and disease do not come from outside they come from inside. I have come to understand disease as having a social role. Many people die when they retire, or when their spouse dies. They all see their physicians, they undergo tests, are diagnosed and treated. All very expensive, but they die just the same. We must be missing some essential ingredient.

"People, in their dealings with others, follow social rules. When they stop following rules, for whatever reason, they are likely to become ill." (Richard Totman in *Social Causes of Illness*, Pantheon, 1979.) When a herd of horses becomes too large, then the ones that contribute least to the good of the herd are pushed out. When they no longer follow social rules, they die. The human individuals who are best adapted to the peculiar needs of the human tribe, at a given time in history—these people are the most likely to be healthy and they are the most likely to have offspring. The ones who have the least to contribute are the most likely to live outside the tribe, the ones who are most likely to get sick and die.

Just stop to think about that for a moment! In our haste to create everything big—big industry and commerce, big government, big labour—we have destroyed the small community by whose rules we have lived for so long. We have not been able to make the transition. We have not, on the whole, accepted the rules imposed on us by big government, and all these big institutions have not allowed the previous holons to continue their own independent existence. We have lost the old rules but failed to accept new ones. Most of us live by no rules. That makes us sick.

Futurists are the last to see the future. I read all kinds of interesting stuff written by people who do not call themselves futurists. Futurists are out of touch.

. . . In the meantime our place starts to look like a farm. Barn, hayshed, corral, fences and gates. And twenty-three horses, all yearling belgians. Slowly, one step at a time, we hope to link up with others. The failing economy is helping us. We hope one day to end up with a holon, an independent community, existing of independent people, interacting with other holons and systems of holons.

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