

RELIGION IN THE FUTURE

IN these days of moral as well as material confusion—a time of painful transition, of search and questioning—what is called "religion" has the most ambiguous of names. This is as evident to thoughtful theologians as to the rest of us. "Religion" indeed stands for something, but what? By many, adhering to some formula or creed of inherited belief is regarded as religion. Yet if religion is held to lead to a better life, for one, for all, the modern world knows nothing of its practice. Increasingly, it is noted by observers that the *sociology* of religion—how people claiming to be religious behave—has less and less to do with the *substance* of religion. For the most part, the practice of the conventional religions has become external, an affair of where one goes on Sunday morning. In *Faith and Belief* (Princeton University Press, 1979), Wilfred Cantwell Smith gives attention to the transitions in meaning of these terms. It may come as a surprise to some to learn that "faith" once meant simply, to set one's heart, a quality of being rather than an identification of doctrine. "When one knows what is worth doing, faith is a putting of the heart in the sense of plunging in and doing it." Obviously, this has little to do with forms of belief, although belief, as Wilfred Smith shows, once had virtually the same meaning as faith. He says:

In the three and a half centuries since the King James Authorized Version, the word "faith" has not altogether lost its original spiritual meaning, but the words "belief" and "believe" have. One might therefore urge that "belief/believer" be dropped as religious terms since they now no longer refer directly to anything of human ultimacy. . . . The modern world has to rediscover what "faith" means, and then begin to talk about that; it must recover the verb, to rediscover what it means to have faith, to be faithful, to care, to trust, to cherish, to be loyal, to commit oneself: to rediscover what "believe" *used to mean*.

Here Prof. Smith proposes doing without words that have lost their meaning, as an exercise

for regaining it. This seems a good idea. A number of words now in use, since they are made to take the place of thinking, we might well learn to do without. But suppose, for example, we decided to abolish (for a time) use of the word "religion" itself? What would happen? How long would it take to recover its original meaning, or for a fresh and perhaps better meaning to evolve? Scholars like Prof. Smith, bent on this project—the recovery of the original meaning of religion—are investigating the decline and fall of religion in Western history, attempting to restore understanding of its true content.

There is, however, another approach, that of a modern man who starts out with no religion at all—nothing apparent, that is—choosing the study of good and wise and courageous human beings as his life-work, and ends up with an "empirical" account of what a philosophically religious person is like! We are speaking of A. H. Maslow, and in particular of two of his books, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences* (1970), and *Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (1971). What, Maslow asked himself, can we learn directly from human beings themselves about the good, the true, and the beautiful? He would recognize none but sources found in humans, they becoming the sole origin of truth, if there were any to be discovered.

How did Maslow come to take up such study? In *Farther Reaches* he tells of two teachers he had who were "most remarkable human beings." They were Ruth Benedict and Maurice Wertheimer. By their quality as humans Maslow was led to begin the work that became the basis for a new science of man:

When I tried to understand them, think about them, and write about them in my journal and my notes, I realized in one wonderful moment that their two patterns could be generalized. I was talking

about a kind of person, not about two noncomparable individuals. There was wonderful excitement in that. I tried to see whether this pattern could be found elsewhere, and I did find it elsewhere, in one person after another. . . . When you select out for careful study very fine and healthy people, strong people, creative people, saintly people, sagacious people—in fact, exactly the kind of people I picked out—then you get a different view of mankind. You are asking how tall people can grow, what can a human being become?

Despite the mess the world is in, such people do exist, and the implications of their presence make the body of Maslow's researches and reports. His work became the foundation of a psychology based on health and high human achievement, and curiously, in his latter years his thought moved toward what might be called a humanistic religious psychology. He called people who consistently give expression to the best that is in them *self-actualizers*. He says:

Self-actualizing people are, without one single exception, involved in a cause outside their own skin, in something outside of themselves. They are devoted, working at something, something which is very precious to them—some calling or vocation in the old sense, the priestly sense. They are working at something which fate has called them to somehow and which they work at and which they love, so that the work-joy dichotomy in them disappears. One devotes his life to the law, another to justice, another to beauty or truth; All, in one way or another, devote their lives to the search for what I have called the "being" values, the ultimate values which are intrinsic, which cannot be reduced to anything more ultimate.

These attitudes are the consequence of a quality or state of mind that would naturally be identified as religious, if religion is thought of as making humans better in all fundamental respects. (Here religion is defined in terms of its effects rather than by some affirmed set of beliefs.) One could say that Maslow is bringing to our attention the natural attributes of a religious life—or, we might say, tests of its authenticity—and thus developing a regenerated religious vocabulary from an experiential point of view. In reply to the

question, "What does self-actualization mean in terms of actual behavior?", he says:

First, self-actualization means experiencing fully, vividly, selflessly, with full concentration and total absorption. It means experiencing without the self-consciousness of the adolescent. At this moment of experiencing, the person is wholly and fully human. This is the self-actualizing moment. This is a moment when the self is actualizing itself.

Second, let us think of life as a process of choices, one after the other. At each point there is a progression and a regression choice. There may be a movement toward defense, toward safety, toward being afraid, but over on the other side, there is the growth choice. To make the growth choice instead of the fear choice a dozen times a day is to move a dozen times a day toward self-actualization. *Self-actualization is an ongoing process*; it means making each of the many single choices about whether to lie or be honest, whether to steal at a particular point, and it means to make each of these choices as a growth choice. This is movement toward self-actualization.

Third, to talk of self-actualization implies that there is a self to be actualized. A human being is not a *tabula rasa*, not a lump of clay or Plasticine. . . . There is a self, and what I have sometimes referred to as "listening to the impulse voices" means letting the self emerge. Most of us, most of the time (and especially does this apply to children, young people), listen not to ourselves but to Mommy's introjected voice or Daddy's voice or to the voice of the Establishment, of the Elders, of authority, or of tradition.

There are more of these paragraphs on the meaning of self-actualization, one involving the acceptance of responsibility. "This is one of the great steps. Each time one takes responsibility, this is an actualizing of the self." It also means "using one's intelligence," and undergoing the discipline that enables one to realize one's possibilities.

The peak experience is a kind of inner rainbow experience, made up of "moments of ecstasy which cannot be bought, cannot be guaranteed, cannot even be sought." But, Maslow adds, "one can set up the conditions so that peak experiences are more likely, or one can

perversely set up the conditions so that they are less likely." As an example of the latter he speaks of a defense mechanism "not mentioned in the psychology textbooks," but often by the young of the last generation (a tendency not so much in evidence today).

It is the defense mechanism of *desacralizing*. These youngsters mistrust the possibility of values and virtues. They feel themselves swindled or thwarted in their lives. Most of them have, in fact, dopey parents whom they don't respect very much, parents who are quite confused themselves about values and who, frequently, are simply terrified of their children and never punish them or stop them from doing things that are wrong. So you have a situation where the youngsters simply despise their elders—often for good and sufficient reason. Such youngsters have learned to make a big generalization: They won't listen to anybody who is grown-up, especially if the grown-up uses the same words which they've heard from the hypocritical mouth. They have heard their fathers talk about being honest or brave or bold and they have seen their fathers being the opposite of all these things.

The youngsters have learned to reduce the person to the concrete object and to refuse to see what he might be or to refuse to see him in his symbolic values or to refuse to see him or her eternally. Our kids have desacralized sex, for example. Sex is nothing, it is a natural thing, and they have made it so natural that it has lost its poetic qualities in many instances, which means that it has lost practically everything. Self-actualization means giving up this defense mechanism and learning or being taught to resacralize.

Maslow, we might say, has given the expression "natural religion" a new meaning, an everyday, in-the-grain-of-life meaning. It is religion without external authority, religion which relies on self-revelation and self-validation. If challenged on the ground that he lacked traditional authority for what he said—that he was leaving out essentials in which religious people have confidence—he might have poetically replied in the words of Rousseau (whom he admired): "Is it simple, is it natural that God should go in search of Moses to speak to Jean Jacques Rousseau?"

But of course, Maslow didn't think of himself as writing a manual for religious people; he was writing as a psychologist who, from studying the mental processes of exceptional humans, found there was that in themselves that gave guidance, vision, and strength. The Quakers, as one religious group relying on an inward monitor, might agree with this discovery.

In the section on Education in *Farther Reaches*, Maslow says:

What do we really mean by self-actualization? What are the psychological characteristics that we are hoping to produce in our ideal educational system? The self-actualized person is in a state of good psychological health, his basic needs are satisfied so what is it that motivates him to become such a busy and capable person? For one thing, all self-actualized people have a cause they believe in, a vocation they are devoted to. When they say, "my work," they mean their mission in life. If you ask a self-actualized lawyer why he entered the field of law, what compensates for all the routine and the trivia, he will eventually say something like, "Well, I just get mad when I see somebody taking advantage of somebody else, it isn't fair." Fairness to him is an ultimate value; he can't tell you why he values fairness any more than an artist can tell you why he values beauty. Self-actualizing people, in other words, seem to do what they do for the sake of ultimate, final values, which is for the sake of principles which seem *intrinsically worthwhile*. They protect and love these values, and if the values are threatened, they will be aroused to indignation, action, and often self-sacrifice. These values are not abstract to the self-actualizing person; they are as much a part of them as their bones and arteries. Self-actualizing people are motivated by the eternal verities, the B (Being)-Values, by pure truth and beauty in perfection. They go beyond polarities and try to see the underlying oneness; they try to integrate everything and make it more comprehensive.

Someone may say: All this is well and good, but what about theology? The question overlooks the fact that Maslow was a scientist. He honored the empirical disciplines above the speculations of metaphysics, which he did not know how either to verify or disprove. Yet he expanded the field of scientific investigation to include the areas of subjective experience; and, interestingly, he did

this during the time that the physicists were discovering in their own way the substantial subjective element in their discipline. Maslow saw that the old, mechanistic science had reduced humans to "things," by reason of denial of or indifference to the subjective, and he set out to correct this terrible mistake by studying the "non-thing" reality in humans, showing its scope, its power, its elevation. The result was in some ways a report on the ideal practice of religion, with theory left out, except for what seem strong hints in a pantheistic direction. He, like some others of our time, was pointing to a "road not taken." He took seriously the goal of an ideal community (see his *Eupsychian Management*, 1965) and dealt with the nuts and bolts of ideal behavior in business, the arts, and psychotherapy. The metaphysics—if he thought about metaphysics at all—would come later. The reform he undertook was individual and social, and professional in relation to psychology. This became clear when he said: "My study of the failure of most Utopian efforts has taught me to ask the basic questions themselves in a more practicable and researchable way." "How good a society does human nature permit?" and, "How good a human nature does society permit?"

A theologian would hardly be satisfied with the lawyer for whom fairness is an "ultimate value," but "can't tell you why." An instance of this sort of theological objection was provided recently by a critic of Wendell Berry (in an article in the *Hudson Review* for last summer). The writer, Richard Pevear, said:

Mr. Berry, as the sequence of his *Recollected Essays* (Northpoint Press, 1981) makes clear, has always been a "religious" thinker, though the emphasis in his work has shifted more and more to practical problems and solutions. The change he calls for is not only one of method or economy, it is a change of mind and heart, a change of "values," and he recognizes that such a change can come about only by "inspiration," not by imposition. He sees it as a *religio* in the most literal sense, a "binding back" to relations that once existed and have been broken, to the "sacred ties" of man and earth, men and woman,

household and community. Precisely because we have so much power to do harm, we must choose "the good." But to do so we must know what "the good" is, or at least where to turn our attention in search of it. The point at which religious vision defines itself against ideology is in the question of true inspiration. Inspiration *comes to us*, it is not an idea or "value" that we create. But where does it come *from*?

Berry, the critic thinks, ignores or neglects this question. He is satisfied by declaring: "there is only one value: the life and health of the world." Pevear finds Berry "in effect" denying God, "spirit," transcendence, and "incarnation" (in its Christian meaning). This, says Mr. Pevear, "is a view that dispenses with the entire Judaeo-Christian tradition, not only its 'teachings' but its deepest motives." He continues:

It also dispenses with a good deal of Greek traditions. Mr. Berry may mean to dispense with these things. But he does not always keep his own conclusions in mind, and often ignores their implications. For instance, he frequently speaks of "mystery" and "transcendence," of sacraments and rituals of community and spirituality, though none of these can have any meaning for him. And his language tends constantly toward paraphrases and quotations from the Bible, particularly the Gospels, though he denies the very basis of their vision.

The critic, we think, is in serious error here. A reticence in "explaining" the basis of moral vision by no means denies that basis, but leaves it to the intuition of the readers. Would Mr. Pevear direct a similar criticism at Maslow, who (in *Toward a Psychology of Being*) declared for "clear recognition of transcendence of the environment, independence of it, ability to stand against it, to fight it, neglect it, or to turn one's back on it, to refuse it or adapt to it"? (In a footnote Maslow explains that here he uses "transcendence" in "the hierarchical integrative sense rather than the dichotomous sense.")

The critic ends by accusing Berry of "Nature idolatry," which he calls the "worship of power." Nature is all, man not enough, in Berry's thought, he suggests, and he objects.

There is indeed something of this feeling now and then in Berry's essays. It would probably change if mankind were to regain a little of the dignity that Berry seeks for us all. But consider: this is an age in which the religions of the time, inherited from the past, have been tried and found wanting. Theology is now an area full of speculative wondering and guessing, in very nearly all directions. Metaphysical definition, when authentic—when applied to the ground of inspiration—is very much a private affair, as indeed it should be. Berry and Maslow have at least one thing in common: when they speak from the heart, what they say must come from intense conviction—self-validating, so to say—and neither will use the doctrines brought forward from the past, now so much in question as if they were the same as personal feeling and personal discovery. Yet they are affirmers, not deniers, and the great strength in the writing of both is a result. Both are quite willing to repeat the wisdom throughout the literature of religion, when apposite to their personal feeling and conviction. The Stoics, who "believed" little or nothing of tradition, used the spiritual wealth of tradition in precisely this way.

This is not a time when any sort of "authority"—external authority—can exercise much influence for good. There is a basic transfer of allegiance going on, and real religion comes more and more from within. Its inspiration must be felt and acted upon, before it can obtain definition. Maslow did this in his way, with frequent helpful asides; and so does Berry, as a man who understands the meaning of piety without familiar labels.

The strength of religion in the future will, we think, be of this kind. If a metaphysics is finally devised in its support, it will probably be a slowly erected structure in which practice contributes ever clearer implications, while a return to sources, origins, ancient metaphysics and mysticism, may provide the conceptual content.

This may take centuries, which seems reasonable enough. After all, there are centuries of misuse of the religious impulse to undo.

REVIEW

ALL OF A PIECE

ON the whole, books of history tend to be depressing affairs, and current history, such as we read in the papers and magazines, the most discouraging of all. Past history has its great moments, as in Periclean Athens, the Florence of the Medicis, Elizabethan England, and the time of the Founding Fathers of America, but "decline," if not "fall," gets the attention of a far greater number of pages. Moreover, the brief periods of excellence are quite mysterious. We have little idea of what produces these climactic interludes, save for the presence of some rather remarkable human beings who by sheer strength of character and often genius raise their times to peaks of which we read in envious wonder.

This is the case for biography versus history. Except for writers like Carlyle, biography is submerged in history. Yet biography records a quality of human excellence that is very nearly the only antidote we have for monotonous accounts of failure. If progress depends upon the advance of nations, its measurement is an unrewarding task. But if, in the long run, the lives of individuals reveal what is actually being accomplished on earth, then we may have reason to take heart. Biography reports what individual humans have made of the circumstances of their times, which are usually bad times. Within the range of activities of rare individuals, something like "good times" seems to be generated. In short, good times or a good society is the *field* which comes into being through the efforts of such men and women. The roots of civilization may be said to lie in this field, while the lives of its cultivators make ideal material for self-education.

Books by and about such individuals are not always easily accessible. We are thinking, for example, of the diaries of Arthur Morgan (with supplementary material by Lucy Morgan, his wife), published as *Finding His Way* by Kahoe & Co. in Yellow Springs, Ohio, in 1928. This book

tells the story of his early years in St. Cloud, Minnesota, and how, in 1899, he felt that his health was so poor that he should either get well or die in the attempt. The method he chose was to set out on the road for Colorado, equipped with a change of socks, pencil and paper, Gray's *Elegy* and the New Testament. The best of his life, then and subsequently, is embedded in his writings, especially in *Dams and Other Disasters* and *The Making of TVA*. Arthur Morgan made his mark upon history, but it now seems largely covered up by neglect. Much of the best thinking about the importance and role of community can be traced to his pen.

Another rare American—not so much ignored as Morgan—was William O. Douglas. Like Franklin Roosevelt, Douglas was stricken by polio in his early years, but he remained able to walk and strengthened his legs by painful hiking in the mountains near Yakima, Washington, where he lived. His first autobiographical book, *Go Easy, Young Man*, tells of a reverie on one of those hikes. One night a chinook wind warmed his cheeks.

That night I felt at peace. I felt that I was a part of the universe, a companion to the friendly chinook that brought the promise of life and adventure. That night, I think, there first came to me the germ of a philosophy of life: that man's best measure of the universe is in his hopes and his dreams, not his fears, that man is part of a plan, only a fraction of which he, perhaps, can ever comprehend.

A parallel to this experience is found in Admiral Richard Byrd's *Alone*, the account of his exploratory adventure in Antarctica, on an isolated outpost in Little America. There, in extreme cold, suffering carbon monoxide poisoning from a defective stove, he wrote in his diary:

The universe is not dead. Therefore, there is an intelligence there, and it is all-pervading. At least one purpose, possibly the major purpose, of that Intelligence is the achievement of universal harmony.

The human race, then, is not alone in the universe. Though I am cut off from human beings, I

am not alone. . . . The human race, my intuition tells me, is not outside the cosmic process, and is not an accident. It is as much a part of the universe as the trees, the mountains, the aurora, and the stars. . . . I look upon the conscience as the mechanism which makes us directly aware of [convictions of right and wrong] and their significance and serves as a link with the universal intelligence which gives them form and harmoniousness.

Another sort of book, yet equally valuable as biography, and about people under stress, is Anne Morrow Lindbergh's *War Within and Without* (1980), made of her letters and diary entries from 1939 to 1944. This was the time of Lindbergh's and her endurance of merciless attack for their conviction that America should stay out of World War II. The lies and misinterpretations of their stand are not remarkable; nothing is more unreasoning and cruel than aroused mass opinion; the notable thing in this book is the emerging quality of character of the Lindberghs and some of their friends. Such books have importance for the young, who need to discover that there are always people like that in the world, sometimes famous, sometimes unknown save through accidental or casual report. Anne Lindbergh's book, like a few others, is a story of human integrities. As in the case of Charles Lindbergh, these qualities are often concealed by the ruthless course of history; yet, indirectly, they may be responsible for the underlying decencies from which what historical good is possible may reach the surface.

Of such individuals, Gaetano Mosca wrote:

Every generation produces a certain number of generous spirits who are capable of loving all that is, or seems to be noble and beautiful, and of devoting large parts of their activity to improving the society in which they live, or at least to saving it from getting worse. Such individuals make up a small moral and intellectual aristocracy, which keeps humanity from rotting in the slough of selfishness and material appetites. To such aristocracies the world primarily owes the fact that many nations have been able to rise from barbarism and have never relapsed into it. Rarely do members of such aristocracies attain the outstanding positions in political life, but they render a perhaps more effective service to the world by molding the minds and guiding the sentiments of

their contemporaries, so that in the end they succeed in forcing their programs upon those that rule the state. (*The Ruling Class*, 1939.)

Arthur Morgan's little book, *The Long Road*, available from Community Service in Yellow Springs, Ohio, is the fruit of a sustained effort to exert the sort of influence Mosca speaks of.

Anne Lindbergh's book is many-sided, and here we give a passage which tells of time spent with the author of *Wind, Sand, and Stars*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, who was a close friend. The Lindberghs were then living on Long Island, near Huntington, and the famous French flyer was visiting them.

St. Ex. talks of Baudelaire, his life, his poetry. He says that Baudelaire was great not for what he said but because he was one of those who knew best how to knot words, and he recites some of his poetry to me and goes on, about his theory of style—that the same words arranged differently became banal, did not mean the same thing. The unexpressed finds expression in style, rhythm, etc.—words carry only half the freight. Of how inverted words sometimes gave quality.

Yes, I say, it is the breaking of rules, but cannot explain all I mean by that, which is much more—a union of the familiar and the strange which makes for an artistic creation—in fact, for any creation.

Then he talks of the poetic image—what it is, technically—very exciting. He describes how in comparing things one has one object and another object and a bridge with which they are linked—so-and-so is like so-and-so. *Like* is the bridge. But sometimes one has no bridge. The mind must vault the gap; one's mind *creates* the bridge. It creates a new thing entirely.

Another time:

C. [Charles] and I into town with Saint-Exupéry, he talking to C. all the way, and I translating feverishly. . . . We talk somewhere of faith, of the times in a plane when it is black ahead and one must go on only by that patch of green off to the right, like a thread. How one must have faith like a child. . . . faith like Gideon at Jericho.

He says yes, and from that goes on to tell the story of Esau selling his birthright, as he interprets it. He is sure that Esau was dying of thirst when he did

that. They had been out in the desert and they had missed their wells and they came back dying of thirst. He went on to explain how in the desert if you go a long time without water the throat finally hardens and closes and one can no longer be saved even if at last one finds water. But the people who live in the deserts have discovered that if you make a paste from beans or some farinaceous vegetable and stuff it in the mouth and throat and around the neck of the sufferer, little by little the moisture seeps into the throat and a tiny thread is opened and water, one drop at a time, can finally be let down it, and the man is saved.

The mess of "pottage" was "lentils" and it was *that* that Esau craved. It was a death-cry: Give it to me "or I die"! It was a holdup on the part of Jacob.

One last quotation from Saint-Exupéry, in which he says that the reason for the war, for Hitler, and for the crumbling of civilization, is because "Our words and actions are not one."

We say things and pretend to believe things, but what we say is not translated into the deed. And the deed is divorced from Faith, from the Word. And so, since we have not been all of a piece ourselves, personally, and in all our institutions, we have been divided souls and a divided society. To be free means to be trustworthy. Otherwise no one is safe in freedom. A democracy must be a brotherhood. Otherwise it is a lie.

These are some of the truths affirmed or implied in biography—in the books we have quoted or named.

COMMENTARY

MATHEMATICAL METAPHYSICS

TOWARD the end of this week's lead article there is brief discussion of the possibility that metaphysical conceptions consistent with our increasing awareness of psychological processes may emerge in modern thought. It is of interest, then, that both physicists and mathematicians seem to be moving in this direction, driven by the inadequacies of atomic materialism as the basis for understanding the primary phenomena of nature.

In a paper published in a volume honoring the five hundredth birthday of Copernicus, Werner Heisenberg predicted that in physics the time had come for "a change in fundamental concepts." We shall, he said, "have to abandon the philosophy of Democritus and the concept of fundamental elementary particles," adopting, instead, "the concept of fundamental symmetries, which is a concept out of the philosophy of Plato." In a symposium devoted to this paper, Heisenberg was asked if he was not proposing "a quite violent break with tradition." He replied by saying that he was raising "the ontological question of whether mathematical structures are only forms in our mind, or whether they are there before the human was ever created." His further comment is clear evidence of the sort of structural "metaphysics" this physicist had in mind:

There is a very great difference between this kind of objective idealism of Plato and, let us say, the more subjective idealism of the 19th century. . . . I would like to say that the mathematical structures are something behind the whole thing, or beyond the thing, not only in our mind. . . . Thus the mathematical structures are actually deeper than the existence of mind or matter. Mind or matter is a *consequence* of mathematical structure. That, of course, is a very Platonic idea. But I would always feel that is a reality.

This conception is indeed in the air. In *The Mathematical Experience* (Birkhauser, 1981), Philip Davis and Reuben Hersh say:

If, like Laplace, you don't think that deity is a necessary hypothesis, you can put it this way: the

universe expresses itself naturally in the language of mathematics. . . . This view of mathematics goes well with what is often called the Platonic view. Mathematical Platonism is the view that mathematics exists independently of human beings. . . . The job of the mathematician is to discover these mathematical truths.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

A COMMON KNOWLEDGE BASE

DOCTORS' and dentists' offices are places where you have to wait and wait, with a variety of magazines aimed at "consumers" to while away the time. An experience of this sort led to wondering how much good it would do for these offices to provide another sort of reading matter—the magazines devoted to transition and constructive change. The February-March *Rain*, for example, starts out with an interview with a spokesman for the Planet Drum Foundation (P.O. Box 31251, San Francisco, Calif. 94131) on the bioregional movement. In one Planet Drum pamphlet, Peter Berg (its founder) speaks of the need to generate customs which are on the side of life, so that people will begin to make the right choices spontaneously, developing what the psychologists call "a network of association" of ideas growing out of ecological and cooperative verities. Establishing customs of any sort takes time, but the sooner we begin, the sooner multiplier effects will come into action.

And suppose, for example, that high school libraries had on their tables magazines like *Rain* and some other of the papers received as exchanges by MANAS—such as Bill Mollison's *Permaculture*, which comes from Australia (37 Goldsmith St., Maryborough 3465, Australia), Dana Jackson's *Land Report*, from Salina, Kansas, John Jeavons' pamphlets on mini-gardening issued by Ecology Action in California, and various publications of the New Alchemy Institute. The materials in these papers are interesting, often exciting, and, given display in libraries and other public places, might spur useful conversations. For example, instead of the usual political gambits, *Rain* begins the interview with Planet Drum by asking about appropriate government for a bioregion, obtaining this reply:

The present government structures are not appropriate to the conditions we are in, that is,

inhabitants of the same planet. Not all forms of government are inappropriate. It depends on how long the government has been in place. In New England many of the districts conform more or less to watersheds, valleys, other natural boundaries. When you get west of the Mississippi River they reflect the acquisition of the Louisiana purchase. You find straight lines, square states, states shaped like pan handles, frying pans, trapezoids, every imaginable form and many that have nothing to do with local conditions.

We think national governments should be replaced by continental forms of government, the North American Continent, Europe, Asia, Africa. . . . The second level of government would be bioregional, large areas with separate identities within the United States, the Great Basin, the Plains, the Rockies, etc. Below the bioregional level would be watersheds, which might be large or small. Your own Willamette Valley [in Oregon] is an example. The watershed is the natural way to deal with many problems.

What better way could there be to introduce the study of geography? And democracy as well?

Then there is a fortnightly paper called *Western Colorado Report* (P.O. Box V, Paonia, Colo. 81428) published in behalf of that region, with frequent articles on the local economy, what is happening to it, and why. The Jan. 31 issue provides an informative account by George Sibley on forests, with facts every citizen ought to know. The material is basic to study of biology, economics, regionalism, and conservation.

There is nothing dull about the articles in these papers and magazines. The career of Bill Mollison, developer of Permaculture—a method of gardening without tillage similar to that of the Japanese Manasobu Fukuoka—is almost a saga. Two writers in Germany say in the August 1982 number of *Permaculture*:

The fascination with which we (as well as others) have been captured as we heard Bill Mollison for the first time a year ago in Berlin most likely goes back to the credibility of a man who lived from his fifteenth to his twenty-eighth year alone in the Australian bush. He was a trapper, logger, fisher and farmer, and can support his theoretical approach with a wealth of practical examples. Later on he studied and taught Psychology and Environmental Studies in

Hobart, Tasmania, but soon saw how these academic exercises were a waste of time for him. He decided to give it all up and do his own thing. But he did not turn his back on civilization, as so many do, but went diligently through the history of civilization to find worldwide evidence which would support his Permaculture concept. Later he started examples of his proposals with interested people all over Australia and the USA, trying to find ways of communicating his and their findings to an ever wider public.

These writers relate that Jakob von Uexkuell (a well-known journalist) decided the Nobel prizes were being awarded in a way that neglected Alfred Nobel's original intentions. So he gave what he called an "alternative Nobel prize" to Bill Mollison the day before the official awards.

Mollison tries to work against the uncontrolled demolition of forests, against the poisoning of soils, of the seas, of the air, and against the suffering of animals. He maintains that Permaculture is [an] attempt to develop a design method which integrates Agriculture, Forestry, Biology, Architecture, Anthropology, Sociology, Economics and other disciplines (according to the particular problem at hand) with the objective of creating an ecologically sound, permanent, and autonomous life-base that would be practically achievable by all mankind.

These are the questions that ought to claim wide attention, instead of stale ideological controversies. They are ideas with which teachers should be engaging the minds of the young, especially since the young will inherit the largely unchanged world that Mollison and others hope to reshape. What could be more important than learning to live "with nature rather than against it"?

Most older agricultural methods are able to produce approximately 300 energy units of foodstuffs with the help of the sun and the natural biological growing processes from less than 100 units of invested energy. With our present "modern" agricultural methods: wide range monocultures, employment of ever bigger machines, artificial fertilizers and pesticides, we have managed—at best—to obtain a grotesque relationship of 10 output for every 100 input of energy units! This means that we are continually using more energy than we produce—because we are working against nature, not with it.

All this has been said before, but needs to be said again and again, until it is widely recognized that these are matters to which every sane human should be giving primary attention, and doing something about. In addition to the depletion and waste of the soil, there are large energy losses due to the high cost of storage, packing, and transport of food over thousands of miles to urban areas.

As for losses of fertile land through erosion, acid rain, and the destruction of forests, leading to desertification:

Bill Mollison estimates that over the past 30 years approximately 50% of the world's fertile agricultural area has been destroyed. Of the remaining 50%, about 30% is presently so badly endangered that, unless some sort of radical change is forthcoming, we will only be able to produce 20% of any of our possible yields.

These figures are shocking—a bit exaggerated, one hopes—yet there are too many warnings from similar critics for them to be ignored. The vitality of the present and the future—the hope of the future—lies with pioneers who are working on these problems. The same sort of reorientation is needed in education. Teachers can help. The institutions, especially the large ones, will be the last to change.

FRONTIERS

When Communities Are in Place

[This is another article by N. G. Dormaar, M.D., the Canadian doctor who wrote "What Keeps Us Healthy" in MANAS for March 2 of this year.]

IT is possible, I think, to return home and unite the world. Whatever the reasons may have been for us to leave home and venture out into the lonely crowd, these reasons have played themselves out. We may not understand the forces that have been at work, but we can see that different forces are at work today. To return home means to return to ourselves as we used to be, as our families, as communities, as villages, as regions. The only unanswered question that remains is: How will we get there from here?

Well, then, my first observation will color the rest of what I have to say. You see, it is illegal to live in small communities. It may not say so in the law books, but everything that makes a community a community is illegal. It is illegal to barter. It is illegal to sell unpasteurized milk. It is illegal to compete with the post office. It is illegal to coin your own money. It is illegal to hire your own teacher, not to mention teaching your children. It is illegal to do home deliveries. It is illegal to sell gas by the gallon. It may not be illegal to own a small saw mill, but you are not allowed to get timber when you are small.

What else are laws but rules laid down by governments? What big government does is legal, by definition. Big government is incompatible with thousands of small, independent communities. The two cannot both exist in the same space. So big government must rule against small communities. The rules are called laws. Therefore, small communities are illegal. This is something we must come to terms with first.

Our strategy is to carry on what many are doing already. Quietly get together with friends and relatives, work out a blueprint and try to implement it, one little step at a time. This is effective, not because it accomplishes much, but

because what it does accomplish is immediately in place, and visible for others to see. Even while still building you are already a community, a community of builders. You are already the end-product. Also, you reach other people. Few people read. Most people do not respond well to words, but all respond to deeds. From the moment you roll up your sleeves to start working on the blueprint, from that day on you will be reaching others. Not, perhaps, the way you had anticipated. You may lose some friends, but that means they noticed. It gives them something to think about.

The one thing to keep in front of us, at every stage, is the meaning of our "system"—ours in contrast to the "big" system that, inch by inch, we are setting out to replace. We don't ordinarily think in this way, since the right, the natural system attracts no attention, it just works. When the community still had its own store, the storekeeper could not do something that would hurt the community without hurting himself. Nor could the lawyer or the doctor or the minister or the teacher. Now all that has changed. More and more, service and control is from the outside. How can we cut all those ties, bend them down and bring them together at the level of community? I don't know exactly how, but we'd better get busy finding a way.

The moment you stand up to be counted, someone will feel threatened and try to shoot you down. So either you work away quietly, unnoticed, or you must be prepared to slug it out. The quiet strategy is fine, but it is also very slow. Who are our allies, anyway? Just about anyone in the country could be an ally. The only way to find out is by word of mouth, from friend to friend. One major ally is industry. Not large-scale industry—heaven forbid!—but industry. Large-scale industry is simply the way industry has organized itself. But industry is owned by people like you and me, shareholders. Industry can be flexible. Unlike big government and its bureaucracy, once industry understands that the

climate has changed, it will cut its losses and turn a page.

Read Leopold Kohr. Switzerland has never given up its small-scale industry. It has survived with its small governments and all its dialects intact. At the same time Switzerland is one of the most highly industrialized countries in the world. It has the world's highest per capita industrial export. But all this industry is small-scale. There is probably no factory whose manager does not know his workers by name. He may have gone to school with some. Industry is not incompatible with small communities. Only largescale industry is.

All industry can be divided up into natural allies, possible allies, and impossible allies. The entire telecommunications system, including computers and their dependent industries, are natural allies. They are the ones to wire our small-scale world. We are their challenge. We are their customers. They will give it to us any way we want it.

Possible allies are in the large middle section of industry that can go both ways. If it sees which way the wind blows, it will follow.

Impossible allies are a small number of large factories that must remain large—oil refineries, cars, trains. But even they will adjust themselves to the needs of their customers if they have to. Remember, industry has had an easy time of it because they control the consumer—but that is not a *natural* state, and we are set on becoming natural again. Industry may not particularly like the change, but there is no doubt that it will adjust. The exception, of course, will be that large, uncomfortable section of industry, the factories that produce machinery for war. I am not sure what to do with them. We may have to live with them for a time, but allies they cannot be.

So much for industry. How about the people who own those industries, the shareholders, millions of ordinary citizens? How about the people who own the land? How can they become

our allies? I saw on TV an elderly gentleman who parcelled up his land, giving it away to young families. The only thing they had to contract for was to populate the little school in the area, on the verge of closing. You must ask yourself what people need money for. Shelter, clothing, food, yes, but most of all we need security and friends. If small communities can promise security and friends, and lasting opportunity for work or jobs, people will want to become shareholders. Especially at a time when no single investment, not one, can promise financial security, let alone friends.

That leaves the last and most important source of allies—the moneyless, the unemployed, the people with skills for sale. They too need friends and security. In their experience the government is the only reliable source of security, so they hang on for dear life. But when the day comes that government is bankrupt and has no more security to give away, those people will vote for a dictator. Why not? They see no other way out. That will also be the time of our great opportunity. The opportunity will exist if on that day lots of small communities are already in place, so that people can see them, discover what they mean. Even today people are falling off the security wagon. We must be prepared to pick them up, and help them to be useful. In community, everyone learns and wants to be useful.

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