

## SOCIETY BY DESIGN

FOR all too long we have had a society designed by Happenstance. There are simply too many losers. It is inefficient, uneconomical, any way we look at it. Losers are not good for business. We need to build a society in which everyone wins. The cost of having so many losers is tremendous in happiness, in dollars for health care, famine relief, and prisons, in human potential, in suffering and in wars. We have the knowledge and resources for raising the well-being of all to unheard-of levels. We have in our hands the potential to create a blossoming of human culture—an Eden on earth and in the minds of men. Will we be able to do it? Can we find the will to do it? For me, this is a design problem.

Originally, as a child, the word "design" meant to me something far off in a world where artists lived. Growing older, the word slipped a notch in my regard, as I came to see design as surface treatment, superficial—often cosmetic, cheap, gaudy—the dazzle aimed at conning the buyer. I was no longer in awe of the word, but disdaining of it. Then, as I observed things more closely, I began to feel that this previous use of the word was a misuse, a co-opting of the term by the commercial world. Design slowly came to mean that quality whereby a well-shaped spoon works. I began to find it in quality work everywhere—in Finnish log houses, Dutch windmills, Eskimo fishhooks, Indian moccasins, Swampscot dories. It was a joyous discovery. One of the most important things in life, the conscious shaping toward perfection, now had a name—design. But it still clung to the world of things. As my concern for society and for understanding of its needs grew, I found myself reaching out for a term for the concept of a new education, and I began to think in terms of educational design. This idea grew into thoughts of family design, community design, and then life

design as a logical way of shaping one's own life. All this finally knit itself together under one term—social design. "Design" had now come full circle from my childhood, when it denoted something especially beautiful, wondrous, marvelous. It had become that again. So "design," as used here, implies not only beauty, well formed for use, but includes also the factor of human shaping for positive ends. Good design is one of the most critical needs at this point in human history—good design not only by those who call themselves designers, which will not suffice, but also by society at large. We need a general awareness of the need of good design in all elements of life and the encouragement to all people to take part. The finest design for society will not be one worked up by specialists, but one designed by the people themselves to fit their needs. Planners and designers are needed, but only to help, not to pre-empt the work of creating a new society. Only as society becomes aware of its right (and obligations) to take part in designing the work of the future, and of the importance of all taking part—discovering that their efforts are truly desired and needed—only then can a true democracy exist.

Seldom are the young people in our society helped to see the ways in which they can be useful, in which they can have the joys of working together. The Outward Bound movement has some very positive approaches to this problem in programs that get young people sailing, climbing, canoeing, and desert trekking—especially valid for the leaders who are filling a socially useful role as resource people. To some extent a quality of social service is built-in for the participants in groups. But one drawback of these programs is that they are only a three-to-four-week experience. What we need is an increase in the sense of adventure in daily life, all year long.

A little known program of adventure and social contributions is the volunteer work camp movement. Various designations are used in different countries: IVS (International Voluntary Services); SCI (Service Civil International). Familiar in Europe, the work camp is relatively unknown here. Young people from many countries come together to share their labor in a place of need. It may be repairing avalanche damage in Italy; coping with a flood emergency in Holland; road-building in a Mexican village; making hay on a Finnish farm; famine relief in North Africa. The volunteers need no money to take part—the village houses and feeds them. All that is needed is a willingness to work and to be of service.

The camps date from the end of the first world war. During college I participated in two work camps in Germany, building a youth hostel in one and thinning trees in a national forest in the other. During graduate school I worked in groups in Mexico at road-building and school repair. Later I was co-leader in a camp in Finland where we helped to make hay in a small village that had lost its young people to the cities. In this camp we had 28 people from twelve different countries. The sense of purpose and adventure is great in these groups—a beautiful alternative to the violence of war and the competition of sports. Such programs are relatively unknown to Americans and few take advantage of them. Those who do invariably wonder why they are not better known. It is one of our finest institutions. Where else can a person find the excitement and adventure in a foreign country with people of one's own age, doing socially useful work, the only cost being travel? The idea could be expanded without limit, making room for as many as wish to take part. Every community has projects needing attention.

Is it possible to build a society in which all people are successful? Yes, if we take as our definition of success, not the competitive one—where for one to succeed another must fail—but the non-violent one wherein success means

growth and development. Somehow, in our society competition gets a better press than cooperation. Why this happens to be so, I do not know. Society is based on cooperation to a greater extent than on competition. Even in our highly competitive society, children absorbed in creating something seem oblivious to their surroundings. Only after they have finished do they look about to see what others have done. A few years ago I took a traveling museum of Eskimo culture to Eskimo villages on the coast of the Bering Sea, with the purpose of giving the villagers a chance to see some of the beautiful things of their culture that were hidden from them in museums. A way of helping the Eskimo children to get into closer contact with the art of their people was to let them choose a slide of an Eskimo print and project it on a sheet of paper. They paired up to trace the print with felt-tipped pens, and then laid it on the floor to put in color. The beauty of the collaboration and the loveliness of the art of the children were exceedingly fine.

If we are to have a world without violence and prejudice, we must find ways to help people to become more confident, aware, and secure. The less secure we are within ourselves, the greater our need to put others down—to make ourselves feel superior. This is a sick response, a blind, short-range, unhealthy response—and as prejudice will likely be used on us in return. One way of helping to build confidence and thus counter the spiral of violence in everyday life—that culminates in warfare—is to help others to gain a closer, more aware relationship with their environment. The knowledge and sense of belonging that this brings is a strong antidote for insecurity.

There is a great deal of unnecessary and avoidable friction and violence among people in everyday life. One remedy is in looking at things differently. There is, for example, the current feeling that we should love all people. Love often means being close—able to sustain continual contact. Couples feel that they want to be together all the time; when they don't want this

they think that something is lacking in them. Intentional communities seek to live in togetherness and complete sharing, and when they can't handle it they feel they have failed. Older couples with happy lives and families behind them will suddenly have more time together than before, and find the constant closeness oppressive. While the resulting separations may be blamed on lack of compatibility, sensitivity, and caring, the desire for more privacy may be wholly normal under the circumstances. For any two people, there is a right distance in their relationship. It is a bit like the attraction between two planets. At the proper distance they keep orbiting; but if they approach one another too closely, they collide; and if they get too far apart they drift away. This is neither good nor bad, but simply the way things are.

This leads to the need for family design (not to be confused with family planning). It means designing a way of life in which there is a common thread or purpose for the whole family—a purpose that all can believe in larger than each one's concern for his own welfare. It is something that ties the efforts of the various members into a whole, something greater than the sum of its segments. Every child has a right to a family with a purpose. This is as important in a growth environment as food and affection. The members of the family do not necessarily do the same work, and the work need not be done together all the time, yet they are together in spirit, in a feeling of teamwork.

For a society as we would like to see it, no detail is too small to receive attention. So much—words and conceptions—needs to be rethought. So many of our values are made to depend on the perspective of the times—often no more than a passing style. At the moment, in much of the United States, homemaking is looked down upon as a profession. In reality, it is the most important profession and can be the most exciting of all. It is sad that this profession has been misunderstood to such an extent. It is difficult now in many groups for a young girl to

grow up with the goal of becoming a homemaker. Much of this trend has come about through people who have had a bad experience with it, and rather than working to improve the profession have become vocal in attempting to destroy it. Any social institution can be misused. A Turkish proverb says that it is short-sighted to burn your blanket to get rid of a flea. The home is our most important social institution and unless we give it the respect that is its due and stop the incessant erosion that is taking place, we will suffer irreparable loss.

The home is the focal seat of education and emotional security—two of the essential elements of a healthy society. More and more the functions of the home have been taken over by the school, but the school is no substitute, no matter how fine the instructors or expensive the equipment. "The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world" is a statement glibly repeated but not given much heed. But the hand that rocks the cradle *does* rule the world, if not for good, then for ill. Unless that hand perceives the beauty, honor, the responsibility of its role, it will, as often as not, produce ill. There is no substitute for the sensitive care of the young in building a sane society. What mental insolvency has overtaken us that we can allow the core of our culture to be denigrated, weakened, reduced? Far better to burn your house to the ground and live in a cave than to lose the sense of wonder and privilege of making a home.

We started leaving the home to go to work in order to support the home. We have been doing this for so long that we have forgotten the purpose for which we sold ourselves in the first place. Then, in our blindness and insecurity, we made this prostitution the norm, told the other half of the team it was doing inferior work, and pointed to the advantage of going into trade. Our society is now suffering from the greatest pimp job in history.

The small farm family of a hundred years ago provided most of human needs. People sold little

for cash and bought little. Life was hard but in many cases a happy life. We had two roads to choose between in advancing from those small farms. One was to abandon the farm and the husbandman's skill in order to develop industrially and to make life physically less hard. There was another path that could have been taken. we could have retained the life of the small family farm, with its tremendous potential for growth, and applied our scientific and technological skills to make life on the homestead less hard and isolated. Now some in this country are moving in that direction—not *back* to a former way of life, but forward to a way that blends the best of the past with the best of today. It is with this kind of blending that social design is concerned.

Have you considered the most evident geographical factors in your child's life (or in your own)? What comes first? Is it the land? The sea? The sky? The desert? The forest?

Or is it the highway? The sidewalk? The parking lot? The classroom? The fumes and dust of cars? The TV set?

So often a house is chosen for its neighborhood or nearness to a good school, or for the social status it implies. Think how nice it would be to choose a special tree, or a stream, for a neighbor. Why not resolve to be near a certain hill, a grove of trees, some handsome ledges or a giant boulder standing up to the sky—and then build the home that fits both you and the surroundings?

It is important to emotional security that we have traditions to lean on. The degree to which we can alter our traditions and still feel emotionally stable is probably quite small. We may feel able to change, but we change too many things at our peril. This does *not* mean that when we see an unhealthy tradition (like going to war) that we should not try to replace it; but for all the elements we deplore and wish to change, there are myriads of others that evade scrutiny and, taken together, give us stability. Since tradition is so helpful in unseen ways, we need, therefore, to

design society in a way that gives traditions positive direction. Traditions that are worthwhile need our support—so, perhaps, do the even neutral ones—while we reserve our tradition-changing energies for the manifestly bad customs and habits, not "blowing our dynamite" on minor issues.

In the ideal society we would still have the young rebelling against the past, and often against socially useful traditions, but these, after all, can stand attack. They have a wiry strength and will probably be found valid—or renewed under another name—after a time.

Designing a new culture is necessarily a self-conscious operation, not without risks. An example of the danger in creating a self-conscious culture to take the place of a culture supported by folk ways is our present, notably self-conscious *diet*. With the breakdown of healthy traditional sources of nutrition, people are left to their own resources to decide on a balanced meal. But these resources are seldom adequate, rarely our own. Under the pressure of slanted advertising, of the poisoning of food and land with "preservatives" and "fertilizers," the average person has little chance of choosing sensibly. The *only* alternative seems to be to become *very* self-conscious about food. By this means some few people learn to live healthily, while a great many others go to extremes—all carrot juice, or no bread, or all brown rice. It is nearly impossible for a society to acquire a naturally healthy diet without the guidance of tradition. We need, therefore, to look carefully at our traditions and keep the best of them in operation.

This by no means implies that all folk diets are good, but that learning to make a well-designed diet traditional would in time correct the excesses and oscillations of the self-conscious diet. Who has time to weigh every calorie, test every organic stringbean? But for this to come into being would require redesigning the care of our land, our soil, our animals, and our moral and legal codes that, even with apparently good

intentions, are quite unable to stop the adulteration and poisoning of foods. (And the intentions may be questioned.)

We run similar risks in the self-conscious design of our family life, our houses and our communities. *But we have no choice.* We must apply conscious effort, with all its shortcomings, to their improvement. The hope is that our efforts, applied over a long enough time, will result in designs that provide a sound base for future tradition.

The main thrust of my own work is not "simple living"—not Yurt design, not social design, although each of these has importance and receives large blocks of my time. But they are not central. My central concern is encouragement—encouraging people to seek, to experiment, to plan, to create, to dream. If enough people do this we will find a better way.

In the past, we—or most of us—have looked to experts, to leaders, to national heroes for knowledge and guidance. This is accepting a paternalistic way of life that brings with it a state of permanent adolescence, and it's tremendously wasteful to boot. It stifles creativity. We pay psychologically in remaining forever adolescent. We deny ourselves the joy of full development, and at a time when we are in need of all the ability we can muster to solve the critical issues facing ourselves and the world. The ability of the leaders and planners, however wise and skillful they may be, is simply not adequate for the task.

As an analogy, think of a child lost in a forest. We do not send out an expert to find the child. (While the good tracker, given enough time, may find the child, it is often too late. He can't cover the ground.) Instead we recruit as many people as possible—and as quickly as possible—to comb the countryside. Expert knowledge is certainly needed in every area, but all too little concern has been given to the value of stumbling. If enough people are searching—stumbling as they may—we discover that our stumbling improves as it gets honed from practice. The great advantage is in

realizing that our efforts are worth while, are needed, and that our abilities are improvable.

I remember a time in my life, about thirty years ago, after growing aware of the critical issues of the day, when I became greatly depressed. There was absolutely no way, that I could see, that society could avert catastrophe. Everywhere there was—pollution of air, water, minds; everywhere there was crime, poverty, political corruption, war, land and food poisoning—the order doesn't matter. I viewed the mass of humanity as easily duped, with people willing to sell themselves for material gain, while remaining provincial and violent. Democracy had become a system in which the many were manipulated by the few. Yet slowly it became clear to me that the basic human stock was sound and that the "democracy" that I saw was not democracy but a distortion of it. As I became aware of our untapped potential as human beings, I began to grow in optimism and belief in our latent ability to solve our problems. I feel now, as I did then, that only a minute percentage of our abilities has been developed. I am not concerned here with what economic, political, or social system is best. I am concerned with education—the development of human beings, their growth.

If we can find ways to help one another grow to full sensitive, creative adulthood, we will have no need to concern ourselves with the style of government or economic system that we need. The coming generation will be so much better equipped that its members will be able to design the institutions needed. Our great, our crying need is for human development.

WILLIAM S. COPERTHWAIT

The Yurt Foundation  
Bucks Harbor  
Maine 04618

*(To be concluded)*

## *REVIEW*

### PANORAMA AND SPECTACLE

THE Greeks, we may say in retrospect, thought of human life as an Odyssey, a great adventure concluded by the return home. The Indians of the East called life a Great War—the *Mahabharata*—and taught this meaning to their children in a literature not in books but chanted in the villages by men who knew the songs by heart. The people of the West, our ancestors, vaguely remembering pagan lore and adapting it to Christian conceptions, called life a pilgrimage, its first destination being the City of God, which was replaced by the eighteenth-century dream of the earthly City of Man. Today, after two hundred years, the dream of national and personal achievement is fading into the confusion of unworthy aims and frightening attainments. Yet for all the horror of the present, the sense of drama has been lost. We have stage settings enough, but no protagonists to redefine and renew the dream.

This is the account of Western history provided by Stringfellow Barr in *The Pilgrimage of Western Man* (J. B. Lippincott, 1962), who ends his book by quoting the final chapter (and volume) of the Cambridge Modern History, titled "The Era of Violence." The point is that the events we produce, using the means to which we are accustomed, are almost the very opposite of the goals that we had planned:

In one respect especially were the two world wars alike: in their demonstration that violence, in general wars of unlimited commitment, has a propensity to produce totally unintended results which are liable to destroy the aims and hopes of even the victorious belligerents. The powers did not go to war in 1914 to produce a Bolshevik revolution in Russia or a nationalist revolution in Turkey, to restore a Polish state or make an Irish Free State, to set up a Jewish national home in Palestine or new Arab kingdoms, or even to found a League of Nations. . . . Again, in 1939 the powers did not go to war to subject Eastern Europe to communism, to precipitate a communist revolution in China or national

independence in colonial territories, to create a new world schism between East and West. . . .

Musing, Mr. Barr ends his book:

The Pilgrim City had apparently reached a fork in its long road. Down one road lay the possible destruction of a civilization—but other civilizations had been destroyed might not a new and better one arise?—and perhaps the destruction of mankind. Down the other road lay something even better than the merely physical salvage of a civilization something like a worthy destiny for a City, something based on the common need of all men for freedom, justice, peace and on this day their daily bread. Down both roads lay, for Western Man and for all men, great dangers. How would they choose?

The question remains unanswered. We know little or nothing about how humans in their collectivity "choose" what shall become of them. Individuals make decision and map courses for their lives, and as these decisions accumulate, forces of which we have no understanding gather strength, and then, as in 1945, events explode to make a shambles of all these combined intentions. What then is left of our private engagements and resolves? Do they lose all their meaning, or had they any to begin with? The wave of suicides among some of the best men of Europe, which came after 1939, revealed the loss of hope for the City of Man. Would, on the other hand, recovery of the sense of drama in human life have given those discouraged souls a surviving sense of meaning? Could they have felt a Socratic optimism, and kept working for another day, even if, for perhaps millennia, the ideal city might remain "laid up in heaven," and nowhere appear on earth?

The work of the historian may seem to give us few clues except to show that, whatever dark destiny rules for a time, humans always gather their strength and try again. Are their instincts sounder than their theories? Do the poets with their prediction of another Golden Age to come have access to patterns of history that historians ignore?

Stringfellow Barr was something of a poet, perhaps more than he was a historian. To him, at any rate, we turn for threads of continuity in human aspiration. He is, you could say, visionary without being sentimental; hardheaded without being harsh. And he has a capacity for generalization seldom equalled by writers about the complex skeins which make our historical past. Here we present some of the passages in *The Pilgrimage of Western Man* that seem to give definable shape to what we have done, becoming thereby a light on what we may reasonably hope to do. Who, for example, were the eighteenth-century French thinkers who called themselves *philosophes*? How did they design the setting of our present lives?

In the *Great Encyclopedia*, which Diderot started publishing in 1751, they attempted the most ambitious summary of their culture that had been attempted since the great *summas* of the Middle Ages. And although the *Great Encyclopedia*, unlike the *summas*, tried to furnish factual information from the accumulated store of the new natural sciences and elsewhere, its writing was slanted to the proclamation of a new cultural synthesis, a new account of the universe, and in effect a new and universal religion, based not on the revelations of God, which the Encyclopedists doubted, but on the reasonings of men, in which they had a burning, infinite faith. Diderot, as editor, was right therefore to invoke the memory of Francis Bacon. Knowledge is Power; and "the progress of enlightenment" would give, the Encyclopedists were quite certain, the power to raise all men from the ignorance and poverty and misery in which politician and priest conspired to keep them.

For the God of the Christians, in whose name Christians so joyfully burned each other at the stake, or tore each other asunder on the rack, or slaughtered each other on the battlefields of Europe, they substituted a somewhat abstract Deity, a Supreme Being, an Author of the Universe, a Great Contriver, a Prime Mover, a First Cause. Men could learn of him, not in Holy Writ, which was a fraud of priestcraft; certainly not in the "miracle" of the Mass, since there were no miracles; but in the Book of Nature. For the Great Contriver had cunningly contrived a vast machine called the Universe, which operated by mechanical laws; and these Laws of Nature had been discovered to mankind by such investigators as Voltaire's beloved Isaac Newton. It is

our business to understand these natural laws, whether in the field of mechanics or politics or economics, to find out what is "natural" and do it. That is the whole duty of man. By discharging it, he can steadily progress; and what he will progress to is not the heaven of the Christian but the perfection of life on earth, which Posterity, though not the Encyclopedists, will some day witness.

This was the dream adopted by the Founding Fathers of the United States—and why the dream fell among thieves instead of other "philosophes" is a question that needs answering by Americans.

Something of an answer is given in Barr's chapter, "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Money," which begins:

Less than eight years after a British military band at Yorktown had played "The World Upside Down," Western Christendom throbbed to the news of the French Revolution. Three years more, and Christendom entered on the cycle of wars that would last almost without interruption for twenty-three years. That great convulsion would surpass in fury and destruction any ordeal it had undergone since the Protestant Revolution; and it would far surpass even that in the area of Europe and the world that would be fought over, in its visible effects on human institutions, laws, and property rights. It would send French troops to the pyramids of Egypt, an army of 600,000 Europeans to Moscow, the Pope to a prison in Savona, British troops to burn the Capitol in Washington, Nelson to Trafalgar, Bolivar across the Andes, the ships of seven seas to Davy Jones' locker, and Napoleon Bonaparte to St. Helena. Contemporaries would call it justifiably the "War of the Nations" or even the "World War." Its beginnings would make men hope that war could be abolished, and its end would be the greatest blood bath in which Europe had ever yet been plunged. It would inspire the poetry of Chenier and Wordsworth, the declamatory but impressive canvases of David, the enthusiasm of Kant, Fichte, Humboldt, the furious execrations of Burke; the blessings of Goethe; the torrential and triumphant strains of Beethoven's symphonies. It would promise liberty to all men under law; equality to all before that law; fraternity, first to all men, and in the end, at least to all citizens within the sacred nation-state. Like the religious wars of two centuries before, it would cut across political frontiers; it would be a European civil war. Like them, it would end as primarily a struggle for national power. It would leave Europe dazed,

disillusioned, romantic, nostalgic, but deeply committed to political and economic reforms.

Barr ends his book with an inquiry concerning Gandhi.

Was Gandhi right to believe he had failed? Certainly, the Hindu-Moslem massacres suggested that he had. India had indeed won her freedom, but she had been partitioned; and each part had armies of occupation in the disputed province of Kashmir. . . . Nevertheless, more than any other man, Gandhi had defied the power of the greatest empire on earth, and had detached Europe's richest imperial possession, containing about as many human beings as the whole of Europe west of Russia, while the rest of Europe's colonial subjects watched. He had pioneered a worldwide colonial revolution, and, despite bloody exceptions like Indo-China and Algeria, the independence movement in most colonies was remarkable for its use of moral pressure and reasonable proposals instead of bloody revolt.

Did Gandhi actually mark a change in the affairs and destiny of mankind? Was that change really rapid rather than slow and faltering, in terms of the minute processes that transform, little by little, the intentions of men? Historians of the future may give the answer, but we and our children will decide what they must say.

## COMMENTARY

### WHAT WE REALLY NEED

THIS week's lead article, "Society by Design," provides a kind of thinking that is difficult to get down on paper. The reason, we think, is that such reflections are self-generated. Little with such content is reflected in the essay writing of the time. Bill Coperthwaite is redressing balances that need attention, by reason of a sense of symmetry—or design—that has enabled him to articulate ideas of considerable subtlety, yet which flow for him with apparent ease, doubtless because he has long been thinking along these lines.

It was Bill Coperthwaite who, ten years ago, sent us the text of Richard Gregg's now famous article, "Voluntary Simplicity," which had appeared in an Indian magazine back in the 1930s and was printed in MANAS for Sept. 4 and 11, 1974. He and Gregg had become friends in the 1950s, when Gregg was nearly seventy and Coperthwaite twenty-five. The latter wrote of Gregg:

It was exciting to find that this gentle, white-haired man with such wide knowledge of the world, had long before discovered many of the things I was finding true in my world—the joy of bread labor; the importance of the hands in education; simple living; the wonders of the technology of early peoples; and the relation of these to non-violence. . . .

His library was an open treasure house. It was he who introduced me to natural living, to Gandhi's work, to nonviolence, to simplicity. When I was hard-put to find support for my beliefs, he encouraged me with Thoreau's *Gnaw your bone, Gnaw it. Bury it. Unearth it and gnaw it still.*

Bill Coperthwaite's first contribution to MANAS was a letter to the "Children" department in 1963 (June 19), in which he proposed the idea of a community school with a Gandhian inspiration adapted to American ways, for which he had the land, in Buck's Harbor, Maine. Then, in an interview which appeared in *Mother Earth News* (reviewed in "Children" for May 23, 1973), he said that he later realized that

"what we really need are communities dedicated to encouraging the optimal growth of *all* people . . . children or adults. If you need a school in such a community, you build one . . . but the community remains primary and the school a spinoff, not the other way around." This was the origin of his Yurt Foundation, which adapts the skin-covered dwellings of Asian nomads to various means of construction and supplies plans to people interested in low-cost and community housing.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves SOME EXAMPLES

WHAT is a healthy-minded human? Or, to make the question a bit easier, where shall we look for models?

These are difficult inquiries for fond parents, who are likely to try to distract their offspring from projects which promise (or threaten) to bring pain. Is a healthy-minded life a comfortable life? Is it relevant to remark that the best men and women were seldom comfortable and seemed to have little interest in comfort?

Years ago, when Abraham Maslow was teaching psychology at Brandeis University, a friend asked him, "Do any of the students come to you for help?" He answered, "Not the ones who need it. The ones who talk to me are just confused—good heavens!—what sensible person living in this time wouldn't be confused! No, it is the ones who think they have things all figured out that need help. But they don't ask for it."

This recalls a passage in one of J. B. Priestley's books of some twenty years ago. The subject was the sandalled and bebeaded youth of the time, wandering about with guitars hanging from their shoulders, needing a haircut and a bath. "They don't worry me at all," Priestley said in effect. "What gives me concern are the ones who wear a shirt and tie, part their hair in the middle, go about confidently, and are majoring in bacteriological warfare in school. They worry me a lot."

Are the distinguished and the great healthy-minded? We had always thought of William James as about the most healthy-minded man one could read, but we came across this passage in Jacques Barzun's recent book about him:

Young James's nervous instability or neurasthenia, as it was then called, was no temporary trouble of late adolescence. It was a deep-rooted depression which held up his choice of career till his mid-twenties, which he overcame in part by an heroic

effort of will, and which periodically returned, though less crippling, throughout his life.

Barzun speaks of letters which show that "James's recurrent impulse to quit life was grounded equally in his sense of failure and in the reigning philosophy that life is meaningless, both these proofs of futility being reinforced by knowing that he was a moral and financial burden on his father." Lacking what Barzun calls "the help of traditional religion," he had for the resources of recovery only "the thought of my having a will and of my belonging to the brotherhood of man." The death of a dear friend seemed to make the occasion for forging philosophic stability. He wrote to her in his diary:

"By that big part of me that's in the tomb with you, may I realize and believe in the immediacy of death! May I feel that every torment suffered here passes and is a breath of wind—every pleasure too. Acts and examples stay. . . . Is our patience so short-winded, our curiosity so dead or our grit so loose that one instant snatched out the endless age should not be cheerfully sat out? Minny, your death makes me feel the nothingness of all our egotistic fury. The inevitable release is sure; wherefore take our turn kindly whatever it contain. Ascend to some sort of partnership with fate and since tragedy is at the heart of us, go to meet it work it in to our ends, instead of dodging it all our days. . . . Use your death (or your life, it's all one meaning)."

So, as Barzun says, by his twenty-eighth year James "had forged in the throes of adversity a set of working principles by which to build a character."

Is the ordeal James suffered the price of a healthy mind? He certainly made one for himself. Is there a sense, as Keats suspected, in which we have to make our own minds, healthy or unhealthy? Is our endowment something like the larva that amounts to little in itself, but can at least form a chrysalis, from which may emerge a wonderful flying creature? What if there is hardly a mind at all unless this transition—usually painful for us—is made complete? Are we, most of us, trying to stabilize the transition phase and call it health? What if all those terrible words like

"anomie" and "alienation" are needed because of this attempt not to grow up?

Are poets healthy-minded? Would you have your boy or girl become a poet—poet all the way through? W. B. Yeats said something of what this means:

We make out of the quarrel with others, rhetoric, but of the quarrel with ourselves, poetry. Unlike the rhetoricians, who get a confident voice from the remembering the crowd they have won or may win, we sing amid our uncertainty and smitten even in the presence of the most high beauty by the knowledge of our solitude, our rhythm shudders. I think, too, that no fine poet, no matter how disordered his life, has ever, even in his mere life, had pleasure for his end. . . . Nor has any poet I have read of or heard of or met with been a sentimentalist. The other self, the anti-self or the antithetical self, as one may choose to name it, comes but to those who are no longer deceived, whose passion is reality. The sentimentalists are practical men who believe in money, in position, in a marriage bell, and whose understanding of happiness is to be so busy whether at work or at play, that all is forgotten but the momentary aim. They find their pleasure in a cup that is filled from Lethe's wharf, . . . He only can create the greatest imaginable beauty who has endured all imaginable pangs, for only when we have seen and foreseen what we dread shall we be rewarded by that dazzling unforeseen wing-footed wanderer. We could not find him if he were not in some sense of our being and yet of our being but as water with fire, a noise with silence. He is of all things not impossible the most difficult, for that only which comes easily can never be a portion of our being. . . .

When life puts away her conjuring tricks one by one, those that deceive us longest may well be the wine-cup and the sensual kiss, for our Chambers of Commerce and of Commons have not the divine architecture of the body, nor has their frenzy been ripened by the sun. The poet, because he may not stand within the sacred house but lives amid the whirlwinds that beset its threshold, may find his pardon.

Keats, writing to his brother in 1890, was of the same mind:

Though a quarrel in the streets is a thing to be hated, the energies displayed in it are fine; the commonest Man shows a grace in his quarrel. By a superior Being our reasonings may take the same

tone—though erroneous they may be fine. This is the very thing in which consists poetry, and if so it is not so fine a thing as philosophy—For the same reason that an eagle is not so fine a thing as a truth. Give me this credit—Do you not think I strive—to know myself?

By now there may be a rumble of dissent. Why should we take poets and philosophers for examples of the healthy-minded? And such eminent ones, too! But do we really need to apologize for calling greatness to mind? Educator after educator—that is, one or two—have noted that the young of our time have no one to look up to to admire and emulate. Should we choose businessmen, the magnates of the age, for our examples? And pick the winners among them? Well, how about Andrew Carnegie who was an unparalleled success as a tycoon and also a great philanthropist who endowed more than 2800 libraries for America. Yet Carnegie wrote a note to himself in a hotel room in 1868.

Thirty-three and an income of \$50,000 per annum! By this time two years I can arrange all my business as to secure at \$50,000 per annum. Beyond this never earn—make no effort to increase fortune, but spend the surplus each year for benevolent purposes. . . .

Man must have an idol—the amassing of wealth is one of the worst species of idolatry—no idol more debasing than the worship of money. Whatever I engage in I must push inordinately; therefore I should be careful to choose that life which will be the most elevating in its character. To continue much longer overwhelmed by business cares and with most of my thoughts wholly upon the ways to make more money in the shortest time, must degrade me beyond hope. I will resign business at thirty-five, but during the ensuing two years I wish to spend the afternoons in receiving instruction and reading systematically. . . .

Is Carnegie's advice—orders, rather—to himself any the less valid or valuable because he never took it? Wasn't he, after all, a healthy-minded man?

## *FRONTIERS*

### **Expiations, Belated and Absent**

[This article is an extract from the journal of Louis J. Halle, an American scholar, now Emeritus, who for years taught at the Institut Universitaires de Hautes Études in Geneva.]

ONE of the most notable musical performers of the twentieth century was the cellist, Pablo Casals. Although professional musicians appreciated his virtuosity early, he did not win general renown until 1939, when General Franco came to power as dictator of his native Spain.

Then, in protest, Casals moved out of Spain to Prades in the French Pyrenees, vowing that he would not leave it as long as Franco remained in power. This self-sacrificing gesture on behalf of a political ideal made him a hero throughout Western intellectual circles, so that pilgrimages to Prades became common. Instead of his going out to the world, the world came to him, crowding the music festivals he staged in the town of his self-imposed confinement. We may think of this as virtue rewarded.

To make a noble gesture is one thing, to hold it another. As the decades passed, with Franco's rule clearly established, the effectiveness of Casals' original gesture diminished—until at last, now as the most famous performer of his age, he emerged from his Pyrenean retreat, returning to the world. By this time one could no longer separate the acclaim he had won for his political stand from his fame as a musical performer.

Let us turn, now, to another notable performer, Wilhelm Furtwängler, conductor of the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra. Unlike Casals in a similar situation, he did not leave Germany when Hitler came to power, and inside Germany he continued to perform in public. This brought upon him the general condemnation of Western intellectuals, with the consequence that, after the death of Hitler he was in effect disbarred from performing in the world under their control, whether inside Germany or out.

Now, to complete a triangle, we turn to a third notable performer, the American violinist, Yehudi

Menuhin. After Hitler's overthrow, Menuhin discovered that, in point of fact, Furtwängler had repeatedly defied the German dictator—not from some point of exile beyond his reach, but while remaining within his jurisdiction and therefore at his mercy.

On one occasion he had defied Hitler to his face. At a meeting between the two in the home of Richard Wagner's daughter, Wagner's granddaughter heard him refuse to obey Hitler's order that he allow himself to be used in the service of the Nazi Party. She later reported that, when Hitler then threatened to have him put in a concentration camp, he replied: "In that case, Herr Reichschancellor, I will be in very good company."

Menuhin, knowing this, was moved to do what he could to correct the injustice represented by the general condemnation of Furtwängler. He took the matter up with Casals who readily agreed that Furtwängler was being maligned, that in fact he deserved to be praised for his political stand under Hitler.

Menuhin was a just and honorable man. So were they both, both honorable men. So Menuhin, although he had never even met Furtwängler, proposed to Casals that, to rectify the injustice that had been done him, the two of them arrange to make a recording of the Brahms Double Concerto with Furtwängler, thereby publicly demonstrating their regard for a maligned colleague.

Casals agreed in principle, but two years passed and he still found reasons for not carrying out the agreement. At last, in response to Menuhin's continuing importunities, he wrote that, although he held Furtwängler to be innocent of the charges against him, he could be identified with him in public only at the expense of his own public image as an anti-fascist. Therefore he had to decline to do so.

Hitler's tyranny was not as complete as that exercised over the City of Geneva by Mrs. Calvin's son John. Knowing as he did God's inmost thoughts and what he had for breakfast, he was able to speak for him. That being so, anyone who dissented might properly be treated as a servitor of Satan.

There was, in those high and far-off times, a scholar by the name of Michael Servetus—Michel Servet in the French. He had certain thoughts of a theological nature that he set down in a writing which he sent to his fellow scholar, Dr. Calvin, who found them to be false. Then, simply following his nose, he had the bad judgment to enter Dr. Calvin's Geneva on his way to Zurich, thinking he would slip through undetected. But he was recognized in church, caught, and put on trial. Being found guilty of theological error, he was then taken to the heights of Champel, on the outskirts of the city, where he was burned alive.

Today, on the heights of Champel, near the Rue Michel Servet, there stands a block of stone that, on its front face, commemorates Servet's death in a simple statement:

ON OCTOBER 27, 1553  
THERE DIED AT THE STAKE  
AT CHAMPEL  
MICHEL SERVET  
OF VILLENEUVE OF ARAGON  
BORN SEPTEMBER 29, 1511

On the back face of the block is the following inscription:

RESPECTFUL AND GRATEFUL SONS  
OF CALVIN, OUR GREAT REFORMER,  
BUT CONDEMNING AN ERROR  
WHICH WAS THAT OF HIS CENTURY  
AND FIRMLY ATTACHED TO FREEDOM OF  
CONSCIENCE  
ACCORDING TO THE TRUE PRINCIPLES OF  
THE GOSPEL  
WE HAVE RAISED THIS EXPIATORY  
MONUMENT  
OCTOBER 27, 1903

I don't know where there is an expiatory monument to Furtwängler.

LOUIS J. HALLE

Geneva