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A LARGER AUDIENCE

AS the plans, projects, and fortunes of nations grow more problematic—and disreputable—it is natural for the patterns of our thoughts to change. A generation ago, very nearly all thinking (which reached print) was historical. One thought about one's life in terms of social and economic progress or advantage. Whatever "destiny" there was would be fulfilled by arrangements established within the framework of national achievement, even if that meant no more than keeping the environment open to well-conceived human enterprises. Other-worldliness had little meaning for most people.

Today, however, the modern brand of worldliness is working very badly, something like an engine with worn-out gears. The mesh gets worse and worse. You never know what will go wrong next, but you know that *something* will go wrong, and it seems probable that nothing much can be done to prevent it. There are two areas of ominous portent to which present historical thinking gives close attention: the imminence of nuclear war and economic decline. That the one is causing the other is agreed upon by most sensible people, yet the same sensible people feel close to helpless when it comes to reversing the trends. There is no way, it is claimed, to maintain peace except by trying to scare other nations into not starting a war.

This seems equivalent to saying that nobody values peace enough for its own sake to stop preparing for war—no *nation,* that is. Meanwhile countries which spend most of their money on military preparations can't balance their budgets and are going ever deeper into debt. As yet, only common people and the poor feel the pinch, but there is a lot of wondering going on about what will happen when all those millions—a big majority—decide that their anxiety and impoverishment have got to stop.

The major problems of the nations seem without remedies. Take two important economic institutions in the United States—the savings banks and the automobile industry. Both are in serious trouble. In *Harper's* for February, William J. Quirk tells what is wrong with the savings and loans institutions. They are losing money and can't do anything about it except go out of business.

> Currently, the S & L's are paying more, on the average, for their deposits than they are earning on their loans. They are paying 11.31 percent and earning 9.79 percent. This is like buying apples at twelve cents and selling them for ten cents, a practice with a limited future. And even this unhealthy spread depends on the willingness of many savers to leave their money at 5 or 6 percent, which cannot last. The S & Ls are stuck with those low interest mortgages, but depositors are not stuck with the S & Ls. In the first nine months of 1981, withdrawals from S & Ls were $35 billion more than deposits. In June and July alone, net withdrawals were $12 billion. The thrifts, unable to pay their depositors, borrowed over $25 billion from the federal government . . . The money is supposed to be a loan. . . .

It seems clear that only the federal government can protect the savings banks from liquidation. How, one may wonder, would liquidation affect "public opinion"? Quirk says:

> It is easy to imagine the effect of nightly TV interviews with worried depositors and persistent questioning of government officials: how many banks are in trouble? how much do you have left?

Only the government with an enormous subsidy to cover the losses of the savings banks can keep them in business, the question then becoming: who will keep the government in business? the answer, of course, being—the taxpayers. (Quirk remarks that the federal insurance agencies "do not have enough money to pay off the depositors of more than a couple of failed institutions.")

A brief comment by Garry Wills (in the *Manchester Guardian* for Jan. 24) seems sufficient as verdict on the automobile industry in America:

> Today, in America's biggest market—California, the freeway state, where the future often is foreshadowed—half the new cars sold are Japanese. The thing that Ford's assembly line revolutionized—productivity—is lagging behind that of Detroit's competitors; and Detroit's wages, which productivity once justified, are higher than those of Detroit's competitors. So unemployment is at Depression levels, especially among the children and grandchildren of blacks who came north to find opportunity in Henry Ford's factories. Stagnation seems so permanent that some stores advertise special long-term credit arrangements for the unemployed.

Meanwhile, a literary critic, musing on the insight of George Orwell's *1984* (in the same issue of the *Guardian*), has this to say:

> The greatness of *1984* may be that it reveals the hidden agenda beneath virtually all science-fiction utopias: the fact that a world based totally on material progress requires a totalitarian system, fascism. . . . The weakness of *1984* is a charming one, only to be suspected from a resident of Britain, the last refuge of the eccentric individual, the last city-state: For all his grimness, Orwell never conceived a power as anonymous as the power we must deal with today. His Big Brother has an actual face, his spies and villains are palpable people. Apparently he never dreamed of credit card billing systems utterly unresponsive to human appeals. He never heard the modern refrain, "The machines are down," meaning that you can't get your money out of the bank or your story written or your phone call processed, and there is absolutely no one you can blame. He never guessed how faceless, how amorphous, how insidious, how ubiquitous, how easily accepted and assimilated automation can be. . . .

This is not the sort of world we bargained for. It was predicted, of course, by a surprising number of poets, essayists, and novelists who saw what was coming without the aid of either computers or their human equivalent, Herman Kahn. These literary prophets foresaw the natural harvest of the historical state of mind, "a world based totally on material progress." We speak of these nineteenth-century seers—including Heine, Amiel, and Tolstoy—for the reason that they represent a human possibility that our shabby theories of human nature leave out of account. Even in the most optimistic of times there are those who do not count armies and skyscrapers and world-circling commercial exploitation as signs of progress, and who ask their questions without needing the provocation of imminent disaster.

In this century, ahead of most of the rest of us, a siege of isolation at the South Pole experienced by Admiral Richard E. Byrd precipitated for him the kind of thinking that now seeps into our minds. In *Alone*, published in 1938 (Putnam's Sons), Byrd describes his feelings on the sixty-fourth day alone at the Advance Base in "the dark immensity of the Ross Ice Barrier":

> I am finding that life here has become largely a life of the mind. . . . My sense of values is changing, and many things which before were in solution in my mind now seem to be crystallizing. I am better able to tell what in the world is wheat for me and what is chaff. In fact, my definition of success itself is changing. . . .
>
> 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. . . .
>
> As the harmony of a star in its course is expressed by rhythm and grace, so the harmony of a man's life-course is expressed by happiness; this, I believe, is the prime desire of mankind.
>
> "The universe is an almost untouched reservoir of significance and value," and man need not be discouraged because he cannot fathom it. His view of life is no more than a flash in time. The details and distractions are infinite. It is only natural, therefore, that we should never see the picture whole. But the universal goal—the attainment of harmony—is apparent. The very act of perceiving this goal and striving constantly toward it does much in itself to bring us closer and, therefore, becomes an end in itself.

Do such longings and aspirations have meaning? If they have meaning, then our lives are awry. What is the origin of the intelligence which arises from within to tell us this? Thinking is a

dialogue we hold with ourselves. But it takes two to hold a dialogue. Are we a unity, a duality, or even a multiplicity? At times we feel like a unity—especially when we are busy doing some kind of work—but then we sometimes have animated or even tortured arguments with ourselves: how many are we then? And are such interchanges reliable evidence about our own being?

We have this feeling of not really belonging to the messes the world is in, and which will almost certainly grow worse. They may be our own messes, since we or our parents or ancestors had a part in making them, so that they are indeed our affair; yet, even now, there is the feeling that we have alternatives. We could have made the world go in another direction. And perhaps the time has come, whatever the world decides or wherever it goes, for us to choose another direction. What are the ranges of an independent life? Our thinking is not necessarily a strand in mass psychology. Our psycho-spiritual beinghood is more than a puppet made of conditioned reflexes. We may have our illusions, but there are inner voices which do not lie.

Is there a Lethe in which we have been dipped, a forgetfulness we are trying to throw off in such reflections? The poets, on whom we have some reason to place reliance, are persuaded of this. Wordsworth, for one, began his "Intimations of Immortality" by saying:

> Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting;
> The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
> Hath elsewhere had its setting,
> And cometh from afar.

Schopenhauer wrote in *Parerga and Paralipomena:* "Were an Asiatic to ask me for a definition of Europe, I should be forced to answer him: it is that part of the world which is haunted by the incredible delusion that man was created out of nothing, and that his present birth is his first entrance into life."

One thing much in evidence today is the *impact* on thoughtful humans of transcendental or metaphysical hungers. What the poets felt by sheer sensibility we are beginning to feel as the grip of physical existence loosens—loosens by reason of the ugly concomitants which go with imagining the physical to be all there is. We know—or feel that we know—that we are voyagers and pilgrims, not of earthly generation alone. In *Exotics and Retrospectives* Lafcadio Hearn anticipated a sense of discovery more easily felt today, giving it extension by his vaulting imagination:

> I remember when a boy on my back in the grass, gazing into the summer blue above me, and wishing I could melt into it,—become a part of it. . . . Now I think I was really close to a great truth—touching it, in fact, without the faintest suspicion of its existence. I mean the truth that the wish *to become* is reasonable in direct ratio to its largeness,—or, in other words, that the more you wish to be, the wiser you are; while the wish *to have* is apt to be foolish in proportion to its largeness. Cosmic law permits us very few of the countless things that we wish to have, but will help us to become all that we can possibly wish to be. . . .
>
> By wanting to be, the monad makes itself the elephant, the eagle, or the man. By wanting to be, the man should become a god. Perhaps in this tiny globe, lighted by only a tenth-rate yellow sun, he will not have time to become a god but who dare assert that his wish cannot project itself to mightier systems illuminated by vaster suns, and there reshape and invest him with the forms and powers of divinity? Who dare even say that his wish may not expand him beyond the Limits of Form, and make him one with Omnipotence? And Omnipotence, without asking, can have much brighter playthings than the Moon.

Hearn touches the heart of the matter—the difference between wanting to have and wanting to *be*—now affecting so many during this time of shocks and relinquishments. "Having" is the obsession of a dying civilization, while "becoming" is the birthright of mankind. The feeling of a larger identity one sometimes has in the morning, upon first awakening—this may tell us more than intruding messages from the cells of the brain. This is a sense of self-transcendence seldom noted by psychologists, although A. H. Maslow found it noticeable in the "healthy subjects" of his study of self-actualization. Their

feeling of being grew widely inclusive. As he put it:

> Examples of this kind of transcendence are Walt Whitman or William James who were profoundly American, most *purely* American, and yet were also very purely supra-cultural, internationalist members of the whole human species. They were universal men not in *spite* of their being Americans, but just *because* they were such good Americans. So too, Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher, was *also* more than Jewish. Hokusai, profoundly Japanese, was a universal artist.

Hearn's term, monad, which was also Leibniz's since he wrote the *Monadology,* makes possible a cosmic conception of the individual self. We begin with this idea of our selves—a focused center of consciousness. That is what we really are, if we rely on our primary feelings—a self-aware unit of consciousness with *intentions.* In the morning, in that moment of wonder—that quest for orientation—we, so to speak, assume the body in order to fulfill our intentions Then, as the day proceeds, there may be recurrence of that feeling. The "What am I doing here?" question presents itself.

W. Macneile Dixon, the modern philosopher of the monad, mused at length on this assertion of our inward being. He said toward the end of *The Human Situation:*

> To regard the advent of consciousness, that is, the world's coming to a knowledge of itself, the awakening of a soul in nature, to take this unexampled overwhelming fact as of course and for granted, as no singular event, or anything out of the way noteworthy or surprising, or again as a thing of accident among other accidents, were for me no easier a thought than the notion of the Himalayas giving way to laughter, or the ocean writing its autobiography. . . . Though surrounded by and embedded in the world, this awareness, this unique appanage or endowment of the individual self, marks its absolute separation from the rest of creation. . . . Whatever it be, this entity, this I, this being that cares for truth and beauty, the haughty, exclusive, conscious soul, its sense of personal identity survives all assaults. He may analyse it, with Hume, into a series of disconnected thoughts and feelings, but its unity reasserts itself in reviewing the series into which you have attempted to dissect it. . . . There is something in us which nature has not given, for she has it not to give. Selfhood is not a contingent entity, but the representative of a metaphysical and necessary principle of the universe, part of its essential nature, a constituent of reality, nor without it could the Cosmos have attained to recognition, to full consummation or true being. Experiencing souls were a necessity if a universe in any legitimate sense there was to be. Such is the soul's superlative standing in reality. . . . With the removal, therefore, of conscious selves, were that possible, no witness of any kind that there was in fact a universe, supposing it to be in existence, could be cited or would remain. As a whole and in every particular it is utterly dependent upon the attestation of experiencing individuals. It is reflected in the mirror of the soul and only there. This position no argument can turn, no manoeuvre outflank. It is impregnable.

It must have been some such call that roused the Prodigal Son from his preoccupations. It comes as a rhythm in life itself, touching all who have felt the animating breeze of that other world which now and then intersects with ours. Dixon challenges dispute, declaring that this soul, this reflective and designing intelligence, rich in the lore of eternity, filled with ideas, emotions, longings, and sympathies that know little of the earth, is the active agent of becoming on the planet. He says:

> Despite these its transcendent qualities, or rather because of them; despite the fact that the individual is the maker of history since there are no other doers of deeds than individual souls; none the less, the soul is out of favour in our time, not acknowledged in the superior circles, an outcast, a slumdweller, a beggar on charity. To "think nobly of the soul" is now accounted a symptom of low intelligence. But few of today's opinions will be those of tomorrow, and fewer still the day after. You may hate life and despise man, but "the power of the mouth, the wisdom of the brow, the human comprehension of the eyes, and the outstriking vitality of the creature" remain to confound you.

Thus Dixon, first published in 1937. His confirming votce speaks now to a larger audience.

REVIEW
ARE WE "EVOLVING"?

THE question of how the universe came into being—whether this extraordinary structure of existence was shaped by "Mind," or happened merely by chance—is a question that has haunted many inquirers. It seems natural enough that human beings, who try to make sense of their experience, should expect to find some *meaning* in the world around them. The consensus of the scientific community, however, has been that to look for meaning—our sort of meaning—in the natural world is naive and wishful thinking.

Why, one may ask, do scientific minds hold stubbornly to this position, since they are so manifestly bright in other ways? Do the "brute facts" of life really stand in the way of accepting the possibility of a transcendent purpose behind natural phenomena?

It seems fair to say that the scientists (who, like the rest of us, want to "survive") are determined to resist any attempt to diminish the prerogatives of independent thinking. They remember what happened to Bruno and Galileo and they don't want any more of that. But what if this argument is now merely parochial? There have been great cultures which never had to cope with a Holy Inquisition (although it would be hard to locate a society free of any form of priestcraft) and found no reason to deny the activity of intelligence as the foundation of all that is. *We* are intelligent, and why not everything else—that is, everything in its own way?

Our civilization is actually a very junior affair. Compared to China and India, which have records going back thousands of years, we are barely out of adolescence in our thinking, and meanwhile the pressures of religious (or was it anti-religious?) history obliged the scientific thinkers to erect a strong methodological wall against the idea of creative intelligence behind the works of Nature. Common sense, however, might suggest that since the Holy Inquisition no longer has earthly power, we no longer need the protection of the methodological wall. Why not follow the example of the really great scientists, instead of the rules of scientific bureaucrats, and begin to think for ourselves? The matter has sufficient importance.

Happily, a handful of rebel scientists has been attempting to do this, during the past fifty or seventy-five years. The work of these men provide the resources of a new book, *Chance or Design?* (Philosophical Library, 1979, $13.95), by James E. Horigan.

Mr. Horigan is not a scientist but a lawyer (of some distinction) and he goes at the project of finding meaning in nature in a way that you might expect of a lawyer. It is the business of lawyers to reach conclusions, to win cases. They are not used to having verdicts put off until the Greek Kalends. They do not, of course, expect to establish "absolute certainty," but only to get beyond reasonable doubt. In Mr. Horigan's view, that the universe is the work of designing intelligence is beyond reasonable doubt. His book assembles evidence which, if not scientifically acceptable, makes a strong appeal to common sense.

The book is timely, bringing support to the swing of general opinion toward the conclusion the author reaches. The scientific denial of intrinsic meaning in the world goes against common sense and people are tired of submitting to it. Mr. Horigan writes as a layman, but not a submissive one. His position is that while we can learn much from the scientists we must not be ruled by them, and that we have no reason to infect ourselves with the occupational myopia from which a great many scientists suffer. In other words, denial of meaning in nature has a social, not a scientific, basis, and the time has come to put it aside. This conclusion might find support in a perceptive remark by Bertrand Russell, who said in 1925:

Historically, we may regard materialism as a system of dogma set up to combat orthodox dogma. As a rule, the materialistic dogma has not

been set up by men who loved dogma, but by men who felt that nothing less definite would enable them to fight the dogmas they disliked. They were in the position of men who raise armies to enforce peace.

Mr. Horigan assures his wary readers that he has no covert theological purpose behind his assemblage of recent scientific discoveries or theories which he thinks point to the reality of underlying design. This is important enough to be quoted:

> Any consideration of the idea of a designed universe raises, of course, the question of purpose. To hold that the universe was intelligently designed is to expect that an intelligent Designer would have had reason and purpose to bring the universe, and all that lies within it, into existence. The remarkable purposefulness we will consider in the natural world herein is of itself not demonstrable of ultimate purpose. When one seeks to argue to the existence of an ultimate Designer of the universe on the strength alone of inferences arising from present-day empirical knowledge, and without resort to biblical or other religious references, it restricts one's possible avenues of explanation of purpose that could otherwise be available. No doubt some will find this approach to be in error. It does not mean, however, that theologians, philosophers, and scientists will not be free to draw views as they see fit from the material presented herein in a "not so" restricted manner.

It seems just to say that Mr. Horigan preserves quite well his theological neutrality, yet, on the other hand, he adopts a humanist view that can be called philosophical. He is convinced that there is a close relation between mind and matter at even the atomic level, with the effect of ordering the qualities and differentiated function of atoms, and he also suggests that the evolution of mind is a central if not ultimate purpose behind nature. Speaking of the wealth of evidence for design which has recently become available, he says:

> Does it not signify the importance of man, his mind and consciousness, in a universal scheme of things, that Nature's bounty within his grasp and in all its fullness (including inanimate, animate, and associated phenomena) may be seen to point directionally and specifically to him alone as though he were the central apex of intersecting vectors? Our present-day observation, based on the comprehensive overview of nature to be set forth herein, shows not only the regularity and invariant directionality of this phenomenon but, in addition, reflects the significance of man and his intelligence (together wth its associated values) as a special object of creation. This is saying something quite different, empirically, than simply drawing analogies or calling attention to "innumerable" harmonious interrelationships in nature that make for the existence and development of life. Not even light, gravity, or other known cosmic phenomena in the universe share the obvious significance of an equally far-reaching and penetrating mind and consciousness which appears to have the potential capacity to not only perceive and find meaning in it all, but to harbor the potential for becoming increasingly involved. Perhaps any failure on our part to recognize the empirical significance of this remarkable mutuality between man and the phenomena of nature may be attributed to our tendency to take things for granted, being, as we are, an integral part of the creative process itself.

Should a modern ecologist come across this passage, he would be likely to set up a hue and cry against its implications. How can humans be given such sublime rank in the natural hierarchy, when they are so diligent in planning mayhem or even destruction for the planet?

We don't know what Mr. Horigan would say in reply, but he might find an ally in Dr. Catherine Roberts, a microbiologist who declared in her recent book, *Science, Animals, and Evolution:*

> . . . to proclaim that man is in no way unique is a distortion of spiritual truth. Man's conscious awareness of his conscience, the divine ethic, and his self-transcendence as a realistic human potential *does* set *Homo sapiens* apart from other creatures. And precisely because of his spiritual uniqueness, he has a responsibility to help lower beings to ascend that exceeds any responsibility to them based on a sense of physical relation through common descent. . . . In assuming the existence of a spiritual hierarchy of being, there at once emerges an idea wholly undemocratic and, at the same time, wholly necessary for the evolutionary ascent: *noblesse oblige.* This is no illusory concept to bolster the human ego. . . . In the religious scheme of things, the higher are ever

> helping the lower to realize potentiality for the sake of the cosmic Good.

While Mr. Horigan is interested in the "design and structure" aspects of the universe, Dr. Roberts' main concern is with the moral responsibility of human intelligence, suggesting that mankind are not here simply to enjoy themselves, but have a work to do. And she would probably argue that the continual messes we make, now reaching climactic proportions, are the result of determined neglect of our (cosmic) responsibilities.

Horigan does, however, give attention to the problem of evil, saying:

> . . . good and evil are associated with mind and consciousness—an apparent "imperfection" of evil in a world that otherwise shows the highest degree of perfection. The matter of evil and its consequences stand out uniquely in man, his mind and consciousness, and the fact that it does so within the framework of a remarkably designed world in other respects implies a special meaning and significance. . . . we may see here a basis for trial, error, and accountability in a choice between good and evil. We should not presume, therefore, that these characteristics are not of themselves the hallmarks of design and ultimate purpose. In a way, evil may not be a "problem" but rather a consequence of personal freedom, itself purposeful.

Chance or Design is worth reading because it is by an intelligent man who recognizes that he and all the rest of us must soon make up our own minds on some momentous questions. No authority can do that for us. Taking this position would doubtless be a sign of some "evolution" in ourselves.

COMMENTARY
ARE THE TERRORISTS MAD?

IN Frontiers, Erwin Knoll, editor of the *Progressive,* calls the governments of the nuclear powers terrorists. "Who," he asks, "but terrorists could conceive of building and stockpiling such weapons?"

Contributors to *The Final Epidemic*, a book issued last year by the Educational Foundation for Nuclear Science (*Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*), propose another identification. For example, Herbert Scoville, author of *MX: Prescription for Disaster,* says:

> An increasing number of people are saying that we can fight a nuclear war, that we can survive, and that we can even win it. The view that such people should be put in an insane asylum is very sound; but that is not going to happen because these people are the leaders of our country and—in some cases—the leaders of the Soviet Union.

Another contributor, John Edward Mack, a professor of psychiatry in the Harvard Medical School, says:

> It is my contention that the madness of the arms race is not primarily in individuals but in the context of the problem. There are individuals, especially in the two superpowers, who bear responsbility for the arms race, but policymakers and strategists seem to be caught up in a structure, a system, in which the interlocking parts activate one another, but which no one controls. There is a state of mind, a mental "set," which accompanies this system. . . .
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> Often those who come into positions of responsibility from outside of the federal government see the nuclear arms race initially as unnecessary, believing that many fewer weapons would suffice. But they end up trapped in the system, caught in the escalation game. This happens to presidents as well as many academics, including those who have or still do regard themselves as against war or violence. . . . How does this happen? What is there in the climate of decision and policy-making in the nuclear weapons field that absorbs men and women, although not all of them, into the dangerous process of the escalating arms race?

This is not much of a sampling of the book, which is mostly by medical doctors who write about the effects of nuclear bombing and how few—and how helpless—they will be to treat the survivors. But the quotations from Dr. Mack and Mr. Scoville (and also Erwin Knoll) show one thing: *Governments* are not able to make peace. The people must do it themselves, which might of itself institute another sort of government.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SCHOLARLY MUSINGS

THE debt of education to the classicists—as both scholars and teachers—is immeasurable. They may not be able to persuade us to learn Latin and Greek, but they demonstrate what knowing these "dead" languages can do for writers who tell us about the high points of our Western past. The classicist is skilled in the use of analogues. He finds ways of showing how to profit from reading Thucydides, Sophocles, Aristophanes, and Æschylus. For the classicist, these ancestors of our culture are still articulately alive.

Thinking, lately, about the decline of the university, and of the fact that the university is still the place to find scholars of this sort, we wondered what they might have to say about the present state of higher education. A passage in an article in *Arion*, a quarterly journal devoted to "Humanities and the Classics," issued by Boston University, seemed the keynote of an answer. In *Arion* for the Spring of 1973, one of the editors, D. S. Carne-Ross, had this to say:

> The university is now threatened in various ways. Perhaps the gravest danger is this: that the best qualified people find it increasingly difficult to believe in it. And the only case I can see for staying inside the university structure—until such time as it becomes clearly impossible to do so—is that for all its imperfections the university still acts as a recognized public barrier against the growing barbarism of the mass society. It is still a place where things happen that cannot happen anywhere else. A place for discussion and argument and intellectual labor not directed toward personal gain or blatantly "practical" ends. A place that still has access to immense inner riches and the means to create new riches. A place where the future has not yet been mortgaged and the past still preserves a life of sorts. In an increasingly restricted period the university provides, potentially at least, an *area of freedom.* But its power to do so and stand as a last line of defense is greatly weakened if the best people abandon it.

In this article of sixty pages Prof. Carne-Ross explores the implications and possibilities of his dream of a reformed and reconstructed classics department in the university. He wants the classicists to make an island of perspective on the present, using the light of the Greek spirit and outlook to see ourselves and measure what we are doing. He says:

> Greece offers a different reality, not so different as to be incomprehensible but different enough to be challenging and to show our familiar assumptions and the everyday conduct of our lives in a strange and unsettling light. But: there is only one way to enter this Greek reality and that is by going to the Greek texts in the original. Translation cannot serve it shares our own cultural reality and is written from our own cultural perspective.
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> Hence I doubt it is valid to say, with Steele Commager, that if Lyndon Johnson had read Thucydides on the Sicilian expedition, things might have gone differently in Vietnam. I suspect that the former President would have read only what he thought he already knew. We need to revise Mr. Commager's remark and say: if we had a certain number of people—an intellectual community—capable of regarding our affairs from the extra-territorial perspective that Greece can provide, then things might go differently in Vietnam and in our society at large.

The Athenians, Prof. Carne-Ross points out, were like ourselves—filled with a restless energy—"much-doingness" is a translation of what Thucydides said about them—and also "having or claiming more than one's due." Wise Greeks knew this and said so. If we had a cultural community such as this classicist proposes, there would be a strong, opinion-influencing body of thinkers in the country to make possible effective self-criticism.

It is a dream, of course. The Greeks, for all their men of insight, went on to their own ruin; they did not listen. And we have little or no memory of the meaning of the Greek experience. It is this the writer would restore. In one place he says:

> The humanist lets himself be told that the humanities have failed and are no longer of any use. They have failed: because the humanist has deprived them of their humanity, by aestheticizing or formalizing them or treating them as the raw material of scholarship which (properly enough, by its own standards) distances and objectifies whatever it treats. Btit the humanities have another dimension, a dimension both more inward and more public, the power to touch men's hearts and mould their minds and move in the life of the polls. To deny the humanities this power is to denature them. Imagine a Classics or philosophy professor trying to tell Socrates that politics was outside his professional

competence or an English professor defending his umbratile [secluded] virtues to Milton.

We are not required, as the cultural radicals tell us, to stop reading Plato and Milton in order to concentrate on the social issues of the day. Plato and Milton would be "relevant" enough if we found a way of reading them that did not artificially curtail the range of their interests and let these eminently political authors loose in the polls again. The great critics of American society—men like John Jay Chapman—were steeped in the literature of the past. Their reading was not an evasion. It was a means of bringing trained, critical *mind* to bear on gross and carefully nourished confusion. Of bringing informed, active *conscience* to bear on gross selfishness and continual violations of the public interest.

This is Prof. Carne-Ross's dream, and it deserves to be kept alive. One wonders whether, in time, new centers may appear where the scholars congregate in ones or twos to do their work and continue the life of at least the dream. Conceivably, if there are minds who undertake this work and try to spread its fruit, they will in time "create" such places, which might turn out to be on farms—to make a wild guess.

Meanwhile, whose fault is the decline of the universities? William Arrowsmith, another classicist, also an editor of *Arion* (in 1973), told a meeting of the American Council on Education in 1966:

Behind the disregard for the teacher lies the transparent sickness of the humanities in the university and in American life generally. Indeed, nothing more vividly illustrates the myopia of academic humanism than its failure to realize that the fate of any true culture is revealed in the value it sets upon the teacher. *"The advancement of learning at the expense of man,"* writes Nietzsche, "is the most pernicious thing in the world. The stunted man is a backward step for humanity; he casts his *shadow* over all time to come. It debases conviction, the natural purpose of the particular field of learning; learning itself is finally destroyed. It is advanced, true, but its effect on life is nil or immoral." . . .

It is my hope that education . . will not be driven from the university by the knowledge-technicians. . . . Socrates took to the streets, but so does every demagogue or fraud. By virtue of its traditions and pretensions the university is, I believe, a not inappropriate place for education to occur.

What Prof. Arrowsmith says about "taking to the streets" is true enough, yet it is better than keeping silent. The streets may be the best place to find the scholars of the future.

While a reading of Joseph Epstein's *Portraits of Great Teachers* (Basic Books) might lend encouragement to Prof. Arrowsmith's hopes, it should be remembered that the wonderful men and women presented in that volume belong to past generations. Meanwhile, in his preface to the new edition of his *Teacher in America* (which first appeared in 1945), Jacques Barzun mourns the missed opportunity to reconstruct the universities after the student rebellion of the 1960s. He had hoped for a return to "simplicity," saying:

Simplicity would have meant not just giving up grants and foundation playthings such as "institutes" and "centers" for immediate social action, but also many ornamental activities, including public sports. Some of us who urged the move at the time were ridiculed as "scholastic-monastic," but I accept the phrase as tersely descriptive of a still desirable direction. "Monastic" here has of course nothing to do with religion or of asceticism or the muddle of coeducation and cohabitation now part of campus life. It betokens merely the mind concentrated on study in a setting without frills. . . .

Instead of that transformation we have but ruins barely concealed by ivy. For students, not the monastic life, but a shabby degradation of the former luxury; not the scholastic life, either, but a tacitly lowered standard, by means of which instructors maintain their rating on the annual student evaluation and students themselves ensure the needed grades in the credentials game. For the faculty, salaries dropping fast under inflation that also raises the costs of operation and tuition. For the administration, nothing but the harried life among demands, protests, and regulations. To expect "educational leadership" from men and women so circumstanced would be a cruel joke.

As anyone can see, we need a renaissance, not a reform of education. Making a place in the world for scholars of the sort considered here is an unbegun project. If, as Wendell Berry suggests, culture blooms as a metaphysical evolution of agriculture, the farms of tomorrow might also grow centers of learning, places where such scholars can feel at home.

FRONTIERS

Experts on Death . . . and Life

RECENTLY a college student in Pennsylvania spent some time in the library and then put together a model of the hydrogen bomb, made of Styrofoam, complete with description and diagrams. This young man explained his purpose: "If more people are informed about how it [the H-bomb] works, they will be better equipped to ask questions in the nuclear proliferation debate." Hearing of his achievement, a reporter phoned Erwin Knoll, editor of the *Progressive*, and asked him if this might not lead to terrorists making their own thermonuclear devices and holding us all for ransom. Knoll's reply, which he gives in his editorial notes in the February *Progressive*, is worth thinking about:

> It was, I told him, thirty years too late to worry about that. That's how long terrorists have had the H-bomb. I meant of course, the governments of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, and the People's Republic of China—and perhaps others. Who but true terrorists could conceive of building and stockpiling such weapons?

The new wave of the "nuclear proliferation debate" now going on in Europe has precipitated intensive discussion in the press. In the *Atlantic* for February Peter H. Stone reports on the work of a group of American doctors who have united as Physicians for Social Responsibility. Together with a number of European associates they are campaigning for bilateral nuclear disarmament as the only way to avoid "a medical tragedy beyond any possible cure." Commenting on the efforts of this group of doctors, Robert Jay Lifton, a psychiatrist who studied the effects of the bombing of Hiroshima on the survivors, said the numbing effects of the experience leads to overwhelming fear and feelings of helplessness. Two illusions about nuclear war, he said, will have to be overcome. They are that doctors can "patch you up after nuclear war, and that devices like shelters can help." Such ideas, he added, are "part of a campaign of psychological preparation for nuclear war."

The *Atlantic* writer recalls a study made by these doctors in 1962 (published in the October 1962 *New England Journal of Medicine*) telling what a nuclear attack would do to Boston:

> In their projection, the doctors estimated that 1,052,000 people out of Boston's 3 million would die immediately, as a result of the initial blast and of the devastating heat accompanying it. . . . The doctors calculated that in the weeks right after the blast another one million people would perish, as a result of fatal injuries sustained during the explosion. Hundreds of thousands of survivors would suffer simple and compound fractures; severe wounds of the skull, thorax, and abdomen; and multiple lacerations with extensive hemorrhaging. Third-degree burns would be an overwhelming problem for physicians, because treatment requires specialized burn-care facilities, sophisticated laboratory equipment, and enormous supplies of blood and plasma, as well as a wide variety of drugs. These would simply not exist after a nuclear attack, because the area's hospitals would be largely destroyed. On top of all this, the doctors noted that since most physicians are concentrated in areas that would suffer the greatest damage from a bomb, their profession would be decimated: out of 6,560 physicians working in Boston . . . only about 640 would survive, or one doctor for every 1,700 acutely injured people. They concluded that if the surviving doctors spent only ten minutes diagnosing and treating each patient, and worked twenty-four-hour days, it would take eight to fourteen days to see every severely injured person once. This assumes that every physician would be willing "to expose himself to high or lethal levels of radiation," and would "be able to identify the areas in which he is most needed" and get there and begin work immediately.

This report goes on for pages, pointing out the impracticality of "evacuation" plans and the uselesssness of "shelters." The doctors' group is growing, Stone says. Physicians for Social Responsibility had only a few hundred members two years ago, but they now number over 8,000. From a 1979 report by the congressional Office of Technology Assessment on the effects of a general nuclear war, he quotes:

> "Cancer deaths and those suffering from some form of genetic damage would run into the millions over the 40 years following the attack." The OTA report asserts that after 100 million casualties on each side in a major confrontation between two superpowers, "millions of people might starve or freeze during the following winter, but it is not possible to estimate how many."

Dr. Howard H. Hiatt, dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, declared in the *Journal* of the A.M.A. that "prevention is the only recourse," and later the A.M.A. "passed a resolution calling on doctors to assume more responsibility for informing their patients of the real dangers of nuclear war."

Curiously, along with numerous reports on the deathdealing capacities which science has developed, there are other reports by other scientists who seem to be coming a little closer to understanding the mysteries of life. The *Tarrytown Letter* for January gave considerable space to *A New Science of Life* (Blond & Briggs, London) by Rupert Sheldrake, in which an idea proposed back in the 1930s, that of the "morphogenetic field," becomes the source of the patterning intelligence of both living and crystalline forms. In 1935, an anatomist, H. S. Burr, and the philosopher, F. S. C. Northrop, made measurements of tiny changes in organic bodies, showing that all vital processes are guided by an "electrical architect." The *New York Times* (April 25,1939) science writer said:

> The experimental evidence shows, according to Dr. Burr, that each species of animal and very likely also the individuals within the species have their characteristic electrical field, analogous to the lines of force in a magnet. This electrical field, having its own pattern, fashions all the protoplasmic clay of life that comes within its sphere of influence after its image, thus personifying itself in the living flesh as the sculptor personifies his idea in stone.

Sheldrake, a chemist and plant physiologist, now proposes "some kind of universal consciousness or learning-memory . . . at work in all species; he says that a new form or technique that begins to work in one place in a given species will shortly appear as the new standard or norm in the same species throughout the world!" He suggests that "systems may be regulated not only by the physical laws we already know about, but also by a kind of invisible organizing force we know nothing about." He calls these forces "morphogenetic fields." The British journal, *New Scientist,* welcomed Sheldrake's book as presenting a testable theory that might result in a "paradigm shift" for the life sciences.

Meanwhile, in *Minds and Motion* (Taplinger, 1978), a book on psychokinesis, Scott Rogo notes the conclusion of a Soviet psychic researcher, V. Inyushin, that—

> all living things generate an atomic structure of "counter energy" which builds up into a duplicate physical system within the organism. This substance can act selectively within the body and outside it, or can build up into a duplicate of the human body which Inyushin calls the "bioplasmic body." . . . Prof. Inyushin's theory deserves to be taken seriously. For one thing, the concept of a double which is locked in the human organism and which is responsible for PK [mind directly moving matter] is a very old parapsychological theory. Inyushin also claims that this bioplasmic body radiates energy and creates life fields, and he believes that this bioplasmic structure consists mainly of free charged particles which create uniform energy networks.
>
> Inyushin himself makes the following points about the nature and properties of bioplasma: (1) It is not a chaotic field, but a complex organization. (2) It can be a discrete system or systems acting as constellations with the organism, but all bioplasma may represent a uniform structure. (3) Bioplasma "drifts" throughout the organism, and propagates electromagnetic energy within the system. (4) This field regulates the interactions among the cells of the body.

There seems here a clear convergence of function, if not of theoretical intent. Are organisms "nodes" in a psychic sea? It seems at least possible.