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ONE UNIVERSAL PHILOSOPHICAL IDEA

IN his article, "The Humanities as a Moral Force" (printed here on May 10), Jacob Needleman spoke of "the need to ponder and question the meaning of human life and one's part in it." His experience in teaching philosophy at the college level (and lately in high schools), he said, made this need evident. The reasons are apparent. No period of history has been as confusing as the present. The very meaning of life has been made uncertain by the widening gap between inherited ideas and the texture of daily experience. It is fair to say that strenuous attempts to change the quality of that experience (through revolutions or far-reaching reforms) have done little or nothing to reduce the confusion.

What, then, is missing in our lives? Since he is a teacher, Prof. Needleman asks what is missing in modern education, but the question applies to all generations, since for adults the confusion is not only wide-spread but institutionalized in social complexities no one can escape.

His answer, then, is that what is missing is "the role of universal philosophical ideas in the intellectual, moral, and psychological development of a normal human being." He means ideas which meet "a structural need in the human being," an actual hunger for "ideas about man and his place in the cosmic scheme." Since this amounts to a diagnosis, the general terms need filling in. What is the "structural need"? It is, we could say, for a sense of direction. Knowledge is of course important, but knowledge is like an enormous library with hundreds of thousands of books. Which ones do you read? You read the books that deepen the meaning and elaborate the course suggested by your sense of direction. But if your sense of direction is obtained from hearsay—or as psychologists put it, "conditioning"—then it may seem good enough the way it is, needing no amplification. That is, it will seem good enough until we are overtaken by malfunction of our lives, and in many cases by an emptiness within.

So there is an increasing need for a better sense of direction. How will "universal philosophical ideas" help us to get it?

Before tackling this enormous question, a distinction made by Ortega (in *The Idea of Principle in Leibniz*, Norton, 1971) may be of use as preparation. He points out that "ideas" are generated by thinking, by imagining, while *beliefs* are what we live by. We do not question or think about beliefs, but act upon them. They are the realities of our lives. We count on them. Beliefs don't get reflective attention because reality doesn't require it. Considerable effort may be necessary to expose and examine our beliefs. Ortega says:

> Only when man realizes to what extent other beliefs exist vis-à-vis his own beliefs which, once he is acquainted with them, seem to him more or less as worthy of credence as his own—only then does there arise in man a new need: the ability to discern which of the two complexes of belief is one that *ultimately* merits being believed. That need, necessity or necessitousness for deciding between two beliefs is what we call "truth." . . . When man realizes that his beliefs are not the only reality but that there are others which are very different, *ipso facto* he loses his virginity, his innocence, and the strength of his beliefs. He recognizes them as *mere* beliefs, i.e., as "ideas." With regard to them he then acquires a freedom which he did not previously possess. They no longer get hold of him and keep hold of him. They become revocable, they lose the absolute weight of their absolute seriousness and come to approximate poetry forming part of a world which, as compared to that serious aspect, has a playful one. It is clear that this freedom, like all freedom, assuming that this has value, is paid for by exchanging the security of belief for perplexity, insecurity, worry, vacillation, in short for uncertainty in facing "ideas."

Perplexity is one thing—we may never entirely get rid of it—but insecurity, worry, and vacillation unfit people for life, and Prof. Needleman believes that going out to meet "ideas" deliberately, and facing them with the best intelligence we can muster, is what we now should do. Which ideas are worthy

of at least tentative adoption as beliefs, perhaps to be strengthened into convictions as time goes on? And which of our cherished or even unexamined notions should be discharged without letters of reference? Every-man-his-own-Socrates is Prof. Needleman's program.

What, then, are some of the ideas to be inspected?

Here we are obliged to look at ideas in all their conceptual nakedness, which is not the way we come upon them in life. Consider the idea of the immortality of the soul. What is there against it? First, the fact that we have seldom heard it seriously proposed. Our parents and teachers have been busy with other things—life "here and now," as they put it. Why should we consider the idea at all? For a number of reasons. The "here and now," for one thing, has become increasingly unpalatable. That is not the best of reasons for wondering what happens after death, but others may come into view if we start from that provocation. A first step in thinking would require us to consider ourselves as subjects instead of objects. The finality of death is entirely reasonable for objects, which are always coming apart. But we are not only objects. Our bodies are objects; *we* are not. We are subjects, and as such, as Freud once pointed out, we are simply incapable of imagining or thinking of ourselves dead. In short, there is a timeless factor in consciousness. There is, then, this intuitive testimony to consider. Similar testimony has to do with what took place before we were born. Immortality can hardly be one-ended. Speaking of his son in *Education and the Good Life*, Bertrand Russell remarked:

> I find my boy still hardly able to grasp that there was a time when he did not exist; if I talk to him about the building of the Pyramids or some such topic, he always wants to know what he was doing then, and is merely puzzled when he is told that he did not exist. Sooner or later he will want to know what "being born" means, and then we shall tell him.

The boy may have had a better idea than his father on these questions. Is his subjective feeling of no importance? His (implied) conviction that "death is for objects but not for me" may have come out of the grain of a beinghood from which Russell was shut off by an excess of intellectuality. Another acute mind, that of Erik Erikson, after prolonged contact with the beliefs of people in India, said in *Gandhi's Truth: "* . . . let us face it: 'deep down' nobody in his right mind *can* visualize his own existence without assuming that he has always lived and will live hereafter; and the religious world-views of old only endowed this psychological given with images and ideas which could be shared, transmitted, and ritualized."

Actual "proofs" of immortality are not available, mainly because no one has been able to establish what would be acceptable evidence of eternal life. Philosophers have affirmed it, sages have claimed it, but how shall we, who feel terribly mortal at times, be able to know it for ourselves except by experiencing it, and in what comprehensible terms could this experience be described?

For considering immortality, then, the sources and terms of this belief, in ages past, become of interest. In his *Essay on Man,* Ernst Cassirer says:

> To mythical and religious feeling nature becomes one great society, the *society of life.* Man is not endowed with outstanding rank in this society. He is a part of it but he is in no respect higher than any other image. Life possesses the same religious dignity in its humblest and its highest forms. . . . and we find the same principle—that of the solidarity and unbroken unity of life—if we pass from space to time. It holds not only in the order of simultaneity but also in the order of succession. The generations of men form a unique and uninterrupted chain. The former stages of life are preserved by reincarnation. . . .
>
> Many mythic tales are concerned with the origin of death. The conception that man is mortal, by his nature and essence, seems to be entirely alien to mythical and primitive religious thought. In this regard there is a striking difference between the mythical belief in immortality and all the later forms of a pure philosophical belief. If we read Plato's *Phaedo* we feel the whole effort of philosophical thought to give clear and irrefutable proof of the immortality of the human soul. In mythical thought, the case is quite different. Here the burden of proof always lies on the opposite side. If anything is in need of proof it is not the fact of immortality but the fact of death. A myth and primitive religion never admit these proofs. They emphatically deny the possibility of death. In a certain sense the whole of

> mythical thought may be interpreted as a constant and obstinate negation of the phenomenon of death. By virtue of this conviction of the unbroken unity and continuity of life, myth has to clear away this phenomenon. Primitive religion is perhaps the strongest and most energetic affirmation of life that we find in human culture.

What shall we understand by "mythical thought"? How does it differ from our way of thinking? The best brief account that we know of concerning this difference was provided by Robert Redfield in *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (1953). He said in summary:

> Primitive man is, as I have said, at once in nature and yet acting on it, getting his living, taking from it food and shelter. But as that nature is part of the same moral system in which man and the affairs between men also find themselves, man's actions with regard to nature are limited by notions of inherent, not expediential, rightness. . . . "All economic activities, such as hunting, gathering fuel, cultivating the land, storing food, assume a relatedness to the encompassing universe." And the relatedness is moral or religious. . . .
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> If we compare the primary world view that has been sketched in these pages with that which comes to prevail in modern times, especially in the West, where science has been so influential, we may recognize one of the great transformations by which the primitive world view has been overturned. . . . Man comes out from the unity of the universe within which he is oriented now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character. . . .

The world, in primitive and mythical thought, is a world of "immanent justice." Children, Redfield points out, believe in this world spontaneously, and only give it up for the morally indifferent world of modern belief as they are influenced by their parents and the surrounding culture. In short, both the ancients and children look upon the universe from the subjective and moral point of view. When this outlook encounters the deliberate rejection of the modern age, it succumbs and loses its power. And what we are now proposing, by asking about the immortality of the soul, is the possibility that the mythic view should be considered as an alternative to the morally indifferent outlook of the present. As Ortega said, the comparison of conflicting beliefs presses the issue of "truth" into the foreground.

What other view of ourselves and the world is available?

Since we are accustomed to argument about matters of importance, we turn to Plato's *Phaedo*, which Cassirer said was set off from mythical belief by the attempt of Socrates at logical demonstration. In this dialogue Socrates says:

> Then tell me, what must be present in the body to make it alive?
>
> Soul.
> Is this always so?
> Of course.
>
> So whenever soul takes possession of the body, it always brings life with it?
> Yes, it does.
> Is there an opposite to life, or not?
> Yes, there is.
> What?
> Death.
> Does it follow, then, from our earlier agreement [a little mathematical exercise], that soul will never admit the opposite of that which accompanies it?
> Most definitely, said Cebes.
> Well, now, what name did we apply just now to that which does not admit the form of even?
> Uneven.
> And what do we call that which does not admit justice, or culture?
> Uncultured, and the other unjust.
> Very good. And what do we call that which does not admit death?
> Immortal.
> And soul does not admit death?
> No.
> So soul is immortal?
> Yes, it is immortal.
> Well, said Socrates, can we say that that has been proved?
> What do you think?
> Most completely, Socrates.

The wonder, for us, is not the proof, but that it is admitted as proof! Torn from the context of the dialogue, and also from the common cultural stipulations of the Greeks, the passage does not seem persuasive. Yet since we know that the Greeks were

not fools—that, indeed, we are still learning from them—there is reason for further inquiry. In the *Meno* Socrates offers a more substantial argument. He tells his host that in his pursuit of the meaning of Virtue he found out something from the "men and women who understand the truths of religion." Meno asks what they said, and who they were, and Socrates replies:

> Those who tell it are priests and priestesses of the sort who make it their business to be able to account for the functions which they perform. Pindar speaks of it too, and many another of the poets who are divinely inspired. What they say is this—see whether you think they are speaking the truth. They say that the soul of man is immortal. At one time it comes to an end—that which is called death—and at another is born again, but is never finally exterminated. On these grounds a man must live all his days as righteously as possible. For those from whom
>
> Persephone receives requital for ancient doom
> In the ninth year she restores again
> Their souls to the sun above.
> From whom rise noble kings
> And the swift in strength and greatest in wisdom,
> And for the rest of time
> They are called heroes and sanctified by men.
>
> Thus the soul, since it is immortal and has been born many times, and has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed. All nature is kin, and the soul has learned everything, so that when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge—*learned* it, in ordinary language—there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search, for seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection.

Follows the famous example of Socrates eliciting the truths of geometry from a boy servant of Meno's household, simply by asking him questions, and he points out to Meno that the "knowledge" the boy demonstrated in answer to Socrates was not taught, but *recollected.* "And if," he went on, "the truth about reality is always in our soul, the soul must be immortal, and one must take courage and try to discover—that is, to recollect—what one doesn't happen to know, or, more correctly, remember, at the moment."

We choose the immortality of the soul to stand for "universal ideas" because it generates numerous others, such as that the world has a moral order of "imminent justice," and that humans are here to work out their salvation or evolution by regaining, under the wayward circumstances of our lives, the spiritual knowledge, and other sorts of knowledge, that belong to us on higher planes. The world thus becomes the theater of universal development, with each form of life pursuing its related but distinctive growth. Man has a Promethean responsibility in relation to his fellow and to the whole.

These are all "abstract" ideas, general conceptions of meaning, without proof, yet possessed, when taken together, of a symmetry of inherent appeal to moral or subjective intelligence. A generation ago these ideas would have been summarily dismissed by reason of their abstraction, but the force of this criticism now no longer exists. As we have lately been instructed by physicists, all our general ideas about the world are abstractions, created by acts of imagination, and sustained through continuous improvisation by scientific minds. The same may be said of most of the rest of our beliefs, which come to us from the parental generation, from public communications, and from educational and cultural influences, including the sectarian and political institutions of our time.

Which of these beliefs are "true"? We cannot be sure, since ignorance, not knowledge, is the natural medium of our lives. Yet if the abstractions we live by are not truth, they are more or less serviceable. And it is fair to conclude that the most widely serviceable abstractions may be the closest to truth. The testimony of "universal philosophical ideas" is that Ethics is the best foundation for life in the circumstances of the human condition. Ethics provides the best guide for decision in spite of our ignorance. Without ethics, first drift, then whirl, becomes the ruler of our lives. Even with ethics we will still make mistakes, but they will be fewer, and none perhaps without remedy. This seems a reasonable case for "The Humanities as a Moral Force."

REVIEW
ON MANAGING IGNORANCE

THE present is a time in which imminent disaster is widely recognized, bringing anxious and sometimes strident effort to turn the direction of the world's movement around. But the present is also a time when respected thinkers are making it clear that a recovery of intellectual and moral *balance* is also going on. What is the meaning of the simultaneous presence of these opposite tendencies?

Our lives, it seems just to say, are gravely out of balance, yet our minds are reaching toward an equilibrium that has hardly existed since the time of Plato in Greece, or the time of the Buddha in India, or o£ Lao tse in China. But when we speak admiringly of these philosophical antecedents, it is well to remember that Plato found the world of the Athenians so much in decline that he withdrew from engagement in practical affairs; that conditions were such in India when Buddha taught that not long after his death the Buddhists were driven from the land of their birth; and as for Lao tse, he simply disappeared on the "Western Frontier" of China after a lifetime of vainly trying to persuade the Chinese rulers to adopt the ordering principles he proposed. So there is nothing novel about contradictory tendencies. If history gives instruction, they seem naturally paired, perhaps as conjunctions of ends and beginnings.

Our present focus is on the kind of balance now being achieved. For this we find the work of Huston Smith very nearly the best available source. Prof. Smith—he teaches religion and philosophy at Syracuse University—has a firm grasp of the themes that characterize the modern mind. He is both protagonist and recorder of the movement toward balance. He knows the literature of world philosophy and religion and has a working grasp of the "philosophy" of science. In addition, his learning does not complicate his prose. His writing is disarming because he wants to be understood, while the tangible warmth of his human concern in no way dulls the cutting edge of his reason.

In his latest book, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind* (Crossroad, 1982, $14,95), one of the chapters, "A Critique of the Modern Western Mind-Set," begins with the human causes of change. Why is the mechanistmaterialist outlook being replaced? Because of what it leaves out, what it ignores and declares of no importance. Change is on the way because we are sensing the appalling abyss in both our intellectual and emotional lives, and because the wide-ranging results of application of the scientific method, once regarded as liberatory and beneficent, are increasingly recognized as confining and often debilitating. Philosophers and poets long ago pointed out these tendencies, but were told that the practical achievements of science made such fears irrelevant. Where are the *products* of philosophy? asked the enthusiasts of the World Machine, and they were not impressed by the shy answers they received. Those things don't matter, they said, and until lately it has seemed to most people that they were right.

Today, three centuries later, comes the powerful rejoinder: What are the *meanings* in the world of science? To this question there are no answers at all. There is no department of human meaning in scientific inquiry, and we are discovering how much this matters to us.

Huston Smith shows that meanings are the "Excluded Knowledge" of the Modern Western Mind-Set. Shut out are intrinsic and normative values, purposes, both global and existential meanings, and, finally, the *qualities* by which we measure the satisfactions and deprivations of our day-to-day lives. In its progress through the years, science has in its theory continually moved away from these all-pervasive realities of human existence, and now, in its dominant practice, it erects barriers to the sense of meaning that we can hardly live without. Our recognition of these barriers is the basis for the growing demand for

another conception of knowledge—knowledge that will include Values, Purposes, Meanings, and Qualities. Prof. Smith emphasizes the drama of this quest:

> Considering the importance of these four domains for human life—for three hundred years mankind has all but held its breath waiting for science to close in on them—the fact that it has made no inroads whatever would seem to be a clear sign that science is not fashioned to deal with them. The reason we resist science's limitations is not factual but psychological—we don't want to face up to them. For science is what the modern world believes in. Since it has authored our world, to lose faith in it, as to some extent we must if we admit that its competence is limited, is to lose faith in our kind of world. Such loss of faith would be comparable to the crisis that would have visited the Middle Ages had it suddenly discovered that God was only semicompetent—that he was not God but just another god. The fall of a God is no small matter.

Well, here we are, high on the cold plateau of disillusionment, but also of freedom and challenge—characterized by William Butler Yeats as the "rise of soul against intellect." Prof. Smith quotes a contemporary sociologist (Manfred Stanley) for a concise account of what we are striving to leave behind, pressed by the malaise called "alienation."

> At its most fundamental level, the diagnosis of alienation is based on the view that modernization forces upon us a world that, although baptized as real by science, is denuded of all humanly recognizable qualities: beauty and ugliness, love and hate, passion and fulfillment, salvation and damnation. It is not, of course, being claimed that such matters are not part of the existential realities of human life. It is rather that the scientific world view makes it illegitimate to speak of them as being "objectively" part of the world, forcing us instead to define such evaluation and such emotional experience as "merely subjective" projections of people's inner lives.

The linchpin of the towering scientific outlook is its claim to "objectivity"—to the fact that science gives definition to and is solely concerned with what is really *there* in the world. But in recent years—although starting, more than half a century ago, with Arthur Eddington—leading scientists have themselves been declaring that what science finds "out there" is what scientists decided was worth looking for—a subjective choice. Consciousness, in short, may have fifty-one per cent of the say in what is "real." Meanwhile, the course of empirical physical research (guided, however, by the subtleties of mathematical invention and necessity) has dissolved the hard "uncuttable" atoms into a mist of Joycean quarks and overlapping fields, with the effect that even scientific philosophy seems to confirm—or at least allow—the liberation demanded by both poets and common sense. Once more we are on our own.

This is the meaning of Huston Smith's book. He has a way of making the intellectual and moral topography of our present situation unmistakably clear. What then shall we do?

> The alternatives to objectivity, prediction, control, and number are subjectivity, surprise, surrender, and words. With the exception of the last of these four terms, it sounds odd even to suggest that education might turn to them. This shows how deeply committed we are to the scientific quartet; the question is, are we too deeply implicated with it even to imagine what an education that swung toward the neglected alternatives would look like?

The priority of subjectivity is now admitted, more or less. What is the implication of accepting—even embracing—surprise? Surprise is the admission of ignorance, indeed requires it. The new outlook will accept ignorance and learn how to manage with it. It will recognize that every determination of "fact" produces a corresponding field of ignorance filled with things we didn't know we didn't know. Moral man has always understood this about the human condition and now intellectual man is learning it. A wonderful collaboration might result. That this possibility is more than a hopeful speculation seems clear:

> Balancing our present assumption that education's role is to transmit what we know, education for surprise would not reject that premise but would add that it is equally important to remember how much we do not know. Learning

> theory? Who knows, really, how we learn? Medicine? I go to visit my neighbor Robert Becker at New York's Upstate Medical Center because of interesting things I have heard about his research and he greets me with, "We know nothing!" "Welcome to the club," I reply, having studied the skeptical tradition in Western philosophy rather thoroughly. "That's not what I mean," he says. "It may be true generally, but it's especially true in medicine. Here I am, a director of medical research with thirty years behind me, and when I cut my face shaving I haven't any idea what makes it heal." Generalizing Becker's point, education for surprise would remind students that the more we know, the more we see how much we do not know. The larger the island of knowledge, the longer the shoreline of wonder.

Goodbye to the static observer, exit the non-participating objectivist, and enter the man-in-motion in pursuit of meaning and its corollaries in daily life. All Huston Smith's books are musings about the possibilities, the promise, the wonder, and finally, the *rules,* of this great enterprise.

COMMENTARY
BICYCLE HISTORY

THE August-September issue of *Not Man Apart* provides a fascinating story on bicycles—from their origin in England about 1870 (big front wheel, little rear one) to the present streamlined models. The familiar bike with same-size wheels and a chain drive dates from about 1890 and was then called the "safety bicycle." According to the writer, Mark Evanoff, riding them soon became widely fashionable.

> The bicycle fad grew. People were willing to trade all their possessions for a bicycle, which changed consumption habits. Consequently watch and jewelry sales fell to almost zero; furniture, books, tobacco, and dress sales suffered. People took up riding in the country rather than staying at home. Bicycling was hailed as bringing the different economic classes together.

While the enthusiasm of the writer for bikes seems a bit exaggerated, his report is salted with amusing facts.

> Bicycling was a social activity. People chose to ride in the country rather than attend church. Ministers tried to lure young people back to the services by building bicycle stalls for those who rode to church. When this didn't work, religious groups distributed posters depicting bicycle riders descending into Hell.

The story seems as much a comment on extravagant journalism and the highs and lows of human nature, as bicycle history. For example:

> Bicycling was said to cause crime. Because it was so popular, people would steal to get one. Gangs organized to steal bicycles; highway robbers and bank robbers used bicycles as getaway vehicles. . . .
>
> The Indianapolis Plumbers Union passed a resolution prohibiting the use of a bicycle on the job. Most of a plumber's time was spent sending his assistant back to the shop to get a forgotten tool. A bicycle saved too much time.

There is this pithy recommendation of the bike:

> A person on a bike is more energy efficient than any other machine or living thing. On a flat surface, a person riding a bike burns .15 calories, per gram, per kilometer pedaled. By comparison, .75 grams are burned walking.

For aging Southern Californians who remember the origins of freeways, the following will be of interest:

> In 1899, H.H. Markham, a former California governor, and Horace Dobbins attempted to build an elevated bikeway between Pasadena and Los Angeles along a route carefully selected for its scenic quality. After completing only two miles, Southern Pacific, fearing competition, obtained a court injunction against further construction. The Pasadena freeway, the nation's first freeway, now runs along the proposed route.

The advent of the automobile, unfortunately, reduced the popularity of the bike to humdrum personal transport and it was not until the 1960s that its star rose again, while today, when automobiles are regarded as almost sinful, MIT professors are inventing the bike's most efficient form as the "recumbent" design. Apparently, you get the most motion out of your legs and the least wind resistance if you lie down oh these models and pump away. A man recently cycled across the country in 14.5 days, using a recumbent bike weighing 29 pounds.

Meanwhile, for those who are no longer up to balancing and powering the two-wheelers, it is interesting to know that George Benello (quoted in MANAS in past years) is trying to develop an alternative-powered car in Northampton, Mass. One hopes that his effort will lead to do-it-yourself possibilities in this direction.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

THE HUMAN LOT

THE problem of how to live a good life in a bad world besets us all. There are those—a few—who have found ways of doing it, but the skills involved are hardly transferable. Yet examining the practice of some of these people is likely to be useful.

But first we have three broad comments on all such understandings—comments concerned with the environment in which they are begun. We found them in various places in *Resurgence* for March-April. The first is by John Moat, who says:

> Once an idea becomes orthodox it's had it. It is my impression . . . that the orthodoxy serves the group as the ego serves the individual—it is a self-centered device for achieving a totally unfounded sense of self-importance. It is, poor isolated soul, a fiction of belonging, and the sense it fosters compounded of vanity, is that of being the unique and the chosen. Of being a Mormon or a Manchester United supporter, or a member of Mensa or Moonies or the Movement of the Mother's Union. Self-centeredness is actually the most pitiable Self-denial. That is why Life can only shrug its shoulders at the orthodox.

There seems little here to dispute. Yet some shy voice should be raised to ask if the conceits of orthodoxy are any worse than the egotisms of ostentatious nonconformity. And someone else might murmur, "Blessed be the habits and conventions needed for daily functioning, which give us time for deciding on the kind of orthodoxy it is time to desert."

Elsewhere in *Resurgence* is an interview with the late Erich Fromm, one of the ancestors of humanistic psychology, in which, asked if he thought "people whom we generally regard as normal are really sick," he said:

> Yes. The most normal are the sickest: and the sick are the healthiest. That sounds smart, or perhaps a little contrived. But I am quite serious—it's not merely a witty formula. The person who is "sick" shows that certain things are not so suppressed in him that they are unable to come into conflict with cultural patterns, but because of this fiction they are regarded as symptoms of illness. The symptom, like a pain, is only an indication that something is wrong. He who has such a symptom is fortunate. We know that a person who could feel no pain would be in a very dangerous situation. But very many people are so adapted, have so abandoned everything that is individual to them, have become so alienated, have become so reduced to the roles of tools and robots, that they are absolutely unable to feel conflict. That is to say, their true feelings, their love and hate, are so repressed or withered, that these people present a picture of chronic schizophrenia.

The reasons?

> The reasons seem quite obvious to me: our society is geared around the premise that the goal of life is increased production and greater consumption. Progress of economy and technology. Not of human beings! What is useful to human beings is of little interest. Many of our adverts, and much propaganda, praise things which are unspeakably deadly and harmful. . . . Almost all the arguments are for carrying on as we are and sliding into catastrophe. But I also say that as long as there remains a small chance—shall we say one or two per cent?—we shouldn't give up. We should all try to avoid catastrophe. For when we deal with life, it is different from dealing with money; if one wants to invest money and has only a one or two per cent chance that it won't be lost, then only a fool will invest it. If a person is really sick, and there is only a one or two per cent chance that his life can be saved, medicine will use everything to save his life. (First published in German in *Südwest-funk*.)

Fromm is both right and persuasive. Yet the key to remedying this condition is whether or not people suffering from our kind of "normalcy" are ready to admit their ill.

Our last quotation from *Resurgence is* a single sentence by Paul Goodman (heading a review):

> A free society cannot be the substitution of a "new order" for the old order; it is the extension of spheres of free action until they make up most of the social life.

In these quotations, what has the most importance: the diagnoses, or Goodman's rule? Does Goodman imply a corrective approach to the orthodox egotisms and the psychological ills of the age? And what do these juxtaposed comments suggest for the lives of children . . . and ourselves?

Our remaining space is devoted to some musings on possible means to a "good life." First, then, from Robert Hart, English writer and organic farmer, co-author, with Sholto Douglas, of *Forest Farming.* The quotation is taken from his article in *Gandhi Marg* for last December:

> A free and truly peaceful "One World" would not be a homogeneous mass of humanity dominated by vast monolithic institutions—as some envisage—but a complex of diverse, self-governing and largely self-sufficient nations, deeply rooted in their respective soils and traditions, and united by voluntary cooperation to fulfill God's universal design.
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> To operate as exemplary nuclei of the New India, Gandhi established a number of ashramas, politico-religious communities of a traditional Indian type. Their primary aim was to propagate the Gandhian creed of creative, nonviolent living. Each ashrama comprised a leader and a number of young men and women, who received a two-year training course in craft-work and Basic Education. This system was evolved by Gandhi to fulfill his aim of helping children to develop into whole, rounded, practical human beings, with their feet firmly on the earth, while their higher faculties were imbued with spiritual ideals. It is a way of learning through living and doing, through performing actions which are of basic importance to life with the whole being. . . . In many Gandhian schools Basic Education was geared to a single productive process from start to finish, such as the manufacture of cotton clothing. Children would be taught how to prepare the soil and sow the cotton seed, how to hoe, weed, and cultivate the plant, how to harvest the bolls, to spin the thread, to weave it into lengths of cloth and finally make the cloth into garments. They would be taught the art of dyeing and embroidery and their aesthetic senses would be developed by study of the characteristic patterns of different provinces. Thus, too, geography would be brought in, as well as mathematics in connection with distribution and marketing. . . . A world order of this kind, based on mutual aid rather than competition and conflict, giving rather than getting, production for need rather than for personal power and wealth, would enable mankind to get on with the real business of living.

For conclusion we have a quotation from Wendell Berry, farmer and author who regards his place subject to the depredations of the Kentucky river—as an atonement for previous mistakes by people of "my kind." The erosion is likely to go on, no matter what he does. He says:

> Living at the lower end of the Kentucky River watershed is what is now known as "an educational experience"—and not an easy one. A lot of information comes with it that is severely damaging to the reputation of our people and our time. From where I live and work, I never have to look far to see that the earth does indeed pass away. But however that is taught, and however bitterly learned, it is something that should be known, and there is a certain good strength in knowing it. To spend one's life farming a piece of the earth so passing is, as many would say, a hard lot. But it is, in an ancient sense, the human lot. What saves it is to love the farming.

It may interest readers to know that Berry's essay, *Standing by Words*, which first appeared in the Winter 1980-81 *Hudson Review*, is now available as a booklet from the Lindisfarne Press, R.D. No. 2, West Stockbridge, Mass. 01266, at $3.75.

FRONTIERS

Autonomy and Unanimity

A LARGE book which came in for review, *Networking* (Doubleday, $15.95), by Jessica Lipnack and Jeffrey Stamps, made occasion for qualms. Are these imaginative people active in networks around the country in danger of losing their amateur standing? Publicity is seldom a friend to spontaneity, and the organizational structure which growth seems to require often terminates the wonderful improvisations that give life and extended influence to network activity. Already, apparently, there are scholars who are developing a vocabulary to identify the features of networking. Is this a good thing?

Networking means starting to do something that needs doing and then helping to create a web of collaborators who want to work toward the same ends. In one chapter the authors identify what was probably the first significant network in American history (the Indians of course had their tribal networks long before):

> About 200 years ago, local groups calling themselves Committees of Correspondence formed a network, a communications forum where homespun political and economic thinkers hammered out their ideological differences, sculpting the form of a separate and independent country in North America. Writing to one another and sharing letters with neighbors, this revolutionary generation nurtured its adolescent ideas into a mature politics. Both men and women participated in the debate over independence from England and the desirable shape of the American future. It was in one of these letters that Abigail Adams first mentioned the idea of enfranchisement for women, while another of her friends, the playwright Mercy Otis Warren, used ideas from the letters to create her popular political satire about the British.
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> During the years in which the American Revolution was percolating, letters, news-sheets, and pamphlets carried from one village to another were the means by which ideas about democracy were refined. Eventually, the correspondents agreed that the next step in their idea exchange was to hold a face-to-face meeting. The ideas of independence and government had been debated, discussed, discarded, and reformulated literally hundreds of times by the time people in the revolutionary network met in Philadelphia.

What followed was the Declaration of Independence; and then, after its confirmation by arms, there came what Catherine Bowen, repeating both Washington and Madison, called the *Miracle at Philadelphia*—the making of the Constitution of the United States. One could say that the genius of the network was poured into the Constitution, and there eventually lost. This amounts to suggesting that the golden days of a network come before its achievements are institutionalized.

The vitality of a society is accumulated and used in its networks, as this book amply shows. The women's movement is a network, and a chapter is given to describing "One Very Special Network: The Boston Women's Health Book Collective." Other networks are concerned with healing, sharing, communities and cooperatives, education and communication, and personal growth. After each section there is a Guide giving the names and addresses of active groups.

There are these useful definitions:

> A network is a whole made up of participant parts. In networks comprising individuals, each participant in turn is the hub of a personal network of family, friends, and contacts. Networks are composed of participants who have friends. This indistinct level of informally connected "friends" of participants is a rarely recognized but often crucial level for understanding the astonishing growth and influence that a small network might exert in a particular situation. . . . Although networks and bureaucracies both have level structure and are wholes with parts within wholes, networks and bureaucracies differ in how they structure the relationship between the whole and its parts. Bureaucracies tend to bring parts together through *centralized* control and to *maximize* the dependency of parts on the whole. Networks tend to bring parts together under *decentralized coo*peration and to *minimize* their dependency on the whole. Network parts are dispersed and flexibly connected, whereas bureaucratic parts are concentrated and rigidly connected. . . . Like the fly whose "one" eye comprises thousands of individual eyes, networks "see" through many perspectives

> although the unknowing observer may think they have only one point of view. At times, a network seems to see, with one eye and "speak" with one voice, testifying to consensus around an idea or a strategy. Such moments of unanimity are important, because they often reveal the essential common values and bonds that explain the unity among the diversity of network viewpoints. . . . The many perspectives of a network derive from the autonomy of its members. . . . Ideally, all the participants in a network share in the leadership functions by taking responsibility for tasks and viewpoints related to the network as a whole.

Another recently published "directory" is the *Future Survey* Annual *1980-81* ($25.00), edited by Michael Marien, published by the World Future Society, 4916 St. Elmo Ave., Bethesda, Md. 20814. This publication is called by the editor "a tool for aiding public understanding of major social problems and possibilities: what is changing (trends), what may happen (forecasts), and what ought to be done (policy proposals, prescriptions, ideas for the future)." Briefly reviewed are books and articles on subjects within sixteen categories—such as Energy, Food and Agriculture, Science and Technology, Environment and Resources, Children and Education, and Health. The material presented, the editor says, does not represent "futurology" and it offers few predictions, but seeks to inform concerning present conditions and future possibilities.

To illustrate the cogency of the summaries provided by Marien, we give one review—of Morris Kline's *Mathematics: The Loss of Certainty* (Oxford University Press):

> Explains in non-technical language the drastic changes that have taken place in our understanding of "pure" as well as "applied" math, and the implications for science and for human reason generally. Mathematical activity is flourishing as never before, with the rapidly growing interest in computers and the expanded search for quantitative relationship in the social and biological sciences. But the current predicament of mathematics is that there is not one but many mathematics, and each for numerous reasons fails to satisfy the members of the opposing schools. It is now apparent that the concept of a universally accepted, infallible body of reasoning—the pride of human expression—is a grand illusion. Uncertainty and doubt concerning the future of mathematics have replaced the certainties and complacency of the past. Mathematics has suffered a fall, which directly or indirectly affects all employment of reason.

This seems an entirely wholesome development. Other reviews are similarly informing.