VOLUME XXX, NO. 12
MARCH 23, 1977

ON THE HUMAN CONDITION

IN 1932, Canon Richard Sheppard, Dean of Canterbury Cathedral—a man called "the best known and best loved priest in all England"—decided that he had to do something about the complete incompatibility of war and Christianity. He talked with his friends, Maude Royden and Herbert Read, considering "the possibility of gathering together a large number of people to form a Peace Army, which, unarmed, would stand between the opposing forces wherever there might be conflict." They laid plans for such an "army," but serious illness overtook Dick Sheppard, delaying action for a time. In 1934, while discussing the proposal with Frank Crozier (a former Brigadier General who had resigned his commission rather than take part in the Black and Tan atrocities in Ireland), Sheppard hit upon an idea that he thought might work. Sybil Morrison tells the story in *I Renounce* War, an account of the origin and history of the Peace Pledge Union (6 Endsleigh Street, London W.C. 1):

> It was as a result of this conversation that on 16th October, 1934 he sent a letter to the Press asking men who agreed with him that war was not only a denial of Christianity but a crime against humanity to write a postcard making a simple signed statement "I renounce war and never again, directly or indirectly, will I support or sanction another." He had taken these words from a sermon preached by a famous New York minister, Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, on Armistice Sunday, 1933. . . .
>
> He had no thought then of a big organization, of sponsors and committees, aims and objects; he just wanted to know how many would be with him in a crusade against war if he should undertake it.
>
> He had given the address of the Croziers' home in Walton-on-Thames to the Press since he himself was obliged to be abroad at the time. For two days after the letter's publication in some provincial papers, and one or two national dailies and weeklies, Frank Crozier and his wife Grace, waited for the arrival of postcards, hurrying to the door directly the postman's knock sounded. . . . "I can't believe," said Frank "that no one, not one person cares enough to reply, especially as it's Dick." . . . when the third day came and there was still nothing, they looked at each other in grief and dismay. "Whatever *are* we to say to Dick?" moaned Frank.
>
> It was at this very moment that the telephone rang. It was the village postmaster. Why, he demanded to know, had he not been warned about "these postcards." "Postcards?" cried Frank, his heart leaping. "Yes, postcards, sacks of 'em; I should've been warned, but I've got a van now, only wanted to know there'd be someone to take 'em in." . . .
>
> In the weeks to come Dick was to learn how many agreed with him, and to learn also that in some ways it was simpler to be alone in his conviction than to be responsible for over 100,000 who looked to him for guidance in the tremendous step they had taken, not in saying "No" to war, but in pledging themelves to take no part in it.

The subsequent course and present activity of the Peace Pledge Union, which grew out of Dick Sheppard's letter, is traced by Sybil Morrison, and a vivid sense of its vision and moral strength is obtained from reading *Bridge into the Future,* the letters of Max Plowman (for years General Secretary of PPU). Obviously, Dick Sheppard began something that spoke to the aspiring side of the human condition. There were of course others before him in making this appeal, and many more after, with the result that today there are minorities of people in almost every land who renounce war and will not support it.

Yet we still have war, and increasingly ominous preparations for war, throughout the world. Does this make the dream of peace "utopian"? What about all the visionary struggles of which people say that they cannot possibly succeed? Are they useless, or are they, although continually failing, absolutely necessary?

In *The Soul of Man under Socialism,* Oscar Wilde wrote:

> A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realization of Utopias.

More analytically, Arthur Morgan said in *Nowhere Was Somewhere:*

> When we examine some of the causes of the failure of utopias, we must reach the conclusion that many of these causes run deep in the cultural patterns of mankind. No legislative change, no revolution in the form of society, will take away the necessity for the long, slow growth which must prepare men for a new Golden Age. Yet, as wax is rigid when cold, pliable when warm, and flows freely when hot, so, though the spirits and habits of men may seem rigid and frozen, they may become ductile or even liquid, and may take on new forms with surprising rapidity, if they are warmed by a great personality, by great trials, or great events. Then it is fortunate if a great pattern has been envisioned and is ready for them.

It hardly needs pointing out that people swing in their allegiances from one pattern to another, depending upon their feelings—what they hope for and what they fear.

A leaflet issued by the Peace Pledge Union recounts some history:

> When the Second World War came there was a great falling off of members, including some of the sponsors, but Dick Sheppard House [named for the PPU founder, who died in 1937] was crowded with pacifists and war resisters who needed advice and help, and the protest against war continued against enormous odds. . . . Thousands registered as Conscientious Objectors and went to prison; some accepted the conditions of alternative service, but all said *"No"* to war.

In the 1950s—

> Thousands of people became involved in the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament. This was not and never became a pacifist movement, but many pacifists supported it believing it to be a first step toward the renunciation of all weapons and all wars. Civil disobedience and nonviolent action, aspects of pacifism but not unique to pacifism, had been used by some PPU members in the early fifties; and the Nonviolent Resistance Groups' actions had paved the way for the more famous campaign of civil disobedience undertaken by the Committee of 100. These movements and their offshoots served to awaken public concern and jolt government policies, making a greater impact at the time than any existing pacifist organisation was able to do. The Peace Pledge Union however, as an organisation, stuck to its uncompromising belief that it was not enough to ban the weapon that could destroy the world—not even enough to demand total unilateral disarmament (which many a PPU campaign had made a priority)—but essential to realize that only the abolition of war would make the use of these weapons impossible. Pacifism had to concentrate on the many causes of war and strike the disease at its roots.

There were those who became convinced that an essential cause of war lies in what has been called the "structural violence" of competitive economic systems. The adversary attitudes fostered by acquisitive goals, they held, make war inevitable, not only by shaping the attitudes of people, but also in creating conditions of want and injustice. Sooner or later, nearly all those who work seriously for peace formulate to themselves the simple truth put so well by Thomas a Kempis—"All men desire peace, but few men desire those things that make for peace."

Two publications in England clearly reflect this recognition—*Resurgence* and the *Ecologist.* The January 1979 issue of *Ecologist* presented *Blueprint for Survival,* a compilation by a number of scientists outlining a plan for socio-economic organization of Britain according to ecological and decentralized principles—a design for living, you could say, which would reverse the prevailing cultural influences, making it natural for people to "desire those things that make for peace." In the first issue of *Resurgence* (May, 1966), John Papworth, the founding editor, gave reasons for the broader approach contemplated for this magazine:

> Against the background of a world-wide war crisis that is basically a crisis of political power, the methods of war protest so far evolved, the marches, meetings, manifestoes, and other forms of mass activity, are clearly inadequate and can now hope to achieve little practical effect.

> Today there are welcome signs that a growing number of people is beginning to realise that this is so. . . . A civilisation that genuinely reflects all that human beings long for and aspire to cannot be prefabricated either by Fabians, Commissars, or capitalists; it can only be created on the basis of each person's freely acknowledged power to decide on each of the many questions that affect his life. He who would gloss over these rights, for whatever ostensible reason, is on the high road to totalitarianism and war. . . .
>
> We have come to see that besides the bigger campaigns of protest . . . we need also to extend our field of action and to change our social structures if they are ever to yield peace as naturally as they now yield war. . . . Men will not come to reject our war societies until they have some coherent alternative to which they can turn. . . . It is evident that such an alternative will embrace a multi-cellular, power-dispersed, world civilization, rather than the totalitarian, state-power giants that dominate it today. . . .

Resurgence presents the elements of a "great pattern" such as Arthur Morgan proposed, and also nuts-and-bolts applications of ideals to the practical circumstances of present-day life.

So far we have considered the problems and utopian vision of a *social* outlook. A transition from this point of view to the consideration of individual attitudes is provided by a passage in Morgan's book, in the chapter, "Why Utopias Fail":

> In a community of a thousand persons nine hundred and fifty may . . . be going about their business sincerely; yet if the other fifty make it their primary business, not to produce wealth, but to manipulate affairs so as to appropriate wealth or power for themselves, very often they can succeed.
>
> When the strategy of getting power is their chief interest and exercise, men may become highly skilled at it, as the great majority are not. The power-seekers can study the public mind, its weaknesses and foibles. They can plot their way into strategic positions. . . .
>
> This institution of the racket is very old, and its technique is well developed. Along the mountain highways of eastern Europe at every strategic point one comes upon the ruins of a castle, where in days gone by some robber baron lived and levied tax on every caravan of traders that passed by. His descendant through control of the banks or other agencies of business, may be no less well situated to take tribute from all who pass.
>
> In America recently it was reported that every artichoke which went from a California garden and every egg from a Utah farm to a New York market paid its tribute to a racketeer. It is reported that every pound of mica which is mined must, on its way to market, pay tribute to a small control group. In a hundred or a thousand industries, large and small, the process is repeated. In most cities, towns, villages, and counties, while the average decent citizens go about their business, a little group of men, laying their lines and planning deliberately, have taken possession of the local government. One of our stronger labor unions did not have a convention or an election for ten years. The president found a way to get control, and laid aside a fortune while in that position. Some other unions have had a not greatly different career. In various American industries, notwithstanding antitrust litigation, the control of the industry by a small inner ring is almost complete. Some of the most persistent and oppressive rackets men have known have been in the name of religion.

Morgan makes this concluding comment:

> Men are so adaptable that in a large and complex society given almost any conceivable form of social organization, the racketeer can study and master the operations of that social order and can make it serve his purpose. It is doubtful, therefore, whether racket ever can be permanently eliminated from society merely by a form of social and economic organization, though some forms serve its purpose much better than others.

This seems a sage comment regarding the environmental factors affecting individual change. Bigness and complexity are obviously attributes made to order for the purposes of the racketeer and the self-interested manipulator. A high degree of immunity to such forms of exploitation might be achieved by scaling social organization to a smaller size, making its simpler administrative processes highly visible and manipulation much more difficult.

What then can be done at the individual level? This takes us into the domain of psychology. Psychological utopians are few in number. We think easily of only two—Trigant Burrow and

A.H. Maslow. In his Utopian study, *Eupsychian Management*, Maslow speaks of the kind of work people do and how it affects their lives:

> If work is introjected into the self (I guess it always is, more or less, even when one tries to prevent it), then the relation between self-esteem and work is closer than I had thought. Especially healthy and stable self-esteem (the feeling of worth, pride, influence, importance, etc.) rests on good, worthy work to be introjected, thereby becoming part of the self. Maybe more of our contemporary malaise is due to introjection of nonprideful, robotized, broken-down-into-easy-bits kind of work than I had thought. The more I think about it, the more difficult I find it to *conceive* of feeling proud of myself, self-loving and self-respecting, if I were working, for example, in some chewing gum factory, or a phony advertising agency, or in some factory that turned out shoddy furniture. I've written so far of "real achievement" as a basis for solid self-esteem, but I guess this is too general and needs more spelling out. Real achievement means inevitably a worthy and virtuous task. To do some idiotic job very well is certainly not real achievement.

This brings into focus the question of everyday attitudes as the foundation of all change for the better. When we propose utopian goals, we address not only the visionary and hopeful side of the human being, but also that complex of feelings and habits which results from what people do every day. For insight into how this works, we turn to a paper on recidivism (repeated crime) by Charles B. Thompson, an associate of Trigant Burrow. To go from devotion to peace and utopian longing to the other extreme of human behavior should help to fill out the picture of the human condition, especially since crime is continually on the increase. Dr. Thompson writes to throw light on why criminals commit offenses again and again:

> For some years Burrow has emphasized the fact—to take but one aspect of this thesis—that our social structure puts each individual through a very definite process of conditioning, a conditioning that is in direct opposition to intrinsic patterns of expression and development. Broadly speaking, the individual is conditioned almost from birth to believe that all actions, and even all thoughts are to be divided into the two categories, "good" and "bad." The child is constantly admonished to be "good," or to "do the right thing"; to avoid being "bad" or doing the "wrong" thing.
>
> At the same very early period of his life, each of us as an individual is conditioned to react with a special affective content to the stimulus word "you," or, as he feels it, "I," and the picture or image denoted by this word comes to have more importance than anything in the world. . . . every individual, normal or neurotic, great or small, is preoccupied with thoughts of himself and his advantage. It is obsessive with us. Each one becomes so conditioned that his thought automatically is "how will what is going on at this moment cause *me* gain or loss?" Normal individuals then are conditioned to a self-preoccupation—and to self-acquisitiveness.
>
> It should be kept in mind, then that when we are confronted with a prisoner in our examining room, we are studying an individual who, like ourselves, is the resultant of this same continual conditioning process, for the criminal and the neurotic and the law-abiding citizens are all members of the same social structure or society, which, as we have described, automatically conditions all its members to react effectively and disproportionately to this "I" image. . . . In our superficial angers and hatreds or in our agreements, in our wars and in our equally superficial arrangements called peace, "normal" man, like the criminal, is himself a repeater of pathological reactions. Naturally, then, if we are all involved automatically in repeated reflex actions that have to do with oppositeness, self-acquisitiveness and competition, the nature of the behavior of the recidivist is not far to seek, for the problem of the recidivist is but the problem of man's behavior generally.
>
> We might well keep in mind that society has its own crimes which, however, are not recognized as such because they are committed on so large a scale. Society has its mass homicides called wars, its mass-robberies called invasions, its wholesale larcenies called empire-building. As long as the individual's behavior fits in with the mass-reaction it is considered "good" behavior. As long as he does not question by word or deed the validity of the mass-behavior, he may be called a "good citizen." . . .
>
> In this broader setting, the egocentricity of the overtly antisocial or criminal individual appears in a different perspective. Criminals merely present an exaggerated form of the ego-preoccupation that characterizes the individuals of our normal society,

> and in our attempt to deal with them, we are confronted with a problem in community behavior.
>
> In the absence of a clear accounting of this community problem, we can only expect the supply of antisocial individuals to continue to pour into our courts and prisons; and we cannot hope that our present legal and correctional procedure will fundamentally alter the behavior reaction of the individuals whom we have called repeater criminals. Our responsibility, then, is to reckon broadly with those factors within ourselves which determine antisocial trends throughout society and of which the behavior of the recidivist is but one aspect. (*American Journal of Psychiatry*, November, 1937.)

As relief to this forbidding picture, Dr. Thompson observes that the prevailing response to "the stimulus word 'I' does not represent health or wholeness, for this 'I' is a secondarily acquired image which has been inculcated in the individual and superimposed upon the organism's total personality."

The diagnosis, however, stands. In relation to war, today's society is hardly more than a "repeater criminal," and the remedy requires nothing less than a basic re-formation of the conception of "I."

REVIEW
THE GOD WHO BECAME HUMAN

DO men imitate the gods, or is it the other way around? Judging from the world's great religions, men set problems and the gods set solutions. But the solutions are godly, which makes them difficult for humans to apply.

In the Indian epic, the *Ramayana* (*Rama's Way*), humans and animals seem more important than the gods. The conclusion is unavoidable, since all that humans accomplish in this tale is done by great effort, with might and main, while the gods press magical buttons. One comes to take the powers of the gods for granted, but the exploits of men are heroic.

As retold by William Buck, the *Ramayana* presents the story of Rama, Sita, and Ravana in a readable version of a great Eastern classic which may have been the origin of the *Iliad.* (The publisher is the University of California Press, 1976, and the price is $14.95.) Rama is a prince, Sita his bride who is kidnapped by Ravana. Ravana is a demon who, because of his immunity to death feels free to ravage the earth and slaughter its inhabitants. In a weak moment the creative deity, Brahma, granted Ravana the boon of immortality, explaining later, when reproached by Indra, whose realm had been desolated by Ravana and his demonic hosts, that on impulse he had promised Ravana he couldn't be killed by either gods or underworld beings.

This left a loophole, however, which is disclosed in an interchange between Indra and Vishnu:

> Indra went to Narayana, the Lord Vishnu, the Soul of the Universe. Narayana sat watching Indra approach. Indra pressed together his hands, touched his brow, and bent his head low to Narayana's feet. "Searcher of Hearts, I bow to you, *namas.* I have still faith in the Good Law of Dharma." . . .
>
> "How shall we bring down Ravana?" asked Indra. "'Because of Brahma's boon is the Demon King strong, and for no other cause of his own. Help me, you are my only refuge, there is no other for me. *I will gather my storms again and attack Lanka* [Ceylon, where Ravana lives], *give me your permission to fight Ravana once more!"*
>
> "Never!" said Narayana. "Don't you understand that Brahma's words are always true? Do not falsify the three spheres of life. I would not have let you fight in the first place, though you were right to resist and Ravana was wrong. Ravana asked Brahma—*Let me be unslayable by every creature of Heaven and of the underworlds.* And Brahma promised—*So be it.* That boon is unbreakable, yet I will cause Ravana's death. That is the truth. Only ask me . . ."
>
> "Ah," said Indra, "from disdain Ravana did not mention men or animals, and took no safeguard against them. He eats men; they are his food and why should he fear them? Lord on Earth life resembles Hell again. We need you again. Look at us, see us, and bless us. For the good of all the worlds, Lord Narayan, accept birth as a man."
>
> "I already have."
>
> Waves of happiness washed over Indra. "Dark blue Narayana clad in yellow, become four. Put aside the shell trumpet, the razor-edged chakra, the lotus and mace you hold in your four hands. Empty your dark hands; descend into the borrowed and fanciful world of men, desperate and glittering. Become Dasaratha's four sons, born of blood and seed. Take your Goddess Lakshmi and let her be your mortal wife."
>
> "We will go down," said Narayana.

There are deeds, in short, which only humans can perform, and getting rid of evil is one of them. Why can't the gods make war on evil? Possibly because they are beyond it, not involved in it. At any rate, the defeat of Ravana was a project for human beings and animals, not the gods. Rama, chief of Dasaratha's four sons, acquired a wonderful animal ally, a white monkey, in his war on Lanka.

Can a god become a man, take on the garb of mortality? This would seem entirely possible, and reasonable enough if the gods were once men and have graduated to supervisory (heavenly) roles. The price exacted of the gods who become men may be that they become vulnerable to human misfortunes and illusions. This certainly happened to Rama. His extraordinary delivery of Sita from

the Demon King's clutches left him in a suspicious mood. Had she been true to him? A god would surely have known better than to ask.

Epics, at any rate, present us with these contradictions in their heroic characters. Even Ravana, a high-achiever in the art of wickedness, discourses on *dharma,* or duty. The duty he chose, apparently, was to act wholly without conscience. He is an abstraction of evil, and therefore not human. He revels in the embarrassment of the gods who are impotent against him because of Brahma's impulsive moment. He has no relieving qualities at all.

The story of how William Buck came to undertake this work of translation, or rather rendering, is worth repeating. Back in 1955, when browsing in the public library in Carson City, Nevada, he came across an elaborate edition of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* published in the nineteenth century. He was then twenty years old. The *Gita* made so great an impression on him that he resolved to spend his life putting Indian classics into English. So he learned Sanskrit and set to work. Fifteen years later, when he died, he had completed a translation of the *Mahabharata,* the epic in which the *Gita* appears, the present rendition of the *Ramayana,* and had worked on but not finished a translation of the *Harivansa.* In the Introduction to the *Ramayana,* B. A. van Nooten, who teaches Sanskrit at the University of California (in Berkeley), says that the work is more of a rewriting than a translation, adding—

> William Buck's adaptation is an extraordinary accomplishment. He was neither a scholar nor a well-known author, and though he retells the Rama story with many variations of detail, he has succeeded in capturing the most important characteristics of the *Ramayana*: the simple religious tone that pervades the Indian original. We find in this rendering of the work the same wonder and unquestioning belief in the interrelation of natural and supernatural events that have appealed to millions of people who in the past two thousand years have listened to the recitation and re-enactment of the Rama story. In the minds of many people who hear the Ramayana a mystery is being presented, and slowly, erratically, parts of the mystery unfold. If we are fortunate, we get occasional glimpses of a higher, purer reality that holds out hope for those enmeshed in the sorry state of mundane existence. Again and again this revelation causes us to read and rethink the epic in order to experience again this joy of discovery. The struggle between good and evil is on our behalf and Rama is our hero.

Ravana is a king of evil spirits and his independence of threats by the gods enables the thronging denizens of the underworld to surface and reside with him on the island of Lanka, from which, as headquarters, they mount nightly expeditions of rapine. Early in the story, Dasaratha, Rama's father, asks a forest sage how it happens that the Rakshasas, or evil spirits, are stronger than Brahma:

> Viswamitra replied: "Majesty, we are living in the second age of the world, and the quarter part of Virtue has now died among men. These are faded days and Dharma declines. In the first age food came by wishing and grew from Earth without tending. No one wept, nor was cruel, nor hurt another; and there were not many gods then among different men but only one.
>
> "This age began with the first slaughter of an innocent animal to some lower god; men started to take action to gain objects and rewards; they gave no more gifts free just for the giving, except rarely, more and more rarely as years pass. This is a time of scene-shifting and contrivance; men no longer live as long; there are all about us arguments and objections and ambushes and devious cunning, deceitful sorcery and craft and fraud and guile and trickery and lies and many devices. King, against Ravana's Rakshasas there is no help in the forest and no help from the gods."

There is no reference, here, to Brahma's promise to Ravana, only the general decline in virtue on earth is the explanation for Ravana's power. In other words, Brahma's "impulse" may be thought of as a reflex obliged by human behavior, requiring, for remedy, the incarnation of a god who is willing to suffer the fortunes of human life. As a man Rama is able to conquer the evil of the age, slay Ravana, and drive the demons back underground.

Towards the end a curious dialogue occurs between Ravana and his mighty demon son, Indrajit. Ravana appeals to him for help as the battle for Lanka goes against the underworld forces. Indrajit is reluctant. He urges the King to return Sita to Rama, saying:

> "Think for a moment. Remember the past. When you were young you grew strong by following Dharma and by sacrifice, and so you ruled the worlds. Yet once on the throne you slighted Dharma, you had no courtesy towards life. You drove out kindness, and denied freedom to the Universe and made Creation suffer. . . . However great you may be do not live hostile to every other soul. The fear and anger of the helpless has taken the form of an army of animals. Death has led you on. You took Death on your lap the day you stole Sita, and death have you courted all this time."

But Indrajit is a faithful son and does as Ravana insists, dying in battle—a heroic example of virtue fighting on the wrong side. He is killed by Rama's brother Lakshmana. Rama and his brothers, although mortals, are able to use divine weapons because they are incarnated gods. Ravana burns his son's body, then waits for the dark, when he is strongest, to fight with Rama. An arrow from Rama's bow kills him at dawn.

COMMENTARY
AMERICA—BEFORE THE FALL

IVAN ILLICH'S account of what happens to the Mexican peasant when he arrives in Houston from Oaxaca (see Frontiers) recalls passages in a book on Nabuatl (Aztec) culture as it existed before the Spanish conquest. Dr. Illich says that in Texas the peasant is made to submit and adapt to dependence on outside services. As a result he becomes "a *pocho*, a being whose face and soul are washed out." This is the effect of participating in "civilization."

In *Aztec Thought and Culture* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), Miguel Leon-Portilla gives the teaching of the *tlamatinime*, the wise men of the Nabuatls. The task of the human, they said, is to obtain a "face," which means growing into human beinghood. Face, for the Nahuatls, was much more than external appearance: "It described the most individual characteristic of the human being—the very element which removed his anonymity."

The *tlamatinime* puts a mirror before the people, so that they will develop faces. These wise men were not priests, but teachers outside the Aztec caste system. Such a teacher is contrasted in ancient codices with the mere pretender to knowledge whose influence is just the opposite:

> He is . . . a mysterious wizard, a magician, a witch doctor,
> a public thief, he takes things.
> A sorcerer, a destroyer of faces.
> He leads people astray;
> He causes others to lose their faces.
> He entangles them with difficulties
> he causes the people to perish; he mysteriously puts an end to everything.

Dr. Illich's image of peasants whose faces are "washed out" has an ancient ancestry.

Another writer on this subject, Rafael J. Gonzales (in *Etc.* for December, 1968), remarks that the verb to teach, in Nahuatl, means "to give wisdom to the countenance of others." The word for teacher means "he who makes others take on a face," or enables them to define their characters, to discover themselves. Face and heart, this writer says, are a metaphor for "what we call the integral character of a human being, that harmony between the external acts of a man and those intimate, psychological motivations within him."

Of the outlook of these original Americans, Leon-Portilla says:

> The philosophy of the Nahuatl wise men, which probably stemmed from the ancient doctrines of the Teotihuacans and Toltecs, quite often reveals profound intuition and in some instances is remarkably "modern." Nahuatl philosophy offers the present-day philosopher a unique opportunity to observe man—removed from all contact with ancient civilizations of Africa, Asia, and Europe—in the role of creator of a way of thinking and of living.

The supreme irony is that the present-day "destroyers of faces" suppose themselves to be teachers of civilization and emissaries of progress. But as Illich says, their only pedagogy is instruction in dependency, their text a "catechism of needs."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SCHOOLS FOR TOMORROW

IN the course of his ruthless review of the children's book "industry" and its submissive and helpless "market," John Goldthwaite (in the January *Harper's*) pays his respects to a writer who is likely to know more about how children think and feel than a great many others:

> Dr. [Bruno] Bettelheim's serious critical study of fairy tales, *The Uses of Enchantment,* is exactly the kind of book that you would expect children's authors, critics, and librarians to have written many times over. The truth is, what good essays we have on children's stories are the work of such gifted amateurs as J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, or of folklorists such as Iona and Peter Opie. They have come, in other words, from everywhere but inside the field of children's books itself, where the most popular form of disquisition seems to be the after-dinner speech. . . Not only has Dr. Bettelheim bested them at their own game, he has had the temerity to suggest that in contrast to the fairy tales modern children's books are shallow and at cross-purposes with their didactic aims: "Strictly realistic stories run counter to the child's inner experience . . . (and) inform without enriching." Illustrated story books "direct the child's imagination away from how he, on his own, would experience the story." "The trouble with some of what is considered 'good children's literature' is that many of these stories peg the child's imagination to the level he has already reached on his own. Children like such a story, but benefit little from it beyond momentary pleasure."

At the end of his article, after voicing general approval of Maurice Sendak and Tomi Ungerer, Mr. Goldthwaite lists sixteen books as the best of the crop appearing during the past ten years or so. He gives particular reasons for naming them, but we repeat here only title and author: *All the Way Home,* Lore Segal; *The Animal Family,* Randall Jarrell; *The Bear Who Had No Place to Go,* James Stevenson; *Everything About Easter Rabbits,* Wiltrud Roser; *Father Fox's Pennyrhymes,* Clyde Watson; *Frog and Toad Are Friends,* Arnold Lobel; *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble,* William Steig; *A Little Schubert* (record), Peter Schaaf; *Lumberjack,* William Kurelek; *Snow White,* translated by Randall Jarrell; *Tuck Everlasting,* Natalie Babbitt; *The Wedding Procession of the Rag Doll and the Broomhandle, and Who Was in It,* Carl Sandburg; *How Tom Beat Captain Najork and his Hired Sportsmen,* Russell Hoban; *The Shrinking of Treehorn,* Florence Parry Heide; *The Slightly Irregular Fire Engine,* Donald Barthelme.

That's fifteen, but one more is named in his closing comment on the last three (above), which may, he says, "prove sophisticated." He adds:

> In praise of sophistication, in fact, I would go so far as to recommend that you leave your own picture books lying about wherever your children can get at them—Brueghel, Goya, Edward Gorey's *Amphigorey,* the albums of Saul Steinberg, whatever. At the age of ten I had a run-in with the political drawings of Thomas Nast, and though I was filled with fear and loathing by the experience, I wouldn't trade it for all the Newbery books in Boston.

* * *

A passage in Richard Todd's review (in the *Atlantic* for January) of Bledstein's *The Culture of Professionalism* could easily serve as a long footnote to either Ivar Berg's *The Great Training Robbery* or Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society.* "Training, certification, adherence to objective standards, the notion of fraternity among experts—all these familiar traits of professionalism were invented by Americans of not much more than a century ago." Higher education apparently amounted to little during the early years of the nineteenth century, if campus riots are a sign of inadequacy. Not until about 1850 did the universities begin to take effective charge of middle-class advancement, increasing in size and number and devoting themselves to the production of professionals. Science replaced the classics as the source of value and authority, and the graduates emerged as members of "a freshly minted elite." The reviewer quotes Bledstein:

> "It became the function of the schools in America to legitimize the middle class by appealing to the universality and objectivity of science." The new class had found a way to dodge the whole issue

> of class by constructing the social form that we would later learn to call meritocracy. As Bledstein puts it, "The professional absolutely protected his precious autonomy against all assailants, not in the name of an irrational egotism, but in the name of special grasp of the universe and a special place in it."

This seems about right, although it becomes important to add that one hopeful thing about professionals is that the really good ones see what is wrong and set about making new beginnings, doing all they can to eliminate pretense. (See for example. *The New Professionals*, edited by Ronald Gross.) Moreover, as Hastings Rashdall long ago pointed out, the emphasis on status and authority, far from having been invented by the Americans, is directly traceable to the practices established by the medieval universities, to which, along with the medieval curriculum, the universities of the nineteenth century were heir.

What about the universities of the twenty-first century? If by then there are any left, what they teach will be in part an elaboration on what people like the New Alchemists are now doing with their farm and experimental installations on Cape Cod. Students in the twenty-first century will probably study economics out of E. F. Schumacher, physics as applied by Amory Lovins, and biology as explored and practiced by John Todd. Historians will point out that in the twentieth century the Dark Ages reached bottom, and neither humans nor their planet could stand the way things were going. Social studies may not be needed, considering the changes that will have come about, but there will doubtless be attention to the teaching and example of Gandhi and Vinoba, and some study of the work of pioneers like Arthur Morgan and Ralph Borsodi. Borsodi, for example, called for radical change in 1928 with his book, *This Ugly Civilization*, and a year or so later he published an account of the direction his own life was taking in *Flight from the City*, in which he described the "homestead" he established in Suffern, N.Y., where he founded his School of Living in 1936.

Awareness of the need for schools of living has grown apace. Today, whether or not their inspiration is traceable to the pioneering of Borsodi and his colleague, Mildred Loomis, there are many similar efforts under way, some of them actual schools on a piece of land somewhere, some centers located in cities where inventive individuals are discovering and teaching ways to transform sterile urban areas into vital neighborhood communities.

Some of the new magazines amount to "schools of living," with contents devoted to practical means of creating new ways of self-support and living on the land. For example, *Rain* for last December tells about Kurt Buetow, a designer and manufacturer whose ingenious and comfortable canvas furniture wins prizes, but who, as a non-acquisitive businessman, finds that running a factory creates problems. "I feel a void," he says, "when the basis for my contact with people is money."

More, and more people are refusing to found their lives on the cash nexus. Every person who attempts this freedom is conducting a school for living in his various relationships. Buetow is now trying to improve his practice in this respect. Since he lives, designs, and makes his hanging chairs and other furniture in what was once a one-room schoolhouse near Baldwin, Wisconsin, he is having growth problems. The *Rain* writer, who is a friend, says:

> Far from wanting to protect or patent the design of his now famous chairs, Kurt would like to see it "spread around," but he hasn't yet stumbled onto the proper vehicle. We were trying to figure out a way of setting up a technologically appropriate method of producing the chair, perhaps modeled after the system of the Nomadic Tipi Makers on the Oregon coast. They contract out tipi sewing to local farmers' wives who use the orders for collateral for buying their own industrial sewing machines; they can then apply their equipment and skills to other local production. Instead of having to finance and operate a factory, there would be a network of self-reliance, skilled and equipped small businesses which could serve local needs.

FRONTIERS

No Even Path

AFTER receiving a stop-work order on his unfinished home from the Mendocino County (Calif.), building department, Mike Trevino wrote this letter to the department:

> I hereby certify my home to be safe and sound. It has flush toilet and septic tank in good working order. Water supply is tested safe. There is no electricity within a mile in any direction. The only source of heat is a wood stove which will have a metal-bestos flue of approved type. . . . Insulation will be provided above ceiling to minimum standards.
>
> I'm giving you this information because I do not require your inspecting services. The house was completely designed and built well above code minimums. I built the house myself and it is structurally sound. The government has no right to require me to pay for services I neither want nor need. . . .

Needless to say, Mike Trevino took out no building permit. He explained to a reporter from the *Mendocino County Grapevine* (Dec. 23, 1976): "I objected to war by refusing to become a soldier. I object to inspection by refusing to allow it." His house, he says, is "a regular two-bedroom, standard frame construction, basically a very code house." Applying for a permit, he said, costs money that he could spend on insulation or plumbing or more two-by-fours. But his basic reason is the right to private decision about how to design and build his home.

His position might be summed up in a revised couplet,

> When Adam delved and Eva span
> Who was then the Inspector Man?

Rejoinders may be various. *His* house might be fine, but what about the ones put up by people who don't know what they're doing? Technology has made things complicated and some personal liberties must be sacrificed for the common good. And so on.

This is a controversy that has been going on for years in Mendocino County. Three years ago a band of hilldwelling homeowners organized a "United Stand" protest against the "red-tagging" of their houses by the County authorities and after a long struggle won some success. (The drama of their campaign was reported in MANAS for March 5, 1975.) As the *Grapevine* says:

> After United Stand's two-year battle, the Mendocino County Board of Supervisors made modifications in the State Uniform Building Code and United Stand organizer Anon Forrest was appointed to the California Housing and Community Development Commission. Since the early court trials ended with victories for the owner-builders, no one has been prosecuted for a building code violation in the county. But while the illegal building continues, so does the red tagging.

Trevino has been informed that if he does not apply for the various permits required by the building department, enforcement of the stop-work order will be by the district attorney. The county officials are plainly aggrieved by the stubbornness of this recalcitrant homeowner.

Should we find a right or wrong in this matter, or is it only a practical problem?

In a recent paper, "The Age of Professional Dominance," Ivan Illich considered such confrontations in general terms:

> The expert dominance over laws, decisions, and routines shapes both the mind and the milieu. Specialist power to define issues in terms of problems legitimates the docile acceptance of imputed lacks on the part of the layman by turning the world into an echo-chamber of needs. Society is transformed by expert dominance into one huge classroom, clinic and runway. It welcomes only lifetime pupils, patients, and passengers. People who still insist on using their ever-anarchic potential to learn on their own disrupt its curricula, and are therefore denounced as dangerous autodidacts. People who identify their own health with their ability to cope and their competence in facing pain and death upset the medicalized lifespan. They are caught sooner or later, at least for intensive terminal care. Motorized space deprives feet of their use-value. People who live in buildings with elevators soon lose their muscles to climb a few flights. Building codes paralyze the hands that still have the competence to paint or to string wires. The

> building inspector outranks you in deciding what switch and what sink you need.

While Trevino has strung no wires, other activities are plainly suspect. He, you could say, wants two things: He wants to be his own authority on safety and he wants to challenge an oppressive trend. But if the building department allows an exception in his case, the exception would become precedent, indicating the right of everyone else to do the same.

Would this be disaster? It would certainly abolish the building department. In time a lot of other public services, such as, the Food and Drug Administration. might go the same way, and even the Army and the Navy, if Trevino and some like-minded people are not restrained. Ivan Illich has his own illustration to dramatize what is at stake:

> When a peasant from Oaxaca arrives in Houston as a wetback, within two years he is trained to need a TV and a school certificate. For his family he has become a *pocho,* a being whose face and soul are washed out. He has climbed into the world of modernized poverty where a man needs $3,000 per year to survive, and with each dollar beyond this becomes more needy than he was before. The newcomer is caught into the cobweb of time, space, and rhythm spun by professional delivery services: he is now nobody's servant but dependent on service as no *cacique* in his old town. The wetback might personally remain aware that by his clientage he loses more than he gains. His children, however, have already been born as patients, delivered from the hospital only after a pediatrician certifies them fit. In time the children will help their parents study the catechism of needs.

One begins to see the point of resistance to all this. Illich asks:

> Why are there no rebellions against the draft into disabling service delivery systems? The explanation must be sought in the myth-generating power that these same systems possess. Besides doing technical things to body and mind, professionalism is also a power ritual which generates credence in the things it does. Besides teaching Johnny to read, schools also teach him that learning from teachers is better.

It seems evident that the restoration of competence and self-confidence will find no even and reasonable path of progress. The fears of people schooled in dependency are a worse obstacle than the stumbling mistakes of the uninstructed.