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THE PERSUASIVE ART

A TIME of transition is inevitably a time of strenuous acts of persuasion. People see "what has to be done" or "what must happen," each by a particular light, and try to get others to agree with them. Groups are formed, movements get under way, and new forms of publishing emerge. Troubled, wondering individuals look about, some with considerable daring, others in anxiety, looking for fresh foundations and places for experiment and innovation. Changes in taste, in orientation, in ideas of value and conceptions of nature and self get under way. It is a time, obviously, of ends and beginnings, with the stubborn rigidities of the past in dramatic contrast to the fragility of pioneer undertakings—a time when a great deal of decision-making is or ought to be going on.

What about the arts of persuasion in such a period? How do you get people to see what you think they ought to see? Which is most important: to get people thinking in certain directions or to win them to specific forms of action that seem crucial to their lives—to all our lives?

After all, this *is* a time of change and people *are* opening up to new opinions. It is natural to want to push them along in the right direction.

What is the right direction? Well, there are some hardly disputable realities which more and more people are coming to accept. We are, for example, going to have to alter our economic and technological development to modes which are less destructive, less exhausting and polluting, and more harmonious with actual human needs—not wants but needs. Some say that we are going to have to train ourselves in habits of thinking that lead naturally to the required changes. Hardly anyone will quarrel with such expressions.

There are, however, other issues of equal or perhaps greater importance. We need to put an end to war and the threat of war. Is this even possible? Some people are confident that they know what must be done to obtain lasting peace. There will be war and violence, they say, until there is universal economic justice. It sounds true enough. But arranging economic justice in the world is no easy thing to accomplish. Simply defining justice, at all but the most abstract levels, seems almost impossibly difficult. Aggressively enforced theories of justice have brought immeasurable suffering and disorder in many parts of the world. Systems promising justice don't seem to work unless enough people are already sensitive to its requirements, and then a revolution is not needed, but only intelligent facilitation of the underlying common will. How, then, do you get people to think effectively about justice? A wide range of replies to this question might be expected—all the way from tough brain-washing procedures to Quaker friendly persuasion.

Is there sufficient evidence from history to show the best way to persuade other people what to do? There ought to be enough evidence, but do we know how to interpret it? An example may illustrate the problems involved.

In 1914, Nicolai Lenin was in Switzerland, where he had contact with many radically inclined young men. Years later, in *Foreign Affairs* for April, 1943, Valeriu Marcu, one of those who met and were influenced by him, wrote about Lenin's opinions and methods of persuasion. Inclined to be a pacifist, Marcu argued with Lenin against the support of any war. "What you have just said," Lenin replied, "is false; completely, utterly false." He read to Marcu from an article he had written:

> An oppressed class which does not strive to learn the use of weapons, to practice the use of weapons, to own weapons, deserves only to be mistreated. . . . The demand for disarmament in the

present-day world is nothing but an expression of despair.

Lenin believed, Marcu explains, that the war that began in 1914 would shatter the shell of European society and release mighty forces of which revolutionists must gain control. He became furious with socialists who declared for peace. In Lenin's view, Marcu said, "Every Socialist who spoke of peace was a traitor, a scoundrel, a charlatan." Not until his end was accomplished did Lenin conclude at Brest-Litovsk the separate peace he had raged against in Switzerland.

Why was Lenin so persuasive with so many? Despite his strong opinions, he was remarkably considerate, even gentle, with those who came to him to learn. To Marcu he gave what seemed to the young, inexperienced radical sage counsel:

> "Study and re-study war and revolution. Great things are going to happen very soon, they are bound to happen. Yes everything may be changed from top to bottom, overnight."

Marcu recalled his own feeling at that time, back in 1914:

> To be treated as an equal, despite all the sharp criticism, was a new experience for me. The other Russians . . . contented themselves with expounding their own ideas. They never said: go home, open your mind, try to understand things for yourself, learn. With Lenin I had the impression that I was an important ally, and that I had to pass the real test of revolution. I did not know then that Lenin spoke seriously to everyone who was interested in serious questions.

Lenin practiced a fatherly impersonality with his disciples, seeming to them selfless in his desire for them to develop in their own way. As a result, his influence among them was both disarming and immeasurable.

A partly confirming and partly contrasting picture is given by N. Valentinov. In his Introduction to the 1972 edition of *To the Finland Station* (Farrar Strauss & Giroux paperback) Edmund Wilson uses this material in his portrait of Lenin:

> Valentinov's testimony (in his book *Meetings with Lenin*) . . . [is] this: "No one was able as he was so to infect with enthusiasm for his projects, so to impose his will, so to make people docile to his personality, as this man who at first sight seemed so blunt and rather rude, who apparently had no gift to charm. Neither Plekhanov nor Martov nor anybody else had mastered the secret of direct hypnotic influence on people that emanated from Lenin; I should say even his mastery over them. Only after Lenin did they indisputably follow as after a unique unquestioned leader, since it was only Lenin who presented himself—especially in Russia—as that very rare phenomenon, a man of iron will, of indomitable energy, uniting a fanatical belief in action, in practical activity, with an unchanging faith in himself. . . ." When the break with Valentinov came, the following conversation took place. "I cannot forget," said Valentinov, "how quickly you relegated me to the category of your most malignant enemies and with what a torrent of scolding you rewarded me as soon as you knew that in the realm of philosophy I did not hold your views." "You are quite right," replied Lenin, "—on that score you are absolutely right. All those who part from Marxism are my enemies. I do not give my hand to Philistines. I do not sit at the same table. . . ." "Without shaking hands, Lenin turned away and left, and I left the Bolshevik organization."

Whom shall we put beside Lenin for a very different illustration? We are not here choosing such individuals in order to nail down some point about their goals or intentions, but to examine the character of the persuasion exercised. While in Lenin's case the stakes of persuasion were very high, our interest is in the curious association of a genuine principle of teaching—go home and study for yourself—with the relentless partisanship revealed in his relations with unmalleable persons.

A good contrast with Lenin might be Martin Buber. Buber discusses persuasion in a section in *Between Man and Man.* The passage we have for quotation follows an account of the interchange between a teacher (possibly Buber) and a class of young Israeli students—a heated discussion of the morality of Jewish acts of reprisal for the Arab terror in Palestine. Can there ever, asked the teacher, be a suspension of the commandment, Thou shalt not kill? "Can murder become a good

deed if committed in the interest of one's own group?" There was some debate, and finally one youth lashed out against the idea of endurance of wrong:

> "And what have we achieved that way? This!" And he banged his fist on the newspaper before him, which contained the report on the British White Paper. And again he burst out with "Live? Outlive? Do you call that life? We want to live!"

For Buber, this sets the problem of persuasion:

> I have already said that the test of the educator lies in conflict with his pupil. He has to face this conflict and, whatever turn it may take, he has to find the way through it into life, into a life, I must add, where confidence continues unshaken—more, is even mysteriously strengthened. But the example I have just given shows the extreme difficulty of this task, which seems at times to have reached an impassable frontier. This is no longer a conflict between two generations, but between a world which for several millennia has believed in a truth superior to man, and an age which does not believe in it any longer—will not or cannot believe in it any longer.
>
> But now if we ask, "How in this situation can there be any education of character?", something negative is immediately obvious; it is senseless to want to prove by any kind of argument that nevertheless the denied absoluteness of norms exists. That would be to assume that the denial is the result of reflection, and is open to argument, that is, to material for renewed reflection. But the denial is due to the disposition of a dominant human type of our age. We are justified in regarding this disposition as a sickness of the human race. But we must not deceive ourselves by believing that the disease can be cured by formulae which assert that nothing is really as the sick person imagines. It is an idle undertaking to call out, to a mankind that has grown blind to eternity: "Look! the eternal values!"

Buber is not content to settle for familiar forms of persuasion, but goes straight to the similar dilemma which confronted Socrates in some of Plato's dialogues. How can reference to transcendent values have any power of persuasion if these values are wholly forgotten, or not known to exist? Socrates has no solution for this. He would simply smile, perhaps wryly, and keep on trying.

Buber has no solution either, although he too will persist, by watching for "openings" of a certain sort:

> Men who have so lost themselves to the collective Moloch cannot be rescued from it by any reference, however eloquent, to the absolute whose kingdom the Moloch has usurped. One has to begin by pointing to that sphere where man himself, in the hours of utter solitude, occasionally becomes aware of the disease through sudden pain: by pointing to the relation of the individual to his own self. In order to enter into a personal relation with the absolute, it is first necessary to become a person again, to rescue one's real personal self from the fiery jaws of collectivism which devours all selfhood. The desire to do this is latent in the pain the individual suffers through his distorted relation to his own self. Again and again he dulls the pain with a subtle poison and thus suppresses the desire as well. To keep the pain awake, to waken the desire—that is the first task of everyone who regrets the obscuring of eternity. It is also the first task of the genuine educator in our time.

Is there no growth, no self-discovery or self-persuasion without pain? Probably not. There may be moments of ecstasy when one really sees—stands in the fresh light of a new dawning with wide-open eyes—but these wondrous intervals, call them blessed intrusions of Eternity, are few and far between. Among the sophisticated, an element of fraud enters into the assertions of those who ignore this reality of inner experience.

The awakening of the world we spoke of at the beginning—the new awareness of the balances and needs of the planet—did not come to us without concomitant pain. In fact the pain was a major cause of the reflection and investigation which have been so persuasive to so many of us. Nature cried out, and so did certain distinguished humans able to see and hear. The kaleidoscope of time was turned by events, the tumblers falling into new positions, and we saw more of the relations between our lives and our earth, with meanings becoming more important than goals.

This makes for transformation of stance, from which far-reaching practical consequences may flow.

How is Buber's dilemma as teacher or persuader like that of Socrates? Drawing mainly on the *Republic* and the *Gorgias*, and doubtless other dialogues, Hannah Arendt ten years ago (in the *New Yorker* for Feb. 25, 1967), put Buber's contention in its Socratic form: "It is better to suffer than to do wrong." Socrates works very hard to persuade his listeners of this, but with little or no success. What will convince people? Not, apparently, the impressive logic of others; the failure of Socrates, the greatest persuader of all, exemplar of the dialectic and favorite of the Delphic Oracle, is meant to demonstrate this.

Socrates' strongest argument is that the man who does wrong in preference to suffering will have a hard time living with himself—he will give himself pain. And he said: "Since thought is the dialogue carried on between me and myself, I must be careful to keep the integrity of this partner intact, for otherwise I shall surely lose the capacity for thought altogether."

Hannah Arendt comments:

> To the philosopher—or rather, to man insofar as he is a thinking being—this ethical proposition about doing and suffering wrong is no less compelling than mathematical truth. But to man insofar as he is citizen, an acting being concerned with the world and the public welfare rather than with his own well-being—including, for instance, his "immortal soul" whose "health" should have precedence over the needs of a perishable body—the Socratic statement is not true at all.

It was Plato's view that the truths Socrates sought to elicit in dialogue with his fellow Athenians were not his own property—this street teacher had no verities to dispense, but practiced, as he said, the midwife's art. He was skillful in bringing to birth true ideas which inwardly belonged to his companions. They had truth inside themselves, the problem being to bring it to the surface, to become *conscious* of it, and then, if it were indeed true, to live by it. One learns from oneself only by inner consent to the learning, according to Plato.

An entire chapter of Robert Cushman's *Therapeia* (recently put back into print by Greenwood Press, Westport, Conn.), "The True Rhetorical and Persuasive Art," is devoted to the difficulty of persuading people to persuade themselves. Those who wonder about the "morality" of persuasion might find Mr. Cushman's discussion of Plato's method, and problem, intensely interesting. Plato insisted that there is no use in trying to *compel* assent. He held that the appearances of things are deceptive, that the real truth about life and right and wrong can be known only by gaining access to the world of eternal verities, which never becomes manifest in self-evident terms on earth.

What hope, then, have we? Plato had the hope that the noetic capacity—the potentiality of spiritual vision which every human, he believed, has inside himself—will awaken and take active part in the determination of truth. Pain is sometimes the provocative of awakening, as Alcibiades confesses in the *Symposium.*

> For Plato truth is not conveyed to the mind by deductive syllogism; rather the mind is conducted to a point from which reality discloses itself. . . . The central theme of Platonism regarding knowledge is that truth is not brought to man, but man to the truth.

The cross-examining dialogue pursued by Socrates does not have as its purpose the reaching of truth by logical progression. The role of logic is only to remove obstacles—an indispensable but negative function. Socrates relies on the capacity hidden in every man to look for and eventually to recognize the truth. But he has to be *willing* to look. He must *want* to know. He can't be battered into accepting it, for then there will be no authentic discovery, but only an exchange of opinions.

> For Plato, in contrast with Aristotle, the truth or the knowledge of ultimate reality (*i.e.*, "metaphysical" knowledge) is never necessary and never enforceable. Since assent cannot be required, because demonstration is not claimed, the right to dissent is

> always granted, and human freedom is respected. Likewise, although divine Reality is available for human cognition, it does not intrude itself upon human attention so as to constrain acknowledgment, but, rather, awaits it. Furthermore, Being, or the truth of Being, is in no wise so possessible that, by an exercise of syllogistic power, it may, in all cases, be displayed equally to the untutored, to the incredulous, or to the disinclined. . . .
>
> So while Plato's *paideia* is designed to cope with pervasive human ignorance, his therapeutic pedagogy neither aims at nor pretends to supply any such logical *tour de force* as is, thereby, unable either to account for, to accredit, or to tolerate human error. For wherever apodictic [logically compelling] knowledge is asserted, there denial of the liberty to dissent is implied. The Aristotelian reduction of metaphysical knowledge to the hypothetical and apodictic variety has always carried with it the implication of conformity; for where propositions are demonstrably cogent, conscientious objection is irrelevant and on occasion intolerable. But for Plato cogency is not anticipated in regard to the ultimate object of knowledge. What is required is not *apodeixis* but transformation of *ethos.* And furthermore it is precisely the case that in this domain there can be no knowledge unless it is conscientious.

The art of persuasion (rhetoric) has indispensable use in helping people to *look* for the truth, but it should not be used to persuade people *of* it. For this in effect denies or corrupts their ability to see it for themselves.

REVIEW
FROM MANCHESTER AND SALZBURG

A NEWSPAPER strong enough to examine its own decline is likely to be the best one to read these days, although not for the news, since the news makes little sense from any point of view. Mark Twain used to say that he saved the letters he received for six months before answering them, and was then delighted to see how few needed even acknowledgment. Something like this applies to most news. Six months after hardly anything is worth remembering. There is of course the embarrassment of not knowing what people are talking about some of the time. However, there are those who find this a blessing.

Introducing a collection of essays and sketches reprinted from the *Manchester Guardian* in *The Bedside Guardian* (published by Collins at £3.50), A.J.P. Taylor, reader of the *Guardian* for sixty years and a contributor for most of that time, recalls:

> In those early days I regarded the *Manchester Guardian* as a newspaper. And so of course it is. But that is not its only function and never has been. Other papers go in for sensations and exclusive stories. The *Guardian* is more concerned to explain what the stories are about. The writers in the *Guardian* are primarily concerned to write well and always have been. The unique feature of the *Guardian* is its essays. Essays on literature, essays on music, nowadays mostly essays on ordinary people. Fashions change, and the *Guardian* changes with them. No one nowadays writes two whole columns on a symphony concert as Cardus did every Friday morning on the Halle concerts before the war. No one writes two whole columns on a play, certainly not on a new play in Manchester. There are no new plays in Manchester. As a book reviewer with more than forty years of experience, I deplore the reduced space for book reviews in the *Guardian* as much as in other papers. Once upon a time we rarely reviewed a book in less than two thousand words. Nowadays we are lucky to be allowed five hundred. The longest pieces are usually about the author rather than the book, a topic we never contemplated.

We are indeed fallen among evil days. Possibly authors are reviewed instead of books because the books are so ordinary. But why not just ignore them both, instead of giving so much space to ordinary authors? This is a complaint we have about the serious magazines in the United States—*Atlantic* and *Harper's*—which often devote lengthy essays in impeccable prose to people who are hardly worth writing about at all.

But the *Guardian,* one could say, resists these tendencies manfully, even while succumbing somewhat, as Mr. Taylor says, to fashion. MANAS editors read it (the *Weekly*) regularly and sometimes quote it.

A short paragraph on A.J.P. Taylor by Richard Gott (in one of the essays) presents a little of the common sense which seems to turn up regularly in the *Guardian:*

> It is hardly surprising to find that Taylor is still an unrepentant Little Englander. "I think we'd do much better to mind our own business. I'm a straight John Bright man. Things go much better if people are left to manage their own affairs. I've never been an imperialist. All the grandeur and splendour of empire has been great folly." He thinks that now the empire has gone, we should relish becoming smaller. "I think unconsciously that this is what people want. The only people who haven't realized this are the politicians and to some extent the armed forces."
>
> He doesn't even mind the prospect of the disintegration of the United Kingdom. "I suspect, though I've never seen a proper discussion of this, that Scotland and Wales are an expense to us."

Lying on a very hot day on a jetty beside the Thames, Jill Tweedie, who appears throughout this volume, lets the blazing sun boil up some revolutionary musings:

> The sun is an agent of subversion more powerful than any plot devised by man. Pulsing in a shining sky, it beats ambition, competition, acquisition to a powdery pulp. Its flaming rays pump out one overriding message—why bother?. . . . Let economic disaster hit, let the pound fall to the level of one aduki bean, let industry fold its tents and steal away, let the banks close and the petrol pumps dry and the machines run down and the bills mount, and still there is no motive for turning over from belly to back. . . .

> I lie half asleep, listing my needs. One torn and sun-bleached dress, one pair of sandals, a rug to smooth my sleep, a well for cool water, a river for fish and washing, a patch of ground for beans and peas, tomatoes and lettuce. Somewhere back there, in the city, four walls are packed with possessions now obsolete, unwanted. Outside, a car. A boiling, searing four-door cage with seats to tear the skin off rumps and a wheel to char the hands, belching filth, groaning for fuel, capable of only restless movement because we are never where we want to be. Detested spin-off of an industrial revolution that has spewed nonbiodegradable rubbish across our pleasant land. Down the river bank there is a spear of blue a kingfisher. No stunted, whey-faced children crawled in mines, no women stitched their fingers raw, no men coughed their lungs out to make a kingfisher.
>
> The sun pummels out of human beings the questions hidden deep below the surface, and the compliant front. Why were the people wrenched from the fields and packed into satanic mills, why were men and women prised apart and set against each other, one to earn, the other to be dependent and produce dependents, cut off from the tribe in "icky-tacky boxes? Why are great whales slaughtered to extinction so that cats may eat and comfort us in our isolation? Why are forests ravaged to produce a million billion bad books? Is there progress or only change? Yes, but many die so that the few may live too well, taking another route to death.

Reading these often stirring or delighting essays in the *Bedside Guardian*, one gets the impression that the English, one way or another, are going to get there—wherever they are going, whatever the mishaps on the way. They have a leisurely, unpressured way of saying what they think, and some of the best examples of what they think get into the *Guardian.*

There is innate respect for the reader in this sort of prose. It doesn't bear down but assumes he has a certain perceptiveness, some independent capacity to grasp the point. Another writer with an abundance of this quality is Leopold Kohr, whose lectures on city planning at the University of Puerto Rico have just been published in a booklet titled *The City of Man.* (We have no price, but the address is Editorial Universitaria, Universidad de Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico 00931.) Prof. Kohr's essential message is that people ought to build cities for their primary functions and not to appease real estate developers or accommodate cars. He makes his point with illustrations which have a delayed-action effect. In one place he speaks of a picture of a lovely Greek temple with sheep grazing in the background, remarking: "This sheep economy supported the construction of these temples. Now that Greece is part of the Common Market, that it gets lavish American aid, the temple is in ruins."

Toward the end of his book he says:

> The basis of my theory is perhaps the fact that I was born and grew up in a small country which had been sovereign until 160 years ago: Salzburg. Unfortunately, I have no picture on hand to advertise its assets. But it was the richest of cities, and so blessed that Alexander von Humboldt ranked it among the three most beautiful on earth. The rural population, that built this capital city of barely more than 30,000 for its own enjoyment, never numbered more than 120,000, fewer than the people who live in Rio Piedras, or Ponce. Yet, single-handedly they managed to adorn it with more than 30 magnificent churches, castles, and palaces standing in lilied ponds, and an amplitude of fountains, cafés, and inns. And such was their sophisticated taste that they required a dozen theatres, a choir for every church, and an array of composers for every choir, so that it is not surprising that one of the local boys should have been Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. All this was the result of smallness, achieved with not an iota of foreign aid. And what a rich city they made it into. The same was, of course, true of Florence, Verona, Padua or Venice, though Venice may be said to have been an empire at that time.
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> How could they all have developed in such splendour if small-scale sufficiency meant impoverishment? It is interconnection, integration, union, that spells impoverishment, as can be seen from such a country as our own United States. It is immense. Yet, basically, it has only one opera, and that is on the verge of bankruptcy every year—the Metropolitan Opera of New York. In the unintegrated small-state world of the past, there was an opera in Salzburg. A hundred miles away, there was an opera, and theatres of course, in Innsbruck. Another sixty miles to the other side there were operas and theatres in Munich and Linz. And each of the small states in which they were located developed not in cooperation with each other, but in rivalry and

> competition, each devoted to its own communal splendour. So do not be under the illusion that their smallness caused them to be lacking in social riches.

Prof. Kohr's basic idea is that to help cities grow as they ought to, and stop growing when they should, you have to plant the right seeds. Seeds need only nourishment, not management. *The City of Man* is the best seventy pages we have read anywhere concerning what makes for urban virtue and what is fatal to cities in both human and practical terms.

The foreword is by Ivan Illich, who begins:

> I met Leopold Kohr a decade before I came to understand him, at the time we both had just arrived at the University of Puerto Rico. For years, in the Faculty Lounge and in the Planning Board Office, we read his papers and his weekly column, and took his whimsical wisdom for the delightful carambolings of a useful gadfly. None of us understood that Kohr was engaging in a dimensional analysis of social reality and was constantly urging us to a sense of proportion and dimension as a much better guide to the development of physical plans than the quantitative measurement on which progress was being staked.

Dr. Illich speaks of the disasters that might have been avoided if Kohr's counsels had been listened to and applied. He concludes:

> When reading these pages, I was embarrassed to find the values of smallness, multi-centredness, effective decentralization, de-professionalization, deceleration and autonomous structuring which our generation has been "discovering" had been just as clearly and much more humorously formulated by Kohr, before we understood what he was teaching.

COMMENTARY
DEFENSE OF "ORGANIC"

RESPONDING to an attempt to ban the use of "natural" and "organic" as descriptive terms in the marketing of food products, Robert Rodale, editor and publisher of *Prevention* and *Organic Gardening*, testified last November at a Federal Trade Commission hearing. Portions of his statement, which was printed in *Prevention* for January, provide an excellent characterization of this ever growing movement:

> Organic food represents much more than merely the non-use of synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, and the avoidance of food additives in its processing. It is the end product of a long chain of efforts whose main thrust is to create an ecologically sound and socially constructive way to grow food.
>
> Organic farmers and gardeners not only wish to avoid the use of many effects in a variety of ways, but they also are very much concerned about the prevention of erosion, the adding of humus and other organic matter to soil to improve fertility, the preservation of small family farms, localized marketing of food energy conservation, and proper nutrition. It is a rare organic grower who does not share those concerns, or pursue those activities. . . .
>
> Any series of conversations with even a small number of organic farmers will reveal quickly that those people are farming without the use of synthetic chemicals for reasons that go beyond pure economics. Most organic gardeners are growing food that way out of love for the land, for its purity, and in the hope of being able to preserve and build the soil for the use of future generations. . . .
>
> Many of these farmers don't have the access to the media and certainly not the promotional power of the chemical companies. But they speak to society through the food they produce, trying to sway people's opinions by creating superior flavor, and offering better freshness, purity, and yes, even better nutritional value.

Mr. Rodale's statement on this question is armed by the results of research by various agricultural experiment stations. An agronomist of the University of California, Dr. Robert van den Bosch, is quoted as saying: "In light of prevailing societal concerns over the energy shortage and pollution, it would seem that the government should bend every effort to encourage the expansion of organic gardening and farming."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
LAO TSE, PLATO, AND THOMAS MORE

NOW and then the question of the best way to teach Planning or "Alternative Futures" comes up, and apart from spontaneous distaste for the whole idea, we haven't known what to say. You growl something about the need for teaching good judgment (how?), or opening up areas of sensibility (again, how?), and talk sententiously about the importance of generating feelings of long-term responsibility.

We now have a little book that seems to offer some practical suggestions. In *Technology and Utopian Thought* (Burgess Publishing Co., Minneapolis, 1971), Mulford Sibley, of the University of Minnesota, looks at the assumptions of the great utopian documents, showing the clear anticipation in some of them of the sort of problems we have today. That the main trouble with technology is that it doesn't know when to stop—has no controlling principle except *more production*—was well understood by both-Plato and Thomas More. Today members of an entire generation are acting out a number of things both these philosophers recommended, without, in many cases, having heard of either one.

Other tendencies of the times, such as wanting to go far, far away in order to live a simple pastoral life, seem little more than unconscious revivals of ancient ideas. In short, the spectrum of thinking found in the utopian writers of the past might be the best possible curriculum for those who wonder what is meant by planning, or what it ought to mean.

It would be hard to find a better passage for initiating discussion than the following from the *Tao Te Ching:*

> Were I ruler of a little State with a small population and only ten or a hundred men available as soldiers, I would not use them. I would have the people look on death as a grievous thing, and they should not travel to distant countries. Though they might possess boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them. Though they might own weapons and armour, they should have no need of them. I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords. They should find their plain food sweet, their rough garments fine. They should be content with their homes, and happy in their simple ways. If a neighboring State was within sight of mine—nay if we were close enough to hear the crowing of each other's cocks and the barking of each other's dogs—the two people should grow old and die without there ever having been any mutual intercourse.

Fifty years ago the most likely comment would have been, "How reactionary can you get?" Today, the sagacity of Lao tse has cadres of earnest followers. Living life well has gained new meaning, and at the same time there is recognition of the difference between living as Lao tse suggested while knowing nothing else, and going back to such simplicities after deliberation and choice.

To set the stage for discussion of such questions, Mr. Sibley quotes from Leo Strauss:

> The classics were for almost all practical purposes what are now called conservative. In contradiction to many present-day conservatives, however, they know that one cannot be distrustful of political or social change without being distrustful of technological change. Therefore they did not favour the encouragement of inventions. They demanded the strict moral-political supervision of inventions; the good and wise city will determine which inventions are to be made use of and which are to be suppressed.

Mulford Sibley asks:

> But what do statements of this kind mean specifically?
>
> They certainly do not imply a complete denial of technology. In his classic account of the development of civilization in Book II of the *Republic*, Plato specifically recognizes the "humanity" of the movement from simple or virtually nonexistent division of labor to complexity; and implicitly he also associates this development with the refinement and invention of tools and techniques. Professions like that of medicine improve their methods as doctors specialize; and the same happens with agriculture and the skills of the artisan. In fact, as man moves from the primitive to the complex Plato sees division of labor, technology, and material desires growing

> together and affecting one another. Yet if they are allowed to develop without limit—and there is an overwhelming tendency for them to do so—social justice will be frustrated and constant change will lead to war, imperialism and cultural disintegration. The political philosopher must somehow discover methods for keeping material desires, division of labor, and technology strictly subordinated to the idea of righteousness.

We may not be quite ready to adopt "righteousness" as the regulating norm, but present-day criticism is certainly moving in that direction. Our government now has a technology assessment board, and the requirement of Environmental Impact Statements, Ian McHarg thinks, has been a restraining influence. Meanwhile Ivan Illich has suggested where intelligent people in control of their society would draw the restraining line:

> Any social structure must disintegrate beyond some level of energy use. Beyond this critical level, education for bureaucracy must take the place of initiative within the law. . . technocracy must prevail when mechanical power exceeds metabolic energy by a certain ratio.

Here Jacques Ellul's distinction between tools, which *extend* individual human powers and capacities, and technological systems, which *reduce* them, is clearly applicable.

Along with an excess of technological development comes the establishment of the money system of human relationships, replacing barter and friendly cooperation. As Richard Goodwin, drawing on past history, says in *The American Condition:*

> As money took on independent value, personal obligations could be fulfilled through payment—cash instead of services, gold instead of horses and bowmen. Deeply personal ties, which had extruded the consciousness of the age, a mode of thought, and a structure of values and perceptions, metamorphosed into commercial bonds. You no longer owed yourself; you owed money.

One begins to see what Lao tse and Plato were guarding against. How did they know? Well, they were philosophers and poets.

Mr. Sibley continues:

> Perhaps a word should be said here about the attitudes of Plato to science as it relates to technology. He is, of course, enormously interested in the philosophy of science and in scientific speculation. But always he sees scientific discoveries primarily as ends in themselves. [So, much more recently, did Ortega—in his *Mission of the University.*] It is man's telos to understand the structure of the universe, to see the Forms. In order to enable those who possess the capacity to embrace the Forms to have the *scholia* or leisure to do so, the polls is organized in such a way that this primary end is not forgotten. Insofar as applied science or technology can contribute to this overall goal, it is an instrumental good but, like money and similar devices, it is suspect, for it tends to become an end in itself and thus to pervert right relations. Science is not to be pursued for the sake of technology nor is wisdom to be employed, in distorted form, to gain and hold power.

We conclude with Mr. Sibley's account of Thomas More's *Utopia*, revealing its surprising resemblance to present-day environmental - communitarian - intermediatetechnology thinking:

> *Utopia*—which in More's clever adaptation of the Greek is both a "good place" and "no place"—is characterized by a drastic decline in desire for material goods. Its value system is such that luxury items are spurned, clothes are very simple and long-lasting—built-in obsolescence lies far in the future—and housing is durable and not jerry-built. Technology is very simple. Essentially, More has little confidence in tools or the practical arts as either emancipators or promoters of social equality. A six-hour working day is achieved through such devices as a dramatic decline in material wants, elimination of waste, the employment of both sexes in agriculture and the trades, the destruction of a money economy, and the elimination of useless occupations. Frictions between city dwellers and farmers are wiped out through the requirement of periodic exchanges of roles. Relatively low-level division of labor and communism of material goods help eliminate the tendency for human beings to become alienated from one another and from themselves.
>
> The objectives of life are contemplation and enjoyment of Nature.

Prof. Sibley's book is part of an educational series and is probably best ordered from Burgess at 7108 Ohms Lane, Minneapolis, Minn. 55435. The price is $2.25.

FRONTIERS

A Season of Growing

A REVIEWER in *Freedom* (Dec. 4, 1976), the anarchist fortnightly published in London, sums up the themes of Elaine Morgan's *The Rise and Decline of Urban Civilization:*

> Small is beautiful, agriculture is essential; towns could be small and beautiful and industry could be the servant of the people and geared to renewable resources. . . . A mass of people has to be managed, and self-management is only feasible in small groups where the source of wealth is real and adjacent and susceptible to understanding management. . . probably human power will prove to be the safest and most adaptable form of power for the future, after all, a man on a bicycle is more efficient than Concorde, for all its technical sophistication.

There is a common element in practically all the undertakings implied here, although seldom mentioned, perhaps because it is taken for granted. The people involved have transparently nonacquisitive motives and they trust one another. When they get together, collaborate, or write about what they are doing or what others like themselves are doing, everything happens with a strong feeling of mutual confidence. This quality is gaining strength today. Along with the richly diverse network of reports, newsletters, meetings, and conferences now springing up, a web of good faith is coming into being—a quality that has been missing from modern society for a long time.

To foster the kind of agriculture the *Freedom* reviewer refers to, scores of groups have been formed, many of them during the past ten or fifteen years. In 1971 five of these groups founded the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) and today there are sixty member organizations in eighteen countries. At a meeting last October on a farm in Switzerland, seventy delegate-participants voted to restructure IFOAM to carry out more effectively certain objectives: (1) The development of international standard norms for biological farming methods and produce, recognized by governmental and other regulatory agencies; (2) the intelligent use of energy and resources in food production, nutrition, and rural rehabilitation; (3) the need for a pressure-group representative of IFOAM; (4) clarifying the role of science; (5) serving as clearing-house for information; (6) education and training. This and much other information is provided in the IFOAM *Newsletter* for December, 1976, edited by A. L. Pinschof, IFOAM Secretariat, with quarters at the Research Institute for Biological Husbandry, Bottmingerstrasse 31, Postfach, CH-4104 Oberwil/BL, Switzerland. (Europeans prefer "Biological" to identify what Americans call "Organic" Agriculture.)

The December *Newsletter* gives an account of the October General Assembly of the membership and the proceedings. The rest of the issue is devoted to description of twelve member associations in the U.S., Canada, Bavaria, England, Sweden, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Finland, and Romania.

The temper of these associations may be illustrated by quotation from the representative of one formed in 1975 as a result of contacts with E. F. Schumacher—The Foundation for Ecological Husbandry. Frau Dagi Kieffer reports:

> When I asked Dr. Schumacher what our chances were with the little money we have, he answered: "The [British] Soil Association started with nothing." This lets us hope that, with a little more than nothing and with some good will, we might be able to do something. . . . As you know, there are in Germany quite a number of organizations working in this direction with slightly different methods and possibilities. We thought it might be helpful to the common task to contribute to more and better coordination, cooperation and information. We think it is high time to work as efficiently as possible in order to rescue what can be rescued.

The group will this year produce a booklet on organic husbandry for interested peasants and organizations in Germany, and is holding seminars and weekend meetings and lectures for young people. Other groups are larger and stronger, but the encouraging news in the present concerns new beginnings, which are numerous.

The oldest among the American old-timers in this movement is probably the monthly magazine *Countryside,* founded in 1917, presently edited and published in Wisconsin by Jerome Belanger, who farms 170 acres organically. Each month there is a feature telling about the everyday operation of an active farm family, treating them as people rather than businessmen. Self-reliance is a major goal. *"Countryside* isn't written for the person who wants to be the richest farmer in the cemetery; it is written for and by those who want to do a good job farming while getting a decent return on their time and effort . . . for people who want to steward the earth as best they can.

Eliot Coleman of the Small Farm Research Association (Harborside, Maine 04642), active in IFOAM, conducted a tour of European organic farms last fall and has reported the experience in a (50-cent) booklet, *European Biological Agriculture*—1976. He says:

> Many farms we visited averaged around thirty acres, were not specialized, and yet provided their proprietors with a comfortable income. In Europe the small farmer is an institution and a successful one at that. In America the small farmer has become a victim of economics and neglect. It is important to stress that 100 years ago New England looked much like the lands we visited. Carefully tended farms spread their varied crops and livestock over a soil unsuited to agribusiness scale enterprises. This vibrant agriculture could be restored. In a food- and resource-poor world we may some day need it. But in redesigning the small farm it will be necessary to avoid the pitfalls that drove the small farmer off his land.

The Europeans, he found, are better at "husbandry" than most Americans:

> These people excelled in both animal and herbage husbandry. Hand in hand with husbandry went an obvious love of the land and a pride in their work. They possessed that dignity which arises from the close association between what a man enjoys and what he does for a living.

Mr. Coleman tells about eleven farms in various countries. The good health of the farm animals is a feature of their achievements. One farmer, a biodynamic dairyman in Switzerland, Peter Blaser, has sixteen cows from whose milk he makes cheese which sells all over Switzerland:

> He has a farm apprentice program. All apprentices share in Income after costs are paid. He feels his apprentice program is of both social and intellectual benefit to the participants. Each student stays one year. "I could keep them longer but it is better for them to go and gain wider experience with other farmers." How are they selected? "The right apprentices come by themselves, the choosing is easy."