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THE DISTANCE BETWEEN

THERE are only two ways to change what we are doing on a rational basis. One is to say, "That's no way to behave!", and the other is to reach the conclusion: "It doesn't pay." Both attitudes have a rational ground because both give reasons for what they propose. The reasons, however, are different.

The foundation of the "That's-no-way-to-behave" outlook lies in an ancient view of the world and our relations to it. Its classic statement is provided by Robert Redfield in *The Primitive World and its Transformations:*

> Primitive man is at once in nature and yet acting on it, getting his living, taking from it food and shelter. But as that nature is part of the same moral system in which man and the affairs between men also find themselves, man's actions with regard to nature are limited by notions of inherent, not expediential righteousness. . . . "All economic activities, such as hunting, gathering fuel, cultivating the land, storing food, assume a relatedness to the encompassing universe." And the relatedness is moral or religious.

Redfield thought it was the influence of science that wore away this attitude, accomplishing what he calls "one of the great transformations of the human mind." In the present, he says, "Man comes out of the unity of the universe within which he is oriented now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will." Redfield calls the lost sense of "relatedness" with the universe moral, and this agrees with research showing that the feeling of moral obligation in personal behavior diminishes in direct proportion to modern education. The child, he finds, "begins with a more primitive world view which he corrects to conform to the prevailing world view which grows stronger with age."

But is this change simply a transfer of allegiance from religion to science? And is the belief that the world about us is ruled by a law of "immanent justice" limited to persons we call "primitive"?

Such questions are confusing to those who maintain that religion is one thing, science another, and that the two are inevitably opposed. We might recall that the Europeans who first came to the American continent were quite aggressive, although hardly "scientific" in their opinions. A century or two of the spread of "Enlightenment" would be needed for the assumptions of Francis Bacon to filter down and become the commonplaces of human enterprise. On the other hand, there was very little "immanent justice" in the religious ideas of the Pilgrims and Puritans who made a new start on North America's rugged eastern coast. What justice there was—if they thought about justice was ruthlessly dispensed by Jehovah and his surrogates on earth, and they were fully persuaded that they knew Jehovah's inclinations with greater exactitude than anyone else. Both Max Weber and Lynn White have pointed out that the acquisitive drives so evident in Western industry and commerce grew out of the religious beliefs of the age, usually characterized as "Christian."

One could argue that religious attitudes mature only as they learn from scientific fact, while science begins to evolve into a kind of natural pantheism when it takes into consideration certain spontaneous longings of human beings. For example, Harold Searles, a contemporary psychiatrist, is persuaded that "there is within the human individual a sense of *relatedness to his total environment*, that this relatedness is one of the transcendently important facts of human living, and that if he tries to ignore its importance to himself he does so at peril to his psychological

well-being." He adds: "By 'relatedness' I mean a sense of intimate kinship, a psychological commitment to the structural relationship which exists between man and his nonhuman environment."

This isn't religious language, but it sounds like a religious idea. More and more we see that such things are matters of definition.

Scientific knowledge, most people will agree, is largely a matter of precise definitions. Before science comes simple description. The so-called "descriptive" sciences are regarded as much more backward or undeveloped than the sciences in which mathematics (and therefore definition) has taken over. Mathematical science is abstract and universal in implication, while description remains at the level of unorganized particular things. Description serves best in areas we know so little about that we are not *ready* to make definitions. This is almost certainly the case when it comes to "explaining" human behavior. While we can account for a lot of what people do in terms of environmental pressures, the question of why some people guide their lives according to some ordered scheme of right or moral behavior, while others just ask whether or not what they are doing "pays"—this question ought to be left open until we know a great deal more about the composition of human nature. Easy answers lead to inquisitions and totalitarian tyrannies.

So, on the question of human behavior, we turn, not to some scientist, but to a man very good at description—John Steinbeck. Reflecting on the behavior of our ancestors, Steinbeck says in *America and Americans* (Bantam paperback):

> I have often wondered at the savagery and thoughtlessness with which our early settlers approached this rich continent. They came at it as though it were an enemy, which of course it was. They burned the forests and changed the rainfall; they swept the buffalo from the plains, blasted the streams, set fire to the grass, and ran a wreckless scythe through the virgin and noble timber. Perhaps they felt that it was limitless and could never be exhausted and that a man could move on to new wonders endlessly. Certainly there are many examples to the contrary, but to a large extent the early people pillaged the country as though they hated it, as though they held it temporarily and might be driven off at any time.
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> This tendency toward irresponsibility persists in very many of us today; our rivers are poisoned by reckless dumping of sewage and toxic industrial wastes, the air of our cities is filthy and dangerous to breathe from the belching of uncontrolled products from combustion of coal, coke, oil, and gasoline. Our towns are girdled with wreckage and the debris of our toys—our automobiles and our packaged pleasures. Through uninhibited spraying against one enemy we have destroyed the natural balances our survival requires. All these evils can and must be overcome if America and Americans are to survive; but many of us still conduct ourselves as our ancestors did, stealing from the future for our clear and present profit.
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> Since the river-polluters and the air-poisoners are not criminal or even bad people, we must presume that they are heirs to the early conviction that sky and water are unowned and that they are limitless. In the light of our practices here at home it is very interesting to me to read of the care taken with the carriers of our probes into space, to make utterly sure that they are free of pollution of any kind. We would not think of doing to the moon what we do every day to our own dear country.

What do these people talk about while they are doing such dreadful things? Well, they don't think of them as dreadful, but as necessary and practical. And that's about all they say. They talk mostly and think about other things, such as how much better this or that place—or even the whole world—will be when they get their next big project finished: building the dam, penetrating the mysteries of fusion for nuclear energy, and persuading people to follow the instructions of the Better Minds. What they *used* to talk about a lot *is* something called the Vision of Tomorrow, which D. S. Came-Ross has described:

> Along the traffic-free boulevards of abstract and intentional megalopolis strolled men and women in stylish, hygienic dress; above, worm-like trains carried ranks of smiling passengers in silent, rapid comfort. Huge airships nosed their almost instantaneous way to Tokyo or Paris amid the

> gleaming skyscrapers, one of whose windows looked into Tomorrow's odorless kitchen where carefree woman turned a switch for Tomorrow's instantaneous meal.

Then, after taking a breath, the writer says:

> We know now that none of this will happen. We have learned that we lack the skills needed for life in large modern cities. . . .

In short, we are learning quite rapidly at the "It-doesn't-pay" level. One of the major lessons, although by no means fully acquired, is described by Steinbeck:

> No longer do we Americans want to destroy wantonly, but our new-found sources of power—to take the burden of work from our shoulders, to warm us, cool us, and give us light, to transport us quickly, and to make the things we use and wear and eat—these power sources spew pollution in our country, so that the rivers and streams are becoming poisonous and lifeless. The birds die for lack of food, a noxious cloud hangs over our cities that burns our lungs and reddens our eyes. Our ability to conserve has not grown with our power to create, but this slow and sullen poisoning is no longer ignored or justified. Almost daily, the pressure of outrage among Americans grows. . . . But we are an exuberant people, careless and destructive as active children. We make strong and potent tools and then have to use them to prove that they exist. . . .

While this was written at least eleven years ago, as broad analysis it still applies in every respect. As an account of the realization—slow but gathering strength—that it doesn't pay to do what we are doing, it could hardly be improved. Little by little we are learning from experience. The question is: Is what we learn from experience good enough?

Well, suppose we say that it isn't good enough—since it doesn't seem to be—what then? The trouble with waiting for experience to teach us all we know is that by the time the experience gains enough impact to get our attention, it is often too late. Even so, learning from experience *could* have an effect beyond the numerous particular items we are made to know more about. The lessons of experience also have *implications.* It can be argued that the individuals who seem to learn the most from experience almost always reach beyond it—they take some sort of philosophic leap. One finds them arguing from the other basis of change—"That's no way to behave!"—more and more.

A good example of this is the writing of Aldo Leopold. It would be hard to find a naturalist who learned more from experience than this man. His book, *A Sand County Almanac,* is filled with enviably intimate knowledge of nature's ways on the American continent. At the end he says:

> It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to the land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for the land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophic sense.

This statement comes after a series of convincing arguments that economic interest ("Will it pay?") alone is simply not effective as a restraint on the misuse of the planet. We are not good enough scientists to learn only from experience. We need a faith strong enough to declare that what we are doing is "no way to behave!"

What about science, then, and fact-finding generally? Is science by definition at war with faith?

Well, science is unquestionably a necessary and effective critic of faith. No human lives without assumptions—the foundation elements of faith—and science is not permitted any assumptions. Nor can it supply them. But science has vast competence in pointing to the assumptions that do not work out in practice. Needless to say, we are impressed. It is a great thing to stop fooling yourself. But this useful function of exposing false assumptions by no means eliminates the need for assumptions, and the habit of learning from *nature,* which is science at its best, seems to generate spontaneous hospitality to articles of philosophic faith. Aldo Leopold is a good example of this.

We don't know much about why or how people come to feel within themselves the stirrings of a philosophic faith, but we know that it happens. Deep feelings are now expressed about how we ought to behave. There are, apparently, these two sides to human nature—the faith side and the fact side. When they are in conflict we make one intolerable mess after another. When they work together in harmony we have both cultural riches and self-restraint. Obviously, they haven't worked together very much during recent years.

Conceivably, we have ignored the condition on which this collaboration depends. Leopold put it briefly:

> To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was wilderness an adversary to the pioneer.
>
> But to the laborer in repose, able for the moment to cast a philosophical eye on his world, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life.

What sort of "repose" makes occasion for the philosophic eye to open, stirring understanding into play, giving definition and meaning to life?

Interestingly, in a discussion of education, Vinoba Bhave says almost the same thing as Aldo Leopold. The words are different, but the sense is there:

> . . . it is a mistake to think that this life-knowledge can be had in any school. Life-knowledge can only be had in life. The task of the school is to awaken in its pupils the power to learn from life. . . .
>
> The fountain-head of all the world's conflicts is that knowledge has been separated from action. . . . There is no such thing as knowledge divorced from action. There is only one exception to this rule, and that is the knowledge that "I am, I exist"; the knowledge of the Self *is* divorced from action. It is beyond action. But all other knowledge is linked with action. There is no knowledge without action and no action without knowledge. The two are one, this is not a question of technique, but is a fundamental principle of Basic Education.

Repose is divorce from action and dreams of action, enabling us to think about what we are, what the world is, and what we may have come into the world to do. This is philosophy, the source of legitimate faith. But curiously, the greatest philosophers—the ones best able to communicate with the rest of us—have not advocated withdrawing to a mountain top or hiding in a monastery in order to get "repose." The *Bhagavad-Gita* is a treatise on how to reflect in the midst of conflict. While Plato insisted that would-be philosophers need time to think, he also assigned to them the most difficult and demanding of jobs—running an educational community.

In other words, there really isn't any way of setting things up to produce philosophic human beings. What can be made predictable isn't philosophical, but merely the result of calculation based upon past certainties. This is often very skillful, but wisdom may be entirely absent, as daily becomes evident to us.

Well, if we can't tell what will produce philosophers, we at least know what gets in the way of serious thinking—a life of intense activity, with no time left for questions and reflection. This may have been one of the reasons for "the savagery and thoughtlessness with which our early settlers approached this rich continent." The settlers came from places where they had had a very hard time keeping body and soul together. Looking back at the days of American origins, the historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, saw, not the savagery, but feelings of glorious fulfillment which gave the men of the colonies their love of freedom:

> The fact is that, for a people who recalled how hungry and ill-clad their ancestors had been through the centuries in the Old World, the chance to make money was like the sunlight at the end of a tunnel. It was the means of living a life of human dignity. In other words, for the great majority of Americans it was a symbol of idealism rather than materialism. Hence "this new man" had an instinctive sympathy for the underdog, and even persons of moderate wealth gratefully shared it with the less fortunate, helping to endow charities, schools, hospitals and art

> galleries and providing the wherewithal to nourish movements for humanitarian reform which might otherwise have died a-borning.

The early Americans were people who developed or had hidden within them a remarkable resourcefulness:

> These ex-Europeans and their descendants became a race of whistlers and tinkers, daily engaged in devising, improving and repairing until, as Emerson said, they had "the power and habit of invention in their brain." . . . Thus Eli Whitney, who as a Massachusetts farm boy had made nails and hatpins for sale to his neighbors, later contrived the cotton gin and successfully applied the principle of interchangeable parts to the making of muskets; and Theodore Woodruff, a New York farm boy, won subsequent fame as the inventor of the sleeping car, a coffee-hulling machine and a steam plow. In this manner another trait became embedded in the American character.

These are the people who impressed all the world with their enterprise and know-how, and also with their brash indifference to tradition, their cocky independence and, in time, their adolescent conceit. "Repose" was not something they allowed to interrupt their pursuit of happiness which, by the twentieth century, had been "transformed into the happiness of pursuit."

And so, in a few short years, the tiger they were riding became the monkey on their backs. The driving energy which made them overcome the deprivations of "not enough" turned into neurotic insistence on the supposed security of having "too much." And today, quite belatedly, some are making the discovery that "too much" doesn't pay.

It is a considerable distance from "It doesn't pay" to "That's no way to behave"—the entire length of the philosophic leap. In between is the area of reflection. What bothers us about reflection is that it is not a sure thing. You can reflect and reflect, and nothing may happen except lengthening shadows in an encompassing void.

But reflection may also make one thing clear: The best time to make the leap to voluntary simplicity—to behaving the way we ought to behave—is when we don't *have* to. It is better to take dictation from ourselves than from ugly and compelling facts.

Why? People who claim to value freedom shouldn't need an answer.

REVIEW
AN ARTIST PHILOSOPHIZES

CALLING certain of his essays *The Buddhist Writings of Lafcadio Hearn* is probably as good a way as any of identifying this collection edited by Kenneth Rexroth, yet the essays are something less and also something more than this. Hearn was a man who sought the truth, doubtless in order to know it, but also in order to add beauty to its communication. He used whatever he came across in this way. This being the essence of what he did with his talent, it should not be supposed that he wrote about Buddhism in any conventional way. He didn't.

As Rexroth notes, Hearn never became a Buddhist. He was better than a "Buddhist." He deserves no labels. He was rather a human being who, because he was a distinguished writer, pursued a wonderful course of self-education in public. He showed, you could say, how it ought to be done. He dealt with religious philosophy in the same way that he responded to the natural world—with wide-eyed wonder and complete honesty. His work is untouched by any conventions save the traditions of his craft.

Hearn's *Buddhist Writings* is published by Ross-Erickson, Inc., 223 Via Sevilla, Santa Barbara, Calif. 93109, at $8.95 (hardback only), a lovely book at a lovely price. Kenneth Rexroth's Introduction is perceptive and provides both an outline of Hearn's life and the story of Siddhartha Gautama, as the Buddha was known before his enlightenment.

To many readers Hearn will seem primarily an artist. He was certainly that. Yet his very commitment to beauty—most evidently to moral beauty—seems to have endowed his philosophic reflections with universal depth. He writes with extraordinary clarity about very difficult, very obscure matters, while at the same time his concern with common human life gives a touching simplicity and appeal to all his work. Hearn did not become a Buddhist because he was unable to "join" anything in the sense of allying himself with some institutional or social point of view. He was too busy taking in the spectacle of life, turning what he saw into part of his being, to stop at any established way-station of belief. But he certainly learned from Buddhism, and it seems likely that he transmitted its great ideas in something like their original purity. His prose has an air of discovery, with no sectarian stain anywhere in what he wrote.

The central dilemma of Buddhist thought—Is there, or is there not, an Ego?—runs through this volume. Hearn doesn't chop logic on either side, although he supplies most of the arguments. In one place he says:

> *I* an individual—an individual soul! Nay, I am a population—a population unthinkable for multitude, even by groups of a thousand millions! I am, æons of aeons! Countless times the concourse now making me has been scattered, and mixed with other scatterings. Of what concern, then, the next disintegration? Perhaps, after trillions of ages of burning in different dynasties of suns, the very best of me may come together again.
>
> If one could only imagine some explanation of the Why! The questions of the Whence and the Whither are much less troublesome, since the Present assures us, even though vaguely, of Future and Past. But the Why!
>
> The cooing voice of a little girl dissolves my reverie. She is trying to teach a child brother how to make the Chinese character for Man—I mean Man with a big M. First she draws in the dust a stroke sloping downwards from right to left, so:

> then she draws another curving downwards from left to right. thus:

> joining the two so as to form the perfect ji, or character, hito, meaning a person of either sex, or mankind:

> Then she tries to impress the idea of this shape in the baby memory by help of a practical illustration—probably learned at school. She breaks a slip of wood in two pieces, and manages to balance the pieces against each other at about the same angle as that made by the two strokes of the character. "Now see," she says: "each stands only by help of the other. One by itself cannot stand. Therefore the ji is like mankind. Without help one person cannot live in this world; but by getting help and giving help everybody can live. If nobody helped anybody, all people would fall down and die."
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> This explanation is not philologically exact; the two strokes evolutionally standing for a pair of legs—all that survives in the modern ideograph of the whole man figured in the primitive picture-writing. But the pretty moral fancy is much more important than the scientific fact. It is also one charming example of that old-fashioned method of teaching which invested every form and every incident with ethical signification. Besides, as a mere item of moral information, it contains the essence of all earthly religion, and the best part of all earthly philosophy. A world-priestess she is, this dear little maid, with her dove's voice and her innocent gospel of one letter! Verily in that gospel lies the only possible present answer to ultimate problems. Were its whole meaning universally felt—were its whole suggestion of the spiritual and material law of love and help universally obeyed—forthwith, according to the Idealists, this seemingly solid visible world would vanish away like smoke! For it has been written that in whatsoever time all human minds accord in thought and will with the mind of the Teacher *there shall not remain even one particle of dust that does not enter into Buddhahood.*

In his essay on Nirvana, doubtless the most mysterious of all Buddhist teachings, Hearn gives full weight to the doctrine that not one shred of personality can survive the final dissolution of all compounds—which must precede attainment of the Nirvanic condition—yet asks, in effect, how it can be that the Bodhisattvas are able to *reject* Nirvana, if there is nothing—absolutely nothing—left of the individual ego at that time of momentous choice? No-thing, perhaps, is there, but what of the spiritual center, once but the focus of limited consciousness, but now the avenue of vision encompassing all? Has this perfected Leibnizian monad no reality when summing aeons of evolution? Hearn pursues the question:

> How to reconcile this doctrine of monism with the assurance of various texts that the being who enters Nirvana can, when so desirous, reassume an earthly personality? There are some very remarkable texts on this subject in the Sutra of the Lotus of the Good Law: those for instance in which the Tathagata Prabhutaratna is pictured as sitting *"perfectly extinct upon his throne,"* and speaking before a vast assembly to which he has been introduced as "the great Seer who, *although perfectly extinct for many kotis of æons,* now comes to hear the Law." These texts themselves offer us the riddle of multiplicity in unity; for the Tathagata Prabhutaratna and the myriads of other extinct Buddhas who appear simultaneously, are said to have been all incarnations of but a single Buddha.
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> A reconciliation is offered by the hypothesis of what might be called a *pluristic monism*—a sole reality composed of groups of consciousness, at once independent and interdependent—or, to speak of pure mind in terms of matter, *an atomic spiritual ultimate.* This hypothesis, though not doctrinally enunciated in Buddhist texts, is distinctly implied both by text and commentary.

Hearn is not awed by authority on either side, yet one suspects that he, as Rexroth says of the "ordinary Buddhist," in fact "believes in the rebirth of the self, the *atman."*

But why this relentless Buddhist war on belief in an enduring self? It seems a reasonable precaution if one considers how most people think of themselves. A reliably immortal self would be a self consistent in all its aspects with Eternity, and for this, surely, there could be no definition at all! Yet there are all those spontaneous feelings people have—the sense of needing to make an individual effort, to rely on oneself, not to drift with the crowd. Can they be fraudulent, part of some great cosmic deception? Is there not a crucial difference between the vanities of personality and those egoic or spiritual longings which are the foundation of human nobility—a difference which seems ignored by the denial of an immortal self? How could individually achieved

self-knowledge, a realization of both the One and the Many, dissipate and die in Eternity?

Such thoughts are not alien to Hearn, yet he is also attracted by the cheer and hope ordinary people were able to find in Buddhist teaching. No one has more clearly or felicitously expressed the quality of Buddhist thought and influence that appealed so strongly to Hearn than the English lover of the East, G. Lowes Dickinson, who, in his small volume, *Appearances* (1914), speaks of "what Buddhism really meant to the masses of its followers." The quality of Hearn's writings seems perfectly conveyed by what Dickinson says:

> It meant not the hope or desire of extinction, but the charming dream of thousands of lives, past and to come, in many forms, many conditions, many diverse fates. The pessimism of the master is as little likely as his high philosophy to have reached the mind and heart of the people. The whole history of Buddhism, indeed, showed that it did not, and does not. What touched them in him was the saint and the lover of animals and men. And this love it was that flowed in streams all over the world, leaving wherever it passed, in literature and art, in pictures of flowers or mountains, in fables and poems and tales, the trace of its warm and humanising flood.

COMMENTARY
ACTS OF CREATION

THE Hubbards, Wendell Berry says (page 6), lay claim on our imagination—"a claim we can ignore only at our peril." This is a level of appeal worth thinking about. The response of people whose imagination is stirred is likely to be inventive, self-reliant, and provocative to those who feel the same longings.

What other levels of appeal compete for human attention?

In his book on the young Trotsky, Max Eastman said: "He was a man with an extreme social ideal and enough mechanical instinct to know that the only force capable of achieving such an ideal is the organized self-interest of the oppressed classes."

It hardly needs pointing out that a society achieved by organizing the self-interest of its members requires the whip and monitor of fear to keep it going. Even the spread of material prosperity, when it occurs, does little to reduce the need for compelling conformity through fear. The sum total of human desires, as some economist remarked, is insatiable.

The appeal of the freely acquisitive societies is to disorganized self-interest. This works for a while, until the resulting disorders in both natural and social processes bring another kind of fear or anxiety. Prosperity fails here, too, as a remedy. There's not enough of it, and what there is generates the fever of envy and outrage of injustice.

Does Wendell Berry really believe that the imaginative response of people can change all this?

Yes, if by imagination one means independent envisioning backed by the discipline real vision implies. Imagination is the key to all creation; it sorts the elements of disorder and combines them in harmonious forms. Both great poets—a Blake—and great reformers—a Gandhi—rely upon it. Writing of Blake, Harold Goddard said:

> Imagination can not only cause that-which-was-not to be; it can cause that-which-was not to be. It is this double power to annihilate and to create that makes imagination the sole instrument of genuine and lasting, in contrast with illusory and temporary, social change.

Gandhi's *My Experiment with Truth* is a study of the potentialities of the imagination. Richard Gregg's *The Power of Non-Violence* is an account of some of its achievements. It cannot be coincidence that the imaginative persons of our time, with hardly an exception, choose nonviolence as the only enduring foundation of human life. All worthy acts of creation require it.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
BRAVE OLD WORLD

WHAT do people get from reading books? The question has no more sense than asking what people find out when they take a walk. Even deciding on which book, or where they walk, doesn't help much. The possibilities remain practically infinite.

Well, what about a *great* book? Something, if only a little, can now be said.

Thirty years ago a person who became a frequent contributor to MANAS got involved in the Great Books movement. In those days, a little after the war, a graduate student in philosophy at the University of California had decided to conduct some seminars in the great books. The Hollywood Public Library gave him a room and before long the weekly meetings were crowded with eager participants. When the MANAS contributor spoke to the chairman, saying how good the meetings were, he replied: "Why don't you do the same thing somewhere else?" That was the start of another Great Books seminar.

What does one learn from such activities? First of all, you learn how to *read.* It is quite possible to read a book—as you suppose, quite carefully—without finding out what the book is really about. The Declaration of Independence, which comes in the first year of the Great Books program, is usually regarded as a historical document announcing the break between the American colonies and the mother country, England. This is true enough, but the Declaration is "great" because it is a treatise on the nature of man. It stakes out certain convictions concerning human beings—*all* human beings—and then defines the conditions of human fulfillment. We are going to achieve those conditions, the colonists said. You can't stop us, they said, because we are men.

After the Declaration came Plato's *Apology*. This is another treatise on the nature of man. The Athenians—some of them—were trying to stop Socrates from doing what was natural for him to do. They made up some charges and tried him for heresy and corrupting the young. A sufficient number of his fellow citizens found him guilty. After all, he was upsetting people by what he said. The young men he talked to became unmanageable.

What is the point of the *Apology?* Well, a lady who apparently had not read very many books—she had never heard of Socrates—found one thing very clear. "There are people in the world," she said, "who don't give in under pressure." For her, this was a new idea. Everyone she knew had given in under pressure. And here, she said, was this man who *didn't.* As she spoke it seemed as though a light went on in the room.

Someone else said, "They didn't really stop Socrates, did they? We're reading Plato's book about him."

Now, thirty years later, that's about all one can remember about that seminar on the *Apology*. It's enough, one could say. It justifies reading.

But other things could be added. You could say, for one thing, that perhaps because the lady hadn't done much reading she thought that she was supposed to take what she found in books *seriously*. This could support the claim that reading would be much improved if current book publication was reduced by about ninety-five per cent. If this happened, then the Great Books, most of which are not new, would have a much better chance of getting read—*carefully* read.

Arthur Morgan's argument for the study of history bears on this question. As the resuscitator of Antioch College, Morgan believed in education and in reading history. Why history? Because, he said, most people are exposed to nothing but mediocrity all their lives. History—good history, and especially good biography—brings the unusual, the extraordinary, the heroic, and the resolute people of the past into view. It is very important to know that people like Socrates have

lived in this world, and lived by their own rules, not the world's.

Curiously, several of the men at that seminar of thirty years ago didn't think much of what Socrates did. He wasn't practical, they said. The Athenians got rid of him, didn't they? Even reading the *Crito*—which came next in the program—was not able to overcome this objection. Socrates should have figured out a way to survive. He could have kept still for a while, or agreed to.

Well, did Socrates survive? You have to say that he did and he didn't. This kind of an answer often irritates people. What point is there to discussing questions that can't really be settled? But the *books* that have survived give little attention to anything else.

What did the Athenians have against Socrates? He was unpredictable. They wanted him to behave like the Sophists—show their sons how to win friends and influence people—but instead he was teaching them to be unpopular. There are all degrees of this problem. Take for example Piaget, the extraordinary psychologist of human learning, who seems to have found out how people learn to think. Could there be anything more important for educators?

The question is arguable, it seems. In the "Children" article for Sept. 7 we quoted a psychologist who thought that school programs might be interrupted if teachers concentrated on helping children to think. This writer, Hans G. Furth, explained:

> For instance, learning to read or reach a performance criterion in a certain subject is more frequently than not an inappropriate occasion for high-level thinking. Hence my reaction to the question "Should schools be concerned about fostering intelligence?" would be as follows. As a psychologist I reply with a definite and deliberate "yes" and will point out the various psychological benefits that could result from this step. But as a citizen I realize that the school is an institute of society and the decision to educate children as thinkers implies a value judgment that goes far beyond psychological expertise.

Here we have a working definition of thinking—it means going beyond the acceptable knowledge of the times. It is likely to be upsetting to people, but worth doing, nonetheless. That, surely, is why Arthur Morgan counseled reading history. There is at least a chance of gaining a perspective beyond the mediocrity of the times.

But Dr. Furth has a point. People can't think seriously, as heroic pioneers, *all* the time. Besides, they have to make a living. Real thinking is good for choosing a way to make a living, but in most cases doing the work is a sort of vacation from thinking. Unless you are a Socrates. But Socrates was a stone mason in his spare time.

A further consideration, one often ignored, is that only a few people want to learn how to think. Have they, as citizens, the right to be taught whatever it is they want to learn instead? Robert Jay Wolff worked out an answer to this while he was teaching drawing—in this case to a promising young cartoonist.

> It is obvious [says Mr. Wolff, in his book, *On Art and Learning*] that there is no way by which you could possibly change this boy's mind. Actually, there is no need to destroy his conviction. It would not even be desirable, for he may very well turn out to be an excellent cartoonist. But it is possible to divert his efforts into a wider range of sensory and aesthetic experience by accepting and using the very fixation you are trying to free him from. Show him Alexander Calder's masterful and witty wire images. Tell the boy that is cartooning too.
>
> This would be a beginning, and a pretty rough beginning it is on the teacher. It's hard work and it takes sensitive thinking and insight. There's only one alternative: let him develop in the image that the world of Super Suds and words spelled backwards sets up in him. True, he will still be living in this world and he will be earning his livelihood there. It is also true that we should do all in our power to prepare him for this task. However, in carrying out this obligation we should never lose sight of the fact that if we prepare him for a job, and nothing else, it is always possible that he will end his days with a job—and nothing else. It is our duty above all to see that this does not happen.

This, too, is a treatise on the nature of man.

FRONTIERS

Two Kinds of Rules

IN her report of a Midwest small-is-beautiful meeting held earlier this year, a staff writer for the (September) *Progressive*, Karen Kodner, presents questions that are now becoming familiar:

> What makes small beautiful? Why is big bad? For whom will specified technologies be appropriate? Who will decide the types of technologies that will be made accessible to the rest of us?
>
> How will we "grow smaller" as a society? If we truly want to decentralize, how do we confront the huge concentrations of resources and capital that now exist? How will various groups and individuals be able to participate in a movement that claims to be ultimately responsive to the needs of everyone?
>
> And then there is the trickiest question of all: How will the creation of small alternatives transform the large system we have? Isn't it just as likely—or likelier—that the system will swallow the alternatives, defuse their political, social, and economic impacts, render them meaningless? . . .
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> It was disturbing to hear the contradictions hedged or fudged and the "alternatives" invoked almost as magic talismans. These were, it seemed to me, disciples of a faith—not advocates of a reasoned program. They emphasized the importance of what an *individual* should do, and they offered shining examples. . . .
>
> The apostles of smallness are certain of its inevitability. . . . They seem oblivious to a *big* possibility: that ever-larger structures will consolidate their power and, invoking the energy "emergency" and the need for "order," restrict our freedom even further than they already have. So long as our resources, our land, and our capital are controlled by huge corporations and self-perpetuating bureaucracies, inevitability lies with bigness, not smallness. Our dependence on the present system is intricate and all-embracing. Those who dream of real self-sufficiency without taking account of the insidious and pervasive power of the system are engaging in wishful thinking.

Well, to take one point, the "alternatives" these people are so enthusiastic about *are* magic talismans, or the next best thing. They represent the exercise of a rule in life—the right rule for a healthy small community. The understanding and spread of that rule could work a transformation in the common life. People who become convinced of this see no contradiction between being disciples of a faith and advocates of a reasoned program.

Are the rules for a mass society different from the rules for a small community? Of course they're different, and that is why it is necessary to start changing the mass society into something else—into a collection of reasonably sized human associations in which the scale of action corresponds to the scale of responsibility. Otherwise only inhuman rules will work.

On this matter of wishful thinking, the *Progressive* writer seems to think that taking power away from the "huge corporations and self-perpetuating bureaucracies" is something we'll just do come election day. But even after victory at the polls, if the psychological conditions of the mass society continue, it will be necessary to put other huge corporations in charge. Why, let us ask, will they do any better? They might do worse. On the other hand, a population that has already begun to change its tastes, its needs, its means of self-support, and has withdrawn as much as possible of its allegiance to bigness is a population on the way to increasing self-control and self-determination. It seems a simple and credible proposition that this self-control begins at home.

Hence the need for shining examples. Shining examples of what individuals can do may have two distinctive virtues. They may inspire and they can't be imitated. This means that ideological exploitation of a shining example is not possible.

With no further argument, we devote our remaining space to a shining example—one described by Wendell Berry in his Foreword to the University of Kentucky reprint of Harlan Hubbard's *Shantytown—A River Way of Life*. These are Mr. Berry's first two paragraphs:

> Beginning in the fall of 1944 With the building of a shantyboat on the shore of the Ohio river at Brent, Kentucky, Harlan and Anna Hubbard have fashioned together a life that is one of the finest accomplishments of our time. For seven years they lived on their shantyboat, making their way from Brent to New Orleans and then into the bayou country of Louisiana. There followed a period of wandering by road, which eventually led them back near their starting place. They bought "seven acres more or less" in Payne Hollow on the Kentucky shore of the Ohio, not far from Madison, Indiana. And they built a house there "out of rocks and trees."
>
> They have lived at Payne Hollow ever since—now almost a quarter of a century—largely without benefit of the roads, machines, utilities, communications, comforts, and "labor-savers" that pass with us for modern civilization. Using fundamental tools and skills, they have done with out nearly everything that the salesmen tell us we must have. Their life is comely, orderly, ceremonious, full of health. Though their days are necessarily strenuous, they are also leisurely, allowing time for music and painting reading and writing, taking pleasure, entertaining visitors. Their life, in short, is exquisitely and deeply civilized for reasons and by means that our industrial ideology holds in contempt. This is their claim on our attention and our imagination. It is a claim we can ignore only at our peril.

Is it a confession of wishful thinking to recognize that what the Hubbards did on their shantyboat and later at Payne Hollow may not be useful as a model for a movement that requires supporters who are anxious to be told what to do?

The Hubbards are no more a part of a movement than Thoreau was. You can, if you like, call the spontaneous return to a natural life, a self-reliant life, a *movement*, but confusion will probably result. Meanwhile, Mr. Hubbard's *Shantyboat* (and also his *Payne Hollow*, which appeared a few years ago) is likely to be an enduring inspiration to people who can't be told what to think or do.