# NATURE'S VOICE HAS CHANGED

FROM being, in the eighteenth century, the self-reliant man's substitute for Providence, and nineteenth-century man's arbiter of the struggle for existence, Nature has become little more than a store of energy to be tapped. The natural world is now a convenient reservoir of available resources. Joseph Wood Krutch caught the spirit of this change in *Grand Canyon* by reporting the comment of a tourist who had looked out over the great abyss. "You can't tell me," she said, "it was made without human aid." Mr. Krutch remarks:

> No age before ours would have made such an assumption. Man has always before thought of himself as puny by comparison with natural forces, and he was humble before them. But we have been so impressed by the achievements of technology that we are likely to think we can do more than nature herself. We dug the Panama Canal, didn't we? Why not the Grand Canyon?

He adds that this is "a state of hubris which may bring about tragic catastrophe in the end." There is no denying, however, that the practical relations of man with nature have been made remote by technology, and that for the thoughtless beneficiaries of modern productive efficiency, there are few occasions when an actual contact with natural forces has opportunity to generate awe. Nature is now something that man controls, more or less at will.

In an article in *Anarchy* 78 (August, 1967), titled "Toward a Liberatory Technology," Lewis Herber develops the implications of this changed situation from another point of view. Essentially, he asks what confidence can be placed in the expectations of the technological utopians. Can the world be transformed in the way that they predict, simply by application of more control of nature?

First to be established is the fact that this control exists. Mr. Herber examines man's changed material environment under the heading, "The Potentialities of Modern Technology," finding that the systematic character of technology is decisive:

For the first time in history, technology has reached an open end. What I mean by "open end" is that the potential for technological development, for providing machines as substitutes for labour is essentially unlimited. Technology has finally passed from the realm of *invention* into that of *design,* from fortuitous discoveries into systematic innovations.

Not, "Can we do it?", but "Is it the best thing to do?", has become the significant question. The foundation for this change was laid in the nineteenth century, when the rationalizing methods of science began to be linked with the processes of industry to inaugurate, in time, the age of technology. As Mr. Herber puts it:

> The authentic personification of this new interplay between scientific generalization and technology is not the inventor, the James Watt or Thomas Edison, but the systematic investigator with catholic interests, the Michael Faraday, who almost simultaneously adds both to man's knowledge of scientific principles and to engineering. In our own day the synthesis embodied by the work of a single, inspired genius now reposes in the anonymous team of specialists—the cooperative activity of physicists, biologists, engineers, and technicians—with its clear-cut advantages, to be sure, but also with the resulting lack of vision, imagination, and inspiration so characteristic of bureaucratic modes of organization.

In evidence that we can now make almost anything we like, Mr. Herber quotes Vannevar Bush, former director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development. Today, Dr. Bush says, there are thousands of young men who can design what we want almost to order, using technical resources already in existence: "The point is that the presence of a host of versatile, cheap, reliable gadgets, and the presence of men who understand fully all their queer ways, has rendered the building of automatic devices almost straightforward and routine. It is no longer a question of whether they can be built; it is rather a question of whether they are worth building." What should be done has thus been made into a matter of social and political accounting.

This enormous competence of the scientifically sophisticated technologist was the basis of Daniel Bell's article in this summer's Cal Tech *Quarterly,* in which he foresees that a professional élite is to become the new governing class in the United States. "The norms of the new intelligentsia," Prof. Bell said, expressing some hope, "the norms of professionalism, are a departure from the norms of economic self-interest which guided a business civilization." Much less vaguely, Mr. Herber points to a question which Prof. Bell hardly raised except by implication:

> . . . the real issue we face today is not whether this new technology can provide us with the means of life in a workless society, but whether it can *humanize* society, whether it can contribute to the creation of new relationships between man and man. The demand for a guaranteed annual income is still anchored in the *quantitative* promise of a cybernated technology—the possibility of satisfying essential material needs without toil. I submit that this quantitative type of solution, if such it can be called, is already lagging behind technological developments that carry a new, *qualitative* promise—the promise of decentralized, communitarian life-styles, or what I prefer to call ecological forms of human association.

Mr. Herber devotes much of his article to practical suggestions for realizing balanced communitarian life through the conversion of industrial agriculture into the arts of husbandry, with a general use of technology that is planned from the beginning to enhance humanistic activities and values. Since such a program requires detailed attention to particular applications of technology, the reader is invited to read this *Anarchy* article in full (single copies 30 cents; order from Freedom Press, 17a Maxwell Road, London, SW6, England). Our interest, here, is to consider the obstacles to such thinking about technology. Some of these obstacles lie in prevailing habits of thought and evaluation. Mr. Herber calls attention to one of them when he notes that reformers who a1ready command public interest through advocacy of a guaranteed annual income base their appeal on "the *quantitative* promise of a cybernated technology." More deeply rooted is the obstacle discussed by S.P.R. Charter in a paper in the current issue of *Man on Earth* (Vol. I, No. 8), "Individuation in a Designed World." Here the target of criticism is the blindness of ethical ideas derived from Utilitarian philosophy:

> Utilitarianism is the philosophical doctrine that the useful is the good; that the aim of moral action is in achieving the largest possible balance of pleasure over pain, and for the greatest happiness of the greatest number. When pleasure and happiness possessed intimate tangible qualities, Utilitarianism may have contained a valid moral basis for Democracy. Since we have allowed our technology to become virtually random yet dominant, the intangible qualities of pleasure and happiness have been, and continue to be, replaced by measurable quantities of devices *for* pleasure and happiness. These human attributes are now becoming increasingly more public than private, more responsive to external acceptances than to inner needs more controlled, as it were, by devices of persuasion. And the torrent of devices appears to be, at least for the present, never-ending.

> Because we neither possess nor seek a design-theory for the multiple meanings of Progress, we permit ourselves, through expediency and default, to become actually and spiritually inundated by its multiple tangibilities. We then convince ourselves that pleasure and happiness, inspiration and purpose, are measurable in the same manner in which marketplace response is measured. Is it a wonder that we raise technological utilitarianism to the heights of morality and deity? . . .

> Since everything Technology accomplishes, for whatever reason, is done through Design (or anti-Design if you will), the pivotal question toward sanity remains: What is Design for? This question has virtually no meaning unless it is organic to the question: *What is Man for?*

The trouble with technological utilitarianism is that its advocates think they already know what Man is for: Man is there to be fed, to be made comfortable, to be supplied with devices for making himself "happy." Utilitarian technology has little interest in philosophical or qualitative questions, since it knows only quantitative answers.

There is another, complex, psychological barrier to thinking about the use of technology to fulfill humanistic ideals. For a great many people, deprived and dissatisfied people, "the quantitative promise of a cybernated technology" is still only *talk.* Urgent want in a substantial portion of the population gives strong moral utilitarian argument for a

quantitative solution. But if this argument is accepted, as it ought to be, it should not be made into an excuse for ignoring the multiple alienations which have already overtaken people for whom merely quantitative solutions have not worked. The incidence of malaise, anomie, addiction, mental illness, alcoholism, and other symptoms of profound disorder is at least statistically equatable with heaped-up servings of the quantitative blessings of technology. The earnest desire to redress balances is not a sufficient reason for remaining blind to these defects of the utilitarian panacea.

Moreover, in a world society in which the cultures of many centuries live side by side, there can be no single, grand, technical solution for all. The main offense of countries like the United States in relation to the underdeveloped countries, as E. F. Schumacher has pointed out, has been the introduction of high technology to countries with a crying need for *intermediate* technology. In an underdeveloped country, the techniques of high technology often operate as an infection instead of a help. They bring labor-saving methods to regions where wealth consists mainly of a labor force, with the result that unemployment, instead of being reduced, is increased. This is the obvious case for intermediate technology—for supplying tools which suit the needs of people who are still in the peasant stage of agriculture, and whose manufacturing activities are still at a crafts stage. Actually, there is on other grounds a strong case for deliberate return to the crafts stage, whenever possible, even in advanced technological societies. This becomes plain from Lewis Herber's critical analysis of the dominant machine culture and economy:

> Much has been written about technology as an "extension of man." The phrase is misleading if it is meant to apply to technology as a whole. It has validity primarily for the traditional handicraft shop and, perhaps, for the early stages of machine development. The craftsman dominates the tool, his labour, artistic inclinations, and personality are the sovereign factors in the productive process. Labour is not merely an expenditure of energy but the personalized work of a man whose activities are sensuously directed toward preparing, fashioning and finally decorating his product for human use. The craftsman guides his tool, not the tool the craftsman.

Any alienation that may exist between the craftsman and his product is immediately overcome, as Friedrich Wilhelmsen emphasized, "by an artistic judgment—a judgment bearing on a thing to be made." The tool amplifies the powers of the craftsman as a *man,* as a *human;* it amplifies his power to impart his artistry, his very identity as a creative being, on raw materials.

The development of the machine tends to rupture the intimate relationship between man and the means of production. To the degree that it is a self-operating device, the machine assimilates the worker to preset industrial tasks, tasks over which he exercises no control whatever. The machine now appears as an alien force—apart from and yet wedded to the production of the means of survival. Starting out as an "extension of man," technology is transformed into a force above man, orchestrating his life according to a score contrived by an industrial bureaucracy; not *men,* I repeat, but bureaucracies i.e., *social machines.* With the arrival of the fully automatic machine as the predominant means of production, man becomes an extension of the machine, not only of mechanical devices in the productive process but also of social devices in the social process. Man ceases to exist in almost any respect for his own sake. Society is ruled by the harsh maxim: production for the sake of production. The decline from craftsman to worker, from the active to the increasingly passive personality, is completed by man *qua* consumer—an economic entity whose tastes, values, thoughts, and sensibilities are engineered by bureaucratic "teams" in "think tanks." Man, standardized by machines, is finally reduced to a machine.

The issue, here, is not so much a question of "social justice" or "equality" in sharing the benefits of machine productivity, but a degrading use of human beings. This is the unexpected—and partly unintended—side of exclusive emphasis on the utilitarian conception of human good. It is the logical outcome of the idea of progress in which man is conceived as subordinate to the necessities of a high-production machine civilization. Mr. Herber elaborates on its anti-human effects:

> The "ideal man" of the industrial bureaucracy is a being whose innermost life can be invaded by subliminal and predictively reliable advertising. The "ideal man" of the military bureaucracy is a being whose innermost life can be invaded by regimentation for genocide.

Accordingly men are graded, fingerprinted, tested, mobilized in campaigns from "charity" to war. The horrible contempt for the human personality implied by these "ideals," tests, and campaigns provides the moral climate for mass murder, acts in which the followers of Stalin and Hitler are mere pioneers.

The failed, inadequate, and excluded members of this society are as much victims of the negative self-imagery generated by reverse readings of the propaganda of acquisitive goals as of the impersonal indifference of the competitive system. As Richard Elman says in *The Poorhouse State:*

> The most serious failure of our Poorhouse State is not that it fails to rehabilitate people but that it offers to fit them out in outlandish knickers, tries to marry them to an obsolescent thrift, and fails to allow them to consume with integrity. A whole nation is gorging itself, but the Poorhouse State tells the poor that goodness is something other than what they see on their television screens. It talks a great deal about standards, decency, dignity, liberty, and justice but offers only dependency. It not only fails to bestow upon the poor the only value they have been taught to uphold on equal terms with all their fellow citizens, but it also looks up from its martini, winks, and says, "This is a hell of a life."

Michael Harrington's *The Other America,* Julius Horwitz' *The Inhabitants,* and Elman's book all reveal the basically quantitative way in which the poor are regarded. As Paul Jacobs said in his Autumn 1964 *Dissent* article: *"The poor are still objects to us, objects to be studied, objects sometimes to be used for political purposes, or objects who should he helped because to do so will cut down on public assistance payments."* In short, the manipulative, utilitarian approach to such problems is pursued with the same neglect of the need for *humanization* that pervades the system whose abuses it would now compensate for.

It is obvious that, sooner or later, more far-reaching socio-political remedies will be sought for these conditions. And it is obvious, also, as Richard Elman anticipates, that these remedies, because they must satisfy popular feelings and prejudices, will be compromises with past methods. No matter what the potentialities of cybernated technology for spreading around "affluence" for all members of

society, there will still remain the emasculating psychological effects of dependency, which make people feel like powerless "objects" as well as causing other people to look at them in the same way. Bettelheim's definition, that "the essence of being human is to act on one's own behalf in a context of mutuality based on an accurate sense of causality," will still apply, and its conditions are not likely to be fulfilled by any managed, legislated, utilitarian solution.

How can constructive change be brought about? It can only come about by applying the principles Gandhi advocated for his Constructive Work program, which Dolci uses in his efforts to help the Sicilian poor, and which Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan explain as lying behind their counter-society, communitarian undertakings. The fundamental humanistic and educational psychology of all these endeavors has been variously described, but nowhere more simply and effectively than by Raymond Rogers in the chapter, "Action Develops Belief," in his book, *Coming into Existence.* The following passage gives the general idea:

> Here, for example, is a man who has had a life-long conviction of his own worthlessness. We aren't concerned here with the origin of his belief, though this might be an interesting story. We are, however, interested in knowing why he continued to hold such an unfavorable conviction. At some point in his life this worthless fellow is shown the relationship between self-activity and belief. It is demonstrated to him that his feeling of worthlessness has been supported by his actions, he has continued to feel worthless and to believe himself worthless because he has behaved as though he were worthless. Being an intelligent fellow, he begins to modify his actions, to try to behave as though he were a person of some consequence. He has started on a long and rocky road, but if he keeps going he will eventually feel some slight fluttering of self-respect. This may happen after no more than two or three years. If he persists for eight or ten years, he will both feel and know that he really amounts to something. "Assume a virtue, if you have it not," and you can make it your own.
>
> Notice that there was more to this achievement than just acquiring a new belief. It involved the overthrowing of a conviction, solidly based on feeling, which was already in existence and its

replacement by a directly opposing conviction equally strong and equally supported by feeling. This is a tremendous undertaking, but it is carried through more frequently than we might suppose.

The humanization of the social environment can hardly be accomplished except by multiple applications of this idea. The basis of self-respect is *self*-examination and *self*-energization. Tolstoy found this out and recorded his discovery in *My Confession.* It is essentially what Mr. Rogers says, and what William Ryan says in his paper on preventive measures in respect to mental disorder.

Involved is the rejection of stereotyped self-images and the discovery of inner resources for self-discovery. This is the great contribution of the humanistic psychologists. In Western literature it goes back to Pico della Mirandola's *Oration on the Dignity of Man.* It goes back to Socrates. It lies at the foundation of all the wisdom religions of the East. By this principle men discover how to stop being mere statistics of utilitarian prediction, and to find both freedom and competence within themselves. Raised to a higher power, it becomes the resource of the Hero, the man who will not remain an off-print and passively suffer the contradictions of his culture. As Ortega says in his *Meditations on Quixote:*

> The men of Homer belong to the same world as their desires. In Don Quixote we have, on the other hand, a man who wishes to reform reality. But is he not a piece of that reality? Does he not live off it, is he not a consequence of it? How is it possible for that which does not exist—a projected adventure—to govern and alter harsh reality? Perhaps it is not possible, but it is a fact that there are men who decide not to be satisfied with reality. Such men aim at altering the course of things; they refuse to repeat the gestures that custom, tradition, or biological instincts force them to make. These men we call heroes, because to be a hero means to be one out of many, to be oneself. If we refuse to have our actions determined by heredity or environment it is because we seek to base the origin of our actions on ourselves and only on ourselves. The hero's will is not that of his ancestors nor of his society, but his own. This will to be oneself is heroism.

> I do not think there is any more profound originality than this "practical," active originality of the hero. His life is a perpetual resistance to what is habitual and customary. Each movement he makes has first had to overcome custom and invent a new kind of gesture. Such a life is a perpetual suffering, a constant tearing oneself away from that part of oneself which is given over to habit and is a prisoner of matter.

Being human, in short, when carried to its highest power, is to be heroic. Yet this principle has applications which begin with the simplest private decision, the most elementary consultation of the individual with himself. It is here that authority lies for human beings, and not in computerized accounting of the utilities of life. Nature is still the reference for what is lawful and good, but in a world of technologically manipulated energies the mandate of Nature can be sought only in the voices of human beings, of men who are learning how to speak and act for themselves.

# *REVIEW*
## ON TRUTH AND "POWER"

THE apparent indifference of great religious scriptures to what are now regarded as all-important social questions is often a puzzle to the modern reader. For one brought up on the ringing declarations of the eighteenth century, the passive acceptance of kingly authority seems a kind of moral blindness, while the paternal sagacity of Lao-tse in respect to the management problems of the state, for all its psychological insight, strikes an alien note.

There is a sense in which to be "modern" is to involve oneself in some way with the responsibilities of power, and to have thought about the use of power in behalf of the general good. Only in recent years have men begun to suspect that the wise exercise of power may be just about the most difficult undertaking human beings can attempt; the assumption that "of course" we know how to use power, because of our democratic principles, is unchallengeable for many people, and this may explain the excessive self-righteousness behind the policies of the greatest power-states of modern times.

The revolutions of the eighteenth century brought political power within the reach of the common man. High principles were behind this reform—ideas such as the right of individuals to have a voice in shaping the social structure, and the equality of all men before the law; pervading these social commitments based upon a new conception of the nature of man was the ideal of human solidarity, of the brotherhood of all men—an ethical principle which may be thought of as the lubricant upon which successful application of the other principles depends.

But what the revolutionary doctrines of the eighteenth century failed to instruct us in is the *difficulties* which attend any use of political power. While, for obvious reasons, enlightened modern man will never willingly return to the despotic solutions of the past—not in *theory,* at any rate—the problems of control and order in a society committed to self-determination sometimes seem overpowering, and

this results in covert authoritarianism on the part of impatient reformers. It also leads to the pretenses of a "symbolic" freedom to hide the manipulative techniques of this new sort of Machiavellian.

It was Plato's contention that political thought too easily short-circuits into the quest for power, when it ought to be concerned with what is right and good. There is a sense in which this is precisely the affliction of the present. Goals representing the common good are so inextricably mixed with ideas for the achievement of power that the question of what is right is continually compromised by the techniques of political persuasion. Formulas for the maintenance of control often displace the most elementary ethical principles. The war in Vietnam, for example, may be recognized as an extreme case of the contrast between proclaimed social ideals and compromised political means.

These broad developments have not been going on without being noticed by some of the people involved. One of the clearest exposures of the betrayal of thought—and of society—through the identification of truth with the means to power was made by Dwight Macdonald in the 1940's. Macdonald published his humanist critique of "Progressivism" in his magazine, *Politics,* shortly after World War II. This essay, titled "The Root Is Man," later appeared in book form together with other material (*The Root Is Man,* Cunningham Press, Alhambra, Calif. 1953). Many other writers have since called attention to the way in which intellectuals and scholars have been absorbed by the political and industrial Establishments. In his *One-dimensional Man* (Beacon, 1964), Herbert Marcuse pointed out that the demand for highly paid technical intelligence in both industry and government has increasingly homogenized intellectuality with popular ideology, bringing weakness if not an end to the critical function of intellectuals—those who, as a class, could once be depended upon to declare a Great Refusal of all mediocrity. In the past two or three years, the decline of the role of the independent intellectual in the United States has been the subject of many discussions, ranging from notice of the new "affluence" of the scientifically educated to critiques of academic conformity in colleges and universities,

and the development of the "consultant" path to large monetary rewards for learning. The loss of moral vision in education is the subject of a forthcoming book by Theodore Roszak, *The Dissenting Academy.*

An important contribution to criticism of this sort appears in the *Nation* for Sept. 11, in an article by Christopher Lasch, who teaches history at Northwestern University. Prof. Lasch uses the recent revelations of CIA subsidies to the National Students Association and the British journal, *Encounter,* to show the vulnerability of intellectuals to the suasions and egotisms of power. The article is a long one, filled with details of the use of organs of free expression for the spread of ideological propaganda. Toward the end, Prof. Lasch writes:

> The revelations about the intellectuals and the CIA should also make it easier to understand a point about the relations of intellectuals to power that has been widely misunderstood. In associating themselves with the warmaking and propaganda machinery of the state in the hope of influencing it, intellectuals deprive themselves of the real influence they could have as men who refuse to judge the validity of ideas by the requirements of national power or any other entrenched interest. Time after time in this century it has been shown that the dream of influencing the war machine is a delusion. Instead the war machine corrupts the intellectuals. The war machine cannot be influenced by the advice of well-meaning intellectuals; it can only be resisted. The way to resist it is simply to refuse to put oneself at its service.

When intellectuals submit to the necessities of power, "they betray," Prof. Lasch says, "at a deeper level, the same loss of faith which drives other men into the service of the men in power—a haunting suspicion that history belongs to men of action and that men of ideas are powerless in a world that has no use for philosophy." Such men, when they serve the partisan purposes of the state, in time discover "that all they had made was a lie." In too few cases does this lead to a change in attitude. Instead—

> these defeats—the revelation that the man of action, revolutionist or bureaucrat, scorns the philosopher whom he is able to use—have not led the philosopher to conclude that he should not allow himself to be

used; they merely reinforce his self-contempt and make him the ready victim of a new political cause.

> The despair of intellect is closely related to the despair of democracy. In our time intellectuals are fascinated by conspiracy and intrigue, even as they celebrate the "free market place of ideas" (itself an expression that already betrays a tendency to regard ideas as commodities). They long to be on the inside of things; they want to share the secrets ordinary people are not permitted to hear. The attractions of power and the satisfactions of inside-dopesterism are stronger, in our society, than the pull of any particular position.

So, on reflection, one may wonder whether the neglect of the problems of power, so evident in ancient treatises of philosophical religion, may not be evidence of wisdom rather than a sign of backwardness. Writing in the nineteenth century, Fielding Hall (as he recounts in *The Soul of a People*) found it strange that the Buddhist priests of upper Burma would give him no counsel at all concerning his duties as a civil magistrate. When he asked for advice about a dispute among the villagers, they would not help him. "These are not our affairs," they said. "Go to the people; they will tell you what you want." They would exercise "a general influence, never a particular one." As Hall said:

> If anyone came to a monk for counsel, the monk would only repeat to him the sacred teaching, and leave him to apply it.

> So each village managed its own affairs, untroubled by squire or priest, very little troubled by the state. . . . They maintained a very high, simple code of morals, entirely of their own initiative.

Some deep principle seems embodied here, yet its use in a highly developed, power-obsessed culture such as ours would probably seem either "escapist" or irresponsible to many people. But a clue to the importance of this principle must lie in the fact that ancient religious teachers left the synthesis between wisdom and power strictly to individuals, avoiding attempts at institutional solution. This, as a matter of fact, seems a quite serviceable definition of *freedom.*

## *COMMENTARY*
### INVITATION TO THE COMMUNITY-MINDED

SOME young people working in association with Community Service, Inc., Yellow Springs, Ohio, have sent the following letter, asking that it be published:

> What sort of environment may best bring out the latent powers of an individual? How can we build a society which will restore balance and wholeness to the human personality?
>
> The Community of Correspondence is a group of persons who wish to correspond with one another in order to build a base of fellowship in preparation for working to build a better society. We believe that the key to a better social order is the development of the purposeful small community. We believe that existing small communities, though now in a state of decay, may be nourished by purposeful effort into finer units of society than any that have yet existed. The small community can combine the best elements of rural life and urban life to form a type of "hybrid" community that has more vitality and advantages than either the rural or urban community alone. We believe that a good community life is necessary for a good family life; good family life is necessary to produce healthy personalities and a society of healthy personalities is necessary for a world without war. We believe that a decentralized economy, combined with pioneering efforts in education, and local government are possible and significant elements in the building of a great community. We want to use technology to serve man, and not vice versa. We distrust bureaucracy and mass power. We believe that a good society *can* be built by the cooperative efforts of individuals in all walks of life, uniting in small groups of common purpose.
>
> There are many potentially great small communities all over the United States. We want to get in touch with those persons interested in pioneering. It is important that we contact young persons who are searching to build better environments for themselves and for their children. We hope to learn with one another the practical steps which must be taken to bring good communities into reality.
>
> If you wish to join us in our search, write to:
>
> Community of Correspondence
> Community Service, Inc.
> Box 243, Yellow Springs,
> Ohio 45387

Study of the history of "community" undertakings in the past shows that their founders were usually very sure they knew exactly what to do, and were wholly confident of their plans and ideals. The strength of these enterprises, for this reason, seemed dependent upon a certain rigidity of mind. This authoritarian temper is wholly lacking in the present generation of communitarians. Perhaps a new kind of strength can be born of the new spirit in community-building, which starts out by asking questions.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves

### BEYOND BUREAUCRACY?

[We reprint here, by permission, Richard Kean's Preface to *Dialogue on Education,* a book he edited for the Bobbs Merrill Dialogue series. The paperbacks in this series are priced at $1.25. Mr. Kean's observations are a good indication of the quality and direction of these books.]

ONE of the most dynamic characteristics of man, distinguishing him from other species and giving him pretensions to be more than merely a machine, is that, faced with an environment which threatens his self-development, his instinct is to change it. This instinct is sustained by his ability to sense—as he meshes the logic of his past with his intuitions of the present—the future implications of his actions. Expression of this instinct has brought the word *revolution* into currency.

In the present age, when so much of what is happening moves as bits of information, perhaps the word *context* ought to replace *environment.* For the purposes of discussion, somehow *context* connotes more openness, more sense of possibility. It better suggests the rapidity of change and the fluidity of power which hold man's existence in their embrace. It affirms the radical necessity for understanding.

We are living in a revolutionary period. We must communicate. Achieving a context in which meaningful communication can take place is a revolutionary act today. This book, as it considers alternative ways of educating man, is searching for such a context.

Ninety-four faculty members and administrators and six students spent four and a half days recently (at the National Conference on Curricular and Instructional Innovation in Large Colleges and Universities, East Lansing, Michigan, Nov. 6-11, 1966) trying to achieve a context in which meaningful discussion about innovation in the university could begin. The conference, although broad in agenda and enlightened in chairmanship, had convened on the implicit assumption that the university was moving in the "right" direction, and that techniques and technologies would be discussed whereby it could arrive there more efficiently. After an uneasy pause, during which a letter from a student was read sending his regrets (he was busy running his own university) at not being able to attend, and adding that his ideas would probably not be respected anyway, the deliberations began with due dispatch.

Within ten minutes after the first technical paper was delivered, the first protest was lodged. A professor of English from the University of Michigan objected to the technical jargon, saying it was contrary to the entire style of expression and thinking which his discipline embraced. The discussion was running, he said, in direct opposition to what he understood education to be all about.

He was quickly answered by animated counter charges that he was obstructing the conference and that he and his kind stood in the way of science and progress.

Two students made abortive attempts to reconcile the two points of view.

The chairman was more successful. In an effort to cool the debate, he asked a progression of administrators to describe the innovative programs which were being carried out at *their* institutions. They responded in turn, and what was later described as a "grey pall of College-Bowl rhetoric" filtered through the chamber, suffocating speakers and listeners alike.

By the next day, the technical quarter seemed to have won the debate by default. The jargon had woven its web.

In the midst of an especially facile conversation, a student stood up, was recognized, and said not a word. Fifteen seconds of silence passed, and then in low, even tones he asked: "Can you deliver your wife's baby?"

Astonishment was universal. Confusion was rampant. Polarization was complete.

The next afternoon the six students faced the ninety-four administrators and faculty members as a panel and tried to distinguish their feelings about the university from their feelings about life in general. The six, quite calm at first, quite articulate, found it an impossible task.

The same student who had stalled the discussion the day before pinpointed the dilemma:

> I feel that this conference is not so much a meeting of generations—of exploring a way to bring a younger generation into the culture by cultivating its special energies and understanding what it represents—as it is a businessmen's meeting of those who are trying to run that operation up there, and are trying to settle the problem of how they're going to run that machine. So long as the emphasis is upon smoothing out the machine, I find it hard to decide what to speak to and what sort of things I want to suggest, and what part of myself I can speak from. And I feel this very great separation, this great difficulty, between us.

Failure to bridge the gap, he said, would be catastrophic. And he proposed that the conference attempt a gentle confrontation.

But patience had worn thin; discussion on both sides became heated, and the session ended with a sense of futility. The student panel was dismissed in the minds of some (including, it would seem, the minds of those who prepared the conference report: no mention was made of it) as a "prayer meeting." The act of inquiring about the goals of the university was firmly imbedded in minds of all as somehow opposed to discussion of educational techniques and technologies. A brilliant attempt at synthesis, which appears in this volume, was largely ignored.

The conference wrecked on the rocks of non-communication. A parenthetical statement by an after-dinner speaker who had not attended the sessions—"We're going to have to learn (in education and in political affairs) to operate beyond bureaucracy"—left an empty feeling in the pit of more than one listener's stomach.

The effort to achieve context had failed, and students, faculty and administrators alike left East Lansing with an eerie feeling that survival was at stake.

This book is edited by one and is dedicated to the other five of the six students who attended that conference. It represents an attempt to achieve what was not achieved there.

There are, at least, two ways to edit a book. One is to delineate a very specific logical goal and prepare the contributing articles to lead a straight and narrow path to it. This method is especially inviting when a piece authored by the editor is to be included.

The other is to accept good pieces as they stand and make room for them. If there exists an organizational scheme to this book, it is this: the pieces are ordered sequentially in such a way that each creates a context in which the next one can be relevant. This is sometimes a broadening, sometimes a narrowing, process. Each reader is free to order the final *gestalt* in a way which suits him best.

RICHARD KEAN

# *FRONTIERS*
## Last Summer in the Cities

THE violence which swept a number of American cities during the past summer had one peculiarly unfortunate effect: It enabled some people to suppose that they have no longer any reason to try to understand the causes of the unrest in urban ghettos. Violence is irrational—outside the pale—and this justifies the simple solution of repression.

Trying to understand the causes of the riots is not a way of condoning violence, but the only hope of preventing it. As David Dellinger remarked in a (July) *Liberation* editorial:

> The best way to combat violence always is to work constructively against the cruelty and violence of the status quo. While remaining nonviolent ourselves, we must recognize and respond to the thrust for dignity of those who strike out, however blindly at times, against the system which oppresses them. Only those who have found a sense of dignity and worth in their own lives can believe enough in the dignity and worth of other human beings to become nonviolent. Others may be subservient or submissive—but that is not nonviolence, any more than are the days without arson or sniping in our cities days of peace.

Those who are able to reserve their indignation at the idea that riots can represent a "thrust for dignity"—by remembering, say, the Boston Tea Party—will find the September *Trans-action* a source of considerable light on the subject. This issue of *Trans-action*—a semi-popular monthly devoted to furthering "the understanding and use of the social sciences"—contains five articles presenting different aspects of the riots. All these discussions enable the reader to grasp something of the feelings of the people for whom a riot has become a court of last resort. They also reveal the superficiality of findings which explain the riots by a "small group of unemployed, ill-educated, delinquent, juvenile and uprooted Negroes." They support the contention of Robert M. Fogelson, a Columbia University historian, who recently declared that the report of the McCone Commission "completely misunderstood the character and implications" of the 1965 rioting in the Watts section of Los Angeles. (Los Angeles *Times,* Sept. 11.) As Irving Louis Horowitz remarks in his contribution to *Trans-action:*

> . . . it is the upwardly mobile, relatively well-educated Negro, rather than the "lumpenproletariat" element, that engages in riot activities. This was as true in Detroit, the most highly proletarianized Negro working class in America, as it was in Watts, where more than two thirds of the men arrested were fully and gainfully employed at the time.

It is impossible to assimilate the content of these articles without recognizing that while the riots may be touched off by some minor incident of discrimination, the underlying feelings which gain expression are a reaction to the humiliation of black people which has gone on for centuries. There is also, of course, deep resentment of job discrimination. People seeking both to better their circumstances and to enjoy common human respect find that they cannot *get at* practical means to bring about specific changes. Thus the riots become a dramatic, generalized rejection of *racism.* As Sam Coleman says in July *Liberation:*

> The discrepancy between the aroused expectations of Negroes and the unchanging reality builds pressures up to new highs. The outbursts compose consecutive episodes of a spaced-out revolution by a minority which can therefore be contained. Their increasing frequency is paced by the increasing gap between our promise and performance.

> The only solution is to redeem that promise, to improve the performance so that it begins to catch up with the rhetoric of cheap pledges. The uprisings are counter-productive for this goal, for they drive Negroes and whites further apart, although by frightening Whitey they palliate the humiliation suffered unremittingly by Negroes. The insurrections are but responses to our own casual failures and complacencies as whites. The racism that envenoms this country is the racism of whites, which imposes daily violence against black people. The retaliatory violence of riots is secondary and derivative. To cut racism out of American life is the painful job of whites.

A detailed account of how the Detroit ghetto-dwellers looked at their own riot, compiled in their own words by Tom Parmenter (in *Trans-action),* makes the reader realize that a white minority, subjected to the same conditions by another race, would almost certainly have carried violent reactions to much greater extremes. A simple-indignation response to the riots is seldom evidence of anything more than a white man's habitual inability to identify with a black man's feelings of self-respect. One of Detroit's Negro organizers, a man who is trying to direct the energies of the ghetto residents into more constructive channels, had this to say after attending the funeral of a slain Negro youth:

> "I've had people treat me like that cigaret butt there just because I'm black. I could very easily be on the other side of the street with a 30-30 rifle. I have this fight with myself every day. I keep having this hope that people will somehow come to their senses. I don't know what I'll be doing a year from now. I just don't know what I'll do."

Lee Rainwater, a *Trans-action* editor, discusses the relationship between the riots and white justice. He regards the provoking incident as unimportant:

> The incident becomes an example of a society in which whites do as they please, while Negroes are held accountable for every minor infraction, even those infractions involving behavior that is not really voluntary. For example a man may get drunk because he is depressed and discouraged about his situation, or he may spend his time on the streets and get in trouble there because he has given up looking for a job. The fury of the rioters is probably exacerbated by their weariness at trying to manage their lives in such a way that they can avoid the attentive ministrations of the social control agents (and these include truant officers welfare investigators, and personnel officers, as well as the police).

> By now the guilt or innocence of the culprits, and the manner in which the police treat them, are no longer that central. Instead, the focus is on the crowd members' general feelings that they live in a world in which they are constantly held accountable to standards of justice which are not applied to others. They feel that the merchants with whom they deal cheat them, that employers are either indifferent or exploiting toward them, that the police are disrespectful and suspicious of them. Therefore, they feel that the police (as representatives of society at large) are perpetrating the greater evil—an evil by comparison with which the minor peccadilloes of the drunken driver, traffic violator, the blind-pig patron are, in human terms, irrelevant.

> Further, as incidents like this multiply, and as sophistication about Negro victimization rises in the ghetto community, it becomes increasingly possible to generalize this process without a particular incident.

One can, of course, adopt the view that Negroes, simply because they wish to advance themselves, ought to become "perfect," and not grow depressed when they can't find jobs; one might say that Negroes ought to set an example for one another so that nobody at all—not even a prejudiced white man—can find anything to criticize in their behavior. Some Negroes will do this—some of them have—but this kind of counsel is unmitigated arrogance when it comes from the race that is responsible for their depressed condition. It is this condescending attitude which makes the black-power idea virtually a psychological necessity. As Mr. Rainwater says:

> The common theme running through many of the ideas of the new black militants is that Negroes have a right to their own future and their own place in the sun, not just in economic terms but as full men in society. The emphasis on blackness is a reaction to the price that white society seems to want to exact for economic payoffs, a price that seems to involve a denial of oneself as Negro and to require a tame imitation of whatever the going definition of the proper white person is. Now there is a lot of nonsense these days about what Negro culture involves and what black autonomy might mean. But, at the core of the black populist movement is a denial of the right of the whites to define who the Negro is and what he may become. This is not only healthy, but much more realistic than the earlier, simple-minded integrationist myth that dominated civil rights activity for so long.

What about all that is "being done" for the Negro? The facts presented by Roger Montgomery in his review of housing problems in the slums reveal appalling failures behind the

façade of "urban renewal." One who reads newspaper reports about slum clearance may have the impression that great things are happening for the poor, but the fact is that even conscientious urban-renewal planners are frustrated by the lack of correspondence between areas of local political authority and actual regional need. The inadequacy of the bureaucratic approach to poverty is obvious from the definitions of "blight" and "nonblight" areas but worst of all is the fact that decisions about housing are commonly made over the heads of the people who need it, with little or no attention to how they feel and what they want. Finally, there are the delays which last for months and sometimes years. Mr. Montgomery writes:

> Nearly all programs experience such delays. They do not stem from ill-will on the part of the administrators, nor from ineptitude. The reason that even today's modest renewal workload chokes the pipelines of the system is federal bureaucratic involvement in a mass of details that defy streamlining.

> This attempt to summarize a decade of social research inevitably caricatures some studies and misses others. But this does not diminish the real thrust of the findings, which the riots now reinforce. *The elaborate array of special-purpose institutions created to supply low-cost housing and urban renewal services on behalf of slum dwellers simply has not worked. . . .* If more and more money is poured into the services institutions and still nothing much happens—if slums remain and riots continue—then reaction becomes inevitable. If we continue to disregard what seem to be the results of analysis, and the services approach continues to fail as apparently it must, there is real danger of a Know-Nothing response which pits violent repression against violent rebellion.

These reports and interviews in *Trans-action* for September deserve to be read in their entirety. (Single copies 75 cents—Box 1043A, Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri 63130.)