

## THE ILLUSIONS OF POWER

ALL communications concerning human good speak of the virtues. The reference may be either overt or concealed, but it is always somehow there. Even in an age when the idea of virtue has become unpopular—a sign of outmoded religious belief and a symptom of "reaction"—it is pressed in disguised form as the goal which makes conformity to some system of action and control seem desirable.

A sure way to make men develop contempt for the idea of virtue is to succeed in popularizing fixed and unequivocal definitions of the virtuous life. The man who persuades others of an indisputable definition of virtue may at first be regarded as a benefactor who relieves his fellows of torturing uncertainties. But after a generation or two he is remembered as the designer of cages for the human spirit.

The virtues, whatever they are, present two kinds of difficulties. First, some mode of personal discipline and self-restraint is involved. The other kind of difficulty, usually neglected, involves understanding why they are virtues—why they are *good*; this should involve a grasp of what, at that moment of history, they may leave out or hide from view, in the way of other conceptions of virtue.

It is quite possible, for example, to degrade the idea of the virtues into eager belief in manipulative doctrines and devices through which some comfortable but less than human objective is to be achieved. We have often been told, in recent years, that good moral character is a "national resource." This usually means that a virtuous man always does what existing authority expects of him. A man whose behavior is predictable creates no problems for administrators. He never upsets other people by voicing dissenting opinions.

It is true, of course, that some kind of order is essential to the social community. Freedom is always exercised in some context of order. And the social virtues, whatever they are, will obviously relate to the preservation of an order that serves the common good. So the problem comes down to defining the necessities of the social framework of freedom. It is here that we get into trouble, since the exercise of freedom brings change. A social framework for freedom, if it is not to become a confinement, must be in some sense always in flux; it must be a living, growing environment, incapable of mechanistic definition. Such an environment depends, for its success, on the subtleties of human insight, on generousities of attitude, on patience, on the mutual understanding of individuals. It follows, then, that the conditions of freedom are successfully defined only by abstractions, for only abstractions will leave the issue of particular decisions about freedom open—*undefined*.

The "do's" and "don'ts" of a school, for example, do not define the virtues which, it is hoped, will flower in the school environment, but only indicate the limits of the field in which this development may take place. Unambiguous rules have nothing to do with virtue, but only with gross considerations outside the natural area of human growth. Rules—and similarly the laws of the social community—have no application to the virtues. The Virtues are the qualities which fit a human being to decide matters on which he alone can be the authority—matters which have no relation to learning or growth if they are settled by anyone else.

Yet it is not uncommon for it to be urged that a system of law or organization will help or teach men to be "good." Good for what? The important question is rather whether the system will prevent them from learning how to grow, in

the sense of getting practice in making individual moral decisions. But even here there are paradoxes. A system of law is often said to be a more or less successful imitation of nature. We have an intuition which tells us that we ought to be able to find the ultimate rules of life in the laws of nature. If we stipulate this as a possibility, then we must also allow the possibility that once in a while a human ordinance may indeed duplicate, at least partly, the verity of a law of nature—and therefore, to the same extent, exercise on all men an educational influence. One of the ways in which we learn from nature is through the discovery of its regularities. The unvarying aspects of our natural environment, as we discover them, make possible not merely an orderly life, but our actual survival. And the ability to live an orderly life in relation to nature frees us from having to cope, almost continuously, with the unexpected.

We recognize, however, that nature always mixes the unexpected with the expected. The discovery of one regularity in nature often enables us to see a number of irregularities of which we had not even been aware. So there is great presumption in any confidence that we can really duplicate the natural order in a scheme of human law. On the other hand, to insist that this is impossible might be the highroad to existential despair.

This puts us in the position of having to regard our various systems of organization with great skepticism, while, at the same time, agreeing that in them may be hidden some occasional—and almost accidental—good, so far as human growth is concerned.

A better analogue for nature may be a man—a man instead of a man-made system. A teacher is a man who holds a mirror up to life. He focuses what he can—what he has found out—of the meaning of human experience in a manageable pattern which enables the young to inspect it, before they have direct encounter with the world. A teacher who falsifies the world betrays the

young. A teacher who describes and illustrates the realities of the human situation fulfills his obligation to be a mirror of nature. He does this better than any system, because a system is rigid, and a good teacher is not. A system gets its order by suppressing uncertainties, while the teacher displays them.

But we have a lot of good reasons for arguing that a government of laws—a system—is better than a government of men. Well, a good teacher will point out the meaning of this claim, which is based on the importance of impersonal principle, in contrast to individual opinion. But he will also recall Bismarck's sagacity: you can run a country with poor laws if you have good officials, but the best of laws fail in the hands of poor officials. It remains true that both the laws of nature and the laws of man are read by human eyes, and the resulting practice is entirely dependent upon the quality of the readers.

How can we recognize men who both see the truth and are possessed of the virtues? Well, one thing that seems to be true of them is that they are usually serene. They may engage in great struggles and endure great wrongs, but they maintain their balance.

There is a difference between seeing the truth and exposing an illusion. Exposing illusions excites men. It makes them angry. They feel the pressure of wrong more strongly than they do the invitation to right. Such men, we might say, see *some* of the truth, and have *some* of the virtues. They live, to borrow from Raymond Rogers, a *partly* examined life.

At any rate, men are more easily aroused to action by the exposure of illusion than by the discovery of truth. For one thing, it is easier to condemn an illusion than it is to recognize a truth. An illusion is a particular thing, while the truth always has an unlimited aspect—an undisclosed wholeness. When you encounter a particular thing that is plainly wrong, you feel that you know what to do. But the larger meaning which has been misrepresented by the illusion stretches out

in all directions. Truth is thus like "nature." Trying to follow this meaning up in all directions can easily have a restraining effect on action, and men aroused by a sense of wrong don't really want to see in all directions; they want to right the wrong. Righting the wrong *and* trying to see in all directions would doubtless be the course adopted by a man with all the virtues, but the tendency of men impatient of wrong is to point out that nobody can have true virtues in a world shaped by illusion and wrong; and they are, of course, partly right. As Gandhi said, "God dare not appear before the hungry man except in the form of bread." There is always a way of being partly right. Otherwise, there could be no illusions. Yet the men who act are never *all* of them mutilated by wrong and deceived by illusions. Even in revolutionary struggles there are varying roles.

Often, in these pages, MANAS writers are critical of what has seemed a great illusion of modern, Western man—his faith in politics. Politics is the discipline of rule-making in behalf of social order. The illusion lies in the fact that when there is a decline of virtue, men almost always seek a remedy in making more rules. There seems little or no awareness that rules do not increase the virtues. Yet rules are adopted as a means of making bad people good. They are held to define the pattern of the good life. Even men who know better argue that people have become so bad that we have to have the rules, anyway, since a society of virtuous men has become impossible.

So, by reasoning of this sort, we have reached a point where, for countless people, a man's virtues are identified by his political opinions—his notions of what are the best rules. There is a lot of evidence against so exaggerated a faith in rules, but this is an illusion rooted in centuries of historical practice, supported by strong, righteous emotions, and it persists.

It is also rooted in human nature. A few years ago, when Martin Buber visited this country to give a series of lectures to a group of

psychoanalysts, he told one of his doctor hosts, Leslie Farber, that more than anything else the profession of psychoanalysis needed a psychology of the will! This was of course "obscurantism," scientifically speaking, but apparently the time for such affirmation had come. A few years later Dr. Farber wrote a book about the will—*The Ways of the Will* (Basic Books, 1966, \$5.95)—in which the distinction we have been making between rules and virtues is applied to the individual human being. Dr. Farber develops this distinction in his second chapter, "The Two Realms of the Will." It is this: There are some things a man can do simply by deciding to do them. These are manipulative activities. He can build a fine house, buy someone a present, punish his children, move to another state—the entire gamut of specific acts in behalf of specific ends. This is called by Dr. Farber the second realm of the will. The first realm is made up of deep-seated attitudes and values—qualities of his being which cannot be turned on or off at will. Their development involves subtle changes of character which are not hastened, but come in their own time. These attitudes, properly called the virtues, are very desirable, yet we have no formula for producing them. We have formulas only for imitating them, and the substitution of these formulas for the qualities themselves eventually leads to self-disgust. Dr. Farber writes of this in a brief passage:

The problem of will lies in our recurring temptation to apply the will of the second realm to those portions of life that will not comply, but that will become distorted under such coercion. Let me give a few examples: I can will knowledge, but not wisdom; going to bed, but not sleeping; eating, but not hunger; meekness, but not humility, scrupulosity, but not virtue; self-assertion or bravado, but not courage; lust, but not love; commiseration, but not sympathy; congratulations, but not admiration; religiosity, but not faith; reading, but not understanding. The list could be extended, but it must be clear, when will of the second realm turns to such qualities that it seeks in its own utilitarian way to capture through imitation their public face—the manner or style that is visible and objective, as well as available.

Here, clearly defined, is the illusion from which faith in politics suffers. It is the illusion of the man with power that he can do *everything* with power. It is the illusion of the man without power that he can have nothing he wants or needs until he gets power. Yet power is not the means to good.

But it certainly *seems* so. Perhaps we ought to say that when the social order becomes unspeakably bad, the only effective remedies seem to lie in the exercise of power. This view may have its partial truth, but at what point, in the use of power, does its claim become a terrible deception? People who suffer from the political illusion have no use for this question. Asking it interferes with the accumulation of power.

An illustration of this insistence on the accumulation of power, and of what it cost, was given in a *Frontiers* article (July 6, 1966) by Anadi Naik. Writing on Gandhi's program of constructive work in India, Mr. Naik distinguished between the "two ways of the will" as Gandhi recognized and used them:

In the thirties it was necessary to awaken the Indian masses through political campaigns. But political campaigns meant nothing to a hungry people. So Gandhi "politicalized" the needs of his people. To save their pence spent on salt, he inspired them to make salt at the seashore, and in order to improve their economic condition he exhorted them to weave their own clothes with their own handspun thread. Spinning then became the key to the whole constructive program. Later on, Gandhi divided his constructive program into eighteen parts. Through these programs he brought a new outlook to the minds of the people, and a spirit was born which caused the downfall of the British raj in India. But after Indian liberation, when a national Government was formed Gandhi's close associates and staunch followers took up power politics and the situation changed. All his constructive programs were adopted by the National Government. More basic schools were opened, more names were enrolled on the list of spinners, and "untouchability" became a crime in independent India.

In the thirties Gandhi had chalked out a specific plan for the development of rural India. In those

days he demanded a group of 700,000 young people—one for each village—who would devote their time and energy to the uplift of the village people, keeping themselves aloof from power politics. Many young men came forward, but not enough. Gandhi, no doubt, had great hopes for the National Congress, but the Congress was a political front. Most of the leaders of the political parties which mushroomed in free India had been in the National Congress. These vocal people, who had once inspired the lethargic masses with the vision of freedom, now had different objects in view. Except for a few, they had been power-seekers who recognized in Gandhi the man to serve their purpose—in other words, to give them freedom, so they followed him. But when the goal was achieved, they deserted him in a very subtle way. Gandhi had anticipated this, and while disappointed was not surprised. In the early thirties when the constructive workers united to form the Gandhi Seva Sangha within the National Congress, some party leaders objected; the Sangha, they said, was distracting the minds of the people from the main objective of independence. The Sangha was concentrating on spinning, village sanitation, community prayer, basic education, eradication of untouchability treatment of lepers and development of cattle, etc. At that time it was impossible to convince those leaders that the constructive program was the program that would enable them to achieve their political goal in reality—since political freedom might turn out to be comparatively less important than overcoming the apathy of the people.

So, the Sangha was dissolved. But in his address to its last meeting Gandhi instructed its members to remain active, he said that although the Sangha as a group was dissolved, each worker committed to its cause should stand erect and consider himself a Sangha. Gandhi exhorted them to stay out of power politics and they did so. . . .

The constructive work still goes on, and there is some cooperation between the voluntary workers of the Gandhian movement and government agencies. But the principle of remaining independent of political power is clearly stated by those who carry on the Gandhian tradition. Asked why Gandhi would never accept political power, Jayaprakash Narayan replied: "Why? Simply because he knew that legal authority would not help him to establish such a society as promised the good of all people, the

Sarvodaya pattern of society." And Vinoba Bhave, contrasting the *Sarvodaya* workers with the leaders in government, said:

I am sure that were we to occupy the position and shoulder the same responsibility which they do, we would act in much the same manner as they. Whoever occupies office and wields governmental authority must needs think in a narrow, cramped and set circle. There can be no freedom of thinking for him. He finds himself, as it were, under an obligation to think and act as the world seems to be doing.

One might say, in comment, that the tendency of those working in the field of power is to accept power-solutions for all problems. This is not a necessary consequence of dealing in power, but it is a likely consequence, and likelihoods, when they affect large numbers of people, produce statistically predictable effects. One sees this confirmed in the fact that the readers who took seriously the recent book, *Report from Iron Mountain* (declaring the necessity of continued war to maintain social stability in the United States), "tended," as the editors of *Trans-action* pointed out, "to be Government officials."

But always, there are wheels within wheels. There are a few U.S. Congressmen—we think of one in particular—whose attitudes reveal a profound appreciation of the difference between manipulative power and the quality of human life. It is only statistically true that men involved in politics have "no freedom of thinking." This freedom falls away to a cipher only because, at the mass level, probabilities become political absolutes and the qualities of individuals are totally neglected by the manipulations of power. It is by this means that the illusion of political power becomes firmly established, and is then used as a mandate for exacting conformity of the population.

To participate in politics without participating in this illusion is a very difficult thing to do. Lord Acton's rule about the effects of power grows out of this difficulty, and also the anarchist rejection of any sort of power over human beings. But since we do need to have social order and organization,

we have no choice but to recognize, admit, and define this difficulty in as many ways as possible. The future of the human race does not depend upon choosing the right plan of organization, but on understanding the limitations and the self-betrayals potential in *any* plan or scheme of organization. Men seldom get this understanding from study of political science. They get it only from the study of man.

The need is to see how the potentialities and vulnerabilities of individuals, when ignored or misunderstood, create the insoluble dilemmas of politics and social organization. We ought to find out what are the maximum achievements possible without restraining or controlling rules, which means making social applications of all the new psychological knowledge—such as Dr. Farber's distinction between the two realms of the will, such as A. H. Maslow's distinction between deficiency-needs and being-needs. And we need to popularize the fact that the social question is not a matter of ideology, but a matter of self-understanding.

## *REVIEW*

### THE MAN FROM YAZOO

NORTH TOWARD HOME (Houghton Mifflin, 1967, \$5.95), by Willie Morris, is the story of a man who was born in Yazoo City, Mississippi, in the mid-thirties, went at seventeen to the University of Texas, spent some years at Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar, was an editor of the extraordinary weekly, the *Texas Observer*, and at thirty-two joined the staff of *Harper's Magazine*—of which he is now editor-in-chief. From the socio-political point of view, you could say that his book illustrates the difference between a Southern and a Northern "liberal"—a difference which recalls Milton Mayer's comparison of today's Christians behind the Iron Curtain with the Christians in America. In Czechoslovakia, for example, Christians are a disliked minority and suspect, and it *costs* them to stand by their faith, while in the United States claiming to be a Christian can bring all the blessings of conformity. Like the Czech Christians, a Southern liberal must count the cost of what he does, to his credo and to himself. He must voice his convictions, work for what he believes in, and still survive in order to keep on working. And Southern liberals, if they are to be effective, must understand the opposition—which is made up of human beings with whom they grew up. The Northern liberal seldom bothers to do this.

The long and juicy accounts of Texas politics reveal the same sort of penetration that Lincoln Steffens (from whom Morris learned many lessons) acquired from getting to know machine politicians in northern cities. Morris has a similar bifocal vision in dealing with the good and evil in human beings. It was in Texas, working first on the University campus paper, the *Daily Texan*, and then on the *Texas Observer*, that he began to avoid classifying people by simple moral abstractions:

There it was politics, the ambivalent and exposed world of the politician, that taught me about the complexity of human affairs, about the irrelevance

of most dogmatic formulas, about loyalty and courage and devotion to human causes—about "the fragility of the membranes of civilization, stretched so thin over a nation so disparate in its composition, so tense in its interior relationships, so cunningly enmeshed in underground fears and antagonisms." It was impossible there, as anywhere in America, to make a rigid distinction between personality and ideology, for ideology subtly merged into the personality, but in Texas the personality of the public man, the complicated nature of personal positions, were more intense, more meaningful, than any abstract formulations. One's faith and trust came to reside in the integrity and responsibility of a group of people, people with shared assumptions about reform and liberality, rather than in the superiority of certain coherent groupings of ideas about society. Hence the emphasis in these Texas memoirs on storytelling—storytelling as it embraced the deeper political qualities. The best fighters for justice and humanity in Texas were the best human beings dealing compassionately with the enemy even in the heat of the fight. The problems with which we tried to deal were so diverse, the division between the haves and the have-nots so broad, the undercurrents of violent alienation so explosive, that a coherent ideology, even when we sought after one for ourselves, would have been incapable to indicate, much less to comprehend or encompass, the complexity of the failings of the place we shared. . . . A cohesive pattern, a clear set of reformist goals, were simply irrelevant to our situation; this was not so much our own failing as an expression of the reality of our context and our age. The bitter clash of interests, the impetuosity of disagreements, the old tormenting hatreds at the surface of things, were the sources of my experience as an editor in Texas. I gradually perceived that they, likewise, were only intensified there, that they also existed throughout the America of that time, not so much our common nationality, I concluded, as our common humanity would be our greatest hope against our own destructiveness.

While concerned with the political struggle in Texas, this passage has in it the seeds of the book's other excellences. What constituted "maturity" for Mr. Morris? It came when he stopped merely reacting to his environment, as it shaped his childhood and early youth, and in the light of dawning values began to reflect on what he ought to do. Values which grow from a knowledge of human beings produce brooding,

deeply questioning and weighing states of mind, prior to decision. The integrity of this process, when it can be studied, gives the only objectivity we can have toward human growth. A writer who can describe how this has worked in himself, without vanity and without embarrassment, is continuously instructive to his readers. Mr. Morris has written this kind of a book.

There is a "go for broke" quality in *North Toward Home*. When Willie Morris was a White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant adolescent in Yazoo City, he did everything he was supposed to do, and believed unquestioningly in the brash, sentimental, and cruel credo of the Mississippi "way of life." When he woke up out of this crumbling dream, it was not to adopt the "correct" viewpoint, but with the same intensity to find his own way, inch by inch. The theatre of this transition, for Morris, was the University of Texas. As editor of the campus paper, he bucked all the forces which tried to control his editorial policy—and won. His retrospective evaluation of the university expresses a view which is too often forgotten in current criticism of institutions of learning:

A great irony occasionally besets an American state university, for it allows and at its best encourages one to develop his critical capacities, his imagination, his values; at the same time, in its institutional aspects, a university under pressure can become increasingly wary of the ideals it has helped spawn. It is too easy, too much a righteous judgment, to call this attitude hypocrisy, for actually it is a kind of schizophrenia. This involves more than a gap, between preaching and practicing; it involves the splitting of a university's soul. There can be something brutal about a university's teaching its young people to be alive, aware, critical, independent, and free, and then, when a threatening turn is taken, to reject by its actual behavior the substance of everything it claims for itself. Then ideals and critical capacities exist in a vacuum. They are sometimes ignored, and in extreme instances victimized. And the greater society suffers as well.

This is criticism with hope in it—a quality which runs all through *North Toward Home*. The book is filled with vivid anecdote, delighting

humor, and generous detail concerning the cultural roots of Southern attitudes. Being a bright young man, Willie Morris got to know personally most of the historic figures of the Southern scene. His work on the *Texas Observer*—a paper you have to see to believe that it's real—gave access to editors and writers throughout the country. Subsidized by a generous patron, the *Observer* performed services for the future of Texas that can hardly be over-estimated. As Morris says:

Within the limits of weekly journalism, the *Observer* was also something of a literary undertaking, and many of its early essays would deserve a prominent place in an anthology of our best writing about American politics. When the state legislature was not in session, its writers had concentrated on Texas as a place: the silent tragedies of its small towns, the barren stretches of its Panhandle, the changing character of its cities. The *Observer* ran essays on the rural share-croppers, the whores in Galveston, the Negroes in East Texas, the *Mexicanos* living in caves and shanties just across the border. It had brought a new element into Texas, because in a state which, unlike Mississippi, had not developed much of a creative literature, it had tried to tell about Texas as it really was; it caught the stresses and tensions of a Frontier society becoming urban and American. The big dailies had not been interested in the activities of Tennessee Gas, in the private clubs of the capital city, or in the last words of a seventeen-year-old Negro rapist on death row at Huntsville, or in what Norman Mailer said or did not say to the college students in Austin; the news value of Negro Cub Scouts sitting on the curb in front of a movie house in Dallas after having not been allowed to see *King of Kings* must have eluded their city editors.

One of Morris' talents is his capacity to turn myths into men:

The legend of Maury [Maverick] Sr. was alive and growing when I was covering Texas politics in the early 1960s. He had been the leader of that colorful band of radicals elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1934, and his radicalism was intensely, fervidly American, unmoved by the European ideologies he thought alien. He coined the word "gobbledygook" and scorned the high-flown Marxian language of the Eastern radicals. He bitterly criticized what he called the "Manhattan mind," which he believed was corrupting native American

reform with meaningless rhetoric and empty ritual and all through the 1930s he attacked the Communists with his own memorable mixture of bombast and ridicule. "He looked on San Antonio with the same proprietary devotion that La Guardia lavished on Manhattan," Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., once wrote, "and his solicitude for the Mexicans of Texas was akin to that of La Guardia for the immigrants of New York. And like La Guardia, Maverick was a radical but not a socialist; in essence, he was a pragmatic American politician who wanted the oppressed to get a better break."

*North Toward Home* would be a fine book for anyone determined to understand, instead of merely berating, the American South. One of its most searching comments, drawn from C. Vann Woodward (Mr. Morris' favorite historian) points out that while America as a whole has a "national self-image of innocence and moral complacency," the Southerner is preoccupied "not with innocence but with guilt. The Southerner's experience with evil and tragedy are as impossible to reconcile with the national myth of innocence and social felicity as the experience of defeat and poverty are to reconcile with the American myth of success and plenty."



## COMMENTARY

### WHAT ARE THE VIRTUES?

TWO books would greatly amplify and illuminate the brief consideration of the virtues in this week's lead article—Stringfellow Barr's *The Three Worlds of Man* (University of Missouri Press) and A. H. Maslow's *Religion, Values, and Peak-Experiences* (Ohio State University Press, 1964). Mr. Barr examines the classical Greek conception of the virtues: courage, temperance, prudence, and justice. He tells how these ideas affected the lives of the Greeks and how they were regarded by Plato and appear in his dialogues. Dr. Maslow deals with the moral bankruptcy of the present age, devoting most of this essay to showing how the new, psychological knowledge of man may make possible a revival of the virtues in a context of naturalist meanings and values.

Actually, there is a sense in which Socrates sought a similar rebirth. As Mr. Barr says:

. . . he [Socrates] could not fail to observe that the moral corruption he saw underlying the magnificent age of Pericles was due less to men's failure to live up to their principles than to their increasing failure to descry the principles dearly. All men had opinions on virtue. And yet, when he questioned them in his gentle but relentless way, their opinions turned out to be mere opinions, not knowledge. They even turned out to be hopelessly inconsistent opinions, as indeed opinions on moral problems have a way of doing. But Socrates wanted to know, not merely to opine.

Then, from another place:

. . . in dialogue after dialogue Socrates raises the question of whether virtue may not be reducible to knowledge. And the knowledge he seems to be talking about would have to involve not only what Aristotle called prudence, or practical wisdom, which applies correct opinion to the particular case; it would have also to involve philosophic wisdom, which goes beyond what is merely opined to what can be truly known. Behind moral failure lies intellectual failure, and in a sense all vice is a form of stupidity and ignorance.

In our own day, opinions concerning the virtues are not only "inconsistent"; they hardly exist. Dr. Maslow writes in his Introduction:

We can no longer rely on tradition, on consensus, on cultural habit, on unanimity of belief to give us our values. These agreed-upon traditions are all gone. Of course, we never *should* have rested on tradition—as its failures must have proven to everyone by now—it was never a firm foundation.

It was destroyed too easily by truth, by honesty, by the facts, by simple, pragmatic, historical failure.

However, one point of this book by Dr. Maslow is that the way in which science was used to destroy confidence in tradition has turned out to be nihilistic toward all higher values:

Such an attitude dooms science to be nothing more than technology, amoral and non-ethical (as the Nazi doctors taught us). . . . This dichotomizing of knowledge and values has also pathologized the organized religions by cutting them off from facts, from knowledge, from science, even to the point of often making them the enemies of scientific knowledge.

Dr. Maslow seeks a reform through the reconstruction of science to include recognition of the phenomena of man's higher longings, strivings, and intuitions of spiritual potentiality. Normative for this is the peak-experience. Years of study of healthy, distinguished, and highly original people lead him to propose that "all mystical or peak-experiences are the same in their essence and have always been the same," and that "all religions are the same in their essence and have always been the same." In his development of this view, which has resulted in several important books, Dr. Maslow has a great deal to say about the virtues as functional attributes of "self-actualizing" human beings.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### A NATURAL ENVIRONMENT?

IN the catalog for his photographic exhibition, "I am Alive," at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (September, 1966), Seymour Rosen wrote:

In order to feel what is important to man, it is well to investigate those things he does alone or with his peer group, because it is during those times that he is more honest with himself than when he is forced to provide the "acceptable" answers to a formal questionnaire. Therefore, we should study those activities initially in the place where they exist, while they exist. As a result of the bombardment of words and visual stimulation that we receive each day from the commercialization and exploitation of our environment, we have trained ourselves to "turn off" these stimulants and we only half listen—a response which is carried over into the learning situation.

A vast area of controversy has developed out of the situation described by Mr. Rosen's last sentence. Some people advocate a flight from the indiscriminate swarm of sense impressions which demand the attention of both old and young, wherever they go. Others would have us embrace the stream of impressions in the name of "normality." A professional designer said recently:

The need for continuous sensory input has been called the fifth need of man. It is as essential for survival as are food, water, air and shelter.

This recognition of the fifth need of man—an obvious, yet extraordinary realization—has opened our eyes to what is, in an important sense, the actual, general and major use of the mass media. They provide us with a continuous flow of sensory input. The fact that mass media are largely directed toward stimulating a viewer, reader, etc., rather than conveying information to him, should not be viewed as a criticism but as pointing out what is the result of a perfectly human drive. . . . Men deprived of sensory stimuli, even for a few hours, lose their ability to be normally functioning human beings. . . . Man's demonstrated inability to function normally without sensory stimulation has revealed a critical role of mass media. It helps people to function by supplying

a constant source of sensory stimuli which is vital to our very existence.

This almost incredible justification of "noise"—for that is all stimulation without communication can be—is based on the fact that when human beings are totally isolated from sense impressions, they soon begin to hallucinate to fill the sensory vacuum. One completely abnormal situation is used to defend another!

It seems obvious that all such attempts to arrive at a "good" environment for human beings—simply by comparing the isolated effects produced by various stimuli—leave out the most important factor: the human being himself. For a man or a child with inner resources, an environment which provides alternation between quiet repose and the activity of other forms of life, giving expression to natural growth-processes, would be ideal. Yet children constantly overstimulated by the artificial sensory bombardment of the technological society may seem "deprived" in quiet circumstances, and undergo uneasiness and even neurotic fears. Such children, however, have not been denied normal experience but only the drug of excessive stimulation.

But how, in this case, shall we create a "natural" environment? It is as though we had at last become able to accept the wisdom of Lao tse, but in circumstances making its application almost impossible. Some twenty-five hundred years ago, he wrote in the *Tao Te King*:

Were I ruler of a little State with a small population, and only ten or a hundred men available as soldiers, I would not use them. I would have people look on death as a grievous thing, and they should not travel to distant countries. Though they might possess boats and carriages, they should have no occasion to ride in them. Though they might own weapons and armour, they should have no need to use them. I would make the people return to the use of knotted cords. They should find their plain food sweet, their rough garments fine. They should be content with their homes and happy in their simple ways. If a neighboring State was within sight of mine—nay, if we were close enough to hear the crowing of each other's cocks and the barking of each

other's dogs—the two peoples should grow old and die without there ever having been any mutual intercourse.

Until recently, for a modern man, this passage has sounded like the last word in reaction. Today, however, we are beginning to realize the extent of the alienation which results from rapid environmental changes in which we have played no personal part. As Northrop Frye has put it:

In swift movement we are dependent on a vehicle and not on ourselves, and the proportion of exhilaration to apprehensiveness depends upon whether we are driving it or merely riding in it. All progressive machines turn out to be things ridden in, with an unknown driver. . . .

For an increasing number of people, this "swift movement" is producing apprehensiveness instead of exhilaration. We don't know where the vehicle we depend upon is going, and we are horrified by the commercial and military necessities of its operation, and revolted by the mindless clatter of its wheels. So, for our children's sake, we are now ready to listen to Lao tse. After all, what is a school but "a little State with a small population"?

The all-important question remains: What is a school supposed to get children ready for? Is it intended to prepare them to relate to a civilization which ought itself to be revolutionized in many ways? What should be the norm of educational experience?

A school cannot be simply a cloister which isolates the young from the rest of the world; nor, on the other hand, should it allow a casual exposure to the multiplying evils of the time. These evils, as Jonathan Kozol says, bring "death at an early age." And while the school fails as a place of indoctrination in the programs of other men's theories of reform, it cannot spread an atmosphere of indifference toward the agony of the world. A school is not a place of isolation from evil, nor a place created out of preconceived notions of good. Ideally, it is a place where the young begin to distinguish between good and evil for themselves, and to accumulate personal

reasons for pursuing the good and reducing the evil. It is a place where they have opportunity to gain confidence in their capacity to make their own decisions. What sort of environment will serve this purpose? Only an environment created by people who are doing these things, themselves. There are no blueprints for this.

## *FRONTIERS*

### The Gramdan Movement of India

DURING his almost completed tour of the United States, Jayaprakash Narayan, Gandhian leader and associate of Vinoba Bhave, spoke (on March 7) on "India since Nehru" before a group of professors at California State College in Los Angeles. His chief point, after a brief summary of India's economic situation, was that the democratic institutions of India have a greater stability than Westerners may suppose. This enormous country is not likely to fall into the hands of a political dictator, he said, even though tensions become greater. The reason for this democratic strength, he explained, is that India's freedom came as a result of a *mass* movement. Gandhi's labors in behalf of independence affected the many millions of Indians in the villages, who are now watchful that the rights of individuals be maintained.

During the question period, discussion turned to the progress of the *Gramdan* movement led by Vinoba Bhave, to which Jayaprakash Narayan has devoted his energies since 1954. There are now, he reported, more than fifty thousand villages which have voluntarily become Gramdan villages. This means that some ten per cent of India's rural population has expressed initial allegiance to the Gandhian ideal of common ownership of the land.

The Gramdan reform is based on Gandhi's fundamental conception that all material possessions are and ought to be regarded as held in *trust*, and that people who have more than they need for simple living ought to share their abundance with the poor—and especially to give land to the landless peasants. Many Indian farmers have lost their land to money-lenders. If these people are to be relieved of grinding poverty and restored to the dignity of self-support, they must have access to the land. Gramdan is a means of providing land for every Indian peasant, accomplished by persuasion of the major land-owners in the villages. When seventy-five per

cent of the villagers agree to transfer title to their land to the village itself, the village achieves Gramdan status. Redistribution of the land does not immediately follow, since the transformation of actual relationships to the land, being wholly voluntary, needs to take place gradually. However, each land-owner who participates in Gramdan does give one twentieth of his acreage, which makes land immediately available to those who have none at all. Former private owners of land still have the right to sell any portion of the nineteen twentieths of the land which they retain, but they may not sell it to anyone outside the village area. (This restriction is intended to put an end to absentee ownership of the land, one of the heaviest afflictions of poor villagers.) In addition to the sharing of land, Gramdan participants agree to give one fortieth of the actual produce of their land to the village, to meet the needs of the hungry. Laborers also participate in Gramdan giving. Each man agrees to give one thirtieth of his time to the village. He is available one day out of the month for working on village projects, such as road repair or irrigation.

The success of the Gramdan program depends upon the slowly changing attitudes of the villagers. Yet their response to the appeals of leaders like Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan show that the idea of "all things common" is by no means foreign, and that the cooperative spirit, once reborn in a village, needs only the fostering care of a *Sarvodaya* (Gandhian movement) worker to be maintained. It is this sort of grass-roots transformation of Indian life of which Gandhi dreamed, and which, since 1951, Vinoba Bhave has worked to bring to realization.

Vinoba, as many readers know, worked side by side with Gandhi for Indian regeneration and liberation. Like Gandhi, he felt that the liberation would be almost meaningless without the regeneration. After Gandhi's death he continued Gandhi's missionary work in the villages. A scholar who knows all the many languages of India, Vinoba could speak to the people

everywhere in their own tongue. In 1951, travelling on foot through Kerala, a state then much disturbed by Communist guerrilla activities, Vinoba was challenged by an old untouchable who, after Vinoba's talk in a fairly large village, rose to say, in effect:

You are talking of nonviolence, of love. Well, here is a problem before you. Can your love, your nonviolence, solve this problem? Communists are hiding somewhere around this village who are trying to take the lands from the landlords by the sword and distribute it to the landless. It is the philosophy of violence that we see in practice before our eyes, and you have come to preach nonviolence to us. Well, how are you going to solve this problem through nonviolence?

Responding, Vinoba asked how much land was needed to supply the landless with enough land to support themselves. The untouchable consulted with his companions, then said: "Sir, we want eighty acres of land." Vinoba turned to the gathering:

Have you gentlemen heard what this old man has said? You have so much land, hundreds of acres, perhaps some of you thousands of acres. Do you think that all this land is yours? It belongs to you today. Perhaps it belonged to your father and grandfather at one time. But do you think that for that reason this land belongs to you? Did you create it? Did your forefathers create it? Is it not God's creation? Have not all of the children of God equal share in it?

He paused, then said, "Is there anyone among you who is prepared to fulfill the demand that has just been made?"

To his astonishment, for he expected no answer, a man rose and said:

Sir, I am so and so and have five hundred acres of land. We are six brothers; I am head of the family; on behalf of my brothers and myself, I am prepared to give a hundred acres for these landless people.

Vinoba did not sleep that night. The experience of the day gradually became a charge which took this form:

From tomorrow, you will go on throughout the length and breadth of this country: you will walk

from village to village asking for land, and giving the land that is given to you to the landless.

After seven years, Vinoba and those who joined him had collected a total of four and a half million acres of land. This work was known as the *Bhoodan* movement, involving gifts of land from those who have to those without. Later, it was changed into the *Gramdan* movement, which means the creation of community centers of commonly owned land in which the idea of sharing becomes the basic conception of community life.

Gramdan is not sponsored by the Indian Government. It is not accomplished by Government activity. The transaction which converts a village of private land-ownership into a Gramdan village is registered by the local government, insofar as it affects title to the land, but all the Gramdan activities are voluntary, resting entirely on persuasion. There is of course a leavening influence exercised by the Gramdan workers, which affects the local government as well as the villagers, but a principle of the Gandhian movement and of the *Sarvodaya* (good of all) work of Vinoba and Jayaprakash Narayan is that it must remain nonpolitical.

The growth of this movement is slow and unpretentious, from the viewpoint of political change, but it is rapid indeed when thought of as an organic social process. In the summer of 1958, there were four thousand Gramdan villages. Today there are more than fifty thousand.