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DOES THINKING MAKE IT SO?

PERIODICALLY, those who write, and attempt to write something worth reading, are overtaken by feelings of futility. What shall they say? Each certainty they discover seems to have a partisan flavor; and tomorrow it will be contradicted, or even later today. One insight shuts out another. Even the Eternal Verities are reduced to duality and paradox when righteously embodied in the concrete circumstances of an age.

Yet who can remain silent? Who will retire into stillness save in the hope of learning something better to say?

To think is one thing. To think, for human beings, is to act, to create. Those confident souls, the men of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, were filled with their new-found powers of thinking. They thought about the world and natural law. Nations were born from their optimistic dreams, and after nations came horrors, dark crimes against humanity. Then a disenchanted generation began to think about thinking.

This is something else—a change in the level of thinking. Why, they asked, does our thinking bring fevers of activity that end in self-destruction? Are we not *natural* beings, inevitably formulators of an order inscribed in the atoms and displayed by the stars?

Such questions produce an endless flow of literature—novels, plays, poems, and essays. History is written and then written again. What was declared in the nineteen-twenties seemed almost meaningless in the nineteen-forties, and in the nineteen-seventies we try to understand not history but why men attempt to write it at all. Their reasons, now, hardly seem worth while. Tracts for the times are always for other times, not ours.

In other ages great civilizations lived by what were accepted as stabilizing truths about Man, Nature, and the Gods, and the regulatory potency of these principles can hardly be denied. But principles must be somewhat understood and believed in to exercise this influence. We now find ourselves unable to believe. We know so much from thinking about thinking. Indeed, there are those who say that we must abandon thinking itself, as the cause of endless self-deception; and there is, we find, some truth in the charge. But to speak of giving up thinking is also an act of thought—we cannot really stop thinking because it is our nature to think: thinking is what we are. So "giving up thinking" is only an act of the play we are at the moment performing. It is a gesture of negation which fits the present mood. Tomorrow a cogent new defense of rational inquiry will be born.

Indeed, a new defense of rationalism, or of another sort of rationalism, *must* be born. The reason for this necessity lies in the children that, every day, are entering the world. It is utterly impractical to give children a philosophy of negation and defeat as the basis of their lives. You cannot explain to children that the world will not be a place fit to live in until men have strangled the last king with the guts of the last priest. Some day, children will need to understand not only the hatred of kings and priests, but the honor once earned by the one, the reverence accorded the other, and to know why, over the centuries, the feelings of humans become inverted about these matters. But meanwhile five-year-olds must be protected against inadequate and disheartening explanations. They must be protected against many things, and we have fewer and fewer resources, these days, for the protection of our children. In fact, our ideological and political contentions about human welfare have

not led to a good environment for children or anyone else.

There are some who, today, remembering lost symmetries and ancient nobilities, point to the ordering beliefs of Apollonian societies and celebrate the ideals and virtues which flourished in the past. Comparing these excellences with the nihilist credos of the present, they write in anguish of what has died away. They recall the structures of responsibility, of dutiful obedience, of personal discipline and *noblesse oblige,* and look for means of restoring the foundations of moral conviction which gave classic and traditional societies support.

But do we really understand, as yet, why those foundations, which once seemed so secure, gave way?

Has any Alyosha found an answer to the questions—the life-and-death questions—asked by Ivan in *The Brothers Karamazov?* Not even Dostoevsky, although the author of Ivan's deep moral intuition, could find an answer to those questions. As an honest artist, he left them unanswered. No doubt he knew, too, that no maker or planner of a "social order" could use unanswered or unanswerable questions, yet he attempted no substitute solutions.

Commerce with unanswered questions is not the business of legislators or politicians. Those who seek office by election, or even those who man the ramparts of revolution, cannot afford to spend time with serious doubts.

What is an "ideology"? It is a system of thought which insists on publishing answers to questions that have workable replies only in the private cipher of personal realization. What is the attraction of ideology? A carefully schemed-out system of belief makes virtue compulsory—logically compulsory, at least. It gives us compelling reasons for "being good." But history shows that these reasons wear out and, little by little, become the sanctions of systematic wrong. The other pole of ideology, then, is revolution. And revolution is the bloody ceremony which attends the birth of a new ideology.

These are conclusions we find inescapable by sampling the talent that has come into flower during these closing years of the twentieth century—the fruit of the ability to think about our thinking. And so the question becomes: What can we put in the place of ideology that will not betray us into complacent confidence in a new set of illusions? What can we say to ourselves that is timelessly true and that we can also *use* in individual life and our time?

Ivan,—the Ivan of Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov,*—we might argue, knew enough truth to conduct his own life, but he had nothing to say to the people that they could practically use. It was for this reason that the Grand Inquisitor enjoyed his power, and still does, for the most part—he controls the affairs of state, commerce, and social welfare. The people keep him in power. Philosophers like Ivan may know some truth, but they cannot be widely understood. Socrates, the best of dialecticians, did not in the *Gorgias* win any of the arguments. He was merely right.

Plato must have understood this problem, since he offered a tentative solution in the *Republic.* The thing to do, he said, is to organize the social community as an educational enterprise and put in charge the best men to serve as models. The cultural "fields" generated by their example will spread currents of transforming influence, and the young will grow up to wise maturity. You do not "tell" them the truth, you urge them to *look* for it, and you use symbol and myth as the vehicles of an inspiration that will pervade the entire society. You do not pretend that myths are the Truth but only, as Socrates said, "something like it."

Admirers of the Humanities have no difficulty in accepting this prescription, but find themselves confronted by the intellectual habits of the Enlightenment. (Not only confronted, but themselves infected, by those habits.) The

confrontation has many forms, but in principle they are all the same. On the one side are the defenders of scientific objectivity, the advocates of verified certainty and public truth. With a passion for dispassion, these men of the mathematical and measuring disciplines tell us it is wrong to expect that Nature is on the side of goodness and morality. We don't know. Anselm's proof is a fallacy. It is not man's business to write the laws of nature, but simply to find them out. We are impartially examining the way things work, they say. Then, when all the facts are in (or enough of them), we'll let you know what sort of morality is scientifically feasible.

Some effective replies to these claims are now being made, but the most important comment may be simply that "impartiality" does not really reduce to the invented abstraction of how a motionless, passionless observer behaves. There is and can be *no* impartiality of this sort. Impartiality is a human quality or virtue. Man is a living, end-seeking being; before defining his goals he feels in himself the need to seek them. Reason is part of his response to intuitive and instinctive longings. Impartiality is a virtue of those who reason. The human being is a being on a journey, a pilgrimage, an Odyssey or mission. He is not, never was, cannot be, an abstract and motionless observer. Impartiality has meaning only in a framework of purpose. The question of purpose is what is at issue today. The "impartiality" of scientific objectivity has been recognized as a front for a number of unexamined assumptions, which makes it very close to being an epistemological fraud.

Yet the practical certainties of scientific discovery and their technological application have been enormously impressive, physically convenient, and personally comfortable. How, then, except in fear and trembling, will large numbers of people be persuaded to give up their mechanistic, hedonistic credos for the vague uncertainties of humanistic philosophers? Anyone can see that we need to supply "the masses" with doctrines in which they can believe!

Aha! cries Ivan. "There speaks the Grand Inquisitor!" A most persuasive man, we are obliged to admit—a master of statistics *and* the *argumentum ad hominem.*

Since this exchange has completed itself we turn to other considerations. The practical goal is the common practice of virtue. How can this be arranged?

A presumptuous word—"arranged"! Yet Nature is filled with arrangements. Ecology is the study of natural, healthful arrangements. Cosmology—at present a most unprogressive science—investigates cosmic arrangements, and humans ought to at least attempt to discover principles for governing their own affairs.

This is hardly a new idea. We are not able, here, to review the fortunes of the various systems of social order instituted by past religious and political leaders. We know chiefly one thing, that they are all periodically replaced by other systems or attempts at systems, and presently we are appalled by the ineffectualness and inadequacy of *all* systems. We are fairly sure about the quality of life and human relationships we should like to see in practice: that is, we know the *result* we want, but little of how to get it.

The common opinion is that, if you desire people to be virtuous, the thing to do is to *teach* them the virtues; and then, if they don't behave, you punish the unvirtuous and reward the good. Negative and positive reinforcement. But among those who study the way people change, this is no longer the prevailing opinion. The intelligent consensus is rather that we don't know how to teach the virtues, and that indoctrinating them usually works in reverse. And as for punishment, it is now openly admitted by experts in the field that prisons are a failure, so far as "rehabilitation" is concerned.

Well, let us look at a much earlier view of this question. In what may be the best available

analysis and commentary on the *Tao Te* Chin—which is a treatise on the ordering of society—Holmes Welch says:

> Government controls defeat themselves, for "they may allay the main discontent, but only in a manner which produces further discontents." [The political "technological fix"?] . . . Lao Tzu believes that man's original nature was kind and mild, and that it has become aggressive as a reaction to the force of legal and moral codes. This is the basis for some . . . surprising statements. . . . "Banish human kindness, discard morality, and the people will become dutiful and compassionate"; "It was when the great Tao declined that human kindness and morality arose. . . . It was after the six family relationships disintegrated, there was 'filial piety' and 'parental love.' Not until the country fell into chaos and misrule did we hear of 'loyal ministers'." Thus Lao Tzu reverses the causal relationship which most of us would read into such events. It was not that people began preaching about "loyal ministers" because ministers were no longer loyal: rather, ministers were no longer loyal because of the preaching, i.e., because society was trying to *make* them loyal.
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> The wise ruler does not try to *make* his people anything. He "carries on a wordless teaching" because he knows that "he who proves by argument is not good." Some of us may recall reading about the occasion when President Adams took his grandson Henry to school. Henry was six years old and had decided that to avoid going to school he would have a tantrum. In the midst of it old Mr. Adams emerged from the library, took the boy's hand, and led him down the road right to his schoolroom desk. Curiously enough, Henry felt no resentment. This was because his grandfather "had shown no temper, no irritation, no personal feeling, and had made no personal display of force. Above all, he had held his tongue. During their long walk he had said nothing he had uttered no syllable of revolting cant about the duty of obedience and the wickedness of resistance to law; he had shown no concern in the matter; hardly even a concern of the boy's existence." Lao Tzu would agree, I think, that on this occasion President Adams showed he understood the Tao of ruling. (*The Parting of the Way*, Beacon Press, 1957.)

Even those who agree that the Lao Tzu-Adams method of dealing with disorder is psychologically sound are likely to add wryly that the Vietnam war was a particularly bad "tantrum" and hardly controllable by any such hands-off means. Yet what other means are there? When government itself is the offender, is there any point in making sagacious recommendations to the "authorities"? Has not the responsibility for social order then *already reverted* to Taoistic individuals?

The modern world has virtually boxed the compass of religious and ideological systems, and none of them, in our experience, works well enough to justify "imposing" its order by whatever means available. We have gone from the notorious imperfections of Greek democracy to arrogant Roman imperialism, and then, after an interval of chaos, to a millennium of theocratic rule. And from the revolutions of the eighteenth century until the present practically every other sort of government has had a chance to demonstrate its merit.

Some systems, doubtless, work better than others, but how well they function, it is increasingly evident, depends upon how human beings think of themselves and their relationships with one another. What determines how men think of themselves? Their *culture*, we commonly reply. Children are molded in their attitudes by adults, and believe as their parents believe. Yet there also come great changes in human opinion, due to causes which are in part historical, but also quite obscure. Who, for example, could have predicted the extraordinary change in spontaneous inclination that began in the late fifties and early sixties among the American young, and has since spread around the world? Rather suddenly, the controlling intellectual factors in the Western heritage lost their persuasive force. Some sort of psychic "mutation" has exercised its sway during the past ten years, and the alterations in feeling and attitude are by no means complete.

What can we say about these psychological changes? First, they are no longer limited to the young. Now going on are struggling acts of "self-reference" at every level of society and in all walks of life. The language of tradition and of learning, of folkways and street talk affects these attempts,

giving them local color while limiting their elevation, but increasingly people are consulting themselves rather than the experts, whether of science, university, or religion. And at the same time a far-reaching set of reforms in what we think of as the scientific outlook is beginning to make itself felt. Maslow's hierarchy of motives, ranging from material deficiency-needs to the ennobling Being-needs of self-actualizers, has sketched out a new conception of human nature. It may be vague, but it is open, health-giving, and non-deterministic.

All this suggests that the very matrix of human nature, considered as a collectivity, is in rapid flow and flux. One way of describing the common condition would be to say that a burgeoning dimension of self-awareness has made the present different from any past epoch. Today the individual, reflecting on the past, on the heritage of literature and art, is able to see freshly focused in himself the struggles typified by past epochs o£ history. He cannot repeat them in the same terms because he is now *conscious* of them. He can sense the unities spoken of by the mystic, but also the divisions felt by the artist. He can fill with the unquestioning love of Alyosha, revering his saintly patience, but knows also the stubborn honesty of Ivan and his disdain for a faith that leaves untouched the great moral dilemmas of human life. Who has not felt, these days, both Nietzschean and Franciscan moments? Sudden nihilist impulses and a fierce Luciferian pride?

The culture of the past—of classical Greece, of Hellenistic Alexandria and Stoic Rome, of Platonic Florence, Elizabethan London, Lessing's and Goethe's Germany, the England of Blake, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats—all are a part of us, yet we can take from them only themes and currents of inspiration. We know the wrath of the street mobs of Paris in '93, the high intentions of the 1776 leaders of the United States, the struggles and agony of Lincoln, the vision of Mazzini and the desperation of his defeat. We understand the tragic questioning of Camus, and his inchoate Promethean resolve. All these living memories, in their contradiction and human appeal, are part of our minds.

The trees of the orchard of thought blossom and bestow their fruit. It nourishes for a while, then sours and dessicates. A spoiled generation now wants to level the ground, to kill the ill-bearing trees before any new seedlings are rooted.

But *we* are the trees. No harvest from the past will feed us, and there is a crucial distinction between the trees and their fruit. We chop logic and praise or blame yesterday's social and moral philosophies, as though we could go back to or avoid what men once believed. But we cannot go back. Yet we cannot thrive in the present without understanding the past, while the past, when understood, is no longer objective and accessible. To locate hope in yesterday's truth is nostalgic regression. Yesterday's truth is useless to us except in fresh embodiments, for truth has life and power only through acts of becoming. Yesterday's becomings are now stance and platform, not motion and action. Truth is not truth except in act. It lives and dies in us. This is the mysterious release from the traps and paradoxes of inflexible logic.

For several centuries, now, we have had a theory of knowledge which ignored the ethical roots and law of human life. This theory is blind to the reality-making and truth-creating power of action. So, in the present, we have action programs for sub-humans, art and literature for sub-humans, and Rube Goldberg devices for the survival of sub-humans. These "cultural" forms seem well on the way to making the character of our time. They may go on to create a destiny—a sub-human destiny.

But men can also be more than human; if they can be less, they can also be more. Why should we think that the few who became more were never like ourselves, and must be set apart from us as "gods"?

REVIEW
THE USES OF CRITICISM

QUITE evidently, Solzhenitsyn has been making mistakes in recent months. As a man of Tolstoyan inspiration and a moralist of undoubted courage—truly a hero, considering what he has risked and endured—he has entered an arena where too simple application of his insights involves him in obvious contradiction. He doesn't seem to care about this, which makes him vulnerable to criticism from all sides. Probably the fairest of this criticism came in Norman Cousins' editorial comment in the *Saturday Review* for Aug. 23.

It is not, however, literary criticism. Mr. Cousins examines the political *non sequiturs*, the inconsistencies, the special pleading in what Solzhenitsyn says. No doubt this ought to be done, if only for the novelist's own benefit. But, somehow, we wish a man of Norman Cousins' stature had discussed instead the weakness of trying to apply utopian conceptions to *any* flaw-filled present. It is exactly as Ortega says in his brief essay on Comedy:

> As something made to live in a future world, the ideal, when it is drawn back and frozen in the present, does not succeed in satisfying the most trivial functions of existence; and so people laugh. People watch the fall of the ideal bird as it flies over the vapor of stagnant water and they laugh. It is a useful laughter: for each hero whom it hits, it crushes a hundred frauds.

Solzhenitsyn, in these terms, is too easy a target for Mr. Cousins. Why not show, instead, the difference between politics and literature? Why not point out that politics tries to settle matters which, unfortunately, never stay settled, while the task of literature, at once humbler and more ambitious, is simply to raise questions that inevitably survive every political solution. And why not suggest—if only as an aside—that an artist of moral integrity, when cajoled into ill-timed political declarations by hosts who want to use him rather than learn from him, deserves a particular sort of consideration?

It would also be well to demonstrate that when Solzhenitsyn stays within the area of his lifetime reflections, his value to today's world is very great. (See, for example, the interview with him in *Encounter* for April, 1974, and George Steiner's review of *Gulag Archipelago* in the *New Yorker*, Aug. 5, 1974.)

Leaving, then, the region of political criticism, where Mr. Cousins seems so much at home—perhaps too much at home—we recall what Lafcadio Hearn said to his Japanese students about Tolstoy's *What Is Art?* While the cases are not parallel, and Solzhenitsyn is no Tolstoy, there is nonetheless value in what Hearn said:

> In the case of Tolstoi, the criticisms have been so fierce and in some respects so well founded, that even I hesitated for a moment to buy the book. But I suspected very soon that any book capable of making half the world angry on the subject of art must be a book of great power. Indeed, it is rather a good sign that a man is worth something, when thousands of people abuse him simply for his opinions. And now, having read the book, I find I was quite right in my reflections. It is a very great book, but you must be prepared for startling errors in it, extraordinary misjudgments, things that really deserve harsh criticism. Many great thinkers are as weak in some one direction as they happen to be strong in another. Ruskin, who could not really understand Greek art, and who resembled Tolstoi in many ways, was a man of this kind, inclined to abuse what he did not understand, Japanese art not less than Greek art. About Greek art one of his judgments proves the limitation of his faculty. He said that the Venus de Medici was a very uninteresting little person. Tolstoi has said more extraordinary things than that; he has no liking for Shakespeare, for Dante, for other men whose fame has been established for centuries. He denies at once whole schools of literature, whole schools of painting and whole schools of music. If the wrong things which he has said were picked out of his book and printed on a page all by themselves (this has been done by some critics), you would think after reading that page that Tolstoi had become suddenly insane. But you must not mind these blemishes. Certain giants must never be judged by their errors, but only by their strength and in spite of all faults the book is a book which will make anybody think in a new and generous way. Moreover, it is utterly sincere and unselfish—the author denouncing even his own work, the wonderful books of his youth, which won for him the very highest place among modern novelists. These, he now tells us, are not works of art.

The point is that Tolstoy raises the questions that need to be raised, even though his settlements, in various instances, seem ridiculous. The same might

be said of Solzhenitsyn, although Tolstoy did not make the sort of mistakes that Mr. Cousins lists.

Something similar was said of Dostoevsky by Louis J. Halle in his essay on *The Brothers Karamazov* in MANAS (see the *MANAS Reader*). Speaking of its conclusion, he wrote:

> So the inner divinity fades from each of the characters as the novelist loses his inspiration. It is not that the decline of Alyosha, Ivan, and Dimitri is implicit in the human condition, or in the circumstances of the novel, or in their characters. . . . It is simply, I feel sure, that at a certain point he lost his way, his vision faded, his theme and his characters vanished from it. All that was left, then, was a plot to be spun out to its end, like the plot of a mere detective story written by an extraordinarily gifted professional. . . .
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> *The Brothers Karamazov*, then, may be regarded as a depressing failure, an undertaking ineffable in its beginnings that collapses before its implicit achievement is realized. For, implicit in the novel as it actually is, the reader apprehends the novel that it started out to be; and this other, unwritten novel is one of the enduring masterpieces of the world's literature. It belongs to the class of those works that, once comprehended, change the reader's life—as it did mine when I first read it some forty-five years ago.

This is the reason for reading Dostoevsky, to which his "settlements"—his Pan-Slav loyalties, even his gambling mania—are more or less irrelevant, except for instruction in the sort of problem we are now trying to unravel. The lack of order, discipline, and even common sense in a writer's political opinions may need some brief attention, but more to point out their insignificance (in some cases) than to "refute" them. Who, for example, would spend much time showing that the extraordinary legislative recommendations in Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots* have little or no possibility of "working" at this moment of history? There is a sense in which the book comes close to making practicality irrelevant. *Of course* her proposals won't work. But she will not let us forget that they ought to!

You read Simone Weil for her *ideal* content, as one reads Plato's *Republic*. And if the question of "applying" ideals comes up, then Plato's answer at the end of Book Nine is the one to consider. The unworkability of ideals is to be compared with the moral suicide of living without them.

Such contradictions make the country explored by literature. Its laws—still unknown—are different from the rules of politics. So a writer sets his sights, maps his territory, then tries to bring his insights down to level of everyday life. Often he makes mistakes. He wants the story to come out in a certain way, but if he forces it the insight dies. If he keeps the insight, the tale can have no happy ending. Being a story-teller, he may feel it necessary to do violence to one or the other—the vision or the tale. So, one way or another, he fails. But at the same time, if he is great, one way or another he succeeds. Criticism is the art of examining and clarifying his successes and failures. It should point out why certain successes are far more important than certain failures. Or vice versa.

What the fine writer reaches after—and what the literary critic should cherish above all else—is suggested in another way by Hannah Arendt in her paper in *Social Research* (Autumn, 1971). She quotes Socrates in the *Gorgias*, then comments:

> "It would be better for me that my lyre or a chorus I directed should be out of tune and loud with discord, and that multitudes of men should disagree with me rather than that I, *being one*, should be out of harmony with myself and contradict *me."* Which causes Callides to tell Socrates that he is "going mad with eloquence," and that it would be better for him and everybody else if he would leave philosophy alone.
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> And there, as we shall see, he has a point. It was indeed philosophy, or rather the experience of thinking, that led Socrates to make these statements—although, of course, he did not start his enterprise in order to arrive at them. For it would be a serious mistake, I believe, to understand them as the result of some cogitations about morality; they are insights, to be sure, but insights of experience, and as far as the thinking process itself is concerned they are at best incidental by-products.

These by-products nonetheless make the definition of literature, enabling us to understand why a classic is a work contemporary in any age.

COMMENTARY
BEYOND THE FINITE

THE distinction between politics and literature, discussed in this week's Review, is something like the distinction between prose and poetry made by Paul Valéry in *The Art of Poetry:*

> It may be observed that in all communication between men, certainty comes only from practical acts and from the verification which practical acts give us. *I ask you for a light, You give me a light:* you have understood me.
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> But in asking me for a light, you were able to speak those few unimportant words with a certain intonation, a certain tone of voice, a certain inflection, a certain languor or briskness perceptible to me. I have understood your words, since without even thinking I handed you what you asked for—a light. But the matter does not end there. The strange thing: the sound and as it were the features of your little sentence come back to me, echo within me, as though they were pleased to be there; I, too, like to hear myself repeat this little phrase, which has almost lost its meaning, which has stopped being of use, and which can yet go on living, though with quite another life. It has acquired a value; and has acquired it at the expense of its finite significance. It has created the need to be heard again. . . . Here we are on the very threshold of the poetic state. This tiny experience will help us to the discovery of more than one truth.

Sometimes people start out intending to communicate only matters of "finite significance," and then a feeling, a hope, a longing rises, making resonances heard in what they say—a lilt, a melodic line, a vaulting arpeggio. It is as if the writer means to warn you: Don't take me literally, but take this deeper meaning which has already captured me. So it is that in discussion impetuous people are often obliged to explain that they didn't mean quite what was understood—they were in fact speaking "poetry," not prose. The ambiguity is confusing but *interesting.* What they say, moreover, is not consumed by practical acts—it has a life of its own. The longevity—sometimes the immortality—of the word.

It is this precious ambiguity which invokes our sixth sense in dialogue, helping us to know the right level at which to listen to what is said. It is even possible that all we know comes from using this sense, and all our failures to know from not using it. Meanwhile, it is simply impossible for a writer to mark for identification the level of each of. his expressions. He may hardly know himself, since the actual and the ideal are subtly blended in every one of us. We do recognize the extremes, however. A scientific paper is not a dithyramb.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
STUDENTS AND POETS

WHAT educators need to do in an epoch of uncertainty, insecurity, and problematic outcomes is very different from what they do in an age of settled conclusions, confident progress, and well-defined destinations. For when there is transition from certainty to uncertainty, both curriculum planners and teachers are likely to feel that chaos and desperation are closing in. At the same time there are those able to turn the confusion that seems all about into a "learning situation"—to show by example how to help the young to practice maturity in an age of uncertainty, a time when, out in the world, Whirl is indeed king.

This is the sort of thinking pursued by Lorin Loverde in a paper in the January *Journal of Aesthetic Education.* What, in principle, is involved? Ortega's conception of the "real student" makes a helpful model. This student is one who is constitutionally unable to take anything for granted. Whatever the books say, he suspects them of error. He challenges axioms, distrusts the "cultural heritage," and insists upon finding out for himself. The others, the believers in what their mentors declare to be true, and to be studied and mastered, are not "real students," and they, of course are in the majority. "Education," therefore, is planned to suit their needs, which are different from the needs of the one or two (three or four?) in a hundred who are the real students. But all these ordinary ones, the innocent or sluggish believers, need most of all to have stirred in them an authentic hunger to know, so that they may become, in time, real students. And this is very difficult to do. In fact, it cannot be done at all by conventional means.

The best example we have of a practitioner of this sort of education is Socrates. In the *Meno,* Socrates so pesters Meno with upsetting questions that his host throws up his hands and calls Socrates a Torpedo Fish. You paralyze me with your questions, he said. I can't think straight at all, any more. Why don't you leave me alone? Then Socrates explains that he too is bewildered—the world is filled with so many things he doesn't know—and his adopted policy is to pass on his bewilderment in the form of questions. Maybe, he suggests, the two of us together, both admittedly confused, can by working together find a few of the answers.

At this point in the dialogue the participants have reached the condition called by Lorin Loverde "the *skepsis* structure of consciousness." They have stopped being believers. They no longer know what to believe. This tends to become an unnerving state of affairs, and when it is widespread civilization arrives at what Loverde names a *crisis* stage.

What then does one do? Well, you either think some more, ask some further questions, gain a basic intuition or two and form hypotheses—crisis makes a good time for trying out hypotheses—or you abdicate from thinking and become a cynic or even a nihilist. We see a lot of both these days—people who, because they can't think any more, or are tired of trying, claim that thinking is just no use. It is time, they say, to start all over again. Never mind the women and children. Destruction is nature's way of making room for the suppressed good in our hearts.

Where does the vision that transcends confusion come from, if the nihilist solution is recognized as a relapse into sub-human behavior? That is the real question. How shall we know that the vision is right, true and workable? Mr. Loverde thinks that Rainer Maria Rilke (in the West) and Lao tse (in the East) are good examples of how to recognize tomorrow's reality today, and how to turn this vision into educational midwifery.

But his discussion is considerably more than an investigation of how to handle the phenomena of a particular "breakthrough." Basically, it is an investigation of the mode of thinking appropriate to a world in which relating to one cycle of "breakthrough" or transcendence after another is

required. We need to stop expecting to find the "real" world and then build our conceptions of certainty and finality on it. Reality is process, not object. How, then, should we think about any particular world that is coming into being for us? What is our source for such formulations?

Well, they come from the ideal world, the timeless world, the unmanifest world of infinite potencies and all possibilities. And *when* they come, they have the glint of eternity in them, which is soon lost as they enter the world of being, but is still there in their hour of birth, of our transition, when they penetrate the zone of human consciousness in the form of poetic or philosophic vision.

Mr. Loverde quotes Suzanne Langer:

> Poetry exhibits, like nothing else in the world, the formulative use of language; it is the paradigm of creative speech. For the poetic use of language is essentially formulative. Poetry is not a beautified discourse, a particularly effective way of telling things . . . it is the creation of a perceptible human experience which, from the standpoint of science and practical life is illusory.

But since science (as a deposit of information), and practical life (as the conduct of bodily functions), have no commerce with vision and are only the external side of the field of human experience—which is essentially *in* consciousness—what is illusory for them may be the stuff of reality for *us.*

One thinks here of the Platonic doctrine, developed in the *Phaedo,* that the soul is a harmony. The first reaction may be: How ephemeral, how insubstantial! Surely the soul is more than some sort of vibration. And so, no doubt, it is; yet a particular harmony is a particular way of seeing and understanding—a great poet's response to and reading of the world. The poet passes from vision to vision, peak to peak. He lives in the dignities of human possibility. Read Emerson for a half hour or so, and then ask if Emerson is not a consciously *organized* harmony—a coherent and living way of seeing and knowing. And if seeing and knowing make the sum and substance of human life, then why not call the soul a harmony—something created by the imagination, shaped and sharpened by working with the diversities of the world, and made a permanent identity by the consolidating will.

What happens after skepticism and doubt have done their work, and the minds of men are open and ready? Citing Heidegger, Loverde has a passage on this:

> Heidegger does not emphasize the darkness out of which appearances enter into the clearing, but he does emphasize the fact that things withdraw and disappear over time. This clearing of the human horizon is structured by the primordial capacity for utterance, poetic speech, which creates both experience and the possibility of experience. The phenomena are not "already there to be experienced in a human sense. In earlier writings Heidegger employed the image of the "Between" to describe how mankind is primarily a poetic dwelling between the gods and the ordinary world, the ordinary world is easily routinized into the day-to-day of the people who have forgotten man's participation in the creation of things. Therefore, the poet is the one who remains between the gods and the people continuing to be creative.

There is reason to think that the present breakthrough has a definable character. The eighteenth century, we could say, smashed the framework of belief in traditional religion—its intuitive side having been irredeemably perverted by translation into meaningless rite, with substitution of papal infallibility for the voice of conscience; while on the practical side, the church's cosmology and account of the world was shown by science to be ridiculous. We were not ready, however, to do without a faith, and we adopted the scientific world-view as the new credo. But this was a faith which had no place in it for human beings. So now we are breaking out again, this time to a more self-reliant stance—to faith in ourselves. What else is left to have faith in?

There are doctrines of a larger Self that give some encouragement. Loverde speaks to this hope:

> In [the "faith structure of consciousness"] man is subordinated to the law from the beyond as mediated by the representatives of a revelation from the high god. When only a privileged few mediate a revelation, all others live dependently in a faith structure. But Rilke speaks to all men calling them to a level of consciousness inaccessible to all men only to the degree that consciousness remains bound by the horizontal principles which ground certain delimited realms which man appropriates for his own control.

Buber, too, assigns responsibility to all men for making the meaning of the world "come alive":

> But we ourselves, too, as the ready and obedient bearers of the word of the logos, accord to the cosmos its reality which consists in being our world. Through us it becomes the shaped world of man, and only now does it deserve the name of cosmos as a total order, formed and revealed. Only through our service to the logos does the world become "the same cosmos for all."

We have here attempted to suggest themes that may become the basis of new education—a fragile undertaking, yet filled with potential strength.

FRONTIERS

Some Social Science

THE mid-August issue of *Not Man Apart* (organ of Friends of the Earth) begins with a chapter reprinted from the research publication of the Council on Economic Priorities—*Cleaning Up: The Cost of Refinery Pollution Control.* This study is called an "in-depth" investigation of "the practice of corporations as they affect society." Refining oil is vital to energy production, but it can also be a major source of pollution. Must we submit to this pollution in order to keep moving around on wheels?

The answer is put briefly at the beginning:

> We find that the answer to the question, "Can the economy afford the extra energy and dollars required to meet pollution control goals?" is *Yes* for the petroleum refining industry. The refiners can control their pollution for well under half a cent per gallon of product.

They and we can afford it. The report looks at the performance of eight major U.S. refiners—Exxon, Shell, Texaco, Mobil, Standard Oil (Indiana) (also known as Amoco), Gulf, Standard Oil of California (Socal), and Atlantic Richfield (Arco)—which, taken together, account for about 55 per cent of American refining capacity and control 60 per cent of the country's finished fuels production. Major reduction of the pollution inevitable in oil refining, the report says, can be accomplished through "good housekeeping." This is explained in simple language. It would require "a huge investment" by the oil companies, but far from prohibitive, in view of their consistently impressive profits.

Giving this sort of informational service to its readers is the policy of *Not Man Apart.* In the same issue Jim Harding writes about the Washington lobbies for promoting nuclear energy and posts readers on what is happening in this area in various states. Also reported is the interesting fact that electricity use, country-wide, during the fifty-two weeks ending July 19 stayed about the same as in the corresponding period in 1973-74. The increase in consumption was less than one per cent.

What is the importance of such information? If you think about it you may decide that it constitutes authentic social science. It is social science in the sense of Joan Robinson's definition: *"The function of social science is quite different from that of the natural sciences—it is to provide society with an organ of self-consciousness."*

All accurate investigative journalism is the practice of social science, according to this view. We are recalling, at the moment, the recent reports in the daily press on the activities of the CIA, the August *Harper's* article on the Kennedy family and the invasion of Cuba, the discussion of Indira Gandhi's policies in the *Nation* for Aug. 2, and, in general, the reflective articles and books on Watergate, not to forget the *Pentagon Papers,* Ellsberg's *Papers on the War,* and such books as *Washington Payoff* of which there must be dozens.

Indeed, we are thoroughly posted on the decline of our civilization. The pattern is well-defined, and those who would like regular reports on the process might wish to subscribe to Tristram Coffin's twice-a-month newsletter, *Washington Spectator,* of which the Aug. 15 issue gives details on various activities of the CIA—"the overthrow of the Allende regime, assassination plots, spying on American citizens," and doing odd jobs for the multinationals.

Do the conclusions of sociological studies of delinquency and mental disorder apply to these people, too? Why not? Those who examine these pathologies from a social point of view have little doubt of it. Discussing what he learned from talking to thousands of recidivists, the New York psychiatrist, Charles B. Thompson, said that the offender is "an individual who, like ourselves, is the resultant of this same continual conditioning process, for the criminal and the neurotic and the law-abiding citizen are all members of the same social structure or society which automatically

conditions us to react [with] compulsive' egocentric acquisitiveness." And speaking of American families with psychotic children, Jules Henry observed in *Pathways to Madness:* "They seem destined to misery and catastrophe because they were locked in by their past and by the configurations of love, hate, anxiety and sham which became established in the home." Prof. Henry added:

> The quality of life in these families is their particular creation of what they have taken from their culture without being aware of it. I view them, however, as just as helpless to change their destiny without outside help as Agamemnon was helpless to change his destiny without a god. . . . So much of their activity seems within "normal limits" that in much of what I have written I do not use the word "pathology"!

Well, this is social science—psycho-social science.

There is social science of still another sort in Harold Clurman's recent letter on the London theatre (*Nation,* Aug. 16). Speaking of Harold Pinter, he wrote:

> Much of Pinter's early writing may be set down as a moral parable about an amoral reality. Yet, for all its distortions, there is a weird clarity in the imagery. In *Old Times* Pinter's distorting mirror seems to be overlaid by a veil which causes one to doubt whether any reality exists at all. Many theatregoers, therefore, insist that the play is thoroughly unintelligible. They fail to recognize that this opinion arises not from the play's composition but from its very point: the medium, in this case, is the message.
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> . . . we seize upon what is being shown, we are not sure what is being said. Characteristic of Pinter's art is his refusal to say anything—anything, that is, which may be readily formulated as a "position." The play, an emanation of the writer's troubled being, is projected in "detached" imagery. . . . Pinter is perhaps summing himself up in its concluding lines: "You are in no man's land. Which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent."

Seeing in London a newsreel anthology from *The March of Time,* Clurman felt so unnerved by visual reminders of what happened in America in the early sixties that he wanted to leave—

> But I stayed on, held because as all the items—the murder of Martin Luther King, the killings at Kent State, etc.—were unfolded, I was gripped by a grave disquiet, historical as well as personal. Why, I asked myself, is there so little continuity in all the best impulses of American endeavor? Why are there only seasonal "trends" rather than a line of ever maturing, determined effort? Why is there no real growth?

Well, these are some of the areas of awareness made possible by the social science of the time. Where is the best place to put one's energies—with, that is, some expectation that the right sort of effort will count?