

THE GENESIS OF CHANGE

ONE of the lessons which the Gandhians learned during the early stages of their work in the Indian villages was that little or nothing could be accomplished, at the beginning, in behalf of long-term planning. Their object was the restoration of morale and initiative among the villagers, not efficient "management," so that what the people could not see for themselves as worth doing could not be attempted. Most of all, the villagers needed to experience some actual benefits from what they did, and these benefits had to be tangible and almost immediate. Some small successes at first would give them heart, and then, little by little, persistence would develop. After a year or two, it might be possible to interest them in undertakings dependent upon foresight and vision. Gandhi had said that the regeneration of village life in India would require the same sort of attention from the workers that nurses give to patients who are desperately ill—continual bedside service.

The ideal, in this case, is self-sufficient small communities. Not communities run by administrative experts according to some master-plan, but villages and towns in which the major impulse for constructive activities comes from the people themselves. How difficult it is to restore moral qualities which have been lost for centuries becomes evident from books like Erica Linton's *Fragments of a Vision*, which was reviewed in a recent *Frontiers*. Habits of dependence and attitudes of hopelessness, growing out of a long series of injustices and misfortunes, are difficult to overcome, especially when accompanied by conditions resulting in malnutrition, hunger, and disease. Yet the mighty effort begun by Gandhi, and continued by his followers, is having an effect. There are more than a few "ideal villages" in India, and Gandhi's conception of nonviolence and integrity in social struggle began a ferment in the

thought of the modern world that has inspired changes and movements in many lands. One has only to name Danilo Dolci in Italy, Cesar Chavez in the United States, and various workers for peace and community in England and France to realize the extent of his influence, and its continuing vitality.

But what of the social future of countries where industry and technology are already far advanced? Only about 4 per cent of the population of the United States is rural, while in India 82 per cent of the people still live in villages and small towns. Is there any hope of applying some equivalent of Gandhian conceptions of reconstruction in a country such as the United States?

A frontal attack on this question would probably be completely futile. What might be attempted, however, is an oblique approach, starting with socio-moral issues about which many Americans are already aroused. The most obvious issues are the preservation of a healthful environment and the related problem of the crisis in energy supply. There are various forms of industrial pollution and waste that we don't seem able to put a stop to, with no evidence, as yet, of reduction in the rate of energy consumption. Yet we know that neither of these trends can continue for long, since increased pollution may soon have lethal results, while serious energy shortages would be likely to produce paralyzing effects on countless peoples' lives.

For discussion of this question it is necessary to note that, broadly speaking, there are two kinds of "public opinion" in the United States. There is *informed* public opinion, which makes itself felt in a number of ways—through organizations like the Sierra Club and the Wilderness Society, and others, through statements by scientific bodies, in

the pages of magazines, books, and the few influential newspapers of the country. Then there is the passive, plastic public opinion of the great majority, of people who get their information through the mass media and who take little interest in "public" issues. These people expect to be "serviced" by government and industry, and tend to be indifferent to campaigns for any sort of change. They are not averse to planning, but are accustomed to planning only in terms of personal objectives and on the basis of existing arrangements and expectations. These are the people who might be said to correspond to the "villagers" in India, with one great difference, that they enjoy a comparatively high material standard of living and are not—or not yet—in any pain.

In recent years the persons who provide ideas and background for the informed-opinion sector have done much work on new sources of energy, publishing what they have found out. The reader of only a few of these papers and articles—some of which have been noted in MANAS—cannot help but be impressed by the resourcefulness of the researchers. The same may be said of inventors on the frontier of technology, who are working on such things as new types of engines that will eliminate or greatly reduce pollution. Then there are social planners devising various schemes for housing and transport to renew the cities or create better ones, and formulating broadly based proposals for more intelligent use of the land. Sooner or later, however, when the question of putting some of these ideas into practice is considered, a kind of default ensues. Really constructive innovation always seems to get blocked. Actually, many volumes of encyclopedic dimensions would be required to supply case studies of *why* the recommendations and proposals of these researchers are seldom given a chance to prove their merit, although two good books will supply ample illustrations of the obstacles involved—Frank Graham's *Since Silent Spring* (1970) and *The Politics of Ecology* by James Ridgeway (1972).

In the November 1971 issue of *Smithsonian* Wilson Clark gave the figures on energy consumption in the United States and the rate of increase. He provided a brief inventory of diminishing resources, added a note on the dangers of nuclear fission as a source, then said:

This is the energy crisis, a crisis which . . . requires recognition that our energy resources are dwindling, the bitter realization that at some not too distant hour the party will be over. Yet America has no "energy policy," and there have been few attempts to develop one. One of the reasons for this may be despair. Another is faith that some untried or unknown future technology will save us in the nick of time.

In this article Mr. Clark described at length the devices already in use for the capture of solar energy, and also various proposals for collecting this energy on a large scale. He gave particular attention to the plan of two Arizona astronomers, Aden and Marjorie Meinel, for a vast project in the desert region of the lower Colorado River basin, which might, when completed in 2076, supply not only most of the United States but also northern Mexico with all the electricity needed; and would, in addition, produce daily 50 billion gallons of fresh water! The entire installation would occupy 13,000 square miles of desert land.

In the *Smithsonian* for last August Mr. Clark returned to the subject of energy with an article on hydrogen as a fuel that might possibly end pollution by automobiles. His account of hydrogen as a motor fuel is illustrated by pictures of cars (a Toyota and a Model A Ford) which have been converted to hydrogen operation. There are still practical problems to be solved, he says, but also many advantages to this fuel, which could have applications far beyond its use in automobiles:

In a projected "hydrogen economy," no unsightly power lines would slash continents with enormous rights-of-way and the environmentally destructive method of storing peak-period electrical energy as water in mountain reservoirs would be eliminated. Hydrogen can be stored (similarly to the storage of natural gas) simply by pumping the gas

into underground caverns, certain types of sandstone formations and depleted oil wells. When needed during peak-use periods, it can be pumped out of the ground into a pipeline. When it reaches the final engine, house heater or electrical generators, it can generate energy at that point efficiently, cleanly and quickly.

The U.S. government is apparently spending nothing for specific research on hydrogen-fueled vehicles or other aspects of an integrated, modern, clean hydrogen-energy system. The only industry that is actively supporting the concept of the hydrogen economy is the now threatened gas industry.

Elsewhere in this article Mr. Clark tells about the work of the Italian nuclear research center (Euratom) under the direction of Cesare Marchetti. There hydrogen is produced by chemical decomposition, using heat from a nuclear reactor. Clark concludes with quotation from an article in a European scientific review in which Dr. Marchetti gave the details of an economy that would have hydrogen as its basic source of energy, concluding, however, that "politics is far more complicated than technology."

This is a clear implication that politics is the chief barrier to the application of social intelligence. But is this really the case? The fact of the matter is that political processes relate to only the coarsest sort of human decisions, while action requiring human sensibility, creativity, originality, and vision must always find its way around the political process. What the political process takes over can only be dealt with bureaucratically, which usually subjects the issues involved to the winds of demagoguery, polemics, popular misrepresentation, lobbying, and partisan conflict. The greater the responsibilities heaped on the political process, the less effectual it becomes, until not even its normal functions can be well performed.

A principle is involved here, one that was well stated by Vinoba Bhave some years ago. He said:

The spreading of revolutionary ideas is no part of the government's duty. In fact, revolutions cannot be organized and brought about by the established

institutions of politics. The government can only act on an idea when it has been generally accepted, and then it is compelled to act on it.

It should be plain enough that revolutionary steps are indeed called for by a genuinely effective anti-pollution program; and this is equally true for whatever may be the best way to meet the impending energy crisis. Those steps are not going to be taken by political institutions except in response to deep alterations in human attitude. The weak performance of regulatory agencies concerned with the general welfare ought to be sufficient evidence of this.

This is a comment which applies not only to governments, but to all institutions which have become havens for established opinion and can no longer serve as tools to inventive or innovative minds. How, then, will a complex society like ours, which is endlessly divided under the rule of institutions of various sorts, manage to survive? Manifestly, it will not survive save by the ingenuity and independence of individuals who learn how to *use* existing institutions, yet refuse to be confined by their rigidities, their conceits, and their patterns of self-interest.

In a book noted recently in "Children . . . and Ourselves," *The New Professionals*, edited by Ronald Gross, a young scientist, Garrett De Bell, tells how he tried to open up his field to changes. Wanting to be an ecologist, he found all sorts of barriers to preparation for the kind of ecological science he wanted to practice. The new ecology requires an interdisciplinary approach, and few schools allow the breadth of studies involved. Suppose, Mr. De Bell asks, someone wanted to write a thesis drawing on not only several fields in biology, but involving social, psychological, and political questions as well? As he says:

A thesis of that sort might study and evaluate changes in farming practice brought about by corporate ownership of large farms, increased mechanization, monoculture of single crops, and the use of pesticides and herbicides. Is this really progress, producing more food cheaper, or does it shunt costs off into society instead of the farmer?

What is the effect of corporate farming on wild life? On the "small farmer" who is bought out and must move to the city, increasing urban over crowding? All these implications would traditionally be considered too vague or irrelevant to be included in a thesis.

Obviously, what De Bell is after is "relevance"—he wants his practice of science to have a direct bearing on human life. But the sciences as they are practiced or taught in the universities have no such bearing. They have, as Ortega remarked forty-two years ago in *Mission of the University*, a purpose and meaning of their own—and their own logic to develop, which is not of itself vital to man, although sometimes it may become so. But man, he said, has a life to live, not just a science to practice. The distinction is crucial. Ortega wrote of medicine as an example:

In the last fifty years, medicine has allowed itself to be swept off its feet by science, it has neglected its own mission and failed to assert properly its own professional point of view. Medicine has committed the besetting sin of that whole period: namely, to look askance at destiny and strain to be something else—in this case, pure science.

Let us make no mistake about it. Science, upon entering into a profession, must be detached from its place in pure science, to be organized upon a new center and a new principle, as professional technics. And if this is true, it must certainly have an effect on the teaching of the professions.

A few years later Alexis Carrel was to make a more emphatic declaration of this idea in behalf of medicine in *Man the Unknown*.

Ecology is also a healing profession—it is medicine for the planet. So, naturally enough, Garrett De Bell, wanting to practice this profession, revolted against what happened to him when he tried to bring his education for this practice into focus. His undergraduate years at Stanford were fine because he had enough latitude to move around from his major in biology to other areas involving environmental problems, including the social sciences. Later it was different:

My graduate experience at Berkeley, though, was largely a frustrating attempt to deal with a mindless university. I did learn a few things in applied courses like forestry and wildlife management, and enjoyed natural history courses. But it was clear that any meaningful thesis I might have wanted to do was out of the question.

I finally settled on a thesis on the population dynamics and bio-energetics of a species of wolf spider. At the time I started on my project I really liked the spiders I was working on; but as I became increasingly aware of what man was doing to the world's ecosystems and the irrelevance of my going through the motions of getting a Ph.D., I figured I would wind up hating the spiders by the time I got my doctorate. One day I just walked off the campus and never came back as a student. For a few months after that I taught ecology at the Berkeley Ecology Center, which seemed a lot more important than academic games.

The trouble with the academic approach is that it rarely is directed toward *solving* the problems. It is not enough to understand that mercury concentrates in food chains, and that that is an interesting example of the cycling of materials in nature. *Why* is the mercury there? Its sources have to be found, and its discharge into the system has to be stopped. This will involve studying the industries that use mercury (as a fungicide in paper manufacturing, as an electrode in chlorine production, in the manufacture of many plastics). It will be necessary to find out what can be done to eliminate mercury loss into the environment in all of these processes, and furthermore, to look for ways of doing without materials whose production releases mercury into the environment. Nor would the thesis stop there. It might also be necessary to look into the advertising that stimulates the use of products that result in mercury pollution, as well as the lobbying tactics and expenditures of industries to prevent the lowering of acceptable mercury levels in food.

Many similar research projects in the fields of pesticides, industrial chemicals, and so on could be formulated. As things stand, they would almost certainly be rejected as Ph.D. theses, for their common characteristic is that they bridge many disciplines, and not only study what is but what should be. And they include open-eyed recognition that change will be fought by powerful interests, and that whatever results the studies produce must be brought to public attention, not left to gather cobwebs in the university library.

This is one of the reasons why, as William Irwin Thompson remarked, "The universities are no longer on the frontiers of knowledge." They have become "the kind of places where you learn the past," not where you get some light on what to do next. They are, in short, very much like the government.

What is happening today, for good and for constructive change, is happening, most of the time, in spite of the government and the big institutions. There are small formations of people who have enlightened opinions, and these individuals and groups may be a Western equivalent of the village communities of the vaster areas where a great rural and community renaissance is still possible, along the lines of Ghandi's dream, and the occasional realizations of the Sarvodaya workers of today.

There is a kind of simplicity possible for a technological society, but its root principle will be the same as the simplicity that is achieved anywhere else—the revival of individual responsibility, and the carrying out of activities along diversely individual lines, often, no doubt, as described by Garrett De Bell and some of the other contributors to *The New Professionals* (Simon and Schuster, 1972). The kind of simplicity that counts is in the unifying and generalizing power of the human mind, and it works for the common good when it is devoted to the common good.

When there are enough of such people—and they keep coming along—there may develop new and more flexible institutions that are intended for use as responsive *tools*, not dominating systems. The old institutions will still survive, but will have lost their sovereignty—more or less as monarchies lost their sovereignty, and the once-powerful Church. They will have some social usages, perhaps, but the creative energies of men, their moral strength and their vision, will have found other foci. The present seems to be a moment—a great historical moment—when these new

formative powers are beginning to show their presence on the scene.

The powerlessness of the people in the face of the various emergencies being described in the magazines these days is the result of an excessive delegation of responsibility—all in the name of progress. There is no point in blaming the specialists, the bureaucrats, the politicians, the police, or even the institutions which are shaped by and which "produce" all these people. Both the roles and the institutions are the result of a process of subdivision of human life, and for the most part those who submit to that process can't help what they do. So, naturally enough, the present is in some quarters described as a dark age, a black age, but it is also a golden age for those who refuse to be offprints of their times, and who, little by little, start taking back the parts of themselves that have been parcelled out to the specialists for both servicing and management. For these new individuals are showing that change is possible, that it can be made to work. By such means, in time, even the most laggard forms of public opinion can grow responsive to change.

REVIEW

THE PLAY OF GREAT IDEAS

MILTON MAYER knows perfectly well that there is no way under heaven—and in heaven it is no longer necessary—to fit the politics of Eternity into the procrustean requirements of the politics of Time; he knows this in the same sense that he knows there can be no squaring of the circle and no perpetual motion machine; but he never stops trying. He seems to think that a human being can have no higher calling—a persuasion which puts him, as a journalist, in the best possible company, since some of the greatest of men or minds were devoted to the same heroic pursuit.

If Men Were Angels (Atheneum, 1972, \$12.50) is Milton Mayer's latest book—a collection of essays, like most of his other books. One by one, he looks at the issues and problems of the times, in each case showing that today's moralists and critics have nearly all been anticipated by better and wiser men. Mayer discusses the issues in terms of the seed ideas which reveal where the prevailing notions men have about themselves and their lives came from; he shows what the great clichés were before they became clichés, and how modern intellectuality lost both its muscle and its fire.

For example, after tracing the idea of "progress" to the thinkers of the Enlightenment, and recalling Tocqueville's account of the American adaptation of it, he says:

Men saw, and rightly, that the new machinery and the new discoveries, generally transmitted by the new rights of man, could be used to speed up the amelioration of the human condition to a tempo never before imagined. In the splendor of the new day all history receded. No one seemed to remember that the Greeks (and the early Jews and Christians, too) had seen that the human condition in *their* time had improved radically over the more ancient antiquity. Homeric life was on every count benighted—as was that of the contemporary "barbarians"—in comparison with that of Periclean Athens and Augustinian Rome. But their attention to the past

saved the ancients from the euphoric inference drawn by the egalitarian moderns from the new conditions.

Only a nit-picker would deny that man with the wheel (or with liberty) was better off than man without. But (the nitpickers wanted to know) was he *better*—and if so, how, and how durably? The nitpickers insisted that man's improvement of his environment was neither the necessary consequence of his own improvement nor its cause—nor a sign of his improvability. What he had achieved (they insisted) was wholly within the capabilities described by the Greeks. If his nature was actually changing (as the nit-pickers insisted it wasn't), the changes had to be inheritable and irreversible; otherwise (the nit-pickers insisted) the improved conditions would be in perpetual jeopardy.

But the new view of man the perfectible swept everything before it. The perfectibilists and progressivists and the optimists and the liberals brushed the nit-pickers aside, as they still do—with, however, less of a whoop and a holler since Verdun and Auschwitz and Hiroshima and My Lai. There was weighty evidence (as there still is) that refining conditions refined some (if not all) of the sensibilities of some (if not all) men. Chattel slavery and some of the less onerous forms of economic cruelty were waning.

So it goes. Mayer recounts the transformations of the idea of progress in recent years, describing the heady reassurances available in the new wave of Behaviorist theory, the wild anticipations of genetic remodeling by means of DNA and other biological devices, with even hope of a "knowledge pill" and possibly a "peace pill" to reconcile both the ignorance and the conflicts of the human race.

This essay is called "The Fallen Angel and the Risen Ape," and Mayer, like Disraeli, is plainly on the side of the angels. He can hardly agree with Prof. Skinner that the human "soul," if the term be permitted at all, is no more than "a formless bundle (even an imaginary bundle) of purest plastic potentialities." It is the candor of the modern simplifiers of man's nature that really horrifies us. The modern manipulators and "nothing butters" (man is *nothing* but imperfectly organized raw material for science to improve upon) make materialist hot-gospellers like La

Mettrie and other eighteenth-century progressives sound like the gentlest of Unitarians; they, at least, still had some reverence for Nature, even though they were determined adversaries of God.

Mayer never gets off the subject of the nature of man and how one's thinking on this question bears on all the others. Mayer has read the Great Books and seems to know them by heart—he certainly knows how to quote them in order to show that thinking which ignores the basic philosophical questions is thinking that gets lost in triviality and irrelevance.

What are the basic philosophical questions? One of them is concerned with the possibility of life after death. A historical period in which this question receives no consideration is a period of very little importance—hardly worth remembering. For men who suppose they *know* the answer, that they need not consider it, are either so wise as to be beyond the vicissitudes of history—in some timeless state—or they are afflicted by conceits which fill what they say with shallow impertinence. How is it that the questions which can't be settled are the most important ones of all? The answer must be that while we cannot have final answers to timeless inquiries, it is possible to gain *intimations* of meaning, and these intimations may be recognized as the luminous source of the wisdom of the men to whom we turn, century after century, for light and help.

Mayer practices the pursuit of these intimations. This is his dialectic. His writing is an example of a man getting his education in public. In all the great questions, there are always two sides, and he shows you both. On the question of immortality he says:

Let a Camus say that "life will be lived all the better if it has no meaning" and an Einstein counter with "The man who regards his own life and that of his fellow-creatures as meaningless is not merely unhappy, but hardly fit for life." Who would side with the former's sentiment against the latter's? Agreed, then; but the agreement does not make Einstein right and Camus wrong. We may need meaning and want it—and want immortality as the

condition of it, but none of that is to say that the meaning or the immortality exists.

We may even agree with the believer's best "argument" of all and still have proved nothing: that without immortality there would be no moral order in the universe. We see—as did Job and all men before and since—how often the wicked prosper and the good suffer in this life. And seeing it, we say with Socrates that "if death were the end of it all the wicked would have a good bargain in dying, for they would be happily quit not only of their body, but of their own evil together with their souls." Where, then, would there be any justice, truth, or honor? Where, indeed, would such universal concepts ever have originated? What motivation would men have for decency except for the dolt's recognition of his own inability to get away with indecency? Thus Kant's rational requirement of immortality as the practical necessity for man's progress toward "the perfect accordance with the moral law . . . a perfection of which no rational being of the sensible world is capable at any moment of his existence."

Mayer leads the reader to no firm conclusion, but what he does accomplish is the demonstration that no easy opinion on this subject will stand examination. And Mayer will have gained his purpose if the reader is led to muse on the idea that easy and confident opinions are likely to be the riskiest possessions that a human being can cling to.

Curiously, the secure affirmation of some of the ancient religions concerning the immortality of the soul has been replaced, in modern times, by the measured reasoning of a humane pragmatism. After quoting William James to this effect, Mayer closes this essay with a passage from Charles Jung's *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*:

As a physician I am convinced that it is hygienic—if I may use the word—to discover in death a goal towards which one can strive; and that shrinking away from it is something unhealthy and abnormal which robs the second half of life of its purpose. I therefore consider the religious teaching of a life hereafter consonant with the standpoint of psychic hygiene. When I live in a house which I know will fall about my head within the next two weeks, all my vital functions will be impaired by this thought. . . . Among all my patients in the second half of life—that is to say, over thirty-five—there has not

been one whose problem in the last resort was not that of finding a religious outlook on life. It is safe to say that every one of them fell ill because he had lost that which the living religions of every age have given to their followers, and none of them has been really healed who did not regain his religious outlook.

Earlier, Mayer had recorded some Socratic reflections of his own:

There are dunderheads who maintain that it is better to be alive than dead (and, equally, dunderheads who maintain that it is better to be dead than alive)—an opinion which, on its very face, is nothing but local pride (or wanderlust). For he who knows only his own side of the case knows little of that and in the case at the bar the witnesses for the Adversary have not yet taken the stand. Strictly speaking, we cannot have an opinion that we are going to be dead. Opinion demands consciousness first of all. We know that it is impossible to be at once conscious and not conscious of the future; but it is this impossible situation which presumably obtains at the last conscious moment that precedes death. We may be of the opinion that we are going to die—but the opinion that we are going to be dead is mere presumption.

One has to think about this for awhile, to see that it is indeed as Mayer says. We are not used to thinking of ourselves as subjects when it comes to death; somehow, we switch to thinking of ourselves as "objects," as nothing but bodies, and we have seen dead bodies. But we do not think of ourselves as bodies from day to day, but as sensitive centers of awareness, beings who feel, who dream, who desire, who resolve, who wonder and aspire. *That* being cannot think of itself as "dead," but always is there, looking at death as something that happened to some "thing." It is perfectly natural, again, for children to wonder where they were before they were born. Consciousness cannot conceive of its own non-existence. Can this eternal "is-ness" be mere psychological fraud?

We could all use some practice in this sort of thinking. That people of the Western world have not thought this way for centuries accounts in part for our inability to understand certain ancient

writers whose uses of logic depend very largely upon the paramount reality of subjective values.

If Men Were Angels has four sections. One, which we have just quoted, is concerned with the meaning of death. Another, of particular current interest, deals with man versus the state, and it is here that the tensions between the politics of time and the politics of eternity come into strenuous play. There is a section on youth, and one on the idea of progress. The book settles nothing, but it may unsettle many questions that need to be opened up.

COMMENTARY

REDEMPTION FOR TODAY

"ONLY a nit-picker," says Milton Mayer, "would deny that man with the wheel was better off than man without." If we compiled a list of the eminent nit-pickers who maintained something like this view, and gave their reasons, we should have not only an odd and motley crew, but would collect some extraordinary individuals, among them Gandhi. "Man's fall," Rackham declared, "began with the wheel." Only a rarely prophetic soul could assert this with such certainty without having lived through a smog alert in Los Angeles.

Plainly, the nit-pickers need some exegesis; like other revealers of obscure doctrines, they should not be taken literally. When Plato seems to attack literacy and Lao-tse proposes that ignorance is a desirable condition for people wanting to live happy and contented lives, it is not enough to dispose of such opinions by calling them aberrations in otherwise superior thinkers.

We may have elements of an explanation of the attack on the wheel in what is quoted from E. F. Schumacher in this week's *Frontiers*:

The "logic of production" is neither the logic of life nor that of society. It is a small and subservient part of both. Its destructive effects cannot be brought under control—so that the destructive forces cease to be released. The chance of mitigating the rate of resource depletion or of bringing harmony into the relationship between man and his environment is nonexistent as long as there is no idea anywhere of *a life-style which treats Enough as good and More-than-enough as being of evil*. Here lies the real challenge, and no amount of technical ingenuity can evade it.

The "wheel" is pretty basic to what Schumacher is talking about, since we are the children of a civilization which has long believed that anything which results from wheels—from machines, that is—is bound to be a blessing. After all, making machines is the best thing we do. Our skill with machinery lies at the foundation of almost all our accomplishments. If you add to this

what Charles Reich said in *The Greening of America*—"To have just one value is to be a machine"—the one value being *production*—the exegesis is practically complete.

This was the point of O'Neill's play, *Dynamo*, of O'Brien's *The Dance of the Machines*, and it was made with great clarity by Carlyle more than a hundred years ago. Nit-pickers? We could do with some more of them.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

RACKHAM FOREVER!

IT is just as well that we don't know the price of *Once Upon A Time—The Fairy Tale World of Arthur Rackham*, since such discouraging information can dull the edge of a reviewer's enthusiasm—and no edge sharpened by lifelong recollections of the illustrations of Arthur Rackham should be lost. The joy of celebrating Rackham rises above mundane considerations. In any event, this book was published last year by Viking. It includes Washington Irving's Rip Van Winkle, seven fairy tales by the Brothers Grimm, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll, three of Charles and Mary Lamb's Tales from Shakespeare, a Christmas Carol by Dickens, some Aesop's fables, and Barrie's Peter Pan In Kensington Gardens. All with Rackham's illustrations, mostly in full color.

The volume is edited by Margery Darrell, who has a brief but delighting essay about Rackham at the beginning.

Rackham, we learn from Miss Darrell, gained his first real success with the illustrations for *Grimm's Fairy Tales*, which came out in 1900. He was then thirty-three. How do you describe a Rackham drawing or painting? His best work, Miss Darrell says, was "airborne," meaning particularly fairies, ghosts, winged fiends, and witches. That may be so, but what we remember most clearly are his goblins and his trees. Some of the trees are not only alive but *conscious*, about to say something to you. And the goblins and other little people are sure to produce absolute immunity to any of the characterizations of those wonderful tribes that Mr. Disney could devise. There was apparently good reason for the "realism" Mr. Rackham was able to embody in his little men, since a writer, who met Rackham in 1932, tells us:

I have the recollection of a smallish, aging, almost wizened person, with a bald domed forehead and a very wide elfish grin: a gnome, perhaps, though an entirely benevolent one. But there was more to the impression than that: there was something earthy and even elemental about him. Nor would it be wholly

absurd to say that he resembled one of his own grotesquely poetical trees with faces, for which his own face might have served as the model. As I've suggested, it was impossible not to be confused as to which was which—the artist himself or the creatures, human, half-human, or non-human, of which he had drawn so many. It wasn't in the least that he made one diffident in his presence; one simply couldn't get over seeing so many of his drawings walking about in the shape of one man. It was even surprising that he spoke ordinary English, and not some strange language of fairytale or the woods. . . .

Rackham was a man of strong opinions. You might say that anyone who could draw like that, whose imagination could so command the imagery of worlds ruled by forces and powers answering to mythic rules, would have to have strong opinions. "He amused himself," Miss Darrell tells us, "by saying that man's fall began with the wheel." Our "progress," he seemed to think, had suffocated the life of dreaming and wonder. No wonder "he thought photography, motion pictures, and radio were, in short, abominations."

His views on art for children are worth repeating:

I can only say that I firmly believe in the greatest stimulating and educative power of imaginative and playful pictures and writings for children in their most impressionable years—a view that most unfortunately, I consider, has its opponents in these matter-of-fact days. Children will make no mistakes in the way of confusing the imaginative and the symbolic with the actual. Nor are they at all blind to decorative or arbitrarily designed treatment in art, any more than to poetic or rhythmic form in literature. And it must be insisted on that nothing but the best that can be had, cost what it may (and it can hardly be cheap), is good enough for those early impressionable years when standards are formed for life. Any accepting, or even choosing, art or literature of a lower standard as good enough for children is a disastrous and costly mistake.

How did Rackham work? He worked very much by his own rule. Miss Darrell tells us:

Rackham believed the function of the illustrator to be highly personal and independent: the artist was the author's "partner, not servant." As he put it in his steadfastly dull fashion, "the most fascinating form of illustration consists of the expression by the artist of

an individual sense of delight or emotion aroused by the accompanying passage of literature." Moreover, no one was to tell the artist which passage to illustrate; he decided that, too, himself. As one critic, Selma Lanes, points out, Rackham not only made his own choice but often suggested lines that might have been considered by anyone else so nebulous as to be unillustratable. For example: "It was a golden afternoon; the smell of the dust they kicked up was rich and satisfying" (*The Wind in the Willows*).

Well, there are Browning societies and Shakespeare clubs, and associations devoted to the memory and fame of Francis Bacon; Charles Fort has his following in the Fortean Society, and even Conan Doyle has been honored by the devotion of the Baker Street Irregulars, so why not a "happy throng" of those whose childhood was enriched by the art of Arthur Rackham?

Finally, there is this picture of the artist, taken from the memory of a man who as a little boy lived as a visiting nephew in his home:

Dressed in his shabby blue suit and hopping about his studio in his carpet slippers, he reminded me of Rumpelstiltskin, but when he was armed with his palette and paint brushes, he became for me a wizard, who with one touch of his magic wand could people my universe with elves and leprechauns. He would tell me stories of gnomes who lived in the roots and churned butter out of the sap flowing from the knotted branches.

Rackham did something like that for us all.

* * *

Some of the clearest brief accounts we have seen of the Infant Schools of England and open education have been by Joseph Featherstone, who is probably best known as a writer on education for the *New Republic*. We have quoted him often, and now do so again, in relation to what promises to be a good book—*Open Education and the American School* (Agathon Press, 1972, \$7.95, distributed by Schocken), by Roland Barth. The book itself we'll return to, having space, this week, only for some quotation from Mr. Featherstone, who writes the Foreword. He says:

I'm growing wary of slogans like open education. So is Barth. I think they may do more harm than good. Currently I'm seeking to enlist

everybody in favor of open, informal schooling into a movement whose one slogan will be a demand for decent schools. I know I can count on Barth's support for this movement because in a way the middle portion of this book—a participant's case study of a misguided attempt to introduce open classrooms into two schools in an Eastern city—bears on much wider issues than open or informal education. Barth's chronicle of racial suspicion, bureaucratic ineptitude, and purblind reformism suggests that there was much more wrong with the educational climate in that city than the lack of informality in the classroom.

The basic issues ran much deeper. There was the tension between schools and parents. There was the unprofessional—one might say anti-professional—system of priorities which almost seemed designed to undercut the work of practitioners, depriving teachers and principals of support and autonomy. There was the standard pattern of "innovation" from the top down, reforms imposed by outsiders with little consideration for regular administrators, teachers or parents. This last problem was compounded by two things. One was the folly of the project's awkward administrative structure, which linked together two quite disparate schools, took away principals' authority, and put it into the hands of an assortment of ill-matched subadministrators. And the other was a crew of reformers—young, relatively inexperienced university-trained educators—whose philosophy, clothes, and general way of working were not likely to be approved of by other teachers, administrators, or parents. . . .

Open education will never amount to real change if it is shoved down people's throats. Barth is saying that the standard American patterns of educational reform—more money, more people, more pointless gears churning away—are often antithetical to creating schools where people are treated as human beings. This is not an argument against more money and more people; it is, among other things, a reminder that the occupational disease of reformers is blindness to the limitations of the conventional patterns of reform.

This last comment seems extremely important. When change goes sour, the good men, the real teachers, and the writers who care about children begin to say things like this. Jonathan Kozol has been saying them lately, and now Mr. Featherstone adds his voice.

FRONTIERS

Message From "The Universe"

WITH some few exceptions, the secret of what must happen before any of the proposals for reform of man's relations with the natural environment can be made to work is locked up in rhetorical abstractions by the writers on this subject. This is the initial point in a recent paper by E. F. Schumacher, "Modern Pressures and Environment." He reviews briefly two reports prepared for the Stockholm Conference of last June—calling them "highly representative" and "semi-official"—one of which concludes by emphasizing the need for clearer understanding of the facts of pollution. This will enable us to "free our imagination from existing systems and realise that twentieth-century industrial civilization is only one, and not necessarily the best, of the many possibilities among which mankind is free to choose."

These are brave words, but, as Schumacher notes, we are left in the dark as to what they really mean. Plainly they call for "new values," but *what* new values? Values that would lead to a mode of life significantly different from that of the present, we must suppose. This report also urges that technological know-how be applied to slow down pollution in order to "buy time" for making up our minds about new values.

The other report calls for "education" so that "pollution may be brought under control and mankind's population and consumption of resources be steered toward a permanent and sustainable equilibrium." Brave words, again. But what is the core issue in such education? Schumacher's discussion of these questions follows:

If still more education is to save us, it would have to be education of a somewhat different kind: an education that takes us into the depth of things and does not spend itself in an ever-extending battle with symptoms.

The problem posed by environmental deterioration is not primarily a technical problem; if

it were, it would not have arisen in its acutest form in the technologically most advanced societies. It does not stem from scientific or technical incompetence, or from insufficient scientific education, or from a lack of information, or from any shortage of trained manpower, or lack of money for research. It stems from the life-style of the modern world, which in turn arises from its most basic beliefs—its metaphysics, if you like, or its religion.

The whole of human life, it must be said, is a dialogue between man and his environment, a sequence of questions and responses. We pose questions to the universe by what we do, and the universe, by its response, informs us of whether our actions fit into its laws or not. Small transgressions evoke limited or mild responses; large transgressions evoke general, threatening, and possibly violent responses. The very universality of the environmental crisis indicates the universality of our transgressions. It is the philosophy—or metaphysics—of materialism which is being challenged, and the challenge comes not from a few saints and sages, but from the environment. This is a new situation. At all times, in all societies, in all parts of the world, the saints and sages have warned against materialism and pleaded for a more realistic order of priorities. The languages have differed, the symbols have varied, but the essential message has always been the same—in modern terms: Get your priorities right; in Christian terms: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and all these things (the material things which you also need) shall be added unto you." They shall be added, we have always been told—added here on earth where we need them, not simply in an after-life beyond our imagination.

At issue here is whether or not nature—the universe, our environmental host—can speak in a language capable of being read in this way. Schumacher believes that it can:

Today, the same message reaches us from the universe itself. It speaks the language of pollution, exhaustion, breakdown over-population, and also terrorism, genocide, drug addiction and so forth. It is unlikely that the destructive forces which the materialist philosophy has unleashed can be "brought under control" simply by mobilizing more resources—of wealth, education and research—to fight pollution, to preserve wildlife, to discover new sources of energy, and to arrive at more effective agreements on peaceful co-existence. Everything points to the fact that what is most needed today is a

revision of the ends which all our efforts are meant to serve. And this implies that above all else we need the development of a lifestyle which accords to material things their proper, legitimate place, which is secondary and not primary.

The "logic of production" is neither the logic of life nor that of society. It is a small and subservient part of both. Its destructive effects cannot be brought under control—so that the destructive forces cease to be unleashed. The chance of mitigating the rate of resource depletion or of bringing harmony into the relationship between man and his environment is non-existent as long as there is no idea anywhere of *a lifestyle which treats Enough as good and More-than-enough as being of evil*. Here lies the real challenge, and no amount of technical ingenuity can evade it. The environment, in its own language, is telling us that we are moving along the wrong path, and acceleration in the wrong direction will not put us right. When people call for "moral choices" in accordance with "new values," this means nothing unless it means the overcoming of the materialistic life-style of the modern world and the re-instatement of some authentic moral teaching.

Mr. Schumacher turns now to the traditional Four Cardinal Virtues—Prudence, Justice, Courage, and Temperance—showing their application to the frenzied pattern of consumption which characterizes modern life.

The fact is that habits of excess and waste have become reflexes in our daily life. It was a great misfortune that the cornucopia of resources overflowed in the West at the same time that we lost all feeling of kinship with Nature. Western man is probably the most conspicuous waster the world has ever known. Schumacher, in effect, is saying that we must learn thrift, conservation, reverence for the world, love for the earth, and another sort of respect for ourselves, not because supplies are running out all over, but because it is *right* to learn these things. And he is saying that we won't be able to do it without a philosophy that gives us *reasons*—for there are, after all, reasons which correspond to the instructions of the heart. The reasons arising from a sense of wholeness and synthesis are better than the reasons produced by analysis.

One thing more: Schumacher reminds us that the people who write about these things and talk about the sad condition of the world are spokesmen for a comparatively small minority—the articulate, affluent few. The enormous numbers of the world's poor are no threat to the planet—*they do not pollute*.