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MORE SUBLIME IDEAS

THE seventeenth century saw the last of the Renaissance Neoplatonic world-view, which was being rapidly displaced by Cartesian and what would later be called scientific materialism. The Cambridge Platonists did what they could to stem the mechanist tide, but the horizons being opened up by the "natural philosophers" held greater attraction than the mystical views of Henry More or the "Intellectual System" of Ralph Cudworth. Experimentalism, not philosophic metaphysics, was in the air and Newton's discoveries had captured the imagination of most of the educated men of the time. It was not long before, as Frank Manuel has shown, Newton's own mystical and even "occult" leanings were being carefully suppressed by his followers, who did not want the image of their "scientific" hero blurred by notice of his alchemical inquiries.

The spirit of the times was aptly summed up by Fontenelle, in *Plurality of Worlds* (1686):

> "I perceive, said the Countess, "Philosophy is now become very Mechanical." "So mechanical, said I, "that I fear we shall quickly be ashamed of it they will have the World to be in great what a watch is in little; which is very regular, and depends only upon the just disposing of the several parts of the movement. But pray tell me, Madam, had you not formerly a more sublime Idea of the Universe?"

In the centuries since, there have been various protesting voices, but they found few hearers. In the eighteenth century, William Blake declared that "Bacon's philosophy has Ruin'd England," but who would listen to a mad poet and engraver? Yet we should not pass without notice an earlier figure, Joseph Glanvill, a member of the Royal Society in its early, seventeenth-century years, who was the last of the men who tried to be both philosophical in the traditional sense and scientific in the new spirit. Like Bacon, he disapproved of Aristotle, remarking: "A Schoolman is the Ghost of the Stagirite, in a body of condensed Air: and *Thomas* but *Aristotle* sainted." Yet like the Cambridge Platonists, his contemporaries, Glanvill argued for the reality of psychical phenomena and gathered evidence on the subject. Even before science was well seated he warned against scientific dogmatism, saying, in an often cited passage:

> . . . they that never peep'd beyond the common belief in which their easie understandings were at first indoctrinated, are indubitably assur'd of the Truth, and comparative excellency of their receptions . . . the larger Souls, that have travail'd the divers *Climates* of *Opinions,* are more cautious in their *resolves,* and more sparing to determine.

But Glanvill, too, remained a curiosity of cultural history, a man who went against the grain of his times, and was wholly forgotten until Alfred North Whitehead gave his insight belated recognition by popularizing the phrase, "climates of opinion."

Not many men are able to free themselves of their "climate of opinion," and those who do are seldom thanked for their independence. The world of thought is ruled far more by its climate than by logical contention, and the entire question of how great changes in thought come about remains a subject for historical investigation. Concerning the wide abyss which separates one epoch from another, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth-Century Philosophers* by Becker is a good book to read; and for a study of the difficulties in accomplishing basic change it would be hard to improve on Thomas Kuhn's *Structure of Scientific Revolutions.* Then, for the last Western embodiment of a spiritual world-view, E.M.W. Tillyard's *The Elizabethan World Picture* should be of interest, and for more on Glanvill and others of his time, *The Seventeenth-Century Background* by Basil Willey is not only instructive but highly enjoyable. Seventeenth-century

England seems by far the most vivid time of English history, representing the last period during which transcendental convictions animated the thought and action of men.

What has such a period to do with us? It holds interest for the reason that we are now in the midst of another profound change in the polarity of human thinking—a change restorative of transcendental ideas. After some three hundred years of almost total involvement in the outward spectacle of nature and physical processes, men's minds are being slowly but irresistibly drawn to consider another vast field of reality—within themselves. The evidence of this vast tropism affecting the human spirit is not obscure.

Consider first the extraordinary attraction of psychology, which goes back for at least two generations. In a book first published forty years ago, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, Charles Jung wrote:

> The rapid and world-wide growth of a "psychological" interest over the last two decades shows unmistakably that modern man has to some extent turned his attention from material things to his own subjective processes. Should we call this mere curiosity? At any rate, art has a way of anticipating future changes in man's fundamental outlook, and expressionist art has taken this subjective turn well in advance of the more general change.
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> This "psychological" interest of the present time shows that man expects something from psychic life which he has not received from the outer world: something which our religions, doubtless, ought to contain, but no longer do contain—at least for modern man. The various forms of religion no longer appear to the modern man to come from within—to be expressions of his own psychic life, for him they are to be classed with the things of the outer world. He is vouchsafed no revelation of a spirit that is not of this world; but he tries on a number of religions and convictions as if they were Sunday attire, only to lay them aside again like worn-out clothes.

The world, Jung adds, "has seen nothing like it since the end of the seventeenth century." He speaks of the growing current of inquiry in the West as having a deep affinity with Gnosticism.

Jung was certainly an inspiring forerunner of the extensive humanistic reform in modern psychology that has been going on for the past fifteen or twenty years. For this reason we shall begin our survey of actual views of the meaning of the subjective life by quoting further from him, then turning to other psychologists. Why "psychologists"? For the excellent reason that this is a profession to which men of inquiring mind are naturally drawn, by reason of the tendencies to which Jung referred. Evidence of this sort of change in the spontaneous inclinations of the human mind seems to accumulate more overtly in certain kinds of psychological literature. Shortly before he died, Jung permitted a tape recording to be made of his reflections on the idea of a life after death, a question he approached very broadly, by remarking, first, that doctrinaire rationalism had ruled out all such possibilities:

> To the intellect, all my mythologizing is futile speculation. To the emotions, however, it is a healing and valid activity it gives existence a glamor which we would not like to do without. Nor is there any good reason why we should.

After notice of the phenomena of extra-sensory perception, including recollection of some personal experiences of his own, he says (as reported in the *Atlantic* for December, 1962):

> If such phenomena occur at all, the rationalistic picture of the world is invalid, because incomplete. Then the possibility of an other-valued reality behind the phenomenal world becomes an inescapable problem, and we must face the fact that our world, with its time, space, and causality, relates to another order of things behind or beneath it, in which neither "here and there" nor "earlier and later" are of importance. I have been convinced that at least a part of our psychic existence is characterized by a relativity of space and time. This relativity seems to increase in proportion to the distance from consciousness, to an absolute condition of timelessness and spacelessness.

How, then, might all this bear on our lives? The answer he makes goes to the core of the question, since it points to the foundation of

philosophic attitude for all the rest of life—"life" meaning *choosing* and *valuing:*

> Only if we know that the thing which truly matters is the infinite can we avoid fixing our interest upon futilities and upon all kinds of goals which are not of real importance. Thus, we demand that the world grant us recognition for qualities which we regard as personal possessions—our talent or our beauty. The more a man lays stress on his false possessions and the less sensitivity he has for what is essential, the less satisfying is his life. He feels limited because he has limited aims, and the result is envy and jealousy. If we understand that here in this life we already have a link with the infinite, desires and attitudes change. In the final analysis, we count for something only because of the essential we embody, and if we do not embody that, life is wasted. In our relationships to other men, too, the crucial question is whether an element of boundlessness is expressed.

It isn't a question of saying, Yes that's true, or, No, it isn't, but of *working* on the idea. Human beings are not so much confronted by true/false issues as by raw materials that have to be refined and made the basis of original action or thought. So Jung says:

> A man should be able to say he has done his best to form a conception of life after death, or to create some image of it—even if he must confess his failure. Not to have done so is a vital loss. For the question that is posed to him is the heritage of humanity: an archetype rich in secret life, which seeks to add itself to our own individual life in order to make it whole. Reason sets the boundaries far too narrowly for us, and would have us accept only the known—and that, too, with limitations—and live in a known framework, just as if we were sure how far life actually extends. . . . Overvalued reason has this in common with political absolutism: under its dominion the individual is pauperized.

The idea of immortality used to be identified in terms of various forms of "belief." This may not be the way it will return to modern man. Yet it will return; Glanvill was wise for his time, perhaps for any time, when he said: "The Sages of old live again in us; and in opinions there is a Metempsychosis. We are our reanimated Ancestours, and antedate their *Resurrection."* But if the opinions of the ancients are reborn, they are likely to require contemporary forms. In short, a self-created idea of immortality may have more truth in it than a borrowed one, although a borrowed one might be better than none, or an idea accepted without examination. Jung, at any rate, was convinced that *work* is involved—a view not ordinarily associated with religious conceptions! He suggested that even one's failures ought to be hard-won, since there is much to be learned from some failures.

It is appropriate to recall here Erik Erikson's remark (in *Gandhi's Truth*) after describing the belief in rebirth among the Hindus; "let us," he said, "face it: 'deep down' nobody in his right mind *can* visualize his own existence without assuming that he has always lived and will live hereafter; and the religious world-views of old only endowed this psychological given with images and ideas which could be shared, transmitted, and ritualized."

In *Harper's* for April, under the title, "The Struggle for Cultural Rebirth," the psychiatrist, Robert Jay Lifton, discusses at some length what he calls the modes of symbolic immortality. The "struggle" embodies the longing of present-day man to break out of the intellectual confinements of the "techno-bureaucracy" and to have done with the "image of the machine." Already new social forms are emerging in response to the longing for this sort of basic change in the human condition. Explaining his approach, Dr. Lifton writes:

> Symbolic immortality is an expression of man's need for an inner sense of continuity with what has gone on before and what will go on after his own limited biological existence. The *sense* of immortality is thus more than mere denial of death, and grows out of compelling, life-enhancing imagery of one's involvement in the historical process. This sense of immortality may be expressed *biologically*, by living on through one's sons and daughters and their sons and daughters, extending out into social dimensions (of tribe, organization, people, nation, or even species); *theologically*, in the idea of a life after death or of other forms of spiritual conquest of death;

> *creatively,* through "works" and influences persisting beyond biological death; *naturally,* through identification with nature, with its infinite extension into time and space; or *transcendentally,* through a feeling-state so intense that time and death disappear.

Wondering about the age to come, Dr. Lifton is inclined to think that the spiritual teacher or teachers of the future will represent an intensification of internal growth, "in which spiritual depth no longer depends upon exclusive doctrine of any kind and realization combines 'the principle of permanence' with that of continuing search." He also says:

> Whatever form our next prophet may take, we can be certain that we will be witnessing great waves of religious feeling. For what we call religion directs itself, at least at its best, to precisely the kinds of altered relationships to death and the continuity of life that occur during any historical turning point. But lest contemporary priests misunderstand the stirrings within their churches and temples (and the much stronger religious expressions outside of them), this kind of renewed religious feeling presses not toward the stability of denominations and orders but toward their overthrow, not toward orderly worship within existing social arrangements but toward forms of worship—of celebration and immortalization—that subvert the numbing pseudo-ritual of "normal religion" in favor of newly immortalizing visions.

People who have everyday contact with vital movement of human thought and feeling are in a position to draw conclusions of this sort, and to point to the significance in underlying tendencies. We are fortunate in having articulate observers such as Jung, Erikson, and now Lifton—men who stand, as it were, between epochs and are reasonably free of preconceptions, making them accurate reporters of what they see. And here, in their reports, we recognize the growing importance of subjective "evidence" for these experienced and by no means impulsive observers. When Jung says he is "convinced" that a portion of man's being can be free of the relativities of time and space, he is affirming something of vast importance concerning the nature of man—something he has learned not only by observation of others, but of necessity mostly from within himself. And when Lifton speaks of "a feeling-state so intense that time and death disappear," he is declaring something of the same order on similar grounds. In this article, he goes on to show how attitudes affect behavior. Considering the changes now going on, he says that what is being sought is "the re-creation of the adult self." Further:

> Adult work is always tied in with a larger spiritual principle—whether that principle is the Protestant ethic, the deification of capital, or the revolutionary vision. Indeed, one way of defining adulthood is as a state of maximum absorption in everyday tasks subsumed to transcendental cultural principles permitting minimal awareness of the threat of individual death. This is in contrast to both old age and youth: in old age one is impinged upon by the imminence of death and becomes preoccupied with immediate evidence of continuity and integrity, while in youth one requires more intense and direct modes of transcendence rather than the more indirect workaday kind.
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> Therefore when many of the young are accused of refusing to grow up and become adults, there is a sense in which the accusation is true—and, indeed, may be true for innovators during any period of radical dislocation and change. What they reject is the existing version of adult existence—their sense of adulthood as a locked-in, desensitized state, one of the unquestioned assumptions about work and productivity, family and other human relationships; and of fuzzy, nonviable, half-religious images about death, life, and "ultimate meaning."

Dr. Lifton reads the contemporary scene as a document on psychological states and human longings now being compiled. He says:

> The natural mode of immortality has obvious relationship to ecological passions and to general fears about destruction of the environment, fears all too appropriate. But there is also a more positive impulse toward nature among many innovators, as exemplified by the rural commune movement. Many have ridiculed this movement and have looked upon it as nothing more than a pathetic form of pastoral romanticism a regression to a discredited myth that is particularly misdirected in our present urban-technological society. There is no doubt that many of these communal efforts *have* been romantically envisioned and poorly planned. Moreover there is pathos and error in the claim, occasionally made, that

they are *the* answer to our urban-technological dilemmas. But what is often missed in these exchanges is the psychological significance of reclaiming a relationship to nature as part of a more general psychic renewal. When young Americans create a rural commune in New Mexico or New Hampshire, they approach nature with contemporary sensibilities. They seek to bring nature back into a meaningful cosmology, back into the human imagination. They embrace nature in an experiment with the self. The ramifications of that experiment may yet make their way into the most urban minds.

In tune with all this are some of the final conclusions of Abraham Maslow concerning the peak experience, recorded during a discussion held at Council Grove, Kansas, a little over a year before he died (printed in the *Journal of Transpersonal Psychology,* No. 2, 1972 [Vol. IV]). Dr. Maslow spoke of how, as he grew older, the peak experience became a kind of "plateau experience," no longer climactic and brief, but quiet, serene, and lasting. He said:

> The plateau experience is a witnessing of reality. It involves seeing the symbolic, or the mythic, the poetic the transcendent, the miraculous, the unbelievable, all of which I think are part of the real world instead of existing only in the eye of the beholder. . . . Another aspect of the experience is the confrontation with mortality—this whole death business. The death experience makes life much more precious and poignant and more vivid, and you're required to appreciate it and you hang on to it. With surf, you sense a contrast between your own temporary nature and the surf's eternity—the fact that it will be there always, was there always, and that you are witnessing something that's a million years old and will be there a million years from now. . . . My heart attack brought about a real confrontation with death. Ever since then, I've been living what I've been calling to myself "the post-mortem life."
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> If you've gone through this experience, you can be more in the here and now than with all the spiritual exercises that there are. It's just a kind of spontaneous exercise in hanging on to the moment, because the moment is precious. Competition and life planning disappear. The dominance hierarchy, the competition, the competitiveness and glory, certainly become foolish. There is certainly a shifting of values about what's basic and what's not important . . . if you want to read a very good description of it, look at Arthur Koestler's autobiography. He had a confrontation with death. It was in Spain during the Civil War. He had been caught and was going to be executed before a firing squad the next morning. He was imprisoned and so he fell asleep. He woke up in an ecstasy, partly because of the fact he was to be executed. He saw for the first time how blue the sky was.

These are not familiar ideas of "immortality," but all these conceptions, spreading spontaneously among the people of our time, have a *transcendent* quality, reaching beyond space and time—beyond death. They have to do with lost—lost and recovered—dimensions of human beinghood. They are the equivalents of awareness of a reality which, in other aspects, are indeed enduring and therefore of the stuff of eternal life. These are conceptions which are slowly gaining currency in the age that is coming to birth.

REVIEW
"AVUNCULAR WISDOM"

THIS week we have for brief discussion several quotations which at first were in search of a common theme, and then it seemed that William Irwin Thompson's musings (in *The Imagination of an Insurrection*) on the tension between politics of time and the politics of eternity would serve to thread them together. This tension is often both the central problem and the major inspiration of the artist. Thompson says:

> By refusing to commit himself to political action the artist is insisting on discovering what he senses has been ignored in the politician's demand for an immediate commitment. In bringing this vague and intuitive perception into the distinct and articulate shape of art, the artist is only doing in symbolic form what society at large will do later when it comes to its own awareness (often through the help of the artist himself) and gives this awareness shape in political decision and military action. . . . Perhaps the reason that art and politics are often at odds with one another even when they are embedded in a single ideology, is because great art most often realizes itself in a tragic or comic perception of the nature of human existence. To live out his role the politician must believe or pretend to believe that the next revolution or piece of legislation will make a difference and that the difference is worth living and dying for. The artist, with an older sort of wisdom, knows better. Like the anarchist Bakunin, he sees that the revolution that is to bring about the dictatorship of the proletariat will only bring about the dictatorship of the ex-proletariat. But this avuncular wisdom does not appeal to a younger generation yearning for commitment.

Yet the tension is often evident in the young radicals of today, being vaguely present, a few years ago, in the Port Huron Statement of the then burgeoning New Left, although it didn't survive for long.

The first quotation that we have, then, is from a young man, Raymond Mungo—still under thirty—one of the founders of the Liberation News Service, who a couple of years ago "withdrew" to a farm in Vermont. The passage is from his book, *Famous Long Ago,* published in 1970 by Beacon. We quote it to indicate the kind of intelligence and precocious maturity that one comes across in members of the "rebel" generation. The time is the early months of 1968:

> I interrupt the winter to bring you the summer. I'm in Cambridge, Mass., and it is 5:00 A.M. on a June Sunday. I drove Frieda the VW to Harvard Square from my brother Aanu's place on Dodge Street, thinking to pick up a Sunday *Chicago Tribune,* "The World's Greatest Newspaper," an utterly reactionary and untrustworthy sheet, but very entertaining. Alas, though, I could get only a *Boston Globe* full of liberal claptrap about how *awful* it must be to live in the ghetto and, implicitly, how we must help those people achieve suburbia, and about police and hippies setting up "mutual ground rules" to avoid "trouble" on the "Common." Newspapers which pose as liberal and understanding are the most unbearable, for in striving to, say, "close the generation gap," they embarrass both sides of it. They have so little faith in their own systems and generations that they grow sideburns and praise Eugene McCarthy, hoping that'll be *enough* and of course it isn't and the social friction gets hotter every year. Worst of all are editors and politicians assuming a youthful image without the illogical, spontaneous passions of youth. If I were sixty-five, or even forty-two, I hope I'd be saying: "You kids are welcome to all this bizarre fancy, and I only hope you really enjoy it."

On that chilly Vermont farm, Ray Mungo ends his book by saying:

> The community, in striving to be free and create a living peaceful alternative, has set itself the winter as its great test. "The whole world is watching." Here's the beginning of the "peace movement" of the 1970S, here's a clumsy attempt at self-sufficiency, here's a bigger underground press than ever for each hath one and is one. The word is spreading faster than the wind could carry it. What are *you* waiting for? . . .
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> Let us now then cease with our complaining about the state the world is in, and make it better. We're not trying to convince the world—the world has an energy of its own, and we're only a tiny part of that. We're only trying to change ourselves, what a preoccupation! But if we get better, if I get better, that's tangible change, isn't it?

The people who are deeply involved in the politics of time are much more concerned with "changing the world" than with changing

themselves. But what does it mean to "change the world"? Usually, it means remedying certain manifest ills or injustices which are peculiarly visible to those hoping to be the change-agents. But the matrix of these abuses, in common human nature, hardly interests them. Their focus is on particulars. On the other hand, the artist sees the matrix instead of the particulars, since the matrix is where everything else gets its start.

For example, in the Spring *American Scholar* Jerzy Kosinski draws attention to the reading matter which attracts the interest of a vast number of people in America—the "true confessions" magazines of which there are some thirty or more. One of them, *True Story*, reaches sales of about 4.2 million copies every month, and claims a total of ten million readers. During recent years, when other popular magazines were going out of business, the "confession" magazines increased in both number and circulation. The material in these magazines has a standard formula—the writer is supposed to reveal the "true" story of his submission to overpowering temptation of one sort or another. Kosinski comments:

> But unlike real autobiography, which may work like fiction to extend the reader's imagination beyond the event recalled by the author, and unlike other forms of fiction, which generally allow the reader to consider himself and his own experiences in relation to the narrative, these magazines offer nonevocative reading. The reader is insulated; the narrated event—confined to someone else's "real" past—is already "over." Moreover, the classic resolution of most of these stories shows its protagonist suddenly speaking as an objective observer, denouncing the experience he has just narrated both because it did not achieve anything practical, and because it may have involved or led to immoral behavior. In a curious mode of self-abstraction, he discredits the adventure without admitting even the basic educational value of that adventure. Experience leads to no enlightenment about the world or the self, which might be applied to future experience; the narrator judges his situation as if nothing had happened, as he would have judged it before his last escapade. . . .

At the end Kosinski adds a final comment:

> Ironically, since the reader continually isolates himself from others by reading stories that demand nothing of him and never extend him beyond the most prosaic emotions, he becomes a victim, impoverished by his own unexpanded, underdeveloped self. . . . As they resign themselves to the imaginative vacuum of the stories, the readers admit to a double bankruptcy: if in their vicarious lives they settle for the fraud implicit in these magazines, one can only speculate on the experience component of their actual lives.

Kosinski points out the rigid roles of the sexes in these stories, remarking that there seems to be "an increasing desire on the part of mass audiences to reinforce social divisions and barriers, and to ensure individual isolation." He concludes:

> As the primary exponents of this sterile self-protection, the confession magazines cannot be dismissed as just another stream of popular trash, as the epitome of preferred bad art. They reveal a significant popular need for yet another soporific: a literature that can defuse the imagination, dismiss emotion, and ultimately leave the reader disarmed, unable to face his very self or to cope with the unknown—his own existence.

The artist's diagnosis, whether personal or social, is *always* more searching than political analysis for the reason that the artist penetrates to levels where politics is impotent. The kind of thing represented by these magazines is simply the exploitive use of human beings—access to them being gained through their weaknesses, and any society which maintains its external form through manipulation of one sort or another will depend upon the weaknesses in people as the means of control. Solzhenitsyn's novels provide other illustrations of the same process.

We said that discussion would be "brief." The reason for brevity is the complexity of such matters. Here we have gathered only a few of the raw materials in which the real problems of society and the individual lie embedded. This is certainly true of our final quotations, which are from the same issue (Spring) of the *American Scholar*. Considering three novels on anarchism—*Princess Casamassima* by Henry

James, *Secret Agent* by Conrad, and *The Possessed* by Dostoevsky—Robert Langbaum shows that since Communism now rules a third of the world and is regarded as a rival imperialism, there is opportunity to see the meaning of the anarchist movement, which Communism had overshadowed, in a clearer light. One needs, of course, to have read these novels to get the most from Mr. Langbaum's article, but his general comments are independently valuable. He says, for example:

> The best political novels seem to emerge from the conservative critique of radicalism rather than the other way around. The reason may be that in the West, the conservative side has not, since the dissolution of the Christian monarchical system, represented any burning idealism—although there have been sporadic and spurious attempts to revive such a conservative idealism, most recently in fascism and nazism, Dostoevsky differs from Western novelists in that he could still look to Russian Orthodoxy as an alternative idealism. But even in Dostoevsky, the political interest lies in his critique of *radical* idealism and in the fact that his most intelligent, energetic characters are susceptible to this new idealism from the West. The radical attack on conservatism, as in Dreiser, turns into an expose of rotten conditions without much moral complexity and ambiguity. This is good for political action, since the reader is confirmed in the antiestablishment convictions with which he starts. The conservative attack on radicalism, however makes for better literature because the reader, who is assumed to be a liberal, has to be brought round less to a condemnation of the radical idealism he starts by admiring, than to an awareness of its dangers and complexities, of what happens when it comes into conflict with human motives and passions.

Mr. Langbaum's final observation is this:

> The lesson for the radical intellectuals is that politics cannot subsume the whole world, that politics is a part of something larger and that politics turns, when it touches other realms of value, into something else. These novels can lead to political understanding and even to right political action by demonstrating the limits of politics. They suggest that radicals must not try to politicalize the other realms of value but must operate politically with the other realms of value in mind if they are not to lose in the fervor of action and the rigidities of ideology their original aims born in those other realms: if they are not in the end to confess like one of Dostoevsky's revolutionaries, "I started out with the idea of unrestricted freedom and I have arrived at unrestricted despotism."

COMMENTARY
LEARNING FROM HISTORY

FROM time to time it is remarked in these pages that the young seem to have no sense of history, and we have suggested that this may be both a good and a bad thing—good in that to be free of history is not to feel its psychological confinements, and bad because lack of continuity with the past makes it almost impossible not to repeat its most costly mistakes. Yet some of the young are extremely quick-witted and intelligent, and although led by their isolation from history to think that they are doing things that have never been done before (really "making" 'history as they go along), at the same time there is so strong a sense of reality in what they say that you forgive the naïveté—first, because they seem humorously conscious of it, and, second, because they are so vividly aware of the immediate lessons in what they have been through.

For example, there is this from Ray Mungo's *Famous Long Ago* (see Review):

> We are reliving the last days of the movement; we are watching the movement die. Don't be alarmed—every winter has its spring. What we called "the movement," which started out as a peace-living opposition to slavery, racism, and war, has become an enslaving, racist, civil war of its own; in short, it died. Many of the people still active in the new movement are in reality dead men, killed off by bitterness and frustration and the unceasing attention of your television cameras. But many others have made the transition from the dying thing into a new living alternative which is trying once again to save the world—save the planet, in fact. This New Age defies our attempts to put it down in print, "no sound ever comes from the gates of Eden." So you and I, dear friend, are pounding the streets of New Babylon for the last time, . . . reliving the awful assassinations; we're closing the book on the 1960s, and good riddance to all that's striving after wind.
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> Here's a lesson I honestly believe I learned in my lifetime: ideals cannot be institutionalized. You cannot put your ideals into practice so to speak, in any way more "ambitious" than through your own private life. Ideals, placed in the context of a functioning business enterprise (such as the government, SDS, or LNS) become distorted into ego trips. . . . LNS goes through ideological splits, the *Los Angeles Free Press* installs a punch clock, the *Berkeley Barb* becomes two warring editions, and everybody commits himself/herself to a life of hassle and strife. And all toward goals which seem further away the closer we get to them—goals like peace and justice and freedom. Add to that what Paul Goodman called "the psychology of powerlessness"—our absolute frustration at being unable to change the world using the conventional methods of politics and violence—and it's easy to see why the underground press died too.

It doesn't matter much how people reach such conclusions—so long as they reach them and know why.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SCIENCE AT ANTIOCH

READERS who recall the frustrations which confronted Garrett De Bell when he wanted to broaden the base of his studies at the University of California to include areas essential to work in ecology, and remember the French architectural student's inability to visit the medical library for material outside her "field," will be gratified to learn that there are at least some institutions of learning which are deliberately moving in the opposite direction. *Antioch Notes* for February tells about the changes that have been instituted in the teaching of science at that college. The report is by Albert B. Stewart, professor of physics.

Five years ago Antioch experienced a notable drop in the number of students who wanted to take science courses. This seemed to reflect what the writer calls "a growing public ambivalence toward the place of science." Reasons: "Its reputation had been sullied by pollution, defoliants, pesticides, weapons; and its objective basis has been denied as an appropriate way of looking at the world." Yet the need for scientific understanding, Prof. Stewart says, remained. Accordingly, the teaching of science was transformed. Study programs initiated by students were welcomed, and student instructors under faculty sponsorship became policy. The faculty members began supporting instead of directing student activity. Further: "The faculty adopted a policy for interdisciplinary majors across academic areas as well as among the sciences."

Grades were eliminated. Instead, the faculty evaluated student performance in detail, "granting or denying credit in terms of explicit objectives for each course." This had the effect of encouraging students to take science courses without fear of a lowered grade-point average. In consequence of these changes, enrollment in the sciences increased. The greatest gain was in the biological sciences, with concentration on those relating to the environment.

A grant from the Sloan Foundation made possible the development of a variety of innovative courses and projects:

> Courses were invented such as Science and Experience, East and West (which reawakened interest in scientific modes of explanation as complementary to other ways of knowing) Global Crises (problems of population, poverty, and resources); Science of Photography; Stringed Instrument Construction; courses in human ecology and environments, and computer-related courses. A workshop in basic mathematics was offered each quarter.

Student origination of courses was particularly encouraged:

> For example, in 1969 several students sought to study the relation of man to the land in Mendocino County, California, an area changing from lumbering and ranching to recreation vacation, and retirement use. The students also wanted more courses that dealt holistically with relations between man and environment. The students, led by Roy Crystal, designed a course in Human Ecology, using a broad study of Mendocino County among other field-collected materials. They alerted other students to ecological problems in other regions, where they would be working under Antioch's work-study plan, as preparation for the course.

In consequence of the success of the course which grew out of these investigations, a pre-architectural student made a related course proposal which emphasized the role of structures, especially living structures, in the human environment. This student spent three quarters in the field gathering material for such a course, and the college responded, after he graduated, by adding an architect and environmental designer to the faculty. The outcome of this multi-faceted program has been a rapid expansion of interest in science among Antioch students.

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Farley Mowat's *Owls in the Family* is a story for children about a family that learned to endure about as many wild "pets" as the Woodin family, which lived on a desert forty acres in Arizona, not far from Tucson. The Woodins had four boys whose cherished livestock included snakes, tarantulas and

bobcats. Mowat's tale, although about an imaginary family, is nonetheless based on life since he had the same variety of pets himself when he was a boy in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, which is also the scene of his story. The animals in the story include horned owls, gophers, white rats, snakes, and pigeons.

Bill, who tells the story, has a buddy named Bruce, and the two boys resolve to capture a horned owl to add to their menagerie. This means finding a young one still confined to the nest, and adult horned owls frown on all such enterprises. The boys went out on the prairie, which starts suddenly at the edge of the town, looking for owls' nests, and finally found one high in a cottonwood poplar. They thought it would be good to have some help, and enlisted the aid of a willing teacher, but the teacher was almost knocked out of the tree by the mother owl's aggressions, or rather defensive activities. The teacher, an ardent naturalist, decided to build an observation platform opposite the owl's nest, in a neighboring tree, and the boys helped him. He put up a tent on the platform, making a hole in the canvas through which to point a camera at the nest. Again the owl aggressed, and the teacher was glad to escape with no broken bones. The two boys and the teacher went home, leaving the trio of young owls in the nest, safely guarded by their now furious mother.

A couple of weeks later a fierce chinook blew down from the Canadian Rockies, and during the night Bill could hear the branches of trees snapping along the riverbank. The next day—a Saturday—the boys went to inspect the platform next to the owls' nest, and found it gone, and the nest, too. Two small owls lay dead at the bottom of the tree. Where was the third? Bill found it, still alive, under a pile of brush. It was sodden from the rain the night before, and miserable. It had survived, probably because it was the oldest of the three young owls. Owls lay their eggs in March, a few days apart, and the mother keeps setting until all are hatched, so that the first egg laid hatches first. This owlet had a headstart on the others, and was bigger and stronger, so it survived the storm. It was almost all white, with a few black markings on the ends of the wings. Although only half grown, the little owl was about the size of a chicken. A full-grown horned owl has a wingspread of five feet! The boys had some meat sandwiches, and after a little coaxing the owl ate them, first the meat and then the bread.

When Bill had first announced his quest for an owl, his father groaned, "Oh NO! Not owls too!" So Bill didn't dare bring the owl into the house. He put him in the little summerhouse, where some forty gophers had lived in sole charge of the place. The coming of the owl ended their sovereignty, since owls eat gophers, hair, nails, and all, coughing up the indigestible parts later.

Bill's father had a change of heart after considering the owl's splendid potential as a gopher-eater. "Better count your gophers, Billy," he said.

But the owl was well fed, and never did eat any gophers, although the gophers behaved according to their age-old instincts and scurried away from Wol—the name for the young bird that Bill had borrowed from *Winnie-the-Pooh.*

There is a lot of sneaky natural history in this book, things you don't mind learning at all. Wol discovered how to fly, even without any Mommie to guide him, although the other little owl, one which Bill bought from an older boy with his scout knife, wasn't able to.

Pleasant and amusing things happen to Bill, and many exploits are performed by Wol, such as intimidating all the mean dogs in the neighborhood, and doing away with a cat that was the bane of the birds in the area. Even though learning to love owls may be too much to expect from even a fine book by Farley Mowat, he certainly wins for them the complete respect of the reader.

FRONTIERS

Land Reform—a Growing Movement

MANY people suppose that "land reform" is appropriate only for countries like Mexico, India, Vietnam, and other areas with large peasant populations, but an impressive case can be made for land reform in the United States. Involved is a fresh study of the economic history of the country from a point of view that goes behind commonly accepted assumptions.

Take for example the rapid development of black ghettoes in northern cities. Much of the crowding in the ghettoes was caused by the mechanization of agriculture in the Deep South. According to an article in *Fortune* for August 1968, more than a million Blacks migrated northward between 1958 and 1968—not because they wanted to, but because there was no longer any work for them in the South. There's not much work in the North, either, especially since they are untrained, but there's nothing for them in the South. If they had some land, they'd farm. Many of them like to farm, and are good at it, but they have no land, and no money to buy it.

Another, more complicated approach to the land question starts by tracing to its origins the idea of private ownership of the land. This is practically a sacred idea in America mainly because the first settlers of the continent left Europe to become independent of the claims of feudal landlords. For the farmer colonists, owning and working one's land was equivalent to salvation. The Homestead Act of 1862 reflected this attitude. But in terms of historical time, the United States made a very rapid transition from an agricultural to an industrial economy, and from a rural to an urban nation, and then, as Edgardo Contini says in the February 1972 *Futurist*, "the social significance of private land ownership became, to a large degree, a cover for extracting speculative profits from the pressures of urbanization."

In *The Community Land Trust—a Guide to a New Model for Land Tenure in America* (Center for Community Economic Development, 1878 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02140), Robert Swann points out that the easy accumulation of capital through private exploitation of the land and its resources was partly responsible for the quick industrialization of the United States. Actually, had this development proceeded more slowly, the country would have had a more peaceful history. And there might have been a better understanding of man's relationship with the land. In any event, we know, now, that the excesses of industrialization are responsible for a long list of social problems whose solutions promise to be very difficult, chiefly because of the extensive involvement of both capital and peoples' lives in processes and structures that now require radical reform.

Robert Swann writes in the Introduction to *The Community Land Trust:*

> World conditions have obviously changed, and America not the least among them. The system of private ownership of land that led to high productivity and personal independence one hundred years ago has become a major source of economic and social inequity. Private ownership of land is increasingly translated into corporate ownership, and, despite the increase in private homeownership, ever more land is being held in relatively fewer hands. Middle-income families, as they attempt to purchase their homes, are forced to pay inflated prices, and the poor, as always, are almost totally excluded.
>
> Today's poverty, unemployment, and urban misery are in no small part due to the thoughtless malappropriation of rural land which has taken place at an ever-increasing pace over the past century and a half. Profligate and ruinous landbuying and settlement practices have resulted in a monopoly-owned development pattern in the South and West that has not been altered in the last century—except to replace family ownership of many large tracts of land by corporate ownership.

The most feasible avenue to change, open today, Swann says, is the community land trusts—under which the community itself will hold the land in trust and make it available for use to those

who want to live on and to work the land. A community land trust has opportunity to exert influence in the direction of sound ecological practice and longterm common benefits, being free of either acquisitive or political motivations. Swann points out that long before the Roman system of land tenure, out of which the present system of ownership has grown, the communal holding of the land in trust was a universal practice. The American Indians, as Stewart Udall has said, had a "stewardship approach" to the land. "It was incomprehensible to the Indian that one person should have exclusive possession of parts of the earth." In Mexico the traditional *ejido* system once prevailed, under which commonly owned land was worked by the Indians under "use-rights." A similar practice once prevailed in Africa—a system lately restored in Tanzania by Premier Nyerere. For thousands of years, until 221 B.C., the land of China was held by the Government and distributed as widely as possible to users.

So, there are other "sacred" traditions concerning the land and the holding of it, which may be more appropriate to present-day needs.

Ideas along these lines are beginning to take hold. Late in 1971 a group of people from diverse backgrounds joined to form the National Coalition for Land Reform, with headquarters at 126 Hyde Street, San Francisco, Calif. 94102, and offices in Massachusetts at the same address as the Center for Community Economic Development. This group challenges the claim that only large farmers can be "efficient." At the time of the formation of the Coalition, a grape farmer in Fresno County declared: "The large farmer farms the government more efficiently than I do, but my own labor is more efficiently used and I can afford any equipment the large farmer can use. I don't get the subsidies the large farmer gets." Among the organizers of the Coalition were representatives of small landowners, black and Spanish-speaking farm workers, and youthful conservationists.

Persons wishing to be kept posted on the progress of the land reform movement might write to the International Independence Institute, West Road, Box 183, Ashby, Mass. 01431, for a copy of its newsletter. Robert Swann is director of the Institute. The price of *The Community Land Trust* manual is $3.50.