

## A SENSE OF DIRECTION

THERE are passages in prose (and poetry) which go to the heart of some matter so effectively, that after reading them, we pause in reflective awe. The words, we say, ring with truth. The world is filled with truths, along with a great variety of untruths, the two so closely packed that they jostle each other, but *this* truth speaks to our condition. It helps us to climb to the height of our times—or our life, as the case may be. An epoch or age might be best characterized by the family of truths which the people are then engaged in discovering. But to define those truths—how can we identify them? We cannot compare them with tomorrow's truths, as yet unimagined, nor have we the terms for doing it. Only the past affords the contrasts needed for definition, and then of course whatever we say will be open at one end. We feel our way.

What is the making of a truth? It is the rendering into objectivity of something which before had been only a wondering, a yearning. But this process, to continue to be useful, should remain incomplete. Finality must not take possession. We walk on finality, since it is stable and will support our explorations. So the halfway houses of truth make the real invitation. They consolidate the energies of our minds, not the terrain. The road, as Cervantes said, is better than the inn.

The truths we care about and live by are all psychological. And when the other truths—the arrangements we have made for practical purposes—begin to twist, crack, and crumble, the psychological truths we reach out for are those concerned with the meaning of disaster. We are served with disaster, heaped up . . . and is there, then, a part of disaster that is not disaster? Something not "final" in what is happening to us? Except for metaphysical schemes this is all that we can ask of the disclosure of some "new" truth—acceptable assurance that openings into the future still exist. . . . Is the Phoenix really reborn from its own ashes? If a man die, will he live again? Can

Zeus and Prometheus ever be friends? If the owl of wisdom rises only as the sun of empire sets, what counsels might it utter in all this shambles?

These are fine old images which have given encouragement to past generations, summing up the light that was in the air. But truth, if it really is truth, needs episodic reincarnation. It is the currency of our inner lives.

What seems still the best example of a seminal truth for our time—a time of delusion and trouble—is a passage from Ortega's *The Revolt of the Masses*:

The man with the clear head is the man who frees himself from those fantastic "ideas" and looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic, and feels himself lost. And this is the simple truth—that to live is to feel oneself lost—he who accepts it has already begun to find himself, to be on firm ground. Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look around for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere because it is a question of his salvation, will cause him to bring order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce. He who does not really feel himself lost is lost without remission; that is to say, he never finds himself, never comes up against his own reality.

Is salvation then some kind of salvage operation? Something to be distilled only from disaster? Can we console ourselves with the idea that the once-born are at least able to become the twice-born? When we use such language we realize that Ortega's conception of salvation is far from new. In a symposium last year, recalling Plato's allegory of the Cave, and speaking of the shadows on the wall which the inhabitants of the cave mistook for reality, Jacob Needleman said:

Of course, . . . other teachings say that I too am one of the shadows. Until I can see that, I too have an illusion about myself. This insight is not fun, it hurts a great deal. In the Buddhist training there is an aspect of the training which is intellectual preparation, but ultimately there comes a shattering

or difficult experience, when one has to separate one's self-image from what one is. This is always difficult; it's always a trial. We tend to see the scientific intellectual parallels with some of the teachings of the mystics, but the personal transformation that is spoken of as being the whole main idea of, say Buddhism, may tend to get set aside. One needs to remember that these ideas of, say, Buddhist cosmology, are meant to be . . . instruments for breaking down the egoistic illusions. So it's not for the sake of knowing but for the sake of *being* that these teachings exist. If that's understood then science might be very useful. But science has a completely different end, a completely different goal than these other systems which are for the sake of breaking your heart, a way of breaking the hold that your illusions have on you. (*Journal of Transpersonal Psychology*, Vol. 10, No. 2.)

The two quotations give an interesting comparison. Ortega makes you *feel* something of the disaster which precedes the light, while Needleman fits the experience into a scheme of analysis-synthesis of human development, providing it second-degree (intellectual) objectivity, then says that it's also "a terrific emotional thing." The concomitant question, *What shall I do?*, is more likely to come after reading Ortega. He captures the feeling of "wild surmise," an element of self-recognition in the midst of disaster. But Needleman helps us to generalize our grasp of what takes place.

There are various levels of this ordeal. An English psychiatrist, Alan McGlashan—a man who has been an air force pilot, a sailor, and a country doctor—tells of two patients who have had "this annihilating, all-cancelling experience," which the doctor has found to be uncommon and not a thing people want to describe. In *The Savage and Beautiful Country* (Houghton Mifflin, 1967) he says:

One of these cases was a Surrey cowman, an illiterate farmhand, who came to me many years ago, hesitantly, and said—"It isn't that I'm *ill*, doctor, but I get the queerest, damndest feeling sometimes, for no cause at all. Last time was in the middle of Guildford Cattle Market. Suddenly the notion came over me that all this—the animals, the farmers and their dogs, the smells, the noise, the sunshine—was just silly, empty, made no sense. My life, and everyone's life, somehow went blank. There wasn't no point in going on. . . . It didn't seem 'ardly right, doctor, to feel that way, so I thought I'd pop in and see you. Mind you, it

doesn't last long—in a few minutes I'm meself again. . . . I suppose it's nothing, really."

The other case was of a housewife who would now and then be overcome by the feeling "that life was void and meaningless, that (to use her own words) 'the whole world with its swarms of living creatures was like a great lump of putrefying meat, crawling with maggots, fit only for some cosmic dustbin.'" Dr. McGlashan comments:

These two experiences, I suggest, are at the opposite pole to the state of what is called "illumination"—for want of a better name. I am not unaware that both of them, especially the second, fall into the category known to psychiatric medicine as Recurrent Depression. Having characterized such experiences as pathological, psychiatry is free to concentrate on their treatment, and absolved from considering their tremendous implications. But can we be so sure that there is nothing beyond the pathological in these chilling and nihilistic visions? By the principle of "honoring the opposites" we may regard them as valid glimpses of one aspect of Reality, not merely as distortions of a sick mind.

What would follow from this? Could it be that the state of illumination, momentarily experienced by many, lived in by the mystic, is not an ultimate—as it so convincingly appears to be—but one pole only of a total experience? An ultimate experience of this kind, unimaginable at our present level of awareness, would include and transcend both the state of illumination with its brilliant immediacy and overflowing significance and the annihilating abyss of the Void. Such an experience demands nothing less than an increase in the range of human consciousness.

Can there be a historical or cultural use of this way of thinking? Dr. McGlashan seems to think so:

The foul historical fact of Auschwitz, the timeless moment of illumination . . . such overwhelming glimpses of darkness and light serve only to reveal our dilemma and to expose the terrifying nature of that primeval forest of opposites in which almost the whole human race, like pygmies in an African jungle, has lived and died, groping among the gigantic tangled roots and lianas of good and evil. To dream of complete escape is an illusion, the dear fantasy of salvationists. But it is possible that an expansion of human consciousness could provide a compass, could give man the greatest gift of sublunary existence—a sense of direction within the dark forest.

What good will all our science be if our sense of direction is amiss? The question is apt, if tiresomely familiar. Much of our science is skillful and exact—so much so that we have made its method and requirements the canon of our lives and the yardstick of our knowledge. And this is the reason that science, in the nature of things, cannot lead us out of any wilderness, but must, if relied upon for truth, create the tangles that sometimes require a major disaster to set us free. It is the visionary, the dreamer, the poet and artist who alone can set us free. (Figuratively.) And so we have another passage of the truth which belongs to our time. This is from an article by Wylie Sypher in the *American Scholar* for the winter of 1967-68, in which the writer frames exquisitely something said by Gaston Bachelard in his *Poetics of Space*:

The images of art are unpredictable and unrepeatable, and thus liberating. They validate the instant. The artistic response is an unexpected increase of life, a surprise that keeps consciousness from becoming "somnolent" or routine. The poet, then, has a privilege which the scientist, as scientist, must forego: the poet's world is forever new. His recognitions may be disturbing, for they are not yet crystallized into explanations. We hardly need to be reminded of Keats's spatial experience in first reading Chapman's Homer:

Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken.

This first time the astronomer feels his wild surmise he is a poet, and the poetry in science is this instant of revelation or epiphany. Then his discovery must be reduced before it is reliable science. So Bachelard describes science as a way of organizing our disappointments under the guise of knowledge. Knowledge in scientific form is coherent disillusion, a sacrifice of discoveries to concepts and systems, a loss of epiphany.

What are we, then, before "concepts and systems" involve us in their toils? Are we naked in the light, as with Ortega's shipwrecked man? Does the poet keep some of this nakedness? Do we all have it somewhere in our being, and in magical moments feel the unclothed, unhampered release? And sometimes see horrors, sometimes delights? Is it possible to go beyond both, as the psychiatrist suggests?

How vague and uncertain this is! Yet such are the windings of human longing, the shimmerings of a consciousness not yet ours. And what these writers say seems filled with the resonances of knowledge and truth: not actually "knowledge" and "truth," but its resonances.

Again, this is no new idea. As Lao tse has said:

Tao in itself is vague, impalpable—how impalpable, how vague! Yet within it there is Form. How vague, how impalpable! Yet within it there is Substance. How profound, how obscure! Yet within it there is a Vital Principle. This principle is the Quintessence of Reality, and out of it comes Truth.

We cannot leave the matter here. As Lao tse also said: "With music and dainties we may detain the passing guest. But if we open our mouths to speak of Tao, he finds it tasteless and insipid." Meanwhile sight of the dark abyss—the hell that is balanced by illumination—detains the psychiatric diagnostician as Recurrent Depression, while its opposite may be promptly labeled Satori by other specialists. Is it that the void remains the Void unless we fill it from ourselves, and have the wherewithal for this?

There are other levels of disaster to be considered. In *Resurgence* for January-February this year, John Seymour considers the question put by a coal miner to the people who had gathered to hear the Schumacher lectures last fall. What should *he* be doing? was what the miner wanted to know. His version of disaster:

"I come from a coal-mining village in the North of England and the mine of which is threatened with closure. When the mine is closed there will be nothing for anybody to do. At the moment everybody is making a lot of money and all are able to go to the Costa Brava [Mediterranean resort] every year and ride in aeroplanes. Previously they all worked long hours at a hard, dirty, and dangerous job for starvation wages—if *they were lucky*. I came here hoping that you intellectuals were going to tell me what we ought to be doing and what we should do in the future. I have heard no such instructions."

Mr. Seymour is an articulate man. He thinks the miner deserves an answer, but first he explains the difficulties:

Here are people, whose ancestors were ripped from their land by the Enclosures, and forced underground into the mines, whose own early memories are of wretched poverty and unemployment, now told that the industry they have grown up in and that is *now* providing them with at least some of the knick-knacks and gew-gaws of fairly wealthy people is going to close down and they are all going to be thrown out on a contracting labour market, and here we are, we intellectual eco-conscious middle classics, telling them that the gew-gaws are in any case all wrong, and that they should go back to the land (which they couldn't do anyway because it's all owned by rich people) and lead simple lives. Or something like that. . . .

Well—we eco-freaks can play the game of pure political expediency and tell the rest of the world whatever Machiavellian lies will make them behave in the way that we wish them to behave. Like telling the coal miners to oppose nuclear power because it will do them out of a job. Or, we can be completely honest and tell them what we *really* believe and what we *really* think they ought to do—irrespective of whether we think there is the slightest chance of their taking our advice.

So, finally, this is what Mr. Seymour decided to say to the coal miner:

You are a man just as I am and your real interests are identical to mine. You and I are both the product of evolutionary forces on this planet which have bred us to wish to survive and wish our posterity to survive and do all we can to ensure its survival. No weekly pay packet—no matter how enormous—no flying to Costa Brava is going to ensure the welfare of our posterity if what we are doing is contributing towards destroying life on this planet. . . . After all—if Yorkshire coal miners have the right to fly about like this—why should that right be denied to Indonesian peasants? . . .

Enjoy your jet-set holidays if you want to while you can, but remember that this way of life *cannot last*. The planet just has not got the resources inside it and on it to sustain it. And even if it could last—it is stupid, superficial, and ultimately boring. . . .

If we are not to have the Costa Brava and the colour telly and the three-piece drawing room suites, and the Cortina in every garage and all the rest of it, then we must have something else to compensate for all that. And I submit we can have something else—very much better. We can build, here in England and Wales and Scotland and Eire, a paradise on earth—such a country as people will not want to keep

flipping out of in jet aeroplanes, such a country as will make a man or a woman contented enough to be able to stay happily in the place where he lives without constantly wishing to dash to some other place or drug himself with television. We will not go back to the past. You cannot do that. This is the present and you can only go into the future. But is it to be a future of frightful boredom alleviated by anodynes on an increasingly devastated and polluted planet or is it to be a future of wholeness and good balance—good balance between town and country, countries and cities and governments of an humane size that we who are human can feel happy and comfortable in because these are of an human scale, simple living but high thinking, and the real, deep enjoyment that comes from living as we were evolved or created to live. . . .

Well, John Seymour is doing the best he can, telling about disaster and what might replace it, but the effect must be very different from that of the second sight of the Surrey farm hand Dr. McGlashan describes, and different, also, from the stark awakening of the idealized man of Ortega, who suffers shipwreck and *knows* that the time has come when he must make a new start.

The psychiatrist writes of certain resonances which are in nature, and in the nature of man, and Ortega does the same, although he has no case histories to report, but only the fruit of a ranging imagination, which might mean that he had been through that experience of "shipwreck" himself.

Conceivably, our arguments and pleadings will have but little effect until they begin to be matched by the resonances produced by nature. This might be a truth of preternatural—not abnormal—psychology. Meanwhile we do what we can, trying to get ourselves and others ready to recognize such experiences, preparing a matrix that will put us on notice that the horror is not all horror, the delight not all delight. This may be the frontier realization required in our time, to protect us from easy intoxication and to make us tough-minded against despair. Call it, then, a sense of direction, since all the rest is but figures and sums.

## *REVIEW* ON MENTAL HEALTH

BOOKS about psychotherapy are often a puzzle to this department. They are involved in a vocabulary which makes the reader feel ignorant—or on the outside of what is discussed—and usually we leave those books alone. Exceptions would be the works of Fromm, Homey, Maslow, and May, which are not without technical vocabulary, but the words appear in a way that makes them useful instead of opaque. One cannot of course deny a special branch of inquiry the right or need to develop a special language. Mathematics requires its signs, chemistry its symbols, and biology its various forms of shorthand. All these terms, over the years, enrich ordinary language.

But one wonders if the actual wisdom garnered through psychotherapy might not have existed for centuries in the literature, folklore and proverbs of past generations. Finding these insights reborn in the special language of psychotherapy may give us a sense of discovery—and of having distinctive troubles all our own, not known in the past, by reason of our great complexity as modern human beings. For reasons plain from the history of religion, we wanted to get rid of "morality," so that modern psychology started out with neutral language, enabling us to study ourselves without guilty embarrassments. There is now a furtive return to moral ideas, expressive of feelings based on individual intuitions of the good instead of religious tradition. We speak of autonomy instead of heresy, authenticity instead of, and self-actualization instead of fidelity.

That is one side of the equation. The other gives learnedly servile attention to the status quo as though the exceptions, being statistically few, do not count. Here writers and literateurs are more useful than psychologists. They seem more sensitive to cultural rhythms and changes. For

example, Saul Bellow, in his Nobel Prize address, said:

Essay after essay, book after book . . . maintain . . . the usual things about mass society, dehumanization, and the rest. How weary we are of them. How poorly they represent us. The pictures they offer no more resemble us than we resemble the reconstructed reptiles and other monsters in a museum of paleontology. We are much more limber, versatile, better articulated; there is much more to us; we all feel it.

Is there nothing in us that can make things come out right? This is a way of asking: Do we need to rethink the whole question of what is meant by coming out right? In the *Summer Hudson Review*, Clara Claiborne Park compares tragedy and comedy, showing that an adjustment to some level of reality may be all that is involved in a genuine "happy ending." She says:

The tragic poets were fascinated by the Antigones and Creons, who will die—or kill rather than disguise what they are or compromise what they are sure they know. The comic vision contemplates and celebrates the reverse. These are the characters who have all the luck, who are happy-accident-prone. Comedy shows us how they make their luck. If Shakespeare, in his late comedies, affirms the mythic vision of restoration, his earlier comedies, as Hugh Richmond has shown, interest themselves in the flexibility, adaptability the willingness to climb down from pre-established positions that is necessary to earn happy endings. It is the quality that Richard Wilbur has noted in Moliere's comedies, of those who respond to life and do not coerce it.

This seems close to the core of mental health. How do the dramatists know it? And how do people, "patients," absorb such lessons? Are therapists better at teaching than story-tellers? Such questions may have no answers, since life seems now to coerce us into a nervous selfconsciousness, by reason of the elaborate abstractions we have come to identify as "knowledge." Yet all this artificial language of the psychotherapists may one day dissolve into the responsive action we need to learn, and then be forgotten. How nice it will be no longer to have to speak sententiously of all such things!

Meanwhile Clara Park makes this reproach to neurotic vanity:

It is a grand claim we make when we reject happy endings; that we are very special, that whatever songs previous ages could sing, in our terrible century all success is shallow and illusory, all prosperity a fairy tale; that the only responses to our world which can command adult assent are compulsive ironies and cries of pain, that the world which seems to lie before us like a world of dreams, so various and so beautiful, so new, hash, in short, really neither joy nor love nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain, and we are here as on a darkling plain waiting for Godot. But what is true enough when recognized as half the story rings counterfeit when it aggrandizes the whole. Since misery loves company, it will find it. But second-hand misery is as inauthentic as second-hand cheerfulness, and far less attractive. It used to be possible to laugh at melancholy Jacques.

Are there people who know the whole story—who have the basic symmetries in their lives and work? Probably so, but can we recognize them, or do we need to have the balances stepped down to the level of our current illusions or disproportions? Therapists, that is, to be successful, may need to be somewhat involved in the going illusions simply in order to communicate with the total captives who are mentally ill. Those who know the whole story might be too olympian for this.

The good writer has a foot in both camps. Clara Park speaks of Georg Lukacs, whom she calls a "gallant and sensitive Marxist."

He writes impatiently of the gift for misery of the modern existential-hero, "basically solitary. . . , constitutionally unable to establish relationships with things or persons outside himself." . . . He castigates the glorification of the pathological which is now everywhere around us, as "distortion becomes the normal condition of human existence . . . the formative principle of art and literature." He sees in Kafka and Beckett, for all their marvelous inventiveness, an apotheosis of impotence and paralysis, which makes "the denial of history, of development the mark of true insight into the nature of reality." And when "the static nature of reality and the senselessness of its surface phenomena" are accepted as "absolute truths requiring no proof," "*angst* becomes supreme." . . . "The question," for

Lukacs, "is not: is x present in reality? But rather: does x represent the whole of reality?"

Then, in a passage which Clara Park quotes, Lukacs speaks as the timeless therapist, whether for civilization and the arts or for the disturbed or distraught individual:

What counts is the personal decision. . . . : acceptance or rejection of *angst*. Ought *angst* to be taken as an absolute or ought it to be overcome? Should it be considered one reaction among others, or should it become the determinant of the *condition humaine*? These are not primarily, of course, literary questions—they relate to a man's behavior and experience of life. The crucial question is whether a man escapes from the life of his time into a realm of abstraction—it is there that *angst* is engendered in human consciousness or confronts modern life determined to fight its evils and support what is good in it.

The schizophrenic is one who has become "constitutionally unable to establish relationships with things or persons outside himself," and has made the resulting *angst* into "an absolute." What is to be done with or for such an individual?

In *Reparenting Schizophrenics* (Christopher Publishing House, 1979, \$12.95) Elaine Childs-Gowell tells about the work of Jacqui Schiff, a woman who has established centers in California (near Oakland) for helping schizophrenics to have fresh childhoods in which balance is restored to relationships whose distortion in life were at least partly responsible for their ills. Foremost in these efforts (within the therapeutic family) is the return of the patients to *personal decision*. In this book all the varieties of avoiding personal decision are given names, and people who want to recover their health are shown how to become conscious of what they have done to escape decision, and what they can do now, to confront and deal with the everyday choices in life. The method is taken from Eric Berne's Transactional school of analysis, with emphasis on Cathexis. Cathexis is a word of the sort that you have to look up whenever you come across it. Berne's definition is: "a concentration of energy on a given object; to put all one's energy into one ego state." Another

psychologist (Parsons) says that cathexis, "the attachment to objects which are gratifying and rejection of those which are noxious, lies at the root of the selective nature of action." This seems to mean that when you act, and don't evade the decision to act for reasons you figure out, you may be on the way to getting well. We have two impressions from this book: first, that people ready to try to heal themselves are getting well at the Cathexis community; and second, that this moderate success in dealing with the most difficult of all psychological ills is due to the intensity and strength of Jacqui Schiff, by all accounts an extraordinary human being who sets the standards of therapeutic work and, somewhat like Socrates, is able to help people to look into themselves.

Another book, also from Christopher House, is *Authoritarian Psychotherapy: Authoritarian Control Versus Individual Choice* (\$7.95) by Lucien A. Buck. This is a long and worthy polemic against therapeutic approaches which ignore the need for personal decision and define health as conformity to some scheme of pre-established standards. In this case only the therapist can "know" what health is and what the patient should do. The author says toward the end:

The primary purpose of psychotherapy should be the encouragement of the capacity for autonomy and free choice. In order to explore the ramifications of this goal, the authoritarian, manipulative technocratic values of Skinnerian psychology have been excavated. Rather than directing and reinforcing, it is possible to begin with the attitude that human beings are capable of choosing for themselves—in fact, the particular individual is the only one capable of choosing for him or herself. . . . It is destructive to offer "help," "cure," or "growth" while surreptitiously bootlegging authority in the guise of technical stratagems."

## *COMMENTARY*

### THE CONTENT OF MORALITY

ONE great question is posed by moral obligation: What needs to be done? Ethics gives the reasons, but morality presses the practical consideration—*What?* The question then divides in two. In all human situations there is the self and the relations with others. So the two-part question asks: What must or ought I do, whatever my circumstances and the obstacles or urging of others? and, What effect on others will result from what I do? Herbert Spencer put this second question well: What sort of social structure am I producing or contributing to?

These, then, are the basic questions presented by moral obligation. They are related, of course, but seem to require separate examination as well. The first question is usually a private inquiry, these days. Privacy assures freedom of conscience, and public discussion of individual obligation tends to produce oppressive moralizing. For this reason the records of psychotherapists acquire a particular value, sometimes revealing how people make up their minds. Carl Rogers relates in a paper of years ago:

I think of . . . a young woman graduate student who was deeply disturbed and on the borderline of a psychotic break. Yet after a number of interviews in which she talked very critically about all of the people who had failed to give her what she needed, she finally concluded: "Well, with that sort of foundation, it's really up to *me*. I mean it seems to be really apparent to me that I can't depend on someone else *to give* me an education." And then she added very softly: "I'll really have to get it myself." She goes on to explore this experience of important and responsible choice. She finds it a frightening experience and yet one which gives her a feeling of strength. A force seems to surge up in her which is big and strong, and yet she feels very much alone and sort of cut off from support. She adds: "I am going to do more things that I know how to do." And she did.

The social question, in contrast to the silence on private decision, is endlessly debated. Yet if more reflective attention were given to the moods and difficulties of private decision, the answer to

the social question might seem as plain as day. Obviously, a society in which more and more people are making more and more decisions for themselves would be a society with the right social structure for everyone. "Community" may be the best over-all definition of such a structure.



## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

### CHEERFUL PLACES IN OHIO

IT is one thing to read the mounting figures on juvenile delinquency, and quite another to read about the people who are meeting this problem in the only way that seems to work—establishing homes and halfway houses that have a family atmosphere and do not cut off the young people from normal community life. For insight into what this work involves and is like, we suggest a reading of (or a \$2 subscription to) *Betterway*, a paper issued every two months by Betterway Foundation, 700 Middle Avenue, Elyria, Ohio 44035.

It takes a special sort of person to do this work—to do it without discouragement by bureaucratic indifference and plain human cussedness. Tom Peters, the moving spirit in *Betterway*, has got going in Elyria The Beacon Home for Boys, The Ark Home for younger boys, up to fifteen (which is now co-ed because girls released from institutions often need this sort of haven, too), the Bridge Home for Men, an alternative school program, and a retail store called The Search Shop which sells local craft products, interesting odds and ends and the household articles people give, along with a line of religious goods (which was all the store handled when it was turned over to *Betterway* by its retiring owner). Tom Peters has been doing this kind of work in behalf of young people in trouble for most of his life. In the May-July issue he tells what it is presently like:

I am now interviewing most of the boys or girls in the detention homes or institutions who want to come to our homes. I am once again taking a more active role in the homes and enjoying it very much. This leaves less time for active meetings, but some were not necessary and won't be missed.

I have also been picking up many of the people after agreeing to have them come. To me, this is so much better than sending them on a bus across the state, or having them come with a stranger in a state

car making the rounds of institutions. We try to do everything we can to get to know a person quickly and to break down fear of a new place.

A month ago I picked up a girl at Scioto Village, Ohio's last remaining institution for girls. She has no family at all, and was crying as she left, saying how she would miss her friends, who were also crying. At some point on the ride home I asked her what was the happiest day of her life so far, and she said this day when she was getting out of the institution.

That is one of the strange puzzles of our work. She was happy to be leaving, she said, and crying much of the way, then nervous when we got into Elyria . . . how it would be, etc.

So many of the people we see have such mixed emotions about the experiences of life. Helping them sort it all out is one of our joys and tasks.

In past months I have been making trips to the prison at Lucasville (Ohio) and to some jails. Down at Lucasville I continue to see the young man described in a series in this paper, whom we named Ray T. Henley. Since my visit he was transferred to another prison, so my next stop will be in that location. He is now beginning to think of his future outside prison, since he may get paroled within the next year or so. He is seeking my advice and listening. Even though he has spent most of his juvenile and adult life locked up, I will continue to work with him to find answers. He is 26 years old now. He was with us at fifteen and twenty-three. . . .

Tom Peters has interesting things to say about the prisons he has visited.

I also continue to enjoy my visits with the superintendent there (at Lucasville). Our tasks are at opposite ends, yet we have much in common. He runs a place to keep people confined and isolated but living together as smoothly as possible. Our program works with the very same people to help them maintain freedom in the community, and also live together as smoothly as possible. . . . We strongly support the move to close the juvenile institutions in Ohio, keeping eventually one or two for young people who would be dangerous for the community. I hope this does not produce a rash of local communities building secure facilities to lock kids up just the same as now. In some states, even difficult youngsters are kept in secure group homes rather than institutions or detention homes. Kids in Ohio cannot be worse than

kids in other places. We just haven't created the alternatives that other states have.

The contents of *Betterway* are mostly stories—life stories—of the youngsters who have come there for help, and stories about life in the Betterway homes established in Elyria. One article tells about "Tom," who began living in an institution at the age of thirteen months, when he was left there by his grandparents. Unable to care for so young a child, they turned him over to a state agency. Now, eighteen years later, he is starting his life again at Betterway.

Tom has been in six juvenile institutions at various times. He lived with two foster families and experienced two prisons. He dealt with an uncountable number of counselors, caseworkers, policemen, judges, doctors, and foster relatives. He had to face tests, medical examinations, psychiatric exams, and court judgments. And he kept asking why he was being here and there, but nobody told him.

At the Beacon we hope to help Tom understand his past a little (including his penchant for stealing cars and other things), and help him achieve his goals of a job, apartment, and some savings of money. He is more relaxed and doesn't seem afraid. He wants to follow up an interest in printing and video technology which he developed in the last institution.

We will help him to find a place to live, hold a good job. We will follow up on him to see if he is doing all right. We hope Tom has "arrived home."

Tom is only one of the ten new boys at the Beacon. There was almost a complete change in the house as school ended and boys were able to go to relatives or foster homes, leaving openings for all the new boys.

The Ark began as a home for younger boys, which didn't work very well, but putting older boys with the younger ones seemed to help. Betterway also needed a haven or home for girls, so the Ark acquired a woman administrator who had raised over twenty foster children, Judy Haputa, who reports:

This ship is a little different from most group homes, and I'm trying to use some of my foster parent experiences to make a go of this home for both Betterway and the beautiful young women and men.

We are trying to create an atmosphere of family living. Everyone has to share equally with household duties. I expect all my children to respect their elders, to tell the truth, and to respect others.

We have all been working on a fifteen-foot wooden sailboat. We have completely sanded it down and refinished it, and it is now ready for Lake Erie. We will get our garden started when the rains stop.

"People all over the world," Tom Peters says, "are looking for quick, simple solutions to solve the problem of kids who go wrong. There is no simple solution." One "simple solution" he finds disastrous is portrayed in the film, *Scared Straight*, which dramatizes the prediction that if confinement is made ugly and brutal enough, the young will behave to keep out of prison. This cannot work, Peters says, and the movie distorts reality with respect to at least some prisons:

People are caged and watched, marched and handled like animals to some degree. Yet there is also beauty, compassion and poetry in prison. The film *Scared Straight* forgot to tell this side of prison life. . . . [It] perpetuates the myth that all prison life is evil. A few of the better run prisons in this country do not have anything like the actions in the film. . . . the prison in Vienna, Illinois, does not beget brutality. People learn there to be kind and responsible. They are more tuned to living in society when released. They aren't so bitter or fascinated with the brutality that they come to enjoy it. The film has such an impact that some states are now locking kids up for several weeks, and in effect telling prisoners to terrorize them. This is a terrible thing to do to young people and to prisoners. . . . *Scared Straight* will capture attention and divert efforts away from reform in institutions, better counseling, social work in schools, youth employment programs—the things that do make a difference, but are hard to do well and take time and effort on the part of communities. *Scared Straight* seems so much easier. It is, but it doesn't work—just like locking kids up is easier than working with them day by day.

Betterway, of course, needs help and support. A reading of its paper brings into focus as human beings the young people who live and work in Betterway homes. They aren't statistics any more.

## *FRONTIERS* A Few Small Roots

NOT long ago a reader who lives in a pleasant town in New Jersey expressed wonder—perhaps naïvely—at how few signs he detected of the terrible things said to be going on—"all the erosion, land depletion, diminishing wildlife that is so much discussed in the news." Then he asked: "But why are there so few visible scars on the land that the public can *see*? If there is any reason for public indifference, this is why: few people see the destruction being done."

Well, yes. Only a few black spots mark the onset of gangrene. Diabetes doesn't announce itself in any spectacular way—not until you get dizzy and the room starts going around. And when General Motors began discouraging local rail transport as a way of selling more busses, hardly anybody noticed it, fifty years ago. Only after the birds stopped singing did the public go out and buy Rachel Carson's book. The world is a complicated place with long-term and short-term rhythms in its life, and you may feel pretty good for a long time after the start of some subtle infection.

But there are the few who look around and see ahead. Tolstoy, for example. And Heine. And Amiel and Simone Weil. What such poets and prophets say, a century or so before the ills they anticipate get going full blast, has serious attention from only a handful, not a "public" with any clout. At any rate, the people in the nice towns around the country are not likely to hear such spokesmen or to understand why they are waving banners of desperation. And forlorn-hope heroes may get a little neurotic from being ignored. So, people who watch such things and try to generalize about what is going on—about progress or the lack of it—H. T. Buckle and W. E. H. Lecky were especially good at this—speak of the astonishing spread of ideas "whose time has come." In his way, Thomas Kuhn has written

effectively about this cycle of breakthrough in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

If you look into such matters, you soon get acquainted with the most eminent of the real artificers of change. They are the people who challenge axioms, and who have the knowledge and the discipline to know which ones to question and which ones to use as foundation. But there are others without whose efforts the changes would probably never take place. Most of them remain more or less unknown. Their reality is recognized by those who get to understand grassroots processes—William James, for example, who said:

I am done with great things and big things, great institutions and big success, and I am for those tiny, invisible, molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootless, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride.

If you want to add a dash of mystique to all this you could say that Nature herself sometimes contributes a shock which opens channels and hastens the process, as when all the lights go out in a big city like New York, or when a big nuclear installation starts to boil over, and then fizzles dangerously for weeks, getting everybody terribly worried—or when one of those much-too-big airplanes crashes, killing almost everybody aboard.

Meanwhile the tiny rootless keep on infiltrating their leaven throughout the soil of human feeling. They are instruments of the health that is in us, and being aware of them is of great importance because it is one real answer to the question: What can only one person do? One person can do a very great deal, especially if he is given heart by knowing about others like himself. Following is a report—a brief sampling—on some of these rootless.

In *Samisdat*, now in its twenty-first volume, self-published by Merritt Clifton (Box 10,

Brigham, Quebec, Canada JoE IJO—\$12 for 500 pages a year), there is this by Robin Clifton on the changes sensed and recognized after a visit to Boston:

The many universities still produce lawyers, engineers, doctors, & sociologists whose sole objective in life is agglomerating wealth and power, to whom the meaning of living remains a question unconceived, much less thought out & answered. Yet where the first American Revolution gathered strength two hundred years ago, the second is well under way, revitalizing, rehumanizing, rediscovering and promoting initiative, liberty, self-reliance, & voluntary, one-to-one social cooperation.

This revolution did not begin in Boston, any more than the first one did. The Eastern Townships region of Quebec here could be designated as the starting-point as easily as anywhere: solar inventor Harvey Lawrence tinkers just down the road, subscribers Lowell & Virginia Naeve have been organic farmers for years [and a lot of other things, too] & not far from them, David and Linda Simms run their subsistence farm by wind-power. Within a 50-mile radius, hundreds, even thousands of people develop an environmentally healthy, intellectually free lifestyle. But not everyone can flee to the countryside, not just yet. The real battle to save Planet Earth must be won in the cities, where the great industrial, educational, & political powers-that-be still chain most of humanity to nine-to-five paper-shuffling, or assembly-lines, or welfare lines, where a life spent encased in concrete still seems inevitable and inescapable except through television, drugs, & automobiles on the weekends.

Another report: From the *Friends Journal* for June 15 we learn that in 1949, after a bloody war, the people of Costa Rica amended their constitution. In Title I, Article 23 begins:

The army as a permanent institution is proscribed. For vigilance and the preservation of public order there will be the necessary police forces.

Costa Rica is half the size of Ohio and has two million people. The *Friends Journal* describes how being armyless has worked during a difficult thirty years throughout Latin America. Last year Costa Ricans told a UN meeting that they rely on treaties instead of armed forces, and explained that their youth are being trained to

make music instead of war. The musicians gave a concert for the world's diplomats assembled in New York.

Weekly newspapers around the country are changing. These are comparatively small businesses—small enough to let the editors say what they really think—responding to their moral impulses, as Schumacher said everyone needs to—and not getting rich but not going broke, either. We take two such papers: *The North Fork Times* of Paonia, Colorado, and the *Mendocino Grapevine* issued at Ukiah, California. Dailies are almost hopeless, these days. It is easier to make weeklies into good papers which serve the readers in spite of having to live on ads.