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CHARACTER AND WILL

THE end of a thought is an act. This is the principle on which the understanding of "philosophy" depends. When it is ignored, thought turns into some sort of "bead game," the leisurely activity of gentlemen with time on their hands, earning the contempt of those who believe they are doing "the work of the world." The separation of thought from action accounts for the modern tendency to use the word "academic" as an epithet, explains the jeering conclusion that "those who can't do teach," and helps to identify the perverted logic of the Nazi declaration, "When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for my revolver."

A society in which "eggheads" and "hardhats" become familiar terms for those who discuss its divisions is a society which has learned to define the classes, institutions, and customs of the time by their failures and abuses. Not their normal or healthful function, but their noisy or genteel pursuit of partisan ends makes their defining characteristics. There is no longer a social *whole*, the reality of the social aggregate being seen in the divisions of "producers" and "consumers," the "elite" and the "masses," the "manipulators" and the passive and docile multitude. Scholarship often appears to be the show-window of a parasite class content to live comfortably on the largesse of the vulgarly acquisitive, while "creative" people gravitate to the well-paid fields of entertainment and advertising. Only the gross compulsions of war are able to give such societies "unity," a coarse coherence of purpose which breaks apart with the coming of peace, and which gains most of its emotional energy from propaganda.

In such a time, what is called "philosophy" is bound to be at low ebb. Indeed, those who try to take seriously the attempt to philosophize usually become the mavericks of their profession, pointing out that if you want to locate signs of vital intellectuality you must look outside the ranks of the professionals. In an article which appeared in the *New York Times Magazine* for April 24, 1966, Lewis Feuer, who was then teaching philosophy and social science at the University of California (Berkeley), summed up this criticism:

> When philosophy . . . becomes academic, the results are much the same as when art becomes academic. What great novel could have been written to satisfy a Ph.D. requirement in Creative Writing? Or what great painting could have been done to secure a degree in Creative Art? It is quite otherwise in the sciences where the methods and techniques of verification and experiment on the whole provide a common ground upon which almost all will meet.
>
> When philosophy becomes academic, it tries to emulate the sciences, to employ methods and criteria which the profession in general will accept. The pressures in the universities to be "scientific" are now overwhelming. Therefore, academic philosophers look for some device which will seem to make their "discipline" as objective, scientific and examination-gradable as physics or mathematics. A generation ago mathematical logic was the favored device. Today, as this is being discarded, the study of ordinary language, a kind of descriptive lexicography, is taken as the examinable core of philosophy. Would a James, Kierkegaard or Nietzsche ever have been able to get his mature philosophical works accepted for a Ph.D. degree? Probably not.

There are of course changes in such academic fashions, as Theodore Roszak has noted in "On the Contemporary Hunger for Wonders," in the Summer 1980 *Michigan Quarterly Review* (reprinted in *Harper's* for January of this year), but he reports symptoms of mushiness rather than reform. A melancholy confirmation of both Feuer's and Roszak's strictures, along with a modest hope for reform, was provided by William Arrowsmith, in an address in 1967, in which he spoke disparagingly of "the overwhelming positivism of our technocratic society and the arrogance of scholarship," continuing:

> Indeed, nothing more vividly illustrates the myopia of academic humanism than its failure to realize that the fate of any true culture is revealed in the value it sets upon the teacher and the way it defines him. . . .
>
> It is my hope that education . . . will not be driven from the university by the knowledge-technicians. . . . Socrates took to the streets, but so does every demagogue or fraud. By virtue of its traditions and pretensions the university is, I believe, a not inappropriate place for education to occur. . . . At present the universities are as uncongenial to teaching as the Mohave desert to a clutch of Druid priests. If you want to restore a Druid priesthood, you cannot do it by offering prizes for Druid-of-the-year. If you want Druids, you must grow forests. There is no other way of setting about it.

As for "philosophy," a not uncommon conclusion of present-day academics was voiced recently by a teacher of literature, after wading through the 22,500 pages (eight volumes) of an encyclopedia of philosophy. He said:

> I cannot resist the notion that in the course of 2,500 years of philosophical culture remarkably little has been accomplished, if one considers the vast amount of work and the extraordinary intelligence and learning involved in the philosophical enterprise. And if one sets out on this task in the hope of discovering a really solid comprehension of what truth is, one might as well go to the movies.

What is wrong, one may ask, with what scholars write as philosophy and the history of philosophy, if, as this comment suggests, the total result is a morass of indecisive relativities?

We are brought by this question to the other side of the subject. What is good and valuable in what may be found in books of philosophy or about philosophy?

No doubt some of the trouble experienced by the modern reader lies in the author's failure to distinguish between what can and what can't be learned from books, and the reader himself may be at fault in this respect, hoping to find what cannot be delivered by any writer. Yet philosophy ought to be regarded as that investigation on which turns the life or death of the mind. It is, as Socrates showed, an attempt to make explicit the basis for action in human life, each one for himself. The serious study of philosophy in books is the effort to know how others have shaped this basis for themselves, which ought indeed to be instructive. Among moderns, Ortega y Gasset is one of the few philosophizing writers who have made this clear. We shall quote here his *Concord and Liberty* (Norton, 1963), at some length.

In the section, "Prologue to a History of Philosophy," he says:

> A sentence is the verbal expression of a "meaning"—what we are accustomed to call idea or thinking. We read or hear the sentence. But what we understand—if we understand it—is its meaning. It is the meaning that is intelligible. Very well; but it is erroneous to believe that a sentence "has its meaning" in an absolute way, apart from when or for whom it was said or written. Nothing is "absolutely intelligible." But the customary histories of philosophy take the opposite for granted. The doctrines are presented to us as though enunciated by the "Unknown Philosopher," an anonymous and abstract being without a birth date or a dwelling place who is nothing but the author of those writings and therefore does not add anything to their content, neither qualifying nor sharpening it. . . .
>
> In principle it is always possible to gather *some* sense from the expression of an idea. What is said always conveys *some* signification. But this haphazard meaning is not the authentic meaning of the expression. For language is, by its own nature, equivocal. No saying says of itself all it wants to say. It says a small fraction, and the rest is implied and taken as a matter of course. . . . Every text presents itself as a fragment of a context. . . .
>
> An idea is the reaction of a man upon a definite situation of his life. That is to say, we have grasped the reality of an idea, the idea in its entirety, complete and precise, only if we have taken it as a concrete reaction upon a concrete situation. . . .
>
> Here we have the first principle of a "new philology." *An idea is an action* taken by a man in view of a definite situation and for a definite purpose. If in endeavoring to comprehend an idea we disregard the circumstances that engendered it and the intention that inspired it, we shall be left with only a vague and abstract outline of the idea. It is precisely this indistinct scheme or skeleton of an idea that is currently called an idea; for it can easily be

> understood and it has a ubiquitous and "absolute" meaning. But an idea acquires its authentic content and its true and precise "meaning" only in fulfilling the active role for which it was invented and which consists in its functioning with regard to a given situation.

To read or study (or write) in the way Ortega recommends has certain noticeable consequences. Those consequences are succinctly described by John Schaar in *American Review* (No. 19, January, 1974):

> One of the most important differences between great actors—think, say of Gandhi, or Lenin, or Lincoln, or Malcolm X—and most of the rest of us is that they hold their views and ideas in a way we do not. They *are* their views. And most of us, when we think clearly, can acknowledge that we took, or received, most of what we call "our" views from others. We did not create them. Rather, we got them from others, who may have worked very hard for them, and now we call them ours. Great actors of course also take some of their views from others. Some they forge themselves. But once the idea or vision is forged or assimilated, it is held in a certain way. The actor does not have or possess the idea; rather he is possessed by it. He lives his views. His life is his views, in a way and to a degree unusual among most of the rest of us. Most of the rest of us are many things besides our views or ideas. To an unusual degree great actors are their ideas. More of their lives are contained in, or centered on, their views. In that fascinating way, great actors have a mode or experience of selfhood and identity that is different from ours. That difference makes us uneasy, for we know that at bottom the great actor is demanding of us that we change our lives.

To the question, How shall we change our lives?, the great actor—if he is also a philosopher—will answer: You must consult philosophy for that. He will say, as Socrates said: Look at your first principles and decide why they are not good enough for you to live by; and then find better ones. In Socrates' time, Athens was in a mess—in messes of various sorts—and Socrates, who loved his city and his countrymen, wandered the streets proposing this quest. It was a legitimate inference that if Athens was a mess, so were the minds of the Athenians. For this reason Plato turned from politics to philosophy—to the thinking which governs action. Understanding Plato requires understanding this, for all his playful artistry, his allegories, his myths. The thinking which governs action is indeed a matter of life and death, and not only of the mind, as Plato's *Apology* makes clear.

We now return to Ortega for what he has to say about the writing and reading of philosophy:

> . . . I made bold to assert that a "history of philosophy" as a chronological exposition of philosophical doctrines is neither "history" nor "of philosophy." It is precisely an abstraction of authentic history of philosophy.
>
> A "history of ideas"—philosophical, mathematical, political, religious, economic—in the traditional sense is impossible. Those ideas, I repeat, which are but abstractions of ideas, have no history. . .
>
> To sum up: History must abolish the dehumanized form in which it has offered us the philosophical doctrines. It must incorporate them again in the dynamic interplay of a man's life and let us witness their teleological functioning in it. What if all the inert and mummified ideas which the customary history of philosophy has presented us arose and functioned again, resuming the part they played in the existence of those who wrestled with them? Would not all those patterns of thought light up with a universal *evidence* to gratify us, their historians who revived them, as they gratified the original thinkers and the students around them?

The strength and moral power of thinkers who act upon their thoughts make a striking contrast with present-day discourse. Writing in the *American Scholar* for the autumn of 1974, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., drew attention to the fact that the Founding Fathers of the American Republic used language "notably free of false notes." They were both thinkers and men of action who were able, as the *Federalist Papers* show, to "say in public more or less what they believed in private." The excellence of their language reflected this integrity, a quality which also belonged to their readers. "One can only marvel," Schlesinger muses, "at the sophistication of an audience that consumed and relished pieces so closely reasoned, so thoughtful and analytical."

The decline from the language of that day was made into a diagnostic tool a century later—and a century ago—by Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Schlesinger quotes Emerson for the clarity of his analysis of nineteenth-century public writing and speech:

> "A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbols and so to utter it," said Emerson, "depends upon the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of idea is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches of pleasure, of power, and of praise . . . words are perverted to stand for things which are not." . . .
>
> So words, divorced from objects, become instruments less of communication than of deception. Unscrupulous orators stood abstractions on their head and transmuted them into their opposites, aiming to please one faction by the sound and the contending faction by the meaning. They did not always succeed. "The word *liberty* in the mouth of Webster," Emerson wrote with contempt after the Compromise of 1850 "sounds like the word *love* in the mouth of a courtezan." . . . Social fluidity, moral pretension, political and literary demagoguery, corporate and academic bureaucratization and a false conception of democracy are leading us into semantic chaos. As Emerson said, "We infer the spirit of the nation in great measure from the language."

How true! we say to ourselves. We see that Schlesinger needs Emerson to make his point; and we may wonder why we cannot speak in our own time as Emerson spoke—he is perhaps too openly and candidly a moralist—although there are a few who find ways to afford a similar light. These few are the restorers of our language—Emersonian restorers—and Wendell Berry, one of their number, begins an article, "Standing by Words" (in the winter *Hudson Review*), by saying:

> Two epidemic illnesses of our time—upon both of which virtual industries have been founded—are the disintegration of communities and the disintegration of persons. That these two are related (that private loneliness, for instance, will necessarily accompany public confusion) is clear enough. And I take for granted that most people have explored in themselves and their surroundings some of the intricacies of the practical causes and effects; most of us, for example, have understood that the results are usually bad when people act in social and moral isolation, and also when, because of such isolation, they fail to act.
>
> What seems not so well understood, because not enough examined, is the relation between these disintegrations and the disintegration of language. My impression is that we have seen, for perhaps a hundred and fifty years, a gradual increase in language that is either meaningless or destructive of meaning. And I believe that this increasing unreliability of language parallels the increasing disintegration, over the same period, of persons and communities.
>
> My concern is for the *accountability* of language—hence, of the users of language. To deal with this matter I will use a pair of economic concepts: internal accounting, which considers costs and benefits in reference only to the interests of the money-making enterprise itself; and *external accounting*, which considers the costs and benefits to the "larger community." By altering the application of these terms a little, any statement may be said to account well or poorly for what is going on inside the speaker, or outside him, or both.
>
> It will be found, I believe, that the accounting will be poor—incomprehensible or unreliable—if it attempts to be purely internal or purely external. One of the primary obligations of language is to connect and balance the two kinds of accounting.

In this article Mr. Berry soon gets down to cases. He illustrates the language employed in both kinds of accounting, showing how the very vocabulary, in each one, tends to shut out the language (and thought) of the other. The "all-heart" language of purely personal internal accounting is embarrassed into silence by the practical problems and need for impersonal measurement in external accounting. And the technological jargon of the engineers excludes the realities of human feeling, need, and fellowship. These too emotionally pliable or too mechanically rigid modes of accounting are illustrated with quotation—from both poets and engineers. Both these languages, in their degraded form, are irresponsible, but both can be corrected, made to

achieve balance, as Berry also shows with quotation.

What may occur to the reader is that Berry is a *practical* reformer. We all know the sad plight of the would-be virtuous man—what he wants for himself and his fellows cannot be directly accomplished by will. We can will to imitate the forms of sympathy, but we cannot will to *feel* sympathy. Like the quality of mercy, it does not come at command. Its origin is mysterious. Yet—and we may seldom think of this—there are *callings* which invite the spontaneous development of sympathy. There are situations in which acts of brotherhood become more natural than partisan behavior. Humans can choose those callings, construct those situations—make by will their lives more *hospitable* to the springs of the heart. We *can* be watchful of the implications of our language. One who writes about these things, not in exhortation, but in a musing examination of the ways of human decency, responsibility, and fellowship—as an account of some discoveries he has made for himself—is a practical reformer. People feel able—or a little more able than they have been—to act on their ideas by reason of his searchings and encouragement. His address is to both heart and mind, showing their interdependence, and illuminating the subtle, indefinable relationship between human character and will. He teaches philosophy.

REVIEW
THE LESS AND MORE OF ART

IN the twentieth anniversary issue of *The Structurist,* an annual magazine of art published at the Saskatoon campus of the University of Saskatchewan, Canada ($10 a copy), Eli Bornstein, the editor, throws fresh light on the old argument about art: Should art "imitate" nature, or reflect instead some of the resonances nature evokes in humans? He draws the contrast between "mimesis"—the Greek term for copying—and metaphor, or the imaginative response to resonances. The one has at best a static perfection, the other unlimited but hazardous possibilities. Mr. Bornstein's discussion helps the reader to bring order to a bewildering subject. The order obtained will reveal that there are "wheels within wheels" in all such ultimate matters, so that a finer confusion may begin anew, yet the artist in the reader will begin to feel more at home in his reflections.

Mimesis has gained a spread of meanings—"from faithful copying of form, color, or sound to matching of methods."

> Democritus spoke of mimesis as an imitation of the way nature functions. He gave as examples our imitation in weaving of the spider; in building, the swallow; and in singing, the swan or nightingale. For Socrates and Plato mimesis was copying appearances of nature, although Plato also cautioned that imitation was not the proper road to truth. For Aristotle imitation could present things more or less faithfully than they appeared, it could select from and idealize reality by presenting as it might or ought to be. The artist was freer to represent nature based on its general, typical, and essential characteristics. The Greek formulation of art as the imitation of nature was based upon a belief in the perfection of the visible world.

This idea that the artist is one who reveals natural potentialities in their perfection is the subject of an essay by Lafcadio Hearn in *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields.* Recalling Western comments to the effect that Japanese art is "utterly wanting in facial expression," and that the faces of ladies in Japanese prints seem "absolutely insane," Hearn remarks that his own impressions on arriving in Japan were similar. He says:

> I imagined the apparent conventionalism of the faces to indicate the arrested development of an otherwise marvelous art faculty. It never occurred to me that they might be conventional only in the sense of symbols which, once interpreted, would reveal more than ordinary Western drawing can express. . . . surely the age which makes *Laocoön* a classic ought to recognize that Greek art itself was not free from conventions. It was an art which we can scarcely hope to equal; but it was more conventional than any existing form of art. And since it proved that even the divine could find development within the limits of artistic convention the charge of formality is not a charge worth making against Japanese art. . . . The Greek conventional face cannot be found in real life, no living head presenting so large a facial angle; but the Japanese conventional face can be seen every where, when once the real value of its symbol in art is understood. The face of Greek art represents an impossible perfection, a superhuman evolution. The seemingly inexpressive face drawn by the Japanese artists represents the living, the actual, the every-day. The former is a dream; the latter a common fact. . . .
>
> The highest art, Greek art, rising above the real to reach the divine, gives us the dream of feature perfected. Japanese realism, so much larger than our own as to be still misunderstood, gives us only "feature in the making," or rather, the general law of feature in the making.

We have quoted Hearn to show the endless possibilities of mimesis, when used with vision—and there is much more in this chapter of Hearn's book—and now return to Mr. Bornstein, who observes that the Renaissance strongly reaffirmed the classic theories of mimesis, but declined with the tendency to copy the art of antiquity instead of nature! Then he says:

> In the nineteenth century "naturalism" and "realism" displaced the ancients' mimesis. Imitation came increasingly to be regarded as something inferior, superficial, or shoddy. The twentieth century has largely rejected the term. Instead there has been concern with "expression," "abstraction," "creation" or "invention." However the fundamental questions and problems of the relationship of art to nature have remained unsettled. The theories of mimesis, rather than being laid to rest, have

> reappeared in our own time with new terms resurrecting some of the old unresolved conflicts over art as imitation.

Mr. Bornstein's introduction of the idea of art as "metaphor" seems to dissolve somewhat the basis of these conflicts. An element of mimesis may remain—indeed must remain—yet it serves a purpose far beyond mere "copying."

> Metaphor uses one part of experience to illuminate another. Rather than attempt to mimic aspects of reality, metaphor by inference translates or transforms nature into art. As a figure of speech it compares or combines different subjects, and by analogue suggests new orientations or perceptions. By the bridging of diverse objects or experiences, new insights or understanding can be evoked. The metaphor is an explanatory as well as an aesthetic device. With it, the artist can speculate or hypothesize about experience.
>
> Visual metaphor refers to the non-mimetic, non-literal use of the language of art—the elements of line, color, form, space, etc.—in a manner comparable to verbal metaphor while recognizing that words and actual images or structures are by no means identical. The visual artist and the poet here share in the use of metaphor as a non-lineal, non-sequentially descriptive, and highly compressed device. Metaphor differs greatly from mimesis. Metaphor may be regarded as implicitly evocative, while mimesis is explicitly descriptive—the one more abstract, the other more concrete.

Yet mimesis, obviously, is involved in order to produce a metaphorical effect. The artist puts his mimetic skill into the service of octaves of meaning. A hazy mountain top may suggest a leap into the unknown—abstracted to avoid distractions from what is intended, yet "real" enough to give the imagination a launching pad. These things must be carefully done. As Bornstein says:

> The use of metaphor always involves great risk for, like nature's seeds, many never take, never germinate. Robert Frost said "All metaphor breaks down. That is the beauty of it. It is touch and go with metaphor. . . . You have to know how far to ride it." Not all metaphors ring true or communicate significant meaning, and false metaphors abound in our culture. When metaphor creates an enlightening connection with reality and ignites our imagination, it becomes vital as art. When metaphor becomes too popular it tends to break down and exhaust itself—first as fashion or academic style, then as cliché.

In literature, the classic use of metaphor is found in myth. Both mathematics and myths employ abstractions, but the abstractions of myth are filled with content, while the mathematical are bare. Mention three names—Prometheus, Sisyphus, Tantalus—and the mind fills with archetypal meanings. There are analogies everywhere, making the myths immeasurably useful as basic reference-points in communication. Without myths language would be a dull affair. Words would just lie there, like oatmeal in a bowl. Mythic imagery incarnates life into static language, and we begin to feel and think.

"All metaphor breaks down," says Frost, and we may be glad that it is so. A perfect metaphor might destroy both time and space and make us the prisoner of its fixity. The true work of art says to the one who sees it: "I am not really real, but see what you can do with me—and that may prove more real than all your catalogues of facts." In art reality is optional, and if there were no such state as this, who would do anything worth while? The worthwhile is always something humanly decided upon, and this requires options, intermediate stages between reality and impossible perfections.

A story or a drama is something like that. It plays fast and loose with time. The action of a lifetime must be packed within the framework of three acts. Nobody grows or learns that fast!—but our hero does it. So we are upheld by the victory of the protagonist, yet withheld from complete identification by our sense that hours, days, years—perhaps lives—of just plodding along are necessities or inevitabilities that have been left out. It follows that if you tell the complete truth—no art! The dramatic unity is stretched too thin.

So there is art as retrospect—mimesis; and art as prophecy—metaphor—with dozens of other

ways of saying such things. Mr. Bornstein has this comment:

> Instinct, intuition, imagination, intelligence, and all our senses are engaged in the process of making metaphors. Head and heart, eye and hand must participate in its trying out. Metaphor is said to be the language of the right side of our bicameral mind. It is the right-minded idiom of imagination, spontaneity, and intuitive leaps. The right hemisphere of our brain—as opposed to the more analytical and logical left side—is supposed to be more holistic, synthesizing, creating, and most associated with art as the maker and grasper of metaphors. Learning to see and use one's imagination and senses more fully may in fact be a matter of learning to engage or activate that part of our brain which our technological civilization tends to suppress. Our culture emphasizes the left lobe at the expense of the right. Accordingly, if present brain research is correct, art and the capacity of metaphor in all media may be an essential key to unlocking the potential of the right lobe and its enriching perceptions.

Well, yes. But the "potential" might belong to the *nous* rather than its bodily instrument—a distinction that may come naturally to those who practice the arts.

COMMENTARY
ISSUES IN PERSPECTIVE

ON page 2 John Schaar is quoted as naming Gandhi, Lenin, Lincoln, and Malcolm X as men who distinguished themselves from others by acting on the ideas of which they became convinced. For them a true idea dictated a corresponding act. To his brief list of "great actors" Mr. Schaar might have added Arthur E. Morgan, flood control engineer and educator . . . and American philosopher. The following, taken from the volume, *Observations*, a collection of ideas set down in the course of Morgan's life of ninety-seven years, are philosophical observations about society, for him guides to action:

> A people never can be great except as it recognizes and respects its own excellence. That is very different from national egotism. People who are least sure of themselves must keep busiest in bragging about themselves. Modesty and self-respect commonly are found together. (1931)

> In every field many men want to live in their own particular worlds without regard to the interest of life as a whole. (1954)

> Power has failed. It will continue to fail. It must fail or civilization will fail. That is no idle phrase. Civilized life is too complex today for power to administer. Power can rule only by destroying civilization and by reducing life to deadening arbitrary simplicity which its operations can manage. . . . Only good will, and a spirit of service can organize a fine complex civilization, and make wholesome use of the newly created organs of society. That good will, that tolerance, that kindling power of community must be exercised first of all by those in positions of advantage. (1941)

> Economic and social justice may maintain a controlled range of economic temperature within which life may function best, but it will not supply lasting incentives for living, nor will it find them already in existence. They must be achieved. . . . It is well that the approach to Utopia be gradual, so that little by little we may be tempered to the unprecedented demands it will put upon the human spirit. (1945)

> Only as we get over the feeling that meeting the present emergency is more important than developing the strength and character which enables us to meet emergencies can we expect anything but a succession of emergencies for which we shall be ill-prepared. It would be a public service if those warning America about the perils of atomic warfare should bring the issues into better perspective.

> Honesty is the best policy—sometimes. It is our business to so remake the world that honesty will be the best policy always. The person who is honest even when it is not the best policy helps to bring about that time.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A SOCIAL STUDY?

EARLY in his life Arthur Morgan—to whom it is always good to return—formulated the question that occupied his whole career: What shapes human character? Somewhere in his works he wrote musingly on the fact that the "successful" utopian communities—those which survived for a considerable time—were always bound together by strong but narrow and sectarian religious beliefs. Why, he asked himself, should this be so? Why can't a harmonious society be established by individuals who are free in mind? It was, he decided, a problem of commitment. Liberals and freethinkers find it difficult to direct their energies to a single positive focus. Their motives go in several directions, they are committed only in their rejection of confinement and confining ideas. Morgan devoted the educational aspect of his life to working on this problem, and his concentration on the small community as an educational environment was the result.

This drawing of attention to the virtues of small, agrarian communities is now becoming quite common, for sufficient and understandable reason. A nostalgic looking to the past, in search of the qualities missing in modern society, is also natural. In his 1974 "Letter to the Soviets," Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn reminded his countrymen of the quality of life in Russia before Peter the Great, while defending its handful of present-day champions. He said:

> How fond our progressive publicists were, both before and after the Revolution, of ridiculing those *retrogrades* (there were always so many of them in Russia: people who called upon us to cherish and have pity on our past, even on the most Godforsaken hamlet with a couple of hovels, even on the paths that run alongside the railway track; who called upon us to keep horses even after the advent of the motorcar, not to abandon small factories for enormous plants and combines, not to discard organic manure in favor of chemical fertilizers, not to mass by the million in cities, not to clamber on top of one another in multi-story apartment blocks. How they laughed, how they tormented those reactionary "Slavophiles" (the jibe became the accepted term, the simpletons never managed to think up another name for themselves).

Now a writer in the United States, Thomas W. Foster, who teaches sociology at Ohio State University, looks at one of the religious communities in this country—one with a long history—for similar reasons. In the last December *Ecologist* (published in England) he tells about the ways of the Amish, sectarians descended from the European Anabaptists, of whom there are about 60,000, in order to compare "the basic tenets of Amish culture" with "the utopian and ecological ideas that have been promulgated by such contemporary scholars as E. F. Schumacher and Henryk Skolimowski." Interestingly, while the Amish style of agriculture often has attention because of its "quaint" productiveness, a few years ago these industrious Wisconsiners broke into print because of their contest with the state board of education—which they won—and as a result became somewhat famous as champions of religious freedom. The Amish declared that the influence of public high school was degrading to the morals of the young. Vindicating their claim, the Wisconsin Supreme Court said:

> To the Amish, secondary schools not only teach an unacceptable value system, but they also seek to integrate ethnic groups into a homogenized society (and as a result) the education they receive is irrelevant to their lives . . . or will make Amish life impossible.

Commenting, Stephen Arons, a Massachusetts attorney, said (in the *Saturday Review* for Jan. 15, 1972):

> In its broadest terms, the contest is between the state's definition of education and the Amish definition of education; between the ultimate purposes of life as adhered to by the majority of a materialist society and the religious convictions held by the so-called Plain People; between the limitless and homogenizing logic of compulsory attendance and the rights of individuals and groups to maintain the sanctity of their own socially harmless values against a "pall of orthodoxy."

Mr. Arons and others are now suggesting that there is something to be learned from the Amish. The writer in the *Ecologist* has this view He says:

> A primary goal of this article, then, is to explain how Amish life and culture generally correspond to an emerging set of ethical ideas and principles which

> Schumacher and Skolimowski, among others, have identified as being the hallmarks of an ecologically-balanced, humane social order. A secondary goal is to consider some of the major ways in which Amish society falls short of meeting these moral requisites. Finally, I will briefly describe what can be gained, both theoretically and practically, from the study of societies like the Amish.

We have been reading Mr. Foster's article with some care for the reason that it seems the sort of material that might well be used to give life to a class in "Social Studies" in a high school with imaginative teachers. After all, social studies ought not to be simply an acquaintance with the way *we* live: why not consider the ways of those who insist upon living quite differently? The Ohio sociologist writes:

> There is no energy crisis among the Midwest's Old Order Amish. At a time when the majority of American society are threatened by steeply rising gasoline costs and recurring shortages, the Amish continue to travel across the countryside at a placid but undisturbed pace—in their black horse-drawn buggies. And as heating oil, natural gas, electricity and coal spiral ever-upward in price, while thermostats in homes and public buildings are turned correspondingly down, the houses of the Amish remain comfortably warm because they are usually heated by wood, a replenishable fuel which is readily available on most farmsteads. Nor do the Amish face the familiar stack of other utility bills that most Americans grimly contemplate each month. There are no power-line connections to Old Order homes unless connections were made by prior owners. Candles or fuel oil lamps are used for lighting while water is supplied by wells located on homesites, often being pumped into the plumbing systems of houses by windmills, handpumps or, on occasion, by small gasoline engine-powered pumps. The use of internal combustion engines is limited to such stationary applications and to work that is difficult or impractical to do with horses. There are no telephones, usually no newspapers, except for one—the *Budget*—that is published for the Order, and, of course, no radio or television sets!

Not all these "privations" are inevitable for one who might follow their general plan, but a lot of hard bread-labor is certainly required.

> The Amish fervently believe that manual work is both satisfying and healthful to normal people and that persons who cannot find satisfaction in physical labor are exhibiting a symptom of mental abnormality. They literally believe that idle hands are the devil's workshop and that man is destined to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. Two practical consequences of these beliefs are that Amish parents try to keep their children "too busy with chores for foolishness or trouble" and that the Amish do not seek to profit financially through investments, insurance policies, legal litigation, or through the lending of money for interest.

After giving some of the details of Amish customs and everyday life, Mr. Foster speaks of "two rather remarkable sets of cultural similarities":

> The first is that Amish religious beliefs in many ways resemble the naturalistic religions of the East, particularly Taoism and the monastic orders of Zen Buddhism and Eastern Orthodoxy. Secondly, the Amish way of life is to a great extent consonant with the holistic precepts and emphasis of modern ecology.
>
> With the Eastern religions, the Amish share a reverence for nature and naturalism, for simplicity, unpretentiousness communal self-sufficiency and pacifism; they share, as well, a deeply rooted suspicion toward all that is new, untraditional or highly ambitious in human projects and undertakings.

The second set of similarities is with the ecological principles set forth (in an earlier *Ecologist* article) by Henryk Skolimowski. The writer concludes:

> I am convinced that Amish society *can* serve as a viable, visible alternative for a minority of (non-Amish) people in the United States. I am specifically thinking of those families—and collectivities of persons—who want to become farmers but who lack the necessary capital and/or inclination to become involved in large-scale agri-business operations.
>
> For these people, the Amish can serve as a living example of what can be done to become socially and economically successful as small-scale farmers. Given a willingness to adopt the form and the spirit of Amish culture—if not its exact content—and given a like commitment to the use of appropriate technologies, I can see no reason why other Americans should not be equally successful.

Needless to say, this is an article that should be read in its entirety. The address of *The Ecologist* is Worthyvale Manor Farm, Camelford, Cornwall, PL39 9TT, U.K.

FRONTIERS

An Immediate Problem

Los ANGELES, like other large cities (and urbanized counties, of the country, has a problem of crime reaching crisis proportions. Last year, in a report to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, Kenneth F. Fare, Acting Chief Probation Officer, revealed that in the four years from 1966 to 1970, arrests for crimes against persons (homicide, forcible rape, robbery, and assault), increased more than one hundred per cent—from 9,381 in 1966 to 4,802 in 1970. In 1974 arrests reached a peak of 8,976, dropping a bit in later years. But as Mr. Fare notes, these figures are for *arrests*, while the crimes reported against persons (with or without arrests) continued to increase, reaching a total of 76,541 in 1978. He draws the obvious conclusion that *"the ability to apprehend is decreasing."*

What is the "average" offender like? He is male (95% were male), just under sixteen, black or brown (90% from ethnic minorities) and (in most cases) comes from a broken home. He is likely to have done poorly in school, may be a member of a juvenile gang (25% are), and has a better than 50% chance of being a repeater.

It is quite evident that the problem of crime is a problem of *juvenile* crime. Commenting, Mr. Fare says:

> The increasing crime rate is, in reality, simply a mirror of the continuing breakdown of the basic social institutions—the home or family structure, the school and the community.
>
> Usually, the delinquent is from an economically and culturally deprived background. He or she is educationally handicapped with greatly restricted opportunities for employment; frequently a victim of discrimination and living (or just surviving) in a substandard community environment.

He finds in the report of the National Commission on the Cause and Prevention of Violence the following apt account of the situation:

> To be young, poor, male; to be under-educated and without means of escape from an oppressive urban environment; to want what the society claims is available (but mostly to others); to see around oneself illegitimate and often violent methods being used to achieve material gain, and to observe others using these means with impunity—all this is to be *burdened with an enormous set of influences that pull many toward crime and delinquency*. To be also a Negro, Puerto Rican or Mexican-American and subject to discrimination and segregation adds considerably to the pull of these other criminogenic forces.

Mr. Fare then says:

> Most authorities agree that the solution lies primarily in the development of viable social prevention and rehabilitation programs in deprived areas to provide the same opportunities, benefits, and privileges that are available in the more affluent suburban areas. Generally the thrust of such social rehabilitation focuses on job development and improved economic opportunities; in providing a school environment in which security for the purpose of maintaining an atmosphere where children and law-abiding citizens work, relax, and enjoy themselves without fear of becoming a victim of a crime—or molested by a roving gang.

One is obliged to call this recommendation an expression of "the long-term view," despite reluctance to do so. It is long-term because it requires so many far-reaching attitudinal changes on the part of citizens at large. Mr. Fare, however, and his colleagues are confronted by an *immediate* problem. Accordingly, in his report he emphasizes that *"the Juvenile Justice System should hold youngsters accountable for their behavior."* To this end he wants "all youthful offenders 16 years of age and older who are charged with the offenses of Homicide, Forcible Rape, Robbery and Aggravated Assault to be prosecuted in the adult criminal court." He thinks the Juvenile Court should have two distinct elements—one for Youthful Offenders, the other a Family Court for children up to the age of fourteen.

Mr. Fare proposes that the present poor performance of the Juvenile Court system results from the 1961 Juvenile Court Law which

mandated a "protective and rehabilitative philosophy." The courts were instructed to "help" rather than "punish." But the administrative result, Mr. Fare suggests, has been neither helpful to the offender nor protective to the community. He says:

> Today's Juvenile Justice System is obsolete and out of phase with the needs to deal with the sophisticated youngsters of the 1980's. The Juvenile Court Law has not been revised in the last 20 years, but there have been scores of piecemeal and "bandaid" amendments which have resulted in confusion, conflict and misinterpretation.

The mother of an offender, after researching the juvenile justice system, told what she found out:

> The truth is that institutionalizing children as punishment the way we have been doing it does not work, and is very expensive. Therefore the door is open to any system that will keep the kid out of the system, *if* it costs less.
>
> More money is spent on more professionals, and another layer is added. What everyone seems to have forgotten is that the purpose of the system is to support that child in going straight and assist his/her family.
>
> One way to make the system work might be consistent and sure consequences for misbehavior. I can't tell you how many times my son was arrested. All I know is that the first time he went to adult court was the last time he was in trouble. In all the things he did as a juvenile, there were never any consequences dealt by the authorities.

The change proposed by Mr. Fare would mean transfer to the Adult Court of about 8 per cent of the referrals to Juvenile Court, or less than 1,500 youthful offenders. A probation officer tells how the present system works:

> Here is a child going through the normal process of finding out where the limits are. He tests his parents and finds they are too busy with their own dysfunctional lives and problems to parent. He tests the school and finds they don't know he's not there and can't make him go when they discover it. He gets arrested and counseled and released. . . . Arrested again and put on informal probation with the same limits no one has been able or willing to enforce before. He violates and goes to Court. The Public Defender tells him he can beat it and sometimes he does. . . . Finally he's at a sentencing hearing and detained, months after the offending act. He is angry and bitter, in no mood to profit from his experience, because the system has systematically lied to him by its failure to intervene effectively at the appropriate time. We taught him that there weren't any limits really and then jailed him when he successfully learned that lesson.

No brief comment could have much point here, and a long one would probably prove no better. Mr. Fare has simply outlined a frontier for today's urban societies. The police, the courts, and the probation officers have the responsibility of dealing with problems for which practically everyone is responsible. He wants the legislature to overhaul the court system, so that he and his colleagues can do what they are able to do. Copies of his report are available from the County of Los Angeles Probation Department, 9150 East Imperial Highway, Downey, Calif. 90242.