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THE DESIGNING INTELLIGENCE

REALLY distinguished generalist thinkers in this century have been few and far between. The preoccupations of the age have been with construction, manufacturing, getting and spending, and generalist thought suffers a discount during a period in which scientific inquiry shies away from views which even hint at philosophical underpinnings, and when collection of factual data takes the place of reflective musings. Writing in *Philosophy of Science* for July, 1939, Clyde Kluckhohn, an eminent anthropologist, remarked that out of 152 papers published in three anthropological journals over a period of four years, only fourteen offered more than "descriptive" material, while in another specialized journal only one out of ninety-eight articles had theoretical content. Commenting, he said that in the field of anthropology, "To suggest that something is theoretical is to suggest that it is slightly indecent."

In such times, a generalist thinker who could command serious attention would need to be outstanding indeed. We think easily of only three Robert M. Hutchins, W. Macneile Dixon, and Ortega y Gasset. These men displayed a capacity for generalization which was so lucid in effect that they were able to draw the minds of their readers to much neglected considerations. Hutchins wrote—and writes—on education; Dixon, who taught English literature, wrote philosophy; and Ortega turned the study of history into philosophy. It serves our purpose here to quote a passage from Ortega's *Toward a Philosophy of History* (Norton, 1941):

> Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But these qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary problems, leaving intact the ultimate and decisive questions. Of this renunciation it makes its essential virtue, and for it, if for nought else, it deserves praise. Yet science is but a small part of the human mind and organism. Where it stops, man does not stop. If the physicist detains, at the point where his method ends, the hand with which he delineates the facts, the human being behind each physicist prolongs the line thus begun and carries it on to its termination, as an eye beholding an arch in ruins will of itself complete the missing airy curve. . . .
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> For living means dealing with the world, turning to it being occupied with it. That is why man is practically unable, for psychological reasons, to do without all-round knowledge of the world without an integral idea of the universe. Crude or refined, with our consent or without it, such a trans-scientific picture of the world will settle in the mind of each of us, ruling our lives more effectively than scientific truth.

If we accept this statement—and it is very difficult not to, in view of the human requirement of a sense of meaning—we may recognize in it a prophetic element. For since Ortega wrote these words there have been serious efforts to construct a "trans-scientific picture of the world," with substantial evidence that the attempt has only begun.

In such circumstances, what is the task of the generalist? One of his obligations, surely, is to prevent short-circuits and over-simplified solutions, and to point out missing factors in "world-pictures" which obtain uncritical assent mainly because of the visionary enthusiasm behind them. This kind of criticism may be possible from both an ideal and a practical point of view. Take for example the vastly appealing scheme of Teilhard de Chardin. Many readers cleave to what they regard as an intuitively sensed verity in the idea of an emerging *noosphere*, evolved by the exercise of synthesizing human intelligence. Yet it was certainly pertinent for E. F. Schumacher to question Teilhard's implication that scientists, on the record, are qualified by their mastery of "the ultimate energy of which all other energies are merely servants," to grasp "the very mainspring of evolution, seizing the tiller of the world." It is entirely in order, and by no means destructive criticism, for Schumacher to insist that unless there is "change—in depth"—there remains a

great deal of *"hybris* and confusion" in Teilhard's apotheosis of "research."

Well, who is E. F. Schumacher? Is he a generalist thinker? The answer is both yes and no. Actually, he is the kind of generalist thinker that may one day become the practical genius of the transformation of our world into a better one. That is, he is a specialist in a field which for many years has ignored the profound general considerations involved in its subject-matter. He is an economist gradually turned generalist—a man who, like Plato's philosopher who escapes from the dark cavern, has experienced the light of general truths and returned to the region of shadows to practice a generally illuminated version of his specialty. No one is more aware than E. F. Schumacher of the human disaster wrought by the ruthless patterns of high technology in the underdeveloped countries of the world. He sees in human terms what another specialist become philosopher, Lynn White, the historian, sees in ecological terms as the consequence of teaming science with industry. Such men are *bound* to question the boundless optimism of a Teilhard in respect to the potentialities of scientific research. Speaking of the disorder in the human environment produced by the uncontrolled energies of technological progress, Mr. White remarks: "Surely no creature has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order."

While, then, we await the rounded development of the capacity to think broadly and philosophically about human life, we need practical help of this sort, to guard against too easy simplifications of the tasks ahead. No one is better qualified to give such help than the multiplying breed of men who are specialists turned generalists. What makes them change? The requirements of their work, the obligation sensed, if not conceptually defined, to make wholes out of parts, and to recognize insistently and deal stubbornly with discontinuities and failures. We speak often in these pages of the philosophizing tendencies of the humanistic psychologists—of men who, brought by their daily duties into contact with shattered human lives, have been literally driven by their professional role to face the question of how human beings may be made whole again. A generation or so of the practice of psychotherapy led to the profound realization, now become virtually a consensus, that mental health is realization of meaning, and that meaning is the vital content of a philosophy of life. And since therapists are not teachers of philosophy, but specialists in the dynamics of thought and feeling, they tend to become Socratic teachers—men who try to *provoke* to philosophy, while claiming no particular knowledge for themselves. The "doctrines" of the humanistic psychologist may be regarded as no more than the intellectual content which follows inescapably from a basic respect for the independent moral agent in every human being. It is this incommensurable reality in man which gives to the new psychology its ardent and aspiring tone, and which is playing no small part in the reconstruction of the idea of science itself.

Another group of specialists having to do with wholeness may be called—with the broad, general meaning rapidly being acquired by this term—simply designers. As distinguished from those we call artists, with whom they have much in common, designers play a large, professional part in shaping the human environment. In this sense they are, or come to think of themselves as, makers of wholes. Unlike most other people whose activities give external shape to the world, they work at this task deliberately. Being both artists and in some sense social engineers, they bear heavy burdens, and when it becomes evident to them that forces which they do not control, yet are plainly alien to the ends designers seek to achieve, threaten to dominate the scene and circumstances of their work, designers become embattled critics. This makes them generalists in an area of ever-growing responsibility. And as specialists in environment-making, they become highly sensitive to the obstacles to making good environments long before the world at large is aware of the problems involved. What for them begins as æsthetic revolt often turns into an expression of moral outrage.

Books by Lewis Mumford, Norman Bel Geddes, Sigfried Giedion, Walter Dorwin Teague, and Henry Dreyfuss reflect aspects of the point of view here described, with varying degrees of

intensity. The designer wants to develop wholes, in the sense of giving the human environment as much of a holistic character as he can. When he finds himself stopped, he turns naturally to finding out why. While Giedion is an art historian rather than a designer, he is one of the ablest spokesmen of the design point of view. In *Space, Time and Architecture* (Harvard University Press, 1962), he says:

> The Industrial Revolution, the abrupt increase in production brought about during the eighteenth century by the introduction of the factory system and the machine, changed the whole appearance of the world, far more than the social revolution in France. Its effect upon thought and feeling was so profound that even today we cannot estimate how deeply it has penetrated into man's very nature, what great changes it has made there. Certainly there is no one who has escaped these effects, for the Industrial Revolution was not a political upheaval, necessarily limited in its consequences. Rather, it took possession of the whole man and of his whole world. Again, political revolutions subside, after a certain time, into a new social equilibrium, but the equilibrium that went out of human life with the coming of the Industrial Revolution has not been restored to this day. The destruction of man's inner quiet and security has remained the most conspicuous effect of the Industrial Revolution. The individual goes under before the march of production; he is devoured by it.

What are the grounds of such judgments? They are in the great generalist tradition of Thomas Carlyle and William Morris. They speak from a level of subjective awareness which is also the designer's outlook on life. Design is the discipline of sensibility. Without sensibility—which is also developed in other ways—this sort of awareness may be completely absent. As Giedion says:

> Some think that we stand at the beginning of a great tradition. Others, seeing the disaster around them, think that we are at the utmost end of an age. The evaluation of the nineteenth century depends upon which of these is right.
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> If our culture should be destroyed by brutal forces—or even if it should continue to be terrorized by them—then the nineteenth century will have to be judged as having misused men, materials, and human thought, as one of the most wretched of periods. If we prove capable of putting to their right use the potentialities which were handed down to us, then the nineteenth century, in spite of the human disorder it created and in spite of the consequences which are still developing out of it, will grow into new and heroic dimensions.

In his Preface to the 1961 edition of *Space, Time and Architecture,* Giedion says that this book is centrally concerned with "contemporary man's separation between thinking and feeling—with his split personality—and with the unconscious parallelism of methods employed in art and science." This is now a diagnosis declared by many voices—by Herbert Read, for one, in his studies of the art of children, in which he shows the withering effect on the creative spirit during adolescence of over-intellectualized learning. Other champions of visual intelligence say the same thing. In *The Education of Vision* (Kepes, Braziller, 1965) Robert Jay Wolff, a painter, writes:

> Any college student with the gift of swift verbal comprehension, a retentive memory and a strong concern for personal status, may statistically earn the title of "superior." . . . But what is often accelerated is not superiority of mind but rather tidy, academic superficialities. . . . I believe that the normal child who refuses to be rushed into verbalization and who is slow to learn to talk, prolongs, to his own later advantage, a vital, wordless learning period where experience transcends identities. . . .

The industrial designer, who has learned certain facts of life from the grain of his profession, draws on this awareness. In *Design This Day* (Harcourt, Brace, 1949), Walter Dorwin Teague writes:

> Ideologies are the distractions and the obstructions that delay constructive advance. No ideological solution of our racial problems, so far devised, has in it more than one or two reasonable premises in a great proliferation of futilities; none certainly has even a small portion of adequacy as a chart of future advance, and most are fantastically evil in their potentialities. No merchant of words will ever succeed in planning a world fit for human living; not even men actually busy at the task can see the way for more than a short distance ahead. It will be done by men who painstakingly deal with the immediate and evident tasks, extending the rule of order a little further, in confidence that by this success the direction of a still further advance will be revealed. . . . We have multiplied our productive powers to the

> point where the rebuilding of our entire environment to fit the needs of decent human living is delayed only by our wills, not by our ability to do the job.

There is also something of Teilhard's naïve faith, here—in Teilhard, faith in science; in Teague, faith in technology guided by design—and some tough-minded warnings of the sort administered by Schumacher are in order. Yet Teague shares with Buckminster Fuller the contempt of practical, constructive intelligence for political abstractions and ideological claims. Meanwhile, Gyorgy Kepes, in his introduction to *The Education of Vision*, makes the necessary comment on much of the application of technology, thus far:

> Our cities, our buildings (counterfeit inside and out), objects for use, the packaging of goods, posters, advertising in our newspapers—even our clothes, our gestures, our physiognomies—are often without visual integrity. The world that modern man has constructed by and large lacks sincerity and scale. It is twisted in space, without light, and cowardly in color. It combines mechanically consistent patterns of details within formless wholes. It is oppressive in its fake monumentality; degrading in its petty, fawning manner of face-lifting. Men living in this environment, injured emotionally and intellectually by the terrific odds of their compassless society, cannot avoid injury to their sensibilities, the basis of their creative faculties.

Still another "design" perspective on modern life is provided by a scientist of the American Museum of Natural History, A. E. Parr, who wrote in the Winter of 1964 *Landscape:*

> At the rate at which we are changing our surroundings, the task of examining whether or not perceptual diversity fills a real psychological need is long overdue. . . . As the pattern of the cityscape becomes more and more uniform by architectural design and public regulation, the rewards of exploring the neighborhood milieu dwindle to insignificance. With the increasing predictability of the perceptual environment, unpredictable behavior becomes a natural way to seek challenges that the adventurous spirit demands and the evolving environment tries to deny. The loud delinquency of the juvenile and the quiet or restless boredom of the adult are probably in large measure only different responses to the sensory famine.
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> Any experienced traveler knows that there are cities or districts where he can walk for hours and miles before feeling any fatigue, while the prospects of other towns make him feel tired before he gets on his way. . . . It might be well to remember that the city is a stage on which the lives of most of us are acted out, and it should not be designed as though it were a columbarium for our ashes.

Here is a scientist who looks upon the constructions of the environment with his human feelings, and finds missing the "natural morality" of the diverse, unhomogenized scene. The violation of other canons of fitness was protested long ago by Henri van de Velde. Giedion relates:

> In Europe during the nineties a demand for morality in architecture arose in many different countries. As van de Velde puts it, people saw that the reigning architecture was a "lie," all posturing and no truth, and that greater purity of expression was needed. This means that, besides the urge to find new ways of expression suitable to the times, there was the more general urge to bring artistic expression into harmony with the new potentialities born of the age. Or we might say that the desire grew up to reconcile methods of feeling with methods of thinking.

It is difficult to recognize either the power or the importance of the designing intelligence without some attention to individual lives. For example, van de Velde was in the nineties a young Belgian painter who was obliged by his humanistic, moral-aesthetic sense to turn architect. In 1892, about to marry and to establish a home, he was simply unable to find a house that seemed right to him. "I would never," he explained to Giedion years after, "allow my wife and family to find themselves in 'immoral' surroundings." So he became an architect and designed his house and everything that went into it—even to the doorknobs. This house, he said, "pushed me into architecture." A similar resolve, during the previous generation, had spurred William Morris to revolt against the prevailing architectural practice in England. Giedion comments:

> Does this parallel mean that van de Velde simply followed the example Morris had already set? We do not think so. The parallel springs from the fact that the disorder introduced into human life by industry made itself felt in England more than thirty

> years earlier than on the continent. Identical conditions led to identical reactions.

The influence on design and culture of William Morris is fairly well known. Not so widely realized, perhaps, are the far-reaching effects of the intensity of van de Velde's convictions. Some twenty years after he completed his house in Brussels, he acted as godfather to the Bauhaus, suggesting to the Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar that Walter Gropius succeed him as director of the Academy for Arts and Crafts. All these men—artists, designers, craftsmen—were schooled in the laws of making wholes, in humanistic necessities of life in the grain of creative action. They would build, design, and teach—and if you changed the direction of their awareness by presenting them with antihuman opposition, they became determined generalists who, each in his own language, declared the principles of creative, holistic work. It was Gropius who affirmed in 1923:

> Although we may achieve an awareness of the infinite we can give form to space only with finite means. We become aware of space through our undivided Ego, through the simultaneous activity of soul, mind and body. Through his intuition, through his metaphysical powers, man discovers the immaterial space of inward vision and inspiration. This conception of space demands realization in the material world, a realization which is accomplished by the brain and the hands.

Such views, variously expressed, embody the high vision and dignity of the profession of the environment-makers, and the often concealed philosophic sensibility of the designing intelligence. Philosophy that is shaped and made viable in the grain of design and practical construction has a clear pragmatic sanction; it may have limits, but within those limits it is filled with demonstrable truth. This truth takes another form if denied or deprived of a field of action, as in the case of both Gropius and Moholy-Nagy, when they were obliged by their integrity as educators to resign from the Bauhaus in 1928, because of the anti-human forces then gathering strength in Germany. The same indomitable integrity is again illustrated in the glorious "failures" of Moholy-Nagy in Chicago, in the 40's, when he was confronted with the commercializing influences rampant in that city. From Sybil Moholy-Nagy's book about her husband, one has the picture of this intense man who found it impossible to give up, gathering his drawings into a portfolio and going about, ringing the door-bells of American industrialists and corporation presidents, to get the money to found his own school of design where he could teach without dictation from interfering trustees.

These are the men who are rescuing from cliché-mongers certain important truths about human life and human action. When they think, they join abstraction with particular knowledge gained from practical experience; when they speak, they unite personally-earned conviction with inimitable individual awareness; and when they crusade, they cannot—will not—hide their unique personal insights, their knowledge born from individual action, behind shallow political slogans or stultifying ideologies. There is no shrill, schizoid quality in what they say. In them, as in few other men, thought and feeling have remained indivisible. Read Gyorgy Kepes in certain of his introductory articles in the Vision + Value series (Braziller). Read Mumford, not forgetting his indictment of the Bikini nuclear test-shot as a Black Mass of modern physics (in the *Saturday Review);* and read some of Buckminster Fuller's recent expressions concerning the abolition of war, and in behalf of putting design intelligence into science and technology for the service of all mankind. These men are on the side of Life; they know its language.

REVIEW
AFRICAN SYNTHESIS

IN a review in the *Manchester Guardian,* Basil Davidson said of *Muntu—the New African Culture,* by the German scholar, Janheinz Jahn (Grove), "I do not think anyone could read this book and still imagine African systems of thought and belief as mere survivals from a savage chaos." *Muntu* is an expression of the new cultural anthropology and brings the same philosophical excitement as, say, Frankfort's work on the thought of the ancient Egyptians or Lévi-Strauss's volume, *The Savage Mind. Muntu,* as Mr. Davidson says, is "both a summary of African philosophy as it has evolved through the centuries, and a pointer to the direction in which it may move."

The stance of the author is defined by his admiration for the scholarly integrity of Levy-Bruhl, who late in life repudiated the concept of "pre-logical" thought which he had invented to characterize those whom he regarded as "primitive" peoples. Lévy-Bruhl wonderingly asked how he "could ever have conceived so ill-founded an hypothesis," and declared that "the logical structure of the human mind is the same in all men."

In short, Janheinz Jahn practices a chastened scholarship respectful of the uniformity of the human essence. His book is an act of restoration, and of atonement for a century or more of Western blindness in respect to the living depths of African culture. The fundamental event on which its flow of understanding is based was an experience of the French ethnologist, Marcel Griaule, who for many years studied the Dogon people who live on a bend of the Niger in the Sudan:

> In October 1946 Ogotommeli, an old but vigorous sage and hunter who had been accidentally blinded, summoned the ethnographer and expounded to him, in conversations which lasted thirty-three days, the world system, metaphysics and religion of the Dogon: "a world-system, the knowledge of which completely invalidated all the conceptions we had formed about the mentality of the Negroes or the mentality of the primitives in general." Ogotommeli set forth his knowledge systematically, in a poetic language rich in images; the ethnographer had only to write down what was dictated to him and translate it into French.

This event led to other discoveries and revelations concerning African thought, until careful studies of five different African peoples showed beyond doubt that the African heritage is *one*—for all the differences in detail these systems agree basically with one another." *Muntu* presents a generalized synthesis of these systems—a method, Jahn says, "justified by its outcome." Unfortunately, adequate summary is not possible here, for the reason that "it is a question of an African and not a European philosophy," so that the concepts can be described only indirectly in Western language. "They have," as Jahn says, "to be approached first from one side, then from another, until at last the concept in question has been circumscribed." The lay reader is likely to think that Mr. Jahn does this very well.

To understand African philosophy it is necessary to distinguish clearly between the *mythic* and the *theoretic* attitudes toward life. African philosophy is mythic. As Marias says in his *History of Philosophy,* "To mythic man things are propitious or harmful *powers* which he lives with and which he uses or shuns." The attitude of mythic man may be compared to that of the child who moves among forces which affect him in various ways. Later, he begins to *theorize,* and then he experiences alienation from the "things" which gain independent definition in terms of properties of their own.

We think of conceptual abstractions as representing maturity in thought, but loss of the *mythic,* feeling element may turn out to have been a serious mutilation of man's psychic life. Indeed, one could say that having intellectualized themselves beyond mythic understanding, modern Western cultures found it essential to devise a substitute for this lost sense of magical reality, and produced nothing better than the abstractions and passions of political ideology.

One interesting thing about African philosophy is its profound simplicity. It is based on four fundamentals—*Muntu, Kintu, Hantu,* and *Kuntu.* Muntu means "human being," the familiar *Bantu* being the plural. Man is the energizing principle in action, as distinguished from *Kinta,* which are

merely "things," without power to move themselves. (This recalls the Platonic idea of the soul as a self-moving unit, which causes motion in material things.) Hantu represents time and place, and Kuntu is modality—the way things are made and the rhythm or cycle of their being. "All being, all essence," says Prof. Jahn, "in whatever form it is conceived, can be subsumed under one of these categories." Further:

> Everything there is must be conceived of not as substance but as force. Man is a force, all things are forces, place and time are forces and the "modalities" are forces.

Deity is Ntu—

> the universal force as such, which, however, can never be conceived of apart from its manifestations. Muntu, Kintu, Hantu and Kuntu. NTU is Being itself, the cosmic universal force which only modern, rationalizing thought can abstract from its manifestations. . . . that Being which is at once force and matter, unseparated and undivided, sleeping primal force, yet without Nommo, without "life."

Nommo is *Logos,* the Word. "Nommo is the physical-spiritual life force which awakens all 'sleeping forces' and gives physical and spiritual life," and "God" is "the 'Great Muntu,' First Creator and First Begetter in one."

The African artist is not an "artist," but a creator and magician who uses *Nommo.* "If the woodcarver in cutting his statue determines by the force of his Nommo what the figure is to be, then he carves it in such a way as to make his designation recognizable." The ornament made by the African goldsmith remains a mere "thing" unless he breathes into it the name which gives it being. It is really made by the Word. Thus Jahn says:

> The first of the African arts is therefore poetry, not sculpture. The art of words is the pure Art of Nommo. In the poem the metre is rhythmical. When stressed syllables recur at regular intervals, we have a line of verse and then a poem. Yet even more essential than verbal rhythm is the rhythm of the drums; for . . . the language of the drums is also speech, it is Nommo, and indeed privileged Nommo, it is the word of the ancestors.

Prof. Jahn is at his best in comparing modern literature embodying the genuine African spirit with Westernized writing by men of African descent, who have lost this spirit. Richard Wright is an example of the latter, while Langston Hughes, he shows, is able to combine in balance the qualities of both cultures. Jahn says:

> It is not the artistic product that is important in African philosophy, but the fashion in which the creative, form-giving process takes effect. . . . For the European, the difficulty of the African use of æsthetic standards consists in our inability to separate Kuntu from Kintu [the thing from its modes:]. We always see the "work" as an object *having* meaning and rhythm. But the African sees Kuntu in action: the poem as recited, the carving in its function as stimulus in the worship of an orisha [disembodied life forces], the mask in the movement of the dance, that is, when it is Kuntu. In action Kuntu is complete, and here Kuntu is art and displays its efficacious value, its Nommo value, the standard of African aesthetics. Kuntu—and therewith art—is in Africa a force, and the force is accordingly the essential not of the art-*object* (Kintu), but of the exercise of art (Kuntu!). Art in Africa is never a thing but always an attitude or activity.

One more quotation:

> According to African philosophy man has, by the force of his word, dominion over "things"; he can change them, make them work for him and command them. But to command things with words is to practice "magic." And to practice word magic is to write poetry—that holds not only for Africa. Thus African philosophy ascribes to the word a significance which it has also in many other cultures, but there in poetry only. That is why African poetry made such a world-wide impression the moment it was heard beyond the bounds of Africa. African poetry is never a game, never *l'art pour d'art,* never irresponsible. "To practice magic" is therefore a weak expression; the African poet is not "an artist using magic," but a "magician," a "sorcerer" in the African sense. He is the muntu on the bridge of the world.

We must not neglect to point out that this book is rich in examples and discussion of the new African artists and novelists and poets who write in European languages, and that the author thoroughly understands and uses for orientation such writers as Frantz Fanon.

COMMENTARY
MISCELLANY

JUST for the record, and not really to diminish the impact of Janheinz Jahn's book, *Muntu* (see Review)—some passages in Danilo Dolci's A *New World in the Making,* to be reviewed next week, show the sad state into which some of the "primitive" beliefs of Africans have fallen. We doubt if Prof. Jahn is unaware of these things, but was occupied principally in redressing balances, not in pointing at obvious forms of decadence and decay, to which not even Africans are immune. Thus, to Dolci's question to some Ghanaians, "What do you do to have a good harvest?" there came the answer:

"We make an offering to the spirits of our ancestors by pouring gin on the land so that they'll send us lots of money to feed our wives and children."

We devote the rest of this space to some paragraphs by George Buchanan, an English writer. His "Note book" thoughts seem distilled rather than composed.

* * *

Social class may now more accurately be referred to in a geographical metaphor instead of that of fighting dogs, one on top, one underneath. There are not *upper, lower,* and *middle* classes, there are rather social regions containing differentiated groups.

The new jungle, the *terra incognita,* is in the region of individuals outside the "known" social regions. The respectable, the clearly demarcated types, say to them: "You lack a framework. You aren't anybody. How are we to *know* you?

* * *

The demand to be human has always led to revolt. It will again. Simple wishes aren't as unpolitical as many suppose. In the past we were afraid to wish. Wish-fulfillment was a term for something absurd. We had a block. To wish with imagination—a poetic act—was in danger of perishing.

* * *

We don't face a battle under 1917 flags. We're in a battle against more nebulous forces. The Establishment's strength rests on dreams implanted in the mass: dream-arrangements which seem more iron than the gates of a fort. Armed revolt would be no good. In such a case rebellious guns would fire in vain against figures who couldn't be wounded.

But some fictions *are* fading. This island off the coast of Europe is no longer a castle with a mysterious envied interior, with rosy lights from Winston Churchill and Royalty myths. The inhabitants are on view to the spectators, and the spectators are smiling, not always with respect. To them, the dressed-up officers on State occasions are historically misplaced, like animated souvenirs. Our rulers aren't able to send battleships to horizon-positions near coastal cities anywhere they wish, to cow local politics, as they once did.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

NOURISHED BY LIVING SOURCES

A TEACHER has to be something besides a teacher. Were it not for the immeasurable importance of teaching, you might say that the teacher has to be *very* much more than a teacher. Letting this paradox go, the point is that the teacher must have a life of his own—a hungering, yearning search of his own. He must be engaged in finding out things, confronting. and admitting the toughness of the obstacles before him, suffering defeats as well as victories. For if he is not involved in a life of his own, what has he to teach? Teaching is surely more than passing along to the young those items of information from which the satisfied and undiscovering obtain their small complacencies. A teacher who fails to convey the central truth that

> Veil after veil will lift—but there must be
> Veil upon veil behind

is getting both himself and his pupils ready for the button-molder's decisive operations.

Real teachers have different ways of conveying this truth. There can never be a single "correct" way—herein lies the fallacy of "method"—and the best method is always the one most natural to the teacher. Teachers who have not found this out have to go by the book, while teachers who begin to find it out are then obliged to have their quarrels and fights with the book, and in a time like the present the by-products of this conflict may turn out to be the best possible method of helping the young, since they, if they are any good, are going to have to do some fighting, too.

Because of this indispensable factor of individuality, there can be no "models" for good teaching. There can be example and inspiration, but no models. Models tempt to imitation, and good second-handed teaching does not exist. As Plato said, who could learn from a copy of a copy of a copy?

Contact with some teachers is like coming into a quiet lagoon, where all is beautiful and inviting to contemplation. Others are like tornadoes, swirling with the energy of their wrestling match with life. For the pupils, their winds are tempered with human concern, while the magnificence of their intensity to know becomes unforgettable. Something like this seems implicit in the work of Mary Caroline Richards, a poet, a potter, and a teacher of pottery in New York state. In 1964 Wesleyan University Press (Middletown, Conn.) published a book of her thoughts about pottery, poetry, and teaching, after persuading her to write it. The press thought such a book would build "bridges between disciplines." It certainly does this, although the expression seems an anti-climactic description of *Centering*—the title is based on the potter's first practical act: he "brings his clay into the center on the potter's wheel, and then he gives it whatever shape he wishes." Obviously, nothing works for the potter unless he centers the clay before spinning the wheel.

Toward the end of her book, Miss Richards says:

> Once I had a dream, a short one. I like it because it isn't often that we get a really good look at ourselves in a way that makes us smile, however ruefully. In this dream I am sitting literally on the edge of a chair, talking urgently with someone. I am bending forward, my hands are active. "But we don't know anything about love," I am saying; "if we did, we could teach it."
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> Well, perhaps we do not know much about love. And surely we cannot yet put it in the curriculum. Freshman love, Sophomore Compassion, Junior Moral Imagination, Senior Enlightenment, with Freedom as an elective. With required courses in Second Sight and Speaking With Tongues. And a graduate program leading to a master's degree in Union with Cosmos!
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> Such a dream haunts us all, to some degree. It is as if a being within ourselves bears images from afar to which we may in our waking work aspire.

> One of our most excruciating labors is to bring into center the vision and the rebellious flesh. It is a recurring temptation to reject in anger our partial efforts to redeem ourselves. Because the body cannot yet live out the spirit-dream, because incarnation is incomplete—half-man; half-demon, half-angel—one is tempted to judge by action rather than by ideals as well. It is a touchy business. For it is easy to be high-minded. Ready-made goals are cheap. You may easily agree, for example, that centering is necessary and yet be unwilling to bring into center an element of life that does not interest you. It is very difficult to practice what we agree to in theory. And it is very difficult to be modest in our scorn of the gap between what we dream and what we do, and to persevere patiently in our efforts to bridge it. This battle is daily and specific and basic.

This is the pragmatic seeker's Kingdom of Heaven; after achieving it "all these things shall be added unto him."

Why are not such things said more often? Because we do not—or very few people—have the language to say them. It is a case in which the letter killeth, in which symbol is truer than fact—a matter of which Plato spoke warily in his seventh epistle.

But could there not be a lot of great poetry written about such things?

There could, and there has been, but we do not read it, nor often write it, any more. Such work is born from courage married to spiritual longing, and the people of our time have the curious impression that in order to find out about spiritual things, one ought to go to church. We have the emasculating notion that these investigations were completed by others long ago. Some of the modern poets and some of the humanistic psychologists know better, of course. And among the latter are interesting men with academic hair-cuts and portfolios of footnotes who will burst into song if you give them any excuse at all. The times they are a'changin', as we learn from a pied piper who grew up on the other side of the generational tracks.

Here are some words on education by Miss Richards:

> Participation in history and society grows out of myth, legend, biography, nature study. The sense of language grows out of motion and gesture and picture and sound. A sense of the earth and its resources grows out of a kinship with its living surfaces and depths. And the teacher should aid in this education *personally*—not by textbooks! (The children should make their own.) The knowledge he may convey to them will be infused with human qualities of imagination and sensory delight and true concern. The acts of manhood will have been nourished by living sources. This is the hope. The alternatives appear to be estrangement, sterility, moral lunacy. However bohemian or bourgeois the cut.
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> A teacher is at a disadvantage who is not deeply sensitive to the nature of his pupil. Some may, for example, be concerned for a child's freedom, yet be unable to share his anxieties, or enjoy his noise, his candor, his affection and innocence. They may admire the poetry written by adults for children, but be quite ignorant of how the poetic impulse manifests in children themselves. This is perhaps why it is said that a good teacher is taught by his students. For he is not to teach them merely what he knows but to help them bring to maturity what is already in them. It takes, of course, a very good ear, to hear what is present in a child, or an adult.

Well, all this may have been said before, but never with more persuasiveness or clarity, and it belongs to an order of truth which must be repeated over and over again.

FRONTIERS

Learning from "Nature"

IN a paper called *Evolution and Ethics,* Thomas Huxley—after Darwin the most famous of the nineteenth-century evolutionists—proposed what might now be called "Reality Therapy" for the human race, but his idea was not taken seriously, as the growing popularity of "Social Darwinism" made clear. Huxley wrote (in 1894):

> Cosmic evolution may teach us how the good and evil tendencies of man may have come about; but, in itself, it is incompetent to furnish any better reason why what we call good is preferable to what we call evil than what we had before. . . . Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process, the end of which is not the survival of those who happen to be fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically best. . . . The practice of that which is ethically best—what we call goodness or virtue—involves a course of conduct which in all respects is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion it demands self-restraint, in place of thrusting aside or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive.
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> Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of society depends not on imitating the cosmic process, still less in running away from it, but in combatting it.

Interestingly enough, Darwin himself had reached a similar view, apparently through the influence of Alfred Russel Wallace, as early as 1864. In that year, commenting on the latter's paper, "Man," which had appeared in the *Anthropological Review* for March, he said in a letter to Wallace:

> It is really admirable; but you ought not in the Man paper to speak of the theory as mine, it is just as much yours as mine. One correspondent has already noticed to me your "high-minded" conduct on this head. But now for your Man paper, about which I should like to write more than I can. The great leading idea is quite new to me, viz. that during late ages, the mind will have to be modified more than the body; yet I had got as far as to see with you that the struggle between the races of man depended entirely on intellectual and *moral* qualities.

Thus Darwin, Wallace, and Huxley—the three nineteenth-century "greats" of evolution. It is a way of saying that the principles of human behavior are *sui generis*—they arise in man, and if he is to evolve to a better condition he will have to be attentive to them.

But no more than the followers of Newton—who was never a Mechanist in philosophy—would listen to their teacher, did the later biologists and evolutionists listen to the founders of the evolution movement on the question of the survival and good of Man. For generations after their impact, a man who wanted to say something that would be recognized as "science" regarding human behavior had to go looking for his facts in animal behavior. Broad as well as limited ideas about human beings had to originate in comparative psychology, just as the dynamics of human thought and action had to be explained by the mechanistic hypothesis, after Pavlov and John B. Watson. The idea of a man doing something because he *chose* to do it, for good and sufficient reason, was regarded as simply ridiculous, unworthy of a scientist's attention.

It is no wonder that the great nations have long ago given up on the appeal to reason as a basis of foreign policy. Either you *make* people do what you want them to do, using overpowering military force, or you *manipulate* them into it by playing on their weakness and self-interest. You don't treat them like reasonable men; that would be naïve and unrealistic; reason is only the rhetoric which analysts of power politics must get behind to find the *real* meaning of what is said. Words, in diplomacy, are not communications; they are "signs."

Of course, this may be quite natural for people who don't believe in reason, and who declare, day after day, that national policy can have no relation to morality.

It does not amount to a denial of the evil tendencies in human nature to point out that there are other tendencies—peculiarly *human* tendencies—which never even get tried out as the basis for agreement and cooperation in a world endlessly indoctrinated with the idea that they do not exist in any reliable way. And how much of their apparent absence or weakness is due to the confirmed habit of refusing to take them seriously? What *about* a world which by due process of law turns into martyrs and jail-birds the young men who decide that they agree with Wallace, Darwin, and Huxley about human fitness and survival? Who are the really scientific, tough-minded people, these days?

These reflections are prompted by an article in the *Saturday Review* for May 27, by John F. Wharton, titled "What Nature Reveals about Peacemaking." This writer, a New York lawyer, points out that if you want to *"negotiate* a peace," instead of demanding the unconditional surrender which, in the long term, produces very messy results, you had better seek understanding of "the complexities of human behavior." Then, for a beginning at this, he proposes a reading of Wilfred Trotter's minor classic, *Instinct of the Herd in Peace and War,* published in 1908.

What we are mildly quarreling with, here, is the devotion to animal behavior as a means of understanding human behavior. In a sense, Mr. Wharton is quarreling with it, too, since, with Trotter, he declares that the "herd instinct" is in man supplemented by another quality, "altruism," which, he says, *"must* spring from a powerful instinctive drive, because nothing short of that could make an idealist risk the shocking treatment so frequently experienced by the reformer during his life." Well and good, but why the long treatise on "animals" only in order to abandon the models they make? Perhaps Mr. Wharton believes that we are so convinced of our "animality" that no one will take him seriously unless he starts out this way.

But it seems such a long way around. One can only suppose that serious people still believe that the best way to find out about human beings is to study something else. Some eighteenth-century logic relating to another kind of "authority" might apply here: "Is it simple, is it natural, that God should go in search of Moses to speak to Jean Jacques Rousseau?"

There was perhaps some excuse for Kropotkin to base his *Mutual Aid* on animal behavior—anyhow, it's a lovely book—but today one may find in Flower Power a more significant basis for peace-making. The problem is to move people with *human* feeling and *human* reason to put an end to war. We are not really reduced to analogies with the behavior of the Great Apes. And before people will demand and make peace because *they* want it, and not because somebody says that Nature's "powerful instinctive drive" permits it, they will have to be persuaded, somehow, that they are *real* and that they think real thoughts about real things. When that happens, then writers for the *Saturday Review* will not have to write so wistfully about the future of the human race, as Mr. Wharton does in his conclusion:

> To most people, human evolution has always been deemed too slow a process to be observable. But in this issue, we can, in our own lifetime, see the development going on. We *may see* the final result.
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> In the light of such a struggle the question of Geneva Accords and "losing face" fade rapidly to minor issues. Johnson, Rusk, McNamara, and Ho and Mao all appear as spokesmen for little organisms seeking to stay out of the development which Nature seeks as her grandest experiment to date. We see the world as a common humanity in which the struggles of little men clinging to little dreams of sovereignty reduce to what they are. In that light, perhaps we can hope that if altruism is still too weak to serve the cause of a better world, humility may be a temporary substitute.