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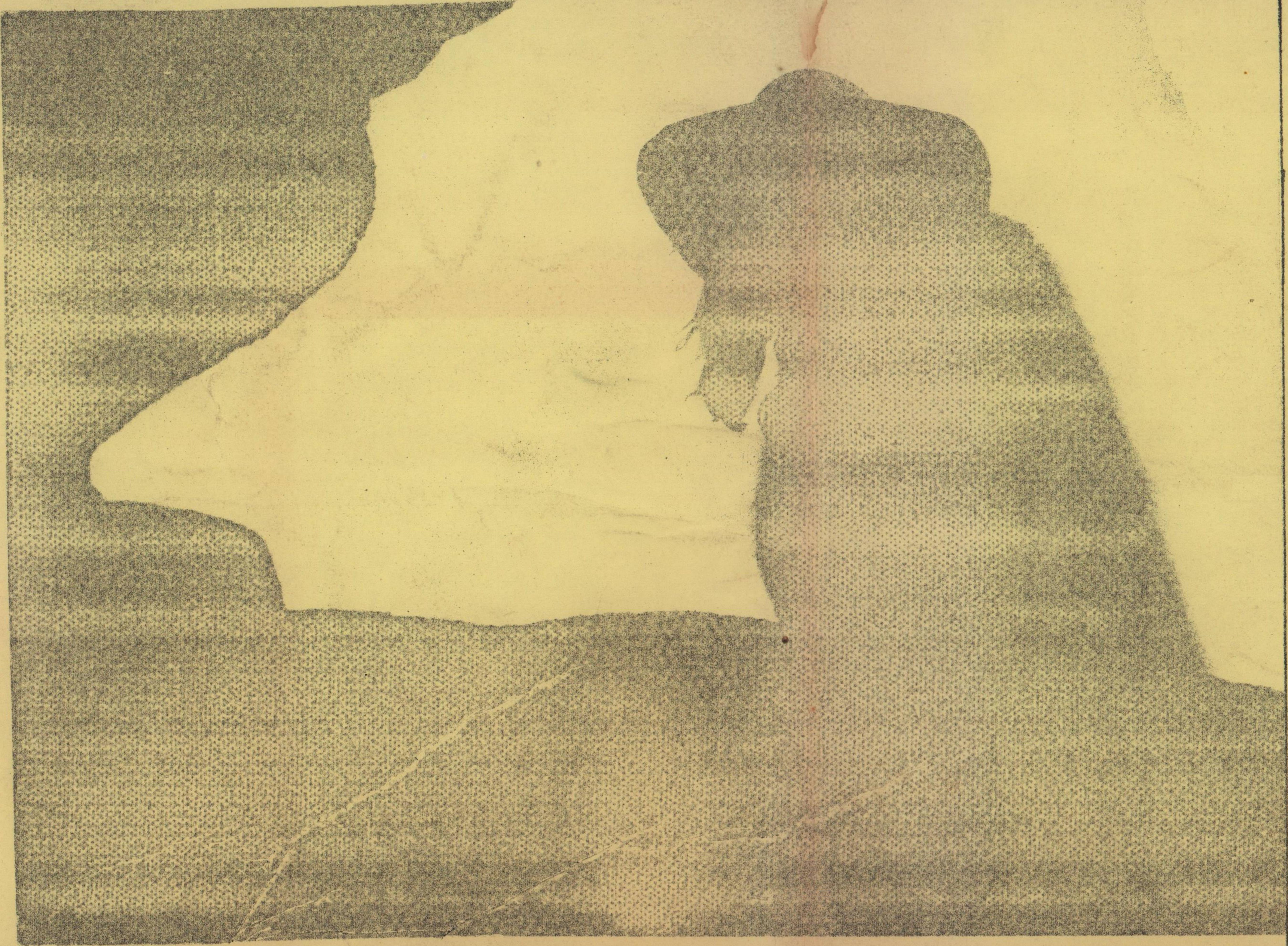
What Rough Beast?

—

Alex Comfort.

Introduction By
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15p.



THE ANARCHISM OF ALEX COMFORT.

Just after the war, two young writers on either side of the Atlantic published collections of their wartime essays. Their books had a similar tone and character both were of social as well as literary criticism, and they even had similar titles; Paul Goodman's was called 'ART AND SOCIAL NATURE', Alex Comfort's was called ART AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY. Goodman's was put together 'when I was having a disagreement with the Selective Service and was set to go to jail, though this was entirely against both my prudent principles and my wishes ... my philosophical and political position was Dodging' Comfort's was written when, according to his publisher, he had become known as 'an aggressive anti-militarist, having headed agitation against indiscriminate bombing and himself refusing military service... 'From now on,' he declared, 'the deserter is every man's friend'

Neither book attracted much attention when published but an interesting thing has happened since; in the last years, both authors have frequently had the suggestion put to them that these long out of print essays from obscure publishers and from a period of which little of permanent value awaits resurrection should be reprinted

It is as though, after a new generation had grown up, people suddenly found them relevant, suddenly found that they 'speak to our condition'. Nor was it for the sake of their criticism of literature and the arts that the requests for reprints came, it was for those more 'ephemeral' essays which took the form of political manifestoes; in Goodman's case for the five essays which formed part of his book called THE MAY PAMPHLET and in Comfort's essays ART AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY and THE END OF A WAR (October 1944 -) both of which had originally appeared in George Woodcock's magazine NOW.

Goodman's May Pamphlet has been reprinted, together with some recent essays, in a paperback 'Drawing the Line' (New York: Random House 1962); Comfort's essays have not, partly because he is conscious of having said the same things again since, and partly because his own programme of work is so full that he hasn't time to make those revisions which after a lapse of almost twenty years, he feels are necessary. Young friends of Goodman assure him that his May Pamphlet makes more sense today than when he wrote it, and Nicholas Walter referring to Comfort as "the true voice of nuclear disarmament, much more than that of Bertrand Russell or anyone else" remarks that "At the end of the last war he wrote its obituary and drew its moral. What he said is as valid and valuable today as it was then, when he was a very young man who kept his head when all around were losing theirs, and I can think of nothing better to say to very young people who are trying to do the same thing eighteen years later."

Comfort and Goodman are characters of a very different kind, but their preoccupations are similar. Both bridge the so-called two cultures, both are novelists and poets, while Goodman is a teacher turned psychotherapist and Comfort is a physician turned biologist. Each has evolved a distinctive anarchism of his own in which resistance to war and war preparation is combined with the search for alternatives to authoritarian and coercive social institutions. This is the reason why they have become relevant for a generation which, after the smug nineteen-fifties, became for the first time involved in public affairs through the campaign for nuclear disarmament, and found that the campaign against the bomb was inevitably a campaign against the state, and then that a campaign against the state became a campaign for different kinds of social and economic institutions based on participation and co-operation rather than coercion and competition. The kind of war resistance which these two anarchists called for years ago, and have not ceased to advocate since, is precisely the kind which has continually seemed about to grow from the radical wing of the campaign against the bomb. The philosophy which Comfort set out in October 1944 is precisely that of the Committee of 100.

Two writers and their programmes

Both these writers have at one time or another felt impelled to set out some form of programme, and it is interesting to compare them. Goodman prefaces his (in THE MAY PAMPHLET) with three preconditions: (a) It is essential that our programme can, with courage and mutual encouragement and mutual aid, be put into effect by our own effort, to a degree at once and progressively more and more, without recourse to distant party or union decisions (b) The groups must be small, because mutual aid is our common human nature mainly with respect to those with whom we deal face to face (c) Our action must be aimed not, as utopians, at a future establishment; but (as millenarians, so to speak) at fraternal arrangements today, progressively incorporating more and more of the social functions into our free society.

His programme, condensed rather crudely, is as follows:

1. Satisfactory work, industrial decentralisation, workers' control.
2. Standard of living to be based on subsistence and humane well-being instead of exploitative institutions and coercive advertising.
3. Provide opportunity for "the sexual gratification of adolescents. This is

essential in order to prevent the pattern of coercion and authority from re-emerging no matter what the political change has been".

4. In small groups we must exercise direct initiative in community problems of personal concern to ourselves (housing, community plan, schooling, etc.) The constructive decisions of intimate concern to us cannot be delegated to representative government and bureaucracy.
5. Group psychotherapy so that "living in the midst of an alienated way of life ... we no longer regard as guilty or conspiratorial such illegal acts as spring from common human nature ... On the other hand, we must see that many acts commonly regarded as legal and even meritorious are treason against our natural society, if they involve us in situations where we cease to have personal responsibility and concern for the consequences."
6. "We must progressively abstain from whatever is connected with the war... If we are to have peace, it is necessary to wage the peace. Otherwise, when their war comes, we must also hold ourselves responsible for it."

Comfort's programme (in *AUTHORITY AND DELINQUENCY IN THE MODERN STATE*) is followed by the observation that

Direct pressure through the mechanism of parliamentary parties does not figure in this list of aims. There are those who will feel that such an omission is perverse. On the other hand, it is doubtful, on the grounds which have been set out in this book, whether progress through the institutional pattern is worth attempting, and whether a more revolutionary approach is not valuable in itself, as a means of bringing home our point.

His programme, again condensed, is as follows:

1. Measure to increase public awareness of the state of society and of the results of research into human social psychology. The focus here is educational, through the explanation of the mechanics of specific problems such as war or social neurosis ...
2. Fundamental experiments in communal living and control of resources. These have a demonstration value out of all proportion to their size. They are often the criticism that they depend on the society which they are attacking, but it is hard to see why they should not do so. A widespread growth of spontaneous experiment of this kind is likely to prove a serious competitor to the less satisfactory institutional apparatus, and influence it as much as experimental rehabilitation has influenced penology.
3. Specific pressure, towards controlled break-up of large city aggregates, increased workers control in industry, with decentralisation of large units.
4. Concentrated propaganda to introduce sociality into the place where character-formation takes place, the family and the school. The value of this type of instruction has been proved by the striking change in ideas of parental and educational discipline during the last twenty years.
5. Individual psychiatry ... The task of adjustment is not the reaction of centralised morale and of acquiescence, but the building of a morale based on negative resistance to bad institutions and positive determination to experiment in social living so that they can be superseded. This is the most specifically revolutionary part of our work. It may involve not only individual therapy but such measures of propaganda as we can undertake through writing, speaking and living. It may involve specifically revolutionary activity, such as the encouragement of direct resistance to delinquent authority and the withdrawal of scientific support from projects involving secrecy, the suppression of information, and the abuse of technology for war purposes.

The tone as well as the content of these two programmes are similar, and they are reflected very closely in the approach to anarchism of contributors to this journal, and in the topics discussed by the newest generation of anarchists. One of the new student groups for instance defines its field thus: "We are interested in workers' control of industry, child-centred education, the abolition of the punitive element in justice, the increased decentralisation of institutions, co operation not competition, the maximum self-determination of individuals. Such preoccupations allow plenty of scope for action; and when the opportunity arises, we will act."

Against the bomb

Like Goodman, whose works were discussed in *Anarchy* 11 Comfort is a man whose ideas flow from one field of his work to another. He says of himself, "I build up a fund of ideas as a result of my various activities and then use them in whichever sphere is most appropriate. For instance, I was studying the colours of horses' coats in the Stud Book from a genetic point of view, as part of my research into ageing. Then I found myself using the different colours of women's hair as a theme in a poem". Another by-product of the same research was a radio talk on the changing fashions in the names given to horses, which provided him with the unlikeliest of pretexts to bring in the topic of nuclear disarmament. Comfort never lets these opportunities slip, whether it is a public discussion of Britain's morals or an article in the press on earlier maturity. Having been concerned with anti-war

propaganda all his adult life, he has never ceased to seek out new ways of getting a hearing. In 1950 he wrote an official looking leaflet (published by PPU) called Civil Defence -- What you should do now, which was subject of angry questions in the House of Commons because of what the Home Secretary called its 'subversive' character. In 1958, at the meeting that launched the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, he declared;

"Much as been said about a summit conference. Sanity is always hardest to restore at the summit-- the air there is rarified. It seems to affect the brain. We can reassert at the base. The people must take over.

I do not see the parties giving an answer to the hundreds of people of all persuasions who are asking what they individually can do to reassert the rule of sanity. The issue is one for direct action."

He was one of those original members of the Committee of 100 who were sentenced to a month's imprisonment for organising the Trafalgar Square sit-down. His voice has been frequently heard on the pirate radio station Voice of Nuclear Disarmament, he was arrested for sticking up anti-bomb posters, and is the author of a collection of anti-bomb songs called ARE YOU SITTING COMFORTABLY? For him the important thing about the campaign is that it has made people vocal, has made them ask questions, and has brought them out on the street. "The people learn slowly, and learn incompletely" he wrote nineteen years ago, "They remain sonnabulists, but the pressure of the times moves them." And in that remarkable war-time manifesto he concluded "When enough people respond to the invitation to die, not with a salute but with a smack in the mouth, and the mention of war emptied the factories and fills the streets, we may be able to talk about freedom."

SEX WITHOUT GUILT

The other subject on which Comfort's views gained a certain notoriety is of course, the ever interesting topic of sexual relations, less through his books (see list on back page) than as a result of a Sunday night television discussion. Here he summed up his code on sexual behaviour in the words of Bertrand Russell's definition of the good life; that it should be inspired by love and directed by intelligence, and the two aspects to which he applied this approach were the sexual lives of adolescents, and monogamy. The fact that sex is still regarded as a 'problem' is the major negative achievement of Christianity, he suggested. "We might as well make up our minds that chastity is no more a virtue than malnutrition" Now everybody knows that teenage lovmaking does not stop short of copulation, but because the myth of "chastity", nobody inculcates the simple and obvious and technical rules of sexual behaviour. His moral injunctions - which have become quite well known thanks to this television programme - are "Thou shalt not exploit another person's feelings" and "Thou shalt under no circumstances, cause the birth of an unwanted child." The technical requirement is of course "sex education" should include instruction to the young on the intelligent and correct use of foolproof contraceptives.

The reference to 'commandments' led Maurice Carstairs to question why, as an anarchist, Comfort was prescribing rules, to which he replied that a philosophy of freedom demanded higher standards of personal responsibility than a belief in authority. The lack of ordinary prudence and chivalry which could often be observed in adolescent sexual behaviour today was precisely the result of prescribing the code of chastity which did not make sense, instead of principles which are "immediately intelligible and acceptable to any sensible youngster".

But the observation which won him the Daily Mirror headline "TV Doctor's Amazing Sex Talk" was his definition of a chivalrous boy as one who takes contraceptives with him when he goes to meet his girlfriend.

He was equally provocative when he came to talk of adult sexual relationships. A good many marriages and a good many personalities, he suggested require an 'adulterous' prop to keep them on their feet. The extended life span in modern Western society means that "till Death do us part" is, as he put it "a hell of a long time" and the concept of romantic love places a very heavy strain on marriage. (He refers of course to the relationship than rather the legal institution).

"In choosing a partner we try both retain the relationships we have enjoyed in childhood, and to recoup ourselves for fantasies which have been denied us. Mate - selection accordingly becomes for many an attempt to cast a particular part in a fantasy production of their own and since both parties have the same intention but rarely quite the same fantasies, the result may well be a duel of rival producers. There are men as Stanley Spencer said of himself, who need two complimentary wives and women who need two complimentary husbands, or at least two un-complimentary love-objects. If we insist first that this is immoral or 'unfaithful', and second, that should it occur there is an obligation to each love-object to insist on exclusive rights, we merely add unnecessary difficulties to a problem which might have presented none, or at least presented fewer, if anyone were permitted to solve it in their own way.

The anarchist reader who presumably takes all this for granted will notice in comparing BARBARISM AND SEXUAL FREEDOM, or SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR IN SOCIETY, with Comfort's most recent utterances on sex, that his opinion have apparently become more radical. When I put this to him, he replied that it was not so much his opinions that had changed - although the arrival of the contraceptive pill had altered the situation - has his manner of expressing them "In offering advice to people, especially the young, you incur a responsibility, which considering the weird use that people do make of your advice, is pretty heavy." The young are making their own sexual Revolution whether their elders like it or not and Comfort's point is that they should be supported and aided as well as being given some awareness of the emotional reactions of the opposite sex.

Comfort notes in his book DARWIN AND THE NAKED LADY that "the actual content of sexual behaviour probably changes much less between culture than the individual's capacity to enjoy it without guilt" and he believes that Western society is beginning to get away from the "operative" view of sex. He argues in the introduction to THE KOKA SHASTRA AND OTHER MEDIAEVAL INDIAN WRITING ON LOVE that the function of erotic literature is not vicarious stimulation but reassurance;

"The gain which modern English readers are likely to get from Indian erotic literature is precisely of this kind... what is profitable to them - and us - in spite of the distance of time and culture which separates us from Sanskrit literature, is the contrast in attitudes - acceptance and pleasure where we have for generations been taught to look for danger and guilt."

SCIENCE AND ANARCHISM

What links Comfort's attitude to war resistance and his attitude to sexual freedom is the notion of personal and social responsibility. This, and his confidence in scientific method are at the root of his anarchism, which is based on a few quite simple propositions which have recurred frequently, with variations, in his work over the last twenty years, in his fiction and poetry as much as in his "sociological" writings. The first (as set out in his series of broadcast talks THE PATTERN OF THE FUTURE) is that Western society has "grown out of and beyond" the Christian tradition, into a new tradition of thought which demand "the evidence to support statements, evidence of their conformity to the same tests of reality which we employ in scientific study or in everyday life", the tradition, that is, of scientific humanism. 'Humanism does not formulate ten commandments. It formulates one only. Man's survival depends on the outcome of his struggle with a morally neutral universe, and on the maintenance of responsibility between men. Do nothing which increases the difficulties which any individual has to face, and leave nothing undone which increases the difficulties which any individual has to face and leave nothing undone which diminishes them' Where the orthodox morality has sanction in scientific fact, he once wrote in FREEDOM, "I will support it; where it has not, a new morality must be devised which has,"

This is the position which leads him to anarchism; "I write as an anarchist, that is, as one who rejects the conception of power in society as a force which is both anti social and unsound in terms of general biological principle. If I have any metaphysical and ethical rule on which to base my ideas, it is that of human solidarity and mutual aid against a hostile environment..."

Comfort claims that his anarchism is founded in his scientific approach and consequently it is not surprising that those anarchist thinkers of the past whom he cites with approval are Godwin, who was rooted in the eighteenth century spirit of rational enquiry (and who is described in the ENCYCLOPAEDIA OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCES as "the first political psychologist") and Kropotkin, who consciously sought to give anarchism a scientific basis (and who Comfort calls "the founder of modern social ecology") Only Comfort could introduce a long quotation from Malatesta with the words Malatesta, though not a social psychologist, gives a statement of the anarchist case which is possible more balanced than any since Godwin"

Modern sociology, he says, in AUTHORITY AND DELINQUENCY: "would seem to uphold the libertarian-anarchist rather than the totalitarian institutional conception of social change, though it does so with marked reservations" and he continues

"If the word ANARCHISM as a name for the attempt to effect changes away from the centralised and institutional towards the social and 'life orientated' society, carries irrational implications, or suggests a preconceived ideology either of man or of society, we may hesitate to accept it. No branch of science can afford to ally itself with revolutionarily fantasy, with emotionally determined ideas of human contact, or with psychopathic attitudes. On the other hand suggested alternative - 'biotechnic civilisation' (Mumford), 'para-primitive society' (G.R. Taylor) - have little advantage beyond their novelty, and acknowledge none of the debts which we owe to pioneers. 'Free Society' is equally undesirable for its importation of an emotive and undefinable idea of freedom.

If therefore the intervention of sociology in modern affairs tend to propagate a form of anarchism, it is anarchism based on observational research., which

has little in common with older revolutionary theory besides its objectives. It rests upon standards of scientific assessment to which the propagandist and actionist elements in nineteenth century revolutionary thought are highly inimical. It is also experimental and tentative rather than dogmatic and Messianic. As a theory of revolution it recognises the revolutionary process as one to which no further limit can be imposed - revolution of this kind is not a single act of redress or vengeance followed by a golden age, but a continual human activity whose objectives recede as it progresses.

AUTHORITY AND DELINQUENCY IN THE MODERN STATE? Which is subtitled "A criminological approach to the problem of power." is undoubtedly Comfort's most important contribution to anarchist thought. Its theme is not merely that power corrupts but that corrupt men seek power and he seeks to provide evidence for the view that democratic, as well as totalitarian societies tend to select for executive and legislative office individuals who are potentially or actually anti-social delinquents. Its author describes it as a text-book. If it is, it must be the only text-book to contain the injunction that "Obedience in modern societies is more often a hideous vice than a Christian virtue". This book's insistence on a 'sociological' anarchism is reiterated in Comfort's most recent book SEX IN SOCIETY.

"The present age is an age, in England, of a very depressed revolutionaries. Revolution in its nineteenth century significance, a mass movement of the people against a particular institutional system and in support of another seen farther off than it has ever been. The depression of those who wish to revert to this pattern of political reform is fully justified.... That the application of sociology to life will involve 'revolutionary' action by the mass of individualism which may prove at least as strenuous and exacting as that envisaged by the older revolutionaries, should not be allowed to obscure the difference between the new and the old....

Writers on political revolution tend to distinguish between two types of attitude, the revolutionary and the reformist, by which they mean the approach to a problem based upon the acceptance of radical change, and the approach based on the gradual pushing and pulling of existing institutions into the desired form. A rather similar division exists in constructive sociology. In educating the society in which we live, we have to distinguish between objectives and palliatives. I have said that an approach to sexual adequacy is only one facet of the approach to social adequacy, and that social change of the type which recent work appears to favour must involve positive solutions of the problem of power in society. This is both a political and a sociological objective, and we are fully justified in reasserting that attempts to secure such reform through the existing mechanisms of government are likely to be a waste of time, and to incur the same failure as that of the ideals of the French and Russian revolutionaries. The only intelligible basis for social change lies in the modification of individual attitudes and the encouragement of resistance to irrational authorities.

ANARCHISTS AS EDUCATORS

But where do we as anarchists fit into all this? What does he recommend us to do? Comfort's answer appears in the passage from his anarchist summer school lecture which Ian Stuart quoted in his article ANARCHISM AND CRIME in ANARCHY 32, "Personally I would like to see more of us, those who can, take training in social sciences or engaging in research in this field. I do not want to turn anarchism into a sociological Fabian Society, from which non-scientists are excluded. I want to see something done which has not been done before - a concerted, unbiassed and properly documented attempt to distribute accurate teaching of the results of modern child psychiatry, social psychology and political psychology to the general public on the same scale as we have in the past tried to disseminate revolutionary propaganda."

Some anarchists took this advice seriously - a byproduct of the result can be seen in some of the authoritative material which has been published in this journal, but in fact he is asking the anarchists to be what they have

always been: educators as well as agitators. To take a phrase of Comfort's out of context - "Godwin tried to do precisely this in Caleb Williams and St. Leon. If he did not make anarchism popular at least he inspired Shelley." Kropotkin's most penetrating observations on crime and punishment, using the latest material available from the emerging sciences of criminology and psychology, were made to an audience of workmen in Paris. It was the role of the anarchist element among the Russian narodniks of the last century, of the obreros conscientes of Spanish rural anarchism reading to their illiterate fellow-villagers, or the anarchist 'penny teacher' remembered by Arturo Barea in Madrid, or the Sicilian anarchist prisoner mentioned by Danilo Dolci who opened the eyes of his fellows to the printed word, or the wandering anarchists of Latin America bridging the gulf between the European and mestizo population and the Indios with their message: "Build a school and start a Union" In our own society our task is more sophisticated, but just as urgent. In 'educating the society in which we live' we may well find that since we are few and they are many, we have to educate the educators. Certainly if every teacher, social worker or psychiatrist who reads Authority and Delinquency and Sex In Society were to apply these two books' implications in daily practice, a revolutionary social change would be set in motion. Comfort poses other questions for the anarchist, on his relationship with a non-anarchist society. Writing in Freedom (9.12.50) he observes that:

" The political dissident in a society has a positive relationship to that society, as we have in our own, but it is a resented and therefore a limited one. Perhaps the best example of a minority setting out to change a culture in which it has to live, without accepting a limited relationship of this kind has been the Quaker movement. Social psychiatry of the type which I think is our obligation depends increasingly upon a group relationship with other individuals who do not share our convictions, but who know themselves to be accepted as individuals, and anarchism as an individualistic view of society, is today the only non-religious ideology capable of doing this. "

Obviously, if we ever do succeed in transforming anarchism from a minority sect into a social force we are going to be faced with this kind of problem, not because of our willingness to participate in political pressure groups like the campaign for the abolition of capital punishment, or the abortion law reform association, nor because we want to use the political and governmental machine as a short cut like the office-holders of the CNT in Spain in 1936, but because any idea or system of ideas becomes a little muddled and fragmented and imperfectly comprehended the wider it is held. We have to remember that as Malatesta put it, we are in any case only one of the forces acting in society. If we want a touchstone for our own conduct and attitudes we could not do better than to adopt the principle suggested by Comfort in The Right Thing To Do.

" Human beings are social as long as they recognise one another as human beings. At the personal level we have certain common ground for our social actions. Once that relationship breaks down in any society and particularly if we begin to treat institutions and conceptions as if they were human individuals, to individualize a group to which we belong, and transfer our responsibility for our neighbour to it, then social senses show increasing signs of breakdown, and we are left with a moral deficiency covering our whole public conduct, however well we may behave in our home or our street. And when I have to decide how far I can accept the directions and the laws of a centralized state as guides to my conduct I have to remember that a centralized state is one of those stuffed substitutes for responsibility. Power in society is a product, not of responsibility crystallized, but of group aggression. The greater the concentration of authority, the greater the strain on those who accept it, the greater the likelihood that psychopaths will come to the top, and that those who do come to the top will be psychopathic. . . . "

"Turning and turning in a widening gyre,
The falcon cannot hear the falconer.
Things fall apart, the centre cannot hold
More Anarchy is loosed upon the world
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned:
The best lack all conviction while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.
Surely some revelation is at hand,
Surely the second coming is at hand."

W.B. Yeats

Bob Dylan has put it more concisely - the times they are a-changin'". Yeats' intentions in that poem were right-wing and mystical in fact, but it happens the words chime remarkably well with the anxieties we now feel about the changing sensibility and the changing style, which most of us, I'm sure, feel to be affecting our culture, and which we find difficult at this stage to analyse. I want in this talk to try to examine some of the forms which this change in sensibility might take, or rather some of the considerations to which it is a response. That this is worth doing is I think obvious if we consider the nature of the last great stepwise change of this kind, the one we call the Romantic Movement. These large changes in our sensibility are mixed blessing. The last such change on the present scale which occurred in the last thirty years of the 18th century gave us, and I pick them at random, Blake, Napoleon, Beethoven, the guillotine, republicanism, the United States, nationalism, the democratic facade, modern industrialism, the large orchestra, Robespierre and modern painting. Few of these I think would have been accurately foreseeable in 1780 and very few of them would have been accurately assessable in 1800 even though some of them were physically present. The holding of seminars to unburden one's anxieties about the future wasn't an 18th century habit and I have failed to find in the literature any marked contemporary discussion of the future in the years after 1770, if you leave out the predictions of revolutionaries like Tom Paine, or mystics like Blake who, although they foresaw that change was coming, saw its outline as little accurately as Yeats did in his poem. 18th century types who were actually passing through this Romantic climacteric realised that sensibility was changing and life was feeling different but they couldn't have written a balanced account of exactly what the changes were. Yet, within 30 years, a whole new style of human experience taking off from the shoulders of the old had introduced all those things which I just listed and a great many others. Now, I don't want to deprive future thesis writers in this University of material, when they attempt to work out in plain the inter-relations between all these assorted phenomena. The Romantic Movement is still a favorite thesis subject. Relationships there certainly are between them, and they make a whole, even when the phenomena are directly opposite in direction. The point I am making is that here was experience and a reaction totally different from what had gone before, and if we are on the lip of a change as radical it would be profitable, I think, to apply ourselves to anticipate its form. There's no problem identifying a change of this kind retrospectively when it's over. It does involve a complete shift in the style of a culture, whether that style is expressed or judged as music, science or politics. All these things change together and you just can't identify the chicken and the egg. One can't, I think, easily confuse 18th century with Romantic poetry or painting. There are, of course, artists like Salvator Rosa who were romantics before their time, but Erwin Panovsky has lovingly documented the way in which the medieval treatment of classical subjects differs from the Renaissance treatment. There had been before that a lot of argument whether the Renaissance was a real phenomenon or whether it was something we'd invented retrospectively. Well, the same goes for the romantic movement. All one can say is that however much you argue in detail there is a definite bump as you go over it. It's rather like flying over the San Andreas fault in an aeroplane; you can see the landscape change. The discontinuity is there for all to see and in fact we can see that not only was the Renaissance view different ideologically from the medieval, and the romantic from the 18th century, but that the world, viewed through new concepts of perspective, for example, in art, actually came out looking different from each of those changes of sensibility. It had come to look different exactly as the world can, I understand, be made to look different to kittens if they are reared in horizontally or vertically striped environments.

The change in sensibilities we are living through is probably going to be at least as radical, and it could be as multiple in its effects as was the Romantic Revolution or the Renaissance. Because it is a change in sensibilities, it affects feelings and these are expressed first and explained later. As before, changes in the times are pushing whole generations into seeing the world and the world's preconceptions as radically altered. Unlike the late eighteenth century, however, we have now got, I think, greater practice in our own natural history, and therefore we have a better chance of a discursive understanding of what is happening as it happens. And if we can understand what is happening at the discursive level we might just possibly be able to make the consequences of the change selective. We might, in other words, be able to organize more Blakes and Beethovens and

fewer Robespierres. Now it's perfectly easy and possible to make up a list of what I would call the concerns either of the pre-Romantic 1770's or of the many revolutionaries whom we have today. Today it is matters such as ecology, participation, many aspects of social justice, the exploration of inner space, and so forth and so on. But I don't think it helps us very much with the more general project. The reason that we are in very great need of exposition is precisely that a revolution of this sort starts as a change in feeling. It is much easier to live that it is to expound. And also we have to distinguish all the time between what we hope will happen and what is likely to happen.

Behind the change lies a great variety of experiences which are basically novel. This is the same in the Renaissance and the same in the Romantic Movement. If we take a visual example of our own then a new experience is the sensation of flight. Most of us have had a birdseye view of a city which our ancestors didn't have; as the song says, we've seen the clouds from both sides now. With film most of us can intuitively see a non-visual topic in terms either of successive frames or of continuous motion: at the experiential level, unlike our forefathers in 1914, we as civilians have been virtually present, through television, at the Vietnam war. Besides these there are concepts which are novel, and though some of them are difficult concepts, they feed so rapidly into our media and into our way of life that vast numbers of people can apprehend them even if they don't understand them or even if they get them practically wrong - as the public of 1790 apprehended new concepts of civil liberty even if they hadn't in detail read Paine and Rousseau. Both for the academic and for the underground, overtaken by this vast input of change, it is easier to recognize than to verbalize accurately and it is hard to give an indication of what one is experiencing other than by simply shouting. For that reason the totality of the change has so far had few exponents as lucid as those of the past revolutions, because the exponents of past revolutions were usually writing afterwards or at a much later stage of the process. And it is given to few people living through a revolution to see the whole of the pattern. I think Beethoven's analysis and Robespierre's analysis of what was going on would have been as different as Marcuse's or Governor Regan's analysis of what is going on today.

Revolutions are triggered when enough people suddenly realize that they themselves and the current emperors have no clothes on. I think this is the case now, and we could identify a good many of the factors which work to bring about that situation today: we see vast and mindless technical expertise, some of it humane but some of it simply self-propagating. We see largely uncontrolled dangers which face the entire race and which arise, as often as not, simply through failing to foresee them. Central planning is essential, but authority is as irrational and vicious as ever, and it's bolstered up in privileged countries by witless public affluence, a sort of profitless inflation at the prosperity level. Even the pigs are no longer able to provide bacon, for which past generations maintained them, and in all countries we have a growing educated public which has not been consulted but which now rightly insists on having its way and is resistant to traditional manipulation. That I think is the real crunch and I think it is the basis of the root and branch opting out of educated youth. Faced with it, older mentors (and I suppose I'm one of them) are apt to be sympathetic; they expect the opting out to be coherent and rational all the time, and then they are disappointed or angry on any occasion when it isn't. I think this is important because, unlike the Romantic Revolution, this one, whatever it ultimately comes to contain, is likely to prove as effective in politics as in art or in human self estimates; in fact it may abolish politics. And though like the Romantics its exponents are often muddled, and faddy, and Utopian, and easily diverted, because they're human. I don't see them being readily Napoleonized. The stakes are too big and the emphasis on issues such as environmental politics is a potential factor in determining an abolition of traditional politics as total, perhaps, as the abolition of the Divine Right of Kings and of aristocrats. These things didn't go because they were oppressive; they went because they became nonsenses rather than abuses. And that is happening to much of politics today.

To an anarchist, leftwing figures like Castro or Ho Chi Minh look less like pillars of this renewed awareness than like with-it and intelligent old-style politicians carried on a tide of popular courage which, like all revolutionaries, they use for their own ideological purposes. But then again the same could have been said of Robespierre and Danton. Now, instead of particularizing single developments or single ideological theses which contributed to the Romantic movement, one could, as an alternative, and I'm going to, take a line straight through it and say that it represented a new assessment of human personality, a new way of seeing things, the emergence of something we now call self-expression, the emergence of a Promethean view of man as being in conflict with the universe and in conflict very often with himself, and of the idea of this conflict as a productive force. I don't feel much confidence at the idea of anyone including myself now being competent to conduct a full-scale predictive analysis of the changes which we are having take place in ourselves today, but we can take a line through those in the same way and say that, at the heart of the new change in the feeling of life, there is, I think, an issue of finding ways, within the culture, of achieving a viable marriage between our hearts and our heads. It is a matter of attempting to find an emotional technology as sophisticated as our present enthusiasm for manipulating nature. And that would, of course include both what we call science and what we call politics.

I don't want to discourse here on what's been called "future shock". The point I think is that we, like the men of 1790, beset by an enormous number of simultaneous processes - because when secular changes in society do come, they affect everything, from music to decency laws and road transport facilities - and in finding that we have to live the changes before we can understand them - while understanding them - we are forced to grasp at "relevance". Ideas of relevance differ - if you are a general, what may be relevant to you is that people have quit obeying orders; if you are a South American peasant, what is relevant is that you are starving and your wife has a baby a year. Students I think rightly dissent from what academic dons find relevant: students themselves may not personally be starving, but not having had time to get hardened into what is euphemistically called realism and responsibility they still seem to nourish the quixotic idea that other people's starvation is their business, whereas the academic is often more worried that standards of scholarship are changing. In a sense, both of them are right. I don't think that any concerned audience will mind if I go beyond the immediate relevancies, although I think we should agree on them, and try to begin the task I mentioned, of seeing what is happening, in just two contexts only which happen to be relevant to me because I practice them, politics and human biology. This is bound to divide up the talk I'm giving but I think it's necessary. There is a historical, anthropological and biological package, as it were, which, though it can't embrace the whole of a radical change in awareness which also includes industrial, economic and endless other matters, can go some way towards that. The Marxist package, of course, in fact, has attempted in the hands of people like Marcuse to include all of these things. My package isn't quite the same but you may be able to compare them. A change in sensibility alone, even if it's understood, doesn't automatically of course make itself politically effective. It doesn't guarantee Blakes as against Robespierres, and it doesn't preclude disasters like the Napoleonic wars in favour of relatively successful projects like the founding of Jefferson's United States. All of these things are in the balance, and to add to them grave physical dangers not immediately related to our purposes, or even our ideology, but related to the way in which we have come to live, face us both from inadvertence and from errors of judgment. These problems face all societies, Marxist, Capitalist or anarchist, and they'll go on doing so. We have to ask whether politics, including revolutionary politics, as we've always understood them, are competent to deal rationally with these threats, even when the nature of the Newer World and its guidelines are known and understood.

We have to remember, first of all, that the last cultural revolution took place not only without benefit of Marx and Freud but even without benefit of Darwin. Any new change now in sensibility begins with a concept of Man as the substrate for any sort of historical biology we undertake, which is wholly different from any in the past.

I want you to imagine a page of the local telephone directory, and I want you to imagine that the names set out there are those of your ancestors - father, grandfather, great grandfather, and so on, in order, assuming you knew them. The bottom of the first column would take you back to the Bronze Age, and the bottom of the first page would take you back into fairly remote prehistory - about the beginning of cities, say 10,000 B.C. It would take probably between 50 and 100 pages to account for the whole of human history, depending on our definition of humanness, but almost the entire history of city cultures would be subsumed by the names on one page. The entire scientific and technological revolution would be covered by the first six to ten names - say 250 years.

How far any sense of that timescale is common property I don't know. What is significant is the proportion of human formative history during which there must have obtained the virtually unchanging and highly conservative conditions of an existence probably very like that of the Kalahari bushman or the Australian aborigine. That is the context in which at least the evolutionary, as against the socially-acquired portion of our human programme was written.

If accordingly a human biologist wishes to divide society into epochs, they won't be those of the cultural historian - like the Bronze Age, the Middle Ages, or even the Renaissance and the Romantic Movement which I talked about. They will be related to some of the same mensurables, such as attitude and technology, but in quite a different time distribution.

We can fairly easily observe the growth of human physical technology in matters like fire, tools and pottery. These are the general material, after all, of archeology, but biologically speaking they aren't good criteria of humanness because apes made tools and the could conceivably have made fire. Of the two human markers, unfortunately we can't get an anthropological records or an archeological one. One of these is language - discursive language, I mean, expressing concepts. And the other is the technology characteristic of man, which has exercised most of his talents over 90% of his probable history, and that is the technology of the emotions. The finding of more artefacts doesn't identify a level as human with certainty. Grave goods, however, or evidence of a ritual custom, such as circumcision, or the discovery of art, do identify is as human.

In fact the people we now describe as primitive, in that the technology they have got at the physical level is crude and has extremely little power of altering their environment.

tend in proportion to possess emotional technologies of extreme sophistication relating the individual to other humans, to animals and to inanimate objects. A large part of primitive time and intellectual energy, which is probably no different I think in quantity or in kind from our own intellectual energy, is spent in activities which belong explicitly to this technology and only incidentally to practical things like hunting and crop-growing, or making pottery - the activities I'm talking about are those we call religious or magical. And that is a technology which our present culture has virtually lost, and which it can't of course revive in the same form. I have argued elsewhere that we have no technology of the emotions which can compare with the volume and richness of that traditional to Man over that very long pretechnical period. What we do have, however, are the programme cards which are responsible for the structures expressed in that technology, including those which determine that at one or another level we need it.

With the vogue for structuralism in describing human behaviours, the biologist I think is bound to be interested in asking how far the structures which man makes reflect those which he has inside him, those built into the generating system, the human brain. There is obviously a feedback, or rather a resonance, between the structures we make and the structures we have in here, whether we look at a human artefact, and whether that is literature or society. I don't intend to pursue here the analysis of archetypes to work out what we have in the black box. We do in fact have the possibility of externalizing these structures now into another black box, the computer, with which one can hold a dialogue, rather like the way one can see one's face in a mirror, but I'm not going to go into that here either. My point is that the loss of this emotional technology, complementary to our socio-neurological past and present, is important, and we are only just coming to recognize it as we lose the Victorian conviction that we are the greatest and that we are here to educate the savages with railroads.

The loss, in fact, is due to, or has accompanied, curiously enough, the contemporary sense of reality. In order to develop the scientific and empirical method, on which the whole of our technology stands, it was necessary to arrive at a cultural stance in which we didn't put down smallpox to devils or believe that woodpecker's beaks would cure toothache. We are just beginning to see that these "primitive" formulations possess a meaning, but for the project of control over the physical environment, which is the deal which has made our lives in some respect at least less nasty, brutish and short, it is not the most relevant means. The Aborigine in fact does separate those two meanings: he doesn't confuse the Great Ancestral Serpent with real snakes, and he doesn't go look for its bones like a Fundamentalist, because one belongs to the daily life and the other one belongs to the Dream Time. Our prosaicism was necessary for a certain sort of cultural progress, as well as for a certain sort of personal integrity, but very early on it is interesting to note that our religious beliefs diverged from the psychologically effective pattern of religion by the way they got mixed up and contaminated with historicity - our Christ is a real person who physically rose from the dead and he was tangible when he had done so; even a deeply symbolic rite like the eating of the flesh of the God had to be literalized into physical transubstantiation, and there was a whole epoch of philosophy vitiated by the attempt to find an intelligible sense in which bread could become flesh without change of outward form, a type of mistake in respect of categories which I'm quite sure no aborigine would have made; he would have understood the rite but he wouldn't have required the literalism. From that point on religion tended to become not so much of the Dream Time, as objectively untrue, leaving us with no valid technology, at all, of feeling to replace it.

My point here is that literalism was essential for the acquisition of real control over nature, since magic acts not on nature but on men. The over-development - the hypertrophy - of this part of the human potential has left us without an emotional technology worth the name but still in possession of the punchcards which require it, and which tend to erupt or obtrude at all manner of points: a good example, I think, our fathers made machines to pull trains, in the steam-locomotive, but they found they had created mini-deities which had attributes of augustness, sexuality and personality, and the like, things that are usually programmed into idols or ancestor-figures. We mount the exploit of physical technology par excellence when we go to the moon, and we find that we are repeating in detail the leading exploit of the eskimo Angakok, right down to mating with mother vehicles in space and climbing to the moon on a ladder of arrows while habited in a magic mask - even the countdown has echoes of the preliminary drumming. It would have been cheaper to send an Angakok - he would have done it in fantasy. But if you shut the door they come in the windows.

Parallel with this loss of emotional technology, the experience of fighting against archetypal thinking in order to get some practical results (what Gaston Bachelard has called thinking against our brains) has given us a civilization which has got just as much emotional potential as our ancestors had, but with a totally reified and pseudo-rational environment in which to express it. I think one has to ask oneself: is, for instance, New York city the practical product of technology, the rational manmade environment, or is it simply the reification of all the material in our minds, which the primitive deals with less concretely and possibly - though I don't want to dig up the Noble Savage, and we should need be primitives to know this - more sensibly? Are our physical structures not unwitting counterparts of Levy-Strauss-type emotional structures which would be much

• better dealt with linguistically or ceremonially - and, if so, what about our political and our scientific structures?

If we go back now to what I said about the division of history into epochs, based on what I'll call big human biology (by which I mean the in-depth variety, which covers everything from cell chemistry to comparative religion and primate origins) we have a choice: you are probably familiar with Julian Huxley's division of evolution into stages - the random, the organic-genetic, the behavioural, and the cultural (the so-called noosphere), each with a different time-scale. The same seems to go within human history. The primitive had little or no capacity to modify his environment by his own technology, but he had a vast technology of feeling devoted to expressing his relationships to it - he experiences intense feedback from it; a kangaroo, for instance, mustn't be killed as if it were an object; one had to make obeisance to the spirit of kangaroos. One ought not to insult rocks; Ayer's Rock is not merely a striking object in Australia but it is a generator of structured relationships, in the same way that a cathedral was to the medieval peasant. The aborigine, in other words, can't control things, but he tends to relate to things and to animals as if they were people.

Our civilization, on the other hand, has virtually boundless capacity to direct interference with nature, and is in fact approaching the capacity to modify some of the last inaccessible, such as human aging or the weather, the last of these by inadvertence if not by design. It experiences virtually no feedback at all from all this, and tends to experience things totally as things. In contrast to our hypothetical primitive, we tend to treat people and animals, as well as the environment, as things.

I've oversimplified this anthropologically, I know, in terms of noble savages and so on, in order to point the nature of the change which I think we do face at root: and we can see in so doing why it is such a big change, why it's more major in scale than the Renaissance perhaps or the Romantic Movement. If I am right, a change of this kind, a cultural-historical one, is going to coincide with a revolution of the order of that which, for example, replaced foodgathering with agriculture. The point is that science has paid off; objective empiricism is the greatest human intellectual discovery for the purpose for which it was intended, namely the testing of objective fact and the exclusion of man-made structures - even if we perceive the printout in terms of those structures. It has paid off doubly in that we can now make the structures in our own minds objectively visible. Whether Freud was right or wrong in detail, his great discovery stands - that human irrationality is not random but patterned and systematic, it has structure and consequently can be read back and comprehended. Primatology, anthropology, linguistics and depth-psychology all fall into line. If some of them suffer from bad science now, that will pass; this, rather than the kind of one-cylinder market-research sociology which dissident youth in England so rightly abhors, are the real social sciences, and they are biologically based sciences.

To oversimplify again, the primitive apparently knew how to feel, and we have learned how to think. We have the problem of combining the two. This is a basically scientific task, very far removed from any reversionary mysticism, which is just as likely to be Nazi as to be enlightened. All of the concerns which make up the new revolution tend in this direction. Even computer science, though it's based in hardware, contributes here. The introduction of feedback from things is in fact the difference between mechanization and automation. The artist today feels feedback from his materials and partly lets it manipulate him instead of him manipulating it. We sense the need of feedback from our environment, we sense the need for treating things more as if they were people, at precisely the moment when brainless exploitation on one hand and talented and engaging nuts like Mr. Buckminster Fuller on the other hand threaten us with a totally man-made environment - a disaster, which, given our programming, could very well be total for Man. We have learned to use science as a protective suit, which, you put on for thinking purposes. We now see pathological fantasies, proper to the wargods of the Dream Time in days when we luckily couldn't enact them, being studied "objectively" by scenario planners, and we recognize the need to get out of the protective suit and enjoy, if not preserve, our skins. I think the nudity of the young today is a gesture of great symbolic accuracy. At one and the same time, our discursive capacity has just about caught up with the structure of our minds, as the irrationalities inherent in that structure have caught up with our supposedly practical purposes - not just in the Bomb, but in our cities, our so-called growth economy, our environment, our population, our attitude toward our fellows, and our capacity to tolerate a steady state of accelerating change (that isn't a contradiction) with a mental economy programmed originally for a near-zero rate of social change per lifetime. I think it's a wonder we are as sane as we are.

I think you will see that all of the concerns of the Great Change are subsumed here, even if I don't elaborate them - anarchism instead of authoritarianism, the space-ship economy instead of the consumer society, ecology, the lot. These are concerns, or ideologies, not realizations. In a talk like this we have to assume that we'll pull through, as we have always done. I think that that is probably true, and that the shift which is coming will be going up a step rather than falling down a hole, as some of us fear. Unfortunately, there is the new factor of time. We don't have the time to reform our institutions. Institutions depend a bit on the lifespans of ineducable people. Every wrong decision could pre-empt the next twenty years. And this can be a point of maximum danger. We've got now the politics of

the last century, if not of the Bronze Age; and for reasons connected with the democratic, or, I should perhaps more accurately call it, the show-biz method of selecting candidates for office; for our choice of priorities modern knowledge might as well not exist. We don't, let me reiterate, need a revolt against reason, a return to God, a revival of magic, or any brand of right - or left-wing Jungian populism. We need a return to reason in emotionally literate terms - "inspired by love and guided by reason" was Bertrand Russell's formulation, though actually Russell had very little sense of the unconscious and the need to unravel it. The thing which stands most solidly in our way of that is our obsolete social organization - an organization which has learned none of the insights we are now learning, and, in fact rejects them with its whole being.

We live now with political theory formulated in the last change of style, by the Romantics. And I think, though only some of them realize it, so do most revolutionaries, however well-intended. They have practical insights, but they are fossil insights, which explains their defensiveness against what they sometimes call revisionism and most other people call progress.

But let me just concentrate on our own culture's hangups. Much of the 19th century was occupied in a debate between two theories of Man, the Utopian (which argued that he was naturally sociable, and he was only corrupted by institutions) and what I'll call the wild-animal theory (which argued that Man is a savage who is civilized only by the coercions of Law - propounded by other savages, it is true, but depending on the consensus effect to make it an improvement over the free-for-all which would result if there weren't any keepers at all in the cages). However much these may have helped to rationalize the worries of 19th century humans faced with the need to adapt to industrialism, social revolution, class struggle, the two theories both speak in categories which, to my mind, are quite obsolete for modern biology and anthropology. It is the muddle generated by this obsolescence which comes through in the "summary issue to which all issues of the day come" as Milton Mayer called it - that of obedience to the so-called rule of Law. Now I don't suggest that re-categorization will magically reconcile the demands for law-and-order with those of the protesters (who point rightly to the enormities which law-and-order commonly maintain de facto). In fact it may well be that such a reconciliation would remove the polarization which conventionally sparks social change in our society, the conventions of reform and revolution (this, of course, is Marcuse's worry over repressive tolerance). It certainly underlies the overt anxiety of every liberal that the rigidity of authority might waiver and not prove rigid enough to maintain a serviceable head of progressive steam. The point is that the game of revolution/status quo and individualism versus authoritarianism is a social convention, widespread as it has been in history. It is not the only serviceable social convention, nor is it the only playable game. It may in fact be difficult to the point of impracticability to persuade a culture accustomed to the rules and usages of College football that (a) cricket and (b) soccer, with a spherical ball and no handling or blocking, are playable and enjoyable - in which case the convention is predictively justified. Where biology, anthropology and the like could help is in preventing the assumption that the choice of College football is an inherent attribute of human nature rather than a cultural choice.

It might or might not be profitable, and it may not yet be wise for lack of knowledge, to start the discussion of the origins of the State from primate dominance behaviour, baboonery as it were, though we could perhaps start it from human family-structure, which is, as Harvey Wheeler recently pointed out, the point at which the rules of the overt-social game are learned. Early Marxists did unfortunately attempt this but a century ahead of any accurate knowledge either of primates or of course of Freud, who himself knew nothing about primates. Enough to say that there are now ethological and psychoanalytic studies which don't come into the political theorist's field of vision and ought to come there. All I want to say here is that the natural history of the behaviour which we see in modern societies looks to a biologist or an anthropologist very differently from the way it looks to a liberal constitutionalist talking in the sort of terms which would have been familiar to Rousseau - just as chemistry would look pretty odd today to somebody who walked out of the lecture just after Mendelyev. Not that the constitutionalist is practically wrong: old style metallurgy works fine, without knowing the periodic table. But no chemist likes to limit himself to it, and new technologies can alter it overnight.

In fact, we've run head-on into all the newer insights at the point where the old ones pinch out. The summary issue I suppose, goes back to Plato: authority could be quite a different force, and it could be much more like the necessary and normating hand-rail against our worsen selves, if it were rational in its expressions. If it were such a hand-rail, it wouldn't be one of the main contemporary generators of social and military abuses. Now I suppose you can argue that My Lai or Czechoslovakia represent only the aggressive drives of individual Americans and Russians embodied by Authority (though this seems quite untrue, and if it were true it would drive a sizeable hole in the hand-rail theory). In fact, it looks as if, not only in the contemporary situation but in history at large, the moral posture of governments has been way behind the private morality of all but the most disturbed of their subjects, and behind that, incidentally, of the individual members of the governments if you talk to them privately. Hitler or Napoleon, or the Members of The Supreme Soviet,

were and are, I'm sure, privately at least tolerable. It is highly arguable whether their private aggressions have been "caged in" by the State; it looks much more as if they've been given permission to express themselves irrationally through it. Fully paid-up psychopaths of various kinds are as unregulated in their private contacts as members of ruling groups are in their public behaviour (and they tend by definition to be the people whom Authority fails to normate in the interests of public policy and "tolerable behaviour"). Historically speaking the fact seems to be that Authority (whether royal or dictatorial, Marxist, capitalist or democratic) consists of those possessors of psychopathic drives who are cunning or powerful enough to embody their least-tolerable aims into the public postures of society; or alternatively, of course, that the possession of authority reveals stores of psychopathology in those who, as private citizens, manage to sit on them. Both are probably true. We may be wrong in thinking, as democracies do, that people who actively volunteer for office and are chosen more or less at random are less undesirable or more representative than those chosen strictly at random or by accident of birth. As Dan Berrigan said recently, "I never expect decent action from a great power whether it be a Church power or State power."

The leading practical problem is for us, however, that at a time when size and rate of change in society make rational organization absolutely essential if we're going to avoid disaster from things like overpopulation or pollution and all manner of other practical issues, we have first an educated public which, having learnt to take decisions on a wider range of matters than ever before, rightly demands to be consulted; secondly, the virtual certainty that those who volunteer to control, for example, our reproductive behaviour, will do so almost wholly for unconscious or psychopathological reasons, and will do it, if permitted, stupidly, tyrannically and irrationally; and thirdly, we have no time whatever to play around because, by adopting as our way of life a stable state of continuous change, we have left ourselves no time, whether we are radicals or conservatives. We have accordingly a society which cannot act rationally, both because of the psychopathology of government and because it has got no time to do the necessary planning even if it were rational.

This brings me to a leading feature of government in human societies, its duality of action. There have been three characteristics of governors in all developed human societies. The first is dominance behaviour and self-interest - that's comprehensive enough; before we knock government, we should recognize it in ourselves. The second are organizational duties, more or less well-done, and third is play therapy, the opportunity for permitted acting-out. Now in practice in democracies the first and third - dominance and play therapy - usually fuse. For most rulers now the whole point of staying in office is not that it confers the more normal kind of privilege (wealth, travel, women, adulation, and the like, though of course it does confer these things) but that it confers the third thing, the right to act out unhindered. And so for the least normal and least normally-selfseeking members of any administration, dominance and play therapy tend to fuse.

In the past, play therapy at the expense of society has been tolerated. The excesses of King Henry VIII or even Joe Stalin can be justified by historians retrospectively on the ground that the organizational and the normative functions of a strong King were worth paying the price of a tyranny. All morality apart this is no longer true. Organization in a modern society is increasingly the function of planners, who ex hypothesi require goals. Those goals will normally be rational unless the public or the government make them otherwise. See, the rewards of being a planner or even an industrial tycoon lie overwhelmingly, for the same, in the satisfactions of purposive activity. In our society, and for top authority, serious planning is withdrawn by delegation to experts, leaving only play therapy and acting-out as the main practically observable activity of governments. In this category, unfortunately, our modern societies also include the choice of priorities. So we spend our money on going to the Moon, on providing minor Supermen with their outfits and props, or hamstringing social advance in the interests of private ideology. The mechanisms aren't new but it's only with the present rate and scale of change that irrationalities in planning have become not merely miserable and uncomfortable but potentially genocidal for Man.

In our society the practical decisions "which matter" are taken by ad hoc experts when they are purposive. Only major decisions of direction and choices of major social priority - the choice between moonshots and food, for example, or between the development or the exploitation of other countries - decisions which presumably in our book don't matter and are unimportant, are left to the play therapy level, of governments and of remote corporation boards. If we talk about industry we might think, of course, that moneymaking was of all activities the most understandable and practicable if it wasn't the most loveable. But if you meditate on the difference between a salary of \$40,000 and a salary of \$100,000, or still more between a fortune of \$1M and of \$100M, you will see that this isn't really so. Money-making at this level, like political ambition, is a psychoanalytic problem, not a problem of simply human acquisitiveness, and it is part of the neglect of unconscious motives which used to handicap old style Marxism that it was willing to go along with the idea of rational greed, as it were, as the sufficient motive of capitalist organization. It isn't; that sort of greed is not rational. Dominance-behaviour in our society is something much less rational than mere avarice. And accordingly the second great body of priority decisions, the commercial, is also left to the field of what are effectively play therapists.

Man has always lived with unreason, but we can't live with both unreason and rapid change. Rapid change is, in fact, a new and unique rule which has accidentally been introduced into this game by knowledge, because most human societies, whether authoritarian or open, change very little and very slowly under their own momentum. It has, in fact, been an adaptive function, as I was saying on another occasion, of shamans and inspired psychotics to change them discontinuously. The Yoruba have a Trickster God who exists only to introduce discontinuity into the rigidity of the squarer gods because without him nothing would ever happen- the rain gods would rain and the war god would fight and the world would never change in any respect. He introduces disturbance. The stability of the norm regardless of what the norm maybe is frightfully general human character. I think we are probably programmed for it-- authority as a normating force expresses it rather than causes it, and and it's existence doesn't depend on authority. Rather it depends on our liking to know where we stand. You see it is bad in a primitive culture to make a new and better boat, not because the King or the Priest has avested or pathological interest against, but because boats are made in a particular vat, as everybody knows, and it is disturbing if not impious, and leads to no good, to make one otherwise unless one happens to be inspired by Ancestor Spirits. Most of us like things to stay the way they are and we know them. Liberals (who are overtly committed to change) would like the situation of confrontation between Reform and Establishment to remain exactly as it was in the 19th century- exactly as old jailbirds prefer the old style jail, where they say the warders are "right bastards" to the new style jail where they are social workers (I heard this view forcibly expressed by fellow prisoners on several occasions when I was in jail) They didn't like the warders you could talk to; they liked the warders that could trip up on the stairs; and they said they wanted to sleep out their bird, they didn't want to plant bloody cabbages.

Change in everything was adopted as a pet by 19th century progressivism when it became fait accompli of technology. It was hard enough to control then, in all conscience; through the old machinery, and the new machinery of stylized authority and stylized revolution (where everyone still knew where he was, and you went through this ballet of Revolution and Establishment) was institutionalised to cope with it. But now that the rate of change is of the order of a generation or less, and still increasing, this machinery has crumbled too. There is a big difference between confrontations now and confrontations in the last century, Kings, we know, were often pathological enough and they often killed people, but, first of all, they couldn't kill everyone, either through malice or through preoccupation with private pathologies which made them neglect to plan and, secondly, the number of their subjects who had special knowledge and purposive priorities was probably much smaller- our nations now consist largely (and up to 25 percent in cases of a country like this one) of people who are potential, project orientated experts in different fields.

One expression of it is anthropologically evident division in England at least is between attitudes correlating with governmental office (the self styled hardline empiricism) and attitudes correlating with knowledge (educational and the psychiatric views of society) These now constitute, for us, two nearly distinct cultures, as different as the Samoans and the Red Indians, between whom communication has been minimal and is only just now beginning. Thus (and I'm not knocking anybody here) the attitude of the average high-court judge in the past and that of the average educationalist towards say, crime, are practically those of two different tribes. Inter-tribal dialogue does occur but inter tribal hostility is pretty high, and there are very few common assumptions between the tribes. In general the attitudes of the authority-group are based on arrogant rejection of knowledge, and those of the unofficial and project orientated upon the equally arrogant assumption of it, though occasionally in recent "permissive" reforms in Britain for instance, legislators have actually been more civilised and modern than the populists, and have been a whistle ahead of public opinion. This is perhaps a tendency we could encourage by education, though, first of all, there is personality selection; one can volunteer which tribe one will join, and the judge minded subject becomes a judge, not a psychotherapist, and secondly, the tribes normate newcomers by the real pressures which affect social conformity; approval-seeking and status-giving, forms of operant conditioning. If one is a liberal and a judge one must still play at being a judge, or be disapproved, and if if one is a punitive individual who somehow becomes a psychiatrist, one must pretend that one is "non-evaluative" or be an outsider. In neither of these cases does 'authority' in the arm-twisting sense do the normating --- such phenomena are better models of what modifies Man than the 19th century model.

We have all been disturbed by this practical impasse of administration and popular impotence, and administrative acting out, in the face of the exponential threats to our environment and survival. It may be these threats are going to have good effect, and resolve the problem not by exterminating us but by substituting perforce project-orientation (which at the moment we've only seen in aggressive contexts like war) for play therapy in office, and that, of course, is an anarchist solution. We think that even purposive rogues would be preferable as legislators and tycoons to fanatics, however moralistic, or to the present pseudo-rational professional - after all a real villain at least cares for his skin, while the austere fanatic and the principled statesman usually hate everyone else as much as they hate and fear themselves. In fact, you might do better with the Mafia whose motives are at least intelligibly selfish- they'd have far too much sense to waste energy in building Dachau because they wouldn't get any payoff from it.

Then, how about the democratic process? A non-anarchist legal theory rejects, but decent society, I think, accepts, the idea that in the democratic society there is

an alarm button. One should go along with society up to and even a little over the edges of one's conscience, and thereafter one can press the button and stop the train. The penalty for improper use isn't specified; the propriety of button pressing depends on pretty split second timing - if one does it and isn't justified one may be rehabilitated posthumously or not at all, depending on the machinations of the Gaderenes and the Pardonable annoyance of one's fellow commuters at the delay. Gaderenes (or as we know call them, 'pigs') have no business to manipulate Law in favour of their projects; it is a fact of life that they invariably do, and it is a convention of all legal systems that the courts should pretend that they do not. It would be feasible to constitutionalise the right of citizens to press the alarm button - you could appoint a Tribune, or an Ombudsman, or commissioner for Equity, who embodied the reasonable man's sense of justice against that of Law but no state has had the decency or the hardhood to appoint an effective one (it would be very unpopular in the sty, where many decisions are taken). As a matter of fact the U.S. has gone further this way than most in creating a Supreme Court to which one can appeal.

This is the conventional, non-anarchist, liberal democratic model. Many people are worried to know what has gone wrong - why people are pressing the button so often, and why are increasing numbers of them wanting to get off the train altogether? Briefly, I think, the answer is that while the democratic train is assumed to be going purposively to its announced destination, commuter opinion, backed by some pretty sound intuition, now increasingly realizes first that the railroad company are crooks, secondly that the driver is a dangerous psychopath, and thirdly that the train isn't going their way and is probably headed for Belsen or Hiroshima. Among young commuters, the evidentially-supported view is becoming somewhat widespread if not general.

The railroad bylaws remain unchanged in spite of the altered situation. After all, piggery in office isn't new - only now it is reasonably open, and unlike the piggeries of the past it has to deal with an educated - and even in places like Spain or Russia, an increasingly liberal -Zeitgeist - indoctrinated public. Pigs aren't any worse than ever, but the public, as a result of the independence of mind which has been generated by many factors, from science to modern education (without which there wouldn't be any science) has started to recognise that it won't tolerate them any longer. One manifestation of 'science' (a new one historically, for Man, I think) is the objective consideration of society and its pretences, not only by occasional philosophers but by whole publics. Mystiques such as Divine Right and the Rule Of Law have had their uses, not only in roofing durable piggeries, but also in making for cohesion. You remember Margaret Mead once convened a committee on the Ethics of Imparting Insight - she thought it was dangerously upsetting; I gather Josh Lederberg agrees with her. Even the most millenarianist anarchists, however haven't yet seen what seems to be the historical crunch, and it's this in a society which by reason of its rapid change, now requires intense and rapid purposive organization, accepted 'leadership' is wholly incompetent to organize anything but self interested play therapy, and the vocal and educated New Man to whom this organisation has to be sold is rightly ungovernable by anybody and demands to be consulted. We haven't got more pigs than in the past, it's just that they are more dangerous, more incompetent to provide bacon, and more widely recognised for what they are - in particular, as manipulators of the literal facade of law, where some animals are more equal than others, not as 'custodians of the rule of Law' from which we all benefit. If we do ever benefit, it is no thanks to them, because in their book the rule of law is strictly for the birds. It is interesting to note that in Britain it is now exemplified by what appears to be a right wing racist maiden lady whose name is Laura Norder.

In this setting, for liberals of the old school to talk about world government is, to my mind, merely irritating; it could mean only bigger and better Mafiosi acting in collusion (as they do now unofficially) instead of in competition.

After all, one Capodi Mafia may be better than multiple local goons, as a king was better than multiple robber barons, but only marginally. So, and he is really hardly a custodian of what we all want these days.

Such skepticism as we see about Law is only lacking in this kind of precise statement. As with the legal idea of the reasonable man, this a sphere where feelings count. Now, I think it leads to a conspiratorial as against a political view of history, but I make it clear that this in itself is a convenient empirical convention; it doesn't represent a truth, it represents a predictive analogy like the electric fluid or the Evolutionary Demon. Now I formulate it like this; it is not historically true that Parliament or the Congress is a body of unprincipled bastards acting with the sole object of expressing their personal character defects, feathering their nests, swindling the rest of us and staying in office. It is not true. Many are as admirable individuals as we are. But if we assume that it is true, we shall 99 times out of a 100 predict how they will act. It is a corollary of this that any Rule of Law, however lovingly designed is going to be abused to perpetuate porcinity whenever and wherever possible, and the time will come when it's going have to be militantly resisted. Indeed, the wider the less principled and the more intuitive the resistance to Authority is, the more likely is a driving - back of the frontiers of porcinity and the extension of those just and reasonable behaviour. You can call it Comforts Law, if you like, that one deserter is worth ten conscientious objectors, and one mutineer is worth ten deserters. Of course populism can be wrong, and it can be horribly wrong (and pigs loathe to see their kin dome fail, have a way of putting themselves at its head, as Hitler did and Enoch Powell is trying

is trying to do in Britain, whether it be exasperated or revolutionary, to found new styles with different personnel) But you know, populism, dangerous as it often is, is no more and usually less often, destructively wrong than established authority. Wars are commoner and more lethal than lynch mobs, though both are bad. It's up to us to make life for future Hitlers not only nasty and brutish but short. These are risks we have to take if we're going to go on being human, I don't think that old style liberals - they are pacific, and, if they'll forgive me, 19th century souls - realize the stakes or take enough of the necessary risks.

The new men of 1800 were ungovernable by Divine Right. When they founded the new countries that was their position, The new men of 2000 are going to be ungovernable by anyone, though the governments of the old style world, finding the old style oracles of malarkey first and violence after no longer work, are still trying to work out what exactly has hit them. Optimally, these new men are inner-directed - at worst they are confused and destructive; but in neither case can they be "governed" in terms of conventional play-politics. And revolution is, in fact, at work in all purposive or project orientated fields together, even in the most unlikely places, in international industry, at least at the executive and technological level, exactly as it is among the executive and technological levels of the U.S.S.R., as I know from quite a lot of contact with them. Unlikely revolutionaries, perhaps, businessmen and career bureaucrats, yet insofar as their concerns are practical, they must repudiate traditional nonsenses, or they have to abandon purpose altogether. And as most of them are trying to do something coherent, they choose to abandon the nonsenses. That is revolution, the revolution towards real purpose and what has been called "adhocracy".

It is also, in my submission, anarchism, If the overtones of that word hamper acceptance, I think that is partly because past anarchists themselves haven't fully realised the implications of what they are preaching. If you commit yourself to non-paternalistic, non-directive solutions, in the way the modern psychiatrist commits himself to non-directive counselling, you commit yourself to a very total empiricism, almost a non-ideology. This in contrast to true classical ideological theories, such as Marxism, is precisely what one is obliged to do in attempting to apply science; or rather, ideology gets reduced to its barest bones - that we will not tolerate authority for its own sake, or use it as play therapy; we will not tolerate solutions which override minorities or discount emotional needs; we will not tolerate the irrational use of property, which is a special branch of power, and furthermore, that we will be heard, not killed off obediently as a result of pathology, misadventure, or inadvertance. Well, that's barely an ideology. The essence of anarchism, I think as it now appears relevant is in recognising that not even the anarchist's preferences may be imposed. A non-directive approach to social planning is not fortunately, obliged to be theoretically consistent. After Russian Marxism, after the democratic attempt to impose bewigged parliamentary Speakers on tribal African societies, what a relief that is! There may be some cases in which it is proper to delegate or vote or have representatives, and there are cases where it is not. There are features of existing social organisation which work, or which, if they do not work, are worth keeping for improvement or for fear of getting worse. There are others which have to go. To my mind, anarchism in this sense is the only ideology which has room for the type of change which we are likely actually to observe in human history, whatever our wishes may be, and that is the illogical mixture of old and new. You may remember that Republicans advocated an end of the Crown. What they got in Britain was a wildly illogical compromise in which the Crown and the Peers were kept, with varying success, to moderate the excesses of the Commons. We may well end with a mixture of anarchism and democracy or something of the sort which is very ill-pleasing for neatness and very offensive to ideologists but which is empirically justified because it has grown that way in response to reasonable needs and above all, the overriding need to make power subject to protest. That I think, is the hub of the thing I doubt very much whether 'revolution' in quotes, the changing of institutions, is our concern. If we kick out the government in London or Washington or Ottawa we shall get something else in its place. It could be an anarchist government, as Durrutti found out, and we shall have to have further revolution against that. The proper modality of change is protest and personal resistance, rather than coercive revolution. It's a new discovery for urban and technological man, and it may be a difficult one for the political-theoretical man who likes things to be tidy. I think existing societies will persist insofar as they find means of making that protest effective.

Old style revolutionary anarchism has come, I think, to look irrelevant to technological societies precisely because it's trying to be directive; it was trying to supply them with better institutions to replace existing institutions. I submit to you that that is not its job. It loses the look of irrelevancy to developed societies immediately it concentrates not on 'revolution' and prescription as such but on making protest effective - a role which was going to be just as necessary after any foreseeable revolution as it was before. I think you'll agree that ex hypothesi, a society in which all valid protest was effective would not require a revolution to reform it. I think that our style of anarchism also subsumes a more revolutionary tolerance, which is not always present. Protest isn't only the property of those who are right, or rather it isn't only the right of those who are left. If the hardhats blame the hippies, the hardhats have their grievances as well and these are in fact just as Marcusian as ours, and they reflect, like ours, the fact that society is disappointing them, even if they don't see why. The malicious diversion by politicians of that malaise into virulent right-wing populism is a real danger, but we only defuse it by understanding.

As to institutions are we in favour of them or are we against them? Democracy, the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the U.S.S.R. - I think that it's not that we're for or against them but that we now see that they are bound to be shams unless they are made to function in spirit, as past institutional liberals purported to intend that they should, by constant and unrelenting extra-institutional militancy. The consciousness of that need is today genuinely popular, I believe, even when it's confused. The role of protest in substance, as against paper revolution may, to my mind, be the leading political feature of the new style.

Medieval English society was such modified and tempered, not by the Rule of Law, but by the fact that peasants were also expert archers. That situation passed, but in a sense is returning. The power of elephantine authority has reached a point at which it is becoming less, not more. Urban technological society is highly vulnerable to popular revolt and popular protests. In Britain today we have a government which still talks as if it could beat a general strike by putting in middle class blacklegs and troops. Well middle class blacklegs could certainly deliver the nails; in 1926 General Strike in Britain they could still drive trains. Not any more, not modern trains. The world in which fossil socialists nationalize things and fossil Tories 'drive the men to heel' (on the 19th century model, while a fossil and decomposing Foreign Secretary concludes treaties with White African racists to safeguard our naval presence in the Pacific, is just about as dead as Pharaoh's mummy, and it only needs a push. But whether it is any deader than the traditional preoccupations and methods of other countries, East West, is to my mind highly arguable.

A short way ahead of all of us - and this goes for Brezhnev and Kosygin as well as for Congress and Parliament - there is a canyon which is getting closer, and we have built no bridges over it. On the other side is a rational world, so far as Man is able to inhabit one. He is never able to inhabit a wholly rational one, but he is able to inhabit one where he has a rational perception of his own irrationality. In that world we would have a zero-growth environmental economy, where planning is important but includes participation, where all the automobiles are built like Rolls Royces because they have to be non-expendable and are brought or rented like real estate. Where there are no bigger faster or noisier aircraft, and no firms go bust going overboard looking for them, but where we have only optimal aircraft - updated jet equivalents of the DC 3 if you like, and where research and development are geared to judgment and thought, with emotional insights thrown in, rather to up-and-over or paranoiac technology; and where as a safety measure in case any Hitlers or Enoch Powells or Spiro Agnews get any ideas, there is a militant, articulate, and non-coercible public - non-coercible because it is indispensable to the complex sort of life we live in. We've got a choice, and the choice is between falling into that particular canyon and having to crawl up the other side, which is the traditional way mankind deals with these things, or hopefully, preparing for the transition in as orderly and rational a manner as we are able - and at least keeping the violence involved to a minimum. That is going to be difficult, simply because, all ideologies apart, the pattern of life we have - frustration with inefficiency, crowding without sociality, high input without communication - is shortening our tempers, all over the world. That could be the answer to Marcuse - prosperity of this sort doesn't bring even metricious contentment, still less acquiescence.

Now we know very well the new protest which I talked about can be irrational and it can act out, too, but it has a current of practicality on its side. At least it recognizes as conventional liberalism is only now beginning to recognize, the uniqueness of the precise predicament, between the need for organization and consensus and the built-in incapacity of current governments and institutions for rational organization, or for perceiving and managing the irrational sensibly, which is another task and even harder one. A new politics of the environment will not, of course necessarily be rational (its as good a ground for demagogues and hostility as any other) but if its practical in terms of self interest then it will in turn, tend to rationality so far as that within the capacity of man. It is on rationality educated as to human emotional natural history, paying due consideration to the non-rational side of Man, that human survival now depends - that, and the resistance of ordinary people to their militant irrationalities of society as we now see it.

I think if there is one evolved human character which might well prove our salvation, since I've offered few solutions in this lecture and have mainly posed problems, that character is human bloodmindedness - the bloodmindedness which made honest John Lilburne the Leveller, inventor of mass demonstrations and presenting petitions to Parliament and using the dock as a rostrum, all the techniques of later revolutionaries, It made him remark 'I think it a foul shame to sit in a whole skin while liberties of England are in peril' Let us cultivate that attribute, rationally and inflexibly; I think as much as anything, our future depends on our present cultivated capacity for orderly disobedience.

Alex Comfort's books include:

Authority And Delinquency In The State.

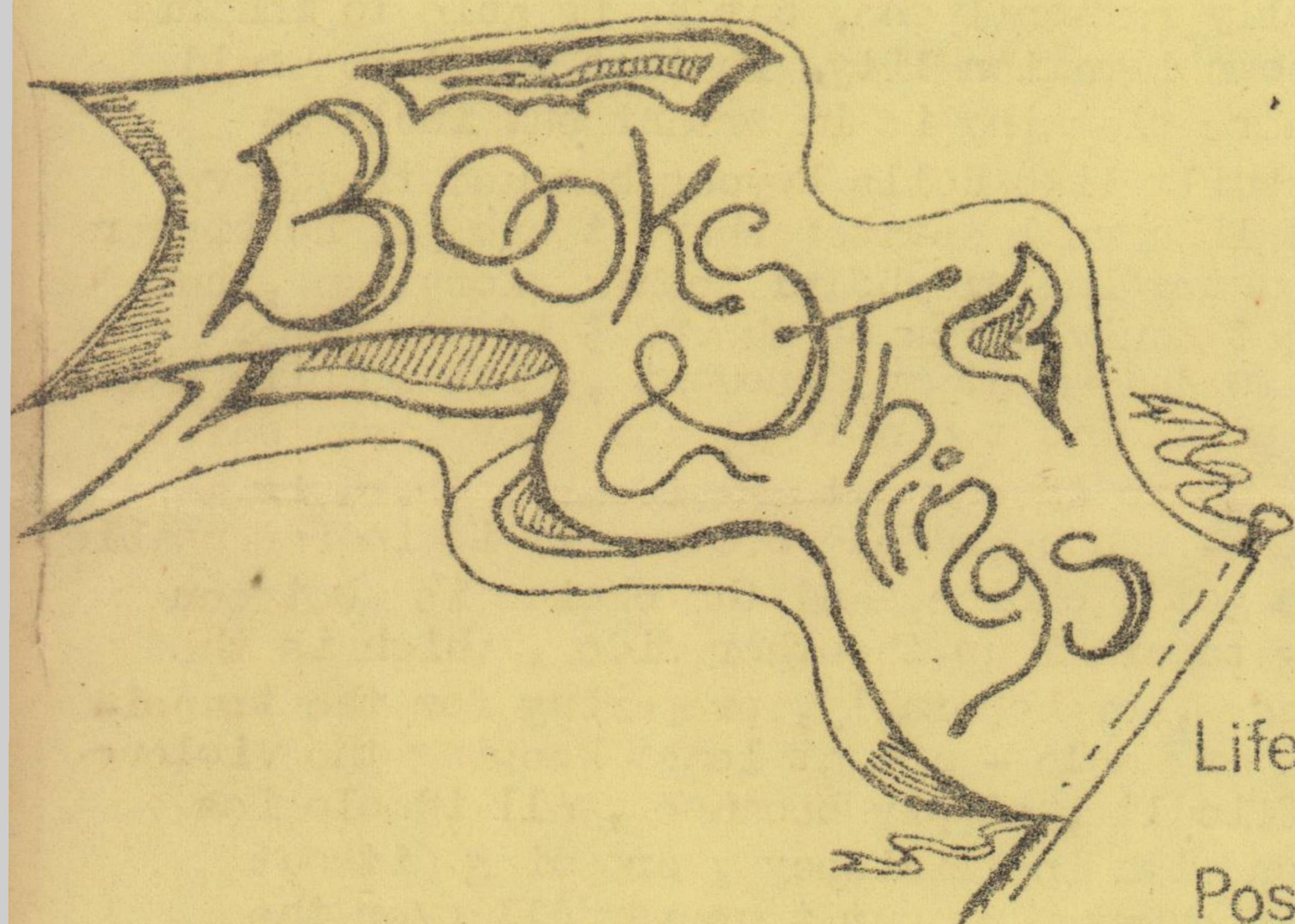
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