

September 1970

Harmony

1. The traditional techniques of European civilisation for control of our environment, have developed to the point of creating desperate problems that cannot be solved in their own terms.

This can most easily be seen in the rapid approach to absolute limits in the degradation of energy and of complex materials by present techniques; and also in the shifting backwards of the battle-line between man and hostile species.

But the knowledge and skills we have achieved, can, if enriched and transformed, provide the basis for a harmony of the human life in nature.

2. Our present comforts and their insoluble problems were achieved by a science and technology developed in the context of an alienated and fragmented conception of man and the world: the "atomic" social and natural worlds, consisting of isolated units deprived of meaning and respect in their own right.

In this world, the style of interaction is not to dialogue but to manipulate; and in the absence of any sense of debt to the past, obligation to the future, or respect for one's human or natural neighbour, to demand total domination for immediate gratification.

The ruthless oppression of man by man has long been known as a characteristic of capitalism. The annihilatory oppression of nature by man has also been recognised in the technology of capitalist (private or state) culture, by those who have seen its catastrophic effects on nature, both wild and on the farm.

This approach has a deep popular base, as the magic characteristic of our culture. The individual possession of materials and devices for achieving total comfort and total protection in each isolated aspect of life, is the common goal of rich and poor alike; and it is forced on all who live in the society. But it is strictly impossible for all to live in the future as greedily as the rich ^{done} have/up to now.

Our "pure" science is no less conditioned than our technology and society by this conception of the world; in its objects, its methods, and in its functions. Fragmented, isolated, abstracted and alienated bits of reality are subjected to intense analysis by totally specialised puzzle-solving technicians. What should be one technique among many, is an exclusive style of research and way of life for its practitioners. Their "scientific integrity" amounts to not cheating at the game, while not knowing or caring why their game is being played rather than some other.

The whole enterprise of "science" is a branch of the apparatus of production: of commodities, of war, and of consciousness. It has more or less autonomy, depending on local circumstances. Up to now its relative independence has been both a precious freedom for the few, and a convenient myth for the many.

When this truncated and distorted "scientific method" is applied to the human life, its results are grotesque; and, unless patently absurd, serve as tools of mystification for the established order in any authoritarian society.

3. For survival, we as a species must regain old attitudes and acquire new skills, for our interaction with the world around us. In simplest terms, our planet and its resources must be a heritage, to be protected and improved for our descendants. Instead of "consuming" materials and energy, we must fit into stable cycles of transformation of energy and matter.

The knowledge which enables such a harmony to be achieved without millennia of prior experience, can be gained by a natural science transformed for this function. Its new style will necessarily be of unity rather than fragmentation; of reference for its materials rather than cold contempt; of synthesis of the natural, social and spiritual aspects of a situation, rather than their

destructive separation. It will find its insights and inspiration not only from natural philosophers and creative engineers of our recent past, but from poets, prophets and craftsmen, famous and nameless, from all cultures and all history.

4. The achievement of this state will require a transformation in our social systems, our values, our technology and science, and our conception of ourselves as ~~most~~ natural, social and spiritual beings. We do not have some centuries in which this can be accomplished by gradual evolution; so revolution may well be necessary.

On the intellectual front, the focus of our first struggles will be on "science" itself. A radical critique of atomistic, bureaucratic science is necessary; and there must be a demonstration, by historical examples and new practical work, that successful science need not be dehumanised and dehumanising. The traditions of humane science, suppressed and distorted by the dominance of the bureaucratic style, must be rediscovered and revived.

Our intellectual grasp of the world through "problems" demanding to be "solved" ~~must be replaced~~ (or in the American fashion "beaten to death") must be replaced. As a species we must share the planet ~~with~~ with others, some of whom cause inconvenience or suffering; and as

individuals we each eventually die. The "science" which offers the hope of "solving" such "problems" is only a degraded and destructive magic. The "problem" as a restricted tool of enquiry (along with experiment, statistics, etc.) is legitimate in its place; but in some situations a poem may be more appropriate than a problem.

5. It would be a betrayal of this vision of the necessary future of knowledge, to ~~xxxxxxx~~ conceive it as a scientific problem~~x~~ to be solved. Indeed, as we help to guide the~~x~~ present towards its only viable future, we shall encounter hazards both crude and sophisticated, and personal and political problems quite insoluble in their temporary context.

Any prospectus for work will encounter the twin hazards of being sterile for some unforeseeable future, or corrupted through a vulgarised realisation. Any commitment to "responsibility" to society will need to steer between capture by authoritarian institutions, and destruction by demagogues. ^{soon} we can/expect a paradoxical situation where those responsible for the continued oppression of man and nature will exhibit more "enlightenment" than those who are suffering brutal and direct oppression. The more sophisticated sections of the comfortably-established

classes are likely to see that the crude rape of nature and the crude oppression of their local proletariat can and should be modified; while those who still suffer material deprivation will have little comprehension or sympathy with those who seem to be denying them the only luxuries they know. But whoever does not have the moral courage to face such contradictions, cannot help to shape the future.

The ~~main~~ first focus of struggle will be among those whose work or training is in the manipulation of symbols and service of people. They are conditioned by their past and by their situations to participate in the inhuman use of human beings and of nature; but in successive generations of membership of the class, they are exposed ever more sharply to the insoluble personal, moral and spiritual contradictions of the entire inherited way of living and thinking.

We shall proceed by developing our Utopia, itself a heritage of past endeavours and struggles; and by mapping the path back from it to the present, as we plan and practise the way forward from now. We invite friends and comrades to join us.

'My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
 Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!'

To see a world in a grain of sand,
 And a Heaven in a wild flower,
 Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
 And Eternity in an hour.

... I pondered all these things, and how men fight
 and lose the battle, and the thing that they fought
 for comes about in spite of their defeat, and when
 it comes turns out to be not what they meant, and
 other men have to fight for what they meant under
 another name.....

Kit Pedler
 Gustav Metzger
 David Dickson
 Robin Clark
 Terry Ravetz
 Peter Harper.