

Wherever men and women make a real attempt to live out and think about community—and community clearly *is* one of the crucial values and re-discoveries of our time—they come up against certain hard problems. And here, *par excellence*, practice and reflection do interact, helping each other to move forward. Reflection cannot afford to become too disconnected from experience, and yet critical reflection is also imperative in its own right, in order to discriminate the intricate elements involved and to discern the figure in the carpet.

We could begin with two news items. *The Times* of 12th and 14th July carried feature articles about changes in the medical and farming professions respectively. These reports seemed banal enough, until one noticed that there was a common feature in both sets of changes—referred to as the need for ‘a collective approach’ in the one case, and ‘growth of vertical integration’ in the other. Seen in this light, these reports begin to take on a symptomatic significance, and all the more so when set in a still larger context. The term ‘participation’ has already become sadly shop-soiled, and yet it seems undeniably to represent a profound aspiration of our time. This aspiration has received perhaps its most determined thematization and practical shape in the national experiment of ‘autogestion’ in Yugoslavia.

In Yugoslavia the experiment of autogestion is linked with an ideological commitment to the creation of a ‘new man’. The basis of this ideological conviction is clearly Marxist: ‘It is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness’ (from the Preface to *The Critique of Political Economy*). Now we may have good reason for rejecting the philosophy behind the conviction, without therefore accepting the corollary that all talk of a ‘new man’ is illusory. There may be a very real insight here, if only we can disengage it from this particular ideology. And in fact I would suggest that the positive content of such a re-interpretation is this: that we now have the chance of passing into a quite new phase of human relationships, a quite new synthesis of the inter-relationship of individual and society. *Grosso modo*, we could suggest that whereas in a first primitive phase the self was identified with the group or collectivity, and in the second—no doubt by way of liberating reaction—the self was set over against the collectivity

(individualism, whether in its Renaissance, Protestant or liberal versions), the phase we are now moving into is one which, in principle and ideal, seeks to recuperate the best in both the previous phases in a new balance. Again in principle and ideal, what this involves for society at large was already prefigured prophetically at the micro-social level by D. H. Lawrence in 1916. In a quite central passage of *Women in Love*, he put in Birkin's mouth a formulation of the ideal relationship between him and Ursula: 'What I want is a strange conjunction with you . . . not meeting and mingling . . . but an equilibrium, a pure balance of two single beings:—as the stars balance each other.' Here he was surely anticipating what has since been projected on a macro-social scale in such terms as Fairbairn's 'mature dependence' or Terry Eagleton's 'free dependents'.

Such an interpretation of the deeper tendencies of our time would seem to make sense of many otherwise unrelated phenomena. In this light, for instance, the theory and practice, the new value as well as the mere vogue, of 'group dynamics' with all its consequential and often disturbing changes in our notions of efficiency, fulfilment, authority, leadership, communication and goal-formulation, could be seen as one of the critical features of our passage into the new phase of human relationships. We might also see and say that the otherwise already cheapened notion of 'collegiality' is merely ecclesiese for this same process and principle of 'group dynamics', under its double aspect as discovery of new forms of relationships both 'vertically' and 'horizontally'.

And there is an interesting rider to this way of looking at things: *if* we are in any way passing through into a new phase of human relationships, in however serpentine, zig-zag, a way, we are in the process of some sort of re-birth. And just as, according to one theory, the foetus in the womb recapitulates the evolutionary process from vegetable through animal to human, so most of our efforts towards community must still be seen as recapitulatory, and so at once forward-looking but also immature. Put in another way, our early efforts towards community may resemble the state of identification and fusion characteristic alike of infantile dependence and early adult love, what, in a phrase picked out by one of our reviewers this month, can be termed '*societal paternalism*'; on the other hand, by the very same token, we are being carried forward to a quite different form of complementary inter-dependence—of the sort glimpsed and caught in the terms already noted. But if this is so, then it is here that the real problems of *structure* re-appear—but seen now as a certain stylization and courtesy of living towards some common end, the self-making by the community of some sort of rules for safeguarding the respect of others in their distinct dependence as persons, so as to let them truly be, cared for but themselves.

Clearly, there are problems and issues here to keep us busy for many a long month and year. . . .

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