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The Education of the Public Man: A Medieval View

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WHEN Odysseus comes to the court of King Alkinoos, and betrays himself with tears on hearing the story of the Trojan horse, the king says to him:

"Tell me why you should grieve so terribly
Over the Argives and the fall of Troy.
That was all god's work, weaving ruin there
So it should make a song for men to come."¹

Again, when Lear's ruin gathers around him, he is wise enough to say that all this would be "pitiful in the meanest wretch, / Past speaking of in a king" (IV. vi. 208-9). The combination makes my point—the public man is the man whose deeds are most eminently worth remembering because he is himself important, and because the facts about him rise to the perfect decorum of poetry.

This is an unusual claim to make, when the apparent needs of our culture are for anonymous public servants trained in the practicalities of management, able to work within more and more bureaucratically defined roles, and committed to the moderate optimism of technical problem-solving. High tragedy, apparently, should have no place. Yet at the same time public figures, in particular at both ends of the political spectrum, are learning, by using the power of television, that their influence grows precisely as they learn to behave in public as if they were characters in a fiction—dramatically, idealistically, violently, at a height of style which invites, and sometimes achieves, the tragic ending. In the technical realm, managers are learning that they sometimes deal best with their problems by distancing them to analogy with a model or a game. Charisma and efficiency seem seldom to occur in the same situations, or in relation to the same people, but the power of the image, whether it be riot or management game, is becoming increasingly clear.

If this be true, then the education of the public man needs be an education in the handling of images. I shall later claim that there is a hierarchy of images, and a variety of ways of handling them, and that both are more crucial than present educational theories and behavioral procedures allow us to realize. Here I shall simply make one more claim—that if the public man needs to handle images, then the medievalist, by virtue of the particular piece of the past he professes and the particular mental procedures which knowledge of that past cultivates, is uniquely

qualified to advise both the public man and his teachers. To substantiate this claim will require not only a considerable analysis of medieval facts, but more important a justification of the analogical logic through which they can be made to apply. This analysis, and this justification, will constitute the bulk of this paper. First, however, something should be said of the public man himself, as he is and has been, and of the actual curriculum of his education.

In his epic of the Roman Civil wars, Lucan observes at one point that "victrix causa deis placuit sed victa Catoni" (*Bellum Civile*, I, 128), implying that the two opinions were of equal weight. Though Cato held public office, his influence and power were derived largely from the fact that, in his consummately noble way, he was right, and everyone knew it. Though the decisions of the powerful and the current of history disagreed with him, they did so guiltily, weighted by the moral force of his existence. Cato, then, was a public man because he was an admirable man; his public character was an aspect of his simple existence as a person.

In a different era and at a different level, Jane Jacobs talks about public personalities on whom, and on whose enterprises, the life and activity of city streets can focus. They are the shopkeepers, residents, or frequenters with whom one leaves keys or messages, on whom one depends to call the police or intervene themselves to prevent disorder, to whom one speaks with a sense of the recognition of home turf. They have no particular power, or virtue; they are public men because they happen to be literally or symbolically useful to private persons who frequent their neighborhood.

In still another area, when Dante and Virgil face the barred gates of the City of Dis, fearful of the Furies and cringing from possible sight of Medusa, the angel of heaven comes "a la porta e con una verghetta / l'aperse, che non v'ebbe alcun ritegno" (*Inferno*, IX, 89-90). At his coming the spirits before whom Dante quailed fled "Come le rane innanzi a la nimica / biscia per l'acqua si dileguan tutte" (*Inferno*, IX, 76-77). Hell observes no law, respects no right. This angel is a public figure by virtue of sheer power. Here it is divine, a "bored excess of power"² before which resistance simply vanishes. In a debased form, the same function can be found in the official who fixes tickets, or (for a fee) expedites contracts. It exists in the power of governors to grant pardons to criminals, or jobs to supporters, or dignity to an occasion.

In this array of examples we have a definition. The public man is a person who is useful, powerful, and admirable, and who operates at both literal and symbolic levels. As Jacob's example proves, he may operate at low levels of the social hierarchy, as well as high ones, but the same characteristics apply. Though the public man as servant may be less absolutely powerful than a neighbor he helps, he does have the power, expertise, or connections to deliver what he promises. To put in another way, the public man is a person in society whose activity and personal significance are needed, effective, and right.

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The problem with modern society is that the public figures we so often confront—bureaucrats, managers, politicians—are seldom effective and needed at the same time, almost never are they significant as personalities (except for the politician who has the facade of one), and they seem usually to be right only when they are ineffective or martyred. This fragmentation is, in part, the natural lot of a humanity which, for purposes of government, it is safest to assume fallen. But in our own time this fragmentation is deliberately cultivated. The very separation of powers at the heart of the American system of government is such a deliberate fragmentation. Congress responds to the needs of constituents; the executive branch has the power to administer the country under the law; and the courts, in the name of justice, decide what is right. The same fragmentation operates at every level of function and value. Conflict of interest laws ensure that managers of all sorts have no personal interest in what they manage; cost accounting sharply narrows the range of values and symbolic overtones which can be cultivated in a business or manufacturing process. All these arrangements seem to us so natural, so much a reflection of the essential givenness of things, that we can be barely aware of them in any critical way. Our reaction to nepotism, conflict of interest, judicial legislation, court-packing—to any of the multitude of possible ways people fail to observe the natural divisions of the world—is an automatic condemnation. But our condemnation, I shall argue, is more and more wrong.

Our reaction is automatic, not because the world really is or should be divided as we perceive it, but rather because our normal way of seeing and thinking blinds us to any possible better world. We have a fundamental assumption behind our knowing—so far behind that we seldom realize that we assume it—which must be dragged up and examined and escaped, before we can make any changes that matter.

This assumption is one which is given to us by the philosophy of Descartes. It is fundamental to the scientific method, and to most of our conscious judgments of truth. It is that subject and object are separate, and operate on one another. Disregarding for a moment the inevitable problem of the solipsism, which the common sense man of action ignores at the price of a certain distortion,³ we can see that the public man, like all men of action operating within this assumption, tends to be a solver of problems connected with efficient cause, because this is necessarily the organization under which "object" appears to him when divorced from "subject" in a Cartesian way. There can be no interaction between subject and object, no applicable universals, no symbiotic relations, no merging; the subject deals with the object either as a thing to be known, or as a thing to be manipulated, or as a thing to avoid. Efficient cause is obvious in the second two; knowledge, as our enlightened culture has developed, tends to the same end. Appeals to definition at some Platonic level, genus and differentiae, even the taxonomy of traditional biology, all seem rather old-fashioned. We know things in terms of

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how they work, or what they do, or what place they have in a developmental or procedural system.

Thus functions tend to purify. The first thing to go is the person himself. The public man, above all, must be disinterested. We have elaborate conflict of interest laws to make sure that the public man has no private interest in what he does. Then there is a further classification, depending on function. We have managers, bureaucrats, advisors, and politicians, that is, people who make things happen, who prevent things from happening, who understand what is happening, and who symbolize the public opinion of what is happening. The manager and the bureaucrat, thus, are natural opposites; the advisor's knowledge function is effective (positively or negatively) as he channels it into the description of purely technical processes, divorced from values; the politician is most effective as a symbol of society's sense of its own virtue when he actually does nothing at all, that is, while he is running for office.

The natural results follow. Industrial and clerical processes are managed with unparalleled efficiency; dishonesty, waste, and the innocent distortion often occurring between command and execution are prevented with unparalleled thoroughness; the political process has displaced the annual August revival as the popular ritual for the affirmation of virtue and the denunciation of sin (accompanied by all the traditional cynicisms, of course); at all levels, the application of the function of the knower—we call it "expertise"—has become so ritually important that consulting firms flourish to organize it. And it must be admitted that these public persons do actually accomplish what they claim to do, precisely that, and no more. The waste widely denounced in government programs is not money diverted to enrich a few well-connected people; rather, it is an essentially inconsistent public reaction to the fact that desired programs are very expensive. Most industrial products actually do work. The mail is delivered far more efficiently than it was only two hundred years ago. Experts do know what they are talking about, and frequently predict things which actually happen. Public dissatisfaction with public processes is based on rising expectations. It is, after all, more acceptable to die of polio when it is an incurable disease than to die because the drug store happens to be out of Salk vaccine, even though, in absolute terms, the quality of public health service is better when the vaccine exists to be available for most people.

The education of these public men—manager, bureaucrat, politician, and advisor—is at present fairly haphazard. We are in a transitional period, and therefore not consistent. The politician, since he functions merely as the appearance of a man, saying appropriate things written for him by one of the other three (usually the advisor), may be educated any way at all—as an actor, as a lawyer, as a restaurant owner with a supply of axe handles, as a Rhodes scholar. The others tend to be people with technical training rather than liberal learning.

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IN their very recent past there was a consistent and expected education for public men, best exemplified by the Oxford course in Greats, and loosely referred to by all of us as a liberal or classical education. As praised by Matthew Arnold, it is an "endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." As actually practiced, for the last two millennia, this education consisted of the study of Latin (and sometimes Greek) literature with a view to the cultivation of wisdom, virtue, and effectiveness in persuasion. The more humanist of our educationists have regretted the recent passing of this type of education, but even those who most passionately wished its preservation have found themselves fatally vulnerable to charges of irrelevance and unprogressive thinking. For this irrelevance, Arnold himself calls attention to the foundation, for he calls the "endeavor to learn and propagate" a "disinterested" one.

The problem with educators of the public man is that they have paid too much attention to curriculum, and too little to the student. It is true, broadly speaking, that the gross content of the educational curriculum of the upper classes (that is, people likely to be powerful enough to be "public") did not change drastically in character from Cicero to Churchill. But the student who studied this curriculum did change, drastically, in his axioms of life and mental procedure, and therefore in his relation to what he learned. Historical processes also intervened, to place the student in a certain important but unappreciated temporal relation to what he was learning. The contemporary of Cicero, thus, studied a literary culture which, in spite of its Greek roots, was essentially his own. The modern student of the classics studies a dead language and a dead culture, which he can only use by making such imitations as the Chicago Exposition, or by placing a high value on the ornamental, disinterested, aesthetic, or liberal in his education. For him, Homer and Caesar and Cicero and Livy are the life and spirit of an alien culture greater than his own, which he studies for the sake of a mental, personal training and a cultivation of self and character. The relation between education and life is as totally discontinuous as is the Cartesian relation between mind and matter. Thus education cultivates the character of the public man. The character of the public man is excluded by conflict of interest laws from his public functions. The public man operates industrial or governmental process using the specific skills required. Both toward his public work and his personal education, he is expected to be "disinterested." Relations do happen, of course, and interests are involved; but they are by axiomatic definition illegitimate. The medieval student, very different from modern man and from Cicero's contemporary, studied the same Latin classics we do, plus some others which were similar but in less good Latin and from Christian authors. But he related to them in a way radically unlike our own, equally unlike Cicero's, and now gone rather out of fashion. He related to them analogically.

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This analogical relationship is crucial, but its importance is not properly understood, because we are accustomed to approach the man of the Middle Ages as an object of research, rather than as a possibly alternative human being. Thus we make one or both of two mistakes. The first is to be preoccupied with medieval deeds—with the facts of a particular war, or diplomatic mission, or procedure in the administration of the Exchequer. This preoccupation inevitably leads us to minimize differences; to believe that because wars and taxes have always been much the same, that the men who administered or suffered them were also much the same. The second preoccupation focuses on ideas, and seeks to know precisely what verbal formulae most neatly summarized what was thought or believed. Thus Simon de Montfort, in 1265, believed in Parliamentary democracy at least incipiently. Thus Anselm taught a particular theory of the atonement, William of Conches believed rather Platonic things about creation, and Dante had imperial notions of good government. This preoccupation with ideas or doctrines or theses leads us to maximize differences, usually, because we find ourselves either in disagreement with these people, or unable to see why they thought the argument important, or both.

What we tend to leave out of consideration is the very factor which would permit the example of medieval public man to be of modern value—which would permit the example of medieval public man to instruct his modern counterpart in the proper way to structure, appropriate, and use his own education—that is, the medieval sensibility. By this I do not mean what the man of the Middle Ages thought and felt; I rather mean how he thought and felt—I mean what it must have felt like to think mediievally. When we simply repeat Dante's formula, "In his will is our peace," we cannot possibly mean what he meant, until we purify our will of Freud, our sense of God, of Santa-Claus-ism and vagueness, and our sense of peace of the simple and rather negative quiescence which has replaced the medieval sense of harmony. Again, we cannot repeat Thomist formulations without distortion unless we bring to them the discoverer's Aristotelian daring which brought them under condemnation as heresy. In all cases, we are only true to the language when we allow for the sensibility.

I am, of course, aware of the fact that allowing for sensibility is a modern tendency, doubtless derived partly from relativity, and partly from phenomenology and other personalist philosophies. But in common sense life, this allowance is made only in psychological and aesthetic areas, and in the equally remote physical realities of sub-atomic and inter-stellar space. I am suggesting that the allowance be generalized, and that the Middle Ages, which made no conscious allowance, can help us do it. In this respect, the Middle Ages and our own times are precise inverses. The Middle Ages received the past in verbal form—stories, proverbs, dicta, treatises—and received it by cultivating in themselves a verbal notion of truth not well adapted to being practical about everyday sense experience. Their

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belief in the singleness of experience, past and present, was compensated for by a certain doubleness of mind. Our modern empiricism, on the other hand, is single-minded in its attention to facts, and the facts are largely material ones. Our sensibility needs a hypothetically different observer (i.e. medieval sensibility) to make clear that reality is not unintelligibly multiple over time, but does make a certain analogically structured sense.

The doubleness of the medieval mind, ultimately, is an ability to sustain simultaneous belief in definition, and in the existence of an instance of that definition—that is, it is the ability to believe that the central problem of thought and being is the problem of universals. This ability, which can fairly be called an analogical or an allegorical sensibility, involves a number of inter-acting factors.

The first is the fact that medieval men did their work, in thought and action, in a language other than the one in which they had been born. Throughout the Middle Ages, all serious learning, speculation, communication, and description took place originally in Latin, or were translated immediately. Even the vernacular poets, such as Dante and Chaucer, were accomplished Latinists, lovers of Latin books and of the *auctoritas* of these books. This fact is of course universally acknowledged, but I know of no place where its significance for sensibility has been adequately analysed.⁴

Medieval Latin was, for all who used it, a second language, self-consciously learned in school and cultivated from literary models. At the same time it was a living language—even the insanely luxuriant mannerism of Martianus Capella was not slavishly rule-bound as was the sterile Latinity of the Renaissance. This peculiar phenomenon, a living language which has no native speakers, may well be a unique feature of the Middle Ages—it is certainly unique in Western civilization. Because medieval man spoke two languages, he could never be like the average American, a chauvinist dupe of an ignorance of tongues; on the other hand, the Latin which medieval man trusted as the chief vehicle of his received and expressed truth was never quite just a human language. He could never ask a living person what the Latin really meant. Everything had to be learned by rule from books, from grammars, from the literary examples of authors long dead. The authors were, naturally, received as authorities, partly because they included examples of good Latin. Thus, whether the text were Jerome's Bible or the work of some antique pagan, the medieval reader faced a form of words which was, like its author, defined authoritatively as true before one read it, and therefore before any possible ratification by experience. The results of this medieval relation to the Latin language were two: words acquired an extraordinary authority, and the sense which one had of the workings of his own intellect was distanced as a paradoxically intimate objectivity.

These two results may well be versions of the same thing: the reification of language. The intellectual enterprise of learning Latin was conscious, deliberate,

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and bookish. It involved a good deal of careful memorization and supervised drill. The primers which one read as one learned were a collection of moral aphorisms, the *Distichs* of Cato, the collection of morally uplifting beast fables by Aesop which have not yet completely disappeared from cultural sight, and a book of *Eclogues* by Theodulus, in verse with a considerable prose gloss, which presented a series of pagan and Christian marvels in alternating parallel. From these books one progressed through a wide range of classical and post-classical literature—Ovid, Virgil, Lucan, Cicero, Prudentius, and others. What one got in all this reading was ostentatiously and relentlessly human. There were fables, poems, aphorisms, philosophizing, speeches, histories, in a variety of genres and styles, prose and verse, high style, middle and low. By and large the school books did not include purely technical works; one never read simply for information, but always submitted to and cultivated the style of *humanitas*. Information was included, of course, but the encyclopedia of the seven liberal arts presented them as wedding guests at the *Marriage of Mercury and Philology*. Therefore, when one learned it was by attending to the voices and deeds of radically cultivated men, and by learning the rules of their cultivation. Thus to think in Latin was to think artificially. One had to distance one's intellect and one's mental operations precisely to that distance where they could be given and living at the same time. Because it took place in Latin, thought took on the character of its medium, and became a living activity with no native actors. That is, educated people cultivated, naturally and necessarily, a mental life style which was constantly raising the individual into the condition of the typical. By distancing one's intellect, one could combine the sense of definition, universal and absolute, and the sense of instance or example or personal self. By distancing one's intellect into a linguistic realm which was at once given, living, and cultivated human, one gave one's private and possibly sorry existential self the freedom of the realm of definition—one made it not only possible but necessary that the bare forked creature man rise, whenever he spoke, into the condition of *humanitas*.

For this medieval situation there are at least three modern analogues, which perhaps should be disposed of immediately, because they are so dangerously perverse. The first is the fictional language of Newspeak, with which Orwell so properly frightens us. The second is the real language of the government document and the official bulletin, which he finds also horrifying. The third is the mathematical language of computers and its analogues in statistics and logic. All these are second languages, of a sort, which are learned by rule for the doing of certain business, which in the way of doing that business are living enough to be altered in appropriate ways, and which tend to direct the thought patterns of people who use them extensively. Thus, like medieval Latin, they are living languages, but they are not and never have been learned by living infants as a primary means of communication. In their perverse way they also give an extraordinary authority

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to words. But they are the opposite of the medieval man's Latin, because they are absolutely artificial—because they tend not to be used, as was medieval Latin, for love letters, poetry, and jokes; and because they are chiefly used to permit abstractions and purely structural linguistic operations to flourish without interference from concrete particulars and their human connotations. They are the brutalizing alternative which faces Cartesian, or existential, man; they are definition purified of *humanitas*.

THE Latin culture of the medieval man, by which he distanced his intellect into definition without losing his self-hood in the distancing, gave an extraordinary authority to words. Not only did the most technical and the most highly regarded medieval processes (such as theology and politics) tend to be verbal; even more, the corpus of known truth tended to be contained in a relatively small but varied collection of books defined as authoritative. The resultant sensibility was not well adapted, as I have said, to the efficient handling of concrete experience. What it could do to perfection was to harmonize apparently conflicting authorities. What it learned from doing so was an analogical or allegorical habit of mind.

The truth, by definition, was single, simple, and Christian. The received corpus of true authorities, on the other hand, was as varied as classical and Christian culture. Abelard's *Sic et Non*, a rigorous and simplistic demand that we line up our authorities and then decide which among them are wrong, has made him a hero in certain philosophical eyes, but his warmly doubleminded attempt to love God and Eloise at the same time is more medieval. Perhaps if he had been single-bodied about the flesh, and double-minded about theology, Bernard would have liked him better. But however complex the reasons, the Middle Ages rejected Abelard, and canonized Bernard, and the decision was an affirmation of Both-And, a rejection of the Either-Or.

The corpus of received truth was a collection of books—the most widespread medieval literary genre was therefore the commentary. Glosses dealt both with the words and with the men and events to which the words referred; difficulties were sometimes simply verbal, and sometimes more serious. Always the effort was to harmonization, to reconciliation, to making it possible for all the various things in the inheritance to be true, and at the same time to say the truth which, under God, everyone knew was central and essential.

Sometimes the difficulties are relatively small. The great ninth meter of Boethius' *Consolation of Philosophy* book III, for instance, is a thoroughly Platonic poem in praise of God and God's orderliness in creation. William of Conches' commentary is one of the most important and elaborate; in his careful dealing with even minor problems we can see how thorough was the medieval concern to save the truth of the received text. For instance, William is at great pains to understand precisely why Boethius uses the word "perpetua" instead of the word

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"eterna" to describe God's governing reason, or how one could say of God's relation to the world, "das cuncti moveri," when obviously the stable earth does not move. The first problem William solves by explaining that though the reason is indeed eternal with respect to God, it is only perpetual with respect to the world being governed, because the world has a beginning. The second problem he solves by an appeal to Aristotle's six kinds of motion: "generatio, corruptio, augmentum, diminutio, alteratio, secundum locum mutatio." Obviously, all things created move in at least one of these ways. Here, William solves his problems by making careful distinctions among literal meanings; his attention is concentrated on the words and what they say, and on the necessity of showing the precise possibilities which permit them to be true.⁵

Problems involving more serious contradiction the Middle Ages solves by the use of allegory, a procedure wholly arbitrary and alien to the Cartesian sensibility, which misunderstands it as a rationalist game. The sensibility of the Middle Ages compels me to use the term, but at the same time compels me to insist on a rather different definition for it than the literary, rhetorical, and symbolist ones.⁶ Allegory, as I mean the term here, refers to that habit of mind which deals with being by arranging it in ordered parallels. Thus the Old Testament is parallel to the New; holy history is parallel to—that is, allegorical of—the life of Christ, the moral life of man, and the life of heaven to come. These are the inevitable four levels:

Littera gesta docet, quod credas, allegoria
Quod agas, tropologia, quo tendas, anagogia.

The same procedure can be used to reconcile apparent contradictions. Anything in the Bible which does not literally teach charity must do so allegorically, and one can see this fact by putting the literal story in parallel to some schema of charity, and developing a large number of one-to-one relationships. By this procedure, one could find unity of doctrine throughout the whole range of inherited culture. Allegorizations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* prove that even the most licentious tales could be assimilated in this manner.

All this is the common knowledge of medievalists. But it needs one final added twist. One of the levels was tropology—"quod agas," what one must do. The same procedure of allegorization which reconciled apparent contradictions in the inherited corpus of authoritative words also related the individual, in his own behavior and sense of himself, to that corpus. History exists as a great array of moral examples, to which one must put oneself as a parallel. Past and present, history and person, relate to one another not as cause and effect, but as allegory and allegory, as model and example.

Summarizing then: the sensibility of the educated medieval man was based on a Latin which distanced his ego into definition, which provided him with a highly cultivated and poeticized corpus of literature as the container of his received truth,

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and which encouraged allegory as the dominant mental procedure for dealing with interior and exterior reality. Not all medieval men, of course, were so cultivated, but public men as a rule were. If they were not educated, they were kings and nobles, whose sacramental existence and daily contact with educated assistants gave them much the same sensibility.

THE actual educational process which produced this sort of medieval public man has been most charmingly described by John of Salisbury, in his *Metalogicon*.⁷ He gives us full details. Bernard of Chartres, "the greatest fount of literary learning in Gaul," taught by reading literature to his students, explaining rules of grammar and style, helping his students to imitate what they heard and memorize choice portions daily. In all their work, students were encouraged in decorous speech, religious devotion, and moral behavior. The elegance, grace, and point of John's description, and indeed of all his works, is testimony to the quality of Bernard's teaching, and John's distinguished public career is testimony to its pragmatic value. Certain features of this marvelous educational program need emphasis here, both because they are important to my argument, and because they have all fallen thoroughly out of favor with contemporary educationists. In the first place, the teaching was personal. The students had come to Chartres specifically to work under Bernard—the medieval habit of following teachers from place to place is notable. Second, the teaching emphasized the rules of expression, and at the same time the imitation of elegant examples of their use. Third, the students were encouraged to memorize. Fourth, the object of it all, clearly, was to make the student a good person—religiously, morally, and practically.

Only as a supplement to this program does logic have its use. John studied logic under Abelard and others in Paris, and soon grew most conceited with his skill and knowledge. When he came to his senses, he went to study under the William whose commentary on Boethius was referred to earlier. Eventually, after twelve years of various studies, he returned for a visit to the logicians of Paris and found that they had made no progress in the interim, and were still arguing the same old questions, but with less perspective and restraint than before. John concludes that "just as dialectic expedites other studies, so, if left alone by itself, it lies powerless and sterile. For if it is to fecundate the soul to bear the fruits of philosophy, logic must conceive from an external source." The external source, of course, is the received body of human experience, as preserved in the books of the past.⁸

For the reintroduction of this program of teaching and learning, quite literally, into the schools of our own day, Dorothy Sayers argues most persuasively. She claims quite properly that a curriculum of "subjects" leaves students with a store of information useful in the contexts for which they were taught, but without the tools for proceeding to learn further on their own, and utterly at the mercy of

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propagandists and well-meaning idiots, however learned, who abuse language. She therefore recommends grammar, logic, and rhetoric as tool subjects, and relates them to natural stages in the learning process of the child. These are, in her terms, the "Poll-parrot" stages of memorization and assimilation, the "pert" stage of the objectionable and argumentative older child, and the "Poetic" or creative and self-expressive stages of the younger teen-ager.⁹ Something like the same three stages are presented, with more ponderous academic rigor and considerably less style, by Alfred North Whitehead in *The Aims of Education*.

Both as a medievalist and as a human being who wishes well for education, I incline to agree with Miss Sayers, and yet I think, for the education of the public man, her program would succeed indirectly and accidentally rather than because of what it centrally proposed to do and be. Grammar, logic, and rhetoric are the crucial tools of learning only if the crucial problems to be solved by learning are verbal ones; it is accidental to the schema, but essential to the result that Miss Sayers (and I) have in mind that the verbal problems this education actually worked on were problems involving nobility and high decorum. Grammar brought with it great literature, and rhetoric presented the rules of its technical greatness, while logic was chiefly exercised on metaphysics and on the implications of God. The result that mattered, both for the Middle Ages and for our use of their experience, was the human being heightened into definition and accustomed to thinking allegorically.

It is a fact of intellect that a culture eventually gets all the consequences of its axioms, and not just the ones it expected on assuming them. Thus modern man must take the solipsism, material determinism, and the positivist denial of questions of value along with sharpened senses and their resultant technology, individualism, and democracy. As our Cartesian culture has become more clearly conscious of all these consequences, the axioms become less attractive, and problems appear with which the axiom system is not qualified to deal. We have, for instance, a problem with the relation between person and structure—people who wish to be humanists seem driven to be anarchist, and people who willingly assume roles in large organizations are thought in existential bad faith. We have a problem with the evaluation of means—technically, whatever can be done, it seems, will be done, and the energies of society will be channelled into fields, such as engineering, in which doing leads exponentially into more doing. We have a problem with hierarchies; if all men are created equal, then hierarchies are immoral, and yet Sweden and England are finding that actual equalization is a low and frustrating barbarism which pleases neither the equalized up nor the equalized down. Cartesian individualism has located human value in the private sphere, forgetting that an earlier age could have used the phrase "homo privatus" for someone in jail. The resulting value of private time, defined as not-work, has led to a capital-intensive economy in which most work is inhuman.

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The verbalism of the Middle Ages, on the other hand, solved the problem of human roles, was able to humanise hierarchy by making it sacramental, and assimilated whatever technical process happened to be discovered into the human. But the Middle Ages was never able to deal with money at a sufficiently high level of abstraction, doubtless because the general tendency to reify universals (even Nominalists and skeptics were more realist than we are) led to a commodity theory of money. There was neither feudal nor sacramental place for the middle class—for free city people attached to no lord and no land. In the end, it was probably printing that blew the Middle Ages apart, by presenting a verbal culture with such a flood of words, accurately multiplied, titled, and indexed, that the allegories of meditative reconciliation could no longer assimilate them all into coherence.

We are never fully conscious of our axioms until it is too late. At the same time, becoming thus conscious of axioms and their array of good and bad consequences is a good sign that new ones are on the way, of which we will once again not be fully conscious until it is too late. Nevertheless we must try, both by looking for our new axioms, and by behaving in ways which deny our worn out ones, to see what we can discover. The problems which we face—the problem of structures and roles, the problem of means, the problem of hierarchy—are all problems of understanding and personhood and value. None of them is technological; none of them demands primarily an expert in efficient causes. The public man who solves them—indeed, the public man who is disposed even to work on them—must be a very different sort from the person we now most often produce.

I said at the outset that the public man should be a person who is needed, effective, and right; whose life and deeds rise to the decorum of poetry; and whose knowledge of what to do and be is likely to be based on his ability to handle images. It may well be that such a person, in a more or less accidental way, would run an efficient office, carry out a public works program with efficiency and dispatch, or see to it that dependent children were no more lavishly supported than the law allows. He might even be marginally interested in such things. But only as they were means to something else. Thus defined, his primary energy would be spent on understanding, on interpretation, and on simply trying to exist as a person in the correct fashion. Acting in this way, he would tend to solve the problems I have just outlined, and would, if he succeeded, exist as the incarnation of their solution.

I shall not argue that these problems are important. If it is self-evident that they are, then it follows that the culture is turning a corner into a new identity, under new axioms, and needs this new kind of public man. If it is not self-evident that they are, then the present progress towards Jacques Ellul's *Technological Man* will continue. Hitherto the rise and fall of philosophies and cultures implies that man will not live an absurdity beyond a certain point; I therefore feel some

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confidence in simply presuming that our present absurdities will not grow much more monstrous, and that the various counter cultures are the incipient beginnings of what is struggling to be born.

ASSUMING that the new public man is needed, how is he to be educated? The medieval experience is here most instructive. We should not want, nor are we able, to restore the supremacy of the medieval verbal axioms; we should not want to repeat their failures with printed word, with middle class, with science and technology (though this condemnation is overdone, and really unworthy of our civilization of engineers and tinkerers whose theology, after all, is in rather parlous state). But the Middle Ages did solve, or in Latin were given the solution of, the problem of the relation of man to his defining role. The Middle Ages did manage to develop a social structure which was efficiently hierarchial and at the same time human. The Middle Ages did make such technology as it had the servant of man, rather man the servant of it—the cathedrals were no mean feats of engineering, but they also allowed scope for individual craftsmen's eccentricities, and they were ultimately not engineering but incarnate theology. Finally, the Middle Ages made a more successful use of the past—of history—than any other culture I know. Our solutions to these problems will not be medieval, but our solutions will be more successful if they are fostered by analogy to the medieval solutions. The education of our public man, then, needs to be an education in analogical thinking.

As I indicated at the outset, this analogical thinking is already being used most successfully by the riotous manipulators of television images, by advertising, and by researchers and technicians who use models and games. Our problem is simply to find ways of learning and teaching which will encourage this analogical thinking to come to human, rather than perverse or simply technical, results.

Modern images and models tend to be of three kinds, television images, advertising images, and models. Through television, people transform themselves into images of themselves, preferably at some moment which the audience will accept as a moment of truth. There is analogy, but it is the analogy of identity in translation. Through advertising, people transfer values from one to the other of totally disparate images. The connection between sex and cigarettes could probably be explained by a psychiatrist, but it is only the willingness to ignore that connection which makes it possible to sell the one with pictures implying the other. Through model-making and gaming, people project wholly or largely artificial analogies into parallel with their problems, hoping for insight. Thus, the first analogy is an analogy without a difference; the second an analogy with an infinite difference; and the third is an analogy with only one real term. Medieval

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allegories, on the other hand, tended (except in cases of pure verbal wit) to relate systematically and in detail two entities which were different, but not utterly different, both of which were historical or real. Moreover, the terms of medieval allegory tended to be given in words, though pictures and rituals derived from these words were also popular. The medieval procedure required the maker of analogies to confront something that was real and in some way culturally remote; while modern procedure makes it possible to be entirely artificial, and to stay completely within one's own culture. When artificial, the analogy is likely to lead to insights which are inhuman; when completely within one's own culture, it is not likely to lead to radical insights at all.

History, to the medieval man, was the ordered space on which God's providence was displayed. Though most of its content was culturally remote, coming from biblical and classical times, and though that part of history which was medieval tended to be preserved in words which assimilated it into the classical-biblical milieu, medieval men were not disposed to recognize the cultural remoteness of history. They were untroubled by anachronism, and read all history as equally familiar. At the same time they read it in the inherited words, and so received it as at once close and distanced; at once as near as yesterday, and as far away as languages of *auctoritas* in which it came. We can no longer read history in this way; archeology, anthropology, and the critical methods of scholarship have made us irretrievably aware of anachronism. But by combining this positivist knowledge of historical fact with a sensitivity to sensibility as well, we can relate to the past, as I have said, with a singleness in doubleness which is quite closely analogous to the medieval relation.

Since we can, we will. This is the psychic version of the technological tyranny of means—if it can be done, it will. What the modern public man needs, more than any one thing, as the core and basis of his education, is history—that is, the collected stories of the exemplary actions of men to which he can relate himself analogically, and whose stories he can use as analogical models for the solution of his own problems of meaning and means. What the young are demanding and cultivating, since positivists and scientists and academics own history and insist that facts are more important than history, is a whole range of alternative histories, all of them imaginary, which function in the way that history should. Hallucinatory experiences, science fiction, such fantasy as Tolkien's, some fundamentalist religion, black culture, are all ways of putting oneself into experimental parallel with a mode of human existence which is somehow alien and possible at the same time. Perhaps, in the end, these sources of analogy will be enough. But I would feel safer with Heinlein if I could have history as well.

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IN very practical and concrete terms, the education of the public man should include the following elements. First, he should gain a thorough knowledge of at least two cultures other than his own, one contemporary, one long dead. By other than his own, I mean far enough distant to be based on entirely different axioms. Contemporary cultures now would have to be oriental or primitive; soon the global village might make genuinely different ones extinct. For culture of the past, any era would do before the Renaissance. Obviously, because the human element in this education would be all-important, and because man is the animal which talks, learning these two cultures would include gaining fluency in their languages. Second, he should serve an on-the-job apprenticeship to some public figure capable of being for him a teacher, a model, and a patron, combining functional and human significance. Third, he should be encouraged to cultivate in himself what already seems to be of growing importance in our values and thought patterns, that is, the ability to use analogies in order to gain insight. If he does this, he will necessarily deal with his analogy cultures as if they were literature, and will prize most highly from them their literary remains. Answeringly, he will tend to behave, and to relate to people, in ways capable of being taken as parallel to a literary existence. Almost regardless of the disposition of the public figure under whom he works, this kind of student will learn from him the same sorts of things he has accustomed himself to learning from his books and his field studies; if the relationship survives, it will be forced to become more personal and symbolic, less purely functional.¹⁰

One final point needs to be made about the education of this model public man. The piece of the past which he will probably choose to study, if not put off by the wrong kind of historian operating the wrong kind of fact-grubbing school, will likely be the Middle Ages, or something remarkably similar. I say this because the general practice of cultures is to move forward by standing on the piece of the past just before the one which preceded them, and because the attitudes of the rising generation toward technology, toward the self, and toward structures of reasoning I call allegorical, are strikingly analogous to medieval ones. The culture's use of the past, until recently, has involved skipping the Middle Ages (even the name betrays our established attitude—the medieval period was between two important ages). As the extending culture of the Renaissance, we stood on classical Greece and Rome. There was an abortive attempt to move forward in the nineteenth century, but it was overwhelmed by the progressive power of railway executives whose buildings—Old Euston Station in London and Penn and Grand Central in New York—rivalled the Roman baths in classical and imperial splendor. Two of these three are no more, and the third has been given a Brobdignagian insult; the step is about to be taken. When the Enlightenment finally dies, we shall reach for our next future standing in the Middle Ages. As for the force of the analogy—that contemplating the Middle Ages helps one to

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understand the attitudes and problems beginning to surface in contemporary culture—it must work by insight or it will not work at all. It has by now seemed self-evident to a number of people.

It is at least clear to all of us that something is going on, that the center will not hold, that there is a smell of apocalypse in the air, and there are still some, I am sure, who weep for the loss of the certainties of 1910, and the loss of the lives of Dresden. But the real tragedy is not mortality, not even the mortality of fire. That is universal, and we shall not change it. The real tragedy is not even that Vonnegut is no Homer, and Dresden no Troy. Not only have we no Alkinoos to offer consolation; we have the worse guilt of knowing that our stories probably aren't worth telling, because we have lived not with the heart but with the glands. When Faulkner said this, he pointed to man's talking as the least of our consolations, beyond which was his soul, a spirit capable of the high abstractions. I should like to believe that the time will soon come that spirits capable of the high abstractions will be found, not only in novels, but also in every area of public life. Then history, an enterprise requiring the collaboration of providence, people, and written memory, may once again be

... god's work, weaving ruin there
So it should make a song for men to come.

NOTES

¹*The Odyssey*, tr. Robert Fitzgerald (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1963), p. 142.

²I am grateful for this telling phrase to my colleague, Sr. Paton Ryan. Such boredom, confronting Medusa's Hell, is a reminder of the true dimension of omnipotence.

³One may deny the solipsism, on the basis of a set of axioms which do not include or imply it; but to ignore it, assuming the empirical axioms which do imply it, is to put one's self at the mercy of materialisms more mechanical than is good for humanity. Since no axiom is *a priori* privileged, prudence suggests avoiding those with perverse or inhuman consequences.

⁴Erich Auerbach comes closest, in his *Literary Language and its Public in Late Latin Antiquity and in the Middle Ages*, and in the monumental *Mimesis*, but his analyses of style and the meaning of style relate more to doctrine than to the sensibility of the one who holds the doctrine. According to R. Dragonetti, "Aux frontières du langage poétique: la conception du langage poétique dans le 'De vulgari eloquentia' de Dante," *Romanica gandsensia*, 9 (1961), 9-77, Dante defines the literary Italian which he wishes to cultivate in a way which leads to much the same effect as my definition of Latin as a living language without native speakers. But Dante treats the native speakers differently.

⁵The commentary has never been edited. These excerpts are printed by J. M. Parent, O.P., in *La doctrine de la création dans l'école de Chartres* (Paris, Ottawa, 1938), pp. 124 ff.

⁶Within the frame of reference of literary criticism, I deal with these matters of definition at some length in *The Friar as Critic* (Nashville, 1971). Here there is only room for dogmatism: Angus Fletcher, in *Allegory, the Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, 1964), is misled by the fact that allegory leads to interpretations to claim that its essential feature is reference; C. S. Lewis, in *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford, 1953), is dominated by Coleridgean theories of poetry and by the famous distinction between fancy and the imagination; he relegates allegory to the area of verbal trickery or ornament. Michael Murrin, in *Veil of Allegory* (Chicago, 1969), discusses the relation of allegory to obscurity and to prophecy; his analysis seems to me true and important, but does not focus on matters useful to my argument here. In the sense in which I

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use the term, allegory is a generalized version of the biblical typology which Jean Daniélou defines in *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, tr. Wulstan Hibbard, (Westminster, Md., 1960).

⁷It can be argued that what John describes is not typical, but is rather the best education the Middle Ages achieved, and that at the height of its twelfth century renaissance, before there descended upon western Europe the logic-chopping darkness of scholastic barbarism. This is in a manner true, and the modern fascination of philosophy for linguistic analysis has analogously deprived learning of a center at once rigorous and human. At the same time, Curtius' hostility to scholasticism may well be overstated. The literary culture of Dante and Chaucer, not to mention such distinctly minor professional academics as Robert Holkot and Nicholas Trevet, is proof that one could still get a reasonably good grammatical education after 1200.

⁸*Iohannis Saresberiensis Episcopi Carnotensis Metalogicon Libri III*, ed. C. C. I. Webb (Oxford, 1929), I, 24, pp. 53-58.

⁹"The Lost Tools of Learning," in *The Poetry of Search and the Poetry of Statement* (London, 1963), pp. 155-176.

¹⁰It is interesting to note in this connection that John of Salisbury was apparently unable to conceive of a governmental abstraction without a person in it. Hans Liebeschütz notes this fact twice: "One of the peculiarities of John's political thought [is that he] avoids any idea of a corporation as the executant of political action. In John's mind the State consists simply of the actions of the officials who command in the ruler's name, and the actions of the subjects who react to these commands." *Medieval Humanism in the Life and Writings of John of Salisbury* (London, 1950), p. 82; cf. p. 6. In general terms, one could say that the content of the abstraction was a person. But one should go on to say that the relation between person and abstraction is reciprocal—the government is person, but the person is an anointed king, who is usually at some pains to look royal. Modern British usage preserves this precise point, by insisting on the plural verb for collective nouns: "The government *are*."