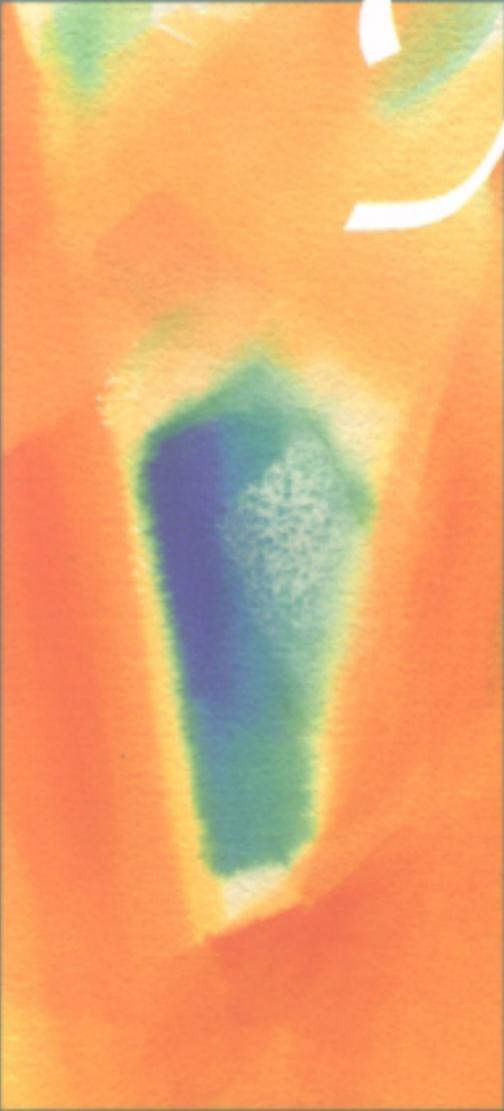


EXPLORATIONS OF THE SPIRIT
IN EDUCATION



YOUTH
LONGS
TO
KNOW

JOHN FENTRESS GARDNER

Youth Longs To Know

by

John F. Gardner

"I am very content with knowing, if only I could know."

—Emerson

Many children today bear within them great potentialities than ever before, powers the world needs as never before. Educators and parents must recognize and find ways to encourage these new capacities. The schooling and habits of thought to which children are now exposed, however, are not helpful. They frustrate what longs to be fulfilled. Our civilization as a whole represents a concerted attack upon the potentialities of the new generations. We must help youth to withstand this attack. We must make it possible for young people to realize the purpose of their lives: to achieve what they mean to achieve. And the modern world must receive from them just what they alone can newly give, if it is to solve the human and environmental problems that increasingly beset it.

It is characteristic of youth that what will later be accomplishment appears first as longing. The young artist is powerfully drawn to music and color and form

before he can use them creatively. The boy is fascinated by the business scene long before he can conduct any significant business. For the student, certain figures loom large in history. He is powerfully attracted because he finds himself in these personalities; he reaches out for what he has in himself to become. Thus, longing and desire for what stands on the far horizon often foreshadow what the soul will eventually produce from its own depths; and therefore the environment with which a young person instinctively surrounds himself is often a picture of capabilities that are coming to birth inside him.

I feel sure that what modern youth, whose strange customs and preferences often perplex us, is actually seeking is a deepened experience of life, to be gained through forces that lie well hidden yet feel the urgent need for expression. These forces are basically cognitive, but they are directed towards quite different kinds of knowledge than we parents and teachers are acquainted with. The urge to find a higher truth is very strong in young people today, though this fact is often obscured by what appears to be an indifference, or even a positive antipathy, to logic, to factual evidence, and to rationality in general. The young turn against conventional forms of knowledge because they do not find in this kind of knowledge the truth they seek. And their disappointment with the emptiness and falsehood of the world we adults have built on this ordinary knowledge is already deep before we with our conventional thinking imagine their search for truth can even have begun.

When youth's quest for truer forms of knowledge is frustrated, it becomes rebellion against the counsel of parents, the training of the schools, the laws of society, the principles of accepted morality. Youth wants life to

make sense; but when it obviously doesn't, it finds fault with all the custodians of culture who allegedly stand for sense but are evidently making nonsense out of existence. In a sensible life, marriages would be full of love, old people and learned professors would be wise, the leaders of society would be heroes, and practical men would be managing affairs so that nature prospered, man prospered, and the triumph of order, beauty, health, and convenience advanced from day to day. But these things are not happening.

It is my belief that the souls of many children today carry in themselves the conviction that real truth is a much higher experience than anything their parents and teachers have presently in mind. It is to be approached through quite other methods, on a different path of training. Whatever practical goods the ordinary kind of scientific knowledge has brought up—and they are many and captivating—it has now reached the point of diminishing returns. Young people see that we are spoiling existence faster than we are improving it. Their conclusion is that if a knowledge that can manage better is to appear, presently established forms and procedures of knowledge must abdicate. Hence, down with home, school, church, and government!

Unfortunately, the instinctive goals of the young are one thing; its ability to reach those goals is another. Youth must still be guided by age; it is absolutely dependent upon age to show the way. Yet this way must lead to the new goals, not the old. We adults must discover what youth is about and what it wants. This discovery should be possible, I propose, if we will study the youthful scene symptomatically, if we still heed the testimony of those forerunners of today's youth, the more advanced souls of

yesterday, and if we can give credence to a true prophet among our contemporaries.

Many today seek the same bread of life for which youth hungers. They have smelled its aroma and even tasted it. They have reliable clues to offer concerning its nature and the conditions of its appearance. One thinks of an Antoine de St. Exupery, a Laurens Van der Post, a Russell Davenport, an Archibald MacLeish. On the other hand, we shall hardly find another contemporary for whom the gates of the knowledge that is wisdom have so fully opened as for Rudolf Steiner. Steiner's extraordinarily practical achievements¹ support his claim that they were based upon the development of capacities of higher knowledge that slumber unknown today in every individual, and which it is the purpose of the further evolution of man to bring very gradually to light. The religious writer Emil Bock² has suggested that the young ardently, if unconsciously, seek the kinds of experience described by Steiner in *The Stages of Higher Knowledge*³ and elsewhere. In his opinion, the frustration of the young in this quest gives the best possible clue to their otherwise enigmatic and dismaying behavior. Dr. Franz Winkler, in his more medically oriented writings and lectures, makes the same analysis.⁴

To put matters briefly, our present thesis is that the young souls of today hunger and thirst for three things, all of which are functions of the cognitive experience.

They want first of all to experience life as life, in living immediacy. And then they long to find a meaning in life that transcends the conventional goals and routines.

And they long at last to touch the ultimate ground of being, in themselves, in other men, and in nature. They would see the whole world in God. The power that is

able to fulfill the first longing was called by the Idealists, Romanticists, and Transcendentalists of the last century Imagination. Rudolf Steiner chose the same name. He called the second power Inspiration. The last power, he said, because it penetrates to the core of existence, deserves the name of Intuition.

Let us see whether certain of the preferences and hungers that appear to motivate modern youth so obscurely and painfully may not reveal nascent capacities for just these higher kinds of knowing, which it is up to the adults who carry the responsibility for education to recognize and support. Then we can go on to see what, under existing circumstances, becomes of such capacities.

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The child hungers after imagination because he wants the experience of life as such. He would have the dry dust of everyday experience moistened. He would feel the heavy body of the world beginning to quicken. He longs for buoyancy and flowing movement, in himself and in all beings.

Though we can perceive bodily movement well enough, we do not perceive the movement that is actual life. Ordinary thoughts are but images that name life and growth without living and growing themselves.

And yet it could be otherwise. It is natural for small children to live with the wind in its blowing and with the white clouds in their sailing. Very young children are so close to the rain that falls, the vapors that rise, the stream that flows, and the sun that comes out shining, that they participate directly in these living movements. They also

bring into movement objects that for us adults remain inanimate and inert.

Adolescent youth still preserves the taste for living motion, even though it is beginning to dwell more in ideas. Nothing could suit it better than that thought itself should be mobile and alive. It hungers after imagination, because imagination is precisely the ability to think in moving, living pictures. No one has better stated the case for imagination than Emerson. He felt it opens the human soul to the life of the world, because “The nature of things is flowing,” and “the quality of imagination is to flow, and not to freeze.”⁵

If in any manner we can stimulate this higher form of knowing, new passages are opened for us into nature; the mind flows into and through things hardest and highest, and the metamorphosis is possible.⁶

As it learns to follow the fluent self-transformations of life, thinking itself is transformed. It becomes pictorial and its pictures move. Thinking becomes seeing.

Imagination is a very high sort of seeing, which does not come by study, but by the intellect being where and what it sees; by sharing the path or circuit of things through forms.⁷

Imagination is the ability to see knowingly and to know seeingly. It transforms both facts and thoughts into something new, making what is outward more inward, so that it can be felt; and what is inward more outward, so that it can be vividly seen and grasped. Thus on the one hand, imagination lifts and lightens material existence until it can be experienced by the human heart; and on the other hand it draws down and condenses immaterial thought to where it becomes creative in the practical world.

When a concrete fact is imagined, it dissolves, as it were, into currents of life. We approach the living reality out of which this fact has been precipitated. And, on the other hand, when an abstract idea is imagined, it fashions for itself a visible form. It becomes creative. Through imagination we see how 'mere' ideas could be capable, as Plato taught, of having brought forth the physical world in the beginning, and how they continue to introduce new forms of reality into it at the present time, through man's artistic and moral initiative. In respect of the advance from abstract thought to the living imagination, it is Emerson again who reminds us that "Whilst we converse with truths as thoughts, they exist also as plastic forces."⁸

Anyone who has difficulty conceiving that imaginations are something more than pale thoughts set free of logic and experience and allowed to move about whimsically, should consider the following characterization by Steiner:

The pictures of Imagination have a vivacity and a comprehensiveness with which the shadowy memory-pictures of the sense-world, and even the glittering and ephemeral physical world itself are not to be compared. This, too, is but a shadow compared to the realm of Imagination.⁹

All becoming is a fluent, buoyant process. What has already become, however, is by comparison static and heavy. When, through imagination the sense for becoming lightens the burden of factual experience; and when through imagination the sense of becoming

gives weight to otherwise weightless ideas, transforming abstract thought into formative power, the soul is doubly invigorated. It can live in the present, breathing in and breathing out. Education should establish this breathing, so that the child may stand as a living soul between the two worlds of matter and of the spirit, and through his breathing bring about their creative interpretation.

Even as idealistic youth longs, therefore, to see with the eyes of the soul, through imagination, it longs also to hear with the soul's ears, and breathe with the soul's lungs. Youth would add to its experience of the world in creative, living pictures the further experience of the world as utterance and tone. Rudolf Steiner called this experience Inspiration, and described it as follows:

If anything at all in the realm of sense can be compared with this world of Inspiration, it is the world of tone opened up to us by the sense of hearing. But now not the tones of earthly music are concerned, but purely 'spiritual tones.' One begins to 'hear' what is going on at the heart of things. The stone, the plant, and so forth, become 'spiritual words.' The world begins to express its true nature to the soul. It sounds grotesque, but it is literally true, that at this stage of knowledge one 'hears spiritually the growing of the grass.' The crystal form is perceived like sound; the opening blossom 'speaks' to men. The inspired man is able to proclaim the inner nature of things; everything rises up before his soul, as though from the dead, in a new kind of way. He speaks a language which stems from another world, and which alone can make the every-day world comprehensive.¹⁰

Music is the soul's air. The soul of youth longs to hear the singing and sounding of the world, to experience natural life and human life as a dance; for when the world

process becomes melody, harmony, and rhythm, the human individual can step forth in tune and in time with events. He can introduce his own counterpoint into the dance of atoms, into the dance of the elements, into the harmony of the spheres. All this is known to the musical, breathing experience of knowledge called inspiration.

Few of us have any real conception of the future experience of knowledge that youth today is preparing and for which it longs. We would, therefore, find ourselves quite incapable of characterizing such an experience as inspiration, were it not for poets and artists whose individual achievements foreshadow what mankind as a whole will not reach until later. Dr. Bucke, for example, in his *Cosmic Consciousness* says of Whitman, "I have heard him speak of hearing the grass grow and the trees coming out in leaf."¹¹ And as a young man, Emerson wrote:

The world...should be like the Dance of Plotinus in which 'the bodies are moved in a beautiful manner, as parts of the whole,' man moved and moving in ecstasy....¹²

He said that every fact and feature of nature taught him what his office should be: He should become a professor of the Joyous Science, a detector or delineator of occult harmonies and unpublished beauties...an affirmer of the One Law, yet as one who should affirm it in the music and dancing.¹³

Bronson Alcott spoke of moral inspiration as the blissful moment when a man abandons himself to the spirit: "The highest duty is musical and sings itself." And Pope Paul VI told a group of musicians that music is

“a most valid instrument in the promotion of humanity and indeed spirituality, for it draws us—perhaps unconsciously—closer to that God who is light and peace and fruitful and living harmony.”

Carlyle’s meaning is the same when he asks, “Who is there that, in logical words, can express the effect music has on us?” Music, he says, is “a kind of inarticulate, unfathomable speech, which leads us to the edge of the Infinite, and lets us for moments gaze into that!”¹⁴

Emerson affirmed that whenever we are finely enough organized, “we can penetrate into that region where the air is music.” In “The Poet” he says:

Like the metamorphosis of things into higher organic forms is their change into melodies. Over everything stands its daemon or soul, and, as the form of the thing is reflected by the eye, so the soul of the thin is reflected by a melody. The sea, the mountain-ridge, Niagara, and every flower-bed, pre-exist, or super-exist, in pre-cantations, which sail like odors in the air, and when any man goes by with an ear sufficiently fine, he overhears them and endeavors to write down the notes without diluting or depraving them.¹⁵

Emerson’s experience is echoed by his friend Carlyle in such a passage as this:

A musical thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, namely, the melody that lies in its soul, whereby it exists,

and has a right to be, here in this world. All inmost things, we may say, are melodious; naturally utter themselves in Song.... See deep enough, and you see musically; the heart of Nature being everywhere music if you can only reach it.¹⁶

And even if the world could be made alive and this life begin to dance, to sound, and to utter itself, a third longing in youth desires something still more fundamental.

The human being ultimately want to know the world as the manifestation of divine Being. Beyond the passing life and soul of things, it hungers after intuitions of the eternal spirit.

The power of knowing was called by Emerson a “resistless menstruum,” a fire that dissolves solid facts. The logical analysis used in ordinary thinking chops the manifest world into blocks of ice that we call scientific laws. Imagination melts this ice into flowing life. This water of life is then dissolved by inspired knowing into air—into the all-pervading musical soul that in the creative order of things is higher and earlier than mere life. And finally air becomes fire, inspiration becomes intuition. Behind the speaking of the world, the highest form of cognition finds the One who speaks. Even this experience is what a deeply hidden part of youth knows to be possible and longs for.

“The soul’s advances,” said Emerson in “The Over-Soul,” “are not made by gradation, such as can be represented by metamorphosis—from the egg to the worm, from the worm to the fly.”¹⁷ When the imagination has risen to become inspired, and inspiration in turn has ascended the further step to become intuitive, the

‘resistless’ fire of knowing comes into its own. Reaching through derivative life and soul to the causative spirit that lies within and behind all beings, cognition at last arrives.

It has been said that “fact is the end or last issue of spirit.”¹⁸ The present form of science cannot confirm this pronouncement as evolutionary truth; but the longing of youth is for a kind of science that can. And this longing is nothing other than the first stirrings of the very powers that will be able to achieve such a science, based upon intuitive experience.

Rudolf Steiner says that the ordinary man experiences, or can experience, one true intuition. That is the realization he can have of himself: “I am.” This experience is the most inward and the surest. Its surety rests upon the fact that it begins with the beginning.

It confirms itself. I am because I will to be. In this case, what is to be known I bring into existence, and so I know it beyond the shadow of a doubt. I know it from its own point of view. There is no room for obscurity or doubt in the experience of self-identity.

If there is anything weak about a man’s intuition of his own core of being in “I am,” it can only be because he has not come to the still moment when he realizes that in this, of all events, he is the absolute prime mover. In the intuition of self-existence, cognition and will are entirely one. This archetypal experience shows, therefore, that intuitive knowledge may be characterized as the cognitive use of our deepest creative power: it is will that has been wholly transformed to knowing.

Intuition in this meaning is obviously the highest form of knowledge, for it alone cancels the separation between knower and known. And if it can be applied to other beings as well as to oneself, it gives the possibility of

overcoming at last the split between subject and object, self and world. Steiner speaks of this achievement as follows:

The attainment of this stage...is marked by a very definite inner experience. This experience manifests itself in the feeling that one no longer stands outside the things and occurrences which he recognizes, but is himself within them. Images are not the object but its imprint. Also inspiration does not yield up the object itself, but only tells about it. But what now lives in the soul is in reality the object itself. The ego has streamed forth over all beings; it has merged with them.

...The actual living of things within the soul is Intuition. When it is said of Intuition that 'through it man creeps into all things,' this is literally true.... The perception of the ego is the prototype of all intuitive cognition. Thus to enter into all things, one must first step outside oneself.¹⁹

Obviously intuitive cognition is the highest form of love, for complete love is the full experience of another as one's self. Intuition is love that has become knowledge, or knowledge that has become love. Intuition is the answer to the alienation young people feel so painfully today.

Every soul longs for the experience of love. But we parents and teachers have never given our young people the clue to finding love through cognition. We have given them no hint of what is possible when thought becomes pure devotion and devotion becomes pure thought.²⁰

* * *

What is happening today to the longing of young people for life, for soul, for spirit, in the world and in themselves? These longings are being frustrated, and the new capacities for both cognition and creation that lie behind the longings are either atrophied or transformed into counter-forces.

All of these longings to know the world in a higher way require that not only the organizing mind, but the feeling heart and the creative will as well, are to be enlisted in the quest for truth. In Emerson's sense, it is only the depths of human experience that can call forth the depths of world-reality. But, as he also observed , in actual life the marriage between the human soul and the world is not celebrated.²¹ It cannot be celebrated for modern youth because science has not yet accepted the propriety of any such deepening of the act of knowledge. Until it does, our world conception will become ever less meaningful, and growing human beings will become every more neurotic, perverse, and destructive.

There seems to be a psychological law that if positive powers are suppressed on their own level, they become active as negative powers on a lower level. In the youth of today we are seeing proper longings that have gone unfulfilled transform themselves into improper longings. The terrible strength of the latter is all drawn from the former.

Instead of being helped to develop imagination so as to be able to live into the great world picture, young people are besieged and assaulted by images that destroy imagination and make experience of the phenomenal world even more opaque than it is for the ordinary state of mind. The attack of images comes from many directions: from speeding car and plane,

from television and movie screens—not to mention the barrage of audio-visual aids laid down in some classrooms. Youth reaches out avidly for these images because it has no understanding at all of what it really wants. It embraces that which destroys it.

The less capacity one has to produce images, the more he hungers for images that may be passively received. And the more passive he is in his receptiveness, the more his own imagination atrophies.

It would be one thing if the images that assault the eyes of youth today came from noble sources and had creative power. They do not. The greater part of the whole incredible snowstorm is born in materialism, greed, and lust. It seeks to awaken appetite, not ability. It appeals to the lowest, not the highest.

And the ear of the soul that longs to hear reality as inner music? It, too, is being externally assaulted without mercy. While the inner ear longs for the soul's speech and music, the outer ear is deafened by a bombardment of noise unheard since the world began. Think of the planes that make quiet conversation in a suburban garden impossible; the unnerving screech of subways, the banshee wail of jets, the sucking roar of car traffic. Think of the electric washing machine, vacuum cleaner, and vegetable blender; the grass-mower, chain saw, and the pneumatic drill. Upon this background of incessant mechanical noise, impose the record player, radio, television, and sound screen! We know and can be genuinely grateful that each of these noisemakers provides some service as convenience or entertainment, but let us ask for once: What is the effect of such cacophony upon the human soul?

Youth drinks the rampant mechanical sound and asks for more. It goes to sleep while the radio is on and cannot

wake up or eat breakfast without more radio. It holds the transistor radio to its ear as it walks along the street. It welcomes the juke box in restaurants and the steadily mounting volume of sound in movie theatres.

We can now expect the third kind of attack to be the worst, because it will be connected with frustration of the very deepest creative powers in the soul. What youth truly wants is to be, and to experience the being of others. What it gets, and seem perversely to crave, is the cruel assault of sexuality. Just as all forms of imagination and inspiration are but preludes to the ultimate power of intuitive knowing, so in the final analysis it is sex that constitutes the ultimate weapon employed against youth in its desire to be and to know being.

The message that comes across in the advertising, the fashions, the novels, plays, music, and dances is an appeal to many appetites and impulses, but through all weaves the appeal to sex. Not spiritual fire is evoked, but bodily craving; and the fire of this craving can consume spirit, soul, and life alike.

* * *

We have spoken of high powers that long to be fulfilled, and of the perverse expression of these longings on a lower level when they go unrecognized. We have seen that when productive powers are unexpressed, they turn into consuming appetites, and these constitute the ruthless attack now being waged by modern civilization against the very humanity of modern youth. What becomes of youth's potentialities under this attack?

Every teacher knows that the attack by images is destroying imagination. Children are losing the power

required to draw mental images out of written symbols: they read with increasing difficulty and with less and less stamina. Children are also tending to look at beast and flower, at rock and cloud, unimaginatively. Too often they see but dimly and are very little interested. Nature as a whole is withdrawing from them because they cannot follow her forms with imagination. At the same time the so-called power of abstract thinking is suffering, too. The best thinkers are those who continually fight abstraction by imagining what they are conceiving.

How much further the negative trend goes may be detected in modern art. Here synthesis, the enhancement of reality towards the ideal, has been replaced by fragmenting, haphazard, or simply mad impulses, which show that the artist is not in control at all. Meaningless pictures, junk sculpture, theater of the absurd: all indicate that deterioration of the creative uses of imagination is passing over into a suicidal will-to-destroy the power itself.

The addiction to canned music and to mechanical noise in general is, according to recent studies, producing progressive tone-deafness in the population at large. Music teachers know that children's voices are growing huskier, lower, more limited in pitch, and less ready to sing. The tones being produced prematurely by young children in the chest and body are doomed from the beginning. It is not the body that sings of itself but the soul sings in the body. Right singing starts high and free, descending deeper into the body only so fast and so far as the latter can be inspired.

Children do not listen so acutely, sing so sweetly, or walk and run so blithely as they should. Their ears are growing dull, their voices seem to growl, their gait

lumpers and shuffles. The aptitude for poetry was never so weak.

But the bombardment by sound is having further efforts. The voices of public speakers must be increasingly amplified. Radios and TV sets are turned up. Dance music has become electrified and deafening. With the increase of volume, melody and harmony are lost, as well as subtleties of rhythm. Music is degenerating into raw beat and thud. Surfeit of 'music' is becoming anti-music. We witness the suicidal will of musicality to destroy itself.

All this, of course, has implications that go far beyond speech and music and dance as such. When these decline, one feels so does belief in the meaningful order of the cosmos; so does the capacity to manage social life with peace and justice; and so does the ability to live one's individual life with melodic style, harmonious feeling, and rhythmic power through waking and sleeping, work and play, sorrow and joy, inward and outward activity.

Once again, we come to what is deepest and most precious. What is the attack of eroticism doing to the creative and intuitive capacities, to the spiritual life, of youth?

It is not only making young people un-intuitive, un-creative, and un-loving; it is causing these forces, too, to take the path of self-destruction. As result of the exploitation of sex, youth is becoming anti-intuitive, anti-creative, and anti-loving. Too many are already nihilists, and the end is not in sight.

Why should sexual over-activity affect intuition? How are the two related?

When the deep fire of sex sacrifices itself for the high love of truth, knowing is empowered. Through this

sacrifice the deepest level of creative power becomes cognitive.

Such knowing fully deserves the name of intuition. But when sex is inflamed and squandered in a purely physical way, intuition is destroyed. Knowing is swallowed by unknowing; darkness replaces light; spirit is lost in matter. And this is not all. The suicidal process does not stop with a laming effect; it goes on to complete destruction.

One ends with hatred of the knowing spirit and the creative spirit. Do we not see this apathy, this turbidity, and also this dark malice beginning to appear in the ranks of youth?

The constant appeals to sexuality draw downward forces that should have been lived out in the heart and brain. And the more sex is squandered, the colder grows the heart and the vaguer grows the brain. Such a heart and brain cannot rise above materialism.

They tend, rather, to create an environment that will be still more disappointing to the soul, making still more forces available for conversion into appetite—an appetite that cannot possibly satisfy itself since it is devouring the soul that alone is capable of experiencing satisfaction.

The prospect is terrifying, and modern youth is immediately confronting that prospect. It is one to breed heroes or monsters. Teachers are beginning to see signs of both.

Perhaps this is the place to mention the strange paradox that in the midst of all this emphasis upon sex, normal sexual vitality may be actually diminishing—consequence of exploitation. It is well known that reoccupation with a subject often indicates a secret realization that the substance of the matter is

disappearing. This sequence is as true of sex as it is of the brotherhood of man in society, about which we talk so much. What is the substance of healthy sex in the human world? Love. When loves dies—as die it must when deeper cognition is balked, and the forces of mind and feeling and will that should have established the relationship between I and Thou are subverted into physical appetite—the strength, the beauty, and the ability to give happiness are removed from sex. What is left is impotence, masked by fantasy, sadism, and the like.

In this discussion of the unsatisfied longings of youth and of the perverse, self-defeating turn these longings take in an age that acknowledges no higher forms of knowledge, we have not mentioned the phenomenon that has loomed so large in our time: the use of drugs. The search for an expanded consciousness is plainest of all in this case, and the suicidal effect of frustrated idealism is becoming equally plain.

It is clear that the adolescents who experiment with drugs are seeking intensified perception, the appearance of new and dramatic images. They seek escape from the humdrum, entry into the transcendental. Ecstasy is their aim—originally, no doubt, religious ecstasy. Too many young people believe that drugs hold promise of imagination, of inspiration, of intuition.

Drugs do not, however, deliver on their promise. While they work in diverse ways, none of them well understood, they all seem to have one thing in common: they exploit the powers of thought and feeling and will that should bring the better future to pass. They waste the future in order to achieve an illusory fulfillment in the present.

Drugs leave the user unmanned. His thrill is bought at the expense of thought, for his thinking grows episodic

and confused; at the expense of feeling, for his feelings in normal life are thereafter far more dull and torpid; at the expense of will, for the surest sign of a drug user is his indecision, lack of initiative, and uncreativity: the bankruptcy of his will. Once again, the longing is justified; the false method of satisfying it is disastrous and, in the end, suicidal.

The picture is dark but not black. There are indeed some very strong rays of light shining in the darkness, showing that behind the clouds the sun is still there and has everywhere power to break through. One of the bright rays is the young heroes who are appearing on the scene. Teachers occasionally see evidence that a new kind of youth is among us.²² These young people are remarkable in two respects : they really want to be good, and if given sound advice at critical moments, they have the strength to do so. In them, the powers needed for a spirited form of knowledge have made a leap forward.

Besides evidence that potential leaders are appearing here and there, we see a whole new climate of thought and feeling among the young that is encouraging and widespread. The love of nature is growing in a way that could not have been predicted a few years ago. Readiness for a simpler life is no longer uncommon. The out-ward comforts are willingly, and even eagerly, foregone for the sake of inwardness, comradeship, creative activity. The spirit of St. Francis seems to be abroad in many quarters, even though too often as the aftermath of, or still associated with, practices that serve to exhaust rather than to build. One encounters among the young today remarkable honesty, as well as tenderness, in human relationships. All these traits, coupled with willingness to accept the pain of self-knowledge, augur that there is in many young people a

strong purpose to force open the gates that lead from death to life.

To support the young people who are striving to achieve the kind of development the future will demand, there are here and there individual adults—authors, statesmen, ministers, doctors, educators, and others—who can offer counsel, friendly encouragement, and even example. Above all, in my opinion, there is the legacy of

Rudolf Steiner, especially the educational method founded upon his wisdom. It was Steiner's view that our present age begins something new in the history of mankind. The whole sequence of recorded history has been a descent of the spirit of man into materiality, with a consequent darkening of spiritual forms of knowing. The ever increasing brightness of physical perception and scientific intelligence has meant deepening darkness for spiritual perception. But now the tide has turned. Steiner agrees with the Oriental view that the necessary millennia of darkness are to be succeeded by an age of light, already inaugurated in our time. According to this insight, what we are now witnessing is the dawn of the new impulse upwards out of materiality, but also the unequal struggle of this young impulse with the massive, still not halted, downward momentum of the long age recently ended.

The sign of the new day, according to Rudolf Steiner, is that at least some men are beginning to realize that cognition can and must break out of its straitjacket. In his *Philosophy of Freedom*, Steiner established that we can have confidence in the power of thinking to know truth. In later works he described how thinking can retain the clarity and objectivity it has achieved under the discipline of natural scientific method and yet go on to develop

additional strength by the enlistment of powers of the soul as yet unused for cognition.²³ It is time now, he said, to withdraw our attention from efforts to improve the instrumentalities and techniques of scientific observation, and from the drive to exploit technologically the physical laws discovered. It is time to focus our attention upon thinking itself. The inherent force of thinking, upon which human freedom and all human progress depend, is now declining. This decline must be reversed.

Thinking must be resuscitated by the renewal of confidence in it, and then vitalized by our efforts to place our full powers at its disposal. Under these conditions, the capacity for objective thinking will commence an evolutionary development that is overdue. Thinking will be enabled at last to cope with the successively higher levels of phenomena that wait to be properly known. In Steiner's view, when intellectual cognition evolves to the further capacity objective imagination, it can for the first time know living beings. It must then rise higher to become inspiration, if it will approach the soul on its own ground. Still higher must it ascend, to objective intuition, if it is to know the primordial spirit that was, and is, and shall be. Our civilization awaits these higher forms of insight as a matter of life or death. "Where there is no vision, the people perish."

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A very practical question will occur to anyone who has followed the preceding argument. "What if, as is certainly to be expected, the very great majority of young people will not in this life attain any of the three stages of higher knowledge? What may they reasonably expect?"

The answer to this question is that every young person who can be guided to the right path of spiritual development will surely receive great gifts. Much is being attempted in this regard by Waldorf schools, working with the methods suggested by Steiner. These methods aim specifically to fulfill the longings of modern youth. They do so by exercising the powers-of-the-future from which these longings issue.

Without at all reaching the stage of clairvoyance Steiner calls Imagination, youth can be strengthened in imagination. The result will be an increased ability to enjoy life because its pulse and power are felt. From such awareness spring surprise and delight, refreshment and renewal. At the same time, the disciplined imagination gives an ability to convert what for others would have remained mere thought into practical energy and skill. Obviously, the capacity to transform abstract ideas into plastic forces overcomes the split between thought and action.

Without arriving at Inspiration as Steiner understood it, youth can still be inspired to great effect. For example, right education can have the result that a man who is not at all clairvoyant will nevertheless be inspired through sleep. He will find himself awakening with good ideas, ideas that falsify the riddles of ordinary life and show how improvements can be made in the form of new ways of doing things. He will develop ingenuity and originality—bold conceptions that break out of the rut of habit and custom. This ability is incipient inspiration.

What will be the third kind of achievement, showing progress towards Intuition?

This stage will show itself as an almost magical ability to accomplish the ideal. All things done deeply and

permanently are done by grace. Grace attends the work of him who has taken himself in hand so fundamentally as to replace self-will by the will to do what is right and needed. To live under grace is to have an objective spiritual task as the meaning of one's life. To have such a task is to be vouchsafed the power to accomplish it in spirit and in truth.

Every occupation, every profession, becomes real to the extent that it is also a task. The teacher then actually lifts and enables; he does not merely explain and correct.

The preacher actually saves; he does not merely exhort. The doctor actually heals; he does not merely medicate and perform operations. Marriage and parenthood, too, can become tasks, can be lived under grace. Then in the home there is love. This above all is the wish of every child and youth.

Considered together, these three practical forms of the higher forces of cognition amount to an ability to enjoy life and to contribute to it; an ability to find meaning in existence, solve problems, and persevere cheerfully through adversities that would defeat the ordinary man. Such are the rewards of striving to make ever more room in one's heart for the mysterious spirit that lives and rules through all.

Endnotes

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- 2 Emil Bock, *The Apocalypse of St. John* (London, The Christian Community Press, 1957).
- 3 (New York, Anthroposophic Press, 1967).
- 4 *Man: The Bridge Between Two Worlds* (New York, Harper & Row, 1960); The Mythology in Wagner's 'Ring' Series and in 'Parsifal', "*Proceedings* (New York, The Myron Institute, Nos.
- 5 Emerson, "The Poet," *The Selected Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York, The Modern Library, Random House, Inc., 1950), p. 336.
- 6 Ibid., p. 332.
- 7 Loc. cit., p. 332.
- 8 *The Complete Writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York, Wm. H. Wise & Co., 1929), p. 1248.
- 9 Rudolf Steiner, *The Stages of Higher Knowledge* (New York, Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1967), p. 8.
- 10 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
- 11 Richard M. Bucke, *Cosmic Consciousness* (New York, Dutton & Co., Inc., 1923), p. 216.
- 12 Emerson, quoted in Van Wyck Brooks, *The Life of Emerson* (New York, E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1932), p. 50.
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- 14 Thomas Carlyle, "The Hero as Poet," *On Heroes, Hero-Worship, and the Heroic in History* (London, Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 109.
- 15 Emerson, "The Poet", op. cit., p. 331.
- 16 Carlyle, op. cit., (Modern Library edition), p. 265.
- 17 Emerson, "The Over-Soul," op. cit., (Modern Library edition), p.265.
- 18 Emerson, "Nature," op cit., (Modern Library edition), p. 19.
- 19 Steiner, op. cit., pp. 9-10.
- 20 "In the uttermost meaning of the words, thought is devout and devotion is thought." Emerson, "Nature," op. cit., p. 41.
- 21 Ibid., p. 41.
- 22 Vid. Franz E. Winkler, M.D., "Rays of Hope in a Dark World" (New York, The Fellowship Committee of the Anthroposophical Society in America, 1966), p. 9.
- 23 Steiner, Rudolf. *Goethe the Scientist* (New York, Anthroposophic Press, Inc., 1950).

