

## Editorial

# Wasteground to University

Most of the authors in these pages have responded to a search by Nora McCardell, as Editor Elect, for representative writing from the field of environmental psychology. They cover an interesting range of topics in more than one dimension. We go from the familiar school classroom to the hills of Calgary, from city wastegrounds to city universities, and from an entire new program of studies in person-environment relations to the subway system of New York seen as a field of action in those relations.

The educator is tempted to perceive some variation along another dimension: among these planners of the learning event, who is controlling and who or what controlled? Whereas the initiative of the teacher in Mele Koneya's classroom is not called into question, Harold Proshansky's architect is warned to make room for the initiative of students seeking some quality of life and learning in a university that is itself a city; and Denis Wood's designers are offered an award of the year (for "non-design") if only they will get right out of the way of children at play. But to make much of such distinctions among these articles would be irrelevant. One theme, one refrain, runs through them all, and dominates the field: environment affects man; by paying attention, man can with care so affect his environment that he gains a greater measure of control over himself. Neither can be said to control the other, in absolute terms. We are talking about an interaction system whose generative — and generous — processes may be stimulated by the initiatives of educators or planners from without.

There is no question that we have left behind these perhaps now sterile issues about respective fields of initiative for teacher and student. Nevertheless there does appear to remain a common, shared assumption, among these writers and in our day, that deserves to be challenged. In the image that we now entertain of this fruitful interaction between environment and man, there seems no question that of the two the dynamic comes — must come — from man. And that perhaps ought to be a question.

Is it not just another manifestation of *hubris* — our present conviction that the individual can best shape his or her own ends? At the same time as the fashion in educational settings has swung with characteristic violence, in one decade, from schools without windows to schools without walls, our students (we are being told) have swung from the Me Generation to something else. And yet one wonders if the Us Era has really ended, that age in which the proper study of mankind has been not only man but has been man only, and all else within his range has taken its place as subservient to man's interests and needs — a sort of universal super-market indulgently catering to the coming week-end's houseparty. For we loftily style it all "the environment" — these trees, those mountains, all that occupies space between ourselves and the stars — as though its entire *raison d'être* were humbly to surround *us*. How superbly arrogant! Whatever happened to "I to the hills will lift mine eyes, from whence doth come mine aid"?

Our recent preoccupation with the environment may mean that we are indeed going further away from, rather than returning to, that earlier, humbler, and perhaps saner respect for the things that we do not understand and that are nevertheless the determinants of our survival. On the other hand, it may have a significance more hopeful. People are never so aware of their environment as when, some prolonged crisis of pain or fever past, they emerge grateful to be beginning to be well again. It could be for our times a sign of much longed-for restoration to health that we are beginning to pay attention to where we find ourselves.

---

Scholarship is not to be defined chiefly by the form in which it is written about; it is to be recognized in the quality of the thought that has determined what we are reading. The readings offered in this issue may be challenging in their diversity of forms, but thoughtfulness informs them all. One is invited to consider research reporting, and less formal interpretational writing about research; speeches originally intended for a single hearing, a poem intended for several reflective readings; a calendar of courses dense with the specifications of an entire new field of understanding, a map whose tiny black dots carry meanings that chill the blood, numbers in tables suggesting regularities in the diverse behaviours of men and women. It has been the long established practice of the *Journal*, under Margaret Gillett's pioneering editorship, that the diversity of humanity in education should appear here in a like diversity of forms. That is one of the traditions this editor hopes to live up to.

J.K.H.