

THE MATURE SOCIETY

by Dennis Gabor

Præger

204 pp., \$7.50

A GOD WITHIN

by René Dubos

Scribner's

320 pp., \$7.95

"Think small" is the message of both these books on the future. Gabor, who has a genius for slogans, proposes these: "Excellence instead of quantitative growth. Possession instead of consumption." We must aim at "a mature society, stable in numbers and in material production, in ecological equilibrium with the resources of the Earth." Dubos would endorse this statement of purpose but says of Gabor's earlier book, *Inventing the Future*: "The futures we invent are viable only if they are compatible with the constraints imposed by the evolutionary past." The two writers' differing views of the means necessary to attain a desirable human future probably stem from their different scientific disciplines as much as from personality differences, though both range far outside their specializations—Dubos with humility, Gabor with arrogance. Dubos, a biologist, insists on an organic, evolutionary approach to the future. Gabor, a physicist, inventor, and electronics engineer, stresses a more revolutionary—though "Fabian"—program, in which a redirected technology would produce "social inventions" rather than "hardware." Nevertheless, he cannot resist describing a fantastic piece of electronic hardware for teaching history—or rather his own Disneyland version thereof. Dubos wants us to be aware of the past in

a more traditional and humane way. He is a better historian than Gabor and shows greater sensitivity to art and literature. Although Gabor wants to preserve the work ethic in a leisure society, he seems unaware of the depth of untapped human potential for the arts. Although the mature society should offer "hope, play, diversity," Gabor's chief work-surrogate is lifelong education. He would, however, require an element of hardship and competition in schooling from six through eighteen, so that young people could then become responsible members of a permissive, leisured society. An "unashamed elitist," he wants everyone to be "directed" into the vocation appropriate for his I.Q., "ethical quotient," and motivation. He and Dubos differ most sharply about the value of computer simulations in planning a future society. Whereas Gabor applauds Jay W. Forrester's dictum that "the human mind is not adapted to interpreting how social systems behave," Dubos deplors it, insisting that because man has free will, "the real future is likely to be very different from any of the predictable futures." It is comically reassuring to note that Dubos's ideal future community would be quite like the French village where he grew up, while Gabor, a Hungarian long resident in England, considers "the English gentleman as not a bad model for the citizen of the mature society."

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