Example is the school of mankind; they will learn at no other.

—Burke

THAT SCHOLARLY and brilliant Britisher, Edmund Burke (1727-1797), assuredly used the term "mankind" as defined in his country's Oxford Dictionary: "Human beings in general." Thus, the reference was not to those few who think for themselves and explore the Unknown, the ones graced with insights and who experience intuitive flashes, the moral and intellectual giants, the oversouls, those like Confucius, Socrates, Epictetus, Augustine, Maimonides, Adam Smith and thousands of others. Not included in Burke's dictum were those who rank high in setting examples—the exemplars! Rather, his reference was to the general run of us who learn, if at all, by the example of our superiors.

For the past forty years I have studied the few—those stalwarts past and present—and observed how their exemplarity has helped me to shape my life. They teach by the high example they set, and we learn by our efforts to do likewise. To the extent that we learn the lessons their examples teach, to that extent are our own chances of exemplarity improved.

What has been the most rewarding lesson? It is this: individuals, past or present, whom I have rated as exemplars, have thought of themselves as among "human beings in general." Their place in the elite category has been be-
stowed by others—never self-proclaimed. Indeed, any time any person puts a crown on his own head, he is one to shun intellectually, never to follow or emulate. Unfortunately for him, he has failed to grasp how infinitesimal is his own finite consciousness.

Socrates, reputedly one of the wisest, had this to say: “I know nothing, but I know I know nothing.” That great Greek referred to himself as a philosophical midwife; he was a go-between—seeking Truth on the one hand, sharing his findings with fellow seekers on the other. Socrates was aware of a simple and self-evident fact: the more one learns, the larger looms the Unknown.

The Infinite Unknown

This point is easy to grasp. Merely visualize in the mind’s eye a sheet of black, infinite in dimensions—the Unknown. Now whiten a small circle to represent your awareness, perception, consciousness of, say, a decade ago. Next whiten a greatly enlarged circle to depict your growth during the past ten years. Observe how much more darkness you as a learner are exposed to now than earlier. A good guideline to assess progress: if daily the Unknown is not looming larger, one is not growing.

Many who have delved deeply into any subject, be it philosophy, science, or whatever, are keenly aware of this point. Warren Weaver, a distinguished mathematician, generalized the conclusion reached by many thoughtful scientists:

As science learns one answer, it is characteristically true that it learns several new questions. It is as though science were working in a great forest of ignorance within which . . . things are clear. . . . But, as that circle becomes larger and larger, the circumference of contact with ignorance also gets longer and longer. Science learns more and more. But there is a sense in which it does not gain; for the volume of the appreciated but not understood keeps getting larger. We keep, in science, getting a more and more sophisticated view of our ignorance.1 (Italics mine)

Here we are presented with what, at first blush, is a seeming anomaly, namely, the more one is aware of his ignorance the more is he graced with wisdom. These two progressions are complementary rather than contradictory. They are twin aspects of man’s most important earthly purpose: growth in awareness, perception, consciousness. As suggested above, when one is growing, he becomes more and more aware of his ignorance and this gain in awareness is, in itself, a gain in wisdom. No

better lesson is to be learned in The School of Mankind!

Parenthetically, it should be noted that there are among us always those I would class as "false exemplars"—the political charlatans and others who prescribe life without effort, the know-nothings who promise that they, better than we ourselves, can manage our individual destinies.

These "leaders" are the very opposite of exemplars. They are Pied Pipers who put themselves in the vanguard of this or that mob. According to Emerson, a mob is "a society of bodies voluntarily bereaving themselves of reason."

A Personal Approach

My concern is not with mobs and their flabby disposition to escape from freedom and self-responsibility but, rather, with those individuals who aspire to get ever deeper into life. The human future is with those whose ambition is to achieve in their own lives, as nearly as possible, man's manifest destiny!

Very well! Observe the true exemplars and their ways. These all-too-rare souls have their eyes cast only on their own improvement, not on the reforming of anyone else. As a consequence of their adherence to self-perfection, others who would improve themselves are drawn not only to them but to the light they radiate. To seekers, such enlightenment performs as does a magnet.

However, there are and always have been two grades of people: stagnant and growing. There are individuals who seem to be more enlightened on this or that subject than anyone else. Being further advanced than all others, no more is required of them, or so they mistakenly conclude. Stagnated! In a word, they crown themselves and freeze at the level of their self-professed perfection. They fail to grow.

It is growth in awareness, and this alone, which energizes the power of attraction; stagnation at whatever level has no magnetism! It matters not at what level of awareness the growth proceeds, be it from a beginner in The School of Mankind or a Socrates. Why? The one who is learning is graced with ideas—enlightenments—new to him and very likely new, or at least refreshing, to those fortunate enough to share his company.

The Power of Attraction

This is a fascinating phenomenon. Magnetism flows between the seekers and the givers of light, much as a flash of lightning oscillates between positive and negative poles. The current may be generated from either direction—by the teacher whose light is grow-
ing brighter, or by the student drawing ever more earnestly from the constant light of a great teacher, perhaps one no longer living. Or, most hopefully, the greatest enlightenment might come as teacher and student grow together.

Many times you and I have said and heard others say, "I now see what you mean." Why not before? Countless reasons range from one party's deafness or disinterest to the other's muteness or monotony. It has been said that repetition is the mother of learning, but this is not necessarily the case. Saying the same thing over and over—the broken record—is folly. But trying to phrase an idea in better and more interesting style has merit not only for the phraser but also for the one who may be trying to "see what you mean." Forever strive for clarity; first in one's mind and then in expressions and actions.

The seeker after the light of truth should search in every nook and cranny, for no person knows beforehand from what source it might beam. When he spots it, he should follow wherever it leads. If we are alert, flashes of truth will be observed emanating from those previously unknown as well as from the acclaimed elite, from sometime opponents as well as from long-time friends of freedom, from babes to grownups. Let us pray with Cardinal Newman: "Lead, Kindly Light, amid the encircling gloom. Lead Thou me on!"

When devotees of the free market, private ownership, limited government way of life are chosen as teachers, let orientation be the teachers' aim. Yes, give some samplings of the few lessons well mastered, point out the lodestar—the ideal—and let the seekers take it from there. The School of Mankind has given me two reasons for this conclusion. First, there is no teacher among all who live who knows all the explanations—even remotely. And, second, only the seekers can find their way. No individual can do it for you or me or anyone else. Each, by the very nature of man, is his own trail blazer.

The School of Mankind! It issues no degrees; there is no tenure. Students and teachers leapfrog one another as they advance. No graduation, only daily commencements! And no semesters or set term of years! The School of Mankind is for life—the good life!
I've got some good news for you about the energy crisis.

Everything that possibly could have gone wrong seems to have gone wrong already. The same institution primarily responsible for our monetary and economic mess is also primarily responsible for our energy problems: Government.

I want to emphasize that, regardless of party label, our elected officials and our bureaucrats are not evil people. They mean well. And it is precisely their good intentions that make our problems so disastrous. Most of our public servants are motivated by the messianic impulse of doing good to their fellow man—and shoving it down his throat whether he likes it or not. They are full of good intentions—which they will enforce with a gun at your head.

In fact, without oversimplifying the issue, the shortest explanation that can be given about the energy crisis is that it was triggered by a good intention and worsened by the use of force.

The good intention was the no-