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AN ARISTOCRATIC ART

LAST week we repeated as with Hamlet's contempt, "Words, words, words," speaking of their deceptions, their false assurances. Yet words also have a healing magic and a peace-giving wonder, most easily discovered in poetry. There are lines in the *Tempest* to calm and soothe when death intervenes:

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made.
Those are pearls that were his eyes:
    Nothing of him that doth fade,
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell:
Hark! now I hear them,—ding dong bell.

And Shelley—Shelley understood Prometheus Unbound:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
    To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
    To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, and bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
    Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory.

And from Shelley, too, we have the triumphal chorus from Hellas:

The world's great age begins anew,
    The golden years return,
The earth doth like a snake renew
    Her winter weeds outworn:
Heaven smiles, and faiths and empires gleam
Like wrecks of a dissolving dream.

A brighter Hellas rears its mountains
    From waves serener far;
A new Peneus rolls his fountains
    Against the morning star,
Where fairer Tempes bloom, there sleep
Young Cyclads on a sunnier deep.

A loftier Argo cleaves the main,
    Fraught with a later prize;
Another Orpheus sings again,
    And loves, and weeps, and dies.
A new Ulysses leaves once more
Calypso for his native shore.

Oh, write no more the tale of Troy,
    If earth Death's scroll must be!
Nor mix with Laian rage the joy
    Which dawns upon the free:
Although a subtler Sphinx renew
Riddles of death Thebes never knew.

Another Athens shall arise
    And to remoter time
Bequeath, like sunset to the skies,
    The splendor of its prime;
And leave, if nought so bright may live,
All earth can take or heaven can give.

Saturn and Love their long repose
    Shall burst, more bright and good
Than all who fell, than One who rose,
    Than many unsubdued;
Not gold, not blood, their altar cowers,
But votive tears and symbol flowers.

Oh, cease! must hate and death return?
    Cease! must men kill and die?
Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
    Of bitter prophecy.
The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last.

Once again, for sheer loveliness, we have the last stanza of Shelley's "The Cloud":

I am the daughter of earth and water,
    And the nursling of the Sky;
I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
    I change, but I cannot die.
For after the rain when with never a stain
    The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
    Build up the blue dome of air
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
    And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
    I arise and unbuild it again.

We go now to a writer who has given attention to the tension between the playwright and the poet, which he finds best illustrated in Shakespeare. The contest seems to have made for him a struggle, but the poet in him won. The writer is Harold Goddard, who in *The Meaning of Shakespeare* explains:

> Drama is the most democratic of the arts in the sense that a play must have a wide and immediate appeal to a large number of people of ordinary

intelligence if it is to have success in the theater to permit the author to go on writing plays. The playwright must be nothing if not lucid. As we have seen, he must keep no secrets if he is to feed that specifically theatrical emotion which resides in the sense of omniscience. If a play's action is not plain and its characters are not easily grasped, it will obviously soon close its run. There is no going back and rereading in the theater.

Poetry, on the contrary, is an aristocratic art. The poet is bound to please himself and the gods rather than the public—to tell the truth regardless of its popularity, to seek the buried treasure of life itself. In that sense he cannot help having a secret, and, even if he would, he cannot share it with the populace. When the moment of inspiration passes, he may not even comprehend it fully himself.

What wonder, if this is so, that, among the innumerable playwrights and many poets, there have been so few poet-playwrights. The poet-playwright is a contradiction in terms. Yet a poet-playwright is exactly what the young Shakespeare was.

Plainly, if this paradoxical being is to survive, he must practice a little deception himself. And it is not just his audience that he must fool. If he must please the public, he must also placate the powers-that-be. If the crowd does not want the truth lest it disturb its animal contentment, those in authority do not want it lest it undermine their power. Between the upper millstone of the powerful and the neither millstone of the crowd the lot of the poet-playwright is not an easy one. . . . The poets . . . have ever delighted in palming off on the oppressor as harmless what from his own point of view, if he only knew, is deadly poison. Oppressors seldom understand humor and never understand poetry. If they did, they would not be oppressors. The powerful suppress the protests of the rebel and stifle the cries of the distressed. But even the Nazis did not ban the music of Beethoven. Poetry might be defined as the speech that tyrants do not understand. If there were no other reason for it, this would be enough to explain the Delphic character of so much of the world's art, including its folklore, its fables and fairy tales. Think, for instance of the revolutionary implications of the story of Cinderella!

Shakespeare the playwright must write for audiences, but Shakespeare the poet has his obligations, too. Goddard chooses *The Merchant of Venice* to show how Shakespeare keeps both intentions in balance.

Drama, as we have said, must make a wide and immediate appeal to a large number of people of ordinary intelligence. The playwright must make his plots plain, his characters easily grasped, his ideas familiar. The public does not want the truth. It wants confirmation of its prejudices. That is why the plays of mere playwrights have immediate success but seldom survive.

What the poet is seeking, on the other hand, is the secret of life, and, even if he would, he cannot share with a crowd in a theater, through the distorting medium of actors who are far from sharing his genius, such gleams of it as may have been revealed to him. He can share it only with the few, and with them only in solitude.

A poet-playwright, then, is a contradiction in terms. But a poet-playwright is exactly what Shakespeare is. And so his greater plays are one thing as drama and another as poetry, one thing on the outside, another within. Ostensibly, *The Merchant of Venice* is the story of the friendship of an unselfish Venetian merchant for a charming young gentleman who is in love with a beautiful heiress; of the noble sacrifice that the friend is on the point of making when nearly brought to disaster by a vile Jew, of the transformation of the lovely lady into lawyer and logician just in the nick of time and her administration to the villain of a dose of his own medicine. Was ever a play more compact with popular appeal? But what if, all the while, underneath and overhead, it were something . . . different from all this . . . ? What if the author is putting to the test, not just, the suitors of Portia, but other characters as well, even possibly, every reader or spectator of his play? It would be like him.

Under the appearance of the gracious life of Venice is the love of gold, and something worse—exclusiveness. "What is the trouble with these people and what are they trying to hide?" asks Goddard.

Now Shylock is a representative of both the things of which we have been speaking: of money, because he is himself a moneylender, and of exclusion, because he is the excluded thing. Therefore the Venetian world makes him their scapegoat. They project on him what they have dismissed from their own consciousness as too disturbing. They hate him because he reminds them of their own unconfessed evil qualities. Down the ages this has been the main explanation of racial

hatred and persecution, of the mistreatment of servant by master.

There is a Shylock in every merchant, we see, if we have eyes to see. This is the hidden lesson of the play. And Shylock is human, or more, than all the rest.

> Shakespeare is at pains to make plain the noble potentialities of Shylock, however much his nature may have been warped by the sufferings and persecutions he has undergone and by the character of the vocation he has followed. His vices are not so much vices as perverted virtues. His pride of race in a base sense is pride of race in a high sense perverted, his answer to the world's scorn. His love of sobriety and good order is a degeneration of his religion. His domestic "tyranny"—which is easy to exaggerate—a vitiated love of family and home. His outward servility, a depraved patience. His ferocity, thwarted self-respect. Even his avarice is partly a providence imposed by the insecurity of his lot. There is a repressed Shylock.

Then, toward the end of his comment, Goddard says:

> The metaphor that underlies and unifies *The Merchant of Venice* is that of alchemy, the art of transforming the base into the precious, lead into gold. Everything in it comes back to that. Only the symbols are employed in a double sense, one worldly and one spiritual. By a kind of illuminating confusion, gold is lead and lead is gold, the base precious and the precious base. Portia had a chance to effect the great transformation—and failed. But she is not the only one. Gold, silver, and lead in one, the play subjects every reader or spectator to a test, or, shall we say, offers every reader or spectator the same opportunity Portia had. Choose—it says—at your peril. This play anti-Semitic? Why, yes, if you find it so. Shakespeare certainly leaves you free, if you wish, to pick the golden casket. But you may thereby be revealing more of yourself than of his play.
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> And what is true of an individual is true of an age. Poetry forever makes itself over for each generation. *The Merchant of Venice* seems expressly written for a time like our own when everywhere the volcano of race hatred seems ready to erupt. But even when we see this we may still be taking it too narrowly. Its pertinence for us is no more confined to the racial aspect than are our hatreds and exclusions. What inspired Shakespeare to introduce into this gay entertainment, with all its frivolity and wedding bells, prototypes of those two giants of the twentieth century Trade and Finance (each so different at heart from its own estimation of itself), to let them look in each other's eyes, and behold—their own reflections?
>
> Which is the merchant here and which the Jew?

The oracle, Goddard finds, "remains the type of the purest poetry." He learned this, no doubt, from Shakespeare, or from Shakespeare and Blake. He says:

> Oracles are *ambiguous* (a very different thing from *obscure*). They are uttered, as the world seems to be made, to tempt men to meet them halfway, to find in them one of at least two fatally different meanings. Life or death hangs on how they are taken. "The Lord at Delphi," says Heraclitus, "neither speaks nor conceals, but gives a sign." Dreams have the same Delphic characteristic. So does poetry.
>
> To our age anything Delphic is anathema. We want the definite. As certainly as ours is a time of the expert and the technician, we are living under a dynasty of the intellect, and the aim of the intellect is not to wonder and love and grow wise about life, but to control it. The subservience of so much of our science to invention is the proof of this. We want the facts for the practical use we can make of them. We want the tree for its lumber, not, as Thoreau did, to make an appointment with it as a friend. We want uranium in order to make an atomic bomb, not for the mysterious quality that gave it its heavenly name. When the intellect speaks, its instrument is a rational prose. The more unmistakable the meaning the better. "Two and two are four." Everybody understands what that means, and it means the same to everybody. But "Become what thou art"; "Know thyself"; "Ye must be born again"; "I should never have sought thee if I had not already found thee"; "The rest is silence": what do they mean? Will any two men ever exactly agree? Such sentences are poetry. . . .
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> We read a poem as we live—at our risk. Though it may take its time about it, the world has a way of bringing up with a sharp jolt the man who attempts to substitute for its facts some private fancy. Fanciful interpretations of literature are doomed to as quick extinction. The text must be as sacred to the reader as his facts are to the scientist. He must discard instantly anything it contradicts. But he must be as ready to strike life into it, from his own experience, as the scientist must be fertile in

> hypotheses. And this is what the objective school of Shakespearean criticism forgets. How refreshing, when oppressed by the deposit of learning under which it sometimes threatens to bury Shakespeare, to remember a sentence of Emerson's: "A collector recently bought at public auction, in London, for one hundred and fifty-seven guineas, an autograph of Shakespeare: but for nothing a schoolboy can read *Hamlet,* and can detect secrets of higher concernment yet unpublished therein." What if it should cease to be true! What if someday the heart of Hamlet's mystery should be plucked out and whenever we went to the theater we could count not on seeing a new Hamlet as we do now but on seeing the one original and authentic Hamlet of "Shakespeare himself"! Would we care to attend the theater any longer? How right that Shakespeare's most masterly character should be his most baffling and protean one.

As both scholar and teacher, Harold Goddard learned from his work how the different parts of the mind function. In his chapter, "The Integrity of Shakespeare," he wrote:

> The intellect makes a conscious plan in advance. The imagination, like the embryo, makes an unconscious one and discovers what it is in retrospect. "I've got to have a conference with my teacher about the outline of my essay," announced the little girl who was writing her first composition in that form. "Now I should think," she continued with a slight note of disdain in her voice, "that you'd write the essay first and then *find* the outline." The teacher might have personified Intellect, the little girl Imagination. It was in recognition of this principle that Samuel Butler was led to assert that "a man should have any number of little aims about which he should be conscious and for which he should have names, but he should have neither name for, nor consciousness concerning, the main aim of his life." The main aim of a man's life, like the main aim of a work of art, is in the control of the Imagination, formerly known as the Will of God, or the will of the gods. "We who dwell on earth can do nothing of ourselves," says William Blake; "everything is conducted by Spirits, no less than Digestion or Sleep." But we can draw nearer such spirits when we sense their presence. "No production of the highest kind," says Goethe, "no remarkable discovery, no great thought that bears fruit and has results, is in the power of anyone, but such things are elevated above all earthly control." Yet we can take advantage of a wind we are powerless to create. Shakespeare's works give signs of having recognized that fact.

Shakespeare the poet has no use for war. *The Rape of Lucrece* is his way of saying that war is rape on a social scale. It is sometimes said that he has no heroes, but his heroines make up the gap. The finest humans are those in whom the masculine and feminine qualities are balanced. Nor does the age determine the make-up of his characters.

> Why are Shakespeare's ideas in so many instances indistinguishable from what may be called the ideas of his time? But why, then, we may ask in turn, has the world shown no such consuming interest in the other men who followed those same fashions and held those same ideas. . . . To fit into one's age as mud does into a crack, or to be molded by it as putty under a thumb is one thing; to fit into it and to use it creatively as a seed fits into and uses soil is quite another. The secret of why the germinating seed selects certain ingredients of the soil, while utterly ignoring others, lies in the seed, not in the soil.

So with the poet, Shakespeare.

REVIEW
WHAT IS "CHANNELING"?

THE book, *Channeling,* by Jon Klimo, published by Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc., in Los Angeles, this year, is probably the best volume on this confusing subject that has yet appeared, although one that should have more warnings than it provides, because of the fallibility of human nature. The author seems to have done his best to present an impartial study of psychism, yet the subject is so vast and afflicted by so many mysteries that such a book is bound to be misleading in some respects. The few who happen to be familiar with the phenomena of nineteenth-century Spiritualism will have an advantage in coping with this material.

In a book of this sort, a great deal depends upon the selection of the "channels" to be considered. Klimo says that he will begin with Jane Roberts and her "Seth" books. Others include the "Findhorn" books and Helen Schucman's *A Course in Miracles,* J. Z. Knight, Kevin Ryerson, Jach Pursel, Mark and Elizabeth Clare Prophet, Ken Carey, Mereditth Lady Young, and Pat Rodegast. Klimo remarks:

> My own preference throughout this book will be to use, instead of *entity,* the term *source,* which I define in the glossary as *"the generic term for anyone or anything occupying the transmitting end, or comprising the informational origin, in the channeling process.*
>
> A fairly good consensus exists throughout the channeling literature that there are levels, dimensions, or *planes* of reality, the physical plane being only one of them—and the lowest (or one of the lowest) at that. Tracing the ascending ever-finer levels away from the physical as we know it, the occult literature (for example H.P. Blavatsky's Theosophical Alice A. Bailey's Arcane, Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophical and Rosicrucian) and the channels associated with it contend that there is an *etheric* (or higher-physical) subtle-energy plane that acts as a template for the organization of physical structures like our bodies. . . .
>
> The subject of channeling is imbued with associations as varied as fakery and showmanship, the psychic and paranormal, mysticism and the occult, delusions and madness and arguments for the survival of death and the existence of a multidimensional populated universe.

Klimo proceeds with a brief biographical sketch of each "channel" and some samples of what is communicated. In his account of J. Z. Knight, he says:

> Featured in MacLaine's *Dancing in the Light* and having received strong word-of-mouth and national media attention Knight is now one of the best known and most financially successful channels. A staff of fourteen helps her organize her semimonthly seminars and publish her brochures and tapes. An average weekend seminar draws up to 700 participants at $400 apiece; she admits to earning millions of dollars from "Ramtha."

The best advice, whether coming from channeling or one of its critics, is to consider the content of what is transmitted, and not its claimed or presumed source. If the source is held to be a deceased personality, it would be well to remember the comment of the psychologist, Charles Tart, who said, "dying does not necessarily raise your IQ." Further, hearsay about various channelers may be utterly unreliable, as for example Klimo's repeated association of H. P. Blavatsky with Alice Bailey, for which there is little or no justification. Those who have studied Blavatsly's works can have little confidence in Klimo's judgment. Yet one of his comments, toward the end of the book, seems altogether called for and worth thinking about:

> The phenomena of channeling, burgeoning as never before throughout the world, may be paving the way for a creative evolutionary shift in the concept of reality—and in how we live our lives. Or it may be offering early warnings of an impending break into a mass psychotic episode, a latter-day Dark Ages with little redeeming values. In either case, an honest, open attempt to come to terms with channeling triggers a critical reconsideration of some of our most basic psychological and existential assumptions about reality.

In his section on explanations, Klimo recalls:

> One interesting psychophysiological contribution to explaining the possible origin of clairaudient channeling (or of audio hallucination,

depending on your perspective) comes from Princeton psychologist Julian Jaynes. In 1976 he presented his (still highly controversial) theory: that the voices of the gods reportedly heard in Mediterranean cultures prior to 1500 B.C., and reported later in the works of Homer and others, were actually auditory hallucinations generated by the right hemisphere of the brain and received by the left. Jaynes speculates that, until the beginning of written language, human beings lived in a naturally dissociated state. Within this state, the coordination of left and right hemisphere activity that we know today as normal awareness was lacking, leading to a bicameral mind composed of two communicating but separate "houses." A right-brain, idea-initiating, executive function was responsible for the "voices of the gods"; the left brain operated as a passive follower of the directives of the voices.

Years ago, in the *American Magazine* for December, 1945, C.G. Suits, chief of the General Electric research division, discussed the strange ways in which inventors make their discoveries. He said that "Hard work invariably precedes the flash of inspiration," but the question of what, exactly, the flash is or where it comes from cannot be generalized upon at all. One engineer insisted "that intuition is an awareness of absolute truth—a sort of spiritual receiving set that permits the owner to tune in broadcasts of universal knowledge." A famous de, signer of airplanes—probably Sikorsky—regarded it as "a new sixth sense, enabling its fortunate possessor to see ahead in time and become aware of future events long before they happen." Another scientist felt the presence of a "guardian angel" who whispers advice and prevents mistakes, while a prominent chemist "gets the impression that unseen hands are guiding his operations."

In 1931 two professors, R. A. Baker and Washington Platt, presented testimony on this subject from 1450 scientists. The general conclusion, while lacking personal interpretations such as the "guardian angel" idea, was more or less uniform:

> All agree that there must be a long period of investigation of data, then a period of assimilation of facts until the mind has grasped them perfectly, and then a season of complete mental rest. It is during this rest that the hunch comes bursting in a flash as if heaven-sent.

Students of the history of science are under particular difficulties when having to write about the manner in which hypotheses are made. Cohen and Nagel in *Logic and the Scientific Method* quote the explanation given by the English mathematician and logician, De Morgan, more than a century ago:

> The inventor of hypothesis, if pressed to explain his method, must answer as did Zerah Colburn (a Vermont calculating boy of the early eighteen-hundreds) when asked for his mode of instantaneous calculation. When the poor boy had been bothered for some time in this manner, he cried out in a huff, "God put it into my head, and I can't put it into yours."

The General Electric Research manager, C. G. Suits, hardly improved on this theory. He borrowed from a colleague the idea that "hunches" leading to discovery scurry around in the brain like birds in a cage. Occasionally one of them finds an exit unguarded by preconceived ideas and flutters out into the conscious mind where the inventor can get at it. Suits wonders why great ideas have such difficulty gaining access to operation. Is it the weight of tradition? He wrote:

> What stifles the creative spark? It could be that our present system of teaching both at home and in the schoolroom squashes originality. "Education" means literally a "drawing out" of powers within the mind. In most classrooms today it is anything but that. Instead of being taught to think, children are taught to parrot the great thoughts of the "authorities"—which all too often turn out to be wrong.
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> If we want Edisons and Whitmans—and America can use them!—our schools will have to de-emphasize mere memory drills ant start teaching intuition.

That inspiration comes at casual moments, by informal invitation, when the mind is no longer straining after them, seems almost a law of human creativeness, true of artists, scientists, and original

thinkers of every sort. Mozart told how his compositions came to him, almost ready-made, in a stream. "When they come, and how, I know not," he wrote, "and I have no control over them." He added: "Those which come to me I retain in my head, and hum them to myself—as others, at least, have told me." According to his biographers, Mozart sometimes carried entire compositions around in his head for days before writing them down.

One day in London, while riding on a bus, the German chemist, Kekulé, fell into a reverie, and "lo! the atoms were gambolling before my eyes!"

> Whenever, hitherto, these diminutive beings had appeared to me, they had always been in motion, but up to that time, I had never been able to discover the nature of that motion. Now, however, I saw how, frequently, two smaller atoms united to form a pair; how a larger one embraced smaller ones; how still larger ones kept hold of three or even four of the smaller, whilst the whole thing kept whirling in a giddy dance. I saw how the larger ones formed a chain.

Working over what he had seen on the bus—or dreamed—Kekulé developed what chemists now call the benzene ring. He had dreamed its architecture.

It would seem a great pity to refer to such achievements of artistic and scientific genius as examples of "channeling." Or, if people persist in using such terms, to take them seriously. Obviously, we have much to learn about the human psyche. Reading about channeling is not likely to help us much.

COMMENTARY
THE SERVICE OF GENIUS

No one who has ever attempted to write poetry can feel anything but awe when reading the verses of a man like Percy Shelley or William Shakespeare. This is simply a way of saying that the occasional presence among us of a man or woman of genius is a stunning experience. It is more than mere talent or the reward of hard work. Everything is just right. You would not move a comma or, in the case of a drawing, alter a line. It is as though genius is at home with the ideal, the language of which has become natural speech.

The best we can hope to do is to seek out the works of genius which our culture provides and literally *soak* in them, so that excellence in forms of expression is eventually acquired and standards are established. One does this for oneself and for the sake of one's children.

This is the creation of culture, through which vision and insight slowly become the true signs of civilization. Even in these commercial times individuals can be found who naturally devote themselves to excellence, finding nothing else worth doing, so that at any moment of history it is possible to discern the presence of such people and to distinguish their achievements from the ordinary and the commonplace. By doing this we become persuaded that from the highest point of view the *ideal* is the *real,* and a genuine content is given to words such as "spiritual."

Those for whom this becomes natural should be given complete charge of education. Such individuals should provide the reading matter for parents, so that all those who have contact with children will feel the responsibility of *lifting* the level of human interchange to the best of which we are capable.

In the pages of MANAS we try to present material that serves this purpose. Great talents are not required, but only the kind of thinking that was pursued, for example, by John Holt, as shown in the extract from his writings in this week's "Children" article. As he put it, "as we are all philosophers, so are we all historians trying to find out what really happened, who we can trust to tell us what happened, how we may better next time know truth from error, falsehood, and propaganda, and how we may best use whatever we have learned."

These are counsels open to all to accept.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
LEARNING PAINTING

A FAMILY which moved from Maine to Seattle found themselves with plenty of friends but no young children. So the children of the family developed adult friends, one in particular.

> This spring an artist friend of ours asked Becca (6) if she would like to come and paint with her once a week. Becca loves any kind of art, so she jumped at the chance. Natalie, our friend, offered to show Becca how to prepare a canvas, how to use oils, and how to mix colors. Once Becca learned a few basics, Natalie has pretty much stopped teaching and the two just paint. Natalie actually never wanted to specifically teach Becca to paint, she just thought it would be fun to have Becca around.
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> So far, this relationship is working out well. Becca loves this chance to work without Laura (3) around. Becca and Laura have completely different temperaments. Laura often distracts and frustrates Becca by her bouncy, energetic ways. Natalie, on the other hand, is very serious and slow to act. Her presence seems to inspire Becca. She watches Natalie very intently. Sometimes Natalie talks about what she is trying to do: why she chose this or that color, what this represents, why this pattern was painted this way, what is working, what isn't. Often, she doesn't say much. They work side by side for three or four hours, quitting usually because I call to say it is time for dinner. (Someday soon maybe I can let go enough to just let her come home when they are done!) Three hours is longer than Becca ever gets to work on anything at home—she seems to love this chance for serious, uninterrupted work. . . .
>
> In the short time that Natalie and Becca have been working together, Becca has seen Natalie make six or seven revisions of a color or shape until she gets exactly what she wants. Recently Natalie has been working on a series of paintings where she paints the same general picture five or six times, varying the colors or making slight changes in shape. Natalie is very excited about the visual symbols she can create by making subtle changes within the same general framework. Becca now talks about her own art in a new way. She talks about the symbols she is creating about her color choices, etc. The process behind her art seems much richer and her pleasure greater since her association with Natalie. . . .
>
> Natalie seems to enjoy working around other people sometimes, as long as she has time by herself too. Since she asked Becca to join her because she likes her, not because she thought she was a great budding artist in need of encouragement, her motivations seem clear. There is no great pressure for Becca to improve or perform up to a certain standard. They are just painting together because they enjoy painting and they enjoy each other. In my opinion, what could be better?

This sort of thing can happen naturally for children who are schooled at home. We have been quoting from a parent in No. 64 of *Growing Without Schooling.*

Also from this issue is unpublished material by John Holt. He says:

> It used to irritate me, without my quite knowing why, to hear people talk all the time about "historical facts." I don't know when the thought came to me that there are *no such things* as historical facts—unless, of course, we mean artifacts. The Parthenon is a fact, so are other buildings, walls, roads, forts, castles; so are armor, weapons, tools, ornaments, jewelry, statues, painting; so even are pikes of parchment, clay, or stone with writing on them. But what that writing *says* is not a fact, but a report. As such it is no better (or worse) than any other report. Such reports are voices speaking out of the past. What we cannot know, cannot be sure of, are questions like these: Did that speaker know the truth? If he knew it, did he tell it? Was he misinformed, mistaken, was he a flatterer or a deceiver, was he paid or made to lie? Why, for what purposes, in whose interests, did he write down whatever it was that he wrote?
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> We cannot remind ourselves too often of the truth of what one historian (I think A.J.P. Taylor) has said, that history is the propaganda of the victors.
>
> It is astonishing how ready we are to believe the truth of anything that is written down, provided it was written down sufficiently long ago. We do not believe everything we see in today's paper or in today's government report. We have learned by the hardest kind of experience that we cannot be sure of what happened even yesterday. We have been shown, over and over again, that even the testimony of eyewitnesses who have no reason to lie and are trying to tell the truth is inconsistent and unreliable; as countless experiments have shown, people will swear having seen things that never happened. Were people 1000, 2000 years ago much more clear seeing and truthful? . . .

It was not until reading careful book reviews of books by historians by other historians that Holt began to realize that "history" needs to be re-examined and questioned.

> It was only when I learned that these issues were not just alive but hot that it began to occur to me that history might be interesting. Why was I never let in on any of these arguments? History is not a pile of facts and theories, a dead body of knowledge, but an activity of human beings, something that people do. Why do they do it? And how do they do it? Such questions as these should be, must be, at the heart of any study of history—at least for beginners. The students' question, "Why do we have to read this, why is this worth learning or knowing?" is not just a silly question to be brushed aside or sneered down or answered with platitudes about lessons of the past. On the contrary, it could take us right into the heart of history as a human activity, and into the human presence of the people who are engaged in it. Perhaps still more important, it could help us to understand that, whether we know it or not, as we are all philosophers so are we all historians, trying to find out what really happened, who we can trust to tell us what happened, how we may better next time know truth from error, falsehood, and propaganda, and how we may best use whatever we have learned.

A man in California writes:

> I own an auto repair shop, and since my wife is the bookkeeper, my sons Ed (6) and Mark (3) have been spending time there since they were born. As infants neither one was bothered by obnoxiously loud noises from air compressors, power tools and unmuffled exhaust, which seemed a little strange to me because there are times when the noise level in the shop gets downright annoying. They both napped right through the worst of it as if they were home in their own bedroom.
>
> Mark is not really able yet to help me at my work, but he loves coming to the shop, I think mainly because there is so much stuff that is different there. During business hours there is simply too much going on that is dangerous to toddlers, so he is constantly supervised by his mother and generally kept near the office or outside in the yard by the plum trees. On Saturdays, when I am not really working but just puttering around, he has a less restricted time.
>
> Ed has been keenly interested in how things work mechanically for a long time, and when he started homeschooling I thought it would be interesting for both of us for him to come to the shop one morning a week for instruction and practice in auto repair. He thought that would be great We started off with a small project, disassembly and reassembly of a carburetor. I was pleased and surprised in equal measures at how speedy and accurate he was.
>
> Our next project was the disassembly and repair of a tired old lawnmower motor. He did quite well, with me helping only in the most difficult parts. The problem was that while I needed to be with him quite a lot for direction and discussion of the project, shop business that required my time and energy interrupted us quite a bit, often at crucial points, so I felt more harried and pressured than I wanted to. Perhaps Monday morning wasn't the best choice of time for this.
>
> Now during this time he follows me around while I explain the job I'm doing, why we're doing it and what direction the job will take. Usually, if I look, I find something in the car that can use his attention, even if it's only checking the tire pressures. He listens to my explanations and never seems to forget a single topic we have discussed.
>
> Ed is free to help me or noodle around on his own, and he does about fifty per cent of each. My employees have all been very surprised by his work and his talking about it. He acts way beyond his years. My current employee has Ed help him out from time to time. The employees enjoy Ed's being there and there is a mutual respect between them.

Finally, there is a letter from a man in New York state who attended conventional schools but learned everything he needed to know on his own initiative at home. At twelve he mastered the Morse Code and learned about electricity and radio. By home study he got his first grade amateur radio license and soon had jobs with Radio News. He also learned how to build houses, doing both plumbing and wiring himself, and now helps home schoolers.

For those who are interested, *Growing Without Schooling* has moved. The new address is 2269 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, Mass. 02140.

FRONTIERS

The World's Greatest Invention

THE transport vehicle of the future is the bicycle, according to Marcia D. Lowe, in the July-August issue of *World Watch.* Sooner or later the world will run out of oil, and then the industrial nations will be glad to learn from the example of third-world countries which have already shown, today, the value of the bicycle. Marcia Lowe begins by saying:

> Traffic noise in Beijing means the whirring of bicycle wheels and tinkling of bells. The streets of New Delhi come alive with thousands of bicycle commuters each day. Office workers in New York City depend on bicycle messengers to cruise past bumper-to-bumper traffic and deliver parcels on time. And police officers in Seattle often find bicycles better than squad cars for apprehending criminals on gridlocked downtown streets.

In their reliance on motor vehicles, transit planners, she says, have been blind to the value of human power. "With congestion, pollution and debt threatening both the industrial and developing worlds, the vehicle of the future clearly rides on two wheels rather than four."

Already, worldwide, there are more bikers than drivers, although most of the 800-million bicycle fleet is concentrated in the Third World, particularly China and India.

> By bicycle standards, China is in a class by itself with some 270 million bicycles, or roughly one for every four people. In urban areas, half the residents have bicycles. Traffic monitors in the northern industrial city of Tianjin once counted more than 50,000 bicycles pass in an hour.
>
> The bicycle fleet in China has nearly tripled since 1979, largely as a result of rising incomes. Domestic bike sales in 1987 reached 35 million units, actually exceeding total worldwide automobile sales. Bicycles are popular in China because, like cars in industrial countries, they offer the luxury of individual mobility and independence, and door-to-door travel without detours or extra stops for other passengers. When the same trip would take equal time by bicycle or mass transit, Chinese prefer to bike.

In Asia, Marcia Lowe says, bicycles transport more people than do automobiles in all other countries combined. Actually, throughout the continent, ingeniously rigged two- and three-wheelers accomplish much of what automobiles do elsewhere.

> With the help of trailers, baskets and load platforms pedal power hauls everything from sacks of rice to piles of bricks. Cycle rickshaws are the taxis of Southeast Asia, while sturdy tricycles are the light trucks that haul loads of up to half a ton. In Bangladesh, cycle rickshaws transport more tonnage than all motor vehicles combined.
>
> In urban areas, bicycles are the primary means of commuting. In the countryside, they help peasants drastically cut down on the time needed to transport water and fuelwood. In many Asian cities, two-thirds of the vehicles on the road during rush hours are bicycles.

Several heavily polluted Eastern European countries are using the bicycle for easing the burden on the environment.

> In Poland, a plan for a bicycle system in the city of Poznan calls for a 124-mile network of bicycle paths by 1990. Bicycle production in Poland has more than doubled in the last two decades, and demand still exceeds supply. In 1979, the Lithuanian city of Siauliai launched a comprehensive program to encourage cycling, the Soviet Union's first, which included a bicycle path system and extensive parking facilties.

There are more bike owners than nonowners in several European countries—among them Denmark, West Germany, and the Netherlands. The United States had some 95 million bicycles, second only to China, in 1985.

> Three outstanding models of nationwide bicycle planning are the Netherlands, West Germany, and Japan. Local governments in these countries—spurred by traffic jams and air pollution—are demonstrating how public policy can be used to make cycling a safe and convenient alternative to the car.
>
> The Netherlands has over 9,000 miles of bicycle paths, more than any other country. In some Dutch cities, half of all trips are made by bike. The West German town of Eerlangen has completed a network of paths covering 100 miles, about half the length of

the city's streets. Bicycle use has more than doubled as a result.

Transportation planners, Marcia Lowe points out, have overlooked a technology that "converts food directly into fuel."

> A biker can ride three-and-a-half miles on the calories found in an ear of corn—and there is no distilling or refining involved.
>
> Bicycles consume less energy per passenger mile than any other form of transportation, including walking. A 10-mile, round-trip commute by bicycle requires 350 calories of energy, or three-quarters of a cup of macaroni. The same trip in the average American car uses more than half a gallon of gasoline. . . .
>
> A 1983 study of American commuters revealed that just getting to public transit by bicycle instead of car would save each commuter roughly 150 gallons of gasoline a year. When a motorist who otherwise drives all the way to work switches to this bike-and-ride method, his or her annual gasoline use drops by some 400 gallons, half the amount consumed by the typical car in a year. If 10 per cent of the Americans who commute by car switched to bike-and-ride, more than $1.3 billion could be shaved off the U.S. oil import bill.

Marcia Lowe makes this searching comment:

> The automobile is very much the victim of its own success, jamming urban centers and suburbs alike. Traffic congestion is eroding the quality of life in urban areas, and the amount of time wasted in traffic continues to expand in the world's cities. London rush-hour traffic crawls at an average of eight miles an hour. In Los Angeles, motorists waste 100,000 hours a day in traffic jams. Traffic engineers estimate that by the turn of the century Californians will lose almost two million hours daily.

Is there anything more to be said? Lots more, Marcia Lowe might answer, but her own concluding paragraphs seem more than enough:

> With or without bike-oriented planning, financial imperatives may force a shift to the bicycle. For starters, most people in the world will never be able to buy an automobile and public transport systems in many cities cannot keep pace with explosive population growth. When the next oil crunch hits, perhaps within the next decade, even those who can now afford to drive will be looking for alternatives. With relatively modest public investment in parking and road space for bicycles, transportation choices would multiply quickly.
>
> Environmental degradation may also change planners' thinking. The by-products of fossil fuel combustion—deadly urban air pollution, acid rain on lakes and forests, and global warming—as well as the paving of valuable land, point to the need for an alternative to engines. The bicycle is the only vehicle that can help address all of these problems and still provide convenient and affordable transportation.