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TOMORROW'S HISTORY

THE rewriting of history is a continuous and inevitable process which sometimes proceeds largely unnoticed, but may also be undertaken quite self-consciously and with deliberation. Some paragraphs under "History" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* make clear the present scope of the term:

> History in the wider sense is all that has happened, not merely all the phenomena of human life, but those of the natural world as well. It includes everything that undergoes change; and as modern science has shown that there is nothing absolutely static, therefore the whole universe, and every part of it, has its history. This idea of universal activity has in a sense made physics itself a branch of history. It is the same with the other sciences—especially the biological division, where the doctrine of evolution has induced an attitude of mind which is distinctly historical.
>
> But the tendency to look at things historically is not merely the attitude of men of science. Our outlook upon life differs in just this particular from that of preceding ages We recognize the unstable nature of our whole social fabric, and are therefore more and more capable of transforming it.

It follows, therefore, that both the writers and readers of history reflect the prevailing conception of where significant historical change is taking place. For a great many centuries our histories have all been "national." But today some writers—not necessarily historians—have been pointing out that the undertakings of nations—whether by kings and heroes, revolutionists and patriots, or legislatures, are subordinate to the movement of events of which they may be hardly aware. The point of view of these writers seems largely ecological. They show from the results of various studies that no nation has been able to survive the loss of available water required for drinking and for irrigation, that regions which use up their topsoil lose their autonomy, and that when, for whatever reason, forests are decimated, people succumb to hunger and disorder. One example of such writing is the remark, by Lynn White, Jr., in his *Machina Ex Deo* (1968): "With the population explosion, the carcinoma of planless urbanism, the now geological deposits of sewage and garbage, surely no creature has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order." Mr. White is a historian and he has already begun to write history in terms of ecology. He also said in this book:

> In Antiquity every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own genies *lord*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men; centaurs, fauns, and mermaids show their ambivalence. Before one cut a tree, mined a mountain, or dammed a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation, and to keep it placated. By destroying pagan animism, Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.

Another note by an ecological authority appeared in *Earth Island Journal*, remarking that African ecologists are opposing a present plan to eradicate the tsetse fly infestation from sixteen African nations, where it causes "sleeping sickness" in cattle, sheep and goats. The tsetse fly has been a natural brake against the expansion of livestock ranching in Africa. But—

> Now senior ecologists in Zimbabwe are warning that elimination of the tsetse fly could open the door to wholesale deforestation, overgrazing, and soil depletion. Within ten years, they warn, the southern Zambesi Valley could become another Kalahari desert.

Another factor in the story of men and nations—once considered of major importance but now wholly unnoticed—is the question of what happens to human beings after their death. There was a time in the distant past, in India and Buddhist countries, when virtually all the people believed that the life-cycle of individuals was

repeated again and again, resulting in conceptions of value and growth and even "evolution" wholly independent of the life of nations. Humans were regarded as pursuing a course of the development of soul, involving aims reaching far beyond the pursuit of either wealth or power. Those by whom this sort of evolution was held to be paramount would care little for the earthly purposes of national leaders and would write histories concerned with inner or psychic and moral progress. For the Indian philosopher, for example, the events of a single lifetime might be not worth recording in comparison to the subtler lines of development bound up in his conception of the unfolding of human capacities and powers. These possibilities were recorded in sacred texts such as the *Bhagavad-Gita,* which gives the story of the transcendental evolution of the inner man or human, which may require a large number of lifetimes. In the *Gita,* for example, which is a dialogue between the spiritual teacher, Krishna, and the noble prince, Arjuna, who is his disciple, Krishna had told Arjuna that in ancient days he has been the teacher of King Ikshwaku, to whom he explained the teaching he is now giving to Arjuna. However, Arjuna asks:

> "Seeing that thy birth is posterior to the life of Ikshwaku, how am I to understand that thou wert in the beginning the teacher of this doctrine?"

Krishna replies:

> "Both I and thou have passed through many births, O harasser of thy foes! Mine are known unto me, but thou knowest not of shine.

"Even though myself unborn, of changeless essence, . . .I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness. Whoever, O Arjuna, knoweth my divine birth and actions to be even so doth not upon quitting his mortal frame enter into another, for he entereth into me."

The teaching of the Buddha, though cast in a different key, is the same. It is given by Sir Edwin Arnold in the eighth book of the *Light of Asia.*

> Pray not! the Darkness will not brighten! Ask
> Nought from the Silence, for it cannot speak!
> Vex not your mournful minds with pious pains!
> Ah! Brothers, Sisters! seek
>
> Nought from the helpless gods by gift and hymn,
> Nor bribe with blood, nor feed with fruits and cakes;
> Withiin yourselves deliverance must be sought;
> Each man his prison makes.
>
> Each hath such lordship as the loftiest ones;
> Nay, for with Powers above, around, below,
> As with all flesh and whatsoever lives,
> Act maketh joy and woe.
>
> What hath been bringeth what shall be, and is,
> Worse—better—last for first and first for last:
> The Angels in the Heavens of Gladness reap
> Fruits of a holy past:
>
> The devils in the underworlds wear out
> Deeds that were wicked in an age gone by:
> Nothing endures: fair virtues waste with time.
> Foul sins grow purged thereby.
>
> Who toiled a slave may come anew a Prince
> For gentle worthiness and merit won;
> Who ruled a King may wander earth in rags
> For things done and undone.

History, then, for the Buddhist, is a record of the progress of the teaching of Karma, through the centuries. What else matters, so long as we each one make all the future we shall ever have. Although, as we mature in egoity, we are able to envision higher glories than we can think of now. And so it was, and perhaps is, with students of the *Upanishads,* the books of devotion of India. What would they do with the story of mere kings and governments? They want the history of the Soul, and find it in the *Bhagavad-Gita,* which is the progressive drama, stage by stage, of spiritual growth for all humans.

What will relieve us of our woes? The Buddha had only one answer to this question:

> If ye lay bound upon the wheel of change,
> And no way were of breaking from the chain,
> The Heart of boundless Being is a curse

The Soul of Things fell Pain.

Ye are not bound! the Soul of Things is sweet
The Heart of Being is celestial rest;
Stronger than woe is will; that which was Good
Doth pass to Better—Best.

I, Buddha, who wept with all my brothers' tears
Whose heart was broken by a whole world's woe,
Laugh and am glad, for there is Liberty!
Ho! ye who suffer! know

Ye suffer from yourselves. None else compels,
None other holds you that ye live and die,
And whirl upon the wheel, and hug and kiss
Its spokes of agony,

Its tire of tears, its nave of nothingness.
Behold, I show you Truth, Lower than hell,
Higher than heaven, outside the utmost stars,
Farther than Brahm cloth dwell,

Before beginning, and without an end,
As space eternal and as surety sure,
Is fixed a Power divine which moves to good,
Only its laws endure.

This is the doctrine of Karma.

The Books say well, my Brothers! each man's life
The outcome of his former living is;

The bygone wrongs bring forth sorrows and woes,
The bygone right breeds bliss.

That which ye sow ye reap. See yonder fields!
The sesamum was sesamum, the corn

Was corn. The silence and the Darkness knew!
So is a man's fate born.

What sort of history would help us if these were our common convictions? It might be instructive to know what happened to the ancient Romans as a culture: Did they reincarnate almost as a body, recreating a modern version of an ancient past? Actually, there was a modern historian, Arthur Weigall, well known and respected, who became almost obsessed by the idea that old Roman civilization seemed to be reconstituted in the United States, especially in New York City. Without mentioning reincarnation he wrote about his feeling in *Collier's* for Dec. 5, 1931. He said in this article:

It may be that subconsciously I am aware of a definite likeness between the two civilizations; it may be that the one really reminds me of the other, both in its good points and in its bad. Let me try, at any rate, to marshal a few of the more striking resemblances.

First of all, Rome at the height of its power was just what the United States prides itself on being—the melting pot of nationalities. . . .

Then again, the Romans were the richest people in the world. "With us," said Juvenal, "it is wealth that is worshipped." . . . and I may mention in that connection that the great financial crash in 33 A.D. closed as many banks and businesses and humbled as many rich men as the depression here has done, but there was a speedy recovery.

Nobody in politics thought himself rich unless he could finance his party out of his own pocket and pay for the votes which supported his cause. . . .

American millionaires have the habit of erecting public buildings at their own expense, which is a characteristic not shared to any great extent with the millionaires of Europe, but is curiously like that of the Romans. The Pantheon, for instance, was built at the private expense of a gentleman named Agrippa; and the church built by a gentleman named Rockefeller on Riverside Drive, New York, affords a close parallel to it. Pompey the Great built a huge theater for the Roman people with his own money; and in this connection one thinks at once of Mr. Carnegie, as also one does on reading that Julius Caesar had quite a mania for providing the populace with free libraries.

And how those Roman millionaires collected paintings, statues and antiques! They were not often very cultured men, but they were most anxious to be thought so; and it was considered extremely smart to possess ancient Greek works of art, old books and manuscripts, old tapestries and that sort of thing. They said their wives liked to have them. . . .

And the parties given by wealthy society people in ancient Rome are to be compared only with those of modern America. Tigellinus, who lived in the first century A.D. gave a party—to mention a single example—at which dinner was served on a purple-carpeted raft floating on a small lake in a Roman park, and the guests were towed about upon it by row-boats as they feasted. . . .

To turn to another subject, the Romans were, as the Americans are today, far in advance of other nations in the arts of plumbing and house-heating. In regard to the former, they amazed the world by their

> provision of a proper water supply for the towns, and by their system piping which brought the water to every building of any size. . . . They had, moreover, a truly American taste for iced water to drink; and in every rich man's house there were arrangements for the supply and preservation of loads of snow, rushed down from the mountains, to cool their drinks.
>
> I might instance a hundred other points of resemblance, but it is not in the details so much, perhaps, as in the general spirit of the nation that ancient Rome lives again in modern America. The hustle, the getting rich quick, the love of money and its power, the desire to live in magnificence and comfort, the keenness and callous disregard of human life—all these things which are considered to be the characteristics of the American people in the mass were features also of ancient Rome.

Where did the ancient Egyptians go, with their incredible architectural abilities and their fascinating wall paintings, their rare medical skills and their profound but little understood religious philosophy? And the ancient Maya people—are they perhaps lost in the crowd of a much larger culture in the Western United States? But historical studies of this sort would require a deep conviction that the law of rebirth is in continuous operation, and not just a speculative likelihood.

One thing seems certain, however—that the history-writing of the future will be increasingly ecological in character. The laws of biological interdependence do not bend and give in response to the demands of nationalist lunacy. When soil washes away into the oceans, when water is wasted and used up by cities built on arid or actual desert terrain, when aquifers millions of years old are drained away by irresponsible real estate developers determined to remodel the earth to fit their promotional schemes, the laws of nature resist with their weapons of exhaustion and famine. It remains to be seen whether our ways will be changed by the man-made disaster of nuclear war or the natural revolt of the planet against the exploitive intentions of stubborn human beings

The clearest-seeing humans of the present seem to be the bioregionalists, who have taken to heart the counsels of E.F. Schumacher and the instructions implicit in the patterns exhibited by natural processes in the various regions of the earth. If we look to the work of such pioneers, we find them well aware of the fundamental changes in attitude that are called for, and slowly being adopted. For example, Howard T. Odum, a well-known ecologist, said in his paper, "Energy, Ecology, Economics"

> Our system of man and nature will soon be shifting from a rapid growth criterion of economic survival to steady state non-growth as the criterion for maximizing one's work for economic survival. . . .
>
> Ecologists are familiar with both growth states and steady states and observe both in natural systems in their work routinely, but economists were all trained in their subject during rapid growth, and most don't even know there is such a thing as a steady state. Only the last two centuries have seen a burst of temporary use of special energy supplies that accumulated over long periods of geologic time.
>
> High quality of life and equitable economic distribution are more closely approximated in steady state than in growth periods. During growth, emphasis is on competition, and large differences in economic and energetic welfare develop; competitive exclusion, instability, poverty and unequal wealth are characteristic. During steady state, competition is controlled and eliminated, being replaced with regulatory systems, high division and diversity of labor, uniform energy distributions, little change, and growth only for replacement purposes. Love of stable system quality replaces love of net gain. Religious ethics adopt something closer to that of those primitive peoples that were formerly dominant in zones of the world with cultures based on the steady energy flows from the sun. Socialistic ideals about distribution are more consistent with steady state than with growth.

This sort of thinking, although the language used is economic, is both scientific, in the sense of ecological, and ethical, in the terms of philosophical religion, and consistent with the laws of nature as we now experience them. This gives us a sense of what lies ahead, although some serious and protracted struggles may lie between that vision and where we are now.

REVIEW
STATE OF THE WORLD

ASSURING the future has been regarded as a national problem for at least a century, with weapons and economic production the tools required to give people confidence in themselves. But in recent years other factors have grown in importance and become increasingly visible—obvious declines in the natural environment, all the result of human causation; and needing international collaboration to reduce their effect. As this change becomes manifest, the idea that cooperation instead of competition is the only way to save our future is dawning on the literate population of the world. With it comes the realization that we must all change our ways, begin to think in planetary terms instead of as nationalists and individuals. Is this really possible? No one knows, but there are a few encouraging signs.

These somber thoughts are the result of reading *State of the World*—1987, published earlier this year by W. W. Norton, fourth in the *State of the World* series which began in 1984. Actually, we have read only the first and last chapters, being somewhat familiar with the rest of the contents, of which much has appeared in pamphlet form throughout the year. This year, the first chapter is titled "Thresholds of Change," meaning the passage of the world from one set of conditions to another, the change already indicating a passage to disaster and raising the question, "Can we alter the direction in which we are going, or are we doomed?"

The information in this volume comes largely from scientific sources, mainly from ecological research. It is evident from the temper of this first chapter, written by Lester R. Brown, President of the Worldwatch Institute, and Sandra Postel, senior researcher, that the changes now going on are now reaching crisis proportion, producing worldwide concern, especially among the scientists who are doing the research. The first three paragraphs make this clear:

> Daily news events remind us that our relationship with the earth and its natural systems is changing, often in ways that we do not understand. In May 1985, a British research team reported finding a sharp decline in the level of atmospheric ozone over Antarctica. Verified by other scientists, the discovery of this unanticipated "hole" in the earth's protective shield of ozone sent waves of concern throughout the international scientific community. A thinning ozone layer would allow more of the sun's ultraviolet radiation to reach the earth, causing more skin cancers, impairing human immune systems, and retarding crop growth.
>
> In late July 1986, a team of scientists studying the effects of rising atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide (CO_2) and other "greenhouse gases" published evidence that the predicted global warming has begun. Meteorologists at the University of East Anglia in the United Kingdom constructed a comprehensive global temperature series for the last 134 years. Their conclusion: "The data show a long time scale warming trend, with the three warmest years being 1980, 198I and 1983, and five of nine warmest years in the entire 134-year record occurring after 1978." Three months later, a U.S. Geological Survey team reported that the frozen earth beneath the Arctic tundra in Alaska had warmed 4-7 degrees Fahrenheit (2.2-3.9 degrees Celsius) over the last century, providing further evidence that a CO_2-induced warming was under way.
>
> Sometime in mid-1986, world population reached 5 billion. Yet no celebrations were held in recognition of this demographic milestone. Indeed, many who reflected on it were left with a profound sense of unease about the mounting pressures on the earth's forests, soils, and other natural systems. With 3 billion young people entering their reproductive years over the next generation, these pressures are certain to intensify.

The bland, impersonal language of scientific research hardly conveys the bad news that these facts reveal. As the authors point out, most cataclysms of the past were of natural origin, while the present changes are driven forward by human activities. The writers remark:

> A frustrating paradox is emerging. Efforts to improve living standards are themselves beginning to threaten the health of the global economy. The very

> notion of progress begs for redefinition in light of the intolerable consequences unfolding as a result of its pursuit.

They also point out that various of the pollutants now threatening the atmosphere were first produced quite innocently—by companies that wanted to manufacture efficient refrigerants, propellants for spray cans, and agents needed to make foam products, yet the result of their efforts has been to load the atmosphere with chlorofluorocarbons which "threaten to subject all forms of life to damaging doses of ultraviolet radiation, a threat that will take on new urgency if scientists determine that these compounds play a role in the periodic depletion of the ozone layer over Antarctica." The writers comment:

> A sustainable society satisfies its needs without diminishing the prospects of the next generation. By many measures, contemporary society fails to meet this criterion. Questions of ecological sustainability are arising on every continent. The scale of human activities has begun to threaten the habitability of the earth itself. Nothing short of fundamental adjustments in population and energy policies will stave off the host of costly changes now unfolding, changes that could overwhelm our long-standing efforts to improve the human condition.

At the beginning of this century, the world population was 1.6 billion, with a gross world product of $640 billion. By 1950 the population had grown to 2.5 billion, with a gross world product of about $3 trillion. The writers say:

> Though impressive by historical standards, this growth was dwarfed by what followed. Between 1950 and 1986 human numbers doubled to 5 billion, expanding as much during these 36 years as during the preceding few million. . . .Within a generation, the global output of goods quadrupled. A variety of technological advances aided this expansion, but none compare with the growth in fossil fuel use. Between 1950 and 1986, world fossil fuel consumption also increased fourfold, paralleling the growth in the global economy.

The comment of the writers becomes a warning:

> The negative side effects of this century's twentyfold expansion of economic activity are now becoming inescapable. Whether through spreading forest damage, a changing climate, or eroding soils, the pursuit of short-term economic growth will exact a price. As the natural systems that underpin economies deteriorate, actions that make good sense environmentally will begin to converge with those that make good sense economically. But that convergence may not occur before irreversible changes have unfolded.

This section continues with its account of the crossing of thresholds, pointing out that we are hardly aware of some of these changes until they have already taken place. An example is the onset of forest damage in West Germany. German foresters are known to be careful and conscientious, yet the die-off of trees took them by surprise. An estimate in 1982 placed the damage at 8 per cent of the nation's trees. But only a year later a thorough survey showed that 34 per cent of the trees were yellowing and losing foliage. By the summer of 1984 it was clear that 50 per cent of the trees had become unhealthy. Meanwhile, in other parts of the world, acid rain is affecting forests, one effect being susceptibility to fire. At the end of this section the writers say:

> A human population of 5 billion, expanding at 83 million per year, has combined with the power of industrial technologies to create unprecedented momentum toward human-induced environmental change. We have inadvertently set in motion grand ecological experiments involving the entire earth without yet having the means to systematically monitor the results. . . . Any system pushed out of equilibrium behaves in unpredictable ways. Small external pressures may be sufficient to cause dramatic changes. Stresses may become self-reinforcing, rapidly increasing the system's instability.

The last chapter, on charting a sustainable course, tells what some nations have been doing and what others are neglecting. There is this final summary:

> Technological and demographic changes are leading us into the twenty-first century with political institutions inherited from the nineteenth. The need to comprehend our responsibility in time to exercise it successfully presses upon us. That we know so little about the consequences of our activities is humbling.

> That we have brought so much responsibility upon ourselves is sobering.
>
> The threats that emerge as we cross natural thresholds are no longer hypothetical. Already environmental deterioration and mounting external debt are combining to reduce living standards in scores of Third World countries. Incomes in Africa have fallen by nearly one fifth since 1970, and in Latin America by several per cent since 1981. Reversing these trends will not be easy.
>
> A sustainable future calls upon us simultaneously to arrest the carbon dioxide buildup, protect the ozone layer, restore forests and soils, stop population growth, boost energy efficiency, and develop renewable energy sources. No generation has ever faced such a complex set of issues requiring immediate attention.

The most encouraging thing we are able to repeat from this book is the fact that the first edition, in 1984, was 16,000 copies, while the first print-order for the 1987 edition was for 50,000 copies. The book is being translated into most of the world's major languages, including Spanish, Arabic, Chinese and Japanese. In all languages, the editors believe that in excess of 200,000 copies will be distributed.

COMMENTARY
THE TIBETANS

WE have a passage by Marco Pallis, taken from his book, *Peaks and Lamas*, published in England by Cassell in 1940, which we have been saving for years in the hope of finding an appropriate place to reprint it. But so much time has gone by that it seems well to use it here lest it be lost or forgotten. In this chapter he is speaking of his life among the people of Tibet:

> I have felt at ease among Tibetans of all ranks as I have not often done elsewhere. I never felt I was among strangers; rather it was a return to a long-lost home. A lama, with whom I was intimate, explained this quite simply by saying it was no accident, but that I showed unmistakable signs of having been a Tibetan myself in a previous existence, whence I had inherited a natural sympathy with my former compatriots and a tendency to return to them like a homing pigeon. Whatever may be the truth, I can at least say this about the next life: I should be well content to be reborn as a Tibetan—always provided that Tibet is still Tibet, and has not been turned into one of many feeble copies of America. From my limited experience I can endorse the words of that able French observer, Professor Jacques Bacot when he writes:—"The Tibetans impress one at once by the dignity of their persons. One sees them on horseback and nobly clad, scattered about the open spaces of their deserts. . . . In all Tibet one would be hard put to it to discover one fool. . . . The Tibetans are not barbarous or uncultivated; nor for that matter is their country. Under their rough hide they conceal refinements that we lack, much courtesy and philosophy, and the need for beautifying common things, whatever happens to be useful to them, be it a tent, a knife or a stirrup. . . . Moreover they are gay, these Tibetans, and happy as is not the case elsewhere today, more so than our wretched workers in their wretched factories, armed with the whole arsenal of their rights. . . . The more densely the country is populated, the tamer is the wild game. The Tibetans are not much addicted to hunting. They have long since lost the taste for killing which we still keep. . . . I love their companionship during the long rides, for they are taciturn, or else they only speak with good sense, originality and a taste for speculative things."

While, by reason of the Chinese invasion, Tibet is no longer Tibet, it is reasonable to think that beneath the surface of the life of today in their country, the people still retain the qualities these writers found in them in earlier years.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE BEST SCHOOL IN TOWN?

AN item in the *New Yorker* "Talk of the Town" section (for Feb. 16) suggested that it might be time to say something justifiably pleasant about public schools, since it supplied remarkably good material for doing so. The story is about Special Public School 31, on the Grand Concourse in the South Bronx. The principal of the School is Mrs. Carol A. Russo. She has held this job for fifteen years, working with thirty-nine other teachers to make it a good school. Of this school the *New Yorker* writer says:

> All the children at 31 come from low-income families, and not one of them is white; this year, the ethnic breakdown is fifty-two percent Hispanic, forty-five per cent black, and three per cent Oriental. Many of the children live on just two streets—Walton and Gerard Avenues—squeezed between Yankee Stadium and the Grand Concourse, and a large number of them come from single-parent homes. In 1972, Mrs. Russo's first year as principal, only forty-five per cent of 31's pupils tested at or above their grade level in reading. Last year, the percentage climbed to a bit over eighty-six; this means that 31, which is also known as the William Lloyd Garrison Elementary School and still calls itself Special Public School 31—a designation authorized by the local community school board in recognition of the school's innovative programs—ranks in the top twelve per cent of the city's six hundred and twenty-three public elementary schools.

The school teaches a total of eight hundred and fifty children—kindergarten through the sixth grade.

What is distinctive about this school? The curriculum for one thing. The youngsters who read well have a class in Shakespeare, which at present is studying *Macbeth* for eight weeks.

> . . . the teacher, Richard Poloso, took his pupils through a quick discussion of Shakespeare's understanding of comedy and tragedy (a comedy wasn't necessarily funny while you watched it, but everyone lived happily ever after) and an equally swift review of the various fatal flaws shown by Shakespeare's tragic heroes and heroines (Romeo and Juliet were impetuous, Hamlet was vengeful). Why was wanting to avenge your father's murder a flaw? Fifteen hands wriggled in the air. Because, one pupil said, according to the religious thinking of Shakespeare's time, only God could rightfully seek vengeance.

The Shakespeare class is a kind of "reward" for children who read well, and in it are mingled pupils from the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth grades. There are other such classes which "offer extra instruction in literature, science and music." As the report says:

> Meanwhile, down the hall to the south, Mrs. Lore Rasch's Opera Box class, another in the Cycle program, was watching on video-tape a scene from an Italian production of "Rigoletto"—the scene in which Rigoletto dickers with an assassin in an alley in Mantua—and the class was pointing out to Mrs. Rasch that the orchestration, heavy with double basses, was both scary and mysterious. And down the hall to the north a Cycle Program orchestra class of saxophones, clarinets, trumpets, flutes, cymbals, and drums—a good quarter of which had never picked up an instrument before last September—was working on the opening bars of the theme from "Star Wars" while, in a Cycle Program class in a room just beyond, Mrs. Vivian Stromberg, who teaches violin by the Suzuki method, was leading eleven girls through a chorus of "Long, Long Ago.". . .
>
> Later in the day, we sat in on a fifth-grade project L.E.G.A.L. (Lawyer-Related Education: Goals for American Leadership) class. Mrs. Michelle Walters led a discussion of the Tinker case—the case of two well-behaved high-school children in the nineteen-sixties who were suspended from school for wearing black armbands to protest the war in Vietnam. Discussion brought out the fact that what was at issue was not a matter of right and wrong but a conflict between values guaranteed by the Constitution—the right to free speech and the right to order and safety. In this case, the Supreme Court held that free speech had a stronger claim than order and safety.

At intervals throughout this story the *New Yorker* puts in some comment about the real achievement of P.S. 31, which is of course the achievement of Mrs. Russo and the teachers she has assembled. Here is one such comment:

> After kindergarten, every school-age child spends about a thousand hours a year in school. This means that, as Mrs. Russo puts it, she and her staff have a maximum of only six thousand hours to make a difference in a child's life.
>
> The Garrison School is now nationally recognized as a school that gives low-income children a high-quality education in spite of everything, and one reason it's so effective, according to Dr. Lawrence Lezotte, the director of the Center for Effective Schools at Michigan State University, is that pupils spend a great deal of their school time "on task"; that is, spend it on actually studying and learning, rather than on preparing to study, or thinking about studying, or getting a drink of water.

The children in the school are encouraged to take on projects in which independence and self-reliance are required. An example is the weekly school-wide broadcast when a team of nine children take over the principal's public address system and broadcast a summary of news—not just school news but national and world events such as what is going on in the Philippines. A feature of the broadcast is a Question-of-the-Week and the one asked when the *New Yorker* writer was there was "Which country first domesticated the cat?" Various classes will set aside time to research the question and find the answer. In this case, the answer was "Egypt."

> Different grades are always getting mixed together at 31, only to be separated and reblended in a different configuration an hour or so later. A school-wide Team Reading Program brings together different grades and then divides them up in groups according to their reading proficiency, with those who need extra help meeting in small bands. (There's also a fifth-grade reading program based on one of the school's favorite themes: "People persevere and achieve despite obstacles." Authors who are read in this program include Langston Hughes, Nikki Giovanni, Walt Whitman, L. Frank Baum, and Dylan Thomas.)

The *New Yorker* concludes with some general comment:

> "Garrison is what schools can be," according to a leading Educator quoted in "Making Schools Work," by Robert Benjamin, a 198I book that describes "maverick" schools throughout the country—public schools that do as much for poor children as schools with more money do for middle-class children. He found only a handful then, and there is probably only a slightly larger handful today, according to several experts, although the need for such schools increases year by year: sometime in the first half of the nineteen-eighties, New York almost certainly became a "majority minority" city—that is, a city where white people no longer constitute a majority—and, according to some respected demographic projections, the California public schools will be educating mostly Hispanic, Oriental, and black children within ten years or so. At schools that fail to do their job, according to Dennis Gray, of the Council for Basic Education, children who in the first grade were eager to learn have become passive and bored by the time they reach the fourth grade, and are beginning to be restless, their curiosity snuffed out. After only three thousand hours, they have been lost. S.P.S. 31, a ninety-year-old Gothic castle that last year became a New York City landmark, has a principal who learned early that all children can be taught. She has never thought of herself as a maverick; her only goal has been to keep on improving the school she once attended.

What is the secret of schools like 31 in the South Bronx? The secret is teachers who care enough about children to help them to care about themselves and to want to learn.

Interesting evidence that this, and not "systems" and "methods," is the heart of the matter comes in the Spring 1987 issue of the *Teachers College Record*, which is entirely devoted to "Reforming Teacher Education." If these contributors would learn to write the way the contributors to the *New Yorker* write, this reform might be well on the way.

FRONTIERS

Almost Forgotten Heroes

IN *Psychology Today* for August 1985—given to us recently by a reader—two women, Eva Fogelman and Valerie Lewis Wiener, tell the story of how a handful of people in Poland saved thousands of Jews from the Nazis who in World War II were rounding up the Jews for shipment to death camps. Some of these rescuers, many of whom now live in the United States, Canada, Europe and Israel, have been interviewed. The writers say:

> It is not easy to find these people. Many had died, some of them 40 or more years ago in the very act of rescuing. A number of rescuers did not want to be interviewed. Some were embarrassed to be recognized for doing something they considered unremarkable, some did not want to be reminded of their severe suffering. Others, particularly those still living in countries such as Poland and Germany, feared ostracism if their deeds became known.

Those talked to in the United States were from quite diverse backgrounds.

> Some had been forced to leave school as early as the fifth grade; others had completed several years of graduate school. They included farmers, factory workers, servants, clergymen and society matrons. Although they had diverse personalities, they shared one characteristic: They did not view themselves as heroes or heroines. Their behavior under the Nazis, they told us, was only natural. Up to the time of their heroic deeds, they lived ordinary lives and, on the surface at least, were very similar to everyone else.

But why did they behave as they did? It meant almost certain death at the hands of the Germans if they were caught. The researchers were unable to find any formula which applied.

> We found that the rescuers fell into two groups, those motivated chiefly by deeply-held moral values and those whose motivation was mainly emotional and based on personal attachments or identification with the victim. In our sample, men tended to fall into the first group and women into the second. But we found both types of motivation in both sexes and often in the same person. . . . This distinction between moral and emotional motivation is consistent with the findings of Harvard University social psychologist Carol Gilligan, who has noted that there are two styles of moral reasoning—one based on justice, the other on responsibility and care.

Some of the rescuers were surprised to be asked why they became involved. "It was the right thing to do," they said. A Polish survivor, Dorothy Ukalo, asked her Christian rescuers, "Why are you so good to us?" The reply came from one who headed an underground network that protected Jews—"I resent strongly what the Germans are doing." Other rescuers were religionists who believed that they should act as "thy brother's keeper."

When the Germans invaded Poland in 1939, they segregated the Warsaw Jews behind barbed wire.

> As reports of hunger, disease and death filtered out of the ghetto, Stefania, a Catholic girl also known as Fusia, became deeply concerned about her Jewish friends. Before long, she was making secret visits to the ghetto, with gifts of food, clothing and medicine, putting her life in jeopardy each time she approached the people behind the walls.
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> One of Fusia's Jewish friends was Max, a medical student and the son of her former landlord and employer. When the Nazis began to ship the Jews out of the ghetto to concentration camps in 1942, Max made a daring escape in the middle of the night. After knocking on the doors of many friends and being refused shelter, he went to Fusia, who had been his mother's seamstress. She agreed to hide him in her apartment.

The rescuers seemed all to have marked perseverance and a belief in their own competence to be successful in what they undertook to do. "Fusia said she had never been afraid despite all the risks she endured."

> After she agreed to help Max, she and her sister built a false wall and ceiling in the attic of their small apartment with wood from abandoned apartments. Designed to hold seven people, the space eventually served as a hideaway for 13 Jews. For two and a half years, the 13 kept watch out of spy holes, spoke in whispers and survived on bread and onions. When one of the Jewish women became ill with typhus, Fusia secretly obtained life-saving medicine for her.

> The most traumatic event came in 1944 when the Germans demanded that she house two nurses in the apartment. The nurses and their boyfriends, who were German soldiers, lived in the apartment with Fusia until the Soviets liberated the town seven months later. They never learned of the 13 people in the attic.

Extraordinary ingenuity enabled other rescuers to record-making achievements.

> Some rescuers who possessed special talents or opportunities managed to save hundreds or thousands of Jews. Barna Kiss, a Hungarian who headed a battalion of Jewish soldiers, shepherded them through Nazi-imposed death marches by disobeying orders to kill them. Raul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat and banker, used his negotiating and financial skills to obtain false identification papers and to find refuge for thousands of Jews in Hungary.

The women writers draw some thoughtful conclusions:

> With time, boundaries between moral and emotional motivation often blurred, and the relation between rescuers and rescued became the sustaining element, whatever the original motivation. Years of long days and nights living under constant threat of exposure required something beyond moral conviction. This "something more" is best described in terms such as love, compassion and caring. In three of the cases we studied, rescuers eventually married the people they had helped. One of them, Fusia, who married the medical student she had hidden. They had known each other before the war, but their relation had not been romantic. . . .
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> Many other rescuers said their behavior was strongly influenced by values exhibited by their parents. . . . Our findings contradict those of Freud and his followers, who claimed that those who undertake intensely dangerous acts are masochistic, seeking to fulfill neurotic needs or acting out grandiose fantasies. The rescuers we interviewed were not neurotic daredevils although they all had an uncommon high tolerance for risk that allowed them to transcend the fear and anxiety inherent in life-and-death situations. . . . By the time we finished our interviews, we were filled with a great sense of admiration for these lesser known heroes. Their willingness to risk their lives, to adhere to a higher principle in the midst of chaos and destruction inspired in us a renewed faith in humanity.