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QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED

THE permissive character of the times has brought into present currency a vast amount of past literature, ignored for years because of its philosophical breadth and acceptance of ideas which have until lately been ruled out of serious discussion by the mechanistic canons of thought. One area that is now returning to popular investigation is the voluminous subject of dreams. In particular, interest is focusing on prophetic dreams, of which there are many examples. Such dreams have long been neglected by reason of their implications—if prophecy is possible, we need to consider how the future can be known through dream, or by any other means, and what metaphysical structures would be required for prophetic dreams to be possible. Such questions were once topics of research in the Neoplatonic society of the early centuries of our era, as becomes evident from a reading of the essay *On Dreams* by the bishop of Ptolemais early in the fifth century. Only a little reading in the literature of this period makes clear that it was a time of clarity and sophistication in thought, and that Synesius was one of the most urbane of writers, a man who might well be a contributor to the *New Yorker* in our own time. He said in his essay on dreams:

> . . . prophecy arising in dreams can be no burden to anyone, nor, even if we wish to, can we avoid visions that are oracular; they remain with us when we live together, and when we are abroad they are about us they join with us on military expeditions; they act with us as fellow-citizens both when we are at work on the land, and when we travel abroad with one another. Nor can the laws of any government prevent them, even if they would. There are no means of bringing dreamers to book. And whom can we wrong when asleep, anyhow? And even if sleep were publicly forbidden, no sort of tyrant could ordain that dreams should not be seen. No one could recommend such nonsense anyway, for it is against law, nature, and God. All do it—men and women, young and old, the rich and the poor, the ruler, the ruled, the townsman, the farmer, the craftsman, the orator. None are excluded, whatever their race or occupation. That prophet—that able and silent guide is everywhere present—and is a teacher and an initiate that preaches the good; to protract pleasure it grasps the enjoyment beforehand, warns us so as to ward off harm and shield us from it.

Synesius was a man of common sense, a disciple of Hypatia, and a self-reliant soul. In one place he says that "providence, or divination, comes from us—from within—and is a private quality in each given life or soul." A little later he says: "I would not deem it a miracle were sleep to yield a treasure gift; one might go to sleep uninspired, and thereafter, in a dream, find oneself an able poet amongst the muses, some speaking, and others listening—nor need this be incredible—it has happened in our time."

An excellent book on dreaming—*The Dream World*, by R. L. Mégroz, published by Dutton in 1939—shows the provincialism of modern scholars in comparison with Synesius. Mégroz writes in an early chapter:

> But while the anthropologists all show that primitive men claim powers of divination and believe that dreams can reveal otherwise inaccessible truth, never do they or the academic psychologists attempt to consider what significance, other than superstitious wish-fulfillment, may be implied by those claims. Dr. J.S. Lincoln [in *The Dream in Primitive Culture*] thus examines the dreams of Navajo Indians, and their ceremonies, and finds the evidence he wants in support of the Freudian theory of an œdipus complex, but does not comment upon the fact that nine of the collected dreams were prophetic. . . . Some of these prophetic dreams anticipated a coming disaster such as an uncommon storm or a serious epidemic causing many deaths. Others foretold the death of a relative. . . . Presumably if Dr. Lincoln had shown any serious interest in the marvellous claims of savage dreamers to divine the future, he would not be regarded as a "scientific" student. Yet we cannot dismiss the stories of divination by primitive peoples everywhere quite so easily as the old-fashioned materialist or the new-fashioned psychoanalyst.

While Mégroz thought that the frequency of prophetic dreams among "primitive" peoples was much greater than the occurrence of them in civilized societies, since his book was published Louisa E. Rhine compiled hundreds of instances of prophecy,

many of them in dreams, showing that this capacity is also common in modern times. In a paper in the *Journal of Parapsychology* (March, 1955) Mrs. Rhine gave numerous examples, from which we reproduce the following taken from a letter by a Navy wife during World War II:

> During the war my husband was in command of a Naval ship, and naturally thoughts of him were often in my mind. After he had been away for almost two years I dreamed one night that he started home by plane. The plane was wrecked and everyone on board was killed. I had that dream on 14 consecutive nights. I wrote him asking him when he re-returned that if it were humanly possible not to come by plane. Several months passed and early one morning he called me from a California airport saying he had just arrived and would leave in about an hour. He asked me to meet him in Washington the following day. I was horror stricken. My feelings are difficult to describe, but I felt he must not fly. I persuaded him to come by train. He cancelled his reservation and had coffee with several officers who had flown in with him, and turned in for a few hours of sleep. When he got up he found the plane on which he was to have left had crashed about 10 minutes after it left the field and everyone aboard was killed.

How did she know? What gave her the insight of danger in a dream which came on fourteen consecutive nights?

Actually, there are thousands of such cases on record in the annals of wonderful dreams. If it were not for the difficulty of explaining how this "vision" into the future works, probably no one would think of denying its possibility. Mrs. Rhine comments:

> After all, a hypothesis that could fully explain precognition would have to say how the personality, whether as a whole or in part, could foresee the future, or else it would have to explain the nature of time in such a way that the logical barrier to foreknowledge would be removed. It is no explanation merely to *assume* that some part of the personality is able to cross the time boundary.

She also says:

> The idea that it may be possible to know the future or, in other words, to exercise precognition at once raises some difficult secondary questions. No other psi concept cuts across such deeply ingrained ways of thought as this one does. Not only does it appear to contradict the traditional idea of causation, but it also seems to challenge the idea of volitional freedom. For on the face of it at least, it would seem that if the future can be known beforehand, then that future must in some sense already be existent. Like a roll of movie film, it must somehow be fixed and determined and waiting only to be unrolled and experienced. If such should be the case, the idea of volitional freedom could only be a delusion.

The navy wife's dream certainly raised questions of this sort, yet she was able to persuade her husband to come home by train and thus escape death. And this was certainly volitional on her part. So the future, if it is in some ways fixed, may be modified in other areas.

There are some famous prophetic dreams which may be recalled here. Lincoln had an ominous dream a few days before he was assassinated. He spoke of it to Ward Lamon, his biographer, and to his wife. Lamon recorded what he said, and we take the account from Megroz' *Dream World:*

> "About ten days ago, I retired very late. I had been up waiting for important dispatches from the front. I could not have been long in bed when I fell into a slumber, for I was weary. I soon began to dream. There seemed to be a death-like stillness about me. Then I heard subdued sobs as if a number of people were weeping. I thought I left my bed and wandered downstairs. There the silence was broken by the same pitiful sobbing, but the mourners were invisible. I went from room to room; no living person was in sight, but the same mournful sounds of distress met me as I passed along. It was light in all the rooms; every object was familiar to me; but where were all the people who were grieving as if their hearts would break? I was puzzled and alarmed. What could be the meaning of all this? Determined to find the cause of a state of things so mysterious and so shocking, I kept on until I arrived at the East Room, which I entered. There I met with a sickening surprise. Before me was a catafalque, on which rested a corpse wrapped in funeral vestments. Around it were stationed soldiers who were acting as guards; and there was a throng of people, some gazing mournfully upon the corpse, whose face was covered, others weeping pitifully. 'Who is dead in the White House?' I demanded of one of the soldiers. 'The President,' was his answer; 'he was killed by an assassin!' Then came a loud burst of grief from the crowd, which awoke me from my dream. I slept no more that night; and although it was only a dream, I have been strangely annoyed by it ever since."

This probably shouldn't be called a warning dream, although it was *like* a warning dream. Is an Abraham Lincoln different from other men? Are such individuals vouchsafed a vision uncommon

among ordinary mortals? But was a dream so plainly prophetic of his death of any value to him? We do not know. But knowledge of the dream, as published by Lamon, may be in some sense instructive to us.

Another sort of dream, of value but not prophetic, came to H. V. Hilprecht, a professor of Assyriology in the University of Pennsylvania. Megroz relates:

> Hilprecht went with an archeological expedition from Pennsylvania to explore the ruins of Babylon. Two inscribed fragments of agate puzzled him. Their significance and the meaning of the characters inscribed on them remained a mystery. He sent home separate drawings of them, and other objects, and then in a dream he saw a priest of pre-Christian Nippur who led him to the treasure-chamber of the ancient temple, the ruins of which Hilprecht had been excavating. On the floor of the treasure chamber the dreamer saw scraps of agate and lapis lazali. The priest told him that the two fragments he was puzzled about should be joined together, and explained the use they had been put to, all of which was confirmed. This kind of creative energy in dreams is beyond the scepticism of the most orthodox critic, and there is no need to exemplify it further. In such experiences as Hilprecht's dream, however, there seems to be a curious anticipation of what is to happen in time, the detailed and unexpected fulfillment of an event seen only in the dream.

The fundamental question raised by Mrs. Rhine remains to be answered. How can anyone see the future? It is easy enough to formulate the proposition that the general structure of the future is created from day to day by physical events according to the laws of motion. The laws of astronomy and of physics are based upon this idea and confirmed in experience. But in the dreams we have described the fortunes of human individuals are involved and are anticipated by the dreamer. Is there then in the human a level of observation which permits one to see another kind of structure affecting the destiny of individuals? Is there a watchtower for observation of the future which some humans are able to ascend and thereby make predictions? If we suggest this, then fairly elaborate assumptions have to be made about the nature of man and the continuum in which he lives.

Yet analogies may be drawn. In Lafcadio Hearn's story of the "Living God," an old Japanese farmer who lives on a mountain top is able to the see far-off approach of a tidal wave rushing toward the island and to recognize that the village on the seashore will be destroyed and everyone living there killed unless he finds a way to warn them rapidly. So he sets fire to the stacks of grain on his fields, all his gathered wealth of produce that he had expected to sell, and the town folk rush up the mountain to help him put out the fire. The old man was experienced. He knew what a tidal wave looked like and what it would do to the village. He saw all this before it occurred; and the villagers were so grateful to him for saving all their lives that they built a temple for him while he was still alive and revered him for many years.

This is a simple tale but from its meaning we can argue that the future is always partially shaped and that prophetic dreams, when they occur, are simply the seeing of future events which are already determined. Do we, then, have the power of two kinds of seeing, one operative all the time, in the physical world and its forces, the other a power to see, not completely developed in all but certainly present in enough individuals to persuade us that for them, on occasion, prediction becomes possible.

The fact of prophetic dreams requires us to ask how we are made and of what constituents. Are such dreams evidence of further evolutionary possibilities? Is there a moral factor involved, and are there moral laws which affect the operation of psychic dynamics?

Would what a man sees out of his watch-tower be determined by what he loves? If so, what sort of metaphysical structure do we need to postulate in order to place this possibility in a rational context?

A navy wife has a dream about her husband's danger in the future, but a Tolstoy was capable of a vision of the future of all Europe! Both the arc of sight and radius of perception might depend in part on the individual's ethical concern and what it includes. It is impossible to consider such questions without recalling the old teachings of the East of Karma and reincarnation. These twin ideas, believed

in implicitly for many centuries by millions of people, seem crucial elements in any rational view of a universe or world in which predictions of the future may be successfully made. Are there, or have there been, human beings to whom these ideas are not in the least speculative but the foundation principles of human existence? Was the Buddha such an individual? Was Plato a man with such powers?

What, indeed, are the factors of "finality" in a coming event, whether a disaster or a historical blessing? When is the "die cast"? What forms the axis of crystallization in the moral and intellectual worlds and what brings the precipitation which enables us to see what is happening on our own plane?

There is a continuous flow of change and activity throughout the world. This flow is punctuated by what we call "events" for the reason that certain intersections of action are important to human beings. An event, therefore, is such by reason of its subjective value to man. The web of action is constantly being modified by human decision, some modifications being obvious and deliberate, others apparently fortuitous so far as observable human motive is concerned. Yet we know that all sorts of changes are unknowingly caused by human action, for the reason that we never anticipate all the consequences of what we do, and do not recognize them as consequences of our own action when they are brought about.

Wendell Berry has written fruitfully along these lines. He says, for example, in *Standing by Words:*

> That it is thus possible for an article of faith to be right or wrong according to worldly result suggests that we may be up against limits and necessities in our earthly experience as absolute as "the will of God" was ever taken to be and that "the will of God" as expressed in moral law may therefore have the same standing as the laws of gravity and thermodynamics. In Dryden's day, perhaps, it was still possible to think of "love one another" as a rule contingent on faith. By our own day such evidence has accumulated as to suggest that it may be an absolute law: Love one another or die, individually and as a species.
>
> If so, then the difference between that law and a physical law such as the law of gravity is only a difference in the proximity of cause and effect. If I step off the roof, I will fall *immediately;* if, in this age of nuclear weapons, toxic chemicals, rampant destruction of soil, etc., we do not love one another we or our children will suffer for it *sometime*. It is a critical difference, for it explains why people who do not ever willingly step off a roof will fearlessly regard their neighbors as enemies or competitors or economic victims. The uncertainty of the term between offense and punishment under moral law licenses all our viciousness, foolishness, and pride. Though most of us know that it's moral law—which is finally apt to look suspiciously like natural law—that visits our sins upon our children (and other people's children), still, to the worst side of our nature, deferred justice is no justice; we will rape the land and oppress the poor, and leave starvation and bloody vengeance (we hope) to be "surprises" or "acts of God" to a later generation.
>
> Because moral justice tends not to be direct or immediate, obedience to moral law, whether or not we think it divine, becomes a matter of propriety: of asking who and where we are acting. And it may be that these questions cannot be asked, much less answered, until the question of authority has been settled, there being, that is, no need to ask such questions if we think the only authority resides in ourselves or, as must follow, in each one of ourselves. If, on the other hand, we believe authority comes from outside or above ourselves, then those questions must be asked, and the answers will put us to some trouble.

This is the confrontation to which wondering about prophetic dreams may lead. Such possibilities should not be neglected.

REVIEW
AN UNSOLVED MYSTERY

THE poetic work, *On the Iliad*, by Rachel Bespaloff, reaches into the reader's mind with a muscular grasp produced by its imagery, yet without the consistency that is expected of a work of the imagination. But it wins respect for a world of ethical confusion. Throughout the reader finds himself exclaiming, but "Why, why?" Yet he reads on, led by exquisitely generated imagery. The introduction by Hermann Broch has similar qualities, independent yet related. This book first came out in 1947, published by Pantheon and is no doubt out of print, but even local libraries may have it.

The artist, Broch says, "is not content with the conventional vocabulary provided him by his epoch." He must invent new forms in order to speak of his world from a point of observation beyond its existing limits.

> This often appears to him a technical problem, the problem of dissolving the existing vocabulary and, from its syntactical roots, forming his own. His main, sometimes his sole concern is one of craftsmanship: Bach's *Art of the Fugue* was intended as a purely technical work; and the Japanese painter, Hokusai, reaching the peak of his mastery at about ninety, had only this to say: "Now at last I begin to learn how one draws a line."
>
> But although the artist's problem seems to be mainly technical, his real impulse goes beyond this—it goes into the universe; and the true piece of art, even though it be the shortest Iyric, must always embrace the totality of the world, must be the mirror of that universe, but one of full counterweight. This is felt by every true artist, but is creatively realized only by the artist of old age. The other, who remains bound to his conventional vocabulary, seduced by the known richness of its content—a Frans Hals or a Thomas Wolfe—though he may enlarge his art more and more, reaching a boundless abundance, is never able to achieve his real goal: one cannot capture the universe by snaring its atoms one by one; one can only capture it by showing its basic and essential principles, its basic, one might even say, its mathematical structure. And here the abstractism of such ultimate principles joins hands with the abstractism of the technical problem: this union constitutes the "style of old age."
>
> The artist who has reached such a point is beyond art. He still produces art, but all the minor and specific problems, with which art in its worldly phase usually deals, have lost interest for him; he is interested neither in the "beauty" of art, nor in the effect which it produces on the public: although more the artist than any other, his attitude approximates that of the scientist, with whom he shares the concern for expressing the universe; however, since he remains an artist, his abstraction is not that of science but—surprisingly enough—very near to that of myth. And there is deep significance in the fact that the creations of the "style of old age" acquire, for the most part, mythical character and even, as in the case of Goethe's *Faust*, have become, being so full of essential symbols, new members of mankind's mythical Pantheon.

This analysis is now applied to the subject of the book—a work by Homer.

> "As for myself, I find it difficult to tell all, I am not a God," says Homer. And Rachel Bespaloff adds: "These modest words of Homer could have been adopted by Tolstoy for himself. To both of them it was not necessary to express everything in order to express the whole. They alone (and, at times, Shakespeare as well) were in possession of those planetarian pauses above the earthly happening, pauses in which history in its continuous flight beyond every human goal reveals its creative un-accomplishment." And in this never-accomplished and always self-creating reality—the building of a new vocabulary out of syntax—lies the essential.

The *Iliad* is filled with ironies, as are, in some sense, the plays of Eschylus. Hector is the true hero of the *Iliad*, yet he is slain by Archilles, and then his body is abused.

As Rachel Bespaloff says:

> Achilles pays for nothing; to Hector everything comes dear. Yet it is not Hector, but Achilles, whose insatiable rancor feeds even on victories, and who is forever "gorging himself with complaints." The man of resentment in the *Iliad* is not the weak man but, on the contrary, the hero who can bend everything to his will. With Hector, the will to greatness never pits itself against the will to happiness. That little bit of true happiness which is more important than anything else, because it coincides with the true meaning of life, will be worth defending even with life itself, to which it has given a measure, a form, a price. Even in defeat, the courage of Hector does not give way before the valor of Achilles, which has been nurtured on discontent and irritable anxiety. But the capacity for happiness, which rewards the efforts of fecund civilizations, put a curb on the defender's mettle by making him more aware of the enormity of the sacrifice exacted by the gods of war. This capacity, however, does not develop until the appetite for happiness has been stilled, the appetite that drives the

> aggressor, who is less civilized, on toward his prey and fills his heart with "an infinite power for battle and truceless war."

In the battle Hector, a sense of doom enfolding him, flees from Achilles; but then he turns to face his enemy, "I no longer wish to flee you, son of Peleus. . . . It is over. . . . I will have you or you will have me." He accepts his destiny and is killed by Achilles. Dying, he begs Achilles not to give his body to the dogs, but Achilles is obdurate.

> Achilles, at this moment, is aware of not being a man, and admits it: "There are no covenants between men and lions." . . . Agony sets Hector free; he recognizes his mistake and yields himself simultaneously to truth and death: "Yes, I see what you are. I could never have persuaded you. A heart of iron is in you for sure."

So, contrary to all acceptable morality, the man of virtue goes down before the man of iron. While Achilles' victory is brief—he will soon be killed by an arrow shot by Paris—this gives us little satisfaction.

Yet when Priam comes to the tent of Achilles in tears—asking for the body of his son—the Greek hero meets him with compassion and agrees. And Priam is constrained to recognize the rough nobility of the Greek. As Rachel Bespaloff says:

> When he admires the enemy who is crushing him and justifies the stranger whose presence is the ruin of his city the old king gives absolution to life in its totally. In this minute of ecstatic lucidity, the haggard world recomposes its features, and the horror of what is to come is abolished in suffering hearts. It is useless to go beyond this. For Priam, the future is the burning of Troy, and for Achilles, its is Paris' arrow. Job will regain through faith all the treasures of the real world, but what Priam is about to recover is only Hector's corpse. Yet out of this encounter on the borders of night comes a dawn of joy, unknown to joy, that reconciles life to itself. Niobe awakes and stretches her petrified limbs.

Here, in a powerful prose, the writer seems to declare that black is white, pain pleasure, and bondage freedom There may be a place in the metaphysical structure of the universe where these things are true, or where they no longer matter, but we have only the barest hint that such a region exists. Is this somehow the spirit of the *Iliad*, portraying the stark reality of life as we live it?

There may be an element of explanation in the following passage:

> Zeus alone stays out of it. He does not knock history into shape with the hammer blows of the God of Israel. For him, history is a show that neither knows divine justice nor asks it. He will not outlive its pageant. But his serene look, dominating from on high consequences still distant, prevents the Trojan War from being a mere bloody fracas. The passionate interest of the divine spectator conveys to the flux of events its metaphysical meaning. What does it matter if the gods perish with the heroes? The poet's verses alone are immortal, will recite the childlike grief of Achilles Hector's regrets, and the tears of Andromache.
>
> Nietzsche is wrong when he says that Homer is the poet of apotheoses. What he exalts and sanctifies is not the triumph of victorious force but man's energy in misfortune, the dead warrior's beauty, the glory of the sacrificed hero, the song of the poet in times to come—whatever defies fatality and rises superior to it, even in defeat.

Rachel Bespaloff rises to Helen's defense.

> Paris or Menelaus may get her, but for her nothing can really change. She is the prisoner of the passions her beauty excited, and her passivity is, so to speak, their underside. Aphrodite rules her despotically; the goddess commands and Helen bows, whatever her private repugnance. Pleasure is exported from her; this merely makes her humiliation more cruel. Her only resource is to turn against herself a wrath too weak to Spite the gods. She seems to live in horror of herself. "Why did I not die before?" is the lament that keeps rising to her lips. Homer is as implacable toward Helen as Tolstoy is toward Anna.

Yet Anna knew what had happened and how she was responsible. Did Helen?

We hardly know. The *Iliad* is an unsolved mystery.

COMMENTARY
ON SCHOOLBOOK BANNING

ACCORDING to the *New York Times* of August 27, a Federal appeals court has reversed a trial judge's order that banned forty-four textbooks from the Alabama public schools "on the ground that they promoted a godless, humanistic religion."

The *Times* story continues:

> In allowing the textbooks to remain in use, the United States Court of Appeals for the IIth Circuit said the books appropriately sought to instill such values as tolerance and self-respect. Disagreeing with the district judge who had banned the books, the appeals court held that they did not promote a religion of "secular humanism" or an antagonism toward God-centered religions.

This ruling was the second time within three days that a Federal appeals court ruled against fundamentalist Christians who had challenged public school texts. On Monday, August 24, the Court of Appeals in Cincinnati reversed a lower court's decision that would have allowed parents in a Tennessee district to keep their schoolchildren out of certain courses because they considered the textbooks godless, the *Times* said. That case had not found specific fault with the books themselves or ordered their removal from the classrooms.

However, in the most recent case, the district judge in Mobile, Alabama, W. Brevard Hand, had contended that the forty-four kooks he banned "unconstitutionally neglected the role of Christianity and other theistic religions in American society and promoted the 'religion of secular humanism'." He ordered them removed from Alabama classrooms, although the eleventh Circuit court had stayed that injunction pending resolution of the appeal.

In the latest ruling, however, the appellate judges took issue with Judge Hand's opinion that the books furthered belief in what he saw as "a system of atheistic, man centered belief that amounted to a religion in itself."

> "Rather," it said, "the message conveyed is one of a governmental attempt to instill in Alabama public school children such values as independent thought, tolerance of diverse views, self-respect, maturity, self-reliance and logical decision making. This is an entirely appropriate secular effort."

The appellate decision was unanimous by the three judges involved. They said that "there was no indication that the books were antagonistic to traditional religion."

> "The message conveyed by these textbooks with regard to theistic religion is one of neutrality: the textbooks neither endorse theistic religion as a system of belief, nor discredit it, the opinion said. "Indeed, many of the books specifically acknowledge that religion is one source of moral values and none preclude that possibility."

The appeals judges ordered the District Court to dissolve its March 4 injunction and end the litigation.

One of the forty-four books objected to as advancing "secular humanism" was a home economics book, *Teen Guide,* in which the following passage was singled out as unacceptable:

> Nothing was "meant to be." You are the designer of your life. If you want something, you can plan and work for it. Nothing is easy. But nothing is impossible, either. When you recognize that you are the one in charge of your life, you will be way ahead of where you would be if you think of your life as something that just happens to you.

Active in the campaign against Judge Hand's ruling was John Buchanan, chairman of the liberal lobbying group called People for the American Way. He called the appellate court's decision "a major victory for public education, for freedom of education, and for freedom to learn." Buchanan is a Baptist minister in Alabama. In a public statement he warned that fundamentalists are "having more and more success in banning books," the only exception being in the Northeast. He also said that the fundamentalists who seek to ban books "represent only a sliver of Christendom in the United States," but "have an impact beyond anything their numerical strength should warrant" because of "the apathy of the true majority of American citizens."

Those who have inspected some of the textbooks leading to such controversy are well aware that they do not contain attack on conventional religion, and that the present campaign against "secular humanism" is mainly an attempt to gain control of the schools by political means.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SOME GOOD EXTRACTS

IN *Growing Without Schooling* No. 56 we found this letter from a mother in Wisconsin on paying children for chores:

> Since the summer, we have been paying Kame (6) for household chores. At first we were reluctant, as we'd like her to willingly pitch in, and we didn't want to emphasize money. But we decided to give it a try as she had recently lost interest in the work she has helped us with since babyhood.
>
> We've been quite pleased with the results. She's content while working, satisfied and proud when a job is completed. She can competently handle a number of tasks—scrubbing sinks, rinsing dishes, making beds, loading the laundry machine, setting the table and preparing food. She works when she wants to, at a job that appeals to her and is OK'd by us.
>
> The money she earns is hers to spend as she chooses. We pay her 15 cents a job—enough, we figured to encourage saving. We worried that she would spend it on candy and gum. This she did for the first several weeks—we tried to refrain from comment, as we watched her consume an inordinate amount of sugar. Once she bought twelve suckers and distributed them to the neighborhood kids. Then she saw a small toy at a store that she decided to save up for. She had the money within a week or two, and was enthusiastic about her purchase. Since then, she is loath to waste (her word) money on candy or gum, and recently bought a doll which she had decided to save for.
>
> The chance for her to earn money has eased tensions between us. She is no longer in the position of asking or begging for a toy or item which she knows we would not ordinarily buy. She knows she can earn the money and does not begrudge the work involved. There is a sense of control and independence in this situation which we feel will serve her well over the years.

The following is not a letter but an extract from an article by Kathleen McCurdy on "The Importance of Play":

> Well-known psychologist and researcher Jerome S. Bruner studied the effects of play and the problem-solving abilities of children. He and his colleagues designed an experiment where 3-to-5-year-olds were given the task of fishing a prize from a box that was out of reach. The only way they could do this was to extend two sticks by using a clamp, thus making a pole to reach the prize. The children were divided into five groups. The first group was "taught" by an adult, who demonstrated how to clamp sticks together. The second group was drilled in the skill of fastening a clamp on a stick. The third group watched the experimenter carry out the entire task of making the pole and then fishing out the prize. The fourth group received no training at all, but was simply given the opportunity to play with the materials. The fifth group was the control group and received no prior exposure to the materials.
>
> The results of this experiment are quite impressive. The children who only played with the materials were able to solve the problem as well as the ones who watched the complete solution demonstrated, and twice as successful as the ones who were "taught" the principle or who practiced the necessary skill. Said Dr. Bruner, "We were quite struck by the tenacity with which the children in the play group stuck to the task. Even when their initial approach was misguided, they ended by solving the problem because they were able to resist frustration and the temptation to give up."

Alfie Kohn, educationist and author of *No Contest: The Case Against Competition,* wrote to *GWS* in response to a letter:

> The surest way to squelch creativity is to arrange for work to be done for reward—or, more accurately, to cause would-be creators to think of themselves as working in order to get something. . . .
>
> The branch of this research that most interests me—and which I review in my book, *No Contest*—is that which investigates competitive triumph as a reward. Despite our society's infatuation with winning, the data show quite clearly that competition not only isn't necessary for achievement but actually interferes with it. Brandeis University psychologist Teresa Amabile, . . . asked some seven-to-eleven-year-old girls to make "silly" collages. Some competed for prizes and some didn't. Seven artists then independently rated their works. It turned out that the children who were trying to win produced collages that were much less creative—less spontaneous, less complex, and less varied—than the others.

As with other sorts of rewards, competition leads one to focus on the goal (in this case, winning) rather than on the pure delight of making collages—or, for that matter, the fun of playing with words or numbers or ideas. Several other studies, including one from the University of Quebec published just last fall, show very clearly that children become less interested in what they are doing when they are trying to beat others at it. Excellence and victory are two different things, and in practice they tend to pull in opposite directions. . . .

The problem is *inherent* to win/lose structure—to an arrangement, that is, in which one person can succeed only if someone else fails. Any competition is too much competition. The most successful arrangement for most kinds of learning is cooperation. . . .

Doing away with competitive awards is both psychologically healthier and more productive, which means there is no trade-off between well-being and performance. The real alternative to being Number One is not Being Number Two but abandoning such ranking altogether.

An interesting comment on praise from a mother:

I found that my first two children did some beautiful drawings when they were little. I would display them, praise them. They stopped drawing. My third child (age 7) draws until it's coming out of her ears. When she shows me something, I say "Oh." I acknowledge it, I say I like it, but I try not to do anything to motivate it one way or the other. She's retained that skill. The others lost it at age 5.

The following is a portion of a talk John Holt gave in 1976, written down by a woman who was present.

The world of human experience in space and time goes back into the past, extends out into the future—that's what four dimensions means. It's all one piece. Everything in it is connected with everything else. It's a very serious mistake to think that the divisions which we have made in human experience, certainly in our schools, dividing them into subjects or courses or so-called academic disciplines—it's a very great mistake to think that these correspond to anything in the real world. They may be useful for certain kinds of purpose. [But we have to] understand that this is a very artificial division, and if carried on very far it begins to be actively harmful. There are no dotted lines out there which separate physics from chemistry, or history from geography, or economics from government, or philosophy from religion, or from that. They don't exist.

You cannot point to physics. If I say to you, "Show me chemistry," or "Where is biology?" you can't answer. These are all activities. They are all different ways of looking at thinking about, asking about, certain aspects of the wholeness and interconnectedness of human experience. Physics happens to be the asking of human questions about certain aspects of what we call inanimate matter, though you pursue it far enough and pretty soon you get into that area where you're not quite sure what inanimate and animate, so you get to talking about physical biology. And chemistry is the activity of asking questions about certain other aspects of inanimate matter. And history is the activity of asking certain kinds of questions about what happened in the past, but for different kinds of things. But those are activities, these are things that people do. There's not a lump out there called physics which all of us can walk away from or come up to and look at. Physics is something people do.

It is fortunate that *Growing Without Schooling* reprints from John Holt from time to time. He was a wise man who understood children—and adults—better than most of us. The editor of *GWS*, Susannah Sheffer (Donna Richoux is or was busy having a baby), says on page one of *GWS:*

While John was publishing GWS, clear reasons supported every decision about style, format or content that he made. But John's legacy to us was not only these reasons and policies but trust in our own ability to make sense of the home-schooling movement, the broader issues of children and society, and how *GWS* can best present these issues. In continuing to publish *Growing without Schooling,* we are not merely keeping a promise or *upholding* what John believed; we are taking those beliefs and running with them.

A year of six issues of the paper (32 pages) is $20. The address is 729 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116.

FRONTIERS

Hearth and Home

IN an article in *The World* (May/June, 1987), the journal of the Unitarian Universalist Association, Harrison E. Salisbury, for years a correspondent and editor of the *New York Times*, writes on Nationalism as "the key to modern history." He begins by quoting a Soviet scientist who said "What you Americans didn't understand in Vietnam was the great force of nationalism." And this friend added: "We Russians have made the same mistake. Nationalism is the strongest force in the world today."

The meaning of the comment was that Americans did not realize how difficult it would be to overcome a people united by "national feelings, national emotions, national ethos." We have in our origins and early history the source of these feelings in the vision of the Founding Fathers—men like Jefferson and Paine—who combined genuine humanitarian fervor with devotion to their home place and countryside, that can only be described as love of country, which was later reduced and transformed into loyalty, often blind, to the national state. Nationalism, then, is a technical continuation of an attitude born of an ennobling emotion, from which the higher aspect of this feeling is gradually subtracted. For a time the new-born United States was an example to all the world, a country to be emulated in its principles, a place to emigrate to in order to be free.

Today, however, the United States has largely lost this role, and has come to be a country that is eyed with fear and suspicion, a nation led by men who have turned patriotism into the uncontrollable lust for power and have turned that nation into an engine of destruction. Our nationalism is animated by the will to dominance supported by a fear that other powers will stand in our way, continually generating suspicion of the rising nationalism evident in other countries, far smaller and less powerful than ourselves.

Salisbury summarizes recent history:

> World War I saw the breakup of two great European empires, Germany and Austria-Hungary, and what seemed to be the beginning of the breakup of a third, Imperial Russia. Woodrow Wilson's dream of the League of Nations seemed to offer a vision of a world parliament in which national issues and national frictions would gradually diminish and be replaced by a new world order. Vladimir Lenin had a similar idea—a world order of Communism, led by the Third International.
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> Neither concept proved viable. Both the League and the International died in World War II along with Hitler's dream of world empire. And nationalism moved forward with overpowering momentum.
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> The British and French empires, the Dutch and the Japanese, vanished in the post-war rise of national feelings. Within a few years all of Asia had cast off the last bonds and so had Africa. China emerged as a united people with a few remnants of other ethnic groups tucked away here and there. Stalin re-constituted most of the Czar's Russia and brought Eastern Europe within his shadow—thereby creating critical problems of thwarted nationalism which persist today.
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> In the wake of World War II another dream of a world parliament and a coming together of peoples arose around the United Nations, this to founder (in that context) in the surging tide of small (and often unenviable) nationalisms.
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> Today wherever residues of empire remain there are trouble spots of nationalist spirit. This is most notably true in the Soviet Union and the area of its dominance. But the United States is not without its problems. Vietnam was perhaps a cruel lesson to the United States in this respect but in many parts of the world there continue complaints against what is called "cultural nationalism" of the USA. . . . At this stage in world development nationalism is the force that moves people, especially those who have been subject to alien rule.

Yet the ethnic and cultural groups which strive against centralized government may also be seen as a longing for regional independence, even as a wish to be free of outside authority of any sort. This longing may be illustrated by an example given by Wendell Berry in a paper of his which appeared recently in *Annals of Earth* (Vol. V, No. 1), After describing a meeting held in

Madison, Indiana, which he attended—a meeting of people mistrustful and fearful of the nuclear plant planned in their neighborhood—he spoke of the calm and "reassuring words" of the power plant officials, and the "lack of objectivity" of the people who lived near Marble Hill, where the plant was to be erected. Then he said:

> But that meeting produced one question and one answer which should tell us all we need to know. . . . A lady rose in the audience and asked the fifteen or twenty personages on the stage to tell us how many of them lived within the fifty mile danger zone around Marble Hill. The question proved tactically brilliant, apparently shocking to the personages on the stage, who were forced to give it the shortest, plainest, answer of the evening: *Not one.* Not a single one of those well-paid, well-educated, successful, important men would need to worry about his family or his property in the event of a catastrophic mistake at Marble Hill.
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> If one wrecks a private home, *that* is vandalism. But if to build a nuclear power plant, one destroys good farm land, disrupts a local community, and jeopardizes lives, homes, and properties within an area of several thousand square miles, *that* is industrial progress. . . .
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> That meeting, then, was not really a meeting at all, but one of the enactments of a division that is rapidly deepening in our country: a division between people who are trying to defend the health, the integrity, even the existence of places whose values they sum up in the word "home" and "community," and people for whom those words signify no value at all. I do not hesitate to say—what I strongly feel—that right is on the side of the defenders of homes and communities.

The spirit which Berry embodies, in behalf of the people of Marble Head, seems the best possible replacement of what we used to call patriotism, which is no longer a feeling joined with hearth and home, but a mechanistic claim for our allegiance to the most terroristic, destructive institution of our time—the national state.