VOLUME XL, NO. 48
DECEMBER 2, 1987

"BECOME WHAT YOU ARE"

WE were happy to discover, in the *Los Angeles Times* for July 19 of this year, a thoughtful article by Paul Johnson, who is, as he explains, both a historian and a journalist. He finds this combination of callings valuable to both undertakings, leading him to deplore the decline of the writing of history to an academic specialty. He points out that the great historians have almost all been men active in public affairs, naming as among them Xenophon, Thucydides, Josephus, Tacitus, Bede, Thomas More, Francis Bacon, the first Earl of Clarendon. He goes on:

> Of the three most influential British historians, Edward Gibbon, Thomas Macauley and Thomas Carlyle, all were men of letters, not academics—two were members of Parliament. Only in the current century, and especially since 1945, have the academics, thanks to the expansion of higher education, really taken over.
>
> With a few exceptions, academic historians are not interested in taking history to the people. They have many virtues but they also have two salient faults. Few are taught or trouble to acquire ordinary writing skills. I have to read large numbers of their efforts, in book form and in learned journals: How rarely is it a pleasure! The organization is often pitiful, the prose leaden and nothing is conveyed of the excitement, awe, fear and admiration which history ought to arouse. Secondly, academics discourage each other from broaching large subjects and tackling great themes. They calculate it is always safer to develop a narrow specialty and stay within it. Sometimes it is safer not to publish anything at all. They are often terrified of exposing themselves to criticism. Much of their work is directed solely at small groups of fellow-academics or at best students. It is not read by the public at all and rests, largely undisturbed; on the shelves of university libraries.

Mr. Johnson then speaks for himself:

> I make no apologies for writing popular history. Quite the contrary, I see it as a public duty. Surveying the terrible events of our century, I am constantly haunted by our failure to learn the lessons of the past, and by the fear that further calamities are in store for societies that ignore the past because they are not taught it or to read about it. If history is worth writing—and it is—it is worth writing well, and for the many. Great historians like Gibbon and Macauley saw it not as a specialist academic activity but as a central part of literature itself and of the moral culture of their society. They brought to their work consummate powers of organizing masses of material and presenting it with vivid narrative force. They were read by the highest in the land and by thousands of humble people too.
>
> In the age of the mass electorate, easily swayed and manipulated by the media, it has never been more important for historians of all kinds to accept their public responsibility by helping to regraft the writing of history onto the general tree of literature, and by making the past real and living in the consciousness of ordinary people.

We might note especially Johnson's point about the avoidance by modern historians of large subjects and great themes. Some years ago, in conversing with one of the best essayists of our time, we learned that he, who had earned a Ph.D. in history, in all the years of his study in the university, had never been introduced to distinguished nineteenth-century historians such as H. T. Buckle and W. E. H. Lecky. He had of course read them later on his own. What is the value of reading such writers—what does one learn from them? The groundwork of historical facts, on which their books were based, has its importance, but what one gets from reading them is the influence of the sense of responsibility with which they wrote, of a quality of mind seldom characteristic of modern writers. They sought through the study of history to understand something of the meaning of life and the course of human development.

One finds for example in Lecky's history of *The Rise of Rationalism in Europe* (Appleton, 1884) passages like the following:

> As men advance from an imperfect to a higher civilization, they gradually sublimate and refine their creed. Their imaginations insensibly detach themselves from those grosser conceptions and doctrines that were formerly most possible, and they sooner or later reduce all their opinions into conformity with the moral and intellectual standards which the new civilization produces. Thus, long before the Reformation, the tendencies of the Reformation were manifest. The revival of Grecian learning, the development of art, the reaction against the schoolmen, had raised society to an elevation in which a more refined and less oppressive creed was absolutely essential to its well-being. Luther and Calvin only represented the prevailing wants, and embodied them in a definite form. The pressure of the general intellectual influences of the time determines the predispositions which ultimately regulate the details of belief; and though all men do not yield to that pressure with the same facility, all large bodies are last controlled. A change of speculative opinions does not imply an increase of the data upon which those opinions rest, but a change of the habits of thought and mind which they reflect. Definite arguments are the symptoms and pretexts, but seldom the causes of the change. Their chief merit is to accelerate the inevitable crisis. They derive their force and efficacy from their conformity with the mental habits of those to whom they are addressed. Reasoning which in one age would make no impression whatever, in the next age is received with enthusiastic applause. It is one thing to understand its nature, but quite another to appreciate its force.

The most valuable sort of study of history is often seen in the consideration of current history, which provides tangible samples of prevailing opinion. We find an example of this in a passage by A.H. Maslow in *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (Viking, 1971). In the section on Education Maslow wrote:

> If your situation is like mine, you know that we are in a complete and total confusion of values in the arts. In music, just try to prove something about the virtues of John Cage as against Beethoven—or Elvis Presley. In painting and architecture similar confusion is present. We have no shared values any more. I don't bother to read music criticism. It is useless to me. So is art criticism, which I have also given up reading. Book reviews I find useless frequently. There is complete chaos and anarchy of standards. For instance, the *Saturday Review* recently carried a favorable review of one of Jean Genet's crummy books. Written by a professor of theology, it was total confusion. It was the approach that Evil now has become Good because there is some kind of paradox while playing with words: If evil becomes totally evil, then it somehow becomes good, and there were rhapsodies to the beauties of sodomy and drug addiction, which, for a poor psychologist who spends much of his time trying to rescue people from the anguish of these things, were incomprehensible. How can a grown man recommend this book as a chapter in ethics and a guide to the young? . . .I have a very strong sense of being in the middle of a historical wave. One hundred and fifty years from now what will the historians say about this age? What was really important? What was going? What was finished? My belief is that much of what makes the headlines is finished, and the "growing tip" of mankind is what is now growing and will flourish in a hundred or two hundred years, if we manage to endure. Historians will be talking about this movement as the sweep of history, that here, as Whitehead pointed out, when you get a new model, a new paradigm, a new way of perceiving, new definitions of the old words, words which now mean something else, suddenly, you have an illumination, an insight. You can see things in a different way.

This is a use of current history of which, we suspect, Johnson would approve. We turn now to the work of another nineteenth-century historian, Henry T. Buckle. In the Introduction to his *History of Civilization in England,* published by Appleton in 1895, he wrote:

> Owing to circumstances still unknown, there appear, from time to time, great thinkers who, devoting their lives to a single purpose, are able to anticipate the progress of mankind, and to produce a religion or a philosophy, by which important effects are eventually brought about. But if we look into history, we shall clearly see that, although the origin of a new opinion may be thus due to a single man, the result which the new opinion produces will depend on the condition of the people among whom it is propagated. If either a religion or a philosophy is too much in advance of a nation, it can do no present service, but must bide its time, until the minds of men are ripe for its reception. Of this innumerable instances will occur to most readers. Every science and every creed has had its martyrs; men exposed to

> obloquy, or even to death, because they knew more than their contemporaries, and because society was not sufficiently advanced to receive the truths which they communicated. According to the ordinary course of affairs, a few generations pass away, and then there comes a period, when these very truths are looked upon as commonplace facts, and a little later, there comes another period, in which they are declared to be necessary, and even the dullest intellects wonder how they could ever have been denied.

Thus, both Lecky and Buckle, as historians who dared to "tackle great schemes," give us a way of looking at the human situation in which we are all involved. They seem to be right in the way general opinions are formed. In considering this, it is natural to ask: How have my opinions been formed? Did I really adopt and form them, or have they mostly been printed on my mind by my surroundings, education, and environment? Are *my* convictions, such as they are, really my own? The ability to ask such questions, which we at least partly owe to historians willing to undertake large subjects, is of considerable importance.

Those who read the kind of history that Johnson recommends are more likely to ask themselves the kind of questions that Arthur Morgan asked himself early in his career. In his *Search for Purpose*, published by Antioch Press in 1955, he said:

> "How do I know that the particular faith in which I was born and reared is the one true faith?" I asked myself "What shall I believe?" What is the validity of the feeling with which I have grown up, that it is very important to have a belief?
>
> Perhaps the most difficult decision I ever made was that my own deep conditioning should be examined. When I did arrive at that conclusion I went far beyond the immediate issue. I arrived at the conclusion that free, critical inquiry is more than a right—it is a duty. I concluded, also, that inquiry cannot be free so long as there is an emotional drag holding one to particular beliefs. Desire or intent to justify a particular belief or attitude leads to unrepresentative selection and inaccurate weighing of evidence. It would be my aim not to try to make myself believe any doctrine or theory, nor to try not to believe. I would want my beliefs and opinions to be my best judgment from the evidence, not adopted because of comfort or courage I would get from believing. If I should be convinced that for me to know the truth, or to give up some current belief by finding it untrue, would take away my comfort and remove the present basis for my hope, nevertheless, I should seek to know the truth.
>
> In determining what to believe I would try to look at the beliefs in which I grew up in the same way in which I would look at the other beliefs in which other people had grown up. I would look at my own inner sense of assurance critically, from the outside, as I would look at the inner sense of assurance of a person of "alien" faith. I would look at its sources, the circumstances of its origin, and its characteristics. I would ask myself, not "How can I justify and strengthen the beliefs, attitudes and doctrines I have come by?" Are they the most reasonable beliefs?

What grows out of this attitude of mind? One answer is found in the reading of Arthur Morgan's books (available from Community Service, Inc., P.O. Box 043, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387) and reflection on his life and career. We might add here a comment of his on the study of history:

> A person without history or knowledge of the past must see the world as commonplace because, except at extreme times, he is going to live among commonplace people who have come to that conclusion. . . . The only way to get the sum and substance of human experience is to reach out beyond the years we have into the years of the past, into the significant experiences of the human race. . . .
>
> Education should protect the individual from the limitations of the group mind. The group mind tends to the uncritical acceptance of whatever is dominantly presented.

Both these paragraphs were written in 1925.

Other comments on the importance of history are found in a collection of Ortega's essays, *Concord and Liberty*, published by Norton in 1946. In a discussion of the history of Philosophy, Ortega wrote:

> To understand other people, I have nothing else to resort to than the stuff that is my life. Only my life has of itself "meaning" and is therefore intelligible. The situation appears ambiguous, and so it is in a way. With my own life I must understand precisely

what it is in alien life that makes it distinct from and strange to mine. My life is the universal interpreter. And history as an intellectual discipline is the systematic endeavor to make of any other human being an *alter ego,* in which expression both terms—the *alter* and the *ego*—must be taken at their full value. Here lies the ambiguity, and this is why the situation presents a problem to reason. . . . the dead cannot come out of the days of yore that are past, and live over again in another time that is present, because their reality is essentially different from the reality of the present and consequently from me. Their being *forever* and *irretrievably* other than I distinguishes them from my mere "neighbor" and gives them a character of inexorable "remoteness" and "ancientness." The vision of the remote, the discovery of "ancientness," constitutes the historical perspective which therefore presupposes the realization of the radical otherness of former men. Whereas of my contemporary I always hope that he may at last become like me, I have in my intercourse with ancient man no other way of understanding him than to assimilate myself imaginatively to him—that is, to become that other man. The technique of such intellectual unselfishness is the science of history. . . .

"Historical sense" is a sense indeed—a function and an organ to perceive the bygone as such. It is this organ that grants to man the farthest distance he can travel away from himself, while at the same time it presents him, as by rebound, with the clearest understanding an individual can gain of himself. For when, in his effort to understand former generations, he comes upon the suppositions under which they lived, and that means upon their limitations, he will, by the same token, realize what are the implied conditions under which he lives himself and which circumscribe his existence. By the detour called history he will become aware of his own bounds, and that is the one and only way open to man by which to transcend them.

How does a writer with this high and serious conception of the role of history regard the human condition? We take for our reply a passage from an essay, "The Self and Other," which first appeared in the *Partisan Review* in 1952 and is now available in *The Dehumanization of Art and Other Essays,* issued as a Princeton paperback in 1968. He wrote:

Far from thought having been bestowed upon man, the truth is—a truth which I cannot now properly argue but can only state—that he has continually been creating thought, making it little by little, by dint of a discipline, a culture or cultivation, a millennial effort over many millennia, without having yet succeeded—far from it—in finishing his work. Not only was thought not given to man from the first, but even at this point in history he has only succeeded in forming a small portion and a crude form of what in the simple and ordinary sense of the word we call thought. And even the small portion gained being an acquired and not a constitutive quality, is always in danger of being lost, and considerable quantities of it have been lost, many times in fact in the past, and today we are on the point of losing it again. To this extent, unlike all other beings in the universe, man is never surely *man;* on the contrary, *being man* signifies precisely being always on the point of not being man, being a living problem, an absolute and hazardous adventure, or, as I am wont to say: being, in essence, drama! Because there is drama only when we do not know what is going to happen, so that every instant is pure peril and shuddering risk. . . . to tell the whole truth our personal individuality is a personage which is never completely realized, a stimulating Utopia, a secret legend, which each of us guards in the bottom of his heart. It is thoroughly comprehensible that Pindar resumed his heroic ethics in the well-known imperative: "Become what you are."

History certainly played a part in Ortega's remarkable and accurate conclusion about the nature of human beings.

REVIEW
UTOPIAN COMMON SENSE

WE have for review from England the book, *A Decade of Anarchy—1961-1970,* edited by Colin Ward, and published at £5 by Freedom Press, Angel Alley, 84b Whitechapel High Street, London EI 7QX, U.K. "This book," the editor says, "is a selection of articles from *Anarchy,* a monthly journal published by Freedom Press from 1961 to I970.

Why did Colin Ward found *Anarchy,* becoming its sole editor in 1961? He says in his Foreword:

> At the end of the 1950s I wrote several articles in *Freedom* [an anarchist weekly] setting out the reasons why I thought that a change "would enable us to make more comprehensive and clearer statements of anarchist attitudes to the social facts of the contemporary world," that "it would also give them greater permanence and greater propaganda effect."

What is Anarchism? In the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica,* Peter Kropotkin defined it as—

> The name given to a principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government, harmony in such a society being obtained not by submission to law or by obedience to any authority, but by free agreements concluded between the various groups, territorial and professional, freely constituted for the sake of production and consumption.

Colin Ward adds:

> For me anarchism is a social philosophy based on the absence of authority. Anarchism can be an individual outlook or a social one. I'm concerned with anarchism as a social point of view—the idea that we could have a society and that it's desirable that we should have a society in which the principle of authority is superseded by that of voluntary cooperation. You could say that anarchism is the ultimate decentralization. I believe in a decentralized society. What I want to do is to change a mass society into a mass of societies.

Nicholas Walter, one of the most thoughtful of the contributors to *Anarchy,* says:

> I want to work towards anarchy. I don't want to establish it overnight, so I would take the—almost a slogan—view that means are ends, that what happens now is an end. To say that you are working towards an end strikes me as meaningless. What you are working towards is what you are actually doing. If you overthrow a government overnight you could say that this is establishing anarchy. I would say that you are much more likely to establish an extreme dictatorship. . . . in general I want a government that governs less, but I want the lessening process to be continuous, so that government always governs less and less, and the people always look after themselves more and more until in the end there is a government that does not govern at all—is simply a clearing house, a post box, a way for people to collect their health benefits.

One soon sees that ideally, anarchism is not an ideology but fundamentally an attitude of mind which calls for a level of maturity in thinking and acting. It is distinguished from familiar forms of political doctrine by its lack of party formations and by the independence in mind of its advocates. Self-criticism is characteristic of the best of the anarchists, and intellectual honesty is what they require of each other. One paper, "Conflicting Strains in Anarchist Thought," by George Molnar, affords a good illustration of these qualities. This writer says at the end (in 1961):

> The central inconsistency of anarchism can be summed up, . . . as follows:
>
> On the one hand anarchism presents a critique of social conditions which takes up, in a realistic manner, some questions of the nature of political domination. Fully worked out, this critique leads to the most pessimistic conclusions, for implicit in anarchism is the contention that all political action is by nature conservative, and no effective safeguards can be devised which would combine the possession of social influence with the absence of political authoritarianism.
>
> On the other hand anarchists, although freely prepared to apply their theories to the analysis of all other movements, stopped short of applying their conclusions to anarchism itself. Instead they treated anarchism as a potential mass movement with the aim of abolishing all obstacles in the way of a free and classless society. Relative to this aim, some anarchists remain utopian (Kropotkin, etc.). Others

> (anarcho-syndicalists) attempt to pursue a course of action outside accepted political forms, in the belief that they will thus escape the odious effects of politics, while still enjoying the power of being organized. This belief, based on the false distinction between "free" and "authoritarian" forms of mass organization, has no substance: where anarcho-syndicalists have gained sufficient strength to operate as a mass movement, there they have exhibited unanarchist, political tendencies. Yet other anarchists, now no longer influential, have subscribed to practicable revolutionary schemes, which, however, if successful, would have produced not anarchy but its exact opposite. Anarchism as a plan for the liberation of society does not work: in practice such plans always yield either wishful thinking, or eventual regimentation.
>
> This conclusion implies that the conflicting strains in anarchism cannot be resolved until anarchism is altogether purged of its association with a programme of secular salvation. In order to consistently uphold the liberation and antiauthoritarian aspects of anarchism it will have to be understood that these aspects cannot be secured by converting society to them; that universal liberation is an illusion; that revolutions *always* involve seizing and exercising power; that "the abolition of the State," in the sense extolled by classic anarchism, is a myth. If, as anarchists have always argued, many little reforms will not eliminate authoritarianism, neither will One Big Reform. The muck of ages, as Marx called it, clings to revolutionaries as fast as it does to the orthodox, and anarchist revolutionaries are not exempt from this mournful generalization. It is only too evident, in any case, that the critical aspects of anarchism will not attract large numbers of people, that anarchism is not something which can assert itself over the whole of society. An archism, consistently interpreted, is permanent opposition.

It may be said, then, that anarchists are usually quarreling among themselves, yet this is not to say, also, that their quarrels and arguments are of not value. In consequence of the kind of thinking that Molnar sets down, Colin Ward says in one place:

> It's perfectly possible to say that anarchism is utopian, but of course so is socialism or any other political "ism." All the "isms" are what the socialists call "ideal types" and you can make fun of the ideal type of an anarchist society, but you can also do it to that of a socialist society. . . . It seems to me that all societies are mixed societies, and while, if it cheers us up, we can dream about an anarchist society, the sort of society that we or our descendants are going to get is a society where these two principles of authority and voluntarism are struggling. But because no road leads to utopia it doesn't mean that no road leads anywhere.

The ideal anarchist society would be a society in which the psycho-moral development of the people had reached a point where they didn't need rules in order to get along well with each other and to live in harmony. This would be possible because the people understood one another well enough to live together without requiring rules to tell them what to do. The trouble with rules is that they are applied to all, even though there are many cases where it would be better not to apply them, or to change or adjust them according to particular people and circumstances. But this would turn the system into a comparative chaos, as it does when there is a favored group or caste able to get around the rules. Further, no system of government, however well designed, is able to guarantee the presence of wise administrators. We don't know how to test for wisdom although we are often able to recognize it in action. The main point of anarchist criticism, then, is the injustice always worked by rules. The main goal of the anarchists ought to be the development of a kind of education that would teach people to be wise, but they don't know how to do this, and neither does anyone else. Can virtue be taught? Plato asked a long, long time ago, and he showed how difficult it was, not really giving an answer but pointing to Socrates. But the common people executed Socrates for irritating them. This, fundamentally, is the problem anarchists are wrestling with, and fortunately, as in this book, they often admit it.

Some of them are not ashamed to show that they learn from experience and reveal how and what they learned. Donald Rooum, in one paper, tells about his arrest and what it taught him. Without giving the details or the charge against him, he relates that "three or four perfectly

innocent boys who were coming back from a game of tennis were arrested too." He then says:

> . . . I think it had something to do with my being an anarchist that I was able to spot an error made by this policeman in planting his evidence and that the general suspicion of policemen which for instance prevented me from complaining against the behavior of one policeman to another policeman; that suspicion made me keep quiet in the police station and hold my story until we came to the magistrate's court. I think it takes either an anarchist or a lawyer to realize this is a sensible thing to do. Before . . . I mainly thought of the police as a repressive agency and something that one ought to fight against. Since then I've had it rammed down my throat through watching it, what the policeman's job was. It's a very difficult job and instead of saying now we ought to be rid of the police force I would rather say that the society which needs a police force is a sick society. It's not the same thing at all as saying that you could cure society by getting rid of the police force. The police force is rather like crutches. With all its faults I suppose at the present day it's necessary. And that's an opinion that I didn't have before I was arrested.

The anarchist is a man who, besides other valuable qualities, applies common sense.

It seems obvious that writers like Colin Ward, Nicholas Walter, and George Molnar deserve careful reading. They disclose neglected truths which become obvious almost as soon as they are stated. They have no hope of power, mostly because they don't *want* power—an attitude vastly clarifying to the mind. Anarchism as a word often makes readers skittish, but the contributors to *A Decade of Anarchy* do not have this effect.

COMMENTARY
INTERNAL WONDERINGS

SOME years ago a reader of a good magazine, both serious and sprightly in content, wrote a letter to the paper pointing out that it contained advertisements aimed at increasing the abuses which in its editorial columns the paper attacked. Well, the fact is that very nearly every paper that sells advertising space is up against this contradiction. And if you complain, as this reader did, the editor will simply point out that without advertising the paper could not survive, "and you wouldn't want a paper like ours to go out of business, would you?" He may also say something about free speech and the right of the advertiser to try to sell his wares.

This situation makes you wonder: What kind of society would be one in which the sale price of a paper or its subscription would bring in enough money to pay for the printing and support the staff? For one thing, it would be a society in which no one—or almost no one—wants to be conned. Can you imagine that?

Well, someone may say, "Yes, but MANAS is now completing its fortieth year and that's quite a survival record!" It is indeed, and we're faintly proud of it, but MANAS, after all, is subsidized; the staff works for practically nothing and the editor draws a very small salary. We have a salary list of only two or three people. A decent man—or rather several such people—have given us enough money so that we have a sort of endowment which keeps us going. Then a surprising number of readers send in gifts because they think well of the paper and *want* it to keep going.

Well, we think it is a pretty good paper, but in a sick society that doesn't automatically mean survival. Without our subsidy and the gifts we speak of, we'd have been forced to quit long ago.

Years ago we thought about this and wrote in a review:

> One of the costs of freedom in a society of imperfect men is *indiscriminate* freedom. There is no way around this hard and unpalatable reality. Meanwhile, it may be noted that it is a very rare publishing activity indeed that can survive on income from circulation. Readers seem to prefer contradictions to paying the costs of production for "pure" reading matter. The "guilt" for such psycho-social phenomena as these contradictions is fairly evenly distributed among all the people concerned or affected.
>
> The fundamental fact to begin with, in such considerations is, as Ortega puts it, "that society is a reality that is *constitutively* sick, defective—strictly, it is a never-ending struggle between its genuine social elements and behaviors and its dissociative or antisocial elements and behaviors." To participate in the larger processes of society, or to exercise a wide and beneficent influence upon it, without submitting to or embracing some of its sickness is a task which only heroes or saints are willing to attempt.
>
> Viewed in this way, the problem of contradictions comes down to a choice of which contradictions the individual decides to be patient about and which ones suggest the need for at least the beginnings of some independent "heroism." A wise man will choose his own "front" or area of struggle, and at the same time remain grateful that other people decide to fight for other causes.

The real problem is getting rid of the "muck of ages." It is everywhere, and as Molnar says, "it clings to revolutionaries as fast as it does to the orthodox." You don't mind its presence when you see it clinging to a man who at the same time is filled with affection and love of his fellows. Love is a universal solvent, the catch being that love becomes a very messy ingredient when it is applied without intelligence.

These are old, old truths, which is why we go back to Plato, so much of the time, and to other writers who seem to intuit the laws of human nature along with broader natural rules. We are thinking here of the *Phaedo*, a book which has the capacity, at the end, to bring tears to the eyes of the reader.

Phaedo says at the beginning of his account:

> Well, I myself was strangely moved on that day. I did not feel that I was being present at the death of a dear friend: I did not pity him, for he seemed to be happy, Echecrates, both in his bearing and in his words, so fearlessly and nobly did he die. I could not help thinking that the gods would watch over him still on his journey to the other world, and that when he arrived there it would be well with him, if it was ever well with any man. Therefore I had scarcely any feeling of pity, as you would expect at such a mournful time. Neither did I feel the pleasure which I usually felt at our philosophical discussions; for our talk was of philosophy. A very singular feeling came over me, a strange mixture of pleasure and of pain when I remembered that he was presently to die.

Phaedo was a favorite of Socrates and one can see why.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
LESSON IN LANGUAGE

IN the *Los Angeles Times* for July 19, Allan Parachini writes at length about Herbert Kohl, author of *36 Children,* "a book that helped shape the alternative education movement of the 1960s." Kohl was then a young teacher struggling with fifth-graders in the heart of Harlem.

> Kohl, in fact, coined the term *open* classroom in a book by that name in which he described his prototype for a radically altered public school system. It included curriculum reform, even advocacy of the elimination of curricula, per se. There was also the new math and the new science and the demise or drastic curtailment of such standard rites of passage as memorizing multiplication tables and learning rules of grammar.
>
> In their place, Kohl called for teaching techniques that pertained to children's everyday lives. For example, fractions might be taught as they related to cooking. Standard reading texts would be replaced by books chosen by the children themselves. Grammar would not be taught as a separate subject but would be absorbed almost intuitively by pupils.

Here, in a few words, are illustrated both the good qualities and the bad habits of the newspaper articles about serious subjects. The writer calls attention to some of the ideas and qualities of a distinguished educational reformer and a very good teacher—one whom we can all learn from—but then speaks of his "teaching techniques" as though that expression could convey the actual meaning of what Kohl does in working with children. Kohl's genius is *not* in his techniques, although he must have them since they are one of the results of effort, practice, and commitment. Kohl's contribution is in his use of the imagination, in his ability to place his awareness inside the child and to help him to get interested in life and its problems in the same way that Kohl himself is interested in them, although at another level because Kohl is a grown-up. Yet a newspaper article like Parachini's may have the effect of leading his readers to buy or get from the library Kohl's books and to read them with not only edification but pleasure.

One soon discovers how much more than technique is involved in his way of teaching. First of all, Kohl loves the children. Technique has nothing to do with this feeling. Then, he has confidence in their capacity to learn. Again, technique is irrelevant. A person inspired by Kohl will begin by altering somewhat his own character. He will learn to love the children by getting interested in them, wondering how they feel and think, and why they behave as they do. You do what he did, but in your own way. You forget both Kohl and yourself and become absorbed in the child. This is what happened to him, as you soon recognize by reading his books.

An extract from 36 *Children* will be of interest:

> One day Ralph cursed at Michael and unexpectedly things came together for me. Michael was reading and stumbled several times. Ralph scornfully called out, "What's the matter, psyches, going to pieces again?" The class broke up and I jumped on that word "psyches."
>
> "Ralph, what does *psyches* mean?"
>
> An embarrassed silence.
>
> "Do you know how to spell it?"
>
> "Alvin volunteered. "S-i-k-e-s."
>
> "Where do you think the word came from? Why did everybody laugh when you said it, Ralph?"
>
> "You know, Mr. Kohl, it means, like crazy or something."
>
> "Why? How do words get to mean what they do?"
>
> Samuel looked up at me and said: "Mr. Kohl, now you're asking questions like Alvin. There aren't any answers, you know that."
>
> "But there are. Sometimes by asking Alvin's kind of questions you discover the most unexpected things. Look."
>
> I wrote *Psyche,* then *Cupid,* on the blackboard.
>
> "That's how psyche is spelled. It looks strange in English but the word doesn't come from English.

It's Greek. There's a letter in the Greek alphabet that comes out *psy* in English.

This is the way *psyche* looks in Greek."

Some of the children spontaneously took out their notebooks and copied the Greek.

"The word *psyche* has a long history. *Psyche* means mind or soul for the Greeks, but it was also the name of a lovely woman who had the misfortune to fall in love with Cupid the son of Venus, the jealous Greek goddess of love. . . ."

The children listened, enchanted by the myth, fascinated by the weaving of the meaning of *psyche* into the fabric of story, and the character, Mind, playing tricks on itself, almost destroying its most valuable possessions through its perverse curiosity. Grace said in amazement:

"Mr. Kohl, they told the story and told things about the mind at the same time. What do you call that?"

"Myth is what the Greeks called it."

Sam was aroused.

"Then what happened? What about the history of the word?"

"I don't know too much, but look at the words in English that come from *Cupid* and *Psyche.'*

I cited *psychological, psychic, psychotic, psychodrama, psychosomatic, cupidity*—the children copied them unasked, demanding the meanings. They were obviously excited.

Leaping ahead, Alvin shouted: "You mean words change? People didn't always speak this way? Then how come the reader says there's a right way to talk and a wrong way?"

"There's a right way now, and that only means that's how most people would like to talk now, and how people write now."

Charles jumped out of his desk and spoke for the first time during the year.

"You mean one day the way we talk—you know, with words like *cool* and *dig* and *sound*—may be all right?"

"Uh huh. Language is alive, it's always changing, only sometimes it changes so slowly we can't tell."

Neomia caught on.

"Mr. Kohl, is that why our reader sounds so old-fashioned?"

And Ralph.

"Mr. Kohl, when I called Michael psyches, was I creating something new?"

Someone spoke for the class.

"Mr. Kohl, can't we study the language we're talking about instead of spelling and grammar? They won't be any good when language changes anyway."

We could and did. That day we began what had to be called for my conservative plan book "vocabulary," and "an enrichment activity." Actually it was the study of language and myth, of the origins and history of words, of their changing uses and functions in human life.

Discussion of what came out of this rather wonderful episode goes on, with Kohl explaining how the children gained both self-confidence and understanding of the conventions in language, their service and their disservice.

We have one more paragraph to quote from Kohl, which shows how a teacher who loves and appreciates children works:

> Later in the semester I taught the class a lesson on naming a topic that seems deceptively simple yet minimally encompasses history, psychology, sociology, and anthropology. I put everybody's full name on the blackboard, including my own, and asked the class how people got names. The answer was, naturally, from their parents who made the choice—but not the full choice, it emerged, when Michael remembered that his parents' surname came from their parents. Then how far back can you go? The children thought and Grace raised a delicate question. If the names go back through the generations how come her name wasn't African since her ancestors must have been? In answer I told the class about my own name—Kohl, changed from Cohen, changed from Okun, changed from something lost in the darkness of history; one change to identify the family as Jewish, one change to deny it. Then I returned to the question of slave names and the destruction of a part of the children's African heritage that the withholding of African names implied.

FRONTIERS

The Atlantic Coastal Environment

COSTA RICA is a small Central American country lying between Nicaragua to the north and Panama to the south, with the Caribbean sea on the southeast and east and the Pacific ocean on the west. It was discovered by Christopher Columbus on his fourth and last voyage to America. The name of the country, meaning "Rich Shore," was probably given by Columbus because of the evidence he found of gold. Its area is about 23,000 square miles, much of it elevated table-land of from 3,000 to 6,000 feet above the sea. At its southernmost tip on the Caribbean there are lowlands with a more or less tropical climate. The population in the highlands is of "almost pure Spanish descent," while there are blacks along the Caribbean coast, supplying workers on the banana plantations. Through the years, Costa Rica has been regarded as a stable democratic country whose illiteracy is the lowest in Hispanic America, with a good educational system.

Some years ago, William McLarney, co-founder with John Todd of the New Alchemy Institute, settled in the southeast corner of Costa Rica, buying some land and developing experimental farming methods in order to be of help to the Costa Ricans in that area. As he says in a recent ANAI letter (ANAI is the name of the organization he formed), ANAI "has been one of the major forces in the establishment, management and integration into community life of the Gandoca/Manzanillo National Wildlife Refuge of Costa Rica." Of this undertaking, he says:

> One of the many facets of the natural environment we sought to protect in establishing Gandoca/Manzanillo was Costa Rica's largest, and presumably healthiest expanse of coral reef. Only late last year did we learn that the reef, extending about 9 miles from Puerto Viejo to Punta Mona, is in grave peril.
>
> On October of last year [1986], under a contract with the International Institute for Environmental and Development (IIED), we sent professional aquarium fish collector Steve Robinson to Costa Rica to carry out a feasibility study toward a sustainable harvest of marine aquarium fishes as a supplemental source of income for local lobster divers. Steve has been the driving force behind the effort to convert the destructive, drug-based marine ornamentals fishery in the Philippines into an ecologically benign, sustainable hand net fishery.
>
> Naively, we instructed Steve to evaluate the possibilities for underwater tourism while he was at it. We knew the reef at Cahuita National Park several miles to the North was in bad shape, and we had noted the absence of colorful corals in the most accessible shallow reef areas. But none of us are divers in the sense that Steve is and we had assumed that, because the neighboring terrestrial ecosystems were in pretty good shape and the lobster divers weren't complaining, the reef as a whole was healthy.
>
> Then Steve's report came in: Zero potential for underwater tourism and virtually no better prospects for harvesting aquarium fishes.

What had happened?

> By Steve's calculation the reefs are about 80 per cent dead due to silt deposition and possibly, agricultural chemicals. The source? Not primarily local small farmers, not even loggers. Not anyone in the immediate area of the refuge. The great majority of the sediments on the reefs come from agribusiness banana plantations in the valleys of the Rio Estrella and Rio Sixaola which bracket the coral reef zone.
>
> We had envisioned a successful "ecodevelopment" project as the result of Steve's work, and instead he was handing us another battle to fight. But in the end ANAI, the International Marinelife Association (Steve's organization) and CIDESA, headed up by ANAI's Alberto Salas, were of one mind. We agreed that it was morally imperative to tackle the issue.

Bill McLarney's discussion of this issue should be of interest:

> What we are facing is not a question of "bananas or coral reefs, take your choice." Erosion control measures can be taken, but of course powerful economic forces will be arrayed against their adoption. It's already happened once. Soon after the establishment of Cabuita National Park, the issue of sedimentation of the reef was brought to the attention of the banana companies by no less a personage than

the then-president of Costa Rica, Rodrigo Carazo. At that time the company was able to openly defy the chief executive.

In this case, while the sides are still not evenly matched, there is more at stake than a single small national park. There is not only the marine portion of the Gandoca/Manzanillio refuge itself, there is the issue of livelihood of a series of coastal communities. Fishing and lobstering became economically important only after the loss of the main cash crop, cacao, to disease around 1980. Most of the divers are young men, who seldom ventured underwater before 1980, and they don't know what a healthy coral reef looks like. Steve and his traveling slide show are taking care of that matter, and the fishermen are not pleased at what is being done to them. But they need help if their communities are not to lose their livelihood for the second time in a decade.

Whether or not we are successful in persuading the banana companies to change their ways depends in large part on certain Costa Rican politicians and bureaucrats. Some of them are quite sophisticated in environmental matters and disposed to help the cause. But they have to function in a political reality where the environment is only one of many critical issues. Others can only understand the importance of the environment in economic terms. They all need to hear from you. North American opinion is very important in Costa Rica, and tourism is almost as important economically as bananas.

If you would like to help save the Atlantic coastal environment of Costa Rica for future generations, and for your own enjoyment should you visit the country, please write the persons listed and urge them to support the effort to stop the destruction of the coral reefs in the Gandoca/Manzanillo area.

Bill McLarney is not asking for money. ANAI needs the help that letters from people in the U.S. will give in behalf of a most worthy cause. Readers inclined to provide this help should write to Bill McLarney, Co-Director, ANAI, Inc., 1176 Bryson City Road, Franklin, North Carolina 28734. He will be glad to send you the names and addresses of the people to write and some brief material on what to stress in your letter.