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A THREAD OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

THERE are moments in history when the human mind seems to swing free of the bonds of habitual assumption and to seek new foundations. The present is surely one such moment, since it is a time when the best minds among us are beginning to question the assumptions on which the prevailing view of the world is based. By reason of the scientific prohibition of metaphysical causes, we have assumed that the world of nature, the cosmos, indeed the universe, is a vast happenstance constructed by blind forces, the result, as Lucretius put it in *The Nature of Things*, of the fortuitous concourse of atoms. The one thing that is not permitted in the study of nature and natural forces is the assumption that behind these phenomena a purposive cosmic intelligence is at work. However much we study and master natural processes, we are not to suppose that they have a *meaning*. The world, in short, is an irrational "given," an enormous storehouse of raw materials, so far as we are concerned. The resources of nature obtain the only meaning they have from our use of them, for strictly human (or inhuman) purposes, whatever they are. Ethics, then, is entirely concerned with a division of the spoils. Morality is not an attempt to reflect the subtle mandate of natural law in human affairs, but is made up of conventions we devise for what we allege to be the common good.

This is the outlook now subject to challenge by a wide range of minds, including scientists as well as philosophical thinkers and essayists. Why? What has happened to provoke this challenge? The reasons might be gathered under two general headings: (1) Inner apprehensions and feelings of emptiness, in some measure the result of applying the objectivizing, subject-rejecting method of science to ourselves, and (2) the practical results in both individual and social existence of the ruthless mining of nature.

For a prophetic spokesman of the first group of reasons, we go back a hundred and thirty years to the Swiss diarist Henri-Frederic Amiel, who wrote in 1852:

> Every despotism has a specially keen and hostile instinct for whatever keeps up human dignity, and independence. And it is curious to see scientific and realist teaching used everywhere as a means of stifling all freedom of investigation as addressed to moral questions under a dead weight of facts. Materialism is the auxiliary doctrine of every tyranny whether of the one or of the masses. To crush what is spiritual, moral, human, so to speak, in man, by specializing him; to form mere wheels of the great social machine, instead of perfect individuals; to make society and not conscience the center of life, to enslave the soul, to depersonalize man, this is the dominant drift of our epoch. Everywhere you may see a tendency to substitute the laws of dead matter (number, mass) for the laws of the moral nature, (persuasion, adhesion, faith); equality, the principle of mediocrity, becoming a dogma; unity aimed at through uniformity; numbers doing duty for arguments; negative liberty, which has no law *in itself*, and recognizes no limit except in force, everywhere taking the place of positive liberty, which means action guided by an inner law and curbed by the moral authority. Socialism *versus* individualism: this is how Vinet put the dilemma. I should say rather that it is only the eternal antagonism between letter and spirit, between form and matter, between the outward and the inward, appearances and reality, which is always present in every conception and in all ideas.
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> Materialism coarsens and petrifies everything; makes everything vulgar and every truth false. And there is a religious and political materialism which spoils all that it touches, liberty, equality, individuality. . . .
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> To defend the soul, its interests, its rights, its dignity, is the most pressing duty for whoever sees the danger. What the writer, the teacher, the pastor, the philosopher, has to do, is to defend humanity in man. Man! the true man, the ideal man! Such should be their motto, their rallying cry. War to all that debases, diminishes, hinders, and degrades him; protection for all that fortifies, ennobles, and raises him. The test of every religious, or educational system, is the man which it informs. If a system injures the intelligence it is bad. If it injures the character it is vicious. If it injures the conscience it is criminal. (*Amiel's Journal.*)

Amiel's cry of long ago has now become a chorus of many voices. The spirit in man is demanding priority in human concern. The

languages, metaphors, arguments are many, the meaning essentially the same. Yet the remedy, as we know, remains obscure.

For the impact of both science and technology on the present-day world, we turn to an American historian, Lynn White, Jr., who says (in *Machina Ex Deo*, MIT Press, 1968) that while we do not know exactly when, where, or how man-induced changes in the environment began—

> As we enter the last third of the twentieth century, however, concern for the problem of ecologic backlash is mounting feverishly. Natural science, conceived as the effort to understand the nature of things, had flourished in several eras among several peoples. Similarly, there had been an age-old accumulation of technological skills, sometimes growing slowly. But it was not until about four generations ago that Western Europe and North America arranged a marriage between science and technology, a union of the theoretical and the empirical approaches to our natural environment. The emergence in widespread practice of the Baconian creed that scientific knowledge means technological power over nature can scarcely be dated before about 1850, save in the chemical industries, where it is anticipated in the eighteenth century. Its acceptance as a normal pattern of action may mark the greatest event in human history since the invention of agriculture, and perhaps in nonhuman terrestrial history as well.
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> Almost at once the new situation forced the crystallization of the novel concept of ecology, indeed, the word *ecology* first appeared in the English language in 1873. Today, less than a century later, the impact of our race upon the environment has so increased in force that it has changed in essence. When the first cannons were fired, in the early fourteenth century, they affected ecology by sending workers scrambling to the forests for more potash, sulfur, iron ore, and charcoal, with some resulting erosion and deforestation. Hydrogen bombs are of a different order: a war fought with them might alter the genetics of all life on this planet. By 1285 London had a smog problem arising from the burning of soft coal, but our present combustion of fossil fuels threatens to change the chemistry of the globe's atmosphere as a whole, with consequences which we are only beginning to guess. With the population explosion, the carcinoma of planless urbanism, the now geological deposits of sewage and garbage, surely no creature other than man has ever managed to foul its nest in such short order.

This is the realization coming over the modern world, leading to deep questioning of the assumptions by which we have lived for the past hundred years or so, on which the dominant institutions of society are based. Once again we are confronted by a great decision, as men were in the time of the ancient Greeks. Which is the more important: Knowing how the world works or understanding how we should live? And is there, perhaps, a harmony between the two?

Louis Halle, of the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, is one of those who are renewing such philosophic questions. In his *Search for an Eternal Norm* (University Press, 1981) he says:

> What is basic to human life, as distinct from all other life, is a discrepancy between a normative order in men's minds and the existential circumstances in which they actually find themselves. Every human individual must necessarily have in his mind, whether he formulates it or not, and even if he is not conscious of it at all, a conception of some order that is proper in terms of what God or Nature intended. (It makes no difference whether he does or does not believe in God or in a Nature that has intentions.) . . . When it comes to conduct that is not purely instinctive, each of us has to have a normative order in his mind on which to base it. He has no other way of deciding what he ought to do and how he ought to do it.

Prof. Halle's book is a musing examination of *Hamlet*, *Morte d'Arthur*, and *The 0dyssey*, looking for guiding principles. He writes as a modern man, yet willing to learn from the genius of the past. He states his position:

> My own disposition is agnostic. Although I am moved by conceptions of propriety that are not without foundation in what present themselves to me as religious insights, I find no reason to believe that there is one preordained normative order to which we men should conform our social relations, including the organization of our societies. I have my preferences and objections, since my own mind, like everyone's, is dominated by many elements of what constitutes for it, the normative order; but I know of no absolute and eternal authority for that order. I assume that, in the present stage of our evolution, a normative order proper to one people in the condition in which it finds itself may not be proper to another in another condition. I do not believe that the world of man, which is still evolving, has arrived at any ultimate end in terms of a normative order applicable to the organization of his societies. If there is such an order, representing the one and only propriety for our kind as the order of the hive represents the one and only propriety for the honeybee, then our evolution, unlike that of the honeybee, is still some distance from its attainment.

In an earlier work, *Men and Nations* (Princeton University Press, 1962), Prof. Halle wrote in a similar vein:

> We men identify the ideas of propriety that each of us respectively entertains with the *Logos,* each of us basing his allegiance to them on the belief or assumption that they represent what is right in terms of what God or nature intended. "There is," says Cicero, " . . . a true law—namely right reason —which is in accordance with nature, applies to all men, and is unchangeable and eternal. . . . It will not lay down one rule at Rome and another at Athens, nor will it be one rule today and another tomorrow. But there will be one law, eternal and unchangeable, binding at all times upon all peoples. . . . The man who will not obey it will abandon his better self, and, in denying the true nature of a man, will thereby suffer the severest penalties."

Commenting, Prof. Halle says:

> The *Logos* itself may be the same at Rome as at Athens, tomorrow as today,;but the identification of it by the men of Rome has been different from the identification of it by the men of Athens, and the identification made by the men of one age has been abandoned in favor of another identification by the men of the next.
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> This experience suggests that, unlike Cicero, we would distinguish between the ideas that we have in our minds and the *Logos* itself. The *Logos* remains largely unknown: the ideas in our minds represent only our partial apprehension of it, our supposition of what it must be.

What is the *Logos?* One dictionary says that "in philosophy it refers to a cosmic reason which gives order and intelligibility to the world," remarking that "the Logos plays an important role in the system of Plotinus, where it appears as the creative and form-giving aspect of Intelligence (*Nous*)." It is the Reason in and behind the world. In the Platonic philosophy, Logos found expression in the transcendental Forms or Ideas. As Werner Jaeger shows in *Paideia,* Logos is the charioteer of the soul, the guiding principle in both nature and man. In his third volume Jaeger says:

> Plato considered it to be the most important fact about the stars that—as discovered by the astronomer Eudoxus—they move around heaven in simple and meaningful mathematical patterns. Similarly legislation is an attempt to take the random movements of the physical creature, man, and in so far as he has any insight into that higher order, to stop his purposeless wanderings and to guide him into noble and harmonious courses. The march of the stars, "the army of unalterable law," is reflected in the human soul and in the steady movement of pure thought within it. Plato's pupil Philip, who edited *The Laws,* is certainly echoing his master's thoughts when he says in the *Epinomis* that mathematical astronomy, the knowledge of the "visible gods," is an image of the supreme wisdom manifested in them.

How or where shall we locate the instruction of the Logos, whether in nature or ourselves? One problem is acceptable authority. Already, historically, we have made the mistake of following an outside authority—first the dogmas of religion, to what consequence the Holy Inquisition and the religious wars of Europe show; and then the dogmas of science—and its denial of "reality" to the substance of man's inner life—yet we still hunger for some sort of external certainty of the sort upon which it has been our habit to rely.

But what if learning to develop and depend upon an inner authority is, in L. L. Whyte's phrase, "the next development in man"? What evidence have we that there is a "logos" that speaks within each one? There are those who, however they identify or name it, are convinced that such an inner voice exists, who need no persuasion of its reality; and there are also those who give personal voice to what they feel they have learned from its presence. In her essay, "Human Personality," Simone Weil declared:

> At the bottom of the heart of every human being, from earliest infancy until the tomb, there is something that goes on indomitably expecting, in the teeth of all experience of crimes committed, suffered, and witnessed, that good and not evil will be done to him. It is this above all that is sacred in every human being.
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> The good is the only source of the sacred. There is nothing sacred except the good and what pertains to it.
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> This profound and childlike and unchanging expectation of the good in the heart is not what is involved when we agitate for our rights. The motive which prompts a little boy to watch jealously to see if his brother has a slightly larger piece of cake arises from a much more superficial level of the soul. The word justice means two very different things according to whether it refers to the one or the other level. It is only the former one that matters.

This love of and insistence upon justice and the spontaneous rejection of evil is evidence of the Logos in ourselves. We all of us expect the universe to *make sense.* It is the stance of the human Logos,

supra-rational, elementary, operative before and after intellectual denials or skepticism. Drawing on Simone Weil's diploma dissertation, which gave her the right to teach in the lycees and university—composed when she was twenty-one—her biographer, Simone Petrement, summarizes her religious views at that time:

> At first only two things are evident: on the one hand, that she does not like priests, theologians, and respectable people; on the other, that she wants to understand the belief in God and does not reject it, at least in one sense.
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> The true God of Descartes (at this time she was his admirer) is not, in her view, the God of the theologians. "This God not only does not resemble the God of the theologians, but he is even that which reassures me against theology; he is what there is of the infallible in myself. In fact I deceive myself, but by rights I should never deceive myself in the sense that it is up to me not to deceive myself.
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> The true God, she says, is what is infallible in myself. Actually, thought is infallible in its essence and it is that which proves that perfect thought exists. "A perfect thought is an independent thought and nothing else. I know this, whatever I might know of my own short-comings."

Here Simone Weil writes—rather extravagantly, some may feel—of her sense of the logos within, and of the possibility of its perfect thought. Erich Kahler names this capacity *reason* (in *The Meaning of History*), as distinguished from rationality, which is the offspring of reason and only a technical function. He is calling for a revival of reason and the control of rationality, giving the example of a scientist or engineer working on nuclear weaponry:

> As far as human reason comes in at all, it is effective only in the narrowest personal scope of concern for keeping his job and pursuing his career, and even the care for the destiny of his children is repressed and held back from any connection with the dire implication of his work. To ponder over the general human consequences of his activity hardly occurs to him; indeed, according to the scientific canon of strict confinement to a delimited field of research, such inferences are considered to exceed his competence. . . . The prevalence of reason in human affairs would presuppose a comprehensive evaluation of all factors, including psychic and generally human factors in a given situation. But in the anarchical condition of an incoherent collective consciousness, functional rationality has reached a point of autonomy where it simultaneously serves the most contradictory ends, among them purposes which human reason must regard as monstrous insanity.

In the concluding chapter of *So Reason Can Rule* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1982), Scott Buchanan gives attention to this aspect of reason, calling it "intellectual intuition," which Plato sought to develop through the dialectic, and which Aristotle illustrated in action: "it is as if an army in retreat, slipping out of control into disorder, and one man, a private, decides to turn about and take a stand to face the enemy. The others note his position and posture, turn about like him, and take a stand to face the enemy." Then Buchanan says:

> The power of the mind that governs this strategy is the habit of intellectual intuition. The fact of datum is the occasion, but not the source, of the insight. This is the intellectual power that Plato puts at the top of the divided line. . . . It is that toward which the upward dialectic moves. . . . Trusting intellectual intuitions feels to us like betting on special experiences or falling for dogma, perhaps groping among possibilities, but, with sufficient critical strategy and dialectical discipline, it is merely recognizing what can and therefore must be thought.

Logos, Natural Law, Pure Thought, Intellectual Intuition—they are all ultimately one, the power of the Nous, long neglected, but struggling to regain recognition in this age of confusion and doubt.

REVIEW
WHY LOS ANGELES IS SO BIG

ONE thing a reading of William L. Kahrl's *Water and Power—The Conflict over Los Angeles' Water Supply in the Owens Valley* (University of California Press, 1982, $24.95) is likely to do is spur the reader to utopian wonderings. The fact is that the city of Los Angeles, using both propaganda and economic power, was able to take away the water of the people living in Inyo County to the north, over a period of more than ten years of single-minded campaigning, and to stultify and prevent the natural development of this agricultural region. Mr. Kahrl, who edited the *California Water Atlas* and wrote a definitive study of the Owens Valley exploitation for the *California Historical Quarterly* (Spring and Summer, 1976), probably knows as much or more than anyone else about this incredibly involved historical drama, which began in about 1905 and still goes on.

How might it have come out differently—more fairly— for all? The author has a comment along these lines: if a different engineer working for the Reclamation Service had been on duty in the region, he says, federal policy might have gone in another direction—but the driving energies of William Mulholland (head of the city-owned water department) and his backers would probably have found a way to accomplish the city's ends, sooner or later.

Our conclusion is that Los Angeles is a big city that should never have been built in desert-like semi-arid country. As long ago as 1896, the people of the city decided to have a municipal water supply—the private companies were inefficient—and a man who knew a great deal about water supply and management, Fred Eaton, led the campaign. As Kahrl says:

> The movement for municipalization emerged in the context of a greater effort by Los Angeles' business leaders to assert their independence in the stewardship of the city's social, political, and economic future. By the end of the nineteenth century they had succeeded, through puffery, advertising, and sheer force of will, in laying the foundation for a modern city in a spot where God clearly never intended large numbers of people to live.

But they were destined to live there, and to require the water that eventually became available when the city took it away from the farmers of the Owens Valley. The U.S. Reclamation Service came into being in 1902 and the director of the service asked his man in California, J. B. Lippincott, to look into the prospects of withdrawing land to federal control for future use in irrigation projects in behalf of Owens Valley agriculture. Lippincott sent a young engineer to survey such possibilities, and he fell in love with the Valley, recommending extensive withdrawals, which began soon thereafter. Lippincott, however, had worked closely with Los Angeles on the city's water problems, was a friend of Fred Eaton and of William Mulholland, and all three apparently agreed that the water of the Owens Valley could be poured downhill to Los Angeles. The Owens farmers and ranchers, on the other hand, thought Lippincott was interested in developing irrigation for Valley agriculture. Kahrl says:

> Lippincott was certainly sincere in his belief that he was serving some higher public duty by encouraging the Reclamation Service to abandon the Owens Valley in favor of Los Angeles. Eaton and Mulholland were his friends and closest professional associates, and as a result of his extensive experience on the South Coast, he knew as well if not better than they the severe limitations of that region's water supply. . . . unbeknownst to the Owens Valley ranchers, the efforts of the federal engineers shifted from the development of an irrigation project for the agricultural improvement of the valley to the design of an aqueduct for Los Angeles.

Plans for the aqueduct went ahead. The city needed to sell a bond issue to finance this enormous engineering project, and Mulholland, a man of talent as an organizer, with little or no engineering training, yet intelligent and aggressive, became a ruthless campaigner.

> Mulholland ultimately resorted to exaggerations of the city's need for water as a way of encouraging voters to approve his bonds, and, in the weeks before the election, the *Times* began to print almost daily predictions of the dire consequences which would be visited on Los Angeles if the aqueduct were not built. One of the most enduring stories fabricated as part of this scare campaign involved the so-called drought which descended on Southern California at a time variously cited as 1892 or 1895 which reportedly persisted until 1904. Modern historians still refer to this drought even though it seems to have originated with Mulholland in the election of 1905. . . . In fact, Los Angeles in 1904 received a perfectly average rainfall of 11.88 inches and in August experienced a record downpour for that month which was not even approached in the entire forty-year period from 1891 to 1930.

There was really little hope for the Owens Valley farmers, and this became completely plain when Theodore Roosevelt declared in 1906: "It is a hundred or thousandfold more important to state that this (water) is of more value to the people as a whole if used by the city than if used by the people of the Owens Valley." Mulholland, however, knew that the city could not possibly then use all the water that would be supplied by the aqueduct, and from the beginning planned to provide for the water needs of the adjacent San Fernando Valley. His Los Angeles backers, meanwhile, were accumulating real estate in San Fernando, where land would immediately appreciate in value when supplied with water. By annexing the Valley to the City, Los Angeles acquired enough assessed valuation within its borders to float the bonds necessary for construction of the aqueduct. Even so, the budget was lean and Mulholland was obliged to eliminate all storage reservoirs and build only the water conduit, which he did with great despatch, within his cost estimates and on time or better than his schedule.

Los Angeles, by 1915, more than doubled its size as a result of the annexation, an expansion, Kahrl says, "supported entirely by the introduction of aqueduct water." Property in San Fernando went from $20 to $2,000 an acre, and meanwhile agriculture there changed from tree crops to truck garden crops which used much more water, so that in a few years the irrigation demand in the Valley took the entire flow of the aqueduct. Meanwhile, by 1920, Los Angeles had grown to five times its size at the beginning of the century and Los Angeles County had become the number one agricultural county in the nation. Mulholland was now drawing water from numerous wells drilled to tap the groundwater resources of the Owens Valley, on lands which had been acquired by the city. Mr. Kahrl says:

> The city's growth rate after 1920 worked to upset all the calculations on which Mulholland had predicated his plans for the aqueduct. Not only were people arriving faster than he had originally predicted, but they were also settling more densely than he had expected. This meant that his estimates of the intensity of water demand in the urban areas were now proving to be just as wrong as his estimates for irrigation demand in the San Fernando Valley had turned out to be by 1917. . . . The aqueduct meanwhile was failing to deliver water in the quantities the city had once hoped.

Mulholland began looking at the Colorado River as a source, using J. B. Lippincott for eyes. He wanted Colorado water, and eventually adopted scare tactics again, warning that a disastrous water shortage was looming. A soils expert, Thomas H. Means, prepared projections of the city's needs over the next five years, predicting a critical shortage in 1928. "The limit of water," he told Mulholland, "is the limit of growth." Kahrl relates:

> An extension of the city's land acquisitions into the Bishop area in order to deplete its groundwater supply would, of course, mean devastation for Owens Valley agriculture. But Means considered this cost to be similarly negligible. "The logic of the situation is so clear that there is no question about what the business judgment of the managers of the city's affairs will dictate," he concluded. "This fertile region will be nearly depopulated in the future in order to make more water available for the rapidly growing city."

To those who understood what had been happening, and what would continue to happen, it was plain that the Owens Valley was doomed to

inadequate water supply and little or no development save for tourism and recreation areas. The farmers and ranchers fought back, at one time, under extreme provocation, by dynamiting a hole in the aqueduct. But while Mulholland pumped the water out from under their ground, he bought them out, one by one, as they protested. Although he was something of a hero to many in Los Angeles, his career ended suddenly when a dam he had built gave way. He inspected the St. Francis dam, designed for use in connection with a Los Angeles power plant, on March 19, 1928, but that night the dam collapsed, and a hundred-foot wall of water carrying masses of concrete swept down the Santa Clara Valley, wiping out three towns and taking more than four hundred lives. Mulholland accepted responsibility, saying at the coroner's inquest, "I envy the dead." The city had no more use for him and he died in obscurity seven years later.

But the policy he had established for the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power continued—because, as Kahrl points out, it had to. Only recently its further diversions of ground water and other sources reduced the level of Mono Lake to the point where it may no longer be a rookery for thousands of seagulls. The lake, the department has said, will eventually be only a third of its original size.

This is a mild and factual book, not a list of indictments. Yet liars are called liars, and exploiters exploiters. At the end, Mr. Kahrl says of the Owens Valley and its fate:

> . . . the problem of the Owens Valley is not simply an economic or environmental matter. It is instead a problem of people and the institutions they construct. What is important about the valley's development is that its people had very little to do with shaping it. Many of the most vital decisions affecting the future of their lives on the land are made in Los Angeles, where their interests are not represented. The residents of the Owens Valley have thus been effectually disenfranchised.

This is the way most Americans behave, not just Los Angeles businessmen. And that is why we began by saying that the book moves the reader to utopian dreaming:

What sort of newcomers and settlers would have thought differently, wisely, about how to inhabit the Los Angeles basin in a way that would benefit their neighbors and countrymen, not make a few people rich and impoverish others? The extraordinary detail of Mr. Kahrl's book— of nearly six hundred pages—drives this question home. The "innocents" can be counted on one hand.

COMMENTARY
LOGOIC VOICES

THE reflections of Robert Engler (see Frontiers) seem a good example of how individuals are increasingly adopting the stance of independent moral decision in contrast to relying on "reasons of state," which are becoming morally intolerable. He speaks as a human being, not as an ideologist declaring the position of some political system seeking to replace that of the status quo. This is an attitude which cuts through the claims and counter-claims of parties and organized groups, returning to the source of moral judgment in individual feeling and idea. Whatever the applications of that judgment in fresh ideas of social structure in behalf the future, if we are able to maintain that source as primary in our social thinking, this will amount to a great and lasting reform, with much less possibility of subsequent disillusionment and consequent reaction.

For an example of the first group of reasons (spoken of on page one) for return to this source, the disclosure of the eminent poet and writer, Czeslaw Milosz, in his (just published in English by Farrar Straus Giroux) *Visions from San Francisco Bay*, seems ideal. He says in his foreword to these essays by a Polish thinker on his life in California:

> I have read many books, but to place all those volumes on top of one another and stand on them would not add a cubit to my stature. Their learned terms are of little use when I attempt to seize naked experience, which eludes all accepted ideas. To borrow their language can be helpful in many ways, but it also leads imperceptibly to a self-contained labyrinth leaving us in alien corridors which allow no exit. And so I must offer resistance, check every moment to be sure I am not departing from what I have actually experienced on my own, what I myself have touched. I cannot invent a new language and I use the one I was first taught, but I can distinguish, I hope, between what is mine and what is merely fashionable. I cannot expel from memory the books I have read, their contending theories and philosophies, but I am free to be suspicious and to ask naive questions instead of joining the chorus which affirms and denies.

This gives voice to the integrity of the poet, in terms of the values which poetry represents. Recognition of the crucial character of these values for *any* civilization would bring a great cultural advance for our time. Think of the changes that would result!

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

HOME (UN) SCHOOLERS

PERIODICALLY, here, we return to John Holt's paper, *Growing Without Schooling,* for the reason that its contents serve admirably in two ways. First, there is always material provocative to the imagination—the heart of the matter where teaching is concerned. Parents who are teaching their children at home are or learn to be resourceful, turning all kinds of things—both circumstances and events—to educational purposes. Ultimately, they are doing something which reaches beyond the benefit of their own children—enlarging individual responsibility and capacity and reducing the authority of institutions. Is there anything our country needs, more than this?

Then, too, *Growing Without Schooling* provides vital information on how to "cope" with state laws and school officials, with reports of the experience of unschoolers (parents who are teaching their own children) in various communities and states around the country. In short, Holt's paper is pioneer and vehicle of a renaissance of self-reliance and responsibility on the part of individuals, where everything good begins.

Here, for example, is a letter from a mother in Michigan:

> . . . Just thought I would give you a report on Becky (now 14) and Matt (now 11). . . . The local superintendent did approve our school program. We had incurred a $75 legal fee before the tables were turned for us, but it was worth it. It wasn't the attorney that accomplished the victory, but he *had* done some research, for which we were charged, of course. . . .
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> When we took the children out of school nearly two years ago, we had advice from several people, among them Dr. Pat Montgomery of Ann Arbor, Mich. She told us that if we would let the children follow their own interests, and just help them when they needed help, they would learn more than if we put them on a preplanned curriculum.
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> I respected Dr. Montgomery, and was grateful for her help. But I just couldn't see any glimmer of hope in Becky. It seemed that seven years of public school had successfully stamped out any inclination she might have had to learn. By her own admission, she had learned to cram for tests, make A's and B's on her report cards, and promptly forget almost everything she had "learned." Whenever I allowed her free rein in "school," her one interest was mindless fiction—nothing of any value that I could see. Pat tried to encourage me, but I had the misgivings and insecurities that I see in so many other parents new to home-schooling. I was afraid Becky would learn nothing at all. So—we embarked on a "curriculum." It turned out to be just a duplication of the old public school pattern. So I went pretty easy with it, still allowing her freedom, and limiting her fiction reading to what I felt was least objectionable.
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> But, Pat was right. It finally happened. This year Becky progressed from Louis L'Amour Western fiction to an interest in Western history, then to the history of the United States, and is now in the process of memorizing the Constitution word for word. I am wondering—what public school teacher could ever coerce a 14-year-old into *memorizing* the Constitution? In addition, Becky has learned to type and is working for her Dad, typing letters, doing payroll and other office work. We put her on our business checking account so she can even sign the checks, though we do check them over before they go to the men. They do *not* have mistakes. . . .
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> I never have been able to accept the idea of total freedom in education for children. Maybe I've been too affected, myself, by our modern conception of education. The children are required, among other things, to do some math every day, or almost every day. They also must write something of their choice every week, so we can work on composition, grammar, etc. Both children take to this writing assignment, and Becky, who is required to write three pages each week, will easily write *ten.* They can choose their own subject. It can be a report on something they are studying, something philosophical, or fiction.
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> Matt loves *Mother Earth News* in particular, and much of his reading and many of his subjects come from "her" pages. His hope is some day to write an article that will appear in *Mother Earth News.* He is forever looking for ideas for his articles. . . .

While "memorizing" the Constitution may not appeal as a project, it could have particular value

if chosen by the child. We remember a thirteen-year-old of years ago who was required by a school teacher to learn Shelley's "The Cloud" by heart. He felt much put upon, but three years later wrote that teacher to express gratitude for what she had done for him. He discovered that he loved Shelley, and went on to learn more of him by heart. The lyrical resonances are with him yet.

We turn to a report to John Holt from New Zealand:

> You must have been wondering how we have been faring since your visit to New Zealand. Home-schooling as a whole does seem to still be in a very precarious position. . . . Even in Auckland, I feel from reading between the lines that the situation with regard to home-schoolers vs. the "authorities" is very uncertain. But our almost eighteen months of home-learning has been really tremendous. The boys are beginning to blossom, in self-confidence and reliance.
>
> I thought you might be interested in one of their escapades. They have been trying to save up some money for a trip to Auckland and Waiheke Island (in the Hauraki Gulf). We have two and a half walnut trees on our property. The boys gathered up the walnuts and dried them and took them round to the local fruit shops and orchardists who, in the main, bought them. They then discovered two more walnut trees at the back of a garage in town. The boys have cleaned up these trees too and made about $50 (NZ). One day I was short of housekeeping money and didn't have enough to buy a sack of potatoes, so I told the boys that we'd have rice instead. Everybody said that they didn't mind and I forgot the incident until Russell burst into the kitchen later in the day with a smile a mile wide on his face. He had gone round to a local market gardener and traded $3.50 worth of walnuts for a sack of potatoes! (Russell is 11.) But that wasn't the end—oh, dear me, no! When the boys ran out of walnuts to sell, Russell went back to the bloke he had traded with and bought the same walnuts back for the price he had been given, took them to *another* market gardener and sold them for 50% more. So there's 11-year-old enterprise for you! I think that there goes one home-schooler who will never be a charge in the state. . . .

Growing confidence in human beings seems the essential result of home-schooling programs. This letter continues:

> John, when you came to New Zealand and we had that chat, I remember only too clearly what you said to me when I asked you how you saw the boys' education going into the future. You looked a bit strangely at me and said, "What do they like doing?" and I said, "They like to read," to which you replied, "Then let them read." I must admit that I went away grumbling to myself and thinking, "How on earth does he think we can do that and not have the education board on our backs?" Almost a year later we have found the answer. I don't know if it is the one everyone would be brave enough to carry out, but we have. We have done, in fact, what you suggested—let them read, along with anything else they wish to do, and my goodness, what a wonderful result. When the children want to read, they read; when they want to do math, etc., etc., and it is quite amazing what a balanced program they have built up not only for themselves, but *by themselves*. . .

There are close to twenty-four pages of reports like these in *Growing Without Schooling.* It makes you think of the early days of this republic, when farmers, after a day of plowing, would read John Locke to their sons and daughters after dinner. Nowadays, of course, it would be better to read Wendell Berry, or maybe Scott Buchanan. The New Zealander goes on:

> Roy, our eldest son, is a very shy but hard-thinking, hard-working boy. He took off from school at 15 because he couldn't stand it any more (and my goodness, we only wish he'd never gone at all). He is doing part-time correspondence—math and science—and the rest of the time he spends in reading and writing to his very long pen-friend list. He has friends right around the world, from a boy in the boonies in Saudi Arabia, to friends in Western countries, to a boy in Zambia whose father was formerly Zambia's representative to the United Nations.

When people ask what they can do for world peace, John Holt might be able to give them a fundamental answer. His address is 729 Boylston Street, Boston, Mass. 02116. (Subscription, $15 for six issues.)

FRONTIERS

Thoughts about "Sovereignty'

THE lead article in the October issue of *Not Man Apart* begins: "Commercial utilities entered the nuclear power field to produce plutonium for the American military, an Atomic Energy Commission document recently obtained by Friends of the Earth revealed." In 1950, the story explains, the U.S. nuclear weapons program was short of plutonium, and the AEC sought the help of private utilities, among them Pacific Gas and Electric and the Bechtel Corporation. The utilities told the AEC that "commercial nuclear reactors would not be economical if they only produced electricity. But they could be feasible if they produced plutonium for sale." The president of General Electric told a Congressional committee: "Atomic energy will be economically sound only when it can compete with conventional electricity without requiring a government-supported weapons market." The connection between nuclear power and weapons was not publicly discussed.

What *was* the public told?

> Both representatives of industry and members of Congress argued the development of the peaceful atom was necessary for propaganda purposes.
>
> The AEC proudly proclaimed nuclear power would be too cheap to meter and the Atomic Industrial Forum organized seminars to teach public relations to the infant nuclear industry.

"It is one of the major responsibilities of you and other public relations people," an AEC instructor said, "to erase the concept of the atomic bomb and replace it with the concept of nuclear reactors."

Well, they tried.

This fragment of our recent history lends force to a quotation from Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* made in a review in *Fellowship* for last October. We give this passage, with the reviewer's comment at the end:

> "National sovereignty lies at the very core of the political issues that the peril of extinction forces upon us. Sovereignty is the 'reality' that the 'realists' counsel us to accept as inevitable. . . . Just as those who favor deterrence policy . . . must in all honesty admit that their scheme contemplates the extinction of man in the name of protecting national sovereignty, so must those who favor complete nuclear and conventional disarmament, as I do admit that their recommendation is inconsistent with national sovereignty, to pretend otherwise would be to evade the political question that is central to the nuclear predicament."
>
> It is Schell's belief that "the task is nothing less than to reinvent politics: to reinvent the world." *Time* magazine responded: "Thanks a lot." The *Wall Street Journal*, in unusual erudition, commented: "Like wow, man."

Another article in the October *Fellowship* records the concern of Joseph Weizenbaum, professor of computer science at MIT, regarding the present passion for computer war games. He says:

> Television, serving as a cheap baby-sitter, has been fostering passivity. Now we can buy a computer game to attach to the television, enabling the child to participate. My question is: participate in *what?*
>
> If you examine what goes on in the computer game arcades, you'll see that almost all of it is extremely violent. You have "space invaders," where the task is to shoot down as many enemy missiles as possible; or "defenders," who have a particular inventory of hydrogen bombs with which to destroy other people's hydrogen bombs; and you watch cities disappear. . . . The computer game, the space war sort of thing, . . . promises to keep people "entertained" for a very long time. But it does seem that we have a peculiar idea of what entertainment means; participating at one level of removal or another in destroying things, or what's worse, people.

A wider concern, in another area, is related by an American teacher and writer, Robert Engler, who has been several times a visitor to Israel. In the seventies he attended a meeting commemorating the Holocaust—"No one in Israel must ever forget. Each had escaped with his life from an unfeeling and hostile world only by chance." But then—

> Shortly afterward I watched the Israeli army commemorate Independence Day by parading its

armored might through Arab East Jerusalem and then its aerial skills over the Holy City. Again the message was plain. The world understands force. Never again must Jews be without it.

I knew I wanted to suggest to Israel's leaders that they just might be wrong. For how long could they build a nation and hold the loyalty of its young through guilt and military might? But no one was asking me. . . .

Some American Jewish organizations, self-identified as representing American Jewry, celebrated the military toughness of the new state and cheered each triumph during the early wars of survival as signalling the birth of a new and more admirable Jew. Those who questioned the second-class citizenship of the Arab minority and whether the peaceful dream was being eroded under the pressures of becoming an occupying power were declared outside the pale of "the Jewish community," if not anti-semitic.

Later reflections:

The invasion of Lebanon evokes those memories and speculations. Preventive war and the killing of thousands in the name of security can only bring new hatred and violence no matter how compassionate and how tormented individual Israeli soldiers may be. An emerging generation of Moslems, Christians and Jews will have diminished memory of the injustices done to the Jews throughout their history, and growing experiences with the injustices of the Jewish state. This action can only heighten Palestinian determination. The arms and financial support of the United States government in the Middle East are for its own power reasons which, tragically for Americans, have little to do with the long-run aspirations of two peoples caught in a conflict for homelands. When Begin says that such military "defense" is the finest expression of a people, he abandons a whole tradition of brotherhood.

Recently Mr. Engler talked to an Israeli army officer, veteran of five of his country's wars. The officer is among those Israelis who challenge their country's failure to make peace with the Arab world. Yet he would pay his taxes and fight if called.

What could an American say to this colonel who has done so much for his country? Could I tell him that perhaps now was the time to say "no"? Here am I, paying taxes to my own government whose vast military expenditures include substantial aid for Israel's war as well as for many other actions about whose misguidedness I have even fewer doubts. America must also change its course if we are to be on the side of justice. That means recognizing the national rights of Palestinians as well as Israelis. And insisting on supporting only peaceful means for resolving the painful differences in the Middle East. I want to help save my country as a democratic and peaceful one, just as I want the colonel to save his. The time to bring such feeling and understanding into effective political action in the United States is long overdue.