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AN EARLIER "TRANSITION"

AN ancient controversy—periodically renewed—is concerned with which one of two questions should have priority. Has "What is true?" greater importance, or should the first question be: "How ought we to live?" Obviously enough, "What is true?" is asked by scientists, and moralist critics are told that no one can decide what he should do without first giving various alternatives reliable definition, and definition is a scientific task. But the religious thinker will then reply that definitions made without reference to moral values are bound to be confining, that the truths disclosed by science, even if correct, are not the whole truth. And they will point to the condition of the modern world, saying that it is very largely the result of letting scientific definitions control decision.

They are of course right, and the frightening character of present historical tendencies (see Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth*) provides emotional reinforcement of their contentions. Yet there are others who, having some acquaintance with history, recall the condition of the world when under the rule of what was held to be moral authority, and ask, *"Do we want to go back to that?"*

The case for indifference to moral claims was well put by De La Mettrie in 1745 (in *L'Homme Machine*):

> If Atheism were universally disseminated, all the branches of religion would be torn up by the roots. Then there would be no more theological wars: there would no longer be soldiers of religion, that terrible kind of soldier. Nature, which had been infected by the consecrated poison, would win back her rights and her purity. Deaf to all other voices, men would follow their own individual impulses, and these impulses alone can lead them to happiness along the pleasant paths of virtue.

This argument, while persuasive, neglects to note that religious impulses are among those which come to humans and that the "drives" of individual inclination, in view of the economic injustice of this or any other time, by no means seek out "paths to virtue." In short, moral behavior is *not* spontaneous but requires the guidance of teachings, or even laws.

At this point the philosopher speaks up, claiming that it is quite possible to look to both science and religion for instruction. He may cite for you quotations from eminent scientists which have the quality of religious inspiration, and find other statements by religious figures evincing deep respect for scientific knowledge. The issue, however, is complicated in two decisive ways. The first is the element of intuition, which has been known to play havoc with accepted ideas in both religion and science. The other is the stubborn rigidity of institutionalized religion together with the confident certainty of organized science. Individuals, it will be said, may be able to find a balance between the inner and outer ways of feeling and knowing, but what of the great majority who are affected mainly by the crystalized "authorities" of their time?

Proposed solutions are various, but none of them, so far as we know, has ever worked. Groups confident of their own salvation are likely to say that others are free to join them or, if undecided, wait for Judgment Day. Resort to some kind of police force, whether moral or socio-political, is usually the choice of managerial saviors, claiming the greatest good for the greatest number in justification. At another level is the idea of a world court of the best minds to determine what is "true" and what ought to be done. But if such a grandiose institution should ever be installed, its major contribution would probably be stirring, by reaction, a renewed interest in Socrates, who was called the wisest

man in Athens because he declared that he knew nothing with certainty.

When in doubt about the future, look to the past, may be as good a rule as any in a time like the present. Today serious opinion is very much in flux, the general outlook claiming the most converts being Ecology, which began as a science, yet has sprung from a foundation of ethical thinking growing out of what seems a pantheistic respect for nature. Why has this happened? That our host the earth needs care and protection from the ravages of industry is one reason, the longing for a more natural life is another, and a third reason might be the feeling of inner emptiness, of alienation from the fellowship of living things. In any event, this change of attitude is going on, along with a renewed inspection of the religious ideas of the past.

It is a time of transition, and also of wondering about the capacity of the people of today to absorb and obtain the benefits of these teachings. Jacob Needleman said in a recent book (*Consciousness* and *Tradition*):

> Are the forms by which truth was once transmitted inapplicable to the conditions of modern life? This question insists itself because among the followers of the new religions one often witnesses the process by which only those parts of ancient traditions are accepted which seem relevant or attractive. *Can part of a tradition lead to the same result that once required the complete tradition?* This has always been a problem in the spiritual history of mankind: the tendency of the mind to select out of a teaching only those aspects which it likes, while ignoring other aspects which are also necessary, thereby creating a subjective religion out of a carefully interconnected totality. It was one of the most fundamental meanings of the term "idolatry" in the Judeo-Christian teachings: man must not create his own god.

Three hundred years ago the Western world was going through a similar transition, although in the opposite direction. Minds in France and England were absorbing the "liberating" conceptions of Copernicus and Galileo, Descartes and Newton. The seventeenth century was a time when the leaders in thought wanted, not preachments, but "explanation." As Basil Willey said in *Seventeenth Century Background:*

> An explanation "explains" best when it meets some need of our nature, some deep-seated demand for assurance. "Explanation" may perhaps be roughly defined as a restatement of something—event, theory, doctrine, etc.—in terms of current interests and assumptions. It satisfies, as explanation, because it appeals to that particular set of assumptions, as superseding those of a past age or of a former state of mind. Thus it is necessary, if an explanation is to seem satisfactory, that its terms should seem ultimate, incapable of further analysis. . . . For example, the spots on the moon's surface might be due, theologically, to the fact that it was God's will they should be there; scientifically they might be "explained" as the craters of extinct volcanoes. The newer explanation may be said, not so much to contain "more" truth than the older, as to supply the *kind* of truth which was now demanded. . . . It was more satisfying, we may suppose because now, instead of the kind of "truth" which is consistent with authoritative teaching, men began to desire the kind which would enable them to measure, to weigh and to control the things around them; they desired, in Bacon's words, "to extend more widely the limits of the power and greatness of man." Interest was now directed to the *how,* the manner of causation, not its *why,* its final cause. For a scientific type of explanation to be satisfying, for it to convince us with a sense of its necessary truth, we must be in the condition of needing and desiring that type of explanation and no other. . . .
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> Speaking generally, it may be said that the demand for explanation is due to the desire to be rid of mystery. Such a demand will be most insistent when the current mysteries have become unusually irksome, as seems to have been the case in the time of Epicurus, and again at the Renaissance. At those turning-points men wanted "scientific" explanations because they no longer wished to feel as they had been taught to feel about the nature of things. To be rid of fear—fear of the unknown, fear of the gods, fear of the stars or of the devil—to be released from the necessity of reverencing what was not to be understood, these were amongst the most urgent demands of the modern as of the ancient world, and it was because it satisfied these demands that scientific explanation was received as the revelation of truth.

Religion, it seems clear, had become identified with mystery and fear—of damnation, fear of charges of heresy, at the time of the Renaissance. While religion was still a power in the world, and to be respected for that reason, it had less and less claim upon the mind. Francis Bacon, herald of the scientific revolution, had set the keynote of the new spirit early in the century. We believe in our religion, he said, well and good, but science must be kept separate from its influence. The domain of religion had no need of the powers of human thought. "We are obliged to believe the word of God," he wrote in *De Augmentis,* "though our reason be shocked at it." Making reason the judge would be impiety. "For if we should believe only such things as are agreeable to our reason, we assent to the matter, and not to the author." And he went on: "And therefore, the more absurd and incredible any divine mystery is, the greatest honour we do to God in believing it; and so much the more noble the victory of faith."

Bacon's desire to separate religious truth and scientific truth, Willey says, "was in the interests of science, not religion."

> He wished to *keep science pure from religion;* the opposite part of the process—keeping religion pure from science—did not interest him nearly so much. What he harps on is always how science has been hampered at every stage by the prejudice and conservatism of theologians. After three hundred years of science we now have writers pleading for religion in an age dominated by science; Bacon was pleading for science in an age dominated by religion. Religious truth, then, must be "skied," elevated far out of reach, not in order that it may be more devoutly approached, but in order to keep it out of mischief. But having secured his main object, namely, to clear the universe for science, Bacon can afford to be quite orthodox (just as, in another context, he can concede poetry to human weakness). He prays eloquently that the new light, when it comes, may not make men incredulous of divine mystery.

As today, the seventeenth century was a period of extraordinary religious ferment. The Quaker movement was begun by George Fox. The Puritans rose in arms and executed Charles I, their king. At the same time, thoughtful men of religion saw in the rise of the scientific spirit—given expression by Galileo and Descartes—an opportunity to purify the inherited faith. Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648), called the father of Deism, sought to go behind Christianity to formulate in the simplest way "a belief which shall command the universal assent of all men as men." In keeping with the spirit of science, all questions would be presented to the tribunal of Reason, and for him the truth of religion would be determined by "the still small voice within." This inner faculty would faithfully tell the true from the false:

> For I boldly say that there have been, and are now, men, Churches and schools, stuffed with *bagatelles*, which have introduced into succeeding centuries impostures and fables . . . having no other foundation than true-seeming stories, or some rude and impertinent reasons; a thing which would never have happened if my method had been followed. . . . We must therefore see what universal consent has brought to light in religion, and compare all that we find on this subject, so as to receive as common notions all the things which are recognisably present and constant in the true religion.

How could he be sure of this recognition in himself?

On a fair summer day, he relates, he knelt with the manuscript of his book, *De Veritate,* in had and prayed for a sign from heaven. "I had no sooner spoken these words, but a loud though gentle noise came from the heavens (for it was like nothing on earth) which did so comfort and cheer me, that I took my petition as granted, and that I had the sign to print my book." Each one, he seems confident, may have his own revelation, and be sure of it by detecting "a particular movement of God" toward him—since "every divine and happy sentiment that we feel within our conscience is a revelation, although properly speaking there are no other revelations than those which the inner sense knows to be above the ordinary providence of things."

While Deism in more developed form survived into the revolutionary epoch of the eighteenth century, as illustrated, for example, in the credo of Thomas Paine, it was, quite evidently, the religious philosophy of exceptional men, including the most eminent of the Founding Fathers of the United States (in 1831 a perturbed preacher declared with dismay that "of the first seven presidents not one had professed his belief in Christianity"). Most notable among the Christians who attempted to turn the spirit of science into a factor that would deepen religion were the Cambridge Platonists, a group of divines in England who had saturated themselves with Platonic philosophy. As Basil Willey says:

> The wheel of history had come full circle, and the seventeenth century reproduced some of the features of the second century A.D. The Cambridge Platonists are the modern analogues of the Alexandrian Fathers, Clement and Origen, with this significant difference—that the Fathers came between a declining philosophy and a rising Christianity, while the seventeenth century theologians came between a declining Christianity and a rising philosophy. The resemblance between the two schools lies in their effort to maintain religion and philosophy as allies, not as strangers and enemies.

"Broadly," Willey says, "the problem confronting such men as the Cambridge Platonists, and religious modernists in general, was (as it still is) how to combine 'philosophy' with religion, how to reconstruct old beliefs in the light of new knowledge." While the Platonists welcomed the investigative and questioning spirit of Descartes, they rejected his idea that human behavior should be regarded as machine-like. In *The Myths of Plato* (London: Macmillan, 1905), J. A. Stewart shows the care they exercised in adopting Descartes' assumptions:

> The central doctrine of the Cambridge Platonists receives considerable illumination from their treatment of the famous maxim, identified chiefly with the name of Descartes, "Clear and distinct ideas must be true." The maxim, of course, can be traced back to Plato himself (at the end of the sixth book of the *Republic*). . . . It is a maxim which undoubtedly lends itself to abuse, if not limited, as it is carefully limited by Plato. . . . as referring only to "ideas" in the sense of "categories" or "notions"—*organic conditions* of experience—and not also to "ideas" in the more ordinary sense—of "impressions," or *data* of experience. . . . the Cambridge Platonists accept as principles of knowledge and conduct those ideas which Reflection of the Soul upon herself as mirror of the Divine Wisdom, sees clearly and distinctly. . . . The truth of such "Ideas" is simply "their clear intelligibility." Their truth needs no other witness. It is in order to maintain this view of the self-evident truth of these "Ideas" or "Categories" that Cudworth submits to a searching criticism Descartes' doctrine, that we fall back upon the supposition of the "Veracity of God" as ground of our belief that our clear and distinct ideas do not deceive us. Against this doctrine he argues that not even God could make clear and distinct "Ideas" in the sense of Categories, or principles of knowledge, false: they are essentially true; and their clear intelligibility is alone sufficient warrant of their truth, or objective validity.

The most widely influential of the Cambridge Platonists were Ralph Cudworth (spoken of above), Henry More, and John Smith. Writing on *Immortality of the Soul,* More maintained that the Spirit of Nature is, as Stewart puts it, "an incorporeal substance, without sense, diffused through the whole universe, exercising *plastic power,* producing those phenomena which cannot be explained mechanically." He believed that "the growth of plants and embryos, and the instincts of animals" were explained by their "astral bodies"—a term he borrowed from the Paracelsians.

> The Soul of man partakes in this plastic principle and by means of it constructs for herself a body terrestrial, aerial, or aethereal (*i.e.* celestial), according as the stage of her development has brought her into vital relation with the vehicle of earth, air, or aether. . . . He then lays it down as an "axiome" that "there is a Triple Vital Congruity in the Soul, namely, *Aethereal,* Aerial, and *Terrestrial.* . . . Of the *Terrestrial Congruity* there can be no doubt, and as little can there be but that at least one of the other two is to be granted, else the Soul would be released from all *vital union with matter* after Death. Wherefore she has a *vital aptitude,* at least, to unite with *Aire.* But *Aire* is a common recepticle of bad and good spirits (as the Earth is of all sorts of men and beasts), nay, indeed, rather of those that are in some sort or other bad, than of good, as it is upon

earth. But the Soul of man is capable of very high refinements, even to a condition *purely angelical,* whence Reason will judge it fit, and all Antiquity has voted it, that the souls of men arrived to such a due pitch of purification must at last obtain *Celestial* vehicles."

More here seems to be elaborating on his Platonic and Neoplatonic sources, but he at least attempts to give the plastic principle a participating role in the metaphysical anatomy of both man and the world. Willey's comment on More's *Immortality of the Soul* is this:

> More's arguments can perhaps best be viewed, from our present point of view, as an endeavor to reunite matter and spirit, which the rigid logic of Descartes had left in unbridgeable opposition, and to give greater "body," or actuality, to both conceptions, which in Cartesianism were too nakedly abstract. More wants his "spirit" to be more than abstract "cogitation"; he will have it to be activity, and the activity must be *there where* it is at work, penetrating and moving matter.

We conclude with some passages from Gary Zukav's *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (William Morrow, 1979), a book devoted to an exceptionally clear account of the implications of quantum mechanics in modern physics:

> Atoms are hypothetical entities constructed to make experimental observations intelligible. No one, not one person, has ever seen an atom. Yet we are so used to the *idea* that an atom is a thing that we forget that it is an idea. Now we are told that not only is an atom an idea, it is an idea that we cannot even picture. . . . The electron cloud is a mathematical concept which physicists have constructed to correlate their experiences. Electron clouds may or may not exist within the atom. No one really knows. . . .
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> A proton never remains a simple proton. It alternates between being a proton and a neutral pion on the one hand, and being a neutron and a positive pion on the other hand. A neutron never remains a simple neutron. It alternates between being a neutron and a pion on the other hand. A negative pion never remains a simple negative pion. It alternates between being a neutron and an anti-proton on the one hand, etc., etc. In other words, *all particles exist potentially* (*with a certain probability*) *as different combinations of other particles.* Each combination has a certain probability of happening.
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> Quantum theory deals with probability. The probability of each of these combinations can be calculated with accuracy. According to quantum theory, however, it is ultimately chance that determines which of these combinations actually occur.

From reading Zukav's book, one is enormously impressed by the hard thinking which has led modern physicists to this conclusion. Yet its meaning, if meaning there can be, remains obscure. Again the question arises: Which should we attempt to find out first, what is true, or how we should live? Truth, some say, perhaps correctly, can be no more than a redressing of balances. Or can we affirm, finally, that if all things are parts of one another, then knowing the truth and knowing how to live have a single answer?

REVIEW
A GREEK IRISH ARTIST IN JAPAN

LAFCADIO HEARN was born in 1850 on the Mediterranean island of Leucadia—for which he was named, and which, prophetically for him, meant "to wander"—of a dark-eyed girl of another island, Rosa Tessima, and Charles Hearn, an Anglo-Protestant Irishman serving in the British army. The family lived for a while in Santa Maura, but before long Charles was assigned to duty in the West Indies, and he entrusted his mother in Dublin with the care of his wife and child. The boy's life in Ireland was of mixed quality, his mother sickening, his Irish relatives rigidly religious. He was small, frail, unhappy at school. He rarely saw his father, and the "discipline" imposed on the lad drove him to terror on occasion. Unhappy, his mother returned to Greece and Lafcadio fell to the care of an aunt who had no use for his philandering father. Something of his childhood environment is conveyed by what happened to books he found in his aunt's library—wonderful books on the arts of ancient Greece. In *Lafcadio Hearn* (Houghton Mifflin, 1946) Vera McWilliams relates:

> A child prying into the questionable esoterics of classicism was a scandalous situation, and Mrs. Brenane met it with all the firmness and tact she possessed. Without a word of reproof the books were taken from the library, and for a long time Lafcadio looked for them in vain. When he was supposed to have forgotten them, they were put back on their customary shelf, but only after they had been ridiculously mutilated. The offending nakedness of the Greek gods was corrected with baggy bathing drawers, while various parts of the dryads, graces, and muses had been condemned and obliterated with a penknife. Breastless female figures adorned the pages, and tiny Loves fluttered about with pen-and-ink trousers attached to their chubby bodies.

He tried to restore them, revealing an aptitude for drawing, and throughout his life he never lost his loyalty to the pagan gods; indeed, much of his later life was involved in contest with the vulgarizations of "modern" civilization. Other capacities began to appear at a preparatory school in the Yorkshire hills, near Durham, where he went to the head of his class in English composition. But pagan he remained. When something he said called forth from a tutor of warning on "the folly and wickedness of pantheism," Hearn "announced himself a fullfledged pantheist at the callow age of fifteen." After he passed his sixteenth birthday he lost an eye when the knotted end of a rope, swung by a schoolmate, accidentally struck his left eye, totally blinding it. He bore this burden painfully for the rest of his life. Next he was sent to a Jesuit school in France, where he encountered the intoxications of Flaubert, Gautier, Maupassant, and Baudelaire. He learned French and to appreciate the superb craftsmanship of French writers. In his second year he broke from Jesuit control by running away to Paris. A friend of his aunt's took charge and sent him money for passage to America, where, again, life was oppressive—he almost starved for a time—until he achieved notable journalistic success in New Orleans.

He left Cincinnati, where he had a job on a newspaper, in 1877—he was then twenty-seven—and intended to contribute from New Orleans political articles to the Cincinnati *Commercial,* but the assignment failed to interest him and his income ceased until he found a job as staff writer. The story of his development is well told by Vera McWilliams. Through exchanges with his paper, other editors around the country recognized Hearn's extraordinary talent, in addition to which he had proved his merit as a translator of the best French literature. He wrote about the West Indies for magazines, and it was a *Harper's* editor that encouraged his trip to Japan in 1890, where he remained until his death in 1904.

One of the happiest times of his life, before he left for the orient, was his stay on the West Indies island of Martinique, where he had fled in 1888 from a tiring, even frightening, visit to New York. The big city meant to him only "millions of hustling, jostling, hard-faced strangers put there expressly to thwart and irritate him." In

Martinique he wrote the novelettes, *Chita* and *Youma,* living with common folk. When it came time for him to leave for a visit in Philadelphia, the story of his last hours in Saint Pierre, told by Vera McWilliams, reveals the friendships he had made.

> At half-past four one morning little Victoire stood by his bed with his cup of fragrant black coffee.—What?—So early? His heart jumped as he remembered what day it was; and he drank his coffee slowly in the faint blue light of dawn. Victoire timidly pressed a farewell gift into his hand. Two vanilla beans carefully wrapped in a piece of banana leaf.
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> He had already received so many souvenirs from his humble mixed-blood friends that Cyrillia [his housekeeper] had brought a special wooden box to hold them. Mann-Robert, from the neighboring tobacco shop, had given him a tiny packet of seeds from a gift orange. (As long as he kept the seeds he would always have money.) Azaline, his laundress had sent him a little pocket mirror, and Cerbonne had brought a small glass of guava jelly. Cyrillia had given him a package of cigars and a box of French matches; and Mimi, a little girl living near-by, had brought him a small paper dog. It was her favorite toy, but he had been forced to accept it lest she cry. He had also received chocolate sticks, coconuts, sugar-cane, and various queer fruits and vegetables; and as he finished his coffee, he remembered that these touching gifts had not yet been packed in their box.

Stopping off in New York before going to Philadelphia, he wrote to an absent friend:

> This city drives me crazy, or, if you prefer, crazier; and I have no peace of mind or rest of body till I get out of it. Nobody can find anybody, nothing seems to be anywhere, everything seems to be mathematics and geometry and enigmatics and riddles and confusion worse confounded: architecture and mechanics run mad. The so-called improvements in civilization have apparently resulted in making it impossible to see, hear, or find anything out. . . . Civilizations a hideous thing. Blessed is savagery! Surely a palm two hundred feet high is a finer thing in the natural order than seventy times seven New York. I came in by one door and you went out at the other. Now there are cubic miles of cut granite and iron fury between us. I shall at once find a hackman to take me away. I am sorry not to see you—but since you live in hell, what can I do? . . .

There was a curious sequel in Japan, when he went for a visit to a rural area.

> In a remote section of the province he and Setsuko [his Japanese wife] entered an inn which was noisy with drinking and rowdiness. "Let's not stay here a second!" he exclaimed, pulling at her sleeve. "This place is a hell!" The innkeeper was already bowing and smiling before them, but Hearn spat out, "I don't like your hotel!" and led Setsuko outside, blushing in embarrassment over her husband's rudeness. Unquestionably he was angry that she had been exposed to such vulgarity; but there was something else he was also trying to protect. Normally anything he deplored could be laid at the door of Occidental influence, but after nearly a year and a half in Japan he was glimpsing uncontaminated aspects of native life which were disillusioning. He was trying to keep his vision of Japan as lovely as possible.

By 1894 Hearn was on the way to the height of his powers. He was a teacher in Japan, teaching English literature, and his last years were spent as a professor at the Imperial University in Tokyo. Fortunately, what he taught has been largely preserved, for his devoted students took down his lectures, given slowly in English, to be sure he was understood. As a result we have his two-volume *History of English Literature,* his *Talks to Writers,* and other lectures made available in collections years later. This was what he loved, and what, in other relationships, he was "protecting." All this was realized only later by the world. As Vera McWilliams says:

> For when his lectures were posthumously published, they were hailed as one of the most fascinating estimates of English literature ever presented. In substance they were "criticism unmatched in English unless we return to the best of Coleridge," one American authority declared. In England they were pronounced not only the best available English literature books for young people, but essays that would drive mature readers "straight to the authors of whom he speaks."

Those who look up these works are soon convinced that this praise still applies. Hearn lived almost wholly in his mind. His sense of delicacy and of lyric beauty is immediately evident in his discussion of Japanese literature, which is mainly

Buddhist in inspiration. Hearn's own philosophical outlook, shaped largely by Herbert Spencer, took naturally to Buddhism. As he wrote to a friend:

> When one has lived alone five years in a Buddhist atmosphere, one naturally becomes penetrated by the thoughts that hover in it; my whole thinking, I must acknowledge, has now been changed, in spite of my long studies of Spencer and Schopenhauer. I do not mean I am a Buddhist, but I mean that the inherited ancestral feelings about the universe—the Occidental ideas every Englishman has—have been totally transformed. There is yet no fixity, however; the changes continue—and I really do not know how I shall feel about the universe later on.

Our object is to draw readers to Hearn, who is well represented in most libraries. For a brief example of how he writes, we take a passage on Japanese poetry from *In Ghostly Japan* (Little, Brown, 1899):

> By the use of a few chosen words the composer of a short poem endeavors to do what the painter endeavors to do with a few strokes of the brush,—to evoke an image or a mood,—to revive a sensation or an emotion. And the accomplishment of this purpose,—by poet or picture-maker,—depends altogether upon capacity to *suggest,* and only to suggest. . . . a poet would be condemned for attempting any *completeness* of utterances in a very short poem: his object should be only to stir imagination without satisfying it. . . . Like the single stroke of a temple bell, the perfect short poem should set murmuring and undulating, in the mind of the hearer many a ghostly aftertone of long duration.

He gives a translation of "A Mother's Remembrance"—

> *Sweet and clear in the night, the voice of a boy at study,*
> *Reading oat of a book . . . I also once had a boy!*

What of Hearn would be good to read first? Our suggestion is *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields* (Harper and Brothers, 1898). In print is a paperback edition by Tuttle.

COMMENTARY
THE GRAND CONCOURSE

HERE we give a passage from Lafcadio Hearn's *Gleanings in Buddha-Fields,* recommended at the end of this week's Review. Hearn had been wandering in the outskirts of a Japanese town, watching the children play at funerals, "burying corpses of butterflies and *semi* (cicadae), and pretending to repeat Buddhist sutras over the grave." He reflected:

> Children in all countries play at death. Before the sense of personal identity comes, death cannot be seriously considered; and childhood thinks in this regard more correctly, perhaps, than self-conscious maturity. Of course, if these little ones were told, some bright morning, that a playfellow had gone away forever—gone away to be reborn elsewhere,—there would be a very real though vague sense of loss, and much wiping of eyes; but presently the loss would be forgotten and the playing resumed. The idea of ceasing to exist could not possibly enter a child-mind: the butterflies and birds, the flowers, the foliage, the sweet summer itself, only play at dying;—they seem to go, but they all come back again after the snow is gone. The real sorrow and fear of death arise in us only through slow accumulation of experience with doubt and pain; and these little boys and girls being Japanese and Buddhists, will never, in any event, feel about death just as you and I do. They will find reason to fear it for somebody else's sake, but not for their own, because they will learn that they have died millions of times already, and have forgotten the trouble of it, much as one forgets the pain of successive toothaches. In the strangely penetrant light of their creed, teaching the ghostliness of all substance, granite or gossamer,—just as those lately found X-rays make visible the ghostliness of the flesh,—this their present world, with its bigger mountains and rivers and rice-fields, will not appear to them much more real than the mud landscapes which they made in childhood. And much more real it probably is not.

This casts Hearn into the state of what Hannah Arendt calls *thinking*—the mental occupation which pursues meaning rather than objects and events.

> *I* an individual,—an individual soul! Nay, I am a population,—a population unthinkable for multitude, even by groups of a thousand millions! Generations of generations I am, æons of æons! Countless times the concourse now making me has been scattered, and mixed with other scatterings. Of what concern, then, the next disintegration?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
SCHWEITZER, HOLT, POSTMAN

THE *Rotarian* for last December had an article, "The A1bert Schweitzer Children's Garden," filled with truisms, yet there are good things reported which are by no means obvious—for example, the multiple influences exercised by a man like Schweitzer through people who admired him and decided to do something along the lines of his vision. Following are the remarks of some children who spent time last summer at the Albert Schweitzer Center in Great Barrington, Mass., where they "worked the soil and planted vegetables and flower seeds in several garden plots." (The comforting thing about truisms is that they are *true.*)

> One youngster participating in the summer gardening program commented that he "didn't know there was so much to do in a garden." Another girl said she loved learning about "all the medicine and stuff you can make with plants." . . .
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> Jonah Gillooly likes "eating the things we grow," and he finds his own particular delight in watching the surrounding forest for deer and racoon. Janos Kerseru, who recently emigrated to the United States from France, finds his newfound friends the most important part of the program, but the field mice he's been collecting near the garden and releasing in the woods are running a close second. "Somebody has to take care of them, too many things get killed," he replies, when asked about caring for the mice.

Children's gardens have been established in other places, through the efforts of Sandy Hinden. "The concept of Universal Children's Gardens just came to me," he said. "I wasn't sure what the gardens themselves would *be,* but I knew that I wanted to establish gardens around the planet so children could learn about nature, beauty, and caring." During 1981 and 1982 nearly two dozen Universal Children's Gardens were planned, and some were planted.

> "It's not just the gardening that's important," Hinden explains. What happens is during the process "the children are encouraged to reflect upon their garden and their work, to realize that they are truly connected to all other children who are also working in gardens to bring forth nature's fruits and beauties through plant life, and through themselves as flowers and fruits of humanity.

The program has modest funding from small contributions and subscriptions to a newsletter. People like the idea and join in to help establish a network of gardens on a shoestring basis. Locally, they raise money for seeds, tools, and other supplies.

It was natural, therefore, for the Albert Schweitzer Center in Great Barrington to become host to a Children's Garden. A film-maker, Erica Anderson, a long-time friend of Schweitzer's, created the Center out of a renovated farmhouse and barn, making it a place where people could come to learn about Schweitzer's dream of teaching people to reverence life, to "preserve life, to promote life, to raise to its highest value."

> Director Ann Williams explained that "Albert Schweitzer believed that it would be the children of America in particular who would understand and embrace his philosophy of reverence for life in the example of their own lives. Erica Anderson stated that its purpose was 'to promote among all people, especially the young, the understanding and practice of Dr. Schweitzer's philosophy, reverence for life.' Not only do we continue Erica's tradition of asking children if they would like to ring the steeple bells in the barn to signify that they will try not to harm another living thing, but we are also developing programs for children like this Children's Garden which can bring them closer to an active understanding of reverence for life in their own lives."

Children come from the surrounding communities and spend at least a week working in the garden. They learn about herbs and useful "weeds," and natural healing. One child explained shyly that she "likes the way people at the Center take time to answer questions and to show us how to do things." The article concludes:

> Schweitzer could write learnedly about reverence for life and Hinden can speak eloquently about the delicate balance of life in a highly industrialized, materialistic world, but such abstractions have no place in the nurturing soil of a

> child's garden. To the eyes of a child, the cycle of life is a daily reality, seen in the emergence of tiny sprouts, in the unfolding of flowers, and in the twitching ears of a white-tailed deer at dawn. To a child like young Janos, reverence for life is the simple act of lifting a ladybug from a path and offering it freely to the summer wind.

An extract from one of John Holt's books (the first, *How Children Fail*) supplies the voice of experience on the gentle art of teaching:

> It took me a long time to learn, as a classroom teacher, that on the days when I came to class just bursting with some great teaching idea, good things rarely happened. The children with their great quickness and keenness of perception, would sense that there was something "funny," wrong, about me. Instead of being a forty-year-old human being in a room full of ten-year-old human beings, I was now a "scientist" in a roomful of laboratory animals. I was no longer in the class to talk about things that interested me, or them, or to enjoy what I and they were doing, but to try something out on them. In no time at all they fell back into their old defensive and evasive strategies, began to give me sneaky looks, to ask for hints, to say, "I don't get it." I could see them growing stupid in front of my eyes.
>
> By the time I was teaching my last fifth-grade class, I usually knew enough, when I saw this happening, to back off and drop my big project and go back to our more normal, natural, honest classroom life. If I had some sort of gadget that I thought might interest the children, I would leave it in the corner of the room and say nothing about it until someone said, "What's that, what's it for, how do you work it?" Or if there was some sort of activity I wanted to "expose" them to, I would do it myself, without saying anything. I assumed that whatever did not interest me would probably not interest them, and was not trying to seduce them into doing things that I myself found boring. But if there were things I liked to do and could do in the classroom, I often did them there.

This seems a clear account of the actual, in contrast to the formal, obligations of anyone who sets out to be a teacher. Another comment:

> So many people have said to me, "If we didn't make children do things, they wouldn't do anything." Even worse they say, "If I weren't made to do things, I wouldn't do anything."
>
> *It is the creed of a slave.*
>
> When people say that terrible thing about themselves, I say, "You may believe that, but I don't believe it. You didn't feel that way about yourself when you were little. Who taught you to feel that way?" To a large degree, it was school . . .

Not only the schools are responsible for pulling our minds out of shape. There are the "media," of which John D. Hughes writes in the Fall 1982 *Contemporary Education:*

> People are wrapped in a pervasive blanket of information. This phenomenon would seem to be an outgrowth of the First Amendment to the Constitution, that is, freedom of speech. Careful research might expose journalism existing to serve a competitive marketplace. . . .
>
> Distortion abounds in the struggle for consumer attention. Who decides the right to know what? Does editing delete the superfluous or does it shape or influence our interest? Carefully orchestrated Iranian revolutionary crowd scenes were for the benefit of a duped foreign press. Press attention to such acts reinforces this behavior using the twisted logic of an irresponsible right to know. Highjackings and civil disturbances may be planned for press interest and coverage, receiving better prime-time advertising than many Madison Avenue firms can offer at a much higher price. One can read the same "factual" story in several reputable periodicals and receive multiple accounts with editorial opinion thrown in. Viewers, swayed by the professed integrity of mass communication agencies, make decisions using selective perception on information that has already been selectively altered to fit production requirements of commercial enterprises. . . . Citizens are expected to make judgments of survival and societal significance using information distorted to fit time frames dictated to serve advertising contributors and persuasively distorted to garner viewing time.

"Careful research," Mr. Hughes suggests, is needed to expose all this. Yet the facts are plain enough. The "research" would be no more than setting them down, as for example, Neil Postman does in *The Disappearance of Childhood.*

FRONTIERS
Technological Goliath

THE gap between the thinking and action of the managers of modern nations and the opinions of thoughtful individuals around the world keeps on growing. This gap was emphasized by the late George Kistiakowsky, science adviser to President Eisenhower, in an article in the *Los Angeles Times* for Dec. 19 of last year. Here we are, he said, "possessors of about 50,000 nuclear warheads: more than enough to produce a holocaust that will not only destroy industrial civilization but is likely to spread over the Earth environmental effects from which recovery is by no means certain." He continued:

> The political leaders of powerful nations continue to utter pious words about their love of peace, but the arsenals keep growing, the stability of nuclear peace is being undermined, and the proposals for arms control negotiations on both sides are so unbalanced as to be obviously non-negotiable.
>
> As one who has tried to change these trends, working both through official channels and, for the last dozen years, from outside, I tell you as my parting words: Forget the channels. There simply is not enough time left before the world explodes. Concentrate instead on organizing with others who are of like mind, a mass movement for peace such as there has not been before. The threat of annihilation is also unprecedented. So the movement should be led so that, instead of a few now in Washington, many will be elected to Congress who have a true and unbreakable commitment to search for peace.

How might that commitment be expressed? If it comes from the grass roots of the country, as it should, the expression will be spontaneously diverse. One example would be some observations by Wes Jackson of the Land Institute in Kansas (printed in an Audubon Club newsletter). He speaks of the Christian injunction, "Love thy enemy," as no longer a mere option but a requirement. During recent years of history, he says, "Hell" has become technically feasible.

> Either we get with the specifics of the ancient program, beginning here at home, or the "second death," the heat death from the ancient fires of the universe, is inevitable. We are *required* to love our enemies, not stockpile weapons against them or point missiles at them from land or sea or air or satellite. . . . in the nuclear age we must remove *all* weapons if we are to avoid another arms escalation. The energy to do so can only come from loving our enemies and our neighbors. . . .
>
> It won't be easy for me to love my enemies or even all my neighbors. I have been angry with most politicians, mad at the generals—the world's leading terrorists—for twenty years now, and angry with my colleagues in the universities where potentialities rot and few seem to care. We can get widespread agreement that greed and envy are unbecoming in their own right. What is one to do when it becomes unequivocally clear that it is these two forces which are primarily responsible for reducing options for the unborn, . . . And yet, we are required to love *those* so possessed. We're in for a long pull.
>
> I want to underscore what the economist, Paul Hawken says: that the economy, which everyone says isn't working, *is* working—to the advantage of the rich and the disadvantage of the rest. Because billions of petrodollars no longer circulate in the U.S. economy, because we have become resource-poor relative to our level of consumption, "the economy" now sends signals we choose to misinterpret. What is happening now in "the economy" is a small penalty for the past and a faint foreshadowing of the future. I have not loved those countrymen and neighbors responsible.
>
> I confess that because I have not loved my enemies and all my countrymen and all my neighbors, I have increased the likelihood of a new eternal hell on earth due to nuclear weapons I believe this deep in my heart now, for as a biologist, I do believe that everything *is* connected to everything else, that Garrett Hardin is right, we never do *only* one thing. Without knowing the probability, I believe that every act either increases the chances of nuclear war and the likelihood of extinction, or it decreases it.

It is of some interest that Elliott L. Meyrowitz, director of New York's Lawyers Committee on Nuclear Policy, has gathered and presented evidence that "nuclear weapons are illegal" (*California Lawyer,* April, 1982). He says in summary:

> Of particular relevance in evaluating nuclear weapons are the many treaties and conventions that limit the use of weapons in war, the fundamental distinction between combatant and non-combatant

> and the humanitarian principles that may prohibit the use of weapons and tactics that are especially cruel and cause unnecessary suffering. A review of these basic principles and documents supports the central conclusion that the threat or use of nuclear weapons pursuant to a doctrine of massive retaliation, mutually assured destruction, counterforce or limited nuclear war is illegal under international law. . . . As fragile as the laws of war may be, they must be supported especially in the present setting, in which the risks to human survival are so great. . . . The demand for an effective international legal structure no longer seems quixotic—it is an absolute requirement for global survival. There can be no more appropriate goal for the international legal community than to prevent the arbitrary violence of nuclear weapons.

If you are on enough mailing lists, you soon realize the variety of the people expressing themselves against nuclear war, or any kind of war. The ideas are there, being turned over, their implications developed, and finding print in various ways. More and more individuals are waking up to the fact that the concerns of governments are less and less human concerns, that faith in authority makes less and less sense. How can their number be increased?

There is likely to be only one way: by increasing the means of independence from centralized power and authority. This may *seem* to have little relation to opposition to war, yet it is nonetheless fundamental. People who grow used to making their own decisions, relying on their own capacities, learn to stick by their principles and accept responsibility. They become, in short, *free,* or freer than they were. Who else could you expect to speak out and set an example to others? A tangible encouragement lies in a quiet trend noted by Paul Hawken, the economist quoted by Wes Jackson. In an article in *Country Journal* for April, 1982, Hawken speaks of the reversal of the flow of population from country to city, saying:

> Where is the easiest place to produce? Where you have land, water, soil, trees, resources, and the skills to use them—in the country. There's a swing to the country because it works better and feels better there. People will not make more money by moving to the country, but their total lives will be enriched.

In this way they develop faith in themselves—another requirement for making peace.