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A SCIENTIFIC INNOVATION

WE are continually counselled and warned, these days, that the modern world is undergoing a process of unavoidable change, that our thinking must be altered to accommodate the processes of this change, and that moral or ethical foundations in thought and action are required to avert disasters which are well on the way to taking place. There have been various responses to these appeals, and the beginnings of some deliberated reforms are here and there visible, but the great majority of the world's population continues to live as it has in the past, in what seems complete ignorance of current prophecies and warnings.

This discouraging reality of human behavior tends to produce feelings of desperation in those who recognize the self-destructive tendency of the times; yet, on the other hand, there are others who point out that the sluggishness of large number simply reflects the absolute inability of the great majority to respond or even listen to warnings that they do not understand and would seem to invite them to actions for which they have personally felt no need. Moreover, it is said that this slowing-down effect may even be a requirement for the majority population, which would feel completely lost in a world that is undertaking rapid change.

How, then, can moral vision be hastened? How can the need for change become more evident to more people? How can the steps which are so strongly recommended by the few be made to seem sensible and good, if not inviting? How, for example, can the profit-motive be made to seem mean and contemptible? How can the hunger for power over others be recognized as foremost among the destructive impulses of human beings? How can the simplicities of having " enough" be made to take the place of the immeasurable acquisitiveness which dominates the commercial world of enterprise?

One way of thinking of changes of this sort is to see that the habits that we need to get rid of are in large measure psychological tendencies fostered by institutional attitudes which have grown up to powerful influences during the past several hundred years. There have been communities in the past—a few—which did not have these attitudes, or in which they were weak and by no means admired. The environment may not be all-powerful as the shaper of character, but it does exert great influence. If there could come into being group attitudes which oppose the characteristic weaknesses and bad tendencies of the majority, then greater changes could begin to take place.

In his book, *The Long Road,* Arthur Morgan wrote at some length about this possibility. In a section titled "Islands of Brotherhood," he said:

> America is dotted with the vestiges of efforts to work out practical social programs in the form of community efforts. The names of Brook Farm in Massachusetts; Arden, Delaware; Greeley, Colorado; Amana, Iowa; Fairhope, Alabama; Oneida, New York; and numerous others come to mind. In many cases nothing but a name and a tradition remain. In others, standard American towns have emerged from the efforts. Nearly always some fatal defect has prevented significant development—a narrow religious creed, a one-track economic idea, the assumption that a paper program will create a corresponding social fabric of flesh and blood, the assumption that a miscellaneous "collection of men and women will in some mysterious way catch the spirit of a leader, neglect of ordinary business thrift and judgment, the tendency for unstable and discontented people to flock to a new undertaking—all these and many other causes have led to failure. . .
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> Keeping in mind all the dangers and difficulties involved, for many reasons it would be desirable for persons who are committed to actually achieving what I have called the universal expedients of a good social order, to begin to build their own economic and social world. If such men are to escape the constant dilution of their purposes by society at large, it is desirable that there be *islands of brotherhood* where men of like purposes can strengthen each other and can create a milieu in accordance with the universal expedients of a good life. . . .
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> I believe that in America there may be a considerable number of persons who are ready to pay the necessary price of open-minded inquiry, to develop a

> radically different way of life, and to commit themselves and all they have to its achievement. In addition, there are many more young people who are innately receptive to such an undertaking, and who would respond to effective demonstrations of lives lived according to universal expedients of personal and social conduct. . . .
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> We must begin far back, in the slow, thorough building of character which will be tried out in the realities of everyday living, and which by aspiration, disciplined by open-minded, critical inquiry, will mature a philosophy of life reasonably adequate to the present day. As that quality of character is matured, it will result in leadership that will apply itself to the issues of the time. . . . The long way round, of building character, in the end will prove to have been the short way home to a good social order.

Morgan was a pioneering thinker who saw far in advance the requirements of fundamental change and wrote them down in an epoch-making book (available from Community Service, Inc., P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387, at $3.50).

For efforts of this sort to begin, there must first be a freeing of the mind. We live, today, in a period when all the "authorities" of the past have lost their power, and when there is opportunity for better conceptions of community existence to take hold. Yet there is importance in understanding our intellectual past and the areas which are no longer dominated by past authority. A valuable book for getting this clear has just been published—*The Presence of the Past* by Rupert Sheldrake, issued this year by Times Books at $19.95. Sheldrake is a biologist and biochemist who has broken out of the confinement of conventional biological thinking and who has proposed what he terms morphic resonance as the origin of form. By this he means that biological forms—the forms of all living bodies—are shaped by fields of memory which are neither locked in the brain cells nor in the genes, but which are non-physical yet potent as the designers of all the organs of bodies and of organisms as a whole. His book is also a careful study of the scientific theories which this conception replaces.

The idea of morphogenetic fields goes back, he says, to the 1920s when "at least three biologists independently proposed that in living organisms morphogenesis is organized by fields." Then, in the 1930s, Drs. H. S. Burr, C. T Lane, and Leslie F. Nims, all of Yale, proposed "the existence in the living organism of an electro-dynamic field." This work is not mentioned by Rupert Sheldrake, possibly because he does not regard the morphic field as "electro-dynamic." Yet the field theory of the men at Yale seems to parallel Sheldrake's theory in various ways. This field, according to Dr. Burr, is the "true" architect of the organism. Speaking before the National Academy of Sciences in April, 1939, Dr. Burr presented an electrodynamic theory of life comparable, as he pointed out, to field-theory in physics. Studies made with the help of a sensitive microvoltmeter revealed:

> In the growing embryo, the electrical pattern develops hand in hand with the development of the whole organism. All else in the body undergoes constant change; the individual cells of which the body is made, excepting the germ cells, grow old and die, to be replaced by other cells, but the electrical architect remains the only constant throughout life, building new cells and organizing them after the same pattern of the original cells, and thus, in a literal sense, recreating the body. . . . This electric field, having its own pattern, fashions all the protoplasmic clay of life that comes within its sphere of influence after its image, thus personifying itself in the living flesh as the sculptor personifies his idea in stone. . . . The Yale scientists have succeeded in revealing the master architect at work, and even to catch the first outlines of his configurations in space, showing him to be in absolute control of the organism as a whole and of its parts, and at all times, correlating the workings of the parts with the whole.

The real problem, of course, remains in the question of what is the nature of the cosmic and organic intelligence which, on the one hand, sustains the field of physical and organic phenomena, and, on the other, operates from behind the scene in the living organism with guiding impulses that seem to govern all vital processes.

A simple answer, such as "the will of God," deserves the description given it by Spinoza—the "asylum of ignorance"—and yet, it is equally difficult to deny all-pervading intelligence in relation to the living world of nature. Bishop Berkeley's conception of a universal mind, shorn of its theological implications, might be of theoretical assistance, although the mechanisms of its operation would have to be understood with particularity before such an idea could have scientific validity.

Rupert Sheldrake attacks the question directly:

> What exactly are morphogenetic fields? How do they work? Despite the widespread use of this concept within biology, there are no clear answers to these questions. Indeed, the nature of these fields has remained as mysterious as morphogenesis itself.
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> As might be expected, the fields have been interpreted in radically different ways, which reflect the three major philosophies of form. From the Platonic point of view, they represent changeless Forms or Ideas, which may in turn be thought of in a Pythagorean spirit as essentially mathematical. In an Aristotelian manner, they inherit most of the features of entelechies, and play a causal role in organizing the material systems under their influence. From a nominalist perspective, they merely provide convenient ways of describing the phenomena of morphogenesis, which are usually assumed to proceed entirely mechanistically. All these interpretations coexist within developmental biology, and sometimes the same author oscillates among them, even within a single paragraph. . . .
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> I believe that it is possible to go beyond these unsatisfactory ambiguities by taking into account what must be one of the most essential features of these fields: they have evolved. They have an inherently historical aspect. Organisms inherit them from their ancestors. . . .
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> The idea that morphogenetic fields contain an inherent memory is the starting-point for the hypothesis of formative causation. The reason I am putting it forward is that I think it could lead towards a genuinely evolutionary understanding of organisms, including ourselves. I do not believe that the only available alternative, the traditional mechanistic combination of materialism and Platonism, can do so because it is rooted in a pre-evolutionary conception of the universe, a conception that physics itself is in the process of superseding.

A great deal of this book is devoted to showing how and why earlier scientific explanations and theories have been abandoned. The writer, with a new and somewhat mysterious theory to propose, has no stake in the past and his account of the changes in scientific thinking is both thorough and lucid. In this way he shows how our minds are free to do some thinking for ourselves. This makes his book a valuable contribution. His own theory, that of morphic resonance as the origin of form, is neither "spiritual" nor materialistic, yet it affords a kind of instrumentalism which is not inconsistent with a broad philosophy of mind as the origin of all things. (We should remark here that his observations about the Platonic theory of Forms or Ideas are far from suggesting that Plato's meaning concerning these archetypal matters has been understood, but only that they have been interpreted in a certain way.) As to his own theory, he says:

> So far, this proposal merely makes explicit what has been explicit in the concept of morphogenetic fields all along. What is new in the hypothesis of formative causation is the idea that the structure of these fields is not determined by either transcendent ideas or timeless mathematical formulae but rather results from the actual forms of previous similar organisms.
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> In other words, the structure of the fields depends on what has happened before. Thus, for example, the morphogenetic fields of the foxglove species are shaped by influences from previous foxgloves. They represent a kind of pooled or collective memory of the species. Each member of the species is moulded by these species fields, and in turn contributes to them, influencing future members of the species.
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> How could such a memory possibly work? The hypothesis of formative causation postulates that it depends on a kind of resonance, called morphic resonance. Morphic resonance takes place on the basis of similarity. The more similar an organism is to previous organisms, the greater their influence on it by morphic resonance. And the more such organisms there have been, the more powerful their cumulative influence . . . According to the hypothesis of formative causation, morphic resonance occurs between such rhythmic structures of activity on the basis of similarity, and through this resonance past patterns of activity influence the fields of subsequent similar systems. Morphic resonance involves a kind of action at a distance in both space and time. The hypothesis assumes that this influence does not decline with distance in space or time.

What is the medium of transmission of morphic resonance? This is a question that has probably occurred to most readers. Sheldrake says that while we see light coming from stars at an immeasurable distance, "morphic resonance involves a different kind of action at a distance, which is harder to conceive of because it does not involve the movement of quanta of energy through any of the known fields of physics." Sheldrake has a brief passage on this:

> This raises the problem of the medium of transmission: how does morphic resonance take place through or across time and space? In answer to this question, we might imagine a "morphogenetic aether," or another "dimension," or influences passing "beyond"

space-time and then reentering. But a more satisfactory approach may be to think of the past as pressed up, as it were, against the present, and as potentially present everywhere. The morphic influences of past organisms may simply be present to similar organisms.

We are so used to the notion of immutable physical laws that we take them for granted; but if we pause to reflect on the nature of these laws, they are profoundly mysterious. They are not material things, nor are they energetic. They both transcend space and time and are, at least potentially, present in all places and at all times.

Although morphic resonance seems mysterious, the conventional theories seem no less so when we stand back and look at the remarkable assumptions they embody. The hypothesis of formative causation is not a bizarre metaphysical speculation that contrasts with a hard, empirical, down-to-earth theory of mechanism. The mechanistic theory depends upon assumptions that are, if anything, *more* metaphysical than the idea of formative causation.

It should be added that, in Sheldrake's view the morphic fields have creative power, and when need arises are able to devise new forms of behavior to meet the problems that arise. Finally, note should be taken of some background considerations in his thought. The writer makes no attempt to "explain" creativity. Evolution, he says, is more than a word describing a process; it also includes a creative principle.

New patterns of organization, new morphic fields, come into being as a result of this intrinsic creativity. But why should matter, energy, nature, life, or process be creative? This is inevitably mysterious. Not much more can be said than that it is their nature to be so.

When it comes to all-inclusive, primal questions, Sheldrake goes to the great philosophers of the past for help. Toward the end of his book there is this passage:

What could the idea of a primal, unified, universal field possibly mean?

The sceptic in all of us is inclined to think that it doesn't mean much. It is just another speculative theory that takes us beyond anything that we can directly observe. We are leaving empirical science behind us and entering the realm of metaphysics. There is no point in going further, for we will only enmesh ourselves in tangled webs of metaphysics.

If we do want to go further, we have to recognize that we are indeed in the field of metaphysics. For well over two thousand years, philosophers have discussed the source of pattern and order in the world, the nature of flux and change, the nature of space and time, and the relation of the changing world of our experience to eternity and changelessness. In one major tradition, rooted in the cosmology of Plato, these questions have been answered in terms of the *anima mundi*, the world soul, a conception not unlike the world field of modern cosmology. . . .

Just as the notion of the world field raises the problem of its relationship to eternal laws, so the notion of the world soul raises the problem of its relationship to the eternal realm of Ideas. For the neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus, these Ideas dwelt within what he called the Intelligence. The Intelligence differed from the Soul in possessing perfect self-awareness, and in contemplating the Forms themselves rather than the images of the Forms. Just as the Intelligence "like some huge organism contains potentially all other intelligences," so the Soul contains potentially all other souls.

And here Sheldrake goes on to quote from Plotinus. Sheldrake is not only a brilliant critic; he is also a synthesizer who shows new possibilities for scientific thought in areas where genuine freedom has become possible.

REVIEW
VISION FOR AMERICA AND THE WORLD

OUR most recent attention to Willis Harman, of the Institute of the Noetic Sciences, was in review of his book, *The Higher Creativity,* which we found very much worth reading. Our first encounter with him was in 1969 in reading in *Stanford Today* his article, "The New Copernican Revolution," which launched him on his present mode of thinking. What he then said serves well as introductory to his latest book:

> To whatever extent the science of the past may have contributed to a mechanistic and economic image of man, the new science of subjective experience may prove a counteracting force toward the ennobling of the image of the individual's possibilities, of the educational and socializing processes, and of the future. And if we have come to understand that science is not a description of reality, the new science does not impugn the old. It is not a question of which view is "true" in some ultimate sense. Rather, it is a matter of which picture is more useful in guiding human affairs. Among the possible images that are reasonably in accord with accumulated human experience, since the image held is that most likely to come into being, it is prudent to choose the noblest.
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> At a time when the nation may well be in its gravest peril in over a century, and Western civilization may hang in the balance, it could even come to pass that a new "Copernican revolution" might provide a missing balance in some four-century-old trends started by the first one.

We now have for review Willis Harman's most recent book, published this year by Knowledge Systems, *Global Mind Change,* in which he has matured his thinking. In his second chapter he presents the reader with some choices under the heading "Choose Your Metaphysics." He begins by saying:

> That a society's basic experiencing of reality shapes its science, as well as the reverse, may be a profoundly disturbing thought if one pursues its implications. We who have been educated in modern society naturally assume that our scientific view of reality is essentially correct and other "prescientific" or "primitive" views are wrong. But we have to consider the possibility that some of those other views are seen through other cultural windows, and emphasize other aspects of the total human experience; they are not so much wrong as complementary. There is also the possibility that some sort of "trans-modern" view in the future may be quite different from our own—and equally correct.

He now presents three metaphysical schemes:

> M-1. In the first of these, the basic stuff of the universe is matter-energy. We learn about reality from studying the measurable world. (The positivist assumption is that that is the only way we can learn.) Whatever consciousness is, it emerges out of matter (that is, the brain) when the evolutionary process has progressed sufficiently far. Whatever we can learn about consciousness must ultimately be reconciled with the kind of knowledge we get from studying the physical brain, for consciousness apart from a living physical organism is not only unknown, it is inconceivable.
>
> M-2. An alternate metaphysic is dualistic. There are two fundamentally different kinds of basic stuff in the universe: matter-energy stuff and mind-spirit stuff. Matter-energy stuff is studied with the present tools of science; mind-spirit stuff must be explored in other ways more appropriate to it (such as inner subjective exploration). Thus there develop, in essence, two complementary kinds of knowledge; presumably there are areas of overlap (such as the field of psychic phenomena).
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> M-3. Yet a third metaphysic finds the ultimate stuff of the universe to be consciousness. Mind or consciousness is primary, and matter-energy arises in some sense out of mind. The physical world is to the greater mind as a dream image is to the individual mind. Ultimately the reality behind the phenomenal world is contacted, not through the physical senses, but through the deep intuition. Consciousness is not the end-product of material evolution; rather, consciousness was here first! . . .
>
> The fundamental change which we are suggesting is happening in Western society can be put in terms of these metaphysics. Essentially, it is a shift of dominant metaphysic from M-1 to M-3. . . .

How does one set out to *prove* the validity of a metaphysic? Harman does not think this is a good idea. "Reality," he says, "is far too rich to be adequately captured in any conceptualization of it—any conceptualization whatever." Rather than seeking to determine which metaphysic is "true," we should ask ourselves, "Which one seems to make the best fit with the totality of human experience?" He then says:

> This is indeed a bold claim we are making, namely, that the M-1 dominance is declining, and the M-3 metaphysic is on its way to becoming the dominant metaphysic not only of this society, but of most of the world as well. The fact that no such fundamental change

has occurred in Western society since the Copernican revolution, nearly four centuries ago, suggests the aptness of the phrase "the second Copernican revolution." Whereas the original Coperican revolution reordered our concepts of outer space, this one is concerned with our understanding of *inner* space.

And he adds:

Remember, we are not arguing here that the M-3 metaphysic is *true*. We are merely trying to understand how it might be that some people—including some with rather sophisticated educational training—could have come to conclude that this way of seeing the world is more congenial to the totality of human experience than is the positivistic, reductionistic scientific worldview.

The balance of this book is largely devoted to a wide variety of human experience—medical, psychological, individual and collective—which only the M-3 scheme of things is able to account for, bringing this comment by the author:

The importance of the issues raised here can hardly be over-estimated. It can be indicated by one simple observation. We in modern society give tremendous prestige and power to our official, publicly validated knowledge system, namely science. It is unique in this position; none of the coexisting knowledge systems—not any system of philosophy or theology, nor philosophy or theology as a whole—is in a comparable position. Thus it is critically important—to an unparalleled degree—that our science is adequate. It is impossible to create a well-working society on a knowledge base which is fundamentally inadequate, seriously incomplete, and mistaken in basic assumptions. Yet that is precisely what the modern world has been trying to do.

If one takes seriously the implication that Western science is an artifact of Western society, based on implicit assumptions compatible with that society's basic reality outlook, it follows that the primary impetus for a fundamental change in its underlying assumptions will come not from scientists but from the surrounding culture. Indeed, we see much evidence over the past quarter century that such a force may be gathering. Thus the relevance of this critique as is much to the public at large as to the scientist. . . .

Thus we end this chapter with a conclusion that has the most profound implications for all societies: There appears indeed to be no conflict between a mature science and a mature religion. Indeed, we must seriously question whether we have a mature science as long as such conflict appears to exist.

In his concluding chapter Mr. Harman broadens the base of his argument to show that great historical changes of the past have taken place, not through the political decisions of leaders but by deep changes of attitude on the part of large numbers of people. He says:

Some of these changes have amounted to profound transformations—for instance the transition from the Roman empire to medieval Europe, or from the Middle Ages to modern times. Others have been more specific, such as the constitution of democratic governments in England and America, or the termination of slavery as an accepted institution. In the latter cases, it is largely a matter of people recalling that no matter how powerful the economic or political or even military institution, it persists because it has legitimacy, and that legitimacy comes from the perceptions of the people. People give legitimacy, and they can take it away. *A challenge to legitimacy is probably the most powerful force for change to be found in history . . .*

For the most important example of a political system based on M-3 principles, however, we need to look back two centuries to the early shaping of the United States of America. Most Americans seem aware that a particular embodiment of the "perennial wisdom," in the Freemasonry of the time, was a key factor in the American democratic experiment. The philosophy that underlies Freemasonry has gone by many names since its progenitor appeared in the Egyptian mystery religions. It was a behind-the-scenes influence throughout the development of Western civilization and in the latter half of the eighteenth century it played a leading role in the emergence of democratic philosophies of government. . . .

The most obvious evidence of this influence in the shaping of the United States is in its Great Seal, adopted in essentially its present form in 1782. . . .

The most obviously Masonic symbol is the uncompleted pyramid capped by a radiant triangle enclosing the All-seeing Eye, which occupies the center of the reverse side of the seal. . . .

The phrase *novus ordo seclorum* (from Vergil), meaning "A new order of ages is born," declares that this event is not just the formation of another nation but of a new spiritually based order for the world. . . . The power of these symbols on the collective psyche is such, however, that if the American nation is to regain its earlier position of moral leadership in the world it will be through an effort focused around these symbols and meanings, and no other.

We end our discussion of this excellent book here, with Willis Harman's hopeful prophecy.

COMMENTARY
A FORWARD STEP

IT becomes evident, in the material in this week's issue, that some kind of evolution of human beings is going on, but that its processes are slow and seem to be represented by a comparatively small number of pioneers—made up, we could say, of men like Arthur Morgan, and women like Simone Weil—individuals who are far in advance of the general population.

A conclusion of this sort gives to evolution a meaning very different from that assigned to this term by the biologists, who limit evolution to physical development of the species. Yet ordinary people, not very much affected by scientific theories, spontaneously regard any sort of progress by human beings as a step forward in evolution, regardless of the fact that the sciences have provided no theory for such development.

The long quotation from Arthur Morgan beginning on page one might be regarded as an effort to transform common sense into a form of science which takes into consideration the facts of experience and proposes the actual processes by which human relations may be actually improved.

The import of Morgan's thinking is that true human development is moral and ethical, as all ancient philosopher-sages have maintained. His idea of islands of brotherhood is indeed a key to the process of authentic human evolution, returning us to the teachings of men like Buddha, Plato, and the Neoplatonists, and proposing in effect a union of science and religion which has been lacking in Western culture since the seventeenth century.

The work of men like Rupert Sheldrake contributes to this revival by showing the limitations of conventional scientific theory and by his return without inhibition to the great philosophers of the past.

We have similar instruction from Willis Harman, whose latest book, *Global Mind Change*, has attention in this week's Review. The fundamental contribution of writers like Sheldrake and Harman is that they show that the modern mind is now free to choose for itself what sort of world we live in, and what may be the best foundation for thinking about the meaning of human life. As Harman says: "It is impossible to create a well working society on a knowledge base which is fundamentally inadequate, seriously incomplete, and mistaken in basic assumptions. Yet that is precisely what the modern world has been trying to do."

Harman follows this by saying that "the primary impetus for a fundamental change will come not from scientists, but from the surrounding culture." After a review of the most advanced scientific theory, which he is fitted by background and education to do, he says: "There appears indeed to be no conflict between a mature science and a mature religion. Indeed, we must seriously question whether we have a mature science as long as such conflict appears to exist."

The most important thing to note here is Harman's judgment that the impetus for change will come from human culture and not from the scientists. This means that we can no longer settle important questions by declaring "Science says," but must begin to rely on our own reflections.

This is likely to be upsetting to a great many people who have acquired the habit of relying on authority. Today that authority no longer exists. Yet this by no means implies that science is without value, but suggests that the rigor and devotion to fact practiced by genuine scientists has become an obligation of the members of the culture. They can no longer avoid thinking for themselves.

That is the kind of world we are slowly entering, and taking this step will constitute a major step in human evolution. We are certainly indebted to Mr. Harman for making this evident.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
HOLT ON THE RAMPAGE

JOHN HOLT often changed his mind. Usually, his reason for doing so was of particular interest, since he departed from the common beliefs of the time. For example, in *Escape from Childhood* he said:

> People who feel that they understand children and want to defend them often speak about them in a way that I used to agree with but now find more and more often confused, sentimental, or misleading. They tell us that a child needs "to be allowed to be a child" or "the freedom to be a child" or "to experience childhood." They say that a child needs "time to grow" or that he should live in a "child's world" so that he may experience himself as a "human being in his own right." They speak of people trying to "destroy childhood" or "take childhood away from children."
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> What is wrong with such words and ideas is that much of what they imply about children and childhood is not true, and what is true applies just as much to adults as to children. To whatever extent children really need what these words say they need, so do all the rest of us, young or old. To whatever extent we adults are denied those needs by the society and culture in which we live, so must children be denied them. When we say of children's needs, as of their virtues, that they belong only to children, we make them seem trivial, we invalidate them. What is more important we insure that they will not be met. For no amount of sentimentalizing or preaching will make a society provide for its young people a better quality of life than it provides for its adults. We fool ourselves if we think ways can be found to give children what all the rest of us so sorely lack.
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> "A child's world." "To experience childhood." "To be allowed to be a child." Such words seem to say that childhood is a time and an experience very different from the rest of life and that it is, or ought to be, the best part of our lives. It is not, and no one knows better than children. *Children want to grow up.* While they are growing up, they want, some of the time, to be around the kind of adults who like being grown up and who think of growing up as an exploration and adventure, not the process of being chased out of some garden of Eden. They do not want to hear older people say, as many people in the alternative school movement so often do, "These are the best years of your life; we are going to save them for you and keep the wicked world from spoiling them." What could be more discouraging? For they are going to grow up, whether they want to or not.

What Holt says about taking drugs may shock some readers, but he feels that many of the young pick up such habits from their parents. He writes:

> Those who say that young people should not be allowed to smoke or drink often say that they are too young to know better. Do those who are older know better? Have *they* stopped smoking? They have not. . . . Forty-two per cent of adult men and 30 per cent of adult women smoke cigarettes; no figures are given for other kinds of smoking. [This rate has gone down considerably in recent years.] If the problem is simply one of knowing what harm various drugs can do, we can easily tell people that when they are young. Even then there is not much evidence that warning children about the dangers of drugs will stop them from using them. Reports of so-called drug education programs in schools—which, by the way, say little about tobacco, alcohol, and coffee—and about the effect of these programs on young people show, first, that the young don't believe most of what adults tell them and, secondly, that what they do believe makes them curious about these drugs and eager to use them, perhaps on the theory that if the teachers and parents are all against them they can't be all bad. . . .
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> In any case, there is no reason to believe that telling children that they can't smoke until they are older will reduce their desire to do it, either at the time or when they are older. No one likes his first smoke . . . the taste is terrible. . . . It takes persistence to get this habit. Why do young people persist? Because it is a sign of being grown-up, in a world where there are few other signs. . . .
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> Our schools themselves have often helped to spread the use of drugs among the young. This is partly because as a meeting place for the young they are a center of supply. In that sense, we might say that the school has replaced the old corner drug store. . . . The school is itself often so boring, anxious, ugly, and punitive that many young people say they take drugs, right in the school building, just to help them get through the school days. . . .
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> In any case, laws controlling drug use by adults will probably do little good and much harm, and laws

denying to children the right to do what adults can do will have the same effect.

This book, *Escape from Childhood,* embodies Holt's idea of the rights of childhood. He begins one of his chapters:

> Young people should have two rights they do not now have. The first is the right to the full and equal protection of the law. The second is the right to choose to live as a fully legally and financially responsible citizen.
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> By the first I mean that children should receive all the protection against arbitrary action by others or by the state that due process and other provisions of the law give to adults and that in any situation the law should treat them no worse than it would an adult. Neither of these is now the case. Most people think that our law treats children more kindly or gently than adults because we want to make allowances for their youth and inexperience. The fact is that most of the time we treat them much *worse.* Large numbers of young people are in jails—that is, institutions which they are not free to leave and in which they are as a rule callously, brutally, and cruelly treated—not because they have *done* anything at all but because the state cannot find anyone who will give them the "love, concern, and so on" that they supposedly need. Still more young people are in jail for doing things which, if done by adults, are not crimes or even wrongs. And many young people who are in jail for real crimes are there much longer than would be an adult who had committed the same crime.

Holt devotes several pages to giving examples of cases of young people made subject to these conditions.

His chapter, "The Right to Control One's Learning," is of particular importance.

> Young people should have the right to control and direct their own learning, that is, to decide what they want to learn, and when, where, how, how much, how fast, and with what help they want to learn it. To be still more specific, I want them to have the right to decide if, when, how much, and by whom they want to be *taught* and the right to decide whether they want to learn in a school and if so which one and for how much of the time.
>
> No human right, except the right to life itself, is more fundamental than this A person's freedom of learning is part of his freedom of thought, even more basic than his freedom of speech. If we take from someone his right to decide what he will be curious about, we destroy his freedom of thought. We say, in effect, you must not think about what interests and concerns yon, but about what interests and concerns *us.*

Holt turns this conception into an argument against compulsory schooling, saying:

> The requirement that a child go to school, for about six hours a day, 180 days a year, for about ten years, whether or not he learns anything there, whether or not he already knows it or could learn it faster or better somewhere else, is such a gross violation of civil liberties that few adults would stand for it. But the child who resists is treated as a criminal. With this requirement we created an industry, an army of people whose whole work is to tell young people what they had to learn and to try to make them learn it. Some of these people, wanting to exercise even more power over others, to be even more "helpful," or simply because the industry is not growing fast enough to hold all the people who want to get into it, are now beginning to say, "If it is good for children for us to decide what they shall learn and to make them learn it, why wouldn't it be good for everyone? If compulsory education is a good thing, how can there be too much of it? Why should we allow anyone, of any age to decide that he has had enough of it? Why should we allow older people, any more than young, not to know what we know when their ignorance may have bad consequences for all of us? Why should we not *make* them know what they ought to know?"

"The Tyranny of Schooling" should be the title of this part of Holt's book.

FRONTIERS

Pierre Joseph Proudhon

THE best place to look for a working definition of Anarchism is in Peter Kropotkin's article on the subject in the eleventh edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica.* A second choice would be George Woodcock's *Proudhon,* since Proudhon, as Kropotkin says, "was the first to use, in 1840 (*What is Property?*) the name of Anarchy with application to the no-government state of society." Woodcock's life of Proudhon is now available in a new printing by Black Rose Books (3981 Boul. St. Laurent., Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2W 1YS) at $16.95 in paperback.

Proudhon (1809-1865) was born of peasant stock in Besançon. His father was a brewer and a tavern-keeper who sold excellent beer below the market price, making a deep impression on his young son. Throughout his youth he suffered from poverty, combining life as a printer with attempts at education. Soon after he was thirty he published his first book, *What is Property?* Of it Woodcock says:

> *What is Property?* opens with one of those bold passages which tended to become Proudhon's specialty in political writing. "If I were asked to answer the following question: "What is slavery?' and I should answer in one word, 'Murder!' my meaning would be understood at once. No further argument would be required to show that the power to take from a man his thought, his will, his personality, is a power of life and death, and that to enslave a man is to kill him. Why, then, to this other question: 'What is property?' may I not likewise answer, 'Theft'?"

For a great many readers, that is all that they remember of Proudhon—that he denounced property as theft. Woodcock makes an important comment:

> Hardly noticed at first, "Property is Theft" was to become one of the great phrases of the nineteenth century, bandied about between anarchists and conservatives, borrowed by socialists and communists, and suspended like a sensational placard above the popular image of its author. Ironically enough, Proudhon did not even mean literally what he said. His boldness of expression was intended for emphasis, and what he wished to be understood by *property* was what he later called "the sum of its abuses." He was denouncing the property of the man who uses it to exploit the labor of others without any effort on his own part, the property that is distinguished by interest, usury and rent, by the impositions of the non-producer upon the producer. Towards property regarded as "possession," the right of a man to control his dwelling and the land and tools he needed to work and live, Proudhon had no hostility; he regarded it as a necessary keystone of liberty, and his main criticism of the Communists was that they wished to destroy it.

Proudhon was the first man to call himself an anarchist.

> Others before him had attacked the idea of government and Godwin in *Political Justice* had made a detailed criticism of society which entitles him to be regarded as the first libertarian theoretician. . . . But Proudhon was the first man voluntarily to adopt this name of "anarchy" for the form of society he envisaged, and actually to mean by that word—philological stickler that he was—a society without government. . . . In its rejection of government and of accumulated property, in its advocacy of economic equality arid free contractual relationships between individual workers, *What is Property?* contains the basic elements of which all the later libertarian and decentralist theories—including even those of such maverick figures as Tolstoy and Wilde—have been built.

Interestingly, Proudhon was neither atheist nor materialist. Woodcock says:

> He saw men advancing beyond religion as they would advance beyond metaphysics, but the condition at which he saw them arriving, after they had cast away the childish trappings of the past, would by no means be the arid desert of the dogmatic materialist; rather, the spiritual life would burgeon into new and purer forms in man's realization of his own direct contact with that vast and final equilibrium of all the struggling forces of the universe which is called eternity.

Of equal interest, as he matured, was his growing interest in the arts.

> Proudhon's view of life, indeed, was always many-sided and never uncolorful. He wished to see a world where the rational organization of economic

and social problems would free the dynamic impulses for a more productive function in man's existence. The raising of the struggle of opposites on to a higher plane would lead to an intensification of intellectual activity, and so, while Proudhon concentrated his main effort on enunciating the primary principles of justice and determining the means by which they could be applied in social life, he also directed his attention into those fields of literature and the arts through which man's existence could be enlarged in scope and his understanding of himself and his environment illuminated. His early flirtation with drama had shown a leaning in this direction ... and in many pages of *Justice*, he had discussed various aspects of the relationship between literature and society. Now, in 1863, he turned, at Courbet's suggestion, towards the consideration of the visual arts within their social context.

It would be hard to imagine an artist more sympathetic to Proudhon than Courbet. Both were of Comtois peasant stock, and their friendship was of long standing. From 1848 onwards, Courbet was a constant companion of Proudhon and painted portraits of him, alone, and *en famille*, as well as a frank, coarse portrait of Euphrasie [Proudhon's wife] which she is said to have regarded with displeasure. . . . In his painting, in so far as he chose to transmit a message, it was the Proudhonian one of the dignity of labor and the degeneracy of those who prey upon it, while his style breaking with the conventions of the academicians as well as those of the romantics and classicists, had a robust and direct quality not unlike that of Proudhon's own prose. Proudhon saw his friend as a true representative in art of the best aspects of the age, and defined him as a "critical, analytical, synthetic and humanitarian painter" whose work displayed other aspects of what he himself had expressed in his theory of "imminent justice"; as an artist who belonged to the movement that would bring "the end of capitalism and the sovereignty of the producers."

In the conclusion of his book Woodcock says:

This is not the place to tell the chequered story of the anarchist movement from Proudhon's death (in 1865) down to our own day. It is a long and complex history, sometimes disturbing, sometimes pathetic, and often inspiring in the idealism of its thinkers and the dedication of its saints. It is sufficient perhaps to say that, though in many respects the anarchists departed—often with tragic results—from Proudhon's teachings, they always preserved his essential doctrines and fought for the destruction of the State and the reunion of humanity in a great federation of federations in which the rights and freedom of every region and every man would be guaranteed by mutual accord.