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THE ETHICAL SENSE

WE have on the wall of the MANAS office a picture taken in color from the *Book of the Dead,* the scripture of the ancient Egyptians, but we hardly knew what it meant until coming across a passage in an old book published in the last century. There it is explained that since Jesus was educated in Egypt and taught by the Essenes and other mystic communities, the *New Testament* teems with quotations from the *Book of the Dead*—made up of a large number of wall paintings—and that the Gospels contain many quotations from Egyptian rituals thousands of years old. This is the explanation of the picture, which shows the soul of a deceased Egyptian being led by Anubis before the judgment seat:

> The "soul" under trial is brought before Osiris, the "Lord of Truth," who sits decorated with the Egyptian cross, emblem of eternal life, and holding in his right hand the *Vannus* or the flagellum of justice. The spirit begins . . . an earnest appeal, and enumerates its good deeds, supported by the responses of the forty-two assessors—*its incarnated deeds and accusers.* If justified, it is addressed as *Osiris,* thus assuming the appellation of the Deity whence its divine essence proceeded, and the following words, full of majesty and justice, are pronounced: "Let the Osiris go, ye see he is without fault. . . . He lived on truth, he has fed on truth . . . *The god has welcomed him* as he desired. *He has given food* to *my hungry, drink* to *my thirsty ones, clothes to my naked.* . . . He has made the sacred food of the gods the meat of the spirits."

This text is doubtless a translation of the hieroglyphics which run along the top of the painting.

Becoming curious about the Egyptian teachings concerning the states after death, we pursued the subject, finding that the soul, unless completely pure and good, and was so found by Osiris, was conducted to the field of Aanroo, where it was allotted a piece of land to cultivate, growing corn seven cubits high. Here, as said in a hymn (xxxii, 9), "the deceased is either destroyed therein, or becomes a pure spirit for the Eternity, in consequence of the "Seven times seventy-seven lives passed or to be passed on earth." It is, one supposes, the dregs which are destroyed, while the spirit goes on to its other lives. The name of the broad region of life after death is Amenti, of which the fields of Aanroo are a subdivision.

Apparently the ancients, with hardly an exception, all believed in both an after-life and in reincarnation. That they lived thousands of years ago is not really an argument against such beliefs, since the materialism of the present time was a natural outgrowth of reaction against the dogmas of institutional religion and will in time die away as a rebirth of past beliefs takes place. What we must guard against is not an awakening of philosophical speculation, but rather a cycle of too easy extravagant belief, of which there are already many signs.

How is such extravagance to be avoided? One way would be to seek a transfer of scientific discipline from our study of the world of objectivity to the even wider area of metaphysics. We could begin by asking who or what it is that pursues inquiries of this sort. What, in short, is a human being? One workable answer would be to say: a center of consciousness, to which we need to add, a center of *self*-consciousness. To note that we are self-conscious is necessary because to know that we are gives us the power to distinguish between the self and the other. There is the self and there are all those things which are not the self. I am, for example, a center of awareness, and my awareness may be extended and improved by adopting a pair of spectacles, with which I am able to see more clearly, or, depending on the lens, much further than I normally see. So also with instruments of transport and construction. I am able to use all these instruments to my advantage, but they are not myself. The instruments extend my powers but they do not make me wiser, although they are likely to increase my efficiency in what I set out to do.

But how do I decide what to do? That is a fundamental question. It turns on a quality of my awareness: Do I have an ethical sense? I may or I may not have such a sense If I study the world and the people around me, I am likely to find, in some people, a strong ethical sense, but in others it does not seem to exist at all. How is this to be understood?

Throughout history there have been rare individuals whose ethical sense has been their most evident characteristic—the reason why we remember them, take note of their lives, and often teach our children about them. Yet we have trouble explaining them. It is here that a conception of immortality becomes extremely useful. We can say, that is, that the ethical geniuses of history have learned over many lives—many births or reincarnations—to recognize the importance of being ethical, of developing feelings of brotherhood and compassion for the rest of mankind.

What other way is there to explain their qualities? A comment by A. H. Maslow on this question seems appropriate here. At the beginning of his book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature,* he wrote:

> On the whole I think it fair to say that human history is a record of the ways in which human nature has been sold short. The highest possibilities of human nature have practically always been underrated. Even when "good specimens," the saints and sages and great leaders of history have been available for study, the temptation too often has been to consider them not human but supernaturally endowed.

We need reflect only a little to see how this devalues such individuals. A being who is "supernaturally endowed" has not achieved anything special. His excellences were *given* to him, not fought for and earned.

Maslow, we might note, devoted his life to the study of distinguished individuals. What he said about the value of this research is of general interest:

> It has been my experience through a long line of exploratory investigations going back to the thirties that the healthiest people (or the most creative, or the strongest, or the wisest, or the saintliest) can be used as biological assays, or perhaps I could say, as advanced scouts, or more sensitive perceivers, to tell us less sensitive ones what it is that we value. What I mean is something like this: It is easy enough to select out, for instance, persons who are aesthetically sensitive to colors and forms and then learn to submit ourselves or to defer to their judgment about colors, forms, fabrics, furniture, and the like. My experience is that if I get out of the way and do not intrude upon the superior perceivers I can confidently predict that what they like immediately, I will slowly get to like in perhaps a month or two. It is as if they were I, only more sensitized, or as if they were I, with less doubt, confusion, and uncertainty. I can use them, so to speak, as my experts, just as art collectors will hire art experts to help them with their buying. . . . I hypothesize also that such sensitives are less susceptible to fads and fashions than average people are.

The project, for Maslow, was the composition of Better Human Beings. How are they made? What sustains them? Can education help to produce them? He describes the small population of remarkable individuals which he studied throughout his life, and then locates some archetypal models from history that help him to understand his subjects. These are the essentials of his work.

In one place he asks:

> What if the organism is seen as having "biological wisdom"? If we learn to give it greater trust as autonomous self-governing, and self-choosing, then clearly we as scientists, not to mention physicians, teachers, or even parents must shift our image over to a more Taoistic one. This is the one word I can think of that summarizes succinctly the many elements of the image of the more humanistic scientist. Taoistic means asking rather than telling. It means nonintruding, noncontrolling. It stresses noninterfering observation rather than a controlling manipulation. It is receptive and passive rather than active and forceful. It is like saying that if you want to learn about ducks, then you had better ask the ducks instead of telling them. So also for human children. In prescribing "what is best for them" it looks as if the best technique for finding out what is best for them is to develop techniques for getting *them* to tell us what is best for them. . . .
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> This attitude implies a preference for spontaneity rather than for control, for trust in the organism rather than mistrust. It assumes that the

> person wants to be fully human rather than he wants to be sick, pained, or dead. . . . As a matter of fact some of us go so far as to consider masochism, suicidal impulses, self-punishment, and the like as stupid, ineffective, clumsy gropings toward health.
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> Something very similar is true for the new model of the Taoistic teacher, the Taoistic parent, the Taoistic friend, the Taoistic lover, and finally the more Taoistic scientist.

Not many individuals have given much thought to how the quality of society may be improved. Only a very few books deal with this subject. Here, we come back again and again to the small volume by Arthur Morgan, *The Long Road,* which came out in 1936. This book is filled with concern for what an individual may be able to do in behalf of the social community in which he lives and the country which is his larger home.

Morgan was a distinguished engineer and an educator and he learned much from both careers. He says in one place in *The Long Road:*

> There is scarcely any more effective means for bringing about social change than the "apostolic succession" that results from the ultimate association of persons of clear purpose and great commitment with small groups of young people. Leaders in business and in public life are men of exceptional native ability, who projected onto the larger scene of action the motives and methods they have acquired during early years. Although mature persons of good intelligence continue to profit by experience and responsibility, and grow as they work, yet for most of us the main drives of purpose and our fundamental ethical controls usually are carried over from youth. Thus the environment of childhood and youth actually determines the quality of the leadership of a few years later. If there exist throughout our country many homes, neighborhoods, schools, churches, colleges, and informal fellowships, within which such qualities of character as I have described are dominant, then out of such environment will emerge men and women who will give the same qualities to the management of business and government. In fact, I see no other source of leadership than such centers of influence, which may be ever so humble and unseen, and yet be potent. If such centers are lacking, then we shall continue to bemoan the lack of great leadership. There is a saying that in times of stress "the Lord will raise up a great leader." But such a leader is not suddenly "raised up." He has been silently building up his life for probably twenty years or more.
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> It is often true that the smaller the social unit in which one works, the greater is the possibility of creating and maintaining a highly distinctive quality of excellence. In the intimate associations of a home or small community, qualities of good will, fair dealing, and unselfish cooperation may be developed with a completeness that would be very difficult in an organization including hundreds of people with many divergent outlooks. In a small industry employing ten persons it may be possible to select employees or associates with such care, and to have such intimate relations with them, as to secure a high degree of agreement and commitment to exceptionally exacting standards, commitment which may persist as the organization grows; whereas, if the industry were initiated on a larger scale, it might be impossible to develop the same completeness of mutual understanding and the same capacity for appreciation and cooperation among employees and executives.
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> There is very good reason to wonder whether the Christian religion would have emerged if there had been a thousand apostles instead of twelve. It was with some insight that William James said, "I am done with great things and big things, great institutions and big success, and I am for those tiny, invisible, molecular moral forces that work from individual to individual, creeping through the crannies of the world like so many soft rootless, or like the capillary oozing of water, yet which, if you give them time, will rend the hardest monuments of man's pride."
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> The necessity for working out our pattern of life on a small scale need not be looked upon as a limitation. It may be the very condition that makes success possible.

Only one other writer, E. F. Schumacher, has given an emphasis of this sort to size. In an article in the May-June 1975 *Resurgence* he wrote:

> Excessive size not only produces the dilemma of administration, it also makes many problems virtually insoluble. To illustrate what I mean, imagine an island of 2,000 inhabitants—I have in mind an island of this size which a little while ago demanded total sovereignty and independence. Crime on such an island is a rarity; maybe there is one single full-time policeman, maybe there is none. Assume, however, that some crimes do occur, that some people are sent to jail, and that they return from jail at the rate of one person a year. There is no difficulty in reintegrating

this one ex-prisoner into the island's society. Someone, somewhere, will find this person a room to live in and some kind of work. No problem.

The British Isles contain not 2,000 but 50 million inhabitants, and the number of people returning from prison every year is about 25,000. Arithmetic teaches us that 2,000: 1 equals 50 million: 25,000. . . .

The problem of reintegrating 25,000 ex-prisoners into a society 25,000 times as large as that of the little island is quite a different problem, not only quantitatively but also qualitatively, a problem the solution of which escapes the devoted efforts of the Home Office, Probation Service, and countless other organizations. Is it a matter of proportionately too little effort and money being devoted to this task of reintegration and rehabilitation? Could we solve the problem by having bigger prisoners' aid organizations, more people, and more money? Maybe we can; maybe we cannot. But the point is that the small island does not have the problem. The engine, as it were, is small enough to consume its own smoke. Or we might say: *People's power prevents the problem from becoming a problem.*

This, surely, is a matter of breathtaking importance. People's power doesn't solve problems: it avoids them. Of course, some work is needed to avoid problems; but this is the kind of work which people want to do. They want to do it because, to become real, they need to do it. They need to follow their moral impulses; they need to render service to their fellows, and they need to be creatively productive. So, when we need something, we do not expect to be paid for it. On the contrary, there are countless people who say: "This is what I want to do; I don't expect payment for it, I don't even want my expenses back: it is what I want to do."

The question is: How can people's power be "liberated"? By going for the small, the human, scale. I do not wish to be dogmatic on this because I do not know how to define what, in any particular instance, is the "human scale." When many people are doing exactly the same thing—as for instance in a large orchestra with twenty first violins and twenty second violinists, etc.—the proper scale, expressed in numbers, will undoubtedly be different from that of a team in which everybody is doing something different from everybody else. So there is no easy, generalized answer. It is, as they say, "Horses for courses." But it is horses for courses, it is not the bigger the better, which is the all too common assumption of the modern world. . . .

What, precisely, is the right scale, I cannot say. We should experiment to find out.

Here Schumacher has offered a design solution. He postulates that all human beings have moral feelings and impulses and he wants organized human efforts to be arranged so that these moral impulses have play and room for exercise, and also the freedom to be exercised.

What about the communication and spread of moral ideals and conceptions of behavior? According to Arthur Morgan, the small scale of community and family life is the best environment for speaking of and transmitting the qualities of human character. What then is "character"? Morgan has a partial answer to this question, and an answer that can never be more than partial. He says in *The Long Road:*

When I use the word "character" I have in mind three elements. First is purposefulness, or the pattern of desire—the vision of the life it would be well to lead, of the kind of a world which, so far as wisdom, judgment, and good will can determine, it would be well to live in.

Second, I include good will and the skilled and disciplined drive of desire which presses toward the realization of aims and purposes. Great insight into what would constitute a good life for one's self and for society has value only as expressed in well-considered action. . . .

The third factor is the ethical or moral quality, the habitual choice of means that are wholesome in their own effects. Even when the desired end is good and the disciplined energy great, it is important that the methods used shall be in themselves ethical or moral. . . .

That is an ethical act which is good when judged by its total consequences—which is good for the future as well as for the present, for society as a whole as well as for ourselves.

Morgan has more to say on this, and we might all think of things to add, the question being one that can have no complete answer. Yet he has given us a good answer, one that is quite adequate for those who recognize that they must find their own way in this direction.

REVIEW
ON OLIVE SCHREINER

WE had always thought of Olive Schreiner (1855-1920) as simply a fine and distinguished writer, but now, with publication of *An Olive Schreiner Reader* (edited by Carol Barash, published by Pandora Press, 1987, $12.95, paperback), we learn that she is widely regarded as a feminist writer. This in no way diminishes her excellence, but it seems to reduce the appeal of the selections reprinted by the editor. Her "feminism," in short, is simply the natural conclusion of her quality of mind, to be wholly expected, and not something to be microscopically argued about, as some present-day critics seem to think.

Yet for the reader who has for years admired and cherished Olive Schreiner's work, this book is of interest in widening the scope of her writing. One development in particular is worth reading—the book on pacifism she was working on when she died in 1920. The Introduction to this book is included in the *Reader.* In its second paragraph she writes:

> There are many ways in which a man at the present day may conscientiously object to war. His forebears may have been objectors and have handed down to him a tradition which, from his earliest years, has impressed on him the view that war is an evil, not to be trafficked with. His ancestors may have been imprisoned and punished by the men of their own day, for holding what were then entirely new and objectionable views, but, where once a man can prove that he holds any opinions as a matter of inheritance and that they are shared by a certain number of his fellows under a recognized collective name, the bulk of human beings in his society may not agree with him, may even severely condemn him and desire to punish him but, since the majority of human creatures accept their politics, their religion, their manners and their ideals purely as a matter of inheritance the mass of men who differ from him are, at least, able to understand *how* he comes by his views. They do not regard him as a monstrosity and an impossibility, and are able to extend to him in some cases a certain limited tolerance; he comes by his views exactly as they come by theirs, and in so far they are able to understand him.

Then, after giving consideration to those who find reason to object to taking part in a particular war—"based on a mistaken judgment of the national interest"—she goes on:

> But a man may object to war in another and far wider way. His objection to it may not be based on any hereditary tradition, or on the teaching of any organized society, or of any of the great historic figures of the past; and, while he may indeed object to any definite war for certain limited and material reasons, these are subordinate to the real ground on which his objection rests. He may fully recognize the difference in type between one war and another; between a war for dominance, trade expansion, glory, or the maintenance of Empire, and a war in which a class or race struggles against a power seeking permanently to crush and subject it or in which a man fights in the land of his birth for the soil on which he first saw light, against the strangers seeking to dispossess him; but, while recognizing the immeasurable difference between these types (exactly as the man who objects to private murder must recognize the wide difference between the man who stabs one who has a knife at his throat and the man who slow-poisons another to obtain a great inheritance), he is yet an objector to all war. And he is bound to object, not only to the final expression of war in the slaying of men's bodies; he is bound to object, if possible, more strongly to those ideals and aims and those institutions and methods of action which make the existence of war possible and inevitable among men. . . .
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> This is the man, often not belonging to any recognized religion, not basing his conviction on the teaching of authority external to himself, whom it appears so difficult, if not impossible, for many persons, sometimes even of keen and critical intellectual gifts, to understand.

In a very different mood, the story, "Eighteen Ninety Nine," is told "from the perspective of nameless women who do not fight, but who repeatedly lose their lovers and children to war." Along in this story, a boy of eight or nine is living with his mother and his grandmother. He loved both dearly and liked especially the stories the grandmother told him.

> The story he loved best, and asked for more often than all the others made his grandmother wonder, because it did not seem to her the story a child would best like, it was not a story of lion-hunting, or wars, or adventures. Continually when she asked what she should tell him, he said, "About the mountains."
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> It was the story of how the Boer women in Natal when the English Commissioner came to annex their country, collected to meet him and pointing toward the Drakens Berg Mountains said, "We go across those mountains to freedom or to death!"

More than once, when she was telling him the story, she saw him stretch out his little arm and raise his hand, as though he were speaking.

One evening as he and his mother were coming home from the milking kraals, and it was getting dark, and he was very tired, having romped about shouting among the young calves and kids all the evening, he held her hand tightly.

"Mother," he said suddenly, "when I am grown up, I am going to Natal."

"Why, my child?" she asked him, "there are none of our family living there now."

He waited a little, then said, very slowly, "I am going to go and try to get our land back!"

His mother started; if there were one thing she was more firmly resolved on in her own mind than any other it was that he should never go to the wars.

That night the child sat so quietly that his grandmother thought he had gone to sleep.

Suddenly he said without looking up, "Grandmother?"

"Yes."

He waited rather a long time, then said slowly, "Grandmother, did God make the English too?"

She also waited for a while, then she said, "Yes, my child: He made all things."

They were silent again, and there was no sound but of the rain falling and the fire cracking and the sloot rushing outside. Then he threw his head backwards on to his grandmother's knee and looking up into her face said, "But grandmother, why did He make them?"

Then she too was silent for a long time. "My child," at last she said, "we cannot judge the ways of the Almighty. He does that which seems good in His own eyes."

The child sat up and looked back at the fire. Slowly he tapped his knee . . . once or twice . . . and soon the mother started wide awake and said it was time for all to go to bed.

The next morning . . ."Grandmother," he said suddenly in a small, almost shrill voice, "do the English want *all* the land of *all* the people?"

The handle of his grandmother's knife as she cut clinked against the iron side of the basin. "All they can get," she said.

When the time came the boy went off to war and soon was killed. The women grieved inconsolably.

This is the theme of the story.

Near one of the camps in the Northern Transvaal are the graves of the two women. The older one died first . . . from hunger and want; the younger woman tended her with ceaseless care and devotion till the end. A week later when the British Superintendent came round to inspect the tents she was found lying on her blanket on the mud-floor dead, with the rations of bread and meat she had got four days before untouched on a box beside her. Whether she died of disease, or from inability to eat the food, no one could say. Some who had seen her said she hardly seemed to care to live after the old woman died; they buried them side by side.

There is no stone and no name upon either grave to say who lies there . . . our unknown . . . our unnamed . . . our forgotten dead.

There is a kind of postscript to this story, part of which is as follows:

In a London drawing-room the descendant of a long line of titled forefathers entertains her guests. It is a fair room, and all that money can buy to make life soft and beautiful is there.

On the carpet stands a little dark wooden stoof. When one of her guests notices it, she says it is a small curiosity which her son brought home to her from South Africa when he was out in the war there; and how good it was of him to think of her when he was away in the back country. And when they ask what it is, she says it is a thing Boer women have as a footstool to keep their feet warm; and she shows the hole at the side where they put the coals in, and the little hole at the top where the heat comes out. . . . It is grandmother's stoof, that the child used to sit on.

In "Women and War," which Olive Schreiner wrote in 1911, she spoke as a woman:

It is especially in the domain of war that we, the bearers of men's bodies, who supply its most valuable munition, who, not amid the clamor and ardor of battle, but singly, and alone, with a three-in-the-morning courage, shed our blood and face death that the battlefield may have its food, a food more precious to us than our heart's blood; it is we, especially, who in the domain of war, have our word to say, a word no man can say for us. It is our intention to enter into the domain of war and to labor there till in the course of generations we have extinguished it.

COMMENTARY
THE MORAL STRUGGLE

THE idea proposed in the lead article, on page one, that human beings are centers of consciousness, seems basic to any serious inquiry into the meaning of human life. It is true enough that we have physical bodies and that we are often animated by hungers and passions, but in the most admirable of humans these motives are subordinate to higher aims. The ancients called this conflict within human beings "the moral struggle."

In modern times this struggle has been displaced by other contentions, chiefly by the effort to accumulate wealth, so that the goal of moral excellence has been largely ignored. Yet the fact remains that when we encounter persons of exceptional decency and kindness, as well as practical wisdom, we are deeply impressed by their behavior and point to their attitudes as exemplary of what people ought to do. This is our recognition of the presence of the ethical sense, at the root of our awareness of good and evil and right and wrong.

What is the essential character of the ethical sense? The quotation on page seven from Arthur Morgan's *The Long Road,* giving his understanding of the word "character," comes close to being a practical definition of ethics. In more general terms, we could say that the ethical sense is based on the inner realization that we are all parts of one another, that the ethical act is an act that is good for all and harms no one.

What is an act that is "good for all"? It is not an act that caters to weakness, shallow conceit, or egotism, and for this reason may not be an act that achieves popularity. It will be more like the act of a wise parent, who wants his child to generate strength and self-reliance, who knows when to give practical help and when to withhold it. This immediately distinguishes the parent from the politician, since the politician wants votes more than he wants people to develop wisdom of their own.

The more we think along these lines, the more evident it becomes that wisdom cannot be made into rules, which is one good reason why wisdom cannot be transferred from one individual to another. Borrowing from Arthur Morgan, we may say that wisdom brings "the habitual choice of means that are wholesome in their own effects." Wisdom can be expressed in abstract terms, but its application to particular situations calls for a kind of knowledge that can hardly be generalized except abstractly. The best we can do is to recognize wisdom after it has been applied, and often years must pass before this becomes possible for most of us.

How does one develop wisdom? Only by consistent self-reliance. It is like developing a sense of responsibility, which grows only by *taking* responsibility. Yet taking responsibility before one is ready for it may lead to immeasurable folly. This teaches us that we need to begin by taking small responsibilities at the start, so that one gains insight into what one is able to do and what he had better not attempt. Good judgment in matters of this sort is commonly known as maturity. The wise man or woman will want maturity before anything else, which is doubtless the reason why there are so few wise persons in the world. It is also the reason why unselfishness is a requirement of maturity.

Unselfishness is the equivalent of forgetfulness of self, gained by the feeling that we all have a common origin—in consciousness. It is in consciousness that we really live our lives; our bodies are only part of the apparatus of living on earth. But we are hardly able to realize this except as we become aware that there is within us the thread of an immortal being which will come to full consciousness when we acquire knowledge of the self within. The brotherhood we proclaim as our ideal will be realized in the same way.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
VARIOUS REPORTS

IN *Growing Without Schooling* No. 61, a mother in California writes:

> My daughter Erin learned to read by the time she was five. We never taught her to read. One day she just did it. John Holt said it happened that way, and other parents told me that their children learned to read like that, too. So I trusted her to learn, and she did, and she does. She will now attempt to read anything, even adult books.
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> When I think of how I learned to read, my feelings are so different. There was no joy in my formal early learning experiences. I remember when I was Erin's age, in first grade, sitting in my classroom looking at a giant poster attached to the blackboard. On the poster were huge words at least six inches high. They said (the teacher told us), "See Spot run. See, see, see." I remember these words only because they were in the same place, at the same time, for who knows how long. Now, you might think my overriding, reaction to such an experience would be boredom. Wrong! It was terror. I remember thinking, "How can I ever learn to read, when I don't even know what those words say? I only know what the teacher tells me they say, but I can't read them myself."
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> For years, even through four years of university work, this is how I felt about reading. I lived in constant fear that I wouldn't understand what I read, that I would miss something, that I couldn't pass the test. Even the grades I received as rewards for my efforts did not waylay my fear of failure. The only reason I could get those A's was because I was terrified not to.
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> I learned to relax about reading from my children. I have always loved books, but rarely had time to read what I wanted. When I nursed my babies, I had a free hand, time to sit and think, time to read. I devoured books as my babies fed and slept at my breast. I read every child-rearing manual in the library, any mystery that looked even vaguely interesting, one thousand-page novels that took me less than a week to digest. I was that hungry to read. Previously, I had only felt such exuberance for the printed word when I was on summer vacation.

A mother in Pennsylvania tells this story:

> My daughter Shari had a speech problem until we took her out of school in the fifth grade. The school never recognized her problem, because she always scored high on the reading tests and was put in the highest reading group. Her problem was an inability to put words into sentences and to express herself orally. Listening to her stammer and struggle to get an idea across at the supper table was painful. It was so very frustrating to her because we are a very verbal family, discussing any number of topics in an evening, and she felt left out much of the time. She was beginning to think her thoughts were not worth the effort it took to express them.
>
> When we began to homeschool, I sat down with Shari and we talked about her problem. It was painful for her and a few tears were shed, but I explained that her problems communicating were not a reflection of her intelligence or her worth as a person. Then the question was, "How do we fix it?" We decided that reading aloud would be a good first step. I could never understand how Shari could be in the highest reading group in school when she read aloud so poorly. But I'm glad she didn't receive any help in school. I believe it would have done more harm to her already fragile self-esteem.
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> We sat down to read aloud to each other. She listened to me read poetry and then she read it. Then we went on to prose. She felt the rhythm and flow of the words and gradually began to read much better. I'm sure the relaxed attitude of our home school helped us overcome her problem. The rest of us had more patience with her and gave her more time to express herself.
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> Shari just read this and said she feels that another important help was the fact that when she began homeschooling she began to read for enjoyment. Up until then, reading was just another school assignment. She only read so as not to get in trouble with her teachers. She didn't enjoy it and often got headaches when she read. I encouraged her to read just for enjoyment—no book reports or questions asked afterward. She loves to read now and feels it has helped her in many ways.

And now we have a contribution by Shari:

> I'm 13. Since I started homeschooling full time three years ago, I feel I am respected more by others because I can express myself better. Before I started homeschooling especially in the last two years of public school, no matter what I wanted to say I could never find the right words. I would stumble around trying to talk and making, no sense at all. The harder

I tried, the more frustrated I got. One of the most exasperating things was watching the people around me trying to understand me. More than once I stopped and said, "It isn't important."

Now my sister and I have spoken to relative strangers (something I never dared to do before). They are surprised that we don't talk like a "Valley Girl" about fashions, dating, etc.

I usually don't mind not being allowed to do something because I'm too young. It doesn't bother me that I can't vote until I'm 18 because even if I am able to make a good judgment (which I'm not sure I can), not all teenagers younger than 18 would be able to make a good decision and take it seriously. I don't think all 18 year olds can make a good decision either. Just because they're 18 doesn't mean all of a sudden they're mature enough.

What bothers me most is that adults and even other teens tell teenagers what they have to be. We're told it's normal to not get along with your family, and that you're weird if you do. Kids who enjoy learning are called nerds who can't relate to anything but a computer.

It disgusts me that this is all that is expected of kids my age .I'm tired of things kids are told they "have to have," and what they "have to look like." Being put into a category as a stupid, giggly, boring teenager (as that's all a lot of people think of when they hear "teenager") irritates me much more than not being able to do something because I'm not allowed. I don't wear designer clothing, starve myself or argue with my family because someone says I should. I'm glad that I'm able to express myself well enough to say this.

A mother in Tennesee writes:

These past several months Nathaniel (9) has listened to *The Magic Flute* every day for hours on end (I finally had to insist he use the headphones). He can now sing whole long sections in German and even tell what they mean in English. His learning style (like mine) seems to be total immersion in whatever happens to capture his interest. Then it's on to something new with the same intensity. I often remember how desperately bored he was in school and how his first grade report cards would come home with the comment, "Poor concentration. Does not use work time wisely." If that teacher only knew!

Three years ago a Minnesota farmer, Dick Gallien, offered the job of looking after his farm to readers of *Growing Without Schooling,* and one family, Larry Blake, his wife and three children, applied and got the job. Larry Blake reports:

. . . we've been here eight weeks. My wife Maureen and I, along with Matt (11), Ben (7) and Mandy (3), have begun settling down to life on the farm. It's not a "working" farm as it once was, with dairy cows and other livestock, but there is much to be done and learn about together as we prepare for our first winter here. The wood-burning furnace keeps us toasty warm inside the house, as long as we keep the woodshed well supplied. This is a chore not easily appreciated by the uninitiated city-dweller. Up and down the wooded hills we go, with a tractor-driver flat-bed trailer and our sometimes reluctant chain-saw. When we returned from our first venture, exhausted but proud of the fruits of our labor, we were greeted by Dick's wry smile and comment, "No need to bring 'er back until she's loaded with two or three times that amount.". . .

Dick extends an open invitation to visitors, especially homeschoolers and supporters of homeschooling. The nicest times of the year are spring and fall, Dick says, but you are welcome any time of the year. In the spring we hope to plant a respectable garden, and a garden can always use extra hands to tend it and share in the harvest. And there's always exploring: a hike in the woods, a walk along the creek, a night in the cabin. If any of this appeals to you, or if you are just curious about how we as a family made the decision to come here, please write us at the Winona Farm, c/o Dick Gallien, Rt. 2, Box 279, Winona, Minn. 55987

What kind of work does Larry Blake do now? "At present I do about twenty hours of announcing at a local radio station."

FRONTIERS

The Need For Trees

WHILE we have already given some review attention to the volume, *State of the World 1988,* one chapter, "Reforesting the Earth," by Sandra Postel and Lori Heise, calls for particular notice. These writers point out that although at present forests cover some 40 per cent of the land of the earth, and tree-planting efforts during recent decades have increased the supply of marketable timber, pulp, and fuelwood for cities, there has been a vast neglect of reforestation "for reasons that lie outside the monetized economy." Early in this chapter they say:

> Yet trees quite literally form the roots of many natural systems. With the inexorable march of deforestation, the ecological integrity of many areas is disintegrating—causing severe soil loss, aggravating droughts and floods, disrupting water supplies, and reducing land productivity.
>
> Trees are also a vital component of the survival economy of the rural poor. Hundreds of millions of people rely on gathered wood to cook their meals and heat their homes. For them, lack of access to wood translates into reduced living standards and, in some cases, directly into malnutrition. In addition, trees and soils play a crucial role in the global cycling of carbon, the importance of which has been magnified by the emergence of carbon dioxide-induced climate change as arguably the most threatening environmental problem of modern times.

It is essential to recognize, these writers point out, that it may be quite difficult to persuade the large number of people who are needed to cooperate in restoring the forests of the earth. They say:

> Successfully reforesting large areas of degraded lands . . . will require much more than financial commitments from governments and international lending agencies. It will take a shift in emphasis from government foresters establishing and maintaining commercial plantations to the much more complex tasks of starting nurseries in thousands of villages and encouraging the planting of multipurpose trees along roads, on farms, and around houses. Only by garnering the knowledge, support, and human energy of rural people themselves—and planting to meet their basic needs—is there any hope of success.

The decimation of the forests of Europe began a long time ago. France was once 80 per cent forested, but by 1789 trees covered only 14 per cent of its territory. And England, by the middle of the seventeenth century, was obliged to look around the world for ship timbers needed to maintain its leading position at sea.

Reliable information, we learn, is often hard to get. The best source of figures, these writers say, is studies by the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). They report:

> The most worrisome finding of FAO's assessment was that tropical trees were being cut much faster than reforestation or nature were replacing them. For tropical regions as a whole, 11.3 million hectares were cleared annually in the early eighties, while only 1.1 million hectares of plantations were established. Thus 10 hectares were being cleared for every 1 planted. In Africa the ratio was 29 to 1; in Asia 5 to 1. Even these alarming figures probably underestimate the extent of the forest loss in particular regions, since tree planting is often highly concentrated, while cutting is widespread.
>
> Recent data for individual countries suggest that forest cover trends in some regions are even bleaker than FAO's sobering assessment indicates. Satellite imagery of five states in Brazil, for example, shows that deforestation in parts of the Amazon has proceeded much faster than estimates for the entire region suggest.

In short, loss of forest cover in tropical countries is rampant. The chief cause is conversion of forest to cropland.

> Population growth, inequitable land distribution, and the expansion of export agriculture have greatly reduced the area of cropland available for subsistence farming, forcing many peasants to clear virgin forest to grow food. These displaced cultivators often follow traditions of continuous cropping that are ill suited for fragile forest soils. Eventually, the soils become so depleted that peasant colonists must clear more forest to survive.

The lack of firewood has become a major disaster in several parts of the world.

> In rural parts of the Himalayas and the African Sahel, women and children spend between 100 and 300 days a year gathering fuelwood. Boiling water becomes an unaffordable luxury, and quick-cooking cereals replace more nutritious but slower-cooking foods, such as beans. Where fuelwood is critically scarce, people often have no choice but to divert dried dung and crop residues from fields to cookstoves, a practice that diminishes soil fertility and depresses crop yields. In Nepal, for example, this diversion reduces grain yields an estimated 15 per cent.

How can the peasants be persuaded to plant trees? The writers say:

> To outsider observers, it seems irrational for people faced with an energy crisis to be reluctant to plant trees for fuel. But for most rural dwellers in the Third World, fruit, poles, fodder, and shade are higher priorities. They know that wood, in the form of trimmings and dead branches, will be a secondary benefit of planting for these other purposes. Moreover, people do not always perceive the national "fuelwood gap" that so concerns energy planners. They may be cutting wood over and above a sustainable level, yet still not be experiencing an unacceptable shortage. And in rural areas where fuelwood is not part of the cash economy, the cost of increasing scarcity is measured in women's time, something that may have little value to male decision-makers.

The solutions for all such problems proposed in this chapter are especially interesting. The authors say:

> As indicated earlier, experience has shown that local people need economic incentives and the expectation of short-term gains to support and participate in tree planting efforts. A successful strategy for rehabilitating uplands in Nepal, for example, involving transferring control of forest land from the government to village organizations called panchayats, and paying local people to plant fodder grasses and trees, thus giving them an immediate incentive to join in. . . .
>
> Tree planting programs are most effective when local people are involved in their planning and implementation and perceive their own interest in success. If fodder is a critical need, for example, a project that promotes a nonbrowsable species like eucalyptus will receive little popular support. Knowledge of villagers' access to cash, seasonal patterns of labor, and preferences for tree species is also crucial. Designing a reforestation project without local input is like letting a doctor prescribe treatment without asking the patient what hurts.