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ONE KIND OF CHANGE

THERE are so many changes, these days, in the way that people think and feel that it has become easy—and therefore conventional—to speak of the great "transition" affecting our lives, and then to develop some argument or theme in which one is especially interested. Actually, there is not much else that a writer can do. The changes are proceeding at every level of our lives—physical, emotional, psychological, and philosophical. Nothing is left out. Yet some changes are more decisive in their effect than others. These, it seems reasonable to say, deserve primary attention for the reason that they are likely to have a profound influence on the other changes, giving them color and moral character.

First in importance is what we think about ourselves. Here the argument—and it *is* an argument, one which has always gone on, but in our time seems greatly intensified—has to do with the origin of our resources as human beings. Do they rise from within or are they acquired from without? Most of the arguments about religion turn on this question. The mystics and pantheists—and in secular life the self-reliant souls—say our resources come from within, while the architects of sectarian formations insist that we are inherently incomplete, imperfect, and ultimately helpless, requiring the intervention of some outside God or force to secure our salvation and, indeed, our well-being.

In what we think of as scientific thought, the polarity is less clearly defined, but it exists. The argument, earlier in this century, between the Vitalists and the Mechanists in biology is an illustration. The mechanists insisted that every evolutionary change and biological process would ultimately be explained in terms of chemical reactions and physical laws, while the vitalists held that living things manifest *organic* intelligence not evident in the elements of matter. Bergson called this synthesizing power *élan vital*. Other scientific exponents of Vitalism were Hans Driesch and Edmund Sinnott.

Transferred to the scene of culture, this argument became the issue between the economists who find it suitable and scientific to divide the human race into consumers and producers, and their opponents, now rapidly growing in number, who maintain that such classification of human beings makes dehumanization into a professional activity. Men and women and children, these critics say, are much more than their economic activity, and culture and learning which ignore the higher qualities of human beings will go down in self-defeat.

The question of human origins is essential in this argument. Charles Darwin set the issue for modern times with his famous conclusion: "Man is derived from some member of the Simiidae [apes]," and Benjamin Disraeli, brilliant and debonair prime minister under Queen Victoria, replied:

> The question is this: is man an ape or an angel? I am on the side of the angels. I repudiate with indignation and abhorrence these newfangled theories.

Darwin, of course, aided by his expert controversialist champion, Thomas H. Huxley, won the argument, and generation after generation of schoolchildren have been saturated with belief in shambling, beetle-browed apes as their ancestors, despite the contrary evidence presented by anthropologists—such as Darwin's contemporary de Quatrefages, who declared that there were more scientific reasons to trace the ape from man than man from the anthropoid; and, much later, by Frederic Wood Jones, eminent British anatomist, who ended his book, *Hallmarks*

of Mankind (Williams & Wilkins, 1948), by saying:

> If the Primate forms immediately ancestral to the human stock are ever to be revealed, they will be utterly unlike the slouching, hairy, "ape men" of which some have dreamed and of which they have made casts and pictures during their waking hours; and they will be found in geological strata antedating the heyday of the great apes.

Yet such objections had little or no effect. Darwin's doctrine remained supreme, causing the influential historian, James Harvey Robinson, to say, in his well-known book, *The Mind in the Making,* that our minds began with "no more than an ape is able to know," although he added this admission:

> Of mankind in this extremely primitive condition we have no traces. . . . Man in "a state of nature is only a presupposition, but a presupposition which is forced on us by compelling evidence, conjectural and inferential though it is.

The continuing strength of this "presupposition" was shown by Henry Anderson in a critical review in MANAS (May 6, 1970) of five popular and widely circulated books founded on the ape-origin belief. (They were *African Genesis* by Ardrey, *The Naked Ape* and *The Human Zoo* by Desmond Morris, *On Aggression* by Konrad Lorenz, and Ardrey's later volume, *The Territorial Imperative*.) "Why," Anderson asked, "did the 'killer ape' books sell hundreds of thousands of copies, while Fromm's *Revolution of Hope,* for example, sold only a few thousand?" Discussing both the assumptions and the "liberating" effect of these volumes, Anderson wrote:

> . . . at bottom, the appeal is the same as that advanced by other dehumanists at other times and in other places: you had best jettison that sentimental nonsense about free will, and get in step with your biologically ordained destiny. You are only a very intricate machine, and by trying to be something more, you are just short-circuiting your computer program, and making yourself miserable.
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> Are Jews and Arabs locked in a death struggle, which may turn into World War III? Is that what's troubling you? Forget it. They are only doing what comes naturally—acting out the territorial imperative. Worried about the conflict between communism and capitalism? Forget it. Worried about a dehumanizing job, a dehumanizing marriage, a dehumanizing education? Forget it. None of these is a biological problem and therefore none of them is real. Since there is no such thing as humanization, there can be no such thing as dehumanization.

Darwin had humanist critics from the early days of his theory of evolution, although their influence has in the past been slight. Samuel Butler was among the first. Natural selection as viewed by Darwin seemed to Butler to remove all purpose from nature and life, leaving evolutionary progress to chance. Criticism of natural selection continues to this day, becoming, if anything, more effective. In *Harper's* for December, 1978, Tom Bethell, one of the editors, pointed out:

> Natural selection can "explain" evolution or extinction, millionaires or paupers, competition or mutual aid. In the end it explains nothing because it can explain everything. It is accused of being an unfalsifiable theory, which, according to the influential philosopher of science, Karl Popper, removes it from the realm of the scientific. Darwinian theory, Popper now says, is a "metaphysical research program."

Tom Bethell offers a general comment which deserves close attention:

> It is not often enough stressed that there are really two logically separate theories of evolution: the theory *that* evolution occurred (which can be simply stated as the theory that all organisms have, and have had, parents); and Darwin's theory as to *how* evolution occurred—the theory of natural selection. The latter only is under attack. If Darwin's theory were decisively undermined, it would still be possible to argue that evolution had taken place as a result of mechanisms not yet understood. Some scientists do take this position. Darwin debunked does not leave us with Genesis as the only alternative. Nevertheless, there are those who argue that the abandonment of the evolutionary mechanism would inevitably lead to doubts that evolution occurred at all. *That* is undoubtedly why Darwin is still defended so stoutly—not because his supporters are capitalists but because they are materialists.

This is indeed a spreading outlook in the present. Good evidence that Darwinism is not the only alternative to Genesis is amply supplied in Theodore Roszak's *Unfinished Animal* (1975), and more recently Jeffrey Goodman, an anthropologist and archaeologist, has been using a scattershot approach to what he finds to be the weaknesses in Darwinism. In his *American Genesis* he pushes the antiquity of man back to beginnings hundreds of thousands of years before the time allowed by current anthropological theory; and in a forthcoming book, *The Genesis Theory: The Sudden Appearance of Man,* he raises once again the basic philosophical questions: "Who are we? Where did we come from? Are we much older than we think?" He champions Alfred Russel Wallace, feeling that his pioneering genius was overshadowed by Darwin's sudden fame—and Wallace, be it noted, was no materialist. Goodman declared in an interview (*Los Angeles Times,* Feb. 23) that "man had such unusual origins that his background, potential, and inherent capabilities are infinite." He also said that "science has painted modern man into a corner, concerning his potential, abilities, and especially his origins." One of his comments on the origin and nature of man seems a paraphrase of Disraeli's preference for angels as ancestors: "If Carl Sagan is right and there are space beings out there, maybe we did come from some form of higher consciousness." What, actually, is an angel but that?

As for other notable changes now going on, a number of them might be illustrated in the story of Ira Progoff, contemporary depth psychologist, told by Robert Kaiser in the March issue of *Psychology Today.* A man of wide reading and a Jungian background, Dr. Progoff has been able to persuade numerous people to start looking into themselves for the answers to their basic questions. He invites them to think about their inner lives and to record their reflections in a personal journal. The purpose is discovery of the resources of the inner life. Apart from what might be regarded as a natural reticence, people seem reluctant to consider this subject.

> The wonder is that Progoff has gotten thousands to start working on (if not actually talking about) precisely that—and, moreover, in the hard-driving hurry-burly of the United States today, where men and women are lucky simply to keep the body alive, never mind the soul. Some sociologists of religion claim that a majority of Americans have rejected the very notion of spirituality as something pious and impractical and all-too-dependent on unreal dogmas committed to memory long ago by their local priests, ministers, and rabbis and handed on to the faithful in the form of slogans that were sappy and of categories that did not contain.
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> Nevertheless, Progoff has gotten precisely those secularized Americans involved in a search for meaning. He's done it because, though he has a reverence and respect for all the great thinkers and all the great religions, he has recognized that this is a time when autonomous men and women need to find their own meaning. "It is," says Progoff, "a difficult time, because the old answers don't respond to the new questions. It is also a time of opportunity, because now we have to work out new ways of dealing with ourselves, with others."
>
> In brief, Progoff seems to have secularized spirituality. How has he done it? His immediate answer is: "l don't do it. The people who come into the workshop do it—for themselves."

Part and parcel of the inner life is the content of the mind, its riches and resources in standards and values. These reveal themselves in speech and writing. Emerson, already aware in his time of the decline in excellence of human expression, identified the symptoms which have become omnipresent in modern communication. He said:

> A man's power to connect his thought with its proper symbol, and so to utter it, depends upon the simplicity of his character, that is, upon his love of truth, and his desire to communicate it without loss. The corruption of man is followed by the corruption of language. When simplicity of character and the sovereignty of idea is broken up by the prevalence of secondary desires, the desire of riches, of pleasure, of power, and of praise . . . words are perverted to stand for things which are not. (*Nature,* Chap. IV.)

Carrying forward this analysis, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., said in the *American Scholar* for the autumn of 1974:

> In our own time the purity of language is under unrelenting attack from every side—from professors as well as from politicians, from newspapermen as well as advertising men, from men of the cloth as well as from men of the sword and not least from those compilers of modern dictionaries who propound the suicidal thesis that all usages are equal and correct.

In his excellent introduction to the 1966 edition of Follett's *Modern American Usage,* commenting in the interest of clarity, Jacques Barzun dealt with this last claim in the way it deserves, saying at the end:

> From the common root of their desires the artist and the user of language for practical ends share an obligation to preserve against confusion and dissipation the powers that over the centuries the mother tongue has acquired. It is a duty to maintain the continuity of speech that makes the thought of our ancestors easily understood, to conquer Babel every day against the illiterate and the heedless, and to resist the pernicious and lulling dogma that in language—contrary to what obtains in all other human affairs—whatever is is right and doing nothing is for the best.

Wendell Berry, in his *Hudson Review* (Winter 1980-81) essay, "Standing by Words," goes more deeply into the question, as did Emerson, showing that the weakness and opportunism of modern writing are indeed signs of the emptiness of the inner life. He cites a modern scholar who has declared in a book on literature that "Rightness and Wrongness are determined" by purpose, audience, and situation, exposing the moral relativism implicit in such rules. Berry says:

> This idea apparently derives from, though it significantly reduces, the ancient artistic concern for propriety or decorum. A part of this concern was indeed the fittingness of the work to its occasion: that is, one would not write an elegy in the meter of a drinking song though that is putting it too plainly, for the sense of occasion exercised an influence both broad and subtle on form. But occasion, as I understand it, was invariably second in importance to the subject. It is only the modern specialist who departs from this. The specialist poet, for instance, degrades the subject to "subject matter" (raw material), so that the subject exists for the poem's sake, is *subjected* to the poem, in the same way as industrial specialists see trees or ore-bearing rocks as raw material subjected to their manufactured end-products. Quantity thus begins to dominate the work of the specialist poet at its very source. Like an industrialist, he is interested in the subjects of the world for the sake of what they can be made to produce. He mines his experience for subject matter. The first aim of the propriety of the old poets, by contrast, was to make the language true to its subject—to see that it told the truth. That is why they invoked the Muse. The truth the poet chose as his subject was perceived as *superior* to his powers—and, by clear implication, to his occasion and purpose. But the aim of truth-telling is not stated in either of these textbooks. [He had cited and quoted two.] The second, in fact, makes an "ethical" aim of avoiding the issue, for, as the authors say, coining a formidable truth: "Truth has become increasingly elusive and men are driven to embrace conflicting ideologies."

Mr. Berry considers the literal, accurate speech of small community life and the habits of precision it engenders.

> It sounds like this: "How about letting me borrow your tall jack? " Or: "The old hollow beech blew down last night." Or, beginning a story, "Do you remember that time . . .?" I would call this community speech. Its words have the power of pointing to things visible either to eyesight or to memory. Where it is not too much corrupted by public or media speech, this community speech is wonderfully vital. Because it so often works designatively it *has* to be precise, and its precisions are formed by persistent testing against its objects.
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> This community speech, unconsciously taught and learned, in which words live in the presence of their objects, is the very root and foundation of language. It is the source, the unconscious inheritance that is carried, both with and without schooling, into consciousness—but never *all* the way, and so it remains rich, mysterious, and enlivening. Cut off from this source, language becomes a paltry work of conscious purpose, at the service and mercy of expedient aims. . . . If one wishes to promote the life of language, one must promote the life of a community—a discipline many times more trying, difficult, and long than that of linguistics, but having at least the virtue of hopefulness. It escapes the

> despair always implicit in specializations: the cultivation of discrete parts without respect or responsibility for the whole.

Rather than moralize—which is probably not possible for Mr. Berry—he shows the divorce from the resources of the inner life in the prevailing habits of an excessively technological society: When our utopian dreams become technological, he says, we can no longer speak precisely—or responsibly—because what we talk about does not yet exist. The dispensers of technological dreams use words to declare speculations:

> They cannot stand by their words because they are talking about, if not *in*, the future, where they are not standing and cannot stand until long after they have spoken. All the grand and perfect dreams of the technologists are happening in the future, but nobody is there.
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> What can turn us from this deserted future, back into the sphere of our being, the great dance that joins us to our home, to each other and to other creatures, to the dead and unborn? I think it is love. I am perforce aware how baldly and embarrassingly that word now lies on the page—for we have learned at once to overuse it, abuse it, and hold it in suspicion. But I do not mean any kind of abstract love (adolescent, romantic, or "religious"), which is probably a contradiction in terms, but particular love for particular things, places, creatures, and people, requiring stands, acts, showing its successes and failures in practical or tangible effects. And it implies a responsibility just as particular, not grim or merely dutiful, but rising out of generosity. I think that this sort of love defines the effective range of human intelligence, the range within its works can be dependably beneficent. Only the action that is moved by love for the good at hand has the hope of being responsible and generous. Desire for the future produces words that cannot be stood by. But love makes language exact, because one loves only what one knows. One cannot love the future or anything in it, for nothing is known there. . . . Because love is not abstract, it does not lead to trends or percentages or general behavior. It leads, on the contrary, to the perception that there is no such thing as general behavior. There is no abstract action. Love proposes the work of settled households and communities, whose innovations come about in response to immediate needs and immediate conditions, as opposed to the work of governments and corporations, whose innovations are produced out of the implicitly limitless desire for future power or profit.

This is the sort of thinking which arises—surely it arises spontaneously—in those who cherish, care for, and pursue an inner life. It represents a mood and a longing that is coming into the world, in small streams from human springs, although its full power to leaven and alter is not yet known.

REVIEW
THE GANDHIAN MOVEMENT

IN *Sarvodaya—The Other Development* (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, India, 1980), Detlef Kantowsky, a German sociologist, places the Gandhian movement for moral and social reform in the framework of a century of past history. He examines its roots, its manifold expressions, considers its successes and failures according to various criteria of achievement, and in general enables the reader to avoid the pitfalls of visionary optimism as well as of unrelieved pessimism concerning a great historical change that is struggling to make itself manifest. Most important, perhaps, of all, this book helps the reader to recognize that the wonderings he may feel about his own life have a fundamental relation to this historical movement.

In a great many thoughtful people there is the feeling that Gandhi sounded a keynote for the solution of the most pressing human problems. He seemed to have discovered an idea or truth that is part of the central meaning of human life. This feeling is usually a background reference, an undeveloped hope. Not much may be done about it, but it is there. One often sees the presence of the feeling in casual asides in good books, and it sometimes becomes evident in the letters received by MANAS. This quiet tendency gives particular importance to a book which tells what has happened, historically, through the years, to determined efforts to put the Gandhian inspiration into practice. Mr. Kantowsky shows the power of the ideal, but gives equal attention to the obstacles to its realization. He contrasts the two ways of measuring the obstacles—those in human nature and the barriers made by attitudes which have been turned into seemingly immovable institutions. While action to change institutions seems to call for counter-institutions, practically all institutions tend to stultify, confine, and eventually corrupt the very truths they are supposed to cherish and express. This being the case, a fine line must be drawn—consciously drawn—between individual action and organized efforts. It is true that social change often requires group action and certain instruments for joining and working together. But it is also true that the moment an instrument is turned to some other use—as, say, a replacement for individual thinking and independent decision, or as a haven from the wicked world—no real changes are any longer possible. A vital moral movement is continually in transition, its way a course through an eternally changing landscape. Any fixed destination will declare the movement's failure, since deliberated, imaginative change is the life principle of all reform.

Kantowsky's book about Sarvodaya—the Good or Welfare of All—enables the reader to think with some clear purpose about these things, and then to decide what he wants or ought to do, himself, regardless of immediate "results." He may come to the measured conclusion, as have a few undiscouraged Gandhians, that the long, long road is the shortest way home.

The book begins with notes on the highlights of Gandhi's career—his reading of Ruskin's *Unto This Last*, for example, in which he found his own feelings so well articulated that he immediately set out to apply what Ruskin said. This is basic in understanding Gandhi. His life, as he declared again and again, was a search for Truth. Not second in importance is the fact that whenever he came across some vital truth he was compelled by an inner urgency to practice it. After reading Ruskin's relentless criticism of the economic ways and means of the West, he instituted radical changes in his own life. He found a collaborator and bought a farm near Durban in South Africa, then moved the publication he edited—*Indian Opinion*—there, with all workers receiving the same wage. (This project, called the Phoenix farm, is still going, under the supervision of his son's widow.) Gandhi hoped to spend the rest of his life supporting himself by manual labor on the farm, but the needs of his countrymen drew him into the battle for justice. Yet this central idea of self-support on the land found wider application,

years later, in Gandhi's Constructive Program for the Indian villages, where more than 80 per cent of the population live and work.

Ruskin, Tolstoy, and Thoreau were the three Western thinkers who gave Gandhi inspiration, helping him to speak to all the world, but his fundamental ideas grew out of his own life and reflection. As Prof. Kantowsky shows by quoting from him:

> "The resistance to authority in South Africa was well advanced before I got the essay of Thoreau on Civil Disobedience. But the movement was then known as passive resistance. As it was incomplete I had coined the word Satyagraha for the Gujarati readers. When I saw the title of Thoreau's great essay, I began to use his phrase to explain our struggle to the English readers."

Gandhi put a simplified version of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* into Gujarati for Indian readers, since it embodied the principles he believed in, and he strongly recommended Tolstoy's works in his own, now famous, manifesto, *Hind Swaraj* (Indian Self-Rule) published in 1909. "Tolstoy," Gandhi wrote in 1921, "is one of the three moderns who have exerted the greatest spiritual influence on my life, the third being Ruskin." (The other of these three was Rajachandra, a Jain reformer.) Speaking of Civil Disobedience, he said: "It is a force which if it became universal, would revolutionize social ideals and do away with despotism and ever-growing militarism under which the nations of the West are groaning and are almost being crushed to death, and which fairly promises to overwhelm even the nations of the East."

When Gandhi returned to India in 1915, his thinking matured, he began working with what he regarded as his real tools: Truth and self-discipline. As Prof. Kantowsky says:

> Through them he moulded himself into the world-famous charismatic leader of the Congress Movement for independence. For Gandhi, however, unlike most of the Congress workers, independence meant much more than just a political issue. Constructive work, i.e., home-spun cloth, village industries and local self-reliance, was not simply a timely tactical instrument in a non-violent struggle against the colonial regime and its industries, for him it was the heart of the matter. In 1931 he wrote: "My work of social reform was in no way less or subordinate to political work. The fact is that when I saw that to a certain extent my social work would be impossible without the help of political work, I took to the latter and only to the extent that it helped the former. I must therefore confess that the work of social reform or self-purification of this nature is a hundred times dearer to me than what is called purely political work."
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> The "Constructive Programme" is, therefore, central to the understanding of Gandhi's concept of Swaraj, which for him was a step towards the ultimate goal of "Ram Raj," the Kingdom of God, where an equal share was given "even unto this last."
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> "Constructive Programme: Its Meaning and Place" was first published in 1941. . . . Gandhi issued a "thoroughly revised" edition in November 1945 so as to show the connection between the Constructive Programme and Civil Disobedience more clearly. In the concluding remarks he repeats "that Civil Disobedience is not absolutely necessary to win freedom through purely non-violent effort, if the cooperation of the whole nation is secured in the constructive programme." Gandhi thus expects it to be clear to the reader that "Civil Disobedience in terms of Independence without the cooperation of the millions by way of constructive effort is mere bravado and worse than useless."

Later, perhaps in a moment of discouragement, Gandhi declared that to give greater emphasis to civil disobedience than to constructive work had been his "Himalayan blunder," but the blunder seems less his own than of the followers who paid insufficient attention to this cardinal idea.

COMMENTARY
GANDHI'S CONSTRUCTIVE WORK

IT is natural to ask, what is the "Constructive Work" spoken of at the end of this week's Review? During the 1930s Gandhi made the needs of the people into a program of action. They needed salt, so he and a great parade marched to the sea, to make their own salt. They needed clothes, so he inaugurated spinning, which became the root idea of Constructive Work. Prof. Kantowsky gives the breakdown:

> The programme itself lists eighteen items of Social Work, namely: the building of communal unity; the removal of untouchability; the introduction of prohibition; the development of khadi; the promotion of other village industries; the improvement of village sanitation; the adoption of a new (craft-centered) basic education; the introduction of universal adult education; the improvement of the condition of women and equality of status and opportunity for them; education in health and hygiene; the preservation and development of provincial languages; the adoption of Hindustani as the national language; working towards economic equality; organizing the peasants and protecting their rights; organizing industrial labour on the basis of truth and nonviolence; the welfare of tribal peoples; and finally, working with students to improve their mental, moral and physical equipment.

In a sense, what has been quoted in Review is mainly introduction to Detlef Kantowsky's book. Most of its pages are devoted to what happened to Gandhi's work and dream after he died, in India, and also in Sri Lanka, or Ceylon. For the author, the chief purpose of his study is to tell the world how the Gandhian inspiration has been taken to heart by the Buddhists of Sri Lanka, where caste is less of an obstacle, and where there are communal traditions which make the Gandhian ideas natural to apply. The author feels that the work of Sarvodaya has been more successful in Sri Lanka, and he describes at length the achievements of the principal leader, Ahangamane Ariyaratne. He finds that the Buddhist revival stimulated by Anagarika Dharmapala (who died in 1933) helped to create a matrix for application of Gandhi's ideas.

The struggles of the Gandhians in India are also recounted, and the understanding brought by Mr. Kantowsky to the situation in India may prove useful to the workers there. Actually, this book is a resetting of the problem of reform in the classical terms of the Buddha's teaching, drawing attention to what is "left out," and raising the question of *why* it was left out.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
VARIOUS MATTERS

LEAFING through back issues of MANAS, a reader came across a review of a book on the failure of the public schools to teach students about the actual reasons for U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War, and on the common neglect of the searching criticisms made by such writers as Noam Chomsky and Gabriel Kolko (*Teaching the Vietnam War* was reviewed last Jan. 28). Our reader comments:

> Viet Nam has come and gone. Whatever lessons we might have learned from it, we have learned—mostly that this country, on the whole, is incapable of shame, remorse, repentance. Meanwhile, the idea of using the public schools to teach children that our government did wrong in Viet Nam is naive beyond imagining. . . .
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> I'm reminded of something I saw the other day in the February *Bulletin* of the National Association of Independent Schools. It was an article about teaching the Holocaust in schools. Some teachers were for it. There was much support in Brookline, which has a strong, affluent, and liberal Jewish population. But in another affluent suburb, Arlington, the entire History department of one public school voted against teaching a unit on the Holocaust. Reason: it encourages students to question authority. Said one teacher: "When my government tells me to go to war, I go. Far from being ready to look at American war crimes, these people don't even want to look at German war crimes, because they don't want to admit into their students' minds for a second the idea that anything that authority tells you to do might be wrong. . . .
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> It gives me no pleasure to say such things. I would like to love my country *as a society*, not just a piece of geography I am familiar with, or the place where a lot of my friends and associates live and where I do my work. I would like to feel about the U.S. as I think I would feel about Norway if I were Norwegian, or as I felt about it when I was growing up, and until the age of about 28 or 29.

There is indeed an enormous difference between a country "as a society" (defined by Burckhardt as culture representing the *voluntary* activity of minds) and the nation-state which rules by measurable amounts of deception combined with coercive power. The question is: How do you introduce this distinction to the young? They'll find it out for themselves, sooner or later, and will have to learn to manage the bitter contradictions involved in some way or other. But some preparation should be possible. Historical studies may help—beginning, say, with the life of Cicero, who strove to restore to Rome the dignity it lost as its imperial glory increased. The writings of Thoreau would also be useful. To understand the moral weaknesses and evil predispositions of political power is certainly a need of all citizens, but instruction in such matters, as our reader notes, is hardly to be expected of schools more or less controlled by the state. The Founding Fathers understood this danger far better than contemporary politicians and many educators. For example, Daniel Webster, during the presidency of James Madison, spoke against a proposal that the regular army be organized by federal conscription (it failed), saying:

> Where is it written in the Constitution, in what article or section is it contained, that you may take children from the parents and parents from their children, and compel them to fight the battles of any war, in which the folly or the wickedness of Government may engage it? Under what concealment has this power lain hidden, which now for the first time comes forth, with a tremendous and baleful aspect, to trample down and destroy the dearest rights of person liberty?

Neither Pentagon propagandists arguing for ROTC in the high schools nor the history teachers quoted in that school bulletin are likely to use this material from Webster, and present-day conscientious objectors will certainly be ignored as totally outside the pale of patriotic discourse. (Good teachers may be exceptions.) It seems fair to say that exposure to conventional public school education alone—if that were the only way children "learn"—would produce generation after generation of submissive and unimaginative conformists whose habits of obedience might

require, not one, but several, Nuremberg Trials during the decades that lie ahead.

Yet a certain maturity is surely required for the young to profit by some representation of the hideous inhumanity and genocide of the Holocaust. This is not the sort of material that can be made either instructive or useful when handled by the usual "pouring in" techniques. What might be the first encounter of the students with the enduring, basic, and morally important problem of good and evil, if chosen from the *worst case* known to modern man, could lead to spontaneous withdrawal from thinking about it at all, or, for some others, to nightmarish preoccupation with scenes of brutal and mindless cruelty.

This is a topic on which we have no firm opinions, certainly not one for snap or easy judgments. While thinking about it, one might go back to the Greeks, who were rather good teachers; for examples of cultural precedent. The dramas of Eschylus and Sophocles are based on the omnipresence of good and evil in human life. *Prometheus Bound* is a study of the age-old struggle of beneficent intelligence against "official" power (of Zeus) and shows, also, the tragedy of those who would serve the characterological and well as the material needs of their fellows. Such plays were a means of public education and the audiences learned much of human nature and its capacity for doing wrong. Such "entertainment" was an actual preparation for life. This is not to suggest that the Greeks were paragons of virtue as a result. They had their My Lais (see what the Athenians did to the Melians), but they at least had reason to know better. And this, after all, is what education is meant to accomplish—not to shape behavior, but to give the young the opportunity to know better. Shaping behavior is for managers, not educators.

Education has two general purposes, one, to equip the young with the tools of self-education, the other, to help those who are capable of it to break out of the confinements of the conventional opinion of their time. It is obvious that when education is organized and paid for by the State, not much can be hoped for the second purpose from the schools. Given enough intelligent nonconformity, there would be no State. This is doubtless a long way off, since doing without the State now seems hard to imagine, yet the really precious qualities of a utopian dream, as Arthur Morgan once suggested, may be precisely what stand in the way of its realization. No great dream should be put aside because it is not immediately realizable.

This seems a good place to speak of a letter we have from a reader who thinks we give too much space to the deschooling (Holt calls it "unschooling") ideas of John Holt. We do plug them a lot. We have three reasons. First, Holt is undoubtedly a good teacher. No reader of his books would deny this. Second, in every issue of his paper, *Growing Without Schooling,* one finds a *multitude* of ideas on how to interest, encourage, and stimulate children, helping them—not trying to *make* them—take part in the learning process. He has had a lot of experience in learning how to do this and it seems valuable to quote examples he has turned up. *Anybody* can use this material. Both parents and teachers in schools can learn from John Holt. So, third, his work is a leaven which has an effect in many directions.

Our reader feels we should balance our "advocacy" (it's not quite that) of Holt's teaching-at-home program with some "alternative opinion." Well, we tell about really good schools whenever we come across them, but it has to be in terms of things other people can try. One, two, or three cheers for a good school—now and then a good *public* school—is of little value to serious readers who are interested in ideas they can use themselves in some way. We know perfectly well that, for the great majority, teaching the young at home is not a practical alternative. But we also know a parent or two who are doing it happily and productively. We also know some public school teachers who grace both their schools and

their communities, and to whom the debt of grade after grade of children is immeasurable. Such teachers have both strength of character and imagination—qualities that seem to come in diminishing supply these days.

Small schools may be very different from the big ones. What can you say about schooling or a school unless you tell what is good about it? And this, whatever it is, is likely to be something that might have happened anywhere. So the issue is not an argument for or against schools, but for imagination in teaching.

The work that John Holt is doing has been salvation for some parents and their children. Salvation is not transferable, but the ideas which bubble up from these often wonderful experiments may add to an influence that our society has great need of. We haven't been able to think of a much better use of our space. In an ideal society—that is, our idea of an ideal society—the schools for children would be small and family-like, as Gandhi recommended, and there might be special places where difficult subjects not known to parents or primary grades teachers would be taught by qualified people who love to teach—"institutes" of some sort. That should be enough. It seems not unreasonable that the thing that Holt is campaigning for will have the long-term effect of bringing that time closer, so we keep on telling about his work. This can't possibly hurt or mislead anyone, and it just might be of great help to some. According to report, it has in particular cases.

FRONTIERS

A Few Clippings

FROM the February 1981 *Not Man Apart*, for a news note, we take the substance of a letter to the editor by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy. He refers to an earlier article in *NMA* on Southern California Edison's decision to actively develop alternative sources of energy (quoted here in the March 4 issue) and says that SCE is not the only public utility firm now pursuing the alternate energy route.

> New England Electric has made a similar commitment to changing its basic planning objectives. Last year it adopted a NEESPLAN which announced a major shift away from energy production to energy conservation and renewable energy development. It is now expected that twice as much energy as it had predicted only last year will come from small hydro, solid waste, wind, and other alternative generating sources.

Good sense seems to be growing fashionable. Meanwhile, in the January issue of *Civil Engineering*, organ of the American Society of Civil Engineers, a long article by one of the editors was headed "Are America's Utilities Sorry They Went Nuclear?" The changing thinking of the country's power companies is reported at length.

A survey conducted by the *Washington Post* (reported in the *Manchester Guardian* for Jan. 11) on gun laws around the world revealed that most other nations exercise strict governmental control over possession of guns of all sorts.

> In contrast to the United States, where limited federal regulations governing sales of firearms are supplemented by a crazy quilt of state laws, most other industrial societies have uniform laws. This reflects general legal traditions in much of the rest of the world, but one other significant difference is that officials are assiduous in carrying out the laws and prosecuting offenders. . . . In almost every country surveyed, illegal possession of a weapon is punishable by a minimum one- to three-year sentence and in some cases up to six years. Illegal sales of guns also carry strict penalties, ranging up to five years' imprisonment.

An exception is Canada, where a jail sentence for unauthorized possession of a weapon is rare, unless a crime was attempted. But Canada is moving toward stricter control, requiring licenses for rifles as well as handguns.

> While hesitating to draw an immediate correlation, officials in Canada have noted a decrease in shooting homicides. In 1975, in a population of 22.7 million, there were 292 homicides involving guns. Last year, although the population had grown to 24.1 million, shooting deaths had fallen by 29 per cent, to 207.

The article provides this summary on violent crime:

> In the United States, there were 21,456 murders reported in 1979 in a population of just over 200 million, or about one murder for every 10,000 people. Half involved handguns and 13 per cent rifles or shotguns. In France there were 1,645 homicides, just over half involving firearms, in a population of 53 million, and in Britain one in every 100,000 is a murder victim—one tenth the ratio in the United States.
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> Other countries have almost negligible incidence of violent crime. In Israel, where only 42 people are licensed to sell guns, there were 145 crimes of all sorts last year involving weapons. In West Germany, with a population of 60 million, 69 crimes in 1979 involved murder or robbery with a firearm. . . .
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> Britain offers the most interesting contrast. Serious crime and homicide have doubled in the past decade. Youth crime is on the increase, as are muggings, and criminals with guns are no longer unheard of. For all this litany of violence, however, police in London found it necessary to fire guns only eight times in all of 1979.

Another contrast is between London and U.S. cities. Despite growing racial and economic tensions, and increasing youthful violence, London, with a population of seven million, had 179 homicides last year, while Los Angeles had 1,557 and New York 1,733.

One is tempted to say that the smaller the country, the less crime.

A contributor to the English magazine, *Resurgence*, told in the September-October issue of last year about his visit to California, making what seems a just report on the experience. Toward the end, he writes musingly:

> California is the westernmost point of the western world, in so many ways an exaggeration of every possible American and western tendency. . . . It is a land of abundance: sixty per cent of the U.S.A.'s fruit and vegetable requirements are grown in California. It is the Garden of Eden, as Woody Guthrie used to sing—the summit of every American materialist's dream. But California is also the end of the line in quite another sense: the malaise which accompanies material abundance heralds the coming of a new era, when there is no other growth to contemplate but inwards. The emptiness which remains when most physical needs are met points to a fundamental change of direction, and that is probably why California is such a special place at this particular point in time—the vanguard of the Western world in terms of affluence and choice, but also in terms of its potential for making change.

Of Californians, this writer, Mark Kidel, says:

> They may seem naive at times, superficial in the speed and flamboyance with which they operate, and by no means cured of a supermarket shopper's approach to the ambiguities of learning and being in the world. But we also found a singular commitment and a simple joy that comes from doing what feels right. The Californian energy is all surface, but seen in a different way, it may spread further. We Europeans may have more depth and roots, but we lack the burning enthusiasm so common on the West Coast.

Among the good things this reporter found in California was the Briarpatch Network (over 250 members) in the San Francisco area—a strong alliance of people dedicated to "right livelihood and simple living." The participants are small-business people who will open their records to anyone interested. They affirm that they are in business to serve people and they are doing what they want to and enjoy doing. "We are willing," they say in their declaration of purpose, "to share our knowledge and experience with others in the Briarpatch. We also have fun in our work and try to live in a lifestyle that minimizes the consumption of resources."