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GOING INTO OURSELVES

THE ease with which fraud can be committed by a writer is a horrifying discovery which comes, sooner or later, to everyone who works with words. He has the power, he finds, of generating a feeling of reality in his readers without feeling that reality himself. This is the manufacture of illusion—legitimate, let us say, for the novelist, but a skill of betrayal in the area of religion. It can be one or the other or both for the poet, who must accept his responsibility while not knowing quite how to handle it. When is he dealing with the fabric of possibility and when only the play of fancy, can he tell the difference himself?

How does the writer become aware that when he sets down what he thinks of as his vision, what he gets on paper may become only ritual? How does he realize that when he becomes schooled in the ways of ritual he is no more than an expert in technique? If he determines to be an honest human, a writer may feel that all the life has gone out of his prose. It will come back, perhaps, but he is not sure how. He says to himself, "No more pretense," or "No extravagant verbal excitement," or "Never again playing with seductive attractions in the name of truth," and so what he thought was his skill with words deserts him, reducing him to mere boyhood in his art.

Has he indeed withdrawn himself from feeling the rhythms of the universe? Is he now only a clod, capable but of the communication of clods? Or should he simply become silent for a while, so that an ear he has not been using may come into play. And if it does, will he use its records sparingly, without the pomp of introductory chords, leaving out such things as splendid announcements? The splendor will not be in what he says, but in what it stands for, with some of the feeling coming through, the way the dawn of a first love makes itself known. This, one could say, is how Thoreau wrote, yet he worked to make it so, worked very hard.

Thoreau raised a question which is not yet settled: "Who was Thoreau?" He spoke of this in *Walden,* in the chapter on solitude:

> With thinking, we may be beside ourselves in a sane sense. By a conscious effort of the mind we can stand aloof from actions and their consequences; and all things, good and bad, go by us like a torrent. We are not wholly involved in Nature. I may be either the drift-wood in the stream, or Indra in the sky looking down on it. I *may* be affected by a theatrical exhibition; on the other hand, I *may not* be affected by an actual event which appears to concern me much more. I only know myself as a human entity; the scene, so to speak, of thoughts and affections; and am sensible of a certain doubleness by which I can stand as remote from myself as from another. However intense my experience, I am conscious of the presence and criticism of a part of me, which, as it were, is not a part of me, but spectator, sharing no experience, but taking note of it; and that is no more I than it is you. When the play, it may be the tragedy, of life is over, the spectator goes his way. It was a kind of fiction, a work of the imagination only, as far as he was concerned. This doubleness may easily make us poor neighbors and friends sometimes.

Yet the doubleness may have been what made Thoreau a great writer. It led him to consider who he was: actor or spectator? Or both? Or are we actor in one part of our being and spectator in another?

Can the one part ever absorb and abolish the other? If this were to happen, would we still have the voice of conscience? Would the inner dialogue that Socrates spoke of become impossible for us? Would we find the hard-headed answers to difficult questions the only ones worth considering?

But what would we be without the duality of our nature? Nothing but a calculating animal? Are we but physicists and nothing more? In his book, *Toward a Philosophy of History* (Norton, 1941), Ortega y Gasset pays his respect to physics right at the beginning, but immediately adds:

> Yet science is but a small part of the human mind and organism. Where it stops, man does not stop. If the physicist detains, at the point where his method ends, the hand with which he delineates the facts, the human being behind each physicist prolongs

the line thus begun and carries it on to its termination, as an eye beholding an arch in ruins will of itself complete the missing airy curve.

It is the task of physics to ascertain for each fact occurring here and now its principle, that is to say the preceding fact that causes it. But this principle in its turn has a principle, and so down to a first original principle. The physicist refrains from searching for first principles, and he does well. But, as I said, the man lodged in each physicist does not resign himself. Whether he likes it or not, his mind is drawn towards the last enigmatic cause of the universe. . . . That science is incapable of solving in its own way those fundamental questions is no sufficient reason for slighting them, as did the fox with the high-hung grapes, or for calling them myths and urging us to drop them altogether. How can we live turning a deaf ear to the last dramatic questions? Where does the world come from, and whither is it going? Which is the supreme power of the cosmos, what the essential meaning of life?

And then Ortega declares his beinghood:

We cannot breathe confined to a realm of secondary and intermediate themes. We need a comprehensive perspective, foreground and background, not a maimed scenery, a horizon stripped of the lure of infinite distances. Without the aid of cardinal points we are liable to lose our bearings.

It is indeed an airy world that Ortega creates with the power of the imagination—the same capacity which makes possible the frauds we spoke of at the beginning, and also that feeling of fidelity to truth which the wholly responsible writer sometimes gains the power to convey, without quite knowing how. A writer like Thoreau. Man, being endowed with imagination, finds this the true origin of his nature, and since the imagination promises endless potentialities, man provides endless definitions of himself, many of them in uncompromising contradiction with the others. And Ortega, remarkably talented writer that he was, found himself equal to giving an account of the human being. He began by noting that human existence is possible through certain facilities men are able to rely upon, but must also encounter a wide range of difficulties; then he says:

Hence, man's existence is no passive being in the world; it is an unending struggle to accommodate himself in it. The stone is given its existence; it need not fight for what it is—a stone in the field. Man has to be himself in spite of unfavorable circumstances; that means he has to make his own existence at every single moment. He is given the abstract possibility of existing, but not the reality. This he has to conquer hour after hour. Man must earn his life, not only economically but metaphysically.

And all this for what reason? Obviously—but this is repeating the same thing in other words—because man's being and nature's being do not fully coincide. Because man's being is made of such strange stuff as to be partly akin to nature and partly not, at once natural and extra-natural, a kind of ontological centaur, half immersed in nature, half transcending it. . . .

Here we come upon the formidable and unparalleled character which makes man unique in the universe. We are dealing—and let the disquieting strangeness of the case be well noted—with an entity whose being consists not in what it is already, but in what it is not yet, a being that consists in not-yet-being. Everything else in the world is what it is. An entity whose mode of being consists in what it is already, whose potentiality coincides at once with his reality, we call a "thing." Things are given their being ready-made.

In this sense man is not a thing but an aspiration, the aspiration to be this or that. Each epoch, each nation, each individual varies in its own way the general human aspiration.

Already it is noticeable that here Ortega is giving an account of each one of us. Our lives are shaped by our aspirations, and if we knew how our longings arise that give shape to our aspirations, we should at last begin to gain control of our lives. But an aspiration which is measured and evaluated and then retained or discharged is really no longer an aspiration, but should be called simply a desire, either worthy or unworthy. What is it in us that makes such judgments? Thoreau's witness? The conscience of Socrates? The governing self in human beings? It is perhaps as well not to name it, yet to know that it exists. A thing named is a thing ready to be packaged and sold by the merchants of spirit. Are we, in our inmost being, the decision-making faculty? The one who chooses?

Ortega writes well on this question of choosing. In another of his books, *Man and Crisis,* in the second chapter, "The Structure of Life, The Substance of History," he says:

> If history, which is the science of human lives, were or could be exact, it would mean that men were flints, stones, physiochemical bodies, and nothing else. But then one would have neither history nor physics; for stones, more fortunate, if you like, than men, do not have to create science in order to be what they are, namely stones. On the other hand man is a most strange entity, who, in order to be what he is, needs first to find out what he is; needs, whether he will or no, to ask himself what are the things around him and what, there in the midst of them, is he. For it is this which really differentiates man from a stone, and not that man has understanding while the stone lacks it. We can imagine a very intelligent stone; but as the inner being of the stone is given it already made, once and for all, and it is required to make no decisions on the subject, it has no need, in order to go on being a stone, to pose and pose again the problem of self, asking itself "What must I do now?" or, which is the same thing, "What must I be?" Tossed in the air, without need to ask itself anything, and therefore without having to exercise its understanding, the stone which we are imagining will fall toward the center of the earth. Its intelligence, even if existent, forms no part of its being, does not intervene in it, but would be an extrinsic and superfluous addition.
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> The essence of man, on the other hand, lies in the fact that he has no choice but to force himself to know, to build a science, good or bad, in order to resolve the problem of his own being and toward this end the problem of what are the things among which he must inexorably have that being. This—that he needs to know, that whether he likes it or not, he needs to work to the best of his intellectual means—is undoubtedly what constitutes the human condition. . . .
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> Man, every man, must at every moment be deciding for the next moment what he is going to do, what he is going to be. This decision only he can make; it is not transferable; no one can substitute for me in the task of deciding for myself, in deciding on my life. When I put myself into another's hands, it is I who have decided and who go on deciding that he will direct me; thus I do not transfer the decision myself, but merely its mechanism. In place of deriving the norm of my conduct out of that mechanism which is my own intelligence, I take advantage of the mechanism of another's intelligence.

This is Ortega's way of drawing attention to the duality of human nature. We have the power to decide for ourselves, yet much of the time we refuse to use it, relying with greater confidence on the judgment of others. It is by this means that orthodoxies gain their power and imaginary personal gods their authority. Think of the transformation that would be accomplished in the world of politics if men and women resolved to rely upon their own judgment instead of the formulations of preachers and authorities. It would no longer be possible for leaders to gain positions of power by manipulating the fears of the people or making promises that cannot possibly be kept. What is required for this? Independence of mind. And how is independence acquired? Only by growth in the sense of the dignity within each one.

Yet what is dignity? For many it is not what Thoreau discovered in himself, but what writers and historians tell them that it is. Something of how this works was set down by the British Major General J.F.C. Fuller in his book, *Reformation of War,* published in 1923. There he described the familiar attitude of the British soldier of that time—whether private, sergeant, subaltern or general—toward the rest of the world. He is, General Fuller wrote,

> a man who possesses such natural pride of birth that, through sheer contempt for others, he refuses to learn or to be defeated. He divides humanity into two classes: Englishmen and niggers, and of the second class some happen to be black and others white. He only condescends to differentiate between these sub-classes by calling the latter dagoes. To him, all white folk, outside of his own little islands, are such. From these he has nothing to learn, yet he is tolerant as he would be to his dog; he has, in fact, raised the vice of contempt to a high virtue and on this virtue is the British Empire founded.

In the light of this virtue, British imperialism was not imperialism at all, but something blameless and noble. Englishmen were holding up the light of civilization to the world. Nor were the Americans, even the best of them, immune to this view. Young Theodore Roosevelt, particular admirer of the example set by Britain, wrote in his *winning of the*

West: "During the past three centuries, the spread of the English-speaking peoples over the world's waste spaces has not been only the most striking feature in the world's history, but also the event of all others most far-reaching in its effects and its importance." And in *The Strenuous Life* (1899) he said:

> We cannot avoid the responsibilities that confront us in Hawaii, Cuba, Porto Rico, and the Philippines. . . . The timid man, the lazy man, the man who distrusts his country, the over-civilized man, who has lost the great fighting, masterful virtues, the ignorant man, and the man of dull mind, whose soul is incapable of feeling the mighty lift that thrills "stern men with empires in their brains"—all these, of course, shrink from seeing the nation undertake its new duties. . . .
>
> The twentieth century looms before us big with the fate of many nations. If we stand idly by, if we seek merely swollen, slothful ease and ignoble peace, if we shrink from hard contests where men must win at hazard of their lives and at risk of all they hold dear, then bolder and stronger peoples will pass us by, and will win for themselves the domination of the world.

Well, we did manage to avoid "ignoble peace," but reading Mr. Roosevelt today makes us vastly uncomfortable. There are many things about this man which make us recognize him as a human being of fine character, yet he was certainly deluded in some respects.

The question arises: How are men and women to be relieved of their delusions of grandeur without becoming responsible for killing a lot of people in order to bring them to a sense of proportion? Is it possible for a man to raise himself to heroic stature and at the same time remain harmless to others? In short, was Gandhi by any stretch of the imagination right? This leads naturally to another question: What makes the difference between reading about Gandhi, what he did, what he said, and becoming Gandhi-like oneself? The answer, it may be, is to be found in Gandhi's life. When he came across an idea that seemed to him right and true, he *adopted* it, which meant for him reshaping his life in order to embody it in practice. This is to say that he took the works of the mind seriously. He would not allow an abyss to separate a good idea and its practice.

Recently we came across something written by Edward Bellamy when still a young man, a passage which suggests he gave much thought to such questions. He said in *The Religion of Solidarity:*

> There are few of an introspective habit of mind who are not haunted with a certain very definite sense of a second soul, an inner serene and passionless ego, which regards the experiences of the individual with a superior curiosity, as it were, a half pity. It is especially in moments of the deepest anguish or the maddest gaiety, that is, in the intensest strain of the individuality, that we are conscious of the soul as of a presence serenely regarding from another plane of being the agitated personality. It is at such times as that we become, not by force of argument, but by spontaneous experience, strictly subjective to ourselves, that is, the individuality becomes objective to the universal soul, that eternal subjective. The latter regards the former as a god is conceived to look upon man, in an attitude passionless, disinterested, yet pitiful. Often does it happen in scenes of revelry or woe that we are thus suddenly translated, looking down calmly upon our passion-wrung selves, and then as with an effort, once more enduring the weeds or tinsels of our personal estates. At such times we say that we have been out of ourselves; but in reality we have been into ourselves; we have only just realized the greater half of our being. We have momentarily lived in the infinite part of our being, a region ever open and waiting for us, if we will but frequent its highlands. We call such an experience abnormal; it should be normal.

We can think of nothing to add to this statement by Bellamy.

REVIEW
EMMA GOLDMAN

FOR reasons we haven't been able to track, a reader suggested we look at a book called *Rebel in Paradise.* Since we try to follow up on readers' suggestions we got the book from the library, and it turned out to be a biography of Emma Goldman, by Richard Drinnon, published by the University of Chicago Press in 1961. Drinnon was then professor of history at Bucknell University and an admirer of Emma Goldman, as are nearly all who have looked into her stormy career and read her autobiography, *Living My Life,* which came out in 1931.

Why should we spend our space recollecting the life of Emma Goldman? For two reasons, perhaps. The first is its story of extraordinary courage and determination, which began very unevenly but eventually achieved breadth and balance. The other reason is the way in which, through the years, Emma Goldman won the respect of people able to think. Of the two books about her, Drinnon's would probably be the one to read first; it is much shorter and gives more chance of being remembered.

Commonly biographies or reviews of biographies start with where the subject was born, but here we are more interested in Emma Goldman's ideas, which really came out of her mind and heart, although she learned the words to express her feelings from Kropotkin, the great anarchist philosopher. Emma Goldman spent her life working for a stateless world. Most thoughtful men and women joined her in this objective, the problem being how to achieve it. Is it to be done by political reform, through some kind of organic social progress and organization, or will freedom be achieved only by individuals who recognize its necessity? Drinnon says:

> Without doubt Emma saw the root of the problem and saw it clearly. It was the old enigma of the individual and society. "Under any circumstances," Kropotkin had written "sociability is the greatest advantage in the struggle for life." No, replied Ibsen's Dr. Stockmann, "the strongest man in the world is he who stands most alone." Contrary to all the rules of either/or logic, she believed both men were right. She was as keenly aware as Ibsen of the tragedy of the modern individual and mass organization, she was as apprehensive as Kropotkin of the power-obsessed, socially irresponsible individual. Caught between these two positions she tried to fuse them into a higher synthesis of individualistic communism.

How, indeed, could this "higher synthesis" be achieved without giving immeasurable power to a bureaucracy that might have the virtues of loyalty and obedience but would certainly lack the insight to administer the social order with understanding? Emma's solution is given by Drinnon:

> What emerged was a peculiar kind of elitism which envisioned individuals so strong-willed that they could reject the fatal lures of authoritarian power. This anarchist elite would urge others to rebel, to exert their own strength, and to refuse direction by other individuals, including other anarchists. Put in another way, she tried to find a place in her thought for heroes. These Titans, unlike Nietzsche's or Carlyle's, would be distinguished by their efforts for social justice and their own renunciation of power: they would urge all men to be heroes. Hence Emma could, for her own purposes, quote Emerson on the crudeness and docility of the masses and on the need to break them up and draw individuals out of them.

She is of course abstractly right, but how do you *make* people heroes? There may be several replies to this question but one that must not be left out is that it will take time, possibly a very long time. On the other hand, those who are aroused by all the suffering and injustice in the world are not willing to wait. As to Emma Goldman, Drinnon's musing evaluation of her life of service to the victims of life, and to the weak and ineffectual, seems wholly just:

> Her one serious lapse was on the issue of acts of violence. Even after she rejected the ethicality of individual acts of violence, she still had not, at the end of her life, discarded the illusion that large-scale violence—in this case the defensive violence of her Spanish comrades—could bring about her ultimate ends of peace, freedom, and justice. Yet she went further than all but a very few of her contemporaries

> in honestly confronting the complicated problem of the relationship of means to ends, and her constant stress on neglected and unpopular truths enriched American and European life.
>
> No matter where she found them, she fought against the administrators who regarded people not as ends in themselves but as means to institutional ends. She opposed rationalized conformity in the United States and rationalized terror in Russia. She correctly diagnosed as a moral malady the special pleading, discouraged determinism, and historicism which led liberals to apologize for Communist oppression and bloodshed. She effectively criticized the naive faith of liberals and Socialists in the omnicompetent state and in the sufficiency of economic reform. Indeed, her attempted spiritualization of politics, her contempt for those who were absorbed in governmental mechanics, her emphatic assertion of the need for small, countervailing groups—all of these views provided a needed counter-statement to the prevailing orthodoxies on the political left.

Emma Goldman was born in Kovno-Kaunas in modern Lithuania—in 1869. Her mother had not wanted another child and her father could never forgive her for not being a boy. There, in Russia, she saw peasants lashed with the knout and dreamed about their bleeding bodies. She had little education as the hands of a rabbi whose autocratic methods Emma resisted, earning beatings for her as a child. But she was befriended by her teacher of German, who taught her German literature and music and took her to hear *Il Trovatore.* Her father had removed to St. Petersberg and was in charge of a store and in 1881, when Emma was about twelve, the family followed him there, to live in the ghetto where, as Drinnon puts it, "narrow quarters housed almost twenty thousand outcasts who nervously tried to exist by running little shops, by working in the clothing trades, or simply living off each other's misery." While the shop her father managed closed shortly after they arrived, her mother borrowed enough to start a small grocery. Emma and her older sister, Helena, helped out by working. In the city Emma made contact with radical students and began to read fine books, one of them describing a heroine who became a model for Emma's life. Meanwhile her family life was brutally hard. Her father tried to marry her off when she was fifteen. Emma refused.

> "I had protested," she recalled, "begging to be permitted to continue my studies. In his frenzy he threw my French grammar into the fire, shouting: 'Girls do not have to learn so much! All a Jewish daughter needs to know is how to prepare *gefüllte* fish, cut noodles fine, and give the man plenty of children.' I would not listen to his schemes; I wanted to study, to know life, to travel. Besides I never would marry for anything but love, I stoutly maintained." To Abraham romantic love was an aberration; to Emma it was one of the most important forces in life.

With such a daughter, the righteous Abraham was enraged. He beat her until he fell unconscious from fatigue. Naturally enough, in 1885, when her elder half-sister decided to emigrate to the United States and invited Emma to come with her, she jumped at the chance, telling her father she would dive into the Neva if he tried to stop her.

She and Helena arrived in New York, where they were appalled by "the antagonism and harshness of the guards and especially by the insensitive treatment of pregnant women and children." They fled to Rochester where another sister lived, and obtained work. There Emma found poorly paying jobs, married a man who turned out to be impotent, who she left after a time, then migrated to New York City.

By now Emma was a radical. It was the time of the execution of the Haymarket anarchists in Chicago, which aroused all her opposition. Drinnon has this passage:

> On one occasion she startled members of the Rochester City Club by informing them that Rochester and America had made her an anarchist. She insisted that her early experience with American capitalism, especially its execution of the Chicago anarchists, had made her a radical. On another occasion, however, she informed a reporter that "I do my work because I cannot look on and see wrong without a protest. I could no more help crying out than I could if I were drowning. I am an anarchist of the Topsy variety—I was just born so." And in a lecture on Mary Wollstonecraft, she concluded:

> "Mary was born (a rebel) and not made through this or that individual incident in her surroundings." Here inherited predispositions were all-important.
>
> Contradictions aside, Emma's interpretation of her own radicalism certainly slipped away from her fruitful idea of the interaction of personality and background. In the final analysis, she placed all her stress on innate factors. As she wrote to another friend, "no amount of preachment can change what is inherent in people. It might bring out human traits either for freedom or against it, but it can put nothing into (a) barren soul." Environment only "acts on character as dew and sunshine on plants."

Something that Emma wrote toward the end of her life seems an accurate summation:

> Individuality may be described as the consciousness of the individual as to what he is and how he lives. It is inherent in every human being and is a thing of growth. . . . The individual is not merely the result of heredity and environment, of cause and effect. He is that and a great deal more, a great deal else. The living man cannot be defined; he is the fountainhead of all life and all values, he is not a part of this or that; he is a whole, a growing, changing, yet always constant whole.

Her life stands as a confirmation of this account. We have left out of our discussion the events which made her famous, but all this is amply supplied by the books we have named. They are indeed worth reading.

COMMENTARY
A TOUGH COOKIE

ARE there any moral issues in the study of biology? We don't mean big issues like Natural Selection versus other modes of differentiation of the species, but the question of cutting up the organs or bodies of dead creatures. This was the question raised by Jack Smith, a columnist in the *Los Angeles Times,* who last spring (May 7) began his piece by saying:

> I must say that I fully sympathize with Jennifer Graham, the 15-year-old Victorville high school girl who refused to dissect a frog. When told that she must dissect a frog in her biology class, Ms. Graham simply put her foot down. She said, "I don't believe in unnecessary killing and maiming animals."

This girl's obduracy brought recollections to Mr. Smith, who set down in his column:

> I still remember the queasy anxiety with which I approached the dissection of my frog. I say my frog because obviously only one student can dissect any particular frog. A frog has only one liver, one heart, one brain, and so on, and once these objects have been removed, the frog must be discarded.
>
> As I remember, I never did dissect my frog. I stood at the dissection table next to a girl who not only didn't mind dissecting frogs, but did it with zeal. . . ..
>
> I confess that my reasons for not wanting to dissect my frog were not moral or humane. They were emotional. I was too squeamish to enjoy groping about in the entrails of a deceased amphibian. Ms. Graham's refusal was based on higher principles. She simply did not want to be a party to the taking of a life, even if it was only a frog.

The dead frog, Smith points out, came to the school already dead, marinated in formaldehyde, prepared for use in biology classes by a "grower" who also does the frogs in. But in principle the Victorville girl was against this use of frogs. There are other ways, she claimed, to learn about a frog's body besides killing it. Smith comments:

> Most revealing of the school's antediluvian position is the rejection of Ms. Graham's principles on the ground that they do not spring from any "organized religion." She was asked to bring a note from her minister. If a note from a minister can get Ms. Graham excused from dissecting a frog, surely it can get her excused from the study of evolution and Shakespeare on the grounds that evolution is godless and Shakespeare is obscene.
>
> Why should Ms. Graham's principles be despised simply because they are her own?

So it will go in her transcript that she refused to dissect a frog, and, as Jack Smith says, college admissions boards will learn that here is one "tough cookie."

Three cheers for Jennifer Graham, and three more for Jack Smith, for being the kind of columnist he is.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
EDUCATION IN JAPAN

AN article about Japanese children and their mothers in the March *Smithsonian*, by Carol Simons, is likely to seem unbelievable to most American readers. It starts out by telling about a two-year-old named Hiromasa, who without knowing it, is "preparing for one of the most important milestones of his life, the examination for entry into first grade." Even if you discount the breathless atmosphere of this report—the journalist's way of commanding interest—you will still have trouble accepting this story, which goes on to explain that the child has already learned to march along the colored tape that leads in *his* direction, and to do this in time with the music, to obey the instructions implicit in a tune and to sing a song of good-bye. While this is going on his mother watches him through a one-way glass window, and then explains that all this is "in preparation for an entrance examination in two or three years, when Hiromasa will try for admission to one of Tokyo's prestigious private schools."

The drama piles up. A thirteen-year-old girl comes home from school to her house in a Yokohama suburb and starts on her homework. Her name is Naoko, dressed in the plaid skirt and blazer that is her school uniform.

> "I made it," her smile seems to say. For three years when she was in fourth through sixth grades in public school, Naoko's schedule was high pressure: she would rush home from school, study for a short time and then leave again to attend *juku*, or cram school, three hours a day three times a week. Her goal was to enter a good private school, and the exam would be tough.
>
> Her brother, Toshihiro, passed a similar exam with flying colors several years ago and entered one of the elite national schools in Tokyo. The summer before the exam, he went to *juku* eight hours a day. Now, as a high school graduate, he is attending prep school—preparing for university entrance exams. . . .

Is this sort of thing really worth writing about? If the Japanese want to bring up their children in this way—taking the joy out of childhood, driving them to succeed according to mechanistic standards—is that a matter in which we should be interested? Well, there may be those who will soon be counseling us to imitate them in our schools, although the very real temperamental differences of both Japanese parents and children from American children may make this impossible. Yet knowing what is happening in Japan may be constructive. Carol Simons writes:

> Little Hiromasa, Naoko and Toshihiro are all on the Japanese road to success. And alongside them, in what must surely be one of the world's greatest traffic jams, are thousands of the nation's children, each one trying to pass exams, enter good schools and attain the good jobs that mark the end of a race well run.
>
> But such children are by no means running as independents. They are guided and coached, trained and fed every step of the way by their mothers, who have had sharp eyes on the finish line right from the start.
>
> No one doubts that behind every high-scoring Japanese student—and they are among the highest scoring in the world—there stands a mother, supportive, aggressive and completely involved in her child's education. She studies, she packs lunches, she waits for hours in lines to register her child for exams and waits again in hallways for hours while he takes them. She denies herself TV so her child can study in quiet and she stirs noodles at 11 P.M. for the scholar's snack. She shuttles youngsters from exercise class to rhythm class to calligraphy and piano, to swimming and martial arts. She helps every day with homework, hires tutors and works part-time to pay for *juku*. Sometimes she enrolls in "mother's class" so she can help with the drills at home.

One of the reasons for the cram schools is that through them both parents and pupils hope that by being advanced the pupils will get into a prestigious private school. By this means they will avoid what has come to be called "examination hell." Just over ten per cent of Tokyo's children attend private schools, some of which run from first grade through high school and even through university. "Assuming there are no major mishaps, a child who enters one of these schools can pass the rest of his academic career without the fierce examinations such as the Masunos must face." This is not to suggest that all Japanese approve the system, which has its critics

among both parents and educators, but exams are all through the Japanese system. "Companies and government ministries administer highly competitive tests to prospective employees, sometimes only to graduates of the prestigious universities—a system that increases the pressure even more." Among the more active critics are the mothers:

> Not surprisingly, Japanese mothers have been among the major critics, perhaps because they bear much of the brunt and witness the effects of the pressure on their children. "My son kept getting headaches and then he didn't want to go to school," said one mother. "So I stopped the *juku."* Recently, such mothers have gained an ally in Prime Minister Yasuhiro Nakasone, whose government has been seeking ways to depressure the education system. Nevertheless, many doubt that his efforts will have any effect in a society dedicated to hard work and competition.
>
> For on a measuring stick, the competition has surely paid off. In math and science, Japanese children rank highest in the world. They do long division before American children, take more years of a foreign language (English), learn chemistry earlier, and are overflowing with factual knowledge about history, geography, scientific formulas and other bits of information that to many Americans would seem encyclopedic.

Another aspect of Japanese schooling is dealt with by James Fallows in the March *Atlantic.* He says:

> The practical pressures, from exams and *juku,* that are piled onto Japanese children are generally assumed to create psychological problems. Although the teenage suicide rate is actually lower in Japan than in the United States, the cases seem much more flamboyant here. That is partly because the rest of Japanese life is so tame and controlled, and partly because the suicide notes, talking about the shame of bad exam scores, suggest a weight on these young hearts.
>
> In the past few years a different kind of teen suicide has become even more famous in Japan. This is deaths induced by *ijme*. The phenomenon probably has more to do with the group-oriented culture of Japan than with the schools themselves, but it is usually cited as part of the general high-pressure syndrome. *Ijime* is usually translated "bullying," but it must have a much more powerful connotation, since its destructive power exceeds anything that we associate with school-yard bullies. Every week or two the papers carry a story about an *ijime* victim who has hanged himself or jumped off a bridge, to escape the torment that awaits him at school. I have talked to groups of students perhaps a dozen times. Every time they have turned the talk to *ijime,* as the problem most on their minds. Apparently, something in the life of today's young Japanese makes them single out a victim who seems vulnerable or "different," and something in Japan's ethos of fitting in makes the treatment unendurable. One chubby high school girl in Tokyo who had been *ijimed* for three months the previous year, said "It feels like you're always strangling in your neck."

Next Fallows turns to the second commonest criticism of education in Japan—that they fail to teach "creativity." Well, we wholly understand Fallows' unwillingness to make judgments of this sort. Who knows what creativity is and how to teach it? He admits, however, that they mainly "pour in facts," and that there is an excess of memorization. And he offers this comment on how English is taught—"the way theology students learn Greek."

> On the basis of the four or five classes I have seen, it would seem that English is taught from passages so stupefyingly vacuous that the students are lucky they can't really understand them. In a famous *juku* in Tokyo students were asked to translate the likes of "It is well to be thoroughly impressed with a sense of the difficulty of judging about others; still judge we must, and sometimes very hastily; the purposes of life require it." In another class, for sixth-year English students, I heard the teacher expound for ten minutes, in Japanese, on the supposed difference between attain and attain to in English. It is no wonder the Japanese think they can't learn languages—nobody could with this approach.

Yet there is one thing that most Americans could learn from the Japanese. As Fallows put it: "As students bear down for their exams, friends and family constantly tell them, *"Gambatte!"*—"You can do it! Tough it out!"

FRONTIERS

Help For Subsistence Farmers

THE Green Revolution, with all its unfairness to the poorer farmers, was impossible to ignore. Mexico amazed the world with the increase in its wheat crop, and India, once an importer of food grains, is now an exporter. While critics pointed out that bigger harvests didn't mean that the hungry were being fed or that just land distribution was at last being achieved, they could hardly deny that the farmers who followed directions were growing a great deal more food. Today, after some twenty years of what has been regarded as great success for the Green Revolution, interest is turning to the welfare of the areas which it left virtually untouched—Africa, for example. Worldwatch Paper No. 73, titled *Beyond the Green Revolution: New Approaches for Third World Agriculture*, by Edward C. Wolf, gives attention to how some of the needs of farmers who could not take part in the Green Revolution are now being met. Mr. Wolf begins by noting that the high praise for the achievements of some of the farmers of the Third World left the plight of others in shadow.

> New seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides boosted the crop yields of Asian and Latin American farmers who had access to irrigation systems and markets for their crops. The aggregate statistics hide a large group of Third World farmers raising food for their families on marginal, rainfed land. Because their agriculture remains unproductive and vulnerable to crop failure, drought, and natural catastrophe, these rural people remain among the poorest in their societies. Failing to address their needs has slowed economic progress in dozens of countries. The recurrent famines in Africa, and persistent pockets of starvation on that continent, demonstrate the unacceptable human costs of this neglect.

Mr. Wolf says in another place:

> That the record of the green revolution is mixed should come as no surprise. The scientists who developed the new varieties of wheat and rice never expected their work to provide an open-ended solution to the world's food problems. Many believed that the new technologies offered a means to buy time until population growth rates could be slowed. Harvests could not be increased indefinitely; birth rates would have to fall. Twenty years later, countries like China that both promoted new seeds *and* instituted economic reforms and national family-planning programs to lower birth rates have done the most to improve the welfare of their people.

Today, we learn, researchers are interesting themselves in developing crops for farmers who do not irrigate their herds and don't have the income to buy fertilizers and pesticides. And a range of crops is beginning to get attention. Wheat and rice are commonly grown under comparatively homogeneous conditions and much research has already been accomplished in working with them. "By contrast;" Wolf says, "improving the staple crops widely grown in Africa, and the potatoes, yams, and legumes grown throughout the Third World, is a much more challenging task." Further, crops almost unknown to us might prove better than the ones in wide use. As Wolf says:

> Most of the world's food is supplied by a handful of crops selected by our neolithic ancestors. While farming technologies have advanced steadily, there have been few botanical innovations since the origins of agriculture. Most international research deals with just 16 widely grown crops, although at least 3,000 plants have been used for food at one time or another in history. Crops like teff, a hardy grass grown as a staple grain in Ethiopia, or amaranth, a grain and vegetable crop native to the Americas that is both nutritious and drought-tolerant, may prove better-suited than conventional crops to the environmental and economic conditions facing many Third World farmers.

Fortunately, Wolf has gone beyond the limits of mainline research and named workers who have already earned the respect of ecologists:

> Naturalist Gary Nabhan, who has studied traditional food and medicinal plants native to the Sonoran Desert in the southwestern United States, believes that research on unconventional crops may be as valuable for insights on how to manage familiar crops as for novel agronomic possibilities. . . . Scientists at Rodale and at the Land Institute in Kansas are investigating perennial grain polycultures as possible alternatives to today's annual corn and

> wheat monocultures, particularly for marginal lands. Agriculture based on perennials, though probably decades away, would offer several advantages over current practices including reduced soil erosion, simplified weed control, improved water management, and enhanced soil fertility. Understanding perennial based cropping practices could shed new light on how to reduce the environmental impact of more conventional farming practices.

One final point made by Mr. Wolf in this pamphlet seems of particular importance. He emphasizes that "mainstream researchers have as much to learn from the partnership with small farmers as the farmers themselves."

Worldwatch Papers are $4 each and may be purchased from Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 USA.

According to a letter from Thom Leonard, who operates the Grain Exchange, last October Wes and Dana Jackson, of the Land Institute, invited him to make his headquarters with them at their Kansas location on the banks of the Smoky Hill River near Salina. The first issue of his newsletter, *The Grain Exchange*, came out in January, from his new address—2440 East Water Well Road, Salina, Kans. 67401. It bears this message:

> The advancement of industrial agriculture has accelerated erosion of genetic variety of staple seed crops. Crops once selected for unique qualities to fulfill human needs in a particular place are being replaced with modern varieties with responsiveness to chemical impute and the earning of corporate profits as primary attributes. The result is a rapidly shrinking gene pool and the lack of varieties suited to conditions outside of the primary cereal growing areas. Genetic diversity of our basic food crops is not static. It is best preserved as it lives; not stored away in vaults, capsules of information, frozen in time, but as part of a living changing agriculture. It seems the best way to preserve diversity is to be diverse.

The Grain Exchange encourages and facilitates the exchange of seeds for rare varieties of grain plants among experimental agriculturists.