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VIOLENCE IN HUMAN BEINGS

IT soon becomes evident, in examining this subject, that it is approached at more than one level. In a paper, "Reflection on Violence," Hannah Arendt remarked:

> In order to know that people will fight for their homeland we hardly had to discover instincts of "group territorialism" in ants, rats, and apes; and in order to learn that overcrowding results in irritation and aggressiveness, we hardly needed to experiment with rats: One day spent in the slums of any big city should have sufficed. I am surprised and often delighted to see that some animals behave like men; I cannot see how this would either justify or condemn human behavior.

The impact of evolutionary theory is plain enough here. Man, the assumption goes, is an animal, and if we want to learn about humans, study animal behavior. Well, it seems fair to say that humans are *partly* animals, yet there is so much about them that is not animal at all that the assumption becomes risky when left unqualified or not added to. This seems the view of J. Glenn Gray who, in his book, 0n *Understanding Violence Plilosophically* (Harper & Row, 1970), says at the beginning:

> To me there is a mysterious chasm lying between man and other species on our planet, which neither scientists nor philosophers have yet succeeded in explaining. I grew up on a farm and was early accustomed to taking care of domesticated animals without sentimentality and to killing wild game in the autumn. Yet the absence of sentimentality in learning to take care of animals can instill a certain attachment, properly called sentiment. The "sport" of hunting I gave up rather soon after watching a creature I had wounded squeal in painful death throes. Later as a soldier I was frequently struck with horror by the spectacle of suffering we inflicted on these innocent creatures who were caught accidentally in frontal areas. After the war was over and slaughter ceased, I remember still vividly braking my jeep to a halt while driving through a German forest to watch two American soldiers casually shoot an antelope on a distant hillside, then climb back into their vehicle and drive off.
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> From such experiences I have become profoundly convinced that man is never on the level of animals. Either he falls below them, as so often in his mad rages, or rises above them when he achieves humanity. Though I never feel inclined to argue about this matter, it gives me a certain satisfaction to hear from veterans of more recent wars that they have come to the same conclusion as a result of like experiences.

This surely identifies a level of approach to the question of violence, since there are many humans to whom it would never occur to draw any conclusion from such experiences about the nature of human beings. That fact in itself also differentiates us from animals. Such differences in attitude are not found in animals, although they may seem to be present in species, and when occurring are uniform in the species. No option is involved.

Glenn Gray continues:

> This intuition of the incommensurability of man and animal is hardly new, to be sure. I find in Aristotle's ethics the statement that "the incontinent man can do ten thousand times as much evil as the beast." Those who are aware how rarely the sober Aristotle exaggerates will also realize that with our contemporary instruments of destruction, totally foreign to the untechnological Greeks, his remark is seen to be an understatement. The simple point, however, that I want to make is that we are probably on the wrong track in trying to understand human violence from the standpoint of animal behavior.
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> The underlying and unexamined assumption of so many of our scientists is that man is a rational animal, that is, an animal first of all with the attribute of reason added to him from without, as it were. In being violent he loses this attribute and becomes a beast, that is, irrational. I have gradually become convinced that this philosophical definition of man as an *animal rationale* is inadequate and therefore misleading. Naturally there is something "correct" about it but it is far from "right." By accepting it as a

> presupposition of our thinking about violence, we go wrong philosophically and get a false start on the endeavor to understand the source of violence within us.

While animals have memory of a limited sort, the human faculty of memory is distinctively different. Gray says:

> Recollection is able to cut across clock time in such a fashion that the near becomes distant and the distant near. This collecting *in* memory and *of* memory can transmute everything so that a seemingly trivial new experience changes the whole of one's perspective on one's past. More dramatically, the recollection of a forgotten incident in childhood may alter radically one's present and future relations to oneself and one's fellows.
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> Who of us has not been haunted by the recall of a momentary act of violence in himself or his companions, an act or even a gesture sufficient to propel us from the periphery of an angry mob toward its center? Similarly, there is hardly a violent man who on occasion has not been moved by an act of tenderness that will not cease to trouble him till his death. The intensity of memory bears frequently little relation to the duration or importance of what it recollects.
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> Normal connections of cause and effect seem curiously out of balance here, indeed hard to discover at all in many instances. Memory makes self-knowledge difficult to the point of impossibility, for the self is not only ever in the making but is subject to no discoverable laws of orderly progression.

Imagination, like memory, enables us to reproduce the past, but it is also a creative power that gives shape to the future. Conscious reflective awareness of past and future does not exist for animals.

> Surely man becomes human in any authentic sense only when this twofold power of imagination is made use of by him to create the poetry, painting, and music of a people as well as their scientific discoveries and philosophies. This second nature into which a youngster is gradually transformed, if he is fortunate, is much more decisive than the accident of his biological first nature, for it allows him the possibility of giving in his turn a local habitation and a name to what would otherwise remain a chilling and lonely expanse of world.
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> Such a capacity of imagination, when reflected upon, never ceases to excite our wonder—even astonishment, a sentiment Aristotle saw as the origin of philosophy as well as of art and science. His teacher, Plato, called these powers *ekstasis,* which is the ability man possesses to transcend his specific situation, to get outside himself in space and time. They permit him to participate in others' experience, to understand what women go through in having a baby, if we are males, or to understand what men go through in mortal combat, if we are females. So often the traditional conception of man as a rational animal misses this dimension of *ekstasis.* It tends to conceive imagination as simply reproductive in the same way it conceives memory as only recall. The other species may well possess imagination in the limited sense as many do possess the popular notion of memory. But the capacity of self-surpassing, of bringing into, presence, of naming, of ecstatic union of the possible and the actual—this capacity seems to be reserved for human beings.

It is this capacity, we may say, which makes possible the inward consultation which we sometimes have with ourselves. In his essay, "The Self and the Other," Ortega y Gasset, distinguishing between man and animals, suggests that the capacity for inwardness, for Socratic consultation, is a distinctively human ability, saying:

> That is why the animal has always to be attentive to what goes on outside it, to the things around it. Because, even if the dangers and incitements of those things were to diminish, the animal would perforce continue to be governed by them, by the outward, by what is *other* than itself; because it cannot go within itself, since it has no self, no *chez soi,* where it can withdraw and rest. . . . of course these two things, man's power of withdrawing himself from the world and his power of taking his stand within himself are not gifts conferred upon man. I must emphasize this for those of you who are concerned with philosophy: they are not gifts conferred upon man. *Nothing that is substantive is conferred upon man.* He has to do it all for himself.
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> Hence, if man enjoys this privilege of temporarily freeing himself from things and the power to enter into himself and there rest, it is because by his effort, his toil, and his ideas he succeeded in retrieving something from things, in transforming them, and creating around himself a margin of security which is always limited but always

> or almost always increasing. . . . man as a technician is able to modify his environment to his own convenience, because, seizing every moment of rest which things allow him, he uses it to enter into himself and form ideas about this world, about these things and his relation to them, to form a plan of attack against his circumstances, in short, to create an inner world for himself. From this inner world he emerges and returns to the outer, but he returns as protagonist. . . . Far from losing his own self in this return to the world, he on the contrary carries his self to the *other,* projects it energetically and masterfully upon things, in other words, he forces the *other*—the world—little by little to become himself. Man humanizes the world, injects it, impregnates it with his own ideal substance and is finally entitled to imagine that one day or another, in the far depths of time, this terrible outer world will become so saturated with man that our descendants will be able to travel through it as today we mentally travel through our most inmost selves—he finally imagines that the world, without ceasing to be the world, will one day be changed into something like a materialized soul, and, as in Shakespeare's *Tempest*, the winds will blow at the bidding of Ariel, the spirit of ideas.

Yet this glorious finish of our development must lie far, far ahead. It is no sure thing. If with Descartes, Ortega says, we assume that we are thinking beings, we might "find ourselves holding that man, being endowed once and for all with *thought*, by possessing it with the certainty with which a constitutive and inalienable quality is possessed, would be sure of being a man as the fish is in fact sure of being a fish."

> Now this is a formidable and fatal error. Man is never sure that he will be able to carry out his thought—that is, in an adequate manner; and only if it is adequate is it thought. Or, in more popular terms: man is never sure that he will be right, that he will hit the mark. Which means nothing less than the tremendous fact that, unlike all other beings in the universe, man can never be sure that he is, in fact, a man, as the tiger is sure of being a tiger and the fish of being a fish. . . . Each one of us is always in peril of not being the unique and untransferable *self* which he is. The majority of men perpetually betray this *self* which is waiting to be; and to tell the whole truth our personal individuality is a personage which is never completely realized, a stimulating Utopia, a secret legend, which each of us guards in the bottom of his heart. It is thoroughly comprehensible that Pindar resumed his heroic ethics in the well-known imperative: "Become what you are." . . .
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> Without a strategic retreat into the self, without vigilant thought, human life is impossible. Call to mind what all mankind owes to certain great withdrawals into the self! It is no chance that all the great founders of religions preceded their apostolates by famous retreats. Buddha withdrew to the forest; Mohammed withdrew to his tent, and even there he withdrew from his tent by wrapping his head in his cloak; above all, Jesus went into the desert for forty days. What do we not owe to Newton! Well, when someone, amazed that he had succeeded in reducing the innumerable phenomena of the physical world to such a precise and simple system, asked him how he had succeeded in doing so, he replied ingenuously: *"Nocte dieque incubando,"* "turning them over day and night"—words behind which we glimpse vast and profound withdrawals into the self.

It seems clear that Ortega found little essential kinship between man and the animals. He dealt with human beings as they really are, not as anthropologists and evolutionists have imagined them. We now go back to Glenn Gray's book for another distinctive and unique attribute of human beings.

> In intimate association with memory and imagination, though subtly constituting another dimension of being human, man possesses consciousness and conscience. The words consciousness and conscience do not sound alike accidentally; originally they were the same, signifying "joint knowledge" or "knowing with others." In our Anglo-Saxon tradition, however, conscience has come to be associated with a moral faculty which enables individuals to know right from wrong good from evil. And consciousness on the European continent, particularly in German philosophy, has been developed as a continuation of the classic Greek understanding of *nou*s, or mind in the sense of that which pervades the cosmos and is simply illustrated in man, not alone embodied in his rational faculties. Neither tradition has seen sufficiently, I believe, the unitary character of conscience and consciousness, by which we are at once distinctive individuals and members of the human community. Both are activities of the productive imagination and memory by which we are placed in the midst of the world and are inseparable from it by virtue of our ability to know jointly with our fellows. . . .

> Conscience is usually thought of psychologically as an inner state of the self. Conscience makes us guilty, we say when we become conscious of an act of ours (or failure to act) that does not comport with that which memory and imagination have made possible for us. But guiltiness is thought of too superficially if it is understood in ethical terms alone. We awake to guilt when we first become self-conscious. Without sufficient consciousness or awareness we are unlikely ever to feel guilty, and without responding to guilt, that is, becoming responsible, we block any growth in consciousness of our being with others. It has become usual to understand consciousness not as some divine imperative within but simply as the internalizing of the mores of our particular culture. While this is doubtless true, its significance is both different and greater than often believed. Conscience is "social" as consciousness likewise is in the sense that neither would come to be in isolated creatures. The new dimension they bring to the fore is the ontological priority of the communal and community as the fount and origin of all memory and imagination in individuals.
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> We are gradually relearning today what the ancients already knew, that language is the common possession making man human. Though languages are relative to particular societies, language itself is not. And it is language which forms and largely determines all of us from birth. . . . There are assuredly more aspects of the human situation that distinguish us from the other species and they from us. I am not inclined to believe that these distinctions make us superior to the animals in any moral or even ontological sense. What I am alone insisting on is the difference, a difference of kind rather than degree. . . . As I study the faces of students in my college classes, I am sometimes greatly tempted to warn them that they have not the slightest idea of what they are capable.

While humans, then, are manifestly different from animals, chiefly in their intellectual and moral characteristics, and in their possibilities for doing evil as well as good, what about their similarities? Both animals and humans have physical bodies and certain parallels are evident, some of them so evident that they led Charles Darwin to conclude that Man had been derived from some Old World Primate akin to the existing Anthropoid Apes. Numerous books have been written in behalf of Darwin's theory, and only a few in this century against it, yet among these few are books by anatomists who point to a very different conclusion—that man has his own and distinctively unique line of evolution, very ancient compared to the anthropoid apes and quite independent of them. For the evidence, one might turn to *Hallmarks of Mankind,* published in London in 1948, by Frederic Wood Jones, professor of human and comparative anatomy in the Royal College of Surgeons of England. This small book of eighty-six pages reviews the history of the theories of man's development proposed by Darwin and the counter-theories of his critics. Jones himself arrives at the conclusion that, from the viewpoint of the structure of his body, "Man is an extremely primitive type," as compared with monkeys and apes, and that he "has his own remarkable structural specializations that distinguish him from all other Mammals and appear to be his very ancient hallmarks." The final sentence in his book is this: "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."

What, then, finally, shall we say about the nature of man? Definitions are out of order here, although there are no restrictions as to possibilities. The allegory of Pico della Mirandola, *On the Dignity of Man,* composed toward the end of the fifteenth century, gives succinctly and grandly the answer to our question. The Great Artificer declares:

> We have made you a creature neither of heaven nor of earth, neither mortal nor immortal, in order that you may, as the free and proud shaper of your own being, fashion yourself in the form you may prefer. It will be in your power to descend to the lower, brutish forms of life; you will be able, through your own decision, to rise again to the superior orders whose life is divine.

REVIEW

THE SICILIAN GANDHI

IT has been years since MANAS has given any attention to Danilo Dolci, known as the Sicilian Gandhi. This long silence makes a reason for renewed examination of his biography, *Fire Under the Ashes, by* James McNeish, published in this country in 1966 by Beacon. Sicily is an impoverished Italian island which Dolci determined to change. McNeish's book is the story of his extraordinary efforts and accomplishments.

Dolci was born in 1924 in a village near Trieste, of a Slavic mother and an Italian (and German) father who worked for the railroad. As a little boy he loved music and when a teenager he was accomplished on three instruments. He also loved to read.

> Danilo studied mathematics and drawing at school and at home plunged deeper into his reading. It had become a ritual. He would rise at four, slip an overcoat over his pajamas and read for two hours; after a break for a hot drink he would go on reading until it was time to go to school. In three, three and a half hours, he would devour a major work. In his sixteenth year he read close to three hundred titles—all the Italian classics, Goethe, Schiller, Tolstoy, Ibsen, Shakespeare. Simultaneously he studied the history of art and crossed into fresh religious worlds, wanting to understand how so many other millions outside Italy might live according to vastly different, yet firmly established patterns of conduct. He read the Bible and the Koran, turned to Tao, Confucius, and the teaching of Buddha. He read all seven hundred stanzas of the *Bhagavad-Gita,* the work which half a century before had become Gandhi's spiritual reference book.

Two years later, in 1942, he was a first-year architectural student, but he continued his daily reading schedule, absorbing the Greek dramatists and the Utopians. He was studying fifteen hours a day and collapsed from overwork. Meanwhile the draft had selected him as officer material, but by now he had grown up to resistance to war. He went about ripping down the Nazi posters that had gone up in Italy. By 1947, when he was twenty-three, he was in his fourth year as an architectural student. Instead of reading he was writing poetry. Just before taking his final exams, he told McNeish,

> "I suddenly realized that I was about to become fossilized," he says. "I was about to bury myself in a materialistic society which glorified intellect to the point where it killed feelings which could become actions. And I felt the need of action. I suddenly realized that reinforced concrete and drawing boards weren't enough. A home, a car, and all the rest—they weren't enough. Better to be penniless and in shirt-sleeves and a nobody, merely alive in the midst of life, alive in the midst of the perfect community which was still maturing within me."

In 1949 he left his enraged father and his disappointed mother and set out for Nomodelphia, a community for homeless children organized by Don Zeno, an extraordinary priest who had taken over an abandoned concentration camp where 500 Jews and many British soldiers (taken prisoner) had lost their lives, and converted it into a place for orphans to live. There Danilo turned his architect's skills into furious building activity for housing the children. But he was obliged to leave this project by a notice from the army to report for service to the barracks at Siena.

> He was the strangest recruit they'd known. He told his superiors he considered military service a polite expression for organized murder, refused to do "anything soldierly" and said, point blank, "No shooting, no bayonet practice." He stuck to his point and won. He consented to do fire drill and gymnastics. After Don Zeno came to plead Nomodelphia's case Danilo was given liberal weekend leave. Once he came back a week late. He was called before the commanding officer, Colonel Sebastiano Camboso. He explained the needs of Nomodelphia and pointed out that Don Zeno was in trouble. Colonel Camboso was a cultured man and, by chance, had read some of the recruit's poems published in a national anthology. "Never let it be said," he remarked, "that here brute force is a mightier weapon than the spirit." He shook Danilo by the hand. What with Don Zeno's continued efforts, the help of friends at Siena University, the influence of the poems, and Danilo's stubborness, he did very little service of any kind. In desperation they put him to work as a designer and offered him a commission. Danilo refused the officer's course and stayed with the ranks. During the whole of the token three-months' course his single achievement appears to be an assignment carried out in Rome, abetted by friends from Siena, when he was ordered to design a new regimental standard. It was to show all the battalion emblems, mostly eagles' heads. He was given a car and a driver to go out and buy materials and paints. He finally produced a monstrous caricature—the eagles' heads were enormous, the talons fiercely predatory. Nobody noticed.

> It was hung proudly in the regimental officers' mess in Rome and, presumably is still there.

After his release from the army he went back to helping Don Zeno, who was suffering difficulties trying to take care of more than a thousand children. He finally separated from Don Zeno on the ground that the priest would take only Catholic children. "They were two obstinate men. Don Zeno took the young plant and nurtured it; Danilo wanted to straighten out the jungle. Their paths were quite different. It was painful for both of them."

The youngsters took the news of Danilo's leaving gloomily. The workman, Virgilio, who said goodbye to Danilo when he quietly left, told the children:

> "All he had with him was a woman's basket, a skiddly *woman's* basket, and some olives and dried figs. . . . I felt somehow ashamed, seeing him go off like that, like a—"
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> "Like a what?" someone said.
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> Virgilio hunched his shoulders and thought about it.
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> "Like a Gandhi," he said at length.

This was Danilo Dolci's preparation for his life work, which was now to begin. He decided to go to Trappeto, a town in Sicily he had visited when his father was station master there. He got off the train in 1952 dressed in baggy pants and an old jersey, with about five cents in his pocket. He told the fishermen who met him, "I've come to live with you, as a brother."

The conditions in Trappeto were very nearly unspeakable. An open canal ran through the village.

> It was drain, sewer, dump, and children's playground. The kids played among hens and pigs at the bottom of the filth, often naked. "Down there," Paolino said, "where Giustina's standing, the stuff often comes into the houses." Giustina's husband was in prison, Paolino said. . . . "Why are so many men in prison?" he asked. "When the young ones cry we steal for them," he was told.
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> A woman whose husband and four sons had earned a total of eighteen dollars in the previous four months said they had been waiting to be put on poor relief for twenty-nine years. . . .
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> Everywhere despair, a deep brooding injustice, the feeling—real and imagined—of being forgotten, left out, of being put upon by the *signori*—the proprietors, the local authorities, the Government. By *them*. The feeling of being an untouchable. . . .
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> They fished at night, they said, and sold their catch on the beach at dawn to the Palermo buyers. Most of the village took its livelihood from the sea. In winter they doubled as peasants. There were only the two jobs. Everyone did a bit of both.
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> Dolci explained his idea of opening a house where the needy would be fed and clothed and live together in brotherly love, which was the basis of true religion. A kind of community. There was silence. A community? What was that?

Dolci begged and borrowed and bought some land and built the community house and taught the people of Trappeto the meaning of community. What drove him to the extreme methods he used? One day he saw a few weeks' old baby die of starvation. The mother had nothing to eat and her milk dried up, while the baby lost the strength to suck.

> Dolci ran to get powdered milk. They tried to give the milk to the baby, but at every attempt it vomited. They put the child on the bed, a palliasse laid on planks, and Franco went for the doctor. Dolci sat with Giustina.
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> While they were waiting for the doctor the child died. The incident haunts Dolci still. "I would never have believed if I hadn't seen it that a child might actually die of starvation," he says.

Experience of this sort became the foundation of Danilo Dolci's resolve. The obstacles confronting him were enormous but he overcame them one by one. When things seemed absolutely hopeless he—more than once—began a fast unto death, and eventually help came, saving his life. Through the years he compelled the government to give much needed help, and a trial in which he was prosecuted for leading a strike-in-reverse—organizing the fishermen to build a road to the sea, but without official permission—made him famous throughout the literary world, generating wide support. His original "community" has grown into a well known center for social research and planning and his books are bringing him volunteer helpers. Aldous Huxley said of Dolci that he "has already done more for Sicily than any other man in the island's twenty-six centuries of recorded history." Read his books, which have been translated and are in every good library, and read the McNeish biography.

COMMENTARY
TODAY'S MONARCH

THE United States, it seems clear enough, is going through a cycle of decline. This is the burden of an article by Barbara Tuchman in the *New York Times* of Sept. 13. (This material was sent to us by a reader in the East, for which we are grateful.) Mrs. Tuchman draws on recent political events, but her article is not political at all. She is concerned with the quality of our lives and our government, not with politics as such.

She begins by a brief look at past history. Speaking of national decline, she says:

> In Rome it is associated with external pressure from the barbarians and the inability of the empire's agricultural rim to offer firm resistance. In the ancient Greek cities of Asia Minor, it can be traced to the silting up of harbors, closing them to access by sea. In the Aztec empire of Mexico it was the invasion of ruthless Europeans. In China it is a long story.

Other factors were no doubt involved, but in a contracted introduction these will serve as explanation. Coming to the United States, she says, "One certainly feels a deteriorating ethic in many spheres."

> Our government is beset by incompetence; our officials display an inability to execute policy efficiently or within the law. The policy-making apparatus itself appears to have broken down, with the chain of command in the Government's executive branch reduced to a meaningless flow chart. Such incoherence and disarray in policy and its implementation result, in turn, from the public's unthinking acceptance of image over substance in its choice of Government officers.

Later, in explanation of this condition of the voters, she notes "the public's acceptance of the pictured image without regard to the reality underneath."

> The problem is serious. It has caused us to put in the Presidency a person who appears likable and avuncular on the screen but is not otherwise equipped for the White House.
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> I need not say that this is the result of a visual—which is to say a nonthinking—culture, inculcated by the age of you-know-what. Television has been a great boon to the ill and the lonely, but the degree to which it has impaired the brain cells of the general population has not been measured.
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> A visual culture has important implications for government. The subjects of the Bourbon monarchy were so overcome by the mystique of the court—curled wigs and elegancies—that they allowed the Bourbons to reign in decadence until the revolution became inevitable. Today television has become our monarch. It determines more and more our choice of candidates for office and the persons we now elect to exercise the government we live under. . . .
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> It does seem that the knowledge of a difference between right and wrong is absent from our society, as if it had floated away on a shadowy night after the last World War. So remote is the concept that even to speak of right and wrong marks one to the younger generation as old-fashioned, reactionary and out of touch. . . .
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> I recently saw on television a survey of airline delays and cancellations. Corporate officers, with the same nonchalant admission of lying shown by Poindexter, and North, acknowledged that their companies issued false statements of flight times—showing a shorter time between given points than their competitors—so that they would appear more favorably on travel agents' timetables and would thus obtain the most bookings.
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> Though not horrendous in itself, the fact of its being acknowledged so frankly and openly, in the same insouciant tone as the National Security Council admissions, gives one the feeling that false dealing is now the prevailing element in American life and may account for the sense of decline we feel in the American condition.

In her conclusion Barbara Tuchman says:

> Maturity and education are long, slow processes. Although our current disarray is urgent, we shall not achieve a more mature public opinion overnight, especially against worshipers of the populace who insist there is no cause for worry because the voice of the people is always right. That is nonsense. It is no more right than would be the voice of a herd of sheep—if it had one.

Can *nothing*, then, be done, beyond waiting for the slow process of "maturity and education" to do its work? We can think of nothing save application of the principle of the bioregionalists, which is to form communities of people desirous of living according to attitudes and ideals which they have adopted, and ignoring the decline going on all about. Decency, at the earthly level, means living in harmony with the earth and its natural ways. The bioregionalists have resolved to do all they can in this direction. In time the country may learn from them.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
WORKING WITH CHILDREN

A PENNSYLVANIA mother with five children—Nathan almost 12, Adam almost 10, Blythe, 6, Jordan, 4, and Anne 1—read in a teaching magazine about teacher burn-out. The story listed ten symptoms, and she, she said, had nine of them. The tenth symptom was given as "aimlessly staring into space," and she "would have loved to have it if I could only have found the time." Thinking about it, she decided that the whole family felt burned out. They were all home-schoolers but were not enjoying life. She wrote in a state home-schooler magazine:

> At that time, I realized something about the difference between home education and school education. When I was the age of Nathan and Adam, periodically the pressure of school, the boredom of subjects that were required but had little meaning for my life, the lure of writing which I found irresistible, all would combine to cause me to just ignore school. I certainly was physically present for each class, but I went through the barest minimum of work to scrape by without failing. Unless I found a subject intensely interesting, I spent my time doing other things. I read books that were interesting to me, I wrote stories and plays, I kept up a lively and copious correspondence with a variety of friends, and essentially school just flowed on around me.
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> This brings up the difference—I was *allowed* to do that. My parents never knew about it until report card time, and since I never actually failed any subjects, they just encouraged me to work harder. My teachers generally took little notice of what I did, not because they didn't care but because they seemed genuinely to feel I was old enough to know the consequences of what I did and to pay the piper at the appropriate time. Also, because I was just one out of thirty, it was difficult for them to monitor my activities six hours a day.
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> My own children, on the other hand, get away with virtually *nothing.* I know every day whether they've been diligent or derelict and when I'm feeling particularly pressured by the curriculum, the nearness of the end of the quarter or my own fears about the school district's reaction if we don't look like Harvard University in each quarterly report, I can lean on them quite heavily.
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> Recognizing the diminishing amount of choice I was allowing my children to have in how they spent their days went a long way to helping us make schooling changes. I saw that I had shackled us to a curriculum with which I was less and less satisfied and which was often meaningless to the children. As I looked back on our most satisfying months of home education, I realized that there had been several factors present at that time: (1) The children all worked at essentially the same projects at the same time. We were not broken into grades. Instead, the children studied the same subjects but worked at them according to each child's maturity and skill level. (2) Because the children were doing the same studies, they were able to effectively help one another and to encourage and challenge one another. I was not required to be all things to all children at all times. (3) My time was less fragmented because I was not preparing three lessons for three children in each subject covered by the curriculum. The research to keep up with our curriculum was making me old before my time. . . . We're still feeling our way along. . . . I'm attempting to be much more flexible, I'm striving to take advantage of teachable moments instead of cramming a day's worth of curriculum down everyone's throat. . . . Already there has been a noticeable difference in the atmosphere around here, and I'm astonished that such an obvious solution could have become hidden for such a long time.

This is quoted from *Growing Without Schooling* No. 57, 729 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

A father in Florida writes:

> For the first few weeks of home-schooling, Jessica (11) just played. According to everything I've read, that was a perfectly normal way for Jessica to learn. She played different roles—teacher, mother, store cashier, waitress, dressmaker. She played with an electrifying energy I had never seen in her before. She also took the initiative to search out jobs in the neighborhood that would pay her fairly good wages, especially for an 11-year-old. . . .
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> During this time I saw how skillful Jessica was in business dealings. She would go to the finest dress shops, find a dress with some imperfection in the sewing, and proceed to demand a discount if she was to buy it. She would then mend it at home, having managed considerable savings. I couldn't help but

> think of myself at her age, not having the courage to question adults, much less barter with them in their own stores.

John Holt, who founded *Growing Without Schooling* more than ten years ago, answered questions by the readers of his books. In 1967 he replied to a question about something he had said in *How Children Learn:*

> The incident of the child, just learning to talk, who at first called all animals in fields *"cows,"* even horses and sheep, is crucial. I feel very strongly that not "correcting" this child was the proper thing to do:
>
> 1. Courtesy. If a distinguished visitor from a foreign country was visiting with you, you would not correct every mistake he made in English, however much he might want to learn the language, because it would be rude. We do not think of rudeness or courtesy as being applicable to our dealings with very little children. But they are.
>
> 2. The child who first isolates a class of objects and labels them has performed a considerable intellectual feat. Our first reaction to such a feat should be one of acceptance and recognition. Without making a great to-do about it, we should by our actions make clear to the child that he has accomplished something good, not that he has made a mistake. Put yourself in his position. If you were just learning, in a foreign country, to speak a foreign language, how would you feel if everyone around you corrected every error you made? Unless you are a most exceptional person, the effect of this would be to make you so careful that you would wind up saying little or nothing—like a man I know who, after six or seven winters in Mexico, cannot speak twenty words of Spanish because he can't bring himself to say anything unless he is sure he is right.

The importance of these considerations can hardly be over-emphasized. Do we *ever* think of the child's feelings when we bear down with a correction with righteous insistence? Holt goes on, making more suggestions:

> 3. You say, "We do not help if we do nothing or say nothing to facilitate learning." But that is the point. Just by our using the language ourselves, we give the child all the help he needs. Because other people called some of these animals "horses" or "sheep" instead of "cows," this little child learned, and very quickly, that this is what they were called. In short, we do not need to "teach" or "correct" in order to help a child learn.
>
> 4. It is always, without exception, better for a child to figure out something on his own than to be told, provided, of course, as in the matter of running across the street, that his life is not endangered in the learning. But in matters intellectual, I admit no exception to this rule. In the first place, what he figures out he remembers better. In the second place, and far more important, every time he figures something out *be gains confidence in his ability to figure things out.*
>
> 5. We are fooling ourselves if we think that by being nice about it we can prevent corrections from sounding like reproofs. It is only in exceptional circumstances and with the greatest tact that you can correct an adult without to some degree hurting his feelings. How can we suppose that children, whose sense of identity or ego or self-esteem is so much weaker, can accept correction equably? I would say that in 99 cases out of 100, any child will take correction as a kind of reproof, and this no matter how "enthusiastic, pleasant, relaxed, stimulating," we may happen to be. I am ready to be about as dogmatic about this as anything I know of; I have seen it too often with my own eyes. . . . A healthy child will almost always rather figure something out for himself. A veteran teacher not long ago summed it up beautifully. "A word to the wise," he said, "is infuriating."

Holt understood both children and adults.

FRONTIERS

Human Destinations

IN his book, *The New World of Philosophy*, Abraham Kaplan formulates a question for discussion:

> *Is a question like "What is the origin of the universe?" a meaningless one for analytic philosophy because an answer to it lies outside the scope of scientific method?*

Commenting, Kaplan says:

> Now the whole point of the logical positivist or scientific empiricist is that the agnostic position is no more tenable than . . . others, because it is equally confused as to the meaning of the question raised. With the progress of science, the area of our ignorance constantly decreases. To be sure, the more we learn the more we discover there is yet to be learned; nevertheless, as knowledge grows, one after another of our questions finds an answer. But the philosophical questions are not of this sort. It is not that here the evidence is and remains evenly divided between the pro and the con, or that, because of the limitations of the human mind (as Kant urged), we are not in a position to get at the evidence. It is not that there is something in question which is too profound for science to grasp, but rather that we have been betrayed by our language into thinking we are asking a question when we are doing no such thing. It has the form of a question, the grammar of a question, but it does not have the logical structure of a question, so it makes no sense to talk of either knowing or not knowing the answer.

What Kaplan seems to mean here is that asking about origins is asking about causes, and those causes are themselves part of the universe. He is suggesting that there is always a pre-existing cause, so we can't really get back of causes since there are always other causes behind them. As he says:

> When we ask about an origin, for instance, what we mean is something like this: Here is a state of affairs, please describe for me the earliest state of affairs, related to this one by some sort of continuous transformation, which is still relevant to my present interests. This is very roughly what we mean by an "origin." In this sense it makes no sense to ask about "the origin of the universe," for whatever earlier state you may describe is still part of the history of the universe. . . . there is nothing other than the universe to be specified as its origin, because "universe" just means all there is. . . .

The question, then, he says, is no question because there are no data for finding an answer. However, he goes on:

> But there is something more to be added. May it not be that, though the question itself is meaningless, there is indeed something that I meant to ask by it? . . . There is *some* point in my asking the question even though it is not the point that my question purports to be raising. It may be that I ask about the origin of the universe when what I really wish to understand is my own destination.

One might reply, "No, the question was about the origin of the universe and I am really interested in that," but saying that becomes unimportant when we see that questions about ultimate beginnings are unanswerable, so let us concede the conclusion he offers: What is my destination? Is that unanswerable, too? Finally, it may be unanswerable, depending upon what we think of as "progress," which might take us into areas for which we have no words. Yet there are *stages* of progress which are within our comprehension. History is the study of the stages of the past—what we are able to find out about it—and the future is accessible to us by the exercise of the imagination.

How shall we anticipate the future, or that part of the future which includes our destination? We have a word for speaking of this—structuring the future by projecting into the future some of the things that have happened in the past. The word is "extrapolation." Economists and futurists do this all the time. But they also make great mistakes. The past, of which we know something but not everything, is a very imperfect guide. Could even an expert predictor, back in 1869, the year of Gandhi's birth, have offered a rough sketch of what this remarkable man would do with his life and of its impact on history? But not even Gandhi himself could predict the full outcome of his career, stretching into the future, although he had great vision and strong intentions.

The past—our genesis and all that has happened since—cannot now be changed. Our present is constructed out of that past. But the future is still at least partly unmade. How much of a hand do we have in making the future? We could say that the raw material of the future is the present. Given some raw material, we are able to shape it to some extent. In that sense, and within certain limits, we *shape* our destination. What are the limiting factors? Only the laws of nature and the past. What are the conditions under which we do what shaping we can? The conditions are largely provided by the rhythms of nature. Everything that develops does so according to rhythms which govern the process of life. As Shakespeare said, "There is a tide in the affairs of men. Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune." And Blake wrote:

> If you trap the moment before it's ripe,
> The tears of repentance you'll certainly wipe;
> But if once you let the ripe moment go,
> You can never wipe off the tears of woe.

Other factors are involved—those over which we have some control. The will, for one, and discrimination in how and when to use it. These are of course old-fashioned terms, but happily they are coming back into usage since they are needed in order to get at how human beings are able to make for themselves the lives they desire and reach the destination they choose.

Biography and autobiography are the best sources for learning how humans have sought and created their destinations. In *Thoreau—A Life of the Mind,* published last year by the University of California Press, the author, Robert Richardson, asks, What does a life close to nature teach? In answer, he said:

> It taught Thoreau the imperative of courage, the absolute value of freedom, a conception of nature as law, and finally, the necessity of individual wholeness or integrity if one was to avoid a life of despair. "I learned this, at least, by my experiment, that if one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours."

This was Thoreau's indirect way of admitting that he had made his destination and had found it good.