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THE SECRET OF SUCCESS

THERE are various ways to "go back to fundamentals," but what may be the best way, or at least a way that is fully available to each one of us, is to start with ourselves. We live at a time which is awesomely threatening—at practically every level of our lives—which is reason enough for funding out what we can about ourselves. At the outset of inquiry, finding out all about the world—why it is what it is—is really too much to attempt. We have neither the means nor the time. But finding out about ourselves seems at least feasible. And it seems not too much to say that the few who have been successful in this lived admirable if not especially happy lives.

For orderly thinking about ourselves, then, we go to Ortega y Gasset, a man who had a peculiar talent for this investigation. We begin by quoting from the last chapter of his study of "sociology," a book wholly unlike the texts commonly read on this subject. The title is *Man and People*, brought out in the Norton Library as a paperback in 1963. In this closing chapter he is concerned with the attitudes and opinions of the society in which we live, how they are formed, and therefore how they might possibly be changed.

> Now, the greater part of the ideas by which and from which we live, we have never thought for ourselves, on our own responsibility, nor even rethought. We use them mechanically, on the authority of the collectivity in which we live and from which they waylaid us, penetrated us under pressure like oil in the automobile. If it were possible—which it is not—it would be interesting to obtain statistics on how many people in a society, for example in our whole country, have ever thought, really in the true sense of the word thought, that two and two make four or if the sun is going to rise tomorrow. From which it follows that the overwhelming majority of our ideas, despite being ideas and acting in us as convictions, are nothing rational but are usages like our language or the handshake; in sum, no less mechanical, unintelligible, and imposed on us than these are. . . . Ideas are ideas of or about something, and are therefore opinions—true or false. Hence they are ideas only when, in addition to their strict sense, we have also made ourselves clearly aware of the reasons that substantiate their truth or demonstrate their falsity. Only then, by virtue of their reasons, are they rational.
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> Now, none of this takes place in the constant emission of ideas in which we indulge. We keep saying things about every subject in the universe on the authority of what people say, as if we were drawing on a bank whose balance sheet we have never read. Man commonly lives intellectually on the credit of the society in which he lives, a credit that has never been questioned. Only occasionally, in regard to one point or another, does anyone take the trouble to go over the account, to submit the accepted idea to criticism and reject or readmit it, but this time because he has himself rethought it and examined its foundations.

Among these ideas, Ortega points out, there is a preponderant mass of opinions more or less accepted by everyone, which "No one thinks of uttering . . . as a discovery of his own or as something needing our support." We seek support in them as if they constituted "authority." They do not, Ortega says, "need support and backing from particular individuals or groups . . . on the contrary, they impose themselves on everyone, exert their constraint on everyone." For this reason he names them "binding observances."

> The binding force exercised by these observances is clearly and often unpleasantly perceived by anyone who tries to oppose it. At every normal moment of collective existence an immense repertory of these established opinions is in obligatory observance; they are what we call "commonplaces." Society, the collectivity, does not contain any ideas that are properly such—that is, ideas clearly thought out on sound evidence. It contains only commonplaces and exists on the basis of these commonplaces. By this I do not mean to say that they are untrue ideas—they may be magnificent ideas; what I do say is that inasmuch as they are observances or established opinions or commonplaces, their possible excellent qualities remain inactive. What acts is simply their

mechanical pressure on all individuals, their soulless coercion. . . .

There is, then, a radical difference between the private opinion of a group—however energetic, aggressive, and proselytizing—and public opinion, that is, opinion actually established and in observance. For the latter to assert itself, no one has to bother to maintain it, of itself, and without any need for defenders, *so long as it is in observance*, it predominates and rules, whereas private opinion has no existence except strictly in the measure to which one person or several or many people take it upon themselves to maintain it.

. . . *the fundamental sociological phenomenon of binding observance*, which is found not only in opinion but in every usage, which therefore is the most essential character of the social fact and of society as a body of social facts, does not consist in individual adherence however great or small numerically. The entire accomplishment of a sociology rests on seeing this clearly. . . . Public opinion, "reigning" opinion, has this power behind it and makes it function in the various forms that correspond to the various dimensions of collective existence. This power of the collectivity is public power. . .

Public power, then, is only the active, energetic emanation of public opinion, in which all the other usages or binding observances that draw their nourishment from it are afloat. And the form that public power takes, that is, the greater or lesser violence with which it acts, depends on the greater or lesser importance that public opinion attributes to contraventions of or deviations from usage. Among many Bantu-speaking African tribes today, the word for "crime" means "things hateful to the tribe," that is, contrary to public opinion.

The common sense of this analysis is self-evident. Ortega goes on to show that there are times when public opinion may weaken, and then the opinions of groups begin to make themselves felt, and these groups, he says, generally coagulate into "two great conglomerates of opinion." Then society splits or separates and public power breaks up or splits into parties. "This is the hour of revolution or civil war."

Ortega's final comment is this:

But these maximum dissensions are only the superlative of a fact that is present in every society, that is inseparable from it: namely, the antisocial character of many individuals—the murderer, the thief, the traitor, the self-willed man, the man of violence. This is enough to make us realize that giving the name of "society" to a collectivity is a euphemism that falsified our vision of collective "life." So-called society is never what the name promises. It is always at the same time, to one or another degree, *dis-society*, repulsion between individuals. Since on the other hand it claims to be the opposite, we must radically open ourselves to the conviction that society is a reality that is *constitutively* sick, defective—strictly, it is a never-ending struggle between its genuinely social elements and behaviors and its dissociative or antisocial elements and behaviors.

In these few paragraphs Ortega has cleared away the false supports of an easy optimism and indicated in outline what is involved in any significant "social" change. Actual change for the better means altering the network of binding observances. It means planting new habits of association, fostering weak impulses to make them stronger, reducing the likelihood of confrontations between mature prejudices and hardly born longings, until the latter gain the necessary strength.

But what is the real work of those who feel themselves to be the "genuinely social elements" of a society? What forms should the persuasion they wish to exercise take?

Well, there have been various exemplars. The Buddha walked the length and breadth of India, declaring the Four Truths, and centuries later it was said that he "made all Asia mild." Socrates wandered over Athens, questioning and reaching a number of the young men of the city, and there is perhaps no better example of a man who stood up to be counted and who paid the price exacted by the "binding observances" of his time. Jesus did something similar among his people. Then there was Bruno, whose vision brought him to death at the stake in 1600, and Thomas More, who wrote *Utopia* and lost his head for his principles in 1535. Thomas Paine wrote pamphlets and books and did more for the independence of the American colonies than any other one man. He died neglected. All these men were shapers of better public opinion. Then in our own time there has been Gandhi. But how did these

individuals acquire the power to alter the views of their contemporaries, and many who came after? That is really the question. What gives strength for good to human beings?

The question has some mystery in it and can have no full answer, yet there are clues. The familiar pattern of behavior by those who feel they have some good ideas that ought to be spread is to go about addressing meetings, writing articles, sometimes large books. But the secret of power is not in these undertakings. We have two examples in mind that might prove instructive. One is Arthur Morgan, the other John Muir. They both did a lot of talking and they wrote articles and books. But first they did something else—they examined themselves.

In the Epilogue he added to his diaries (published by his wife in 1928, called *Finding His World*) Morgan wrote:

> By the time I was fifteen I decided to commit myself to free intellectual inquiry, but repeatedly in the years immediately following I reviewed my orthodox associations, partly because my early indoctrination was difficult to throw off, and partly to assure myself that I was not losing any values those associations offered. To paraphrase an expression of David Starr Jordan, I was led into the camp of the religious liberals about as gracefully and willingly as a cat is led across the carpet by the tail. The intellectual stultification of orthodox Christianity gradually compelled the transition. . . .
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> The past has values for us. Through tradition and other forms of social inheritance we receive all the resources that lift us above primitive savagery, and also we receive from the dead and obsolete past all that encumbers us. We cannot arbitrarily accept or reject that inheritance as a whole. The problem of life is to weigh, appraise, select, and discard with equal care so that no values are lost and no impediments are retained.
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> For my insistence on again and again exploring sympathetically the old orthodoxy for any values it might hold, while at the same time holding to absolute freedom of inquiry, I have no apology. . . . I consider that, given my early environment, the casting off of orthodox Christian theology is one of my greatest achievements. Christian theology says, "It is either this doctrine or despair; there are no other choices." Paganism says, "In what a strange and interesting world we find ourselves! Let us look about us and see what it is like." . . .
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> When starting for the West at nineteen, I determined never to do a day's work for pay where the normal and natural results of that day's work would not be of human value, and I never quite starved on that program. I realized that to live wisely by such a standard, one's ideas of values must include the whole range of legitimate human needs, both the practical and material and the so-called "impractical" hungers of human nature. My failures have been due to living not closely enough in accordance with my convictions, and in not using ordinary common sense in applying them in specific cases. Good will is only potent when associated with intelligence.

Then, in another book he wrote:

> Perhaps the most difficult decision I ever made was that my own deep conditioning should be examined. When I did arrive at that conclusion I went far beyond the immediate issue. I arrived at the conclusion that free, critical inquiry cannot be free so long as there is an emotional drag holding one to particular beliefs. Desire or intent to justify a particular belief or attitude leads to unrepresentative selection and inaccurate weighing of evidence. It would be my aim not to try to make myself believe any doctrine or theory, nor to try not to believe. I would want my beliefs and opinions to be my best judgment from the evidence, not adopted because of comfort or courage I would get from believing.

Morgan's resolves of this sort, and his carrying of them out, gave strength to his mind, depth to his conviction, and power to his prose. Some day, perhaps, the influence for good of this man will be recognized, and not only by a generation of students at Antioch College, which he brought to new life. A list of his books is available from Community Service, Inc., P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387. For an introduction and first reading, we suggest *The Long Road.*

John Muir, born in 1838, entered the scene forty years before Morgan. At twenty-nine he set out for California and soon had a job as a sheepherder. The country of the High Sierras became his natural home for life. Having to kill coyotes which attacked the sheep went against his grain, as he had already decided that he did not think much of civilization and its destructive ways. He wrote in a draft telling of his "Thousand-Mile Walk": "Well, I have precious

little sympathy for the myriad bat eyed proprieties of civilized man, and if a war of races should occur between the wild beasts and Lord Man I would be tempted to side with the bears." The Sierra bears, too, threatened his sheep, but he never had to kill any. But these were troubling experiences for a maturing sensitive man. We take from Michael P. Cohen's *The Painless Way*—a study of Muir's life and thought—an account of Muir's thinking at this time.

> Muir had begun the bold and arduous task of re-examining values he had absorbed during his first thirty years of life. It was not a project he was likely to complete very quickly. Because the world was not divided into neat dualities. It was difficult for him to establish a coherent set of beliefs that would replace those he had learned in civilization. As he rebelled against the doctrines enforced upon him in his youth, he rejected at first almost everything he had learned which might be called cultured or civilized. Sometimes his excitement might have led him toward a more radical position than he realized. But he was following a life of principle, not wise policy, as he walked through the South and came to California. It did not trouble him yet that his values would be a social liability for the rest of his life.
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> He thought he would begin to solve his philosophical dilemma by simply escaping from civilization, and going solitary into the woods. And he attempted to establish a set of implicit resolutions. As I see them, he would:
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> —Leave civilization and society, and enter the self-consistent realm of Nature
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> —Forget the workings of machines and start considering the way plants, flowers, beasts—and his own soul—grew
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> —Reject the false and abstract doctrines of Christianity and learn his philosophy directly from Nature
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> —Liberate himself from the social expectations of manliness, and accept himself as an equal though humble member of Nature's community
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> —Leave Man's arbitrary time, and enter Nature's eternal realm
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> —Cease to believe that Man was the Lord of Creation, or was providentially given dominion, and accept the limitations of human aspirations
>
> —Cease to see Nature as commodity, and accept her true responsibility to herself
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> —Cease to believe that philanthropy was the highest good.
>
> He would pledge his allegiance to Nature.
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> Though they were not entirely new aspirations, in 1867 he decided it was time to test them. What made his later life so remarkable was that he realized how fruitless his past had been and how meaningless it would be to keep up with the times. He tried to step out of history. He realized that the education he sought wasn't available at any university, on any farm, or in any machine shop. He had to seek reality outside any social realm. It was not easy to retire from society, though Muir himself would later suggest that he easily shed the doctrines and lessons which had been taught him through his youth. "I never tried to abandon creeds or code and civilization; they went away of their own accord, melting and evaporating noiselessly without any effort and without leaving any consciousness of loss."

While Cohen believes that this freeing himself of past influences was actually trying for Muir, whatever was the case, he found his freedom and his strength.

We began this discussion by taking from Ortega the account of the power of public opinion—the weighty deposit of uncritically adopted attitudes that govern mass decision. Then we sought witnesses who might tell us something of the way in which mass opinion may be leavened and improved. The two men we called to testify showed that they gained their strength and their power to be of influence, not so much by trying to "change" others as by straightening out their own thinking, freeing themselves of the irrational bonds of past belief. What they kept of the past they gave new life, combining it with what they learned *from* life. This was the secret—if it is a secret—of their success. But then, having acquired and nurtured their own convictions, they gave expression to them in ways that had a profound effect on their readers. Their work, from any point of view, became a power for good.

REVIEW
A LIFE OF INQUIRY

FRAN PEAVEY, who wrote the book we have for review, was born in Twin Palls, Idaho, in 1941. Her book is called *Heart Politics* (New Society Publishers, paperback, $9.95) but the title seems misleading. Politics is the struggle for power, and this writer has been struggling mainly to understand herself and as many other people as she is able. But she has been trying to improve people's lives, so she is perhaps political in that sense. She began life by being puzzled by what happened all around her. As a high-school girl she attended a conference of young people from all over the country, having for roommates two black girls from the South. She had never known any blacks. "All I knew about relations between whites and blacks in the South was that for some baffling reason, when confronted with blacks, white people became vicious, yelled hateful things and formed lynching parties. I was relieved when that was not my response."

A few years later, in San Francisco, where Fran Peavey had gone to college, she was teaching science in a junior high school with a mixed population of students—black and white.

> About the second week of school, I realized I didn't know anything about being black. It was 1963, and black history hadn't been "discovered" yet. So I went to the local NAACP chapter and said, "I'm teaching your children, and I don't have any idea what their life experience is. I asked them to teach me about black history and the worldview of black kids I had a lot of questions.
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> So after school once a week, I went for my "black lessons." I hoped my fellow teachers wouldn't find out about what I was doing—it was an admission of my naivete about black culture, and teachers aren't supposed to be naive. . . . My tutors, black NAACP volunteers, took me around to meet people in the neighborhood. I lived on the edge of the Fillmore district, so I also met black people in the grocery store and became part of the community, a little bit anyway.
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> My tutors took me to people's homes, workplaces, and churches. They would introduce me as the teacher from Roosevelt who wanted to learn about the black community. I noticed that people would warm up and talk in a way that they wouldn't if my tutor weren't there. I'd ask them what their lives were like, what they wanted their children to learn, how school had been for them, how those who were parents felt when they visited their children's schools for open house night. They pinned a lot of their hopes for their kids on the school but felt it to be an alien institution—one where many had never felt at home. Even now, many felt intimidated by their children's teachers.

She learned a lot, of course, but more about white ignorance than about black people. She wanted to understand her connections with other people—at as many levels as possible—and her feelings of unity grew as a result. This mode of inquiry became the meaning of Fran Peavey's life and the content of her book, which is made up of informed anecdotes from beginning to end. She tells them well and some become intensely interesting. She naturally became an activist of a sort, working for causes that have become familiar to us, but in a somewhat new way. She tried not to locate scapegoats for the bad things in the world. Anger, she found, is blinding. It shuts out the good qualities in the "other side," obscuring them for peacemakers, which is all they have to work with. Through all her struggles she has remained an American patriot, although she has become a patriot of the world. She knows that this is often a contradiction in terms, but works to correct our national behavior, a difficult undertaking. A peacemaker's life is not a happy one, but she nonetheless finds some joy.

She began by seeing only the bright side of things, but friends persuaded her of the reality of the dark in America's behavior. And there were other things she found out.

> The Vietnam War convinced me that our government was doing something wrong. On the civil rights issue, I had retained some hope that the government was, in some instances, trying to act in the interest of justice. But how did our involvement in another country's civil war serve justice? And the

> war was costing us a lot of lives. For what? Nobody I knew was benefiting from that war: not my family, not the farmers in Idaho, not my college classmates. It appeared that the only needs the war served were internal to the government.
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> About the same time it started coming to light that the food we were eating contained dangerous additives and chemical residues. I would ask people, "Why would Kellogg's allow poison in the cereal? If they did, we would die and we wouldn't be able to buy cornflakes." For a long time I refused to believe the quacks who said BHA and sodium nitrate and DDT were bad for us. When someone finally convinced me that our food could be dangerous, all kinds of other beliefs crumbled. The food issue was a major step in the breakdown of corporate credibility. Things were not logical. Big businesses weren't thinking about my needs, about my body's long-term survival. And I had trusted them to do that! Like the government, they seemed to be serving only their internal needs—in this case, maximizing their short-term profit.
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> These discoveries were overwhelming to me and to many other people my age. If we couldn't trust our government or the food suppliers, we would have to take care of ourselves. To do that, we would need enormous quantities of information. Suddenly there was a quantum leap in the number of things we needed to be concerned about.

But she took things as they came to her in life, and got down in the trenches with the people who lived at the bottom of society, or outside its dimensions. In a seedy neighborhood in San Francisco was the International Hotel where a hundred people lived, most of them Filipinos and elderly Chinese. Many stayed there for twenty or thirty years. It was all the home they had. Some of the tenants worked a little but nearly all of them had developed the habit of helping each other get by. A developer wanted to tear the building down but the tenants objected and organized, gaining support from liberal and radical people in the city. An Internal Security Committee was formed to fight eviction and Fran Peavey joined it. What were the tenants—some of them—like?

> Wahat Tompao, a wonderful kind man in his mid-seventies, had lived at the I-Hotel for many years. He was from a mountainous area in the Philippines. During World War II, he worked for the U.S. Army as a guide in the Central Pacific. Wahat had a tremendous dignity about him, as well as a great sense of humor. He loved to tease us. He would say, "I'm from the mountains, where people eat dog!" Then he would laugh. . . . Felix Ayson always felt close to death. A deaf man and a Marxist, he was always teaching the organizers around him, sharing books and wisdom, and sharply criticizing anyone whose actions were based on a narrow political analysis. Felix's room was full of books, and he had a cat who notified him when someone was at the door. He died a year after the eviction.
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> Mr. Yip was a spry Chinese alcoholic who walked in and out of meetings and was not very much involved in preventing eviction, but still did what he could.

There is page after page on the fight to save the hotel for the people who lived there, and when they finally lost the battle, three or four thousand people locked arms outside the old building, defying the police, who came with full riot gear. It was hours before they could get into the hotel. People got hurt, including Fran Peavey, who was dragged by her feet downstairs, bump after bump after bump. Where did the people go to live? Some moved into other old hotels, others died. But no one forgot the spirit of the International Hotel and its fight to go on existing.

Another project was a funny little park for, we might say, bums, alcoholics, drug addicts, and unemployables. The Glide Church in San Francisco financed a little landscaping. The idea behind the park was that those who lived there or spent time there would take care of it, and, after a fashion they did. It was 25 by 125 feet, "the most compact park in the city, no bigger than the front yard of a modest suburban house."

> Walking into the Park from the Minna Street alley, you'd see men gathered around a metal barrel with a fire burning inside. They'd be cooking stew on a grate atop the barrel, or just keeping warm. Next to the barrel was a small shelter with a corrugated metal roof and two walls—the kitchen area, complete with a picnic table and a nearby sink. The shelter also served to protect people from the wind and rain; often you'd see someone sleeping there. Beyond the shelter, steps led up to a small grassy knoll, which was far enough off the beaten path that the grass could

survive. In the main area of the park, a few young trees and scrawny bushes clung to life.

It was the human contacts in the park that Fran learned from: these men usually had *some* quality she could respect; and they tried to run the place themselves and keep it clean. It didn't last. Such things seldom do, but it had been good for everybody. No one expected anything great to happen, although three men really stopped drinking for a while, and nothing great did happen, but a few decencies were established in practically empty lives. So the park was worth while.

Fran Peavey took on much larger projects in learning which took her around the world, onto the stage into show business, all the time studying why people behave the way they do, and why some of them change. The most important part of the book—apart from good story-telling—is the chapter on "Contexts." This has to do with people's frameworks of assumption, how they are formed, and, hopefully, how they might be changed. An underlying theme is Fran Peavey's attempt to get people to think about nuclear war and how to prevent it. She has no miraculous solution—no one has—but people can learn things about human nature, and the examples set for the rest of us by a wonderful few, in this book. Don't let the title stop you from getting hold of a copy to read.

COMMENTARY
SEVERAL LEADERS

THINKING about the question raised in this week's Frontiers—the matter of leadership—recalled a minor theme in Michael Cohen's book on John Muir, quoted on page 7. For Muir, becoming a leader involved painful compromises. His goals are listed by Cohen as he reconstructed them from study of Muir's life and thought. There was no way under heaven that Muir could make those goals popular for very many people, yet his own dreams in behalf of the California mountains and wilderness areas could not materialize without popular support. If he wanted that support—and he had to have it to save the Nature he loved from devastation—he would have to tone down his vision in writing for the public. This he finally learned to do. There is a sense in which he became a "good writer" by not sounding as "radical" as his natural feelings inclined him to be. Did this make him a good leader or a compromiser? Perhaps we should say that he was both—since that was what "saving the California redwoods" required. The one-pointedness of his life gave him the power that he needed to communicate what was acceptable to the public of his vision. How could anyone be "trained" to endure the ordeal to which Muir submitted in order to play the part of a leader?

Intensity of conviction is obviously essential in a distinguished leader. How do you teach that? How do you teach others to form a resolve like Morgan's at nineteen: "never to do a day's work for pay where the normal and natural results of that day's work would not be of human value"? Morgan did not really try to convert anyone else to that program—its rule was made for himself, expressive of his understanding of integrity. Yet if you read his little book, *The Long Road*, which has an ennobling and infectious spirit, you can't help wondering why his lean and unshowy prose has such power. It is the man's integrity showing through with the power to inspire. Morgan was meticulously honest, too, which irritated a number of people. That was one of the reasons he couldn't go on being head of TVA. So a big, public-spirited project lost him, but there have been many moved by him and his integrity to guide their lives in a better direction.

A young man, Andy Lipkis, founder and leader of TreePeople here in Southern California, began young. When Andy was fifteen, in high school, a teacher told his class about the rate of mortality of trees in this region as the result of smog. Andy found the idea of a dying forest unbearable. He developed ways to plant trees, hundreds of them, thousands of them—especially smog resistant trees—and he has been doing it ever since. He has a natural talent for leadership, which in his case means getting other people to help TreePeople to plant trees—millions of them.

At present, an airlift of fruit and nut trees to a hunger-stricken area in Africa is planned for early this year—to Lesotho, a small country entirely surrounded by South Africa. These trees are bare-root stock of the sort nurseries have been giving to TreePeople as surplus after the bare-root season is over, which have in the past been distributed to selected families in the Los Angeles area—almonds, plums, peaches, apples—and will now be sent by plane to Africa, with Plenty Canada and Care as organizations collaborating with TreePeople. Help is needed to finance this program, according to the January-February *Seedling News*, 12601 Mulholland Drive, Beverly Hills, Calif. 90210. See the *Seedling News* for evidence of the wide range of cooperation in the numerous treeplanting programs initiated by TreePeople, including reforesting fire-damaged areas.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
AN ALTERNATIVE PHILOSOPHY

FOR a list of books on birth and parenting, write to the Orange Cat, a book store and mail order business at 442 Church St., Garberville, Calif. 95440. They have a free catalog on the subject, edited by Kathy Epling, who invites correspondence and visitors at the store, for talk about babies—she has a new one. About 200 books are listed.

One thing that students ought to know is briefly set forth by Edward Goldsmith in *The Ecologist* (15, No. 3, 1985) in an editorial. He says:

> Thomas Kuhn, in his celebrated *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* demonstrated more convincingly than anyone before him that a scientific theory was adopted not because it had been "proved" to be true on the basis of some serious objective test (assuming there can be such a test) but because it fitted in with that pattern of scientific wisdom on the subject—the "paradigm" as he referred to it—that happened to be in vogue at the time.

A little later Mr. Goldsmith remarks:

> Ecology is above all a world view or social paradigm. It has been the world view of traditional peoples from time immemorial—this is why they never destroyed their natural environment and their societies displayed such incredible stability and continuity. It was also the world view of the Natural Theologists of the 18th century, of Goethe, Wordsworth and the other Romantic poets. It was also the world view of Thoreau and Aldo Leopold.

Real science, in short, is a part of the humanities. Another good passage in the *Ecologist* is in a review by Charles J. Hughes of James Lovelock's recent book, *A New Look at Life on Earth*. Quoting the book, Hughes says:

> "The Gaia hypothesis is an alternative to that pessimistic view which sees nature as a primitive force to be subdued and conquered."

> Agreed. We desperately need such an alternative philosophy. Many have commented on the dangerously short-sighted attitudes arising from an acceptance of the view that Nature was created for man. One of the most cogent discussions of this is Lynn White's landmark article *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis*, where the point is made that our ecological crisis will continue to worsen until we conscientiously reject the axiom, implicit in much of our economic activity that nature has no reason for existence save to serve us. White concludes: "Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious whether we call it that or not."

> The life of John Muir reveals the dialectic very clearly. He came to struggle and rebel for years against the rigid views of his Calvinist father, finally left home and walked practically across America, before he achieved spiritual independence and a new vision of living in harmony with nature, a vision incidentally that saved the California redwoods and led to the formation of the Sierra Club.

* * *

We have been reading once again in Lewis Mumford, this time his *Interpretations and Forecasts* which came out in 1973, a collection of much of his work over some fifty years—in effect a one-volume Mumford. Our reading is in his review of a new edition of the 1909 edition of Emerson's Journals, which he finds precise in a scholarly way, but virtually spoiled by an excess of editing. He says:

> This, then, it turns out, is a high fidelity version of Emerson's "Journals," with all the virtues of mechanically exact reproduction offset by a blunt indifference to any other human aims. As is the way of many hi-fi enthusiasts, the editors show more concern to reproduce the original scratches and squeaks than the music, for instead of relegating the noise to an appendix, or even, as has often been done, to separate volumes, they have made the scratches an integral part of the very sentences from which Emerson himself had already eliminated them, reinstating the slips, the false starts, the rejected ideas, as of equal importance to the final expression. This is not only a maddening practice in itself, but it surely has an ominous bearing on the appreciation and teaching of literature. Such technological extravagance and human destitution is of course the fashionable mode of our day. In the present case, nothing has been lost by this process—except Emerson: Emerson and the many potential readers

who have been prevented by this automated editing from having direct access to his mind.

Oh! but Emerson is there! One sees his figure at a distance, through a barbed wire entanglement of diacritical marks; the searchlight from the control tower, meant to keep Emerson from escaping, or even making a movement without being noticed by the guards. . . . Thus these "Journals" have now performed current American scholarship's ultimate homage to a writer of genius: they have made him unreadable. And the editors have done so by a wholly gratuitous misplacement of the typographic devices they have employed to ensure an accurate transcription.

This would be a good place to attempt to explain the meaning of the word "genius"—a subject for which worthy examples are needed. It might be one way to get students into reading a little Emerson, and a fair test of their own capacity for appreciation. Mr. Mumford's wiry and muscular prose makes a good introduction.

Since we have some space left, we use it for another portion of Mumford's book, the conclusion of a talk he gave at Davis, California, in 1962, on California and its future. After a rather devastating account of the waste of land and human resources, in which he said, "The human prospect, in California or anywhere else, does not hold much promise as long as these conditions are unrecognized for what they are, not real signs of progress, but symptoms of human disturbance and social disintegration; or, even when they are recognized, if they are looked upon as outside human control, and are allowed to go on uncorrected," he added:

If you ask me how California or any other region can be improved without altering our prevailing view of life, without changing our routines, without attaching ourselves to more public purposes and higher human ends than those we now respect, I must answer with a sad smile that no serious improvements are possible on those old terms. If we want to improve the regional environment, we must also improve ourselves, that is, we must change our minds and alter our objectives, advancing from a money economy to a life economy: in many matters we must acquire new values, new sensitivities, new interests, new goals that will ensure a self-sustaining, many-sided life. That life must not depend as it so largely does now upon our constantly dancing attendance upon the machine, and pursuing only such activities as will give the makers of machines and machine products the maximum market for their goods.

In short, it is the whole pattern of our life that must change; and the pattern of our local life will not alter significantly until the over-all pattern for a much wider area does. As long as our country spends astronomical sums for weapons of extermination, weapons which endanger our own lives—sixty million dead on the first day of nuclear attack—and indeed the lives of all mankind, quite as much as they threaten any enemy's, we shall not have the funds needed for more rational public purposes: for our schools and hospitals, for our theaters and churches, for our recreation areas, for the old and the young who need public help.

He ends on an optimistic note:

During the last three years I, like many of my colleagues, have noted a new generation coming into the colleges: a generation trained perhaps more lovingly than their rigid and passive predecessors. They are no longer cagey conformists, no longer bent on dodging all the adventurous possibilities of life by an over-emphasis on security, measured in income, or in status, measured only by the things money will buy. These young people, sometimes at great sacrifice, put babies ahead of careers, and they find, in themselves and their family life, resources that are not found in machines and are often deplorably lacking in the bigger community itself, lacking especially in the big cities. Though they have grown up in an age of violence and totalitarian conformity, they now challenge its brutalities and reject its compulsions; and their respect for themselves is greater than their respect for anything the machine, with or without their help, has created. They are still in all probability a minority, but the seed of life has ripened in them: if their elders do not betray them by surrendering even more abjectly than they have already done to the forces of disintegration and extermination, this generation will assume responsibility that too many of us still shrink from.

Let us hope Mr. Mumford is right.

FRONTIERS

Leadership—One of the Mysteries

SOME weeks we know—or think we know—what to put in this department and get to work on it with enthusiasm. The result is likely to be "a good story." At other times we are overtaken by dismay. There is so much to write about, but so little that we or anyone else really *needs* to know. The correct procedure, no doubt, was given by Alfred North Whitehead in *The Aims of Education*, quoted in "Children" for last Oct. 9. "Do not," he said "teach too many subjects," and "What you teach, teach thoroughly."

But if, every week, we say pretty much the same thing, it gets boring. And as for being "thorough," a magazine column is not really the place for that. Yet we must try. The idea is to extract from the large diversity of our sources a few constant themes, and to repeat them in different ways. That would be an aspect of thoroughness, and would restrict the content to a few important ideas. We should not, on the other hand, under-estimate our readers. From our mail we know that there are always those who want to follow up some suggestion that seemed little likely to stir interest when we made it, but somehow felt its importance ourselves.

One reader wrote in:

> I would like to see you tackle an editorial on the need to train for leadership. This should be a broad type of training. I taught Anthropology and often felt that every student should have to study the subjects which teach how we got the way we are in our culture. All the institutions and the beliefs that we have today had a beginning. Individuals did not have a parcel of real estate as their personal property. Tribes and nations had rather vague boundaries. Men did not always go to church, did not even believe in one God. Family life and marriage did not always exist as they have in our culture. If people could see that religion was man-made and developed by custom, they would not feel so strongly about their religion being the right one, and actually fight over it. If students could know that there are not many races, but just one race, Homo sapiens, with many varieties of individuals and of groups, we would not have so much racial tension. If they could see that we did not always have capitalism, or democracy, that these ideas came about as needed changes in social organization, then they would be more ready to work for future changes rather than fight for one economic concept or form of government.

These ideas might well form the background of a good leader, but when it comes to "training" people for leadership, we bow out. Who knows what starts a person in a leadership direction? Jane Addams saw a bullfight in Madrid, and that, for some mysterious reason, got her going. Gandhi was insulted on a South African train, and he committed his life to work against prejudice and injustice. What stirred up Tom Paine to write *Common Sense?* We don't really know, except that it happened.

How was a deep love of his fellows born in Henry George? A cold winter's day, it is said, in an eastern city. Leadership was not chosen, but thrust upon these individuals by what they saw around them—human need.

Our correspondent warns against too much specialization in education. He is of course right, yet every individual, Whitehead said, should have expert knowledge "in some special direction," as the ground to start from. This seems sensible and right. The most useful people, these days, have often come out of some area of specialization in which they had learned how to focus their minds and to concentrate; then they broadened their interests, became generalists with a sense of what "knowing" means and with lots of illustrations to give to others. Richard Feynman at Cal Tech is able to show how this is done.

Another example of leadership arising from a specialty is Catherine Roberts, who for much of her life has been a microbiologist working in universities. But she left that profession to serve the cause of greater moral sensibility in human beings. She has written several books, the first of which was *The Scientific Conscience* (Braziller, 1967), a moving appeal to the scientific fraternity and humans in general. In a recent writing (for

the Spring 1985 *National Anti-Vivisection Society Bulletin*), after approving quotation from Jeremy Rifkin's *Algeny* and criticism of a book by a physicist, she says:

> Other enthusiastic predictions about the unrestrained advance of science and technology have of course been made, but so far all omit the possibility that self-restraint may be one of the key factors in our further evolution. Man need not, and must not, do all that his intelligence enables him to do. Human intelligence is transcended by human wisdom, which keeps revealing glimpses of the moral order of the cosmos. And such wisdom may now be telling us that in bioscience there is a difference in kind between the artificial and the natural.

The artificial is involved in genetic engineering, through which living beings are reduced to "bundles of genetic information which can be processed and stored." By manipulation of this information, the "engineers" can, she says, "design and produce for specific commercial uses new and vastly more efficient forms of life." These things are done without knowledge of what might be the purposes of the life so distorted to commercial ends. This is "biotechnology's ruthless, arrogant desacralization of nature." Actually, one thinks here of the presumption of animating corpses and making them work in the fields as "zombies."

Dr. Roberts says:

> The artificial which bioscientific intelligence creates operates within the realm of the natural laws of the physical universe. It is possible, for example, for bioscientists to produce viable offspring from very unlike sources and to prolong the life of an infant with a baboon heart transplant. And these things are done because the technological intelligence that impels bioscience recognizes no ethical restraint. In contrast, the natural, while operating intelligently within the realm of physical law, reaches out to the wisdom of spiritual law. Wisdom can never permit intelligence to violate justice or compassion or beauty. . .
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> Of course we must make the spiritual decision to transcend ourselves through self-restraint. Despite its many idealistic goals, bioscience must not continue to impose monstrous artificiality on the natural course of life's evolution towards ethical perfection. Opposition to further expansion of genetic engineering and other forms of biotechnology will grow in strength as we become fully aware of our spiritual nature This will be a truly natural and necessary evolutionary step to take, and defenseless animals, desperately needing protection from unrestrained human intelligence, are everywhere waiting for it to be taken.

Leadership puts into words the inchoate feelings and thoughts of people who will give such ideals support and strength. Such leaders are not "trained," but somehow emerge when the time for their work is ripe.