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THE ROLE OF IMAGINATION

THERE are, no doubt, many ways to speak of the change that is coming over our minds in this age of rapid transition. We might call it the discovery of man's inner life, and of his need to draw upon it, to give its reality play. For illustration there is the resolve of a number of citizen's groups in Dallas, Texas, to construct a lake in midtown Dallas. Whether this will happen remains to be seen, but what is of equal or even more interest is the publication last year by the Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture of a slender book by Ivan Illich, an expansion of a talk he gave in Dallas in 1984.

Why did the Dallas Institute decide to put into print Illich's free associations, reveries, and numerous scholarly footnotes on the subject of water? Illich, whatever else you may say about him, has an emancipated mind. He is fascinated by the imagery which comes to his roving intellect, and he builds clusters of fresh images around ideas in which he finds appeal. The title of his book is *H_2O and the Waters of Forgetfulness* ($14.50, Dallas Institute of Humanities & Culture, 2719 Routh St., Dallas, Tex. 75201). It is not an argument for razing a dozen city blocks and replacing them with a lake, but a learned reverie on the subject of water, ranging from the waters of endless space, as all was in the beginning, to the fluid produced by chemists by uniting Hydrogen and Oxygen in the right proportion. He says only a little about the lake project. His last sentence is this: "I believe these reflections to be relevant to the decision on Town Lake that has to be made in Dallas."

Water, for Illich, is the universal receptacle of cosmos, the feminine principle from which all is born, and also both purifier and cleanser. Can it be all this for Dallas? Dallas people have been reduced by their habits of life and mind:

> Dallas's citizens have lost the potency to imprint their lives on urban space. They use or consume their "housing." One must be quite wealthy to be able to relocate a wall in one's house. We need not necessarily deplore this circumstance, but we must be willing to explore it. Most people today do not dwell in the place where they spend their days and leave no traces in the place where they spend their nights. They spend their days next to a telephone in an office and their nights garaged next to their cars. Even if they wanted to dwell in the traditional manner, the material from which Dallas is made would not register their traces. The traces people manage to leave in the course of living are perceived as dirt that must be removed, as wear and tear that calls for repair, as the devaluation of a considerable investment. Dallas's space is not only "safe," innocuous for the transient, it is "man-proofed": it is hardened against defacement by contact with life. The census tracts that constitute Dallas do not, for this reason, make up a dwelling space. Children grow up and die without ever having had a chance to experience living-as-dwelling. The ability to dwell is a privilege of the dropout.

Has Dallas any hope of becoming a congregation of dwellings for humans? Are there required conditions?

> I am focusing on water in order to reflect on one such condition. It is not water as a commodity that is at issue, nor its waste, its pollution, the ecological consequences of its irresponsible extraction, the biological consequences of poisoning it, or even its maldistribution—which means that, in Mexico City, sixty per cent of all water is given to three per cent of the households, and fifty per cent of the households make do on five per cent. These are also crucial issues, but they deal with water in a different sense. The water I speak of is the water needed for dreaming city as a dwelling place.

Illich does not compromise, except, perhaps, in the service of the weak. What would a historian of dreams hear in Dallas?

> As his ear is attuned to the music of deep waters, he will hear a discordant sound that is foreign to waters, that reverberates through the plumbing of

> modern cities. He will recognize that the H_2O which gurgles through Dallas plumbing is not water, but a stuff which industrial society creates. He will realize that the twentieth century has transmogrified water into a fluid with which archetypal waters cannot be mixed. With enough money and broad powers to condemn and evict, a group of architects could very well create out of this sewage a liquid monument that would meet their own aesthetic standards. But since archetypal waters are as antagonistic to this new "stuff" as they are to oil, I fear that contact with such liquid monumentality might make the souls of Dallas's children impermeable to the water of dreams. In voicing this fear, I am not arguing against the construction of a lake that would provide moorings for inexpensive rowboats, cool the city, and sparkle at night. Pleasure boats, temperatures, and the reflection of skyscrapers are not my concern here. I want to deal with waters and dreams. I want to explore the moral and psychological consequences that will flow from the display of recirculated toilet flush which pretends to the aesthetic symbol of a wedding between water and urban space.

The water, in short, has been abused enslaved—and denatured, and without respect. Illich asks: Can a universal substance that has been treated in this way have an uplifting influence on the people of Dallas and its children? He is suggesting that the way we think of things and use them has an effect on them, an effect worse than just calling them names. In the early pages of the book he explains that his essay builds on a foundation established by Gaston Bachelard, an extraordinary French philosopher who started out in life as a postman, went to school at the same time, and slowly worked his way to a chair of philosophy in the Sorbonne. He was first known as a critic and philosopher of science, but later turned to the content and meaning of reverie and poetic imagery. Etienne Gilson said of him: "We all loved him, admired him and envied him a little, because we felt he was a free mind, unfettered by any conventions either in his choice of the problems he wanted to handle or in his way of handling them." He was born in 1884 and died in his seventy-eighth year. Best known of his works, perhaps, is *The Poetics of Space;* another is *Water and Dreams,* issued in English in 1983 by the Dallas Institute, and on which Illich draws. We do not have *Water and Dreams,* but in still another of Bachelard's works, *The Poetics of Reverie,* we found this passage:

> Plunged into the waters of good sleep, we are in a balance of being with a universe at peace. But is being in a balance of being with a universe really being? Hasn't the water of sleep dissolved our being? In any case, we become beings with no history upon entering into the realm of Night which has no history. When we sleep thus in the waters of profound slumber, we sometimes know eddies, but never currents. We experience passing dreams. They are not life dreams. For every dream which we recount upon returning to the light of day, there are many whose thread we have lost. The psychoanalyst does not work at those depths. . . . Alone, a poet can bring us an image, sometimes, of that distant place, an echo of the ontological drama of a slumber without memory when our being was perhaps tempted by the non-being.

Another passage in the same book, on lakes:

> The lake, the pond, the still water very naturally awaken our cosmic imagination through the beauty of a reflected world. When he is near such things, a dreamer receives a very simple lesson for imagining the world, for doubling the real world with an imagined world. The lake is a master at natural watercolors. The colors of the reflected world are tenderer, softer, more beautifully artificial than the heavily substantial colors. Already, those colors born by the reflections belong to an idealized universe. The reflections thus invite any dreamer of still water to idealization. The poet who goes to dream before water will not try to make it into an *imaginary painting.* He will always go a little beyond the real. Such is the phenomenological law of poetic reverie. Poetry continues the beauty of the world, aestheticizes the world.

In Illich's book there are fascinating bits of myth and past history, having to do with water and many other things. As he says:

> The water that we have set out to examine is just as difficult to grasp as space. It is, of course, not the H_2O produced by burning gases nor the liquid that is metered and distributed by the authorities. The water that we seek is the fluid that drenches the inner and outer spaces of the imagination. More tangible than space, it is even more elusive for two reasons; first, because this water has a nearly unlimited ability to

carry metaphors and second, because water even more subtly than space, always possesses two sides.

As a vehicle for metaphors, water is a shifting mirror. What it says reflects the fashions of the age; what it seems to reveal and betray hides the stuff that lies beneath. . . . However, it is not this ever-changing surface of water that makes it so difficult to explore the historical "stuff." It is the deep ambiguity of that stuff itself that makes it as elusive for us as space was incomprehensible for Plato. Water remains a chaos until a creative story interprets its seeming equivocation as being the quivering ambiguity of life.

The great question, as ever, is whether the activity of the human imagination should be regarded as having actual force in life. Is water only something wet and cold, or does the way we think about it endow it with the potencies that myth-makers and poets are able to recognize? Is there a sense in which drinking, washing, swimming can be a rite? Does water have what could be called a transcendental dimension imperceptible to chemists but seen and felt in different lights by the poet and the dreamer? Questions of this sort must have been in Ivan Illich's mind, since he ends his book by implying them:

Water throughout history has been perceived as the stuff which radiates purity: H_2O is the new stuff, on whose purification human survival now depends. H_2O and water have become opposites: H_2O is a social creation of modern times, a resource that is scarce and that calls for technical management. It is an observed fluid that has lost the ability to mirror dreams. The city child has no opportunity to come in touch with living water. Water can no more be observed; it can only be imagined, by reflecting on an occasional drop or a humble puddle.

Water can not be its own primordial self unless there are human beings who imagine it. In this way, and only in this way, can the highest reality of any form of substance gain its true being. Without the creative power of the imagination, we live among shadows, like the not-yet-humans which excited the compassion of Prometheus. In the drama, *Prometheus Bound*, by Aeschylus, the Titan explains,

Let me rather
Relate to you the tragedy of man:
How from the silly creature that he was
I made him conscious and intelligent.
I speak the human race not to condemn
But to explain my kindness in what I
gave to them.

Seeing they did not see, nor hearing grasp
That which they heard. They lived like ghosts
in dreams,
In lifelong anarchy and dreariness.

No houses built of brick to catch the sun
Nor carpentry they knew. Like little ants
They lived in holes and sunless cavities.

They had no signs reliable to mark
Winter and scented spring and harvest-time,
Nor conscious plan to guide them, till I showed
The dubious rise and setting of the stars.

And now, my triumph intellectual!
Next I invent the count numerical
And history's instrument, skill of the bard
That great compositor of the written word
. . . .

The inventor I, who many a shape did show
Of science to mankind, now do not know
What science will my own release allow.

In an earlier scene, Prometheus had explained to the Chorus:

I knew what I was doing, yes, I knew,
The time I sinned: I do acknowledge it.
Man's cure invented misery for myself.
But penalties not these did I expect:
To see myself rotting beneath the sky,
The lonely tenant of this lifeless peak.

The gift of full self-consciousness and the resources it made available to humans were not a part of the program of Zeus, who wanted them to remain pliable subjects dependent only on impulse and desire, without the powers of reflection and imagination for innovation. So Prometheus was shackled on Mount Caucasus, his liver torn daily by the vultures of passion and appetite. Yet his knowledge made him uncompromising; being a thinker, he could wait until the day, thousands of years hence, when Zeus would be reconciled and become the colleague and friend of Prometheus. This is the promethean doctrine of salvation,

repeated again and again by writers of imagination. As Kay Boyle has said in her most recent book:

> To the recalcitrant who may, quite paradoxically, accept the miracle of Christianity while rejecting the inner world created by the mind of man, I tell the following anecdote:
>
> My friend, a French painter and Resistance fighter, was put in a concentration camp by the Nazis. Every evening during his long incarceration, he and two or three of his fellow prisoners created a world to which their jailers had no access. Entirely by means of conversation and gestures, they dressed for dinner in immaculate white shirts that did not exist, and placed, at times with some difficulty because of the starched material that wasn't there, pearl or ruby studs and cuff links in those shirts.
>
> On the evenings that they saw themselves as men of letters they quoted from the great poets while they dined, reciting all the lines they could remember of Homer, Dante, Milton, and Shakespeare. If they were scientists, at least one among them would be a Nobel prize winner, and they would discuss da Vinci and Spengler and Einstein. The words they spoke were real, if nothing else was, and the lonely courage that other men have expressed gave them the courage to survive.

Without the pain of the loss of their freedom, the Resistance fighters would probably not have fabricated those dreams, made vivid by the intensity of their desire to be free. Yet there are other ways in which we live in the structures of what we are capable of imagining, and without this capacity we would still be the mindless creatures on whom Prometheus took pity. We have an illustration in geometry, which depends upon an ideal world of perfect lines, forms, and shapes. As Louis Halle says in *Men and Nations:*

> We accept the straight line as a concept of perfection that exists only in the imagination. We assume that the mark on the paper represents an attempt to imitate it with necessarily imperfect results. . . . The straight line, as we have defined it, presents itself to our minds as an elemental concept in nature, while the shape that corresponds exactly to the mark on the paper has no such standing. . . . The true concept has that regularity which makes it susceptible of expression in terms of simple formula-definition. The false lacks this quality. It represents no logic. . . .
>
> I conclude that we have in our minds, as a matter of nature, a pattern of logical order that finds its expression in certain elemental concepts. . . . In human creation, the idea always comes first. The man who draws a straight line has the idea before he begins drawing. The sculptor has the idea of his statue before he addresses himself to the block of stone. When Robespierre assumed direction of the French Revolution he had an idea of the society which he meant to produce. No one undertakes any act of creation without a prior idea of what it is that he wants to create. . . .
>
> It is only by falling short of a standard of perfection in the mind that anything can be imperfect. In the very act of saying that a line is not perfectly straight we proclaim the existence of an idea, of the perfectly straight line that can have no material embodiment. It follows that the world of ideas is fundamental

This—that the world of ideas is fundamental—is the conception that seems to be slowly reviving in our time. It began, one might say, with Sigmund Freud, who, in a somewhat perverse way, saw the necessity of recognizing the complexity of human motivation and divided the human psyche up into id, ego, and superego, yet admitted that he had neglected the spirit and limited his theorizing to the "basement" of human life. But then, as Ira Progoff points out in *The Death and Rebirth of Psychology,* Adler, Jung, and Rank, who had been Freud's most eminent followers, pursued independent researches which "led them to a realization of the fundamentally spiritual nature of man." Jung spoke of the development of the human being to "individuation" of the "Self"—

> an abstract phrase to describe his effort to experience the cosmos psychologically by means of symbols. And Rank studied it as "the will to immortality," which meant to him man's inherent need to live in the light of eternity.

While these transformations in psychology were going on, a host of scholars were calling attention to the depths of Platonic and Eastern philosophy, with book after book coming out on

symbolism, many of them with great appeal to the general reader. Tribal sages of both the American Indians and in Africa illuminated the riches of the inner life, while the ideas of Karma (the moral law) and Reincarnation were spreading throughout the Western world. Even the physicists found in Einstein a liberation from the mechanist formulas that had ruled all thinking in science for so long, and consciousness was admitted to be at the foundation of nature.

We are, it is now declared, only secondarily physical beings; basically we are moral and intellectual intelligences whose inner life is the creator of both present and future. This is the thinking that is slowly filtering into the mind of the times, and will play a large part in the life and decisions of centuries to come. The imagination shaped our past and will be the architect of the future, the maker of what will come into being for all mankind.

REVIEW
OUR CIRCLE OF COMPASSION

ALBERT SCHWEITZER'S admonition of the 1920's that man will not find peace until he extends the circle of his compassion to include all living things has been given new life and power. The British author, publisher, and animal advocate, Jon Wynne-Tyson, has spent six years "and a lifetime's appalled observation of our unremitting cruelty toward non-human species" in compiling a 436-page dictionary of humane thought which he has perceptively called *The Extended Circle* (Centaur Press, Fontwell, Sussex, 1985, £4.95; distributed in the United States by the International Society for Animal Rights, Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania, $6.95). Both title and contents would surely have delighted Schweitzer, and there can be little doubt that they will delight many who are now involved in the animal advocacy movement.

What does animal advocacy in the 1980's encompass? First and foremost the conviction that at a time of escalating horrors of war, terrorism, and violence of all kinds, we need more than ever to improve our treatment of sentient non-human life. As Schweitzer so well knew, the peace we have to find is much more than the mere absence of fighting man against man. It is also the inner spiritual peace that comes when we have recognized our moral obligation to the whole of suffering creation and have pledged ourselves to act accordingly.

Noblesse oblige is a dictum expressing an evolutionary obligation to the biosphere. In his long and arduous development, *Homo sapiens*, the still highly imperfect summit of creation, appears now to have realized enough of his potential nobility to feel a modicum of responsibility for the welfare of sentient species other than his own. One of Webster's definitions of compassion is "sorrow for the distress or misfortunes of another, with the desire to help." Failure to alleviate by ethical means the struggles of any sentient individual against pain, fear, sickness, or frustration can only diminish man's nobility. Despite the horrors originating in the ethical confusion of the times, there are other indications that man has arrived at the threshold of a new age of spirituality that is compelling him to give more thought to establishing right relations with others. Not to render compassionate aid to the unfortunate, weak, and defenseless is now being considered ignoble behavior by probably more men and women than ever before. Global concern for the plight of the whole of suffering creation is manifest in many countries, where dedicated minorities are attempting to arouse in ethically apathetic majorities concern for man's increasingly inhumane and unjust treatment of non-human as well as human life.

It is generally assumed by animal advocates that these beacons of light in the pervasive moral twilight and turmoil of our times reveal the strength of the secular ethic that they have derived from rigorous logic and moral philosophy that are deliberately separated from religion and metaphysics. This assumption appears to rest on a shaky foundation. For the beacon whose radiance now surpasses all others proclaims awareness of the reality of the divine and the concomitant existence of the divine-human relation. And if this predominantly godless world regains its sense of divine purpose, will, and ethic, the global theocentricity of the future may be enhanced by a new evolutionary-ethical insight. Solicitude for life is already appearing as a sacred trust based on a sense of some great spiritual purpose in the world whose evolutionary fulfillment requires a deepening human compassion for created sentience. Were animal advocates to recognize themselves as part of this spiritual awakening instead of clinging steadfastly to secular philosophy, evolution would be facilitated and man and beast would reap benefits far beyond present hopes. As man enters more fully into the new age, he can be expected to conceive of the divine both as the Supreme Good which sustains the universe and the ultimate Source of human

goodness. No support is thereby implied for the ethical priorities of Christian fundamentalists who are now so vehemently denouncing secular humanism. For their understanding of theocentric ethics shows a surprising lack of concern for sentient nonhuman nature. Treating animals with justice, respect, pity, and kindness is, however, the appropriate ethical response for theocentric humanists who believe spiritual evolution depends upon the relationship between the divine, the human, and the non-human.

Because we have only started on the course that will ensure compassionate justice for sentient beings, we are as yet spiritually hesitant about our new role. This is all the more reason to welcome at this time the publication of *The Extended Circle.* Addressing directly the problem of life's spiritual evolution, the dictionary is a significant contribution to new age thought, based, quite correctly, upon a wealth of noble utterances that go back as far as Hesiod, the epic poet of the 8th century B.C. Jon WynneTyson's Introduction states that

> The burden of the views quoted in this anthology is that humanist and religionist alike stand in urgent need of facing the question: "Is man an evolving species?". . . . Dismissal of the notion (that he is) is the philosophy of nihilism. Its acceptance dictates the necessity of a philosophy of compassion.

An Editor's Note then expresses the hope that every quotation to follow will be a starting point for someone. Certainly the dictionary contains abundant inspiration for every kind of animal advocate, including D. H. Lawrence's unforgettable response to the killing of a mountain lion. And those who regard vivisection as the most reprehensible form of human exploitation of the non-human will find weighty support in the anti-vivisectionist convictions of numerous kindred souls, including Mark Twain, William James, Luther Burbank, C. J. Jung, Adlai Stevenson, Aga Khan, Jane Goodall, and Esmé Wynne-Tyson and her son, Jon.

Animal experimentation presents a special problem in animal abuse. We now see worldwide acceptance of biomedicine's justification of its annual sacrifice of millions of laboratory animals in terms of the noble idealism of scientists and physicians dedicated to alleviating the suffering and increasing the longevity of human beings (and, in the case of veterinary medicine, of animals as well). The nobility of these motives cannot be denied. But the biomedical profession refuses to concede that its goals are tarnished by the cruel and insensitive means scientists use to achieve them. Noble ends do not justify ignoble means: alleviation of human ills need go no further than moral treatment of animals allows. If the goals cannot be achieved in this way, then man must remember that pain and death are essential parts of the spiritual education of evolving human beings. Our further evolution depends upon human goodness becoming increasingly pure and unsullied. Our self-transcendence means that immoral conduct, once recognized and repented, be transformed into what is everlastingly moral. So continuing to assuage the suffering and defer the death of some by the prior infliction of grievous suffering upon others who are healthy and innocent degrades us all and hardly brings us closer to our ultimate goal.

Here the views of a contemporary sociologist and Christian about man's immorality are thought-provoking. In his important work on transcendence and the human-divine relation entitled *A Rumor of Angels: Modern Society and the Rediscovery of the Supernatural* (Doubleday, 1969), Peter L. Berger states in his discussion of Nazi war criminals that with regard to Eichmann:

> . . . here is a case (as Arendt revealed in the last pages of her book) in which condemnation can be posited as an absolute and compelling necessity, irrespective of how the case is explained or of what practical consequences one may wish to draw from it. Indeed, a refusal to condemn in absolute terms would appear to offer prima facie evidence not only of a profound failure in the understanding of justice, but more profoundly of a fatal impairment of *humanitas.*

For, he continues,

> There are certain deeds that cry out to heaven. These deeds are not only an outrage to our moral sense, they seem to violate a fundamental awareness of the constitution of our humanity. In this way, these deeds are not only evil, but monstrously evil.

Strong words—which many will feel have no applicability whatever to bioscientific methodology. Yet choosing to inflict deliberate cruelty on defenseless animals, regardless of the animal experimenter's motives, *is* outrageously immoral and, as many pages of Jon Wynne-Tyson's dictionary reveal, has been condemned as evil by those who have known that men can, and must, live on a higher spiritual plane than that which bioscientists engaged in this practice now occupy.

If, as Emerson is purported to have believed, evil is good in the making, a prerequisite for an increasingly moral world is knowledge of the nature and extent of the evils in it. And when we become fully acquainted with a particular evil, what, then, should be our response to the evildoer?

Berger speaks of monstrously evil deeds that demand not only condemnation but damnation in a religious sense as well because

> . . . the doer not only puts himself outside the community of men; he also separates himself in a final way from a moral order that transcends the human, and thus invokes a retribution that is more than human.

Desire for justice of this kind is understandable when personal acquaintance with man's colossal capacity for evil overwhelms the mind and righteous anger is intent upon retaliation and vengeance.

Examples of more positive religious attitudes towards Justice are known, and these can be expected to dominate the new age. World consciousness may soon wish to extend its concept of justice to include the evolutionary hope that however long ethical enlightenment may take, the soul of the evildoer is destined to undergo repentance and moral transformation. An example of this kind of thinking comes to mind which I became acquainted with at a meeting of theosophists some years ago but whose source now escapes me. It consists of a short prayer to the powers of Love, a word which my own mind quickly replaced with the word Good without, I believe, changing the religious significance of the prayer. The modified version then becomes

> O Powers of Good, we pledge to you our faithfulness,
> Knowing that only good can redeem the world.
> We invoke your blessing upon all who strive to serve you;
> We invoke your blessing upon all who have to endure suffering,
> That they may joyfully discover their enfoldment in your goodness
> Even in the midst of their afflictions.
> We invoke your blessing upon all who willfully inflict suffering,
> That they may be moved to return to you and serve you.

The last two lines, which I have long pondered, now appear as particularly applicable to all those who are unrepentantly abusing defenseless animals and thereby rapidly narrowing man's circle of compassion. However, when one is convinced that an extended circle is an evolutionary imperative, one can visualize its taking form as animal abusers recognize that their potential nobility within has a divine source.

CATHERINE ROBERTS

COMMENTARY
HUMAN EVOLUTION

Is it presumptuous to write hopefully of the need for a world in harmony with the vision of men with imagination, especially when so many people are literally hungry? If so, then the true "liberals" of whom von Mises speaks (see Frontiers) are right, and his argument that having more and better things (as a result of unleashed free enterprise) will be enjoyed by all must be accepted. But those who today read the contentions of the Austrian economist are likely to say, "Well, it sounds good, but it doesn't work that way any more, so far as I can see," and they will be right. On the other hand, we certainly don't want the remedy proposed by the Omnipotent State. Twentieth-century history has made it dear that life under the rule of an enormous bureaucracy, with terrorists threats first in the background, and then in the foreground, is no solution. Yet change is obviously necessary.

What, then, have men of imagination to offer? E. F. Schumacher was a man of imagination. He spelt out his idea of a remedy in *Small Is Beautiful:* in a single word it was and is *self-restraint.* But, the objection comes, we have to *make* those people behave! That is not exactly a new idea. It is the political substitute for morality. Schumacher would simply reply that there is *no* political substitute for morality, and again he would point to the historical record. But people say, "Well, if we had the power, we'd do things better." And again it is necessary to point out, this is no new idea. But it is a comparatively new idea to decide that the time has come, not for a cleverly devised government or a man on horseback, but for each of us to start learning the difference between surfeit and sufficiency. No one will ever instruct us in this except ourselves. And it will be learned only from experience. But how bitter must the experience become before the learning begins? Nobody knows. Yet we feel intuitively—that is, a growing number are beginning to feel—that "Self-imposed limits, voluntary restraint, conscious limitation—those are the life-giving and life-preserving forces." We might try to find a few people who live by these rules, and see what it does for them, and for those who have relations with them.

This is not a proposal for the abolition of government, but for making it less and less necessary. Can people be satisfied doing that? Yes, if they are acquiring some imagination. Is that really possible? The answer is again yes, if we are able to generate the conviction that human evolution is a fact, and may even have begun.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
ON SCHOOLING AND TEACHING

SOME years ago, in an interview, John Holt said: "I think in time the homeschooling movement will do more to change the schools than anything I ever did when I spent most of my time talking to schools. Only when enough people give them a vote of no confidence will schools begin to think seriously about change."

In the paper John started years ago, *Growing Without Schooling,* now edited by Donna Richoux, in issue No. 47, an educator offers counsel to parents who are teaching their own children. He said:

> I have observed a tendency for homeschoolers to assume that school administrators and superintendents know about homeschooling and know that it works. Therefore, when an administrator speaks out against homeschooling, they wonder, since homeschooling works, why he is negative. They search for other motivations. The others are all negative (e.g. protect teacher jobs, protect funding, desire to impose a particular philosophy on all students).
>
> Most educators are where I was a few years ago. They know little about homeschooling and because it seems contrary to many of the accepted ideas about quality education (e.g. need for highly trained teachers), they conclude that it cannot possibly work. . . .
>
> During the 1985 legislative session, I received a phone call from a radio talk show host who was preparing a show on homeschooling. He was looking for a public school educator who was both knowledgeable about homeschooling and opposed to it. Obviously, I was not that person. I later learned he never found that person! First impressions may often be negative, but on this topic, the second look is almost always positive—information breeds understanding and acceptance. . . .
>
> The foremost challenge facing homeschoolers is to create the conditions whereby others are willing to take the second look. I offer the following suggestions:
>
> 1. Invite educators to your home. Let them meet you and a few other homeschooling families personally.
>
> 2. Describe why you chose to homeschool. Emphasize the positive aspects of homeschooling—minimize references to the negative aspects of conventional schooling.
>
> 3. From time to time, provide additional information such as written articles, case histories, a book, invitations to support group meetings, etc.
>
> 4. Give them time. It took me eighteen months of personal contact and study to come around!
>
> 5. Always be honest in what you say and do.

He also says, don't claim that homeschooling produces results academically *superior* to conventional education. It may be superior, but don't claim it because there isn't the "research" to support it.

Well, there is a lot of research that is negative on the methods of the schools, as for example a report in the *Los Angeles Times,* which relates:

> Last month, after an outside study found that two thirds of its ninth-graders were reading at "an appallingly low level," the Chicago school system scrapped its highly touted program that broke reading into 290 separate skills. Education researchers who originated the program had contended that all children could learn to read if they were carefully taught and tested at each step of the way.
>
> In practice, however, this often meant that teachers were told to ensure that children had learned their "consonant blends" and "dipthongs" and could identify "homonyms" and "select topic sentences."
>
> And for pupils, this meant sitting at their desks drawing lines from the word "red" to a red balloon or circling the consonant that appeared most in a sentence. In Chicago and elsewhere, teachers complained that they were burdened with all the paper work of certifying who had mastered what. Children complained that they were bored. But critics noticed an even more fundamental flaw in this approach. Children rarely got a chance to read.

This report concludes with a quotation from Harry Handler, Los Angeles superintendent of schools, who told some 700 principals that "the goal of reading instruction is comprehension, not just recognizing words."

> "It's easy to believe you are making great strides in reading when you are teaching word recognition," Handler said. "Our analysis shows that we are teaching the mechanical skills of 'decoding' [words]. We are weakest in comprehension.
>
> "Current practices in delivering reading instruction haven't worked and aren't working now for far too many children," Handler told the principals. He urged primary teachers to use "high quality" literature like *Charlotte's Web* and *Johnny Tremain* to teach reading.

These are some of the nuts and bolts of teaching. For the larger meaning of teaching we go to an essay by Wendell Berry, "Discipline and Hope" (in *Recollected Essays*, North Point Press, 1981):

> Like a good farmer, a good teacher is the trustee of a vital and delicate organism: the life of the mind in his community. The standard of his discipline is his community's health and intelligence and coherence and endurance. This is a high calling, deserving of a life's work. We have allowed it to degenerate into careerism and specialization. In education as in agriculture we have discarded the large and enlarging disciplines of community and place, and taken up in their stead the narrow and shallow discipline of economics. Good teaching is an investment in the minds of the young, as obscure in result, as remote from immediate proof as planting a chestnut seedling. But we have come to prefer ends that are entirely foreseeable, even though that requires us to shorten our vision. Education is coming to be, not a long-term investment in young minds and in the life of the community, but a short-term investment in the economy. We want to be able to tell how many dollars an education is worth and how soon it will begin to pay.

Here Berry is speaking out of experience of teaching in colleges and universities. He says:

> The careerist teacher judges himself, and is judged by his colleagues, not by the influence he is having upon his students or the community, but by the number of his publications, the size of his salary and the status of the place to which his career has taken him thus far; he is on the way to a more lucrative and prestigious place. Because so few stay to be aware of the *effects* of their work, teachers are not judged by their teaching, but by the short-term incidentals of publication and "service." That teaching is a long-term service, that a teacher's best work may be published in the children or the grandchildren of his students, cannot be considered, for the modern educator, like his "practical" brethren in business and industry, will honor nothing that they cannot see. That is not to say that books do not have their progeny in the community, or that a legitimate product of a teacher's life may not be a book. It *is* to say that if *good* books are to be written, they will be written out of the same resources of talent and discipline and character and delight as always, and not by institutional coercion.

Another aspect of teaching:

> Correct discipline brings us into alignment with natural process, which has no explicit or deliberate concern for the future. We do not eat, for instance, because we want to live until tomorrow, but because we are hungry today and it *satisfies* us to eat.

People forget, or have never noticed, that children are like that. They are not goal-oriented, but live very much in the now. Not until they are older will they work seriously for future rewards. So it is that good teachers have found out that when something new is introduced to children, they need to have plenty of time for just "messing around" with it, instead of using it, as we say, productively. They play with typewriters before they want to begin "communicating" with them. John Holt noticed this with his cello. Children wanted just to handle it, not play it. But primary grade teachers are driven to achieve ends and may overlook the essential "messing around" or play stage—the child's way of "living in the eternal."

> A poet could not write a poem in order to earn a place in literary history. His place in literary history is another subject and as such a distraction. He writes because he has a poem to write, he knows how, the work pleases him, and he has forgotten all else.

FRONTIERS

An Honest Partisan

LAST year the Foundation for Economic Education restored to print a minor classic, *Liberalism*, written in 1927 by Ludwig von Mises (1881-1973), the Austrian economist who came from Switzerland to the United States in 1940, where he lectured widely and conducted seminars in economics at New York University. (The book is available at $9.95 in paperback.) In this work Mises is a campaigner for the original meaning of Liberalism as developed in England in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The value of this book (he wrote many others) lies in its clarity and the integrity of the author who writes throughout from a moral point of view. In his Preface to the English edition which came out in 1962, Mises made clear his purpose—to revive the original meaning of "Liberalism":

> Today the tenets of this nineteenth-century philosophy of liberalism are almost forgotten. In continental Europe it is remembered only by a few. In England the term "liberal" is mostly used to signify a program that only in details differs from the totalitarianism of the socialists. In the United States "liberalism" means today a set of ideas and political postulates that in every regard are the opposite of all that liberalism meant to the preceding generations. The American self-styled liberal aims at government omnipotence, is a resolute foe of free enterprise, and advocates all-round planning by the authorities, i.e., socialism. These "liberals" are anxious to emphasize that they disapprove of the Russian dictator's policies not on account of their socialistic or communistic character but merely on account of their imperialistic tendencies. Every measure aiming at confiscating some of the assets of those who own more than the average or at restricting the rights of the owners of property is considered as liberal and progressive. Practically unlimited discretionary power is vested in government agencies the decisions of which are exempt from judicial review.

In his introduction, Mises candidly admits that liberalism is materialistic, being solely concerned with man's material welfare, with no direct interest in "inner, spiritual and metaphysical needs." "It does not promise men happiness and contentment, but only the most abundant possible satisfaction of all those desires that can be satisfied by the things of the outer world." He declares: "The most serious error of liberalism has been that it has had nothing to offer man's deeper and nobler aspirations," providing this justification:

> It is not from a disdain of spiritual goods that liberalism concerns itself exclusively with man's material well-being, but from a conviction that what is highest and deepest in man cannot be touched by any outward regulation. It seeks to produce only outer well-being because it knows that inner, spiritual riches cannot come to man from without, but only from within his own heart.

But having said this, Mises seldom reminds us of its fundamental truth. He is for uninhibited capitalist enterprise, on the ground that when free enterprise is pursued without government interference, everyone benefits. "It is thanks to those liberal ideas that still remain alive in our society, to what yet survives in it of the capitalist system, that the great mass of our contemporaries can enjoy a standard of living far above that which just a few generations ago was possible only to the rich and especially privileged." Critics claim "that all progress in the techniques of production redounds to the exclusive benefit of a favored few, while the masses sink ever more deeply into misery," but Mises makes this reply:

> However, it requires only a moment's reflection to realize that the fruits of all technological and industrial innovations make for an improvement in the satisfaction of the wants of the great masses. . . . The development of the clothing industry, the mechanization of shoe production, and improvements in the processing and distribution of foodstuffs have, by their very nature, benefitted the widest public. It is thanks to these industries that the masses today are far better clothed and fed than ever before.

The contention of this book is that capitalism is by far the best system for satisfying the needs of a mass society of consumers. Written in 1927, one could say that the argument was justified, since in those days the methods of mass production were not yet deliberately turned to the decline in quality that we now recognize in many

lines of manufactured goods. This is not to suggest that some other way of supervising production would be any better, but to point out that the drive of competition in the market place is no more of a moralizing influence than the decrees of a socialist dictator. The principle of freedom, which is the guiding idea of the liberal philosophy—specifically, freedom from government control or regulation—does have its benefits, but it also has its excesses, and while government may prove ineffectual as a remedy for those excesses, this is not a sufficient reason for ignoring the abuses which develop in a capitalistic society. Mises claims only that the political remedies don't work, which seems true enough.

What seems entirely missing in the liberal school of thought—divorced as it is from moral principles and aspirations—is recognition that there is a way of thinking about economics which grows out of ethical ideas. This is the Gandhian view, in which no government coercion is involved, but only the moral perceptions of the people themselves. There is only one kind of restraint that works, and that is self-restraint. As E. F. Schumacher put it in one of his early writings:

> The materialist's idea of progress is an idea of *progress without limit.* . . . Economics, as taught today throughout the world—before the iron curtain and behind—recognizes no limit of any kind. It is, therefore, the Economics of Materialism and nothing else. There is implicit in it a purely materialist view of life, and it is inseparable from this view of life.

Schumacher argued that economic activity should be based on using the materials and skills at hand, and improving them, and being satisfied with the result. This means doing without some things, while enjoying others.

> Material things are of real importance—for a person, a family, or a nation—only "up to a point." So we can distinguish three economic conditions: misery, sufficiency, and surfeit. Of these, two are bad for a person, a family or a nation—and only one, sufficiency, is good. Economic "progress" is good only to the point of sufficiency; beyond that, it is evil, destructive, uneconomic. . . .

Who will decide when the point of sufficiency has been reached? There can be only one authority on this—the individual human being. Cultural tradition may help the individual to decide, but it cannot compel him. As Schumacher said: "Self-imposed limits, voluntary restraint, conscious limitation—those are the life-giving and life-preserving forces." No system of external control will ever prove satisfactory. Yet when excesses and abuses become rampant, controls are bound to be attempted. Mises teaches the importance of freedom, but not the necessity of self-restraint in economic enterprise. Learning it from the market takes too long, except on a small scale. World markets tend to bring disaster everywhere. We suggest a reading of Schumacher to enthusiasts of von Mises.