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A CUMULATIVE FORCE

THE question of whether, after a man dies, he will live again in some other form has never been settled. While assumptions regarding the immortality of the soul vary with historical periods, beliefs for and against coming in great waves, the expectation of another life after the death of the body appears spontaneously in individuals, no matter what the prevailing opinion as generated by either religion or science; and similarly, there are always those who, regardless of the common assumptions of their time, give little thought to the question and behave as though convinced that a single life is all there is.

If one pursues "research" in this matter, one finds that all he can learn is what other people have believed, and the arguments on which their convictions have been based. For the most part, those who have declared for immortality did so out of the feeling that there is that in humans which can have a real existence or being without a body such as we have now, or that some other body will be obtained in the future. Materialists, on the other hand, believing, as a scholar has put it, that "the soul is but the sum of the mental processes dependent on physical changes . . . the dissolution of the body carries with it necessarily the cessation of consciousness." (*Britannica.*)

The position of the materialists is clear enough. They hold that what we know of both nature and life is what our senses reveal. The visible world is our instructor. They make no distinction between the body and the self. There is no immaterial reality. The claim that humans have a non-physical being is for them an aberration, the invention of theologians, poets, and enthusiasts. We die, and that is the end of us. The materialist confidently asks for substantial proof to the contrary, and when evidence is offered in the form of psychical reports of life after death he says it is delusion or fraud.

Yet there is great weight of testimony—if not evidence—to immortality from the earliest human times until the present, with support from the most distinguished philosophers. Speaking of the mythic religion of the ancients, Ernst Cassirer (in *An Essay on Man*) remarks: "If anything is in need of proof it is not the fact of immortality but the fact of death." Myth and primitive religion, he says, "emphatically deny the possibility of death." The philosophical approach, in contrast, presses arguments for immortality. "If we read Plato's *Phaedo* we feel the whole effort of philosophical thought to give clear and irrefutable proof of the immortality of the soul." The *Britannica* (1953) provides this summary of Plato's view:

> The opinion of Socrates is uncertain. In the *Apology* he is represented as sure that "no evil can happen to a good man either in life or after death," but as not sure of what man's future lot will be. Only his body will be buried; he will go away to the happiness of the blessed. The silence of the *Memorabilia* of Xenophon must be admitted as an argument to the contrary; but the probability seems to be that Plato in the *Phaedo* did not altogether misrepresent the master. In Plato's own thought the belief held a prominent position. "It is noteworthy," says D. G. Ritchie, "that, in the various dialogues in which Plato speaks of immortality, the arguments seem to be of different kinds, and most of them quite unconnected with one another" (*Plato,* p. 146). The estimate to be formed of his reasoning has been well stated by A. M. Fairbairn: "Plato's arguments for immortality, isolated modernized, may be feeble, even valueless, but allowed to stand where and as he himself puts them, they have an altogether different worth. The ratiocinative parts of the *Phaedo* thrown into syllogisms may be easily demolished by a hostile logician; but in the dialogue as a whole there is a subtle spirit and cumulative force which logic can neither seize nor answer." (*Studies in the Philosophy of Religion,* p. 226.)

Modern arguments for immortality, though they are made but seldom, have something like the effect of Plato—they have a "cumulative force"

which logic does little to oppose, since they seem to arise from some inner conviction against which the claims of materialism count for little. The suggestions of John Haynes Holmes in his Ingersoll Lecture, *The Affirmation of Immortality*, are peculiarly persuasive. If man is only an animal, without a surviving spirit, how, he asks, shall we explain the greatness of Helen Keller? Here was a body, muted, deaf and blind, yet the housing of an indomitable spirit, one ever defiant of its physical limitations: could this have been possible without a soul? Hers was an exceptional case, to be sure, but such extraordinary individuals may drive home to us the reality which ordinary instances scarcely reveal. Holmes asks:

> What are we to think, for example, when a great and potent personality is suddenly cut off by an automobile accident, a disease germ, or a bit of poisoned food? Must it not be what George Herbert Palmer thought as he looked upon the dead body of his wife, one of the outstanding women of her time—"Though no regrets are proper for the manner of her death, who can contemplate the fact of it, and not call the world irrational if out of deference to a few particles of disordered matter, it excludes so fair a spirit?

Among the champions of immortality in modern times, W. Macneile Dixon is pre-eminent. One must think, of course, to be persuaded, and for those who do Dixon comes close to being an "authority." He says in *The Human Situation:*

> Tolstoy, enumerating all his advantages, his health, rank, fame, "possessing all that men desire," asks "Is there any meaning in my life, which will not be destroyed by the inevitable death awaiting me?" The question awaits an answer. It cannot be evaded by any sophistries, this interrogation in which all others are resumed, to which all others lead. For what matter the rest, if it can never be known what was true or false, right or wrong, if no questions of any moment will ever be answered, no justice ever done? "If immortality be untrue," as Buckle wrote, "it matters little whether anything else be true or not."

If we are told that we must consult "the facts" and be rational, Dixon widens the theater and asks:

> Rational? What could be less rational than that his pen and paper should be more enduring than the saint, that we should have Shakespeare's handwriting but not himself? Raphael's pictures but not the mind that conceived them? . . .
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> When the Abbé Moigno first showed Edison's phonograph to the Paris Academy of Sciences all the men of science present declared it impossible to reproduce the human voice by means of a metal disk, and the Abbé was accused, Sir William Barrett tells us, of having a ventriloquist concealed beneath the table. The thing was unbelievable. A future life is you think, unbelievable? How clear it is that death is death for men as for all living things.
>
> Well, I should myself put the matter rather differently. The present life is incredible, a future credible. "Not to be twice-born, but once-born is wonderful."

Dixon makes his arguments but does not press them. It is enough for him to think as he does. He exclaims in wonder. He may explain his delight, but persuasion is for the hearer to determine. No anxious hope besets him. While he may not agree, he is content with whatever you say. Time, he suggests, will reveal.

> How many modes of existence are there? I cannot tell you, but I should imagine them to be very numerous. And what kind of immortality is at all conceivable? Of all doctrines of a future life palingenesis or rebirth, which carries with it the idea of pre-existence, is by far the most ancient and most widely held, "the only system to which," as said Hume, "philosophy can hearken." "The soul is eternal and migratory, say the Egyptians," reports Laertius. In its existence birth and death are events. And though this doctrine has for European thought a strangeness, it is in fact the most natural and easily imagined, since what has been can be again. This belief, taught by Pythagoras, to which Plato and Plotinus were attached, has been held by Christian fathers as well as by many philosophers since the dawn of civilization. It "has made the tour of the world," and seems, indeed, to be in accordance with nature's own favourite way of thought, of which she so insistently reminds us, in her rhythms and recurrences, her cycles and revolving seasons. "It presents itself," wrote Schopenhauer, "as the natural conviction of man whenever he reflects at all in an unprejudiced manner."

> According to Plato's theory of reminiscence, our present knowledge is a recollection of what was learnt or known by the soul in a previous state. You will say, it has no knowledge of previous lives. But what man remembers every day of his life? And lost memories, as the psychologists will tell you, are recoverable. For the memory appears to be a palimpsest from which nothing is ever obliterated. If we have forgotten most days and incidents of our present lives it is natural that memories of previous lives should fail us. Yet from infancy every forgotten day and hour has added to our experiences, to our growth and capacity. All that a child was and did, though unremembered, is still a part of him and is knit up into his present nature. Every day and hour had its value and made its contributions to the mind and soul. So it may be with former lives, each of them but a day in our past history.

In Dixon's book, which was first published in 1937, he suggests that the idea of rebirth has a strangeness for European thought. This may have then been true, but no more. Something of a shock was produced back in the 1940s by publication in England of *Puzzled People,* describing the findings of the research group, Mass Observation, as a result of its study of religious belief in an area of London. The group reported "very largely a loss of faith in the unwieldy, centralized, remote organization, which increasingly monopolies the potential of ideals, and which seems so distant and uncontrollable to ordinary people." The people, the writer of *Puzzled People* said, are looking for something to believe in, hoping to fill the moral vacuum left in their lives by the dying out of religion. The researchers were obliged to add a section to their report because so many of those questioned revealed an interest or a faith in pre-existence or reincarnation. One in ten of those who held any idea of immortality at all "spontaneously went into enough detail" to show they inclined to rebirth—a view which, as Mass Observation noted, is not derived from any religious system widely adhered to in England.

Another point made in *Puzzled People* was concerned with the difference between the skepticism which grows out of indifference and the skepticism which results from critical investigation. It became evident that the unbelief of the modern world is mostly a product of indifference. In other words, the materialism of the time, for the great majority, has not been "earned" by an effort of hard thinking, but results from a drift to following the scientific authorities of the age. That the human being is "nothing but" the physical endowment used for coping with the external environment, as many physicists and biologists have claimed, is a conclusion of the age of reaction against "spiritual" teachings which violate the inner intuitions of all thoughtful men and women, and which, over centuries, have been allied with the power and tyranny of political leaders. "The world," an eighteenth-century freethinker declared, "would never be happy until it was atheistic." A moral ardor attended the arguments of the atheists who preceded the French Revolution and whose ideas did much to shape the anti-clerical spirit of the revolutionary leaders. This is clear from *The System* of *Nature,* by Baron von Holbach, which appeared in 1770. "Already in the preface," Frederick Lange says in his *History of Materialism,* "it is evident that the real starting-point of the author is the effort to secure the happiness of mankind."

> "Man is unhappy," the preface begins, "merely because he misunderstands nature. His mind is so infected by prejudices that one must almost believe him to be forever doomed to error; the chains of illusion in which he is so entangled from childhood have so grown upon him, that he can only with the utmost trouble be again set free from them. Unhappily he struggles to rise above the visible world, and painful experiences constantly remind him of the futility of his attempts. Man disdained the study of nature to pursue after phantoms, that, like will-o'-the-wisps, dazzled him and drew him from the plain path of truths, away from which he cannot attain happiness. It is therefore time to seek in nature remedies against the evils into which fanaticism has plunged us. There is but one truth, and it can never harm us. To error are due the grievous fetters by which tyrants and priests everywhere succeed in enchaining the nations: from error arose the bondage to which the nations are subject; from error the terrors of religion, which brought about that men

> mouldered in fear, or fanatically throttled each other for chimeras. From error arose deep-rooted hatred and cruel persecutions; the continual bloodshed and the horrid tragedies of which earth must be made the theatre to serve the interests of heaven."

This was the attitude, formulated in the eighteenth century, which spread around the world (in the West) and became the foundation of the thinking of thoughtful men. It underlay the ideas of the Deists and deeply affected the generation which brought about the freedom of the American colonies from the rule of Britain. While the orthodoxies of religion continued to enjoy the lip service of the majority, liberating tendencies were at work in the area of belief, with movements toward greater freedom of mind, such as the Quakers and the Methodists, taking hold in America. Meanwhile the progress of science, reinforced by Darwin and Huxley, generated an orthodoxy of materialism whose spokesmen increasingly dared to challenge the assumptions of religious belief.

One thinks here of men like Thomas Paine, and later Robert Ingersoll. By the first half of the twentieth century materialism was well seated as the academic orthodoxy. For illustration of its temper we quote a passage from L.L. Bernard's *Fields and Methods of Sociology* (1934)

> The old theological assumption of personal control through spirit direction, which later developed into a theory of spirit possession, and thence into a theory of an individual or personal soul (a permanent indwelling directive spirit), has given away, under the analysis of neurons, cortexes, and endocrines, to the behavioristic theory of the conditioned response and stimulus-response or behavior patterns. The spiritualists and theologians and the metaphysicians have not welcomed this growth of a science of personality and they have not hesitated to reveal their intellectual character by their strenuous efforts to sweep back the oncoming tide of behavioristic science with their witch brooms on which they have been accustomed to ride in the clouds of spiritistic fancy. But in spite of this bit of diverting hobby-horse play a science of personality based on a measurable mechanics of behavior is bound to replace the old magical and mystical spiritism which still survives in the thousand and one cults that delight in calling themselves psychological.

That is how at least some of the practitioners of the social sciences were expressing their position in the 1930s, indicating the confidence of their materialistic assumptions. Today, however, almost no one in any of the sciences writes in this spirit. There have been many changes in the concerns of scientists who work in the fields of human welfare, partly as a result of the self-criticism which at its best science encourages, and also in consequence of the ordeals of experience brought by the twentieth century—the demoralizations of two world wars, the decline of moral attitudes and the social confusions which afflict the "advanced" nations. All this, and the renewed contact with the world of the East, brought about by the spread of our armies in India and other ancient lands, have caused an awakening of sorts. The overlay of materialism has itself become only an external habit thrown off with surprising ease, even though there is no disciplined inner faith to take its place. As A. H. Maslow said in 1968, in an educational journal:

Something new is happening. There are discernible differences—and these are not differences in taste or arbitrary values. These are empirical discoveries. They are new things that are being found out, and from these are generated all sorts of propositions about values and education.

> One is the discovery that the human being *has higher needy* . . . the need to be dignified, for instance, and to be respected, and the need to be free for self-development. The discovery of higher needs carries with it all sorts of revolutionary implications. . . . Many people are beginning to discover that the physicalistic, mechanistic model was a mistake and that it has led us . . . where? To atom bombs. To a beautiful technology of killing, as in the concentration camps. To Eichmann. An Eichmann cannot be refuted with a positivistic philosophy or science. He just cannot; and he never got it until the moment he died. As far as he was concerned, nothing was wrong; he had done a good job. I point out that professional science and professional philosophy are dedicated to the proposition of

> forgetting about the values, excluding them. This, therefore, must lead to Eichmann, to atom bombs, and to who knows what!

Maslow was one of those who had self-conscious awareness of the changes which went on during the middle years of our century. Others simply felt them and responded in various ways. While, as an ex-behaviorist, he did not leap to embrace the idea of immortality, this lay among the possibilities which remained for human beings. Evidently, many people have been thinking along these lines. In 1981 George Gallup published *Adventures in Immortality* in which he described the results of a poll in the United States. He said: "Of those adults we polled, 23 per cent, or nearly one quarter, said they believed in reincarnation." While a lot remains to be said about this or any theory of immortal life—such as what in human beings *deserves* to live forever, and what should be left behind to dissolve and be worked over again—the conception of a life after death is now becoming an important element in the heritage of the human race. This belief comes to the surface as an intuitive feeling, often a natural sense of the worth of beinghood, seemingly independent of any religious tradition. Our life is coming to be held to have an invisible dimension, needing, from time to time, a sojourn in the body, and also liberation from it, to undergo higher forms of experience. To what other assumptions may this lead?

REVIEW
DOSTOEVSKY IN SIBERIA

IN April of 1849, Feodor Dostoevsky, then twenty-eight years old, was arrested for participation in the meetings held in the St. Petersberg home of Mikhail Petrashevsky, on the charge, as put by an official, of taking part in an "all-embracing plan of an overall movement for change and destruction." The charge was understood to be exaggerated, but Dostoevsky was a member of a secret group within the Petrashevsky circle, led by Nikolay Speshnev—a group whose existence remained unknown until the 1920s—which discussed how to raise indignation against the government and how to arm the peasants against landowners—yet which dissolved because of the arrests. In September the decision of the court was that fifteen of the twenty-three accused—including Dostoevsky—should be executed by firing squad. The Tsar Nicholas, however, was prevailed upon to show mercy and it was arranged that the condemned individuals would be subjected to a mock execution in which, a few minutes before they were to be shot, they would be told that their lives had been spared by the Tsar. As the novelist's latest biographer, Joseph Frank, puts it, "Dostoevsky thus underwent the extraordinary emotional adventure of believing himself to have been only a few moments from certain death, and then of being miraculously resurrected from the grave."

This story is told in the second volume of Joseph Frank's five-volume study of Dostoevsky's life and works (*Dostoevsky: The Years of Ordeal, 1850-1859*, Princeton University Press, 1983). Mr. Frank relates:

> What Dostoevsky felt when he was five minutes removed from certain death was not despair of total extinction but a terror of the unknown—the same "mystic terror" that had overcome him during his nervous attacks in the mid-1840s, and which he had described as being similar to "the anguish of people afraid of the dead." It is precisely because Dostoevsky could not help believing in some sort of life after death that he was so terrified by its impenetrable mystery.
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> The suspense of waiting for the firing squad to pull the trigger—Akhsharumov recalls it as having been "terrible, repulsive, frightening"—lasted about a minute, and then the roll of drums was heard beating retreat. Not having served in the Army, Akhsharumov did not understand the meaning of the signal and thought it would coincide with a volley from the rifles; the ex-officer Dostoevsky knew immediately that his life had been spared. The next moment the firing squad had lowered their rifles and were no longer taking aim; the three men at the stake were untied and returned to their places. One of them, Nikolay Grigoryev, was white as a sheet, all the blood having been drained from his face; he had already showed signs of mental derangement in prison, and the mock execution finished him off entirely; never recovering his senses, he remained a helpless mental invalid for the rest of his days. Meanwhile, an aide-de-camp arrived on the scene at a gallop carrying the Tsar's pardon and the real sentences. These were read to the astonished prisoners, some of whom greeted the news with relief and joy, others with confusion and resentment. The peasant blouses and the nightcaps were taken off, and two men—looking like executioners, and dressed in worn, multicolored caftans—climbed the scaffolding. Their assigned task was to break swords over the heads of the prisoners, who were compelled to kneel for this part of the ceremony; the snapping of the sword signaled exclusion from civilian life, and they were then given convict headgear, soiled sheepskin coats, and boots.

The men were shipped off to Omsk, in Siberia, in shackles. Dostoevsky's sentence was for four years at hard labor. After that he was to serve as a private in the army.

Mr. Frank's book is three hundred pages of detail about this ordeal. For Dostoevsky, the impact of life in Siberia included his inability to relate to the criminals who were his "companions," mostly Russian peasants. He was of another class, a gentleman and noble, and they would not accept him. "Never again," says Frank, "would Dostoevsky believe that the efforts of the radical intelligentsia could have the slightest effect in stirring the broad masses of the Russian people, and history was to prove him right during his

lifetime—if not, to be sure, half a century after his death."

On assignment with a work party, the peasants treated him with contempt. As Frank says:

> In short, the thin-skinned and excruciatingly vulnerable Dostoevsky, ready to flare up at the slightest pinprick to his self-esteem, was now caught in a nightmare of humiliation from which there was no escape, and which he simply had to learn how to endure.
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> It would have been no consolation for Dostoevsky that such ill-will was not directed against him personally but included all the other nobles as well. Indeed, this lack of discrimination only made it harder to bear, since in his own case he could hardly help smarting under its crying injustice. Over and over again in *House of the Dead* he returns to confirm the heartache inflicted by this relentless class hatred. Indeed, he came to consider, as the most agonizing of all the torments of camp life, this awareness of being eternally ringed by enemies, eternally alienated from the vast majority by a wall of animosity that nothing he could do would ever cause to crumble. An ordinary peasant-convict, he explains "within two hours after his arrival . . . is on the same footing as all the rest, is *at home*, has the same rights in the community as the rest, is understood by everyone as a comrade. It is very different with *the gentleman*, the man of a different class. However straightforward, good-natured and clever he is, he will for years be hated and despised, he will not be understood, and what is more he will not be trusted. He is not a friend, and not a comrade, and though he may at last in the course of years attain such a position among them that they will no longer insult him, yet he will never be one of them, and will forever be painfully conscious that he is solitary and remote from all."

The climax of this feeling of isolation and degradation came with the celebration in camp of Easter week—probably the second that he experienced there, in 1851. It was a time of riotous living for the convicts, many of whom went to work drunk. In *Diary of a Writer* Dostoevsky describes the experience: "Ugly, filthy songs; gambling groups squatting underneath the plank bed; convicts beaten half to death, by common consent, because of having been too rowdy, and lying on the plank bed covered with sheepskins until they revive and wake up; knives drawn several times—all this, on the second day of the holiday, tormented me to the point of illness." Finally he threw himself on his plank bed and tried to abstract himself from the ugly scene. He would often do this when planning his writing.

> What emerged in this case, however, was the memory of a long-forgotten incident of his childhood—a period of his life just revived in his subconscious by the Easter preparations and ceremonies. And the experience in question had involved the same emotions of shock, fright, and fear that had been aroused by the prison-camp orgy. Wandering through the forest one day on his father's scruffy little "estate," the nine-year-old Dostoevsky suddenly thought he heard a shout that a wolf was roaming in the vicinity. The wood was in fact criss-crossed with ravines, in which wolves sometimes appeared, and Dostoevsky's mother had warned him to be careful. The frightened boy ran out of the wood and toward a peasant plowing in a nearby field, one of his father's serfs whom he knew only as "Marcy." The surprised Marey halted work to soothe the terrified child, white-faced and trembling, and assured him that no one had shouted and no wolf was near. Dostoevsky recalled Marey smiling at him gently "like a mother," blessing him with the sign of the cross and crossing himself, and then sending him home with the reassurance that he would be kept in sight. "All this came back to me suddenly, I do not know why," Dostoevsky writes, "with surprising clarity and full detail. I suddenly opened my eyes, straightened up on the plank bed and, I recall, my face still retained its gentle smile of recollection." . . .

His whole attitude toward his fellow convicts, Frank says, had "undergone a magical transformation."

> "I remember, when I got off the plank bed and gazed around, that I suddenly felt I could look on these unfortunates with quite different eyes, and suddenly, as if by a miracle, all hatred and rancor had vanished from my heart. I walked around, looking attentively at the faces I met. That despised peasant with shaven head and brand marks on his face, reeling with drink, bawling out his hoarse drunken song—why, he may be that very Marey; after all, I am not able to look into his heart." . . .
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> One might say that, just as Dostoevsky's faith in the miracle of the resurrection had been quickened

> and revived by the Easter ceremonies, so his faith in the Russian people had been renewed by the "miracle" of Marey's resurrection in his consciousness.

Nothing else changed, but the novelist's attitude was transformed. This might explain a quality which runs throughout his stories. No matter how dark the offense of one of his characters, the reader becomes unable to feel contempt for the offender, who is still a human, although under a cloud. Compassion was doubtless always latent in Dostoevsky, but was brought to the surface of his mind and made conscious by the Marey incident, which Frank likens to a "conversion" experience.

Dostoevsky's four years in the Siberian prison camp, followed by years in the army, until he was permitted to return to St. Petersberg in 1859, was a time of deepened psychological experience and insight into the complexities of human nature. If one reflects, it seems that the three most evident qualities of the novelist's character—his personal integrity, his understanding of human nature, and his love of Russia—were all intensified by the Siberian experience, bringing full consciousness to his genius. Showing this seems the value of Joseph Frank's second volume on Dostoevsky.

COMMENTARY
JOHN HOLT—EDUCATIONAL REFORMER

WE have been writing about John Holt for twenty years——since taking note of *How Children Fail* in a September issue in 1965—so it was with sadness that we learned of his death from cancer at 62 on September 14, at his home in Boston. There is consolation, however, in the fact that after he reached a conclusion very like that of the books quoted in this week's "Children," he made a decision as to what should be done, and then carried it out. In the earlier part of his life he taught in schools in New England. What he learned from this experience was that school "reform" was hardly possible; that parents who want their children to be educated had better do it themselves. He made himself the mentor of parents who agreed with him and in effect started a "movement" that can be characterized by the title of his book, *Teach Your Own.* It is a heroic program, but thousands of parents have proved equal to it. He also started a paper, *Growing Without Schooling*, which comes out six times a year—filled with material sent in by home-schooling parents on virtually everything to do with raising their children.

Holt was above all a teacher, and while he left school-teaching, never for a moment did he stop teaching. This becomes evident to the reader of his books, which are several, all of them very good. A list of these books and other literature may be obtained by writing to Holt Associates, Inc., 308 Boylston St., Boston, Mass. 02116.

John Holt did so well what he set out to do that his death as a standard-bearer will not mean any diminution in the spread of teaching at home. This decision by parents has many provocations. His contribution was to give inspiring and practical definition to the alternatives to sending your child to school.

We give what remains of our space to Glenn T. Gilbert, of Newport Beach, California, who said in a letter to the *Los Angeles Times:*

> Holt was recognized by friends and foes alike as the most significant American educational *reformer* of the 1960s and 1970s. With precision and uncommon straightforwardness, he revealed to millions of educators worldwide (his popular books were widely translated) the mechanisms by which the modern educational machine devours our children. . . Holt was a Yankee realist with a passion for demonstrable alternatives, who finally came to view the process of schooling itself as an unworkable and fundamentally counterproductive means of mass education.

While Holt knew that not all parents would or could teach their own children, he also knew that enough of them would find a way to do it, and by example prove it the right thing to do. If you read him and look over his paper, you will almost certainly decide that he was right.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

UNTIL THE CRACK OF DOOM

FOUR pages of review of eight books on the elementary and high schools of the United States—the reviewer is Walter Karp, who writes for the June *Harper's*—make the most devastating account of education in this country that we have read anywhere. Karp, an editor of *Harper's,* begins:

> Until very recently, remarkably little was known about what goes on in America's public schools. There were no reliable answers to even the most obvious questions. How many children are taught to read in overcrowded classrooms? How prevalent is rote learning and how common are classroom discussions? Do most schools set off gongs to make the change of "periods"? Is it a common practice to bark commands over public address systems in the manner of army camps, prisons, and banana republics? Public schooling provides the only intense experience of a public realm that most Americans will ever know. Are school buildings designed with the dignity appropriate to a great republican institution, or are most of them as crummy looking as one's own?
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> The darkness enveloping America's public schools is truly extraordinary considering that 38.9 million students attend them, that we spend nearly $134 million a year on them, and that foundations ladle out generous sums for the study of everything about schooling—except what really occurs in the schools.

First among the books given attention is John I. Goodlad's *A Place Called School,* which examines in depth thirty-eight of the country's 80,000 public schools—"the most comprehensive such study ever undertaken." Goodlad is a former dean of UCLA's Graduate School of Education, and his work has led to a number of similar studies. What have they found out?

> Thanks to Goodlad et al., it is now clear what the great educational darkness has so long concealed: the depth and pervasiveness of political hypocrisy in the common schools of the country. The great ambition professed by public school managers is, of course, education for citizenship and self-government, which harks back to Jefferson's historic call for "general education to enable every man to judge for himself what will secure or endanger his freedom." What the public schools practice with remorseless proficiency, however, is the prevention of citizenship and the stifling of self-government. When 58 per cent of the thirteen-year-olds tested by the National Assessment for Educational Progress think it is against the law to start a third party in America, we are dealing not with a sad educational failure but with a remarkably subtle success.

The reviewer finds no breath of hope for any change for the better in the schools. Why, one wonders, do the authors of these books go on working in or for the schools? Why don't they turn their critical abilities—which are great—to positive efforts to help, say, the home schooling movement of which John Holt is a champion? Do they prefer being chroniclers of doom?

The reviewer provides specific reasons for the "remarkably subtle success" of the schools in defeating the purpose of public education:

> Consider how effectively America's future citizens are trained *not* to judge for themselves about anything. From the first grade to the twelfth, from one coast to the other, instruction in America's classrooms is almost entirely dogmatic. Answers are "right" and answers are "wrong," but mostly answers are short. "At all levels, (teacher-made) tests called almost exclusively for short answers and recall of information," reports Goodlad. In more than 1,000 classrooms visited by his researchers, "only *rarely"* was there "evidence to suggest instruction likely to go much beyond mere possession of information to a level of understanding its implications." Goodlad goes on to note that "the intellectual terrain is laid out by the teacher." The give-and-take of genuine discussion is conspicuously absent. "Not even 1% of instruction time," he found, was devoted to discussions that "required some kind of open response involving reasoning or perhaps an opinion from students. . . . The extraordinary degree of student passivity stands out."
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> [In *Horace's Compromise: The Dilemma of the American High School]* Sizer's research substantiates Goodlad's. "No more important finding has emerged from the inquiries of our study than that the American high school student, as student, is all too often docile, compliant, and without initiative."

> There is good reason for this. On the one hand, notes Sizer, "there are too few rewards for being inquisitive." On the other, the heavy emphasis on "the right answer . . . smothers the student's efforts to become an effective intuitive thinker."

Teachers, says Goodlad, are not "urged to combat the tyranny of the short right answer nor trained to do so."

> "Most teachers simply do not know how to teach for higher levels of thinking," says Goodlad. Indeed, they are actively discouraged from trying to do so. . . . In their orientation to new, inexperienced teachers, for example, school administrators often indicate that they do not much care what happens in class so long as no noise can be heard in the hallway. This thinly veiled threat virtually assures the prevalence of short-answer drills, workbook exercises, and the copying of long extracts from the blackboard. These may smother young minds, but they keep the classroom quiet.

A Rand Corporation writer, Linda Darling-Hammond, said in *The Great School Debate:* Where "important decisions are based on test scores, teachers are more likely to teach the tests" and less likely to bother with "nontested activities, such as writing, speaking, problem-solving or real reading of real books." Mr. Karp asks:

> Do the nation's educators really want to teach almost 40 million students how to "think critically," in the Carnegie report's phrase, and "how to judge for themselves," in Jefferson's? The answer is, if you can believe that you can believe anything. The educational establishment is not even content to produce passive minds. It seeks passive spirits as well. One effective agency for producing these is the overly populous school. . . . Large schools "tend to create passive and compliant students," notes Robert B. Hawkins Jr. in an essay in *The Challenge to American Schools.* That is their chief reason for being.

About half of Mr. Karp's review-essay is devoted to the tracking system, in which children from poor families "are trained for jobs as auto mechanics, cosmeticians, and institutional cooks, but they rarely get the jobs they are trained for."

> The tracking system makes privilege and inequality blatantly visible to everyone. It creates under one roof "two worlds of schooling," to quote Goodlad. Students in academic programs read Shakespeare's plays. The commonality, notes the Carnegie report, are allowed virtually no contact with serious literature. In their English classes they practice filling out job applications. "Gifted" students alone are encouraged to think for themselves. The rest are subjected to sanctimonious wind, chiefly about "work habits" and "career opportunities." . . .
>
> This wretched arrangement expresses the true spirit of public education in America and discloses the real aim of its hidden curriculum. A favored few, pampered and smiled upon, are taught to cherish and despise the disfavored. The favorless many, who have majored in failure for years, are taught to think ill of themselves. Youthful spirits are broken to the world and every impulse of citizenship is effectively stifled. John Goodlad's judgment is severe but just. "There is in the gap between our highly idealistic goals for schooling in our society and the differentiated opportunities condoned and supported in schools a monstrous hypocrisy."

All that seems suitable to add to this indictment is that the people involved—many teachers and even some of the administrators—are not guilty of *intending* the results these books describe. There are teachers who work as well as they can against such tendencies, although the circumstances of their work, the system which controls their efforts, and the politicos who want properly molded minds are all against them.

What can be done? The final paragraph of Mr. Karp's review gives the answer:

> Only ordinary citizens can rescue the schools from their stifling corruption, for nobody else wants ordinary children to become questioning students at all. If we wait for the mighty to teach America's youth what secures or endangers their freedom, we will wait until the crack of doom.

FRONTIERS

The Rectification of Names

THE journal, *Development Dialogue,* is published twice a year by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, with the support of the Swedish International Development Authority. We call attention to this journal by reason of the outspoken candor of the contents, in particular an article by Hannes Alfvén, Nobel prizewinner (in Physics, 1970) in the second 1984 issue, on the responsibility of scientist; in relation to the threat of nuclear war. In an introductory abstract of his discussion, the editors say:

> Those who strive to stop the nuclear arms race will always lose as long as they accept the euphemisms used by the leaders of the arms race in place of more adequate terms. For example, "nuclear arms" sounds similar to "conventional arms." As we know, this is a false impression. They are primarily the means for the mass killing of innocent civilians, or rather for torturing them to death. A more adequate word would be "annihilators."

Early in his article, titled "Annihilators and Omnicide Prof. Alfvén says:

> At present a general madness seems to be sweeping the world, and humanity is clearly preparing for omnicide, the killing of us all.
>
> What part can scientists play? It is our profession to clarify the truth to ourselves and to our colleagues. It is also our duty to tell everybody the truth and nothing but the truth: to educate people about the real state of the world.
>
> It has been thought that this should be done by whispering advice into the ears of the world's political leaders. Decades of sad experience in the nuclear debate have taught us this does not work. Politicians are under pressure from so many groups more powerful than scientists and, according to the rules of the political game, they listen—they must—to those who can exert most pressure. Of course they are concerned if their actions lead to world destruction, but clearly they are more concerned about losing the next election or, in dictatorial states, about losing power to another individual or group.
>
> Hence the only efficient remedy against the nuclear threat is that a popular movement becomes strong enough to exert decisive pressure on the politicians. As far as I can see, this is the only way to save our culture, the results of thousands of years of human activity, and the scientific and technical knowledge on which our civilization rests.

It is time that more scientists said things like this. Only a massive change in human attitudes can accomplish a change in the plans and policies of the industrial nations. If change there is to be, it will come only from the bottom up—that is, from the grassroots of the country, every country. Not even the scientists, who know something of the horror of nuclear war, of its unimaginable folly, are outspoken enough. As Prof. Alfvén says, most scientists are specialists and to them the most important thing is likely to be "their latest discovery or latest technical construction. Whether that is to the benefit or the destruction of human-kind is often of secondary interest." He goes on:

> But there is a second, deeper reason for scientists' lack of protest. Scientists are often—but not always—very "intelligent" people. However, in this context there seem to be two different types of intelligence. One kind is what we may call "nuclear intelligence." The people who possess this count their achievements by how many people their devices can kill: how large a figure they can enter in the "megadeath" column. (One megadeath means the death of one million people.) Their aim is to make this figure as large as possible for the "enemy" and as small as possible for their own masters. What "megadeath" means in human terms is something they either do not understand or refuse to think about. In particular, they never mention that the nuclear megadeath is not comparable to a conventional killing of the same number of people, because radioactive death is not a "heroic" death in the old sense. It is very often a slow torturing death as we know very well from Hiroshima.
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> The other kind of intelligence we may call a "humane intelligence." Those who possess it cannot avoid seeing the meaning of megadeath in human terms. Their intelligence is combined with empathy in such a way that they are compelled to identify themselves with those who are killed. In their imagination they themselves constitute one millionth of what the people with nuclear intelligence call a megadeath.

Hannes Alfvén wants us all to start using the right words for what is intended by nuclear warmakers. Instead of "nuclear arms," we should say, he thinks, "annihilators." He adds that "money for developing and manufacturing annihilators should not come from defense funds, but from funds for "mass murder of civilians." Getting down to cases, he says:

> Let us start by analyzing one of the words in the nuclear debate, the term "Russians," and especially its use in the USA. The Russians are claimed to be the permanent enemies of the USA and the whole "free world" and to represent all the evil of our times. It is necessary to spend billions or trillions of dollars defending the USA and the "free world" against the threat they pose. The key to this defense system is the "button": when Reagan presses it, he will kill at least 100 or 200 million "Russians," if not all. He can do so whenever he wants. The role of the Europeans is primarily to provide sites for this war machine.
>
> But what is meant by the "Russians"? Sometimes the word is used as a synonym for "the Soviet Union." Are those who are ethnically non-Russian—people who in some cases are subjugated by the Russians—included among the evil people? When he presses his button, Reagan will probably kill about the same number of Russians as non-Russians, the latter including people who actually hate the Russians and for centuries have tried to liberate themselves from Russian repression Is it really sensible to kill them, to "punish" them for a crime which not even Reagan believes they have committed? Indeed, their only "crime" is that they happen to live in a region which is part of the Soviet Union. Does US law prescribe capital punishment for such a "crime"?
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> Furthermore, are all those who are ethnically Russians really so evil? There are large numbers of dissidents—a famous one is Sakharov—whom Reagan considers to be heroes. Does he really want to kill *them?*

In his conclusion, Prof. Alfvén says:

> An analysis of this kind shows that there is no possibility of accepting any nuclear activity at all. . . . The only possible definition of a realistic policy is one which aims at rescuing us from the nuclear threat. Hence the only realistic policy is to stop all nuclear activity as soon as possible.

This is the voice of sanity. These extracts are taken from Hannes Alfvén's paper given at the 34th Pugwash Conference on Science and World Affairs held in Sweden in 1984. *Development Dialogue* is published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Övre Slottsgatan 2, S-752 20 Uppsala, Sweden.