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# END-OF-THE-CENTURY QUESTION

THERE seems a sense in which the typical human of the present has no more influence over the course of events affecting his life than a private in the army of Alexander the Great. This, at any rate, was a conclusion that emerged from reading the daily paper and an article in the March *Atlantic.* The paper reported on our country's "quiet military build-up in Central America," with figures in the millions on armaments provided to a country struggling with guerrilla uprisings, and the increasing number of military personnel supplied as "advisers."

As for our own "military build-up," a well known political commentator remarks that we have no way of knowing whether the present administration thinks war with Russia is avoidable, since it does not say. "There are conflicting statements, but no provable consensus." There is also a long report on the growing number of hungry and homeless people in the United States, anywhere from half a million to two million, with only a small fraction receiving help. The need, relief officials say, is "unmatched since the Depression." Another story notes that the laws to protect the environment from pollution by industry are expiring, and that Congress seems uninterested. On what is supposed to be an upbeat note, financial specialists exclaim over the healthy condition of mutual funds with four pages devoted to the gains of investors and dozens of ads by investment houses. Only the people who have money can make it, seems the verdict.

Then, in the *Atlantic,* Robert Reich, who teaches business and public policy at Harvard, says that the American standard of living "will continue to decline," and explains why. Today the big companies which dominate and establish policy, he says, have become paper entrepreneurs, which means that their profits come mostly from mergers and similar manipulations which take advantage of tax and other laws, instead of making better products more efficiently. Meanwhile the developing countries have been learning our production methods, applying them, and capturing markets we once enjoyed. Their low labor cost makes it impossible for American manufacturers to compete. American industry, moreover, is set in its ways, so inflexible that the Japanese are running circles around us—the reason why General Motors found reason to get together with Toyota. Our own "trusted formulas" no longer work and business bureacracy has grown out of bounds. "By 1979, half the employees of Intel—the microprocessor manufacturer—were engaged in administration."

> Bureaucratic layering of this sort is costly, and not only because of the extra salaries and benefits that must be paid. Layers of staff also make the firm more rigid, less able to make quick decisions or adjust rapidly to new opportunities and problems. In the traditional scientifically managed, high-volume enterprise, novel situations are regarded as exceptions, requiring new rules and procedures and the judgments of senior managers. But novel situations are a continuing feature of the new competitive environment in which American companies now find themselves.

Concerning paper entrepreneurialism, Prof. Reich says:

> The set of symbols developed to represent real assets has lost the link with any actual productive activity. Finance has progressively evolved into a sector all its own, only loosely connected to industry. And this disconnectedness turns business executives into paper entrepreneurs—forced to outsmart other participants, or be themselves outsmarted. . . . Paper entrepreneurs produce nothing of tangible use. For an economy to maintain its health, entrepreneurial rewards should flow primarily to products, not paper. . . .
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> Increasingly, professional education in America stresses the manipulation of symbols to the exclusion of other sorts of skills—how to collaborate with others, to work in teams, to speak foreign languages,

> to solve concrete problems—that are more relevant to the newly competitive world economy. . . . The world of real people, engaged in the untidy and difficult struggle with real production problems, becomes ever more alien to America's best and brightest.

Meanwhile, the coming generation at Harvard Business School is majoring in finance. Only 3 per cent of the 1981 graduating class took jobs in production. Another survey revealed that 24 per cent of Harvard freshmen were planning careers in law, doubtless because large law firms are now starting recruits at $48,000 a year. The legal fees which grow out of paper entrepreneurialism are enormous and continuous.

One needs no course in social science to see that the country is fast becoming a playground for manipulators, who are replacing the producers of yesteryear. And it is easy to see that these bright young men are planning to base their lives on short-term profits, which can do nothing but hasten the general economic decline. They are, you could say, unconscious followers of Callicles (in Plato's *Gorgias)*—unconscious because they know nothing of Plato—yet followers of the man who insisted that the strong and astute are right to pursue self-interest at the expense of the simple and the weak. Callicles and those who agreed with him dominated Athens, affirming that "the superior and the stronger" are imitating "nature" in acquiring the possessions of other men. Yet like the schemers of the present, they believed in appearing to be virtuous while carrying on their high-toned brigandage at the cost of the common good. Robert E. Cushman says in *Therapeia* (1958):

> The situation was never more ably described than by the hard-headed Callicles: Either Socrates is joking when he contends that injustice in the soul is the worst evil that can befall a man, or, if it is really true, the life of human beings is turned "upside-down," and most men are doing exactly the opposite of what they ought to be doing. The observation was valid, for the prevailing motivations actuating men in the city-state were based upon the unexamined supposition that the good for men is prescribed by their nature as physical beings. The prevalent success philosophy of the age was nicely rationalized by the teaching of the Sophists.

Indeed, Socrates had little chance of turning Athenian life rightside-up, although this deterred him not at all from trying. Similarly, the prospect of turning life around in our own time seems highly unlikely, even though writers like Prof. Reich on business, dozens of critics on agriculture, commentators on foreign policy, scientists like Rachel Carson and Barry Commoner on the environment, the Odums on ecology, and Wendell Berry on the conduct of life keep pointing out, not merely the folly, but the amoral stupidity of our ways.

Has anyone ever been successful in turning a society around? Is there no hope? If we take a leaf from Schumacher's famous book in our search for such a transformation, encouragement may be seen. And in the *Indian Express* for Feb. 11, a journalist, Yogesh Sharma, tells the story of a village in northern Gujarat which was turned around by an aging Gandhian. This man, Ravishankar Maharaji, now in his hundredth year, arrived in the village of Sunsar fifty years ago, a place where the men made their living stealing cattle at night and burglarizing the surrounding area. Today the place has been "transformed into a community where most of the people earn their living by farming and send their children to school." The reporter talked to an oldtimer about what the village had been like.

> Ravaji Thakore, an ace cattle lifter of those days, told me that one day a tall middle-aged man with a staff in his hand and clad in khadi walked into the village.
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> "We all curiously watched the man who chose a corner, took out his charkha and began spinning," said Ravaii. He talked now and then with those who came to him, but did not tell them why he was in their midst.

At this time the state police were applying a scheme to lessen crime in the area. Three times a day they held a roll call in the village for all male adults. For not being present the penalty was six weeks in jail. It did not work very well, but the

roll call was enforced, working a hardship on the people. This gave the Gandhian, who had come to be known as Dada, his opportunity.

> As days passed the villagers began trusting him and some of them complained to him about the roll-call system. One day two villagers vowed to the saintly man that they would not indulge in any kind of theft and he immediately took them to the police officers at Mehsana and got them exempted from the ordeal of roll call.
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> Others followed and soon most of them left the age-old tradition. "It was not easy and despite our assurances the old man would find some of us bringing cattle into the village," said Ravaji.
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> Though Baroda state had made schooling compulsory the villagers preferred to pay the fine of Rs 3 a year for not sending their children to school. Dada himself began teaching youths and elderly people in his hut. As the number of his pupils grew, he shifted to classes in the open. And while [after seven years] leaving the village he built a school and donated about 100 books with his signature on them. Ravishankar never lost contact with the village and the villagers still remember him with great reverence.

Other of his accomplishments:

> The Dada got Sunsar's village pond deepened and 12 irrigation wells sunk in the area. These wells still supply water to the arid fields. . . . The only road link between Sunsar and Dhinoj, a village about seven km away, was also a result of the efforts of Dada.
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> Above all these things, it was Dada who changed the hearts of the notorious criminals of Sunsar and they now live as decent citizens. During a visit to Sunsar, I met a few old men who had known Maharaj in those days. Their toothless faces glowed as they recounted his activities in the village about 50 years ago. . . . Some of the villagers still go to meet Dada.

This is a modest tale—only, as we say, a drop in the bucket. Yet a principle is illustrated by what Dada was able to accomplish. If the social unit is *small* enough, its transformation is at least possible through the influence of a single man. A similar effect was obtained by Socrates, although it was not sufficient to alter the habits of a city the size of Athens. The people allowed Socrates to be put to death for his pains. Yet in the hands of Plato his execution became an immeasurable source of good for later generations, as readers of the *Apology* and the *Phaedo* will all agree. Was, then, Socrates a failure because not enough Athenians took him seriously?

The same question might be asked about Gandhi's career. Is there any point in being a "minority of one" that is sure to be overwhelmed by common opinion? Is the life of principle a useless gesture unless the man who lives by principle "wins"?

This seems the question needing to be applied to most of the "decision-making" of the present. Its answer turns on how far one goes in developing the implications of justice. In the last book of the *Republic*, shortly before he recites the myth of Er (which proposes the immortality of the soul, and the consolidation of human character through many lives on earth), Socrates declares that one thing has been demonstrated in the dialogue—"that we have proved that justice in itself is the best thing for the soul itself." But when, in the *Gorgias*, Socrates expanded the argument, maintaining that it is better to suffer wrong than to inflict it, he encountered only stubborn antagonism. Callicles, for one, declared for what he called *natural* justice, arguing that the strong and astute have a natural right to more possessions and pleasures than the weak and ineffectual. In short, justice is what the powerful say it is.

In the eighteenth century, the demand for justice, spurred by the pain of long ages of oppression, led to revolutionary struggle for political freedom in both Europe and America. The Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man embody the conception that justice is to be obtained through a political establishment with power to guarantee justice under the law. So freedom was won. In time, however, the exercise of power became more important than the preservation of justice. And the power, men said, always needed to be increased because of growing threats to freedom.

In time, however, governmental acts of extreme injustice were "justified" in behalf of power but in the name of justice. Modern nation-states claimed to be the caretakers and exemplars of justice, and the argument made by Callicles was endlessly repeated by their spokesmen, although without his candor.

This course of history became plainly evident in the nineteenth century, so that angry men argued, with measurable success, that power should be taken away from national governments and given to "the people." And since power was obviously economic in origin, the revolutions of the twentieth century took possession not only of government, but of property too, with the result that the new governments became enormous corporate enterprises in political and economic competition with the "private enterprise" societies. In terms of moral justification, the argument was that only states had sufficient power to preserve justice and freedom, with the qualification that once a truly free and just society had been established, the state would "wither away." It did not, of course, since the new political arrangements in no way reduced the belief in power. The good life, in other words, required for its preservation the same means that tyrants and oppressors use to inflict injustice. The Socratic maxim, "It is better to suffer than to do wrong," was amended to say that it is better to do wrong than to live under the threat of injustice. The present armaments race is ample evidence of this view.

The dilemma is clear. Policies of nations are determined by aggressive self-interest, leading to an international situation which is not only intolerable in its continuous threat of war, but also in the economic and social disorder it produces. On the other hand, how can we do without the guardianship of the nation-state?

Various questions arise. We habitually define justice and freedom in political terms. We assume that the excellences achieved by human beings are represented by and stored in political arrangements, yet we now see that they are also destroyed by political arrangements. In these circumstances, it is not remarkable that the seminal thinkers of our time interest themselves in politics hardly at all. Nor are they concerned with the achievement of power. They point out that the best qualities of human beings, the best social relations, the ideal objectives to which we are attracted, never result from the exercise of power. Power is irrelevant to the development of human good, although it obviously may get in the way of that development. The most that power can do is to establish and enforce mechanical arrangements. Mechanical arrangements have their place, but we live by feeling and idea, by motives which are uncoerced, and we count as worth doing what we do voluntarily, not what we are made to do. Self-ruled lives come close to being the only spontaneous goals we know.

Power cannot generate living things; it can only confine, exploit, or put them to death. Only the crudest sort of regulation is obtained by power. Compare a machine with a living thing, the computer with a brain. Life confronts us with numerous mysteries, but the greatest of all is that control and regulation come from within. Living things are self-starters, self-maintainers, self-directors. We don't need a political education to see this: we've *had* a political education, learning from it what politics cannot do. We do need an ecological education, which means instruction in the delicate balances of symbiosis, the unchartable interrelations and interdependencies of living things.

And that, happily, is where the true genius of our time is to be found—in the study of life. The roll of honor, today, is the listing which begins, for Americans, with George Perkins Marsh, with Rachel Carson, and is made up of scores or perhaps hundreds of others who are slowly revealing a little of the wonder of the "constitution" of nature. E. F. Schumacher's books are on basic human ecology, on the scale of relationships and undertakings in which human

potentiality flowers most abundantly. Schumacher was also an unembarrassed moralist—that is, he added to the practical dynamics of everyday economic life the conception of humans as beings in whom moral decision gives tone and direction to all other activities. He wanted a society in which the few who have external authority give the least possible orders to its members, as Thoreau recommended a century and more ago. The trouble with giving orders is that it removes the initiative from those who are ordered, making them dependent on outside direction, so that every time you give an order, you have to give several more. Eventually everyone begins to feel boxed in by a manifold of orders and laws which are not only too numerous to keep track of, but often contradict each other. The record shows that they can be turned to purposes wholly at odds with what the original law-makers had in mind.

Schumacher was the kind of Socrates that our times called for. He is concerned with the nature of man, with the moral struggle in each one, and with the circumstances appropriate to a reasonable chance of the good in man coming out on top.

This, we submit, is the real issue we are called upon to decide during the closing years of the twentieth century. Drawing on Plato's metaphysics of immortality might make decision a lot easier, but applying an intelligent pragmatism may be the only way many Americans can make a beginning at clear-seeing. According to Plato, the man who lives by principle is never short-changed by either history or circumstance, whatever the appearances. If the soul is immortal, if it is the carrier of all human progress, all evolutionary achievement, all wealth of mind and heart, how can true good ever be lost?

The Stoic view, that whether or not you survive death, a man should behave like a man, uncaring of reward in the future or punishment in the now, has its existentialist attraction for the hardier lot. But for platonist or stoic, the time has come to choose. This is not only because of the threat of nuclear death. We must all die out of our present bodies, sooner or later. The decision now called for is whether or not we are the kind of people willing to *use* the threat of nuclear death—whether the right thing, for its own sake alone, should play the determining part in our lives.

# *REVIEW*
## THE MOST UNFREE

THERE are certain books that deserve renewed attention at least every ten years, and Ronald V. Sampson's *The Discovery of Peace* (Pantheon, 1973) is one of them. Mr. Sampson is a follower and champion of Tolstoy. In 1966 he put into English an untranslated essay by Tolstoy, "On the Annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria," written in 1908, making of it a pamphlet and printing it, as we recall, on a hand press in his basement. Why was this virtually unknown essay by Tolstoy so important? Mr. Sampson, we think, might submit the following from Tolstoy in reply:

> People simply being clearly, decisively aware who they are, people aware of that which all the sages have taught and which Christ taught: that in every man there dwells a free, omnipotent spirit, one and the same for all, a son of God, which man can neither conquer nor subject himself to, that there is one manifestation of this spirit: love—these aware people (and people now ready for this awareness) and behaving accordingly, or rather, people simply not behaving contrary to this awareness; and immediately by the simplest means in the world all the difficulties will be eliminated not only in Bosnia and Serbia, but in the whole Christian world, and not only in the Christian world, but in the whole of mankind. Only people vividly aware of this truth which has been revealed to them and behaving in accordance with it and all those horrors from which they now suffer will end of themselves. There will come to an end the oppression of one people by another, and wars and the preparations for them, and the ruination and corruption of peoples; there will come an end to these absurd frauds of constitutions these seizures of land and the conversion of people to slavery; there will come to an end these judgments of people over people, these laws of people over people terrible both in their cruelty and stupidity, these fetters, prisons, executions there will end the domination by an idle, corrupt minority of men over the majority of working people, reduced to slavery, but still not corrupted and with a capacity for a reasonable life.
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> "But if this be the case, in order to bring all this about, in order that this whole order of human life be changed, it is necessary that there should be not individuals nor tens of individuals, but everybody or a majority. And so long as the majority will not so understand the demands of life cannot be changed." Thus do people speak and continue to live as previously, contrary to common sense and conscience.
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> But only people who are under the influence of patriotism and the superstitions of the State speak in this way. For such people, apparently, man has no meaning outside of State, a man before being a man, is a member of a State. Such people forget that every man, before being an Austrian, Serb, Turk, Chinese, is *a man*, that is, a rational loving creature, whose vocation in no way consists in maintaining or destroying the Serb, Turk, Chinese, Russian State, but in one thing only: in the fulfillment of his human purpose.

An earlier book by Mr. Sampson, *The Psychology of Power*, is on the same theme, and mention should be made of his chapter on male domination of women during the nineteenth century. Seldom has this subject been discussed with so much understanding. Christopher Lasch called this book a "compelling statement of the pacifist position," and the same may be said of *The Discovery of Peace.* In his Preface he makes this position clear by pointing to what he calls the "fatal weakness" in most discussions of war and the means to peace. He quotes a reputable historian who speaks of the need for "a real and successful attempt . . . to alter radically both the purposes of Governments and their means of achieving them." This idea, Sampson says, flies in the face of all we know about States and Governments:

> It reveals the assumption that it is logically possible to "alter radically" the purposes of Governments and the means they adopt to realize those purposes. It is not so possible. The purposes and logic pursued by all governments then and now was stated clearly by Thucydides in the argument which he put in the mouth of the Athenian envoy to the threatened Melians:
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> "But you and we should say what we really think, and aim only at what is possible, for we both alike know that into the discussion of human affairs the question of justice only enters where there is equal power to enforce it, and that the powerful exact what they can, and the weak grant what they must."

This *realpolitik* credo of the Athenian is foundation of the fear that if we do not have states and their armies to protect us, no one can know what will happen to us. We do not know because we have

no examples (no *familiar* examples) of stateless peoples. Sampson comments:

> Nevertheless, whatever the truth of this reasoning, the fact is that this alleged danger of men not living in States—of men without a country, in fact—is not an actual danger; it is at worst a hypothetical danger, since nowhere does it actually exist. . . . We then find that we are no longer preoccupied with what might happen if we did not have order secured by law enforcement, but with what has happened and is happening to cause men to slaughter one another by the millions.

The human will to power, Sampson says, is the root cause of war. Eliminate that hunger to dominate and there will be no more war. This was the stance Tolstoy adopted. Rejection of the will to power is rejection of war—the only way to put an end to it.

> Tolstoy's total rejection of war of any kind sprang from his intimate knowledge of it based on first-hand experience; and his rejection rested upon an entire metaphysic which revealed very clearly the antithesis between the forces of love and of power. This book concerns itself with how Tolstoy came finally after great inward turmoil to a conscious realization of this truth. But it is also concerned to trace the genesis of Tolstoy's understanding of the moral universe, oriented in particular in his understanding of the true significance of the phenomenon of war.

For this purpose, Sampson examines themes in the work of four writers—de Maistre, Stendhal, Herzen and Proudhon—all of whom exerted influence on Tolstoy, although not one of them rejected war as a last resort.

> The fusion of all these separate strands of thought in the Tolstoyan synthesis is the central subject matter of this book.
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> . . . Suffice it to say that Tolstoy's total, radical rejection of war, when it emerges from the profound inner spiritual crisis of his middle years, would not have been possible nor would it have taken the course it did if Tolstoy had been solely a religious thinker. Tolstoy's stand against war, the basis of his entire ideological position is, it is true, religious. It is Tolstoy's central contention that no other position is possible for a rational man—for Tolstoy is in this sense purely rationalist No one is less of a mystic or more impatient with mysticism than he. But he only arrives at his rational, religious conviction as a result of an analysis of the nature of power as it operates in our culture far more penetrating than that of either Herzen or Proudhon, and more richly illustrated in historical and sociological terms than even Stendhal had furnished. Tolstoy arrives at last at the Kingdom of God within us only after the long and anguished struggle laid bare implicitly in *War and Peace* and summarized explicitly in his *Confession.*
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> If we are to abolish war—and there can no longer be any *if* about it, we have got to do so—then Tolstoy's heroic stand, which led directly and inevitably to the final agony of his flight into the unknown, must be our starting point.

This is the case for reading Sampson, and for reading Tolstoy through his eyes. The depth of the discussion is illustrated by the following from a later chapter. In *War and Peace*, the author says—

> Tolstoy is contrasting with love of power the quality of disinterestedness, of pursuit of an abstract idea. The contrast is not of like with like, for love of power is an emotion, whereas disinterestedness and commitment to abstract ideas is primarily an intellectual quality. The correct contrast with .love of power, of the realm of unfreedom, is with love, the essence of the realm of freedom. But in *War and Peace*, while it is abundantly evident that Tolstoy intuitively grasps this distinction, he has not yet brought it to the level of consciousness and thus is unable to make it a clear and explicit basis of his theorizing. In sharp contrast to the ambiguity and confusion in defining the realm of the free, the realm of the unfree, of the swarm life, is incisively probed with devastating realism. Confusion arises, he says, when we wrongly transfer the notion of freedom which we rightly associate with self-regarding actions (actions of conscience) to those acts which we perform in conjunction with others and which depend not simply on our own mind and conscience but upon the contingency of other wills coinciding with our own. And the great paradox which lies at the heart of *War and Peace* is that the supreme example of man's unfreedom, that is to say, of his being bound by the chains linking his activities to those of others, is when a man enjoys what we term *power* over the lives of other men. Men seek power in order to impose their will on others, to do that which they want to do and what they want others to do, which, being in a less powerful position they fear they would not be able to do. But, insists Tolstoy, a man is free in proportion to his non-possession of power. And the most powerful are the most unfree.

Can we persuade ourselves of this, despite the fact that it happens to be true?

# *COMMENTARY*
## COMMONER ON METHANE

IN this week's lead (page 2), Barry Commoner is named as a scientist who gives reasons for turning our way of life around. He bases his arguments on environmental considerations. An impressive illustration of Commoner's encyclopedic grasp of this subject and his persuasive mode of argument is available in the May 2 *New Yorker*. His article is on methane—"a simple molecule, a hydrocarbon made of four hydrogen atoms arranged symmetrically around a carbon atom."

But what *is* methane? It is a fuel produced by nature in a number of ways, and "the principal constituent of natural gas." Where is it found? Nearly everywhere in the world; although at great geological depth, according to recent discovery. It is also produced "from a great variety of organic materials, including manure, sewage, and garbage." What is it good for? It is "a versatile industrial fuel, an excellent means of producing electricity and heat, and an efficient automotive fuel—can in fact be produced from a renewable source, as a form of solar energy." It is non-toxic and non-polluting. "Hundreds of thousands of . . . methane generators provide villages in China and India with fuel for cooking; some farmers in this country have begun to adopt the technique." Obviously, methane is a renewable resource. We'll never run out of garbage!

But the conventional sources of natural gas are not renewable and are becoming more expensive to develop. And the unconventional sources of this gas, deep in Devonian shale and tightly packed sands—formations deeper than fifteen thousand feet—have hardly been tapped. Commoner says:

> Since the unconventional sources of natural gas are less accessible than the conventional ones, they are bound to be more costly to develop, and as the more difficult sites are brought into production the rise in the price of natural gas will undoubtedly be progressively steeper. And we cannot long delay finding a solution to this problem, for as energy becomes more and more costly, and an ever-larger proportion of our wealth needs to be devoted to producing it, the energy system will, in effect, cannibalize the very economic system that it is supposed to support. . . .

What is the answer? Solar energy, Commoner points out, is not diminished by use, "remains constant in cost and maintains a stable, supportive relationship to the rest of the economy." He is speaking of methane.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves
### ON WRITING

As we have said elsewhere, Gabriele Rico's *Writing the Natural Way* (Tarcher, 1983) has choice quotations in it, one being a passage by Northrop Frye, Canada's premier scholar and *literateur*. He wrote in *The Educated Imagination:*

> . . . .listening to a speech by a high authority in the field, I know him to be a good scholar, a dedicated servant of society, and an admirable person. Yet his speech is a muddy river of cliches. . . . The content of the speech does not do justice to his mind: what it does reflect is the state of his literary education. . . He has never been trained to visualize his abstractions, to subordinate logic and sequence to the insights of metaphor and simile, to realize that figures of speech are not ornaments of language, but the elements of both language and thought. . . . Once again, nothing can now be done for him: there are no courses in remedial metaphor.

Who is to blame for this deprivation, which afflicts not only academics (most of them), but spreads all around? Another quotation—this one from Robert Sommer in *The Mind's Eye*—gives the groundwork for establishing responsibility:

> Why go to the trouble of constructing fantasies when a flick of the dial will produce them ready-made? There was a time when a child expected a bedtime story before yielding the house to the adults. Today television is the baby-sitter and soporific. Most adults have lost the capacity to tell a good story. A good story-teller follows internal insights, sounds, and movements. A non-imager knows what is important and can recite general principles but has difficulty describing the particulars, which are the basis of a good story.

This is justification for the rule declared by William Carlos Williams—"No ideas but in things"—the poet's way of claiming attention from the rest of us. Curiously, a modern critic calls John Keats's application of this rule "materialism." Keats had his love of life and its forms but he was no materialist. He said that the world is a "vale of soul-making," wherein humans forge their identities. This, for him, was "the use of the world." He went on to say: "There may be intelligences or sparks of the divinity in millions—but they are not souls till they acquire identities—till each one is personally itself!" How do they accomplish it? "How, but by the medium of a world like this," which is, he added, "a grander system of salvation than the Christian religion—or rather, it is a system of spirit-creation." And then: "Do you not see how necessary a World of Pains and troubles is to school an Intelligence and make it a soul?" Keats wrote this to his brother and his wife, who were in America, in April, 1819.

Well, it is hard to stop quoting Keats—from his few productive years—but an earlier English poet serves our purposes more directly. Samuel Taylor Coleridge was born in 1772, and in his childhood in Devon learned much from his father, John Coleridge, who was "a country clergyman and a schoolmaster of no ordinary kind." In letters to friends, intended as chapters in his biography, Coleridge recalled times with his father:

> I read every book that came in my way without distinction and my father was fond of me, and used to take me on his knee, and hold long conversations with me. I remember, when eight years old, walking with him one winter evening from a farmer's house, a mile from Ottery; and he told me the names of the stars, and how Jupiter was a thousand times larger than our world, and that the other twinkling stars were suns that had worlds rolling around them; and when I came home, he showed me how they rolled round. I heard him with a profound delight and admiration, without the least mixture of wonder or incredulity. For from my early reading of fairy tales and about genii, and the like, my mind had been habituated to the Vast; and I never regarded my senses in any way as the *criteria* of my belief, I regulated all my creeds by my conceptions, not by my sight, even at that age. Ought children to be permitted to read romances and stories of giants, magicians, and genii? I know all that has been said against it; but I have formed my faith in the affirmative. I know no other way of giving the mind a love of the Great and the Whole. Those who have been led to the same truths step by step, through the constant testimony of their senses, seem to want a

> sense that I possess. They contemplate nothing but parts, and all parts are necessarily little, and the universe to them is but a mass of little things. It is true, the mind may become credulous and prone to superstition by the former method;—but are not the experimentalists credulous even to madness in believing any absurdity, rather than believing the grandest truths, if they have not the testimony of their own senses in their favor? I have known some who have been rationally educated, as it is styled. They are marked by a microscopic acuteness; but when they looked at great things, all became a blank, and they saw nothing, and denied that anything could be seen, and uniformly put the negative of a power for the possession of a power, and called the want of imagination judgment, and the never being moved to rapture, philosophy.

This sterilizing outlook reached a climax among educators (of small children) in the 1920s and 30s, but has since, one hopes, been abandoned through the influence of Bruno Bettelheim. His *Uses of Enchantment* seems an echo of all that Coleridge implied. (The quotation from Coleridge is taken from the closing section of *Biographia Literaria,* Harper & Brothers, 1853, edited by his daughter, Sara Coleridge.)

Since we are mining literary autobiographies, this seems a good place to recall Mark Twain's, from which there is an extract in Bernard De Voto's *Portable Mark Twain* (Viking, 1946). It gives an account of Twain's boyhood in Hannibal, Missouri, where he regularly visited his uncle, John Quarles, starting when he was four, and where his family moved seven or eight years later. While no one needs to be reminded that Twain was a great American humorist, the passage we have in mind is of another quality. Just for the fun of it, then, we insert first his note on the delights of Southern cooking:

> It seems a pity that the world should throw away so many good things merely because they are unwholesome. I doubt if God has given us any refreshment which, taken in moderation, is unwholesome, except microbes. Yet there are people who strictly deprive themselves of each and every eatable, drinkable, and smokable which has in any way acquired a shady reputation. They pay this price for health. And health is all they get for it. How strange it is. It is like paying out your whole fortune for a cow that has gone dry.

Now for Twain's attention to "particulars":

> As I have said, I spent some part of every year at the farm until I was twelve or thirteen years old. The life which I led there with my cousins was full of charm and so is the memory of it yet. I can call back the solemn twilight and mystery of the deep woods, the earthly smell, the faint odors of the wild flowers, the sheen of rain-washed foliage, the rattling clatter of drops when the wind shook the trees, the far-off hammering of woodpeckers and the muffled drumming of wood-pheasants in the remoteness of the forest, the snapshot glimpses of disturbed wild creatures scurrying through the grass—I can call it all back and make it as real as it ever was, and as blessed. I can call back the prairie, and its loneliness and peace, and a vast hawk hanging motionless in the sky with his wings spread wide and the blue of the vault showing through the fringe of their end-feathers. I can see the woods in their autumn dress, the oaks purple, the hickories washed with gold, the maple and the sumachs luminous with crimson fires, and I can hear the rustle made by the fallen leaves as we plowed through them. I can see the blue clusters of wild grapes hanging amongst the foliage of the saplings, and I remember the taste of them and the smell. I know how the wild blackberries looked and how they tasted; and the same with the pawpaws, the hazelnuts, and the persimmons; and I can feel the thumping rain upon my head of hickory-nuts and walnuts when we were out in the frosty dawn to scramble for them with the pigs, and the gusts of wind loosed them and sent them down. . . . I know the taste of maple sap and when to gather it, and how to arrange the troughs and the delivery tubes, and how to boil down the juice, and how to hook the sugar after it is made also, how much better hooked sugar tastes than any that is honestly come by, let bigots say what they will.

Well, this all seems so well done that it makes you want to turn in your typewriter; and so we would, save for the fact that Mark Twain was the first American writer to use one. (Authority: the late Dwight Macdonald.)

# *FRONTIERS*

## A Foot in Both Worlds

IN the *Land Report* for last fall, Mari Peterson put together some thoughts that have probably been simmering in the minds of a great many people. This sets a problem. Then she gathers in other thoughts which, fused with an x value the reader must contribute, point to a solution. She begins:

> A schizophrenic feeling is developing for many people of good conscience who try to engage in more subsistence living while holding an eight-to-five job. Having been nurtured by the industrial era, cast in the proper molds, and taught its way, we've discovered that it is extraordinarily difficult to loosen its tenacious grip on our lives. Recognizing the virtues of living lightly on the land, we still find it necessary to make rent or house payments, send children to college, and shore up for retirement. As much as we might wish to garden, preserve food, raise livestock, make bread and cheese, sew our own clothes, or build our own solar collector, we find ourselves fully wrapped up in the money economy, devoting the large chunk of requisite time needed to play the money game.

Drawing on Ivan Illich's discussion of "Shadow Work"—the economically unrecognized work performed, usually by women, for subsistence in the home—she points out that the broader, oldtime subsistence economy "has been pushed out by the industrial economy, and the rigid, institutionalized nature of the latter thwarts a resurgence of self-reliant living."

> Illich warns against the weakness of desiring the subsistence/solar economy for merely sentimental reasons. A nostalgic longing for lower-priced, better quality goods, and a measure of independence gives the market economy grounds on which to compete. . . Sentimentality will pass when we understand how the industrial economy denies subsistence. When this becomes transparent to us, we will have substantial reasons for reorganizing our lives around subsistence, and we will begin to find the means to do so.

This will become possible as we see that using our time for producing what is *needed* is radically different from using our time to make *money*.

> By devoting our time to acquiring money, we are distracted from considering what we are producing, and why. Those considerations are left to our employers who are mostly concerned with profits and expansion, creating a proliferation of material goods transformed from matter and energy. When time is equated with money, we find ourselves working for money itself, rather than the goods and services we need. . . .
>
> The subsistence economy reunites men and women in the common task of providing for their basic needs. . . . Work becomes something more fundamental than a job and money. It has a purpose relating directly to the needs of the household. . . . The need for community is seen more clearly as local markets for surplus goods are created that enable people to obtain those specialized, necessary services which they cannot provide for themselves. However, surplus goods are not produced for economic expansion as in our current system.

On the other side of the ledger is the network of relationships established by an economy in which the pursuit of money is the driving force. As Mari Peterson says:

> We cannot totally escape the industrial money economy, should we want to. First of all, people are not on the land and do not own the land which is so essential to a subsistence economy. Secondly, we do not have the infrastructure in place for a solar economy. Thirdly, many communities no longer have local markets for locally produced goods. And lastly, we are still bombarded, and our children are bombarded, by the mass media indoctrination of the industrial/service economy. We will still need some money.
>
> What I wish to suggest is that we can have a foot in both worlds.

For those who can find it, part-time work for pay may be the way. This will incidentally make more jobs available for others. Such work is now becoming available as labor-saving devices multiply and employers redefine their need for help. Part-time work is often enough for women who now make at home what they used to buy. Now comes the vital point of Mari Peterson's article:

> There is a caveat, however, for people who begin to provide for their own needs. These activities

must be done for noneconomic reasons, because the "economic reasons" are dictated by an archaic industrial/service economy which steals time (personal and planetary) to create bondage (shadow work and jobs). If you make cheese, do so because you want to be home with the family, are opposed to the resources consumed in the industrial processing of cheese, and because you like the quality of the cheese you produce. But do not hope to save money with cheesemaking or other subsistence activities, especially if you give your time a wage value. You are spending your time in a qualitatively different way than if you were to be working on a job, and it is impossible to give a price to qualitative benefits such as being home with the family and knowing a useful skill.

To move beyond sentimentality, we must demand changes in our work places that allow for part-time and shared jobs. We must recognize the value of the family unit and break the industrial system as we try to live lightly on the earth. First, we must see the value of our personal time and reclaim it.

There is a parallel to this conclusion in an article by Wendell Berry in the January/February *Resurgence.* Discussing a comparison between the energy-efficiency of a tractor and a horse on a farm (on *some* farms) he reminds the reader of the "Old Order Amish, who use horses for farm work, doubled their population and stayed in farming, whereas in the same period millions of mechanized farmers were driven out."

The study of Amish agriculture, like the study of *any* durable agriculture, suggests that we live in sequences of patterns that are formally analogous. These sequences are probably hierarchical, at least in the sense that some patterns are more comprehensive than others. . . . And so we must suspect that Amish horse-powered farms work well, not because—or not *just* because—horses are energy-efficient, but because they are living creatures, and therefore fit harmoniously into a pattern of relationships that are necessarily biological, and that rhyme analogically from ecosystem to crop, from field to farmer. In other words, ecosystem, farm, field, crop, horse, farmer, family, and community are in certain critical ways *like* each other. They are, for instance, all related to health and fertility or reproductivity in about the same way. The health and fertility of each involves and is involved in the health and fertility of all.

This, in a chapter of *A Sand County Almanac,* Aldo Leopold calls "Thinking Like a Mountain."