

SOME HEROES

FORTY-ONE years ago, when MANAS was begun, and the first issue appeared on January 7, 1948, the title of the lead article was "The Unfinished Revolution." Two historical figures animated the discussion—Socrates and Thomas Paine. Throughout subsequent years of publication, we kept on referring to these men, who continued to be our inspiration. They cannot be "used up" and they cannot be "dated." They are as fresh and inspiring today as they were more than forty years ago.

Today we have come to the end of our line—we can't go on, can't publish any more. But if someone else wants and is able to pick up where we have left off, our "heroes" are still available and as good as ever. We have to stop because we have run out of energy. Doing a weekly for as long as we have been doing it takes a lot of energy and we are too tired and too old to go on. We didn't run out of money. Our friends and readers have been generous and have kept us going. After we stop, with this issue, we'll make some appropriate adjustment with readers who have paid for subscriptions for two or three years. And we'll keep the office going for a while to correspond with those who write in letters and ask questions. Further, there may be those who want to buy back issues or volumes—not all are available but a great many are. The material in the back issues is almost as current as the recent issues.

Why, then did we do a weekly, instead of a monthly or a quarterly? We decided on a weekly before we began publishing in 1948. One of the editors had worked on a weekly trade magazine which eventually was converted into a monthly for economic reasons. The founding MANAS editor who worked on this paper was a reporter who spent his time out in the field, calling on the proprietors of stores who were the readers. He

got to know a great many of them, covering all their various meetings and conventions. The paper he worked for had become part of the life of these readers. But when the paper went monthly, all that changed. The paper *stopped* being part of their lives. They still read it, but only casually. It didn't affect their lives in the same way. So, when it came to starting MANAS, this editor laid down a rule—do a weekly in order to have impact on people's lives, or do nothing at all. That is why MANAS has been a weekly for forty-one years.

Through these years we have had various heroes. Plato, of course, since all we know about Socrates comes from Plato. Then we learned about Gautama Buddha, Lao tse, Confucius, the Indian scriptures and the *Bhagavad-Gita*. We studied these writers and quoted the scriptures, mainly the *Gita* and the *Upanishads*. Not only are these scriptures full of wisdom, but they are very beautiful as well. We persuaded our printer to publish some of them, which are still available.

We explored the Middle Ages, looking for good translations, and discovered Johannes Scotus Erigena, an Irish philosopher who lived in the ninth century. He was one of the few men in all Europe who could understand Greek. He came to the court of Charles the Bald where he taught for many years, and then to England at the invitation of Alfred the Great. Erigena had become a Neoplatonic philosopher by study of Proclus, and when Hincmar, Archbishop of Rheims, called upon him to refute a moody monk, Gottschalk, who had developed too logically the Augustinian doctrine of predestination, he was glad to help. But he succeeded by doing away with both Sin and Hell as well, arguing that the eternal fire was no more than a metaphor. Actually, he produced a philosophy of mind, using the Gospel stories as Plato might have used a passage in Homer, to illustrate a metaphysical

principle. *The Study of Nature* by George John Blewitt is the best work on Erigena's thinking. Erigena was the fore runner of the intellectual succession which developed into the scientific philosophizing of the Renaissance. Nicholas of Cusa was a close student and declared follower of Erigena, and Bruno, burned at the stake in 1600 for being a Pythagorean, was a professed disciple of Nicholas.

We skip now to a Spanish writer, José Ortega y Gasset, who was born in 1883 and died in 1955. He attained fame in the West with his book, *The Revolt of the Masses*, published in 1932. He sought the development of an aristocracy—an aristocracy of character. We introduce him here by quoting the first paragraphs of one of his books, *Toward a Philosophy of History*. This should be sufficient to explain our devotion to his works. He said:

Scientific truth is characterized by its exactness and the certainty of its predictions. But these admirable qualities are contrived by science at the cost of remaining on a plane of secondary problems, leaving intact the ultimate and decisive questions. Of this renunciation it makes its essential virtue, and for it, if for naught else, it deserves praise. Yet science is but a small part of the human mind and organism. Where it stops, man does not stop. If the physicist detains, at the point where his method ends, the hand with which he delineates the facts, the human being behind each physicist prolongs the line thus begun and carries it on to its termination, as an eye beholding an arch in ruins will of itself complete the missing airy curve. . . .

The physicist refrains from searching for first principles, and he does well. But, as I said, the man lodged in each physicist does not resign himself. Whether he likes it or not his mind is drawn towards the last enigmatic cause of the universe. And it is natural that it should be thus. For living means dealing with the world, turning to it, acting in it, being occupied with it. That is why man is practically unable, for psychological reasons, to do without all-round knowledge of the world, without an integral knowledge of the universe. Crude or refined, with our consent or without it, such a trans-scientific picture of the world will settle in the mind of each of us, ruling our lives more effectively than scientific truths.

The past century, resorting to all but force, tried to restrict the human mind within the limits set to exactness. Its violent effort to turn its back on last problems is called agnosticism. But such endeavor seems neither fair nor sensible. That science is incapable of solving in its own way those fundamental questions is no sufficient reason for slighting them, as did the fox with the high-hung grapes, or for calling them myths and urging us to drop them altogether. How can we live turning a deaf ear to the last dramatic questions? Where does the world come from, and whither is it going? Which is the supreme power of the cosmos, what the essential meaning of life? We cannot breathe confined to a realm of secondary and intermediate themes. We need a comprehensive perspective, foreground and background, not a maimed scenery, a horizon stripped of the lure of infinite distances. . . .

We are given no escape from the last questions. In one fashion or another they are in us, whether we like it or not.

One further passage from Ortega demands inclusion here. It is taken from *Man and Crisis*:

If history, which is the science of human lives, were or could be exact, it would mean that men were flints, stones physiochemical bodies, and nothing else. But then one would have neither history nor physics; for stones, more fortunate if you like, than men, do not have to create science in order to be what they are, namely stones. On the other hand man is a most strange entity, who, in order to be what he is needs first to find out what he is; needs, whether he will or no, to ask himself what are the things around him and what, there in the midst of them, is he. For it is this which really differentiates man from a stone, and not that man has understanding while the stone lacks it. We can imagine a very intelligent stone; but the inner being of the stone is given it already made, once and for all, and it is required to make no decision on the subject; it has no need, in order to go on being a stone, to pose and pose again the problem of self, asking itself "What must I do now?" or, which is the same thing, "What must I be?" Tossed in the air, without need to ask itself anything, and therefore without having to exercise its understanding, the stone we are imagining will fall toward the center of the earth. Its intelligence, even if existent, forms no part of its being, does not intervene in it but would be an extrinsic and superfluous addition.

The essence of man, on the other hand, lies in the fact that he has no choice but to force himself to

know . . . to resolve the problem of his own being and toward this the problem of what are the things among which he must inexorably have that being. This—that he needs to know, that whether he likes it or not, he needs to work to the best of his intellectual means—is undoubtedly what constitutes the human condition.

There is no logical order in which our heroes appeared in MANAS—they appeared as soon as we discovered them. One of our favorite passages for quoting from A. H. Maslow is in the first chapter of his last book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*:

I think that the main reason that hedonistic value theories and ethical theories have failed throughout history has been that the philosophers have locked in pathologically motivated pleasures with healthily motivated pleasures and struck an average of what amounts to indiscriminately sick and healthy, indiscriminately good and bad specimens, good and bad choosers, biologically sound and biologically unsound specimens.

If we want to answer the question how tall can the human species grow, then obviously it is well to pick out the ones who are already tallest and study them. If we want to know how fast a human being can run, then it is no use to average out the speed of a "good sample" of the population; it is far better to collect Gold Medal winners and see how well they can do. If we want to know the possibilities for spiritual growth, value growth, or moral development in human beings, then I maintain that we can learn most by studying our most moral, ethical, or saintly people.

On the whole I think it is fair to say that human history is a record of the ways in which human nature has been sold short. The highest possibilities of human nature have practically always been underrated. Even when "good specimens," the saints and sages and great leaders of history, have been available for study, the temptation too often has been to consider them not human but supernaturally endowed.

Another fine passage occurs in a later chapter of *Toward a Psychology of Being*—"Health as Transcendence of Environment." There, recalling some earlier published material he said:

I reported my healthy subjects to be superficially accepting of conventions, but privately to be casual,

perfunctory and detached about them. That is, they could take them or leave them. In practically all of them, I found a rather calm, good-humored rejection of the stupidities and imperfections of the culture with greater or lesser effort at improving it. They definitely showed an ability to fight it vigorously when they thought it necessary. To quote from this paper: "The mixture of varying proportions of affection or approval, and hostility and criticism indicated that they select from American culture what is good in it by their lights and reject what they think bad in it. In a word, they weigh it and judge it (by their own inner criteria) and then make their own decisions.

"They also showed a surprising amount of detachment from people in general and a strong liking for privacy, even a need for it.

"For these and other reasons they may be called autonomous, i.e., ruled by the laws of their own character rather than by the rules of society (insofar as these are different). It is in this sense that they are not only or merely Americans but also members at large of the human species." I then hypothesized that "these people should have less 'national character,' and that they should be more like each other across cultural lines than they are like the less developed members of their own culture."

Examples of this kind of transcendence are Walt Whitman or William James who were profoundly American, most *purely* American, and yet were also very purely supracultural, internationalist men not in *spite* of their being Americans, but just *because* they were such good Americans. So too, Martin Buber, a Jewish philosopher, was *also* more than Jewish. Hokusai, profoundly Japanese, was a universal artist. Probably *any* universal art cannot be rootless. *Merely* regional art is different from regionally rooted art that becomes broadly general—human.

And now some passages from Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*.

We were eating lunch on a high rimrock, at the foot of which a turbulent river elbowed its way. We saw what we thought was a doe fording the torrent, her breast awash in white water. When she climbed the bank toward us and shook out her tail, we realized our error: it was a wolf. A half-dozen others, evidently grown pups, sprang from the willows and all joined in a welcoming melee of wagging tails and playful maulings. What was literally a pile of wolves writhed and tumbled in the center of an open flat at the foot of our rimrock.

In those days we had never heard of passing up a chance to kill a wolf. In a second we were pumping lead into the pack, but with more excitement than accuracy: how to aim a steep downhill shot is always confusing. When our rifles were empty, the old wolf was down, and a pup was dragging a leg into impassable slide-rocks.

We reached the old wolf in time to watch a fierce green fire dying in her eyes. I realized then, and have known ever since, that there was something new to me in those eyes—something known only to her and to the mountain. I was young then, and full of trigger itch; I thought that because fewer wolves meant more deer, that no wolves would mean hunters' paradise. But after seeing the green fire die, I sensed that neither the wolf nor the mountain agreed with such a view. . . . I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades. . . . Perhaps this is behind Thoreau's dictum: In wildness is the salvation of the world. Perhaps this is the hidden meaning in the howl of the wolf, long known among the mountains, but seldom perceived among men.

Then, from Round River essays:

One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds. Much of the damage inflicted on land is quite invisible to laymen. An ecologist must either harden his shell and make believe that the consequences of science are none of his business, or he must be the doctor who sees the marks of death in a community that believes itself well and does not want to be told otherwise.

Finally, from a brief section called "Wilderness":

To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was wilderness an adversary to the pioneer.

But to the laborer in repose, able for the moment to cast a philosophical eye on his world, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life. This is a plea for the preservation of some tag-ends of wilderness, as museum pieces, for the edification of those who may one day wish to see, feel, or study the origins of their cultural inheritance.

Among the subtler of our heroes was Hannah Arendt, who always requires thought. She says for example in *The Human Condition*:

The trouble with modern theories of behaviorism is not that they are wrong but that they could become true, that they actually are the best possible conceptualization of certain obvious trends in modern society. It is quite conceivable that the modern age—which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity—may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known.

Then, in a paper called "Thinking and Moral Considerations," which appeared in *Social Research* (Autumn, 1971), she said:

This curious thing that I am needs no plurality in order to establish a difference, it carries the difference within itself when it says "I am I." So long as I am conscious, that is, conscious of myself, I am identical with myself only for others to whom I appear as one and the same. For myself, articulating this being-conscious-of-myself, I am inevitably *two-in-one*. . . . For Socrates, this two-in-one meant simply that if you want to think you must see to it that the two who carry on the thinking dialogue be in good shape, that the partners be friends. It is better for you to suffer than to do wrong because you can remain the friend of the sufferer; who would want to be the friend of and have to live together with a murderer? Not even a murderer. What kind of dialogue could you lead with him? Precisely the dialogue which Shakespeare let Richard III lead with himself after a great number of crimes had been committed:

What do I fear? Myself? There's none else by.
Richard loves Richard: that is, I am I.
Is there a murderer here? No. Yes, I am:
Then fly. What from myself? Great reason
why—

Lest I revenge. What, myself upon myself?
O no! Alas, I rather hate myself
For hateful deeds committed by myself.
I am a villain. Yet I lie. I am not.
Fool, of thyself speak well. Fool, do not flatter.

* * *

For the thinking ego and its experience, conscience that "fills a man full of obstacles," is a side-effect. And it remains a marginal affair for society at large except in emergencies. . . . Its

political and moral significance comes out only in those rare moments in history when "Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;/Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world," when "The best lack all conviction, while the worst/Are full of passionate intensity." . . .

When everybody is swept away unthinkingly by what everybody else does and believes in, those who think are drawn out of hiding because their refusal to join is conspicuous and thereby becomes a kind of action. . . . If thinking, the two-in-one of the soundless dialogue, actualizes the difference within our identity as given in consciousness and thereby results in conscience as its by-product, then judging the by-product of the liberating effect of thinking, realizes thinking, makes it manifest in the world of appearances where I am never alone and always much too busy to be able to think. The manifestation of the wind of thought is no knowledge, it is the ability to tell right from wrong, beautiful from ugly. And this indeed may prevent catastrophes, at least for myself, in the rare moments when the chips are down.

Well, there are more heroes—dozens of them—but our space is exhausted. They may be found in the pages of MANAS, through the years.

REVIEW

A HARD QUESTION

IN the *Atlantic* for November, Paul Gagnon, who teaches history at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, contributes a long article in answer to the question, "Why Study History?" He may not think it possible to teach high school students American history in a one-year course, but he plainly thinks that the teachers might do a lot better than they do. He is sophisticated, knows his subject, and has carefully informed himself on what the teachers are doing, at least in the textbooks they write. He gives some attention to five of them. Being a good writer, he approaches his main point slowly, but we don't have time and space for this and will try to repeat his argument briefly.

What is the teaching of history for? It is to help students to learn how to practice democracy, or more democracy. In reply he says:

Why isn't a civics or American-government course good enough? The answer goes back to judgment, which requires more than knowing where the tools of self-government are and how to wield them. Judgment implies nothing less than wisdom—an even bigger word—about human nature and society. It takes a sense of the tragic and of the comic to make a citizen of good judgment. It takes a bone-deep understanding of how hard it is to preserve civilization or to better human life, and of how these have nonetheless been done repeatedly in the past. It takes a sense of paradox, so as not to be surprised when failure teaches us more than victory does or when we slip from triumph to folly.

Unlike geometry or any form of mathematics, there are no absolutely "right answers" in history. There may be useful musings which lead to accurate observations, but what is the correct blend of personal freedom and social justice? We don't know, nor does anyone really know. There may be formulas, and both are certainly required, but the proportions may change with circumstances and from year to year.

As Gagnon says:

This civic education is difficult because it asks people to accept the burdens of living with tentative answers, with unfinished and often dangerous

business. It asks them to accept costs and compromises, to take on responsibilities as eagerly as to claim rights, to honor the interests of others while pursuing their own, to respect the needs of future generations, to speak the truth and do the right thing when falsehood and the wrong thing would be more profitable and generally to restrain their appetites and expectations—all this while working to inform themselves on the multiple problems and choices their elected servants confront.

It is easy enough to lay out these wholesome values and attitudes in classroom lessons and have the students repeat the phrases and swear devotion to them in quizzes and papers. And it is not so hard even to practice them, provided that a certain level of morale prevails. There is no trick to virtuous behavior when things are going well. Most people will hold ethical attitudes, without much formal instruction, when they feel themselves to be free, secure, and justly treated.

But are morality and politics really the same thing and are we convinced of this? When things go well we may assent to the idea, but a great many people simply do not believe that tax evasion is immoral.

Another aspect of the relation between morality and politics that Gagnon does not mention but surely forms the background of his comment is the general decline of interest in the national state. Time was, as, say, in the days of Abraham Lincoln, when the integrity of the state had moral importance for nearly all Americans. Lincoln was determined to preserve the Union and he was probably right in his time. Today it is difficult indeed to recapture that moral emotion. What is the nation-state today but an engine of destruction? We know this, but are we ready to recognize in Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* the wisdom which sets the integrity of the individual against the State? Quite successfully, one may add. And do we recall that Randolph Bourne wrote his most famous essay, "The State," not much more than fifty years later, in which he said:

War is the health of the State. It automatically sets in motion throughout society those irresistible forces for uniformity, for passionate cooperation with the Government in coercing into obedience the minority groups and individuals which lack the larger herd sense. The machinery of government sets and enforces the drastic penalties, the minorities are

either intimidated into silence, or brought slowly around by a subtle process of persuasion which may seem to them really to be converting them. Of course the ideal of perfect loyalty, perfect uniformity is never really attained. The classes upon whom the amateur work of coercion falls are unwearied in their zeal, but often their agitation, instead of converting, merely serves to stiffen their resistance. Minorities are rendered sullen, and some intellectual opinion bitter and satirical. But in general, the nation in wartime attains a uniformity of feeling, a hierarchy of values culminating at the undisputed apex of the State ideal, which could not possibly be produced through any other agency than war. Other values such as artistic creation, knowledge, reason, beauty, the enhancement of life, are instantly and almost unanimously sacrificed, and the significant classes who have constituted themselves the amateur agents of the State are engaged not only in sacrificing these values themselves but in coercing all other persons into sacrificing them.

Is Bourne here writing history? No, but he is surely describing the historical process—how history is made. As he says a little later:

History will decide whether the terrorization of opinion and the regimentation of life was justified under the most idealistic of democratic administrations. It will see that when the American nation has ostensibly a chance to conduct a gallant war, with scrupulous regard to the safety of democratic values at home, it chose rather to adopt all the most obnoxious and coercive techniques of the enemy and of the other countries at war, and to rival in intimidation and ferocity of punishment the worst governmental systems of the age.

So, naturally enough, a California scholar remarked in 1961 that "the purpose of the American nation-state today is to become obsolete." He added in explanation:

A modern nation is a large group of people who have forgotten the purpose of life. Insofar as these people can share in a *national* purpose, it is nefarious, involving massive retaliation and public hatred and tribal religion. National leaders behave like juvenile delinquents.

We go back, now, to Paul Gagnon, who has a lot more to say in his *Atlantic* article. For example:

The truly tough part of civic education is to prepare people for bad times. The question is not whether they will remember the right phrases but

whether they will turn words into practice when they feel wrongly treated or fear for their freedom and security, or when authorities and the well-placed, in the public or private sector, appear to flout every value taught in school. The chances for democratic principles to survive such crises depend upon the number of citizens who remember how free societies have responded to crises in the past, how free societies have acted to defend themselves in, and emerge from, the bad times. Why have some societies fallen and others stood fast? Citizens need to tell one another, before it is too late, what struggles have had to be accepted, what sacrifices borne and comforts given up, to preserve freedom and justice. The deep, discriminating historical knowledge required to ward off panic, self-pity, and resignation is not always fun to acquire.

When students ask why they must study history, they are entitled to some such answer as this. They have the right to know our purposes, why we ask so much of them, and why we have no choice but to do so, in fairness to them and to the larger society. Why try to deny that it is hard to gain historical perspective on the adventures of democratic ideas or their vulnerability in times of stress?

Prof. Gagnon now asks the fundamental questions:

What are those "broad, significant themes and questions" that in the history of the United States would bring life to the facts and promote wisdom about ourselves and our place in the world? In a single year's course—all that is required in most high schools today—that purports to cover everything from the Mayans to moon landings, the choice of a few major themes is imperative.

The story of American democracy must be one of these. This means political history, broadly defined—not a recital of successive presidential Administrations, names, dates laws, and elections but the story of the slow, unsteady journey of liberty and justice, together with the economic social, religious, and other forces that barred or smoothed the way, and with careful looks at advances and retreats made, and at the distance yet to be covered.

Three questions, for example, are central to civic education and today's politics: What conditions—geographic, military, economic, social, technological—have nurtured democratic society, and what happens when conditions change?

COMMENTARY
LAST WORD

THIS brief editorial will be largely devoted to practical matters. Those who have recently subscribed for two or three years may request their money back, and it will be returned. Or, they may ask for back issues somewhat in excess of those covered by their subscription. These will be mailed as soon as possible. This applies to gift subscriptions as well as other subscriptions. As most readers know, the common practice of publications which go out of business is to make an arrangement with another magazine to transfer completion of the subscription to that magazine. We chose not to do this, but either to send back-issues or return the money, as we said above. But readers will need to inform us of their decision by mail.

Except for three or four early years, we have a fairly good inventory of back issues. These can be made available at a reduction in price. The MANAS office will be maintained for several months to correspond concerning these or any other matters that readers write about. One reader is now contemplating the compilation of a rather complete computerized index of all past issues, for readers who feel that such an index would be valuable. This would be an expansion of our editorial index, which lists writers quoted, books cited, magazines referred to, and other material given attention to. Our editorial staff will be available to answer questions within our competence for quite a while to come.

Our volunteers have assured us of their willingness to do what they can to fulfill our responsibility to readers as well as we can.

We might end by saying simply that through the years we have had great pleasure in editing, writing, and publishing MANAS and that in a sense it is painful indeed to stop. We have made many lasting friends. We can think of no more satisfying career, yet no work that is more demanding. Through the years they have

functioned as "editors in the field," giving MANAS a kind of coverage that could be obtained in no other way. Profound thanks go to these helpers.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves NINE WOMEN

THE book, *They Changed Their World*, by Nine Women of Asia, issued by University Press of America, edited by May Handy Esterline, is a double accomplishment. It tells the story of heroic Asian women and of their selection to be honored by the Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Manila, Philippines. Publication of the biographies of these women was originally by the Magsaysay Award Foundation between 1973 and 1981 (largely written by Marjorie S. Ravenhold, assisted by May Handy Esterline.)

Who was Ramon Magsaysay? He was President of the Philippines, widely honored for his concern for common men and women. He was killed in an airplane accident in 1957, and after his death the Rockefeller Brothers Fund established the Magsaysay Award Foundation and later The Philippine Congress awarded a gift of land to the Foundation where the Magsaysay Center was built in 1968. Awards are given every year in five categories—Community Leadership, Government Service, International Understanding, Journalism, Literature and Creative Communication Arts and Public Service. This program sounds a bit organizational, but the life stories of the beneficiaries of the awards are intensely human and self-sacrificing.

A shy village housewife, Michiko Ishimure, born in 1927 on a tiny Japanese island, an aspiring poet, was the author of *Pure Land, Poisoned Sea*, which became known as "the Bible of the antipollution movement in Japan."

Ishimure courageously stood up to industrialists and city and national government officials who were hand-in-glove, and forced them to stop polluting the waters of Minamata Bay with deadly minerals. She aroused public opinion against the dangers of chemical poisoning and demonstrated how perseverance and an impassioned dedication to a cause can overcome bureaucratic inertia and hostile economic interests. . . .

In the early years of this century Minamata was a beautiful, clear bay of the Chiranui Sea. The people along its shore were poor but well fed due to the bounties of earth and sea. Fish and rice were their mainstays, with fish playing a particularly prominent dietary role because they were plentiful and fishing was a major livelihood.

Then, in 1908, the Chisso (Nitrogen) Company built a carbide plant at Minamata. By 1956 there were 50,000 people at Minamata, but meanwhile Chisso was flushing its solid wastes into the bay, and its liquid wastes also reached the bay through an estuary. Fishermen objected to this pollution and the Chisso Company agreed to pay the fishermen's union 1,500 yen if there would be no more complaints. This was in 1925. But by 1950 cats in several hamlets were said to be jumping into the sea and drowning.

Then, three years later, humans began to suffer from loss of coordination, convulsions, and finally death. By 1956 a wing had to be added to the city hospital.

In July 1959, the Kumamoto team identified mercury as the cause of what became officially known as Minamata Disease. Its source, they said, must be waste from the Chisso plant since it was the only industry in the area.

At this point cooperation on the part of the factory ceased. It denied responsibility, would not allow scientists access to the drainage flume and refused to divulge the chemicals used in its various manufacturing processes.

Finally, in 1965, another plant that was discharging mercury into a river was shown to produce the Minamata disease, and three years later it was admitted that the two plants were poisoning people.

This was 15 years after the discovery of the disease, 12 years after its identification, 10 years after its cause was determined, and three years after its outbreak in Niigata. During this time the victims rather than the offenders had had to shoulder the burden of proof, "notwithstanding the fact that a specific source was related beyond question to a specific damage through a causal connection scientifically established."

It was during these years that Ishimure brought the plight of the victims to the attention of the people of Japan, helped the patients in their compensation negotiations with the Chisso company and assisted them in their dealings with the government. . . .

Her book, *Pure Land, Poisoned Sea*, was published in 1968. The theme that runs throughout is that Minamata Disease represents the sickness of Japanese society. Ishimure views industrialization and the evils that it brings with it as an illness because it results in the alienation of the Japanese from their roots.

The story of Prateep Ungsongtham (in Thailand a person is referred to by her given name rather than her surname) as the tale of a slum girl who was brought up in Klong Toey in Bangkok when a tidal wave destroyed her father's fishing equipment that was his way of making a living. Her father worked at odd jobs and in four years saved enough to build their own house where they raised chickens and ducks. Prateep was born in August, 1952. She was five years old when his chickens and ducks died of a disease for which he could find no cure. On the heels of this disaster the Port Authority ordered all squatters to move. Prateep remembers her father "stoically tearing down their house, piece, by piece, carrying the boards to a new location in the Klong Toey slum, and starting to rebuild." He had trouble finding money to buy nails and other essentials.

The slum of Klong Toey is a crowded collection of squatters shanties built on stilts above swamp land. Most houses are small and are linked by narrow boardwalks perched above the filth and muck. With no proper drainage, the stench of garbage and sewage is ever present. Nevertheless the interiors of most homes are surprisingly clean since the Thai, like the Japanese, always remove their shoes before entering a house. Their clothes are dean and stacked neatly with their other few belongings in the single room that shelters the entire family.

Soon after moving into their rebuilt house in this new location Prateep's mother set herself up in business, buying fermented shrimp paste from her hometown and selling it to neighbors and in the sangkok markets. That same year Prateep began earning her own pocket money, purchasing candies in

the market to resell to neighboring children at a 25 per cent markup.

More familiar with the Thai language and with government regulations than her immigrant husband, Thingsuk [Prateep's mother] had, unlike most slum dwellers, registered their house and thus was able to secure a birth certificate for Prateep so that she could attend a government school. When the child reached seven however, and there was still no space available in the crowded municipal school nearby, her mother entered her at Panyawut, an inexpensive private institution located only a short bus ride from Klong Toey which one of her older half-sisters had also attended. . . .

At age 10, having completed the fourth grade, Prateep went to work, since her mother could not afford to send her to secondary school. She was now expected to help with household costs and pay for her own clothing. But she had seen and learned enough to know that she must somehow continue her education if she was to have a better chance in life. Her first job was packaging firecrackers, for which she earned 7 to 10 *baht* daily (about US \$.05). Other work included chipping rust from, painting, and cleaning the funnels of cargo vessels in port for overhaul. For this her daily wage was about 14 *baht*.

It took her five years in this way to save enough to enter high school. And then, as she began to live more "like ordinary people," she began to help others with food. She read about Gandhi and was inspired by his life and work.

After a year of attending school at night and working during the day at factory jobs, Prateep made a compassionate gesture which revealed to her a way of service that was to become her true vocation. On one of her days off Prateep took into her family's home, and kept amused, two small children who had been left alone by neighboring working parents. The grateful couple came to her that night offering her one *baht* a day to watch each of their children'. Soon other children were brought to her and within two months she had accepted 60 youngsters, the absolute maximum that could be squeezed into the 15' by 30' downstairs room and the walkway of her two-story home. Some parents could not pay, but Prateep did not let their poverty stand in the way of her help to their children.

Before long her home had become a school for children from 5 to 14, teaching reading, writing, and simple counting. The children sat on

the floor, using for desks planks resting on boxes. She trained literate slum children as assistants and paid them about 15 *baht* a day. The children attended this school for one or two years, then found work as housemaids, nursemaids, dishwashers, ticket-sellers, or construction workers, just as she had.

Still going to night school while running her slum child care center/school during the day, Prateep obtained her 10th grade certificate in two and a half years instead of the normal six . . . In 1972, with both her school and her income steady, Prateep resolved to continue her own education, and after a two-month review of the required subjects, she took and passed the entrance examination for Suan Dusit, one of Bangkok's finest teacher training colleges.

Meanwhile the publicity given to her work brought her recognition. Help was given enabling her to build her own school.

Armed with her conviction that the only way to a better life was education, Prateep went to the parents to explain that their children's time could be divided between work and school: they could forage early in the morning, she explained, attend school, and in the afternoon and evening clean and sell what they had gleaned. For the children themselves, she tried to make the school attractive by providing music, sports and comic books.

As the result of her fame money began to come in, and buildings could be added to her school.

The young slum teacher was the ideal heroine for the times as the newspapers presented her, but she had been shrewd enough not to allow herself to be used or tainted by taking a political position. . . . The publicity accorded her brought her to the attention of the Magsaysay Foundation and in 1978 this slum teacher of 27 became the second youngest person ever to receive the prestigious Ramon Magsaysay Award.

The other figures honored in this book have a like character.

FRONTIERS

Looking Ahead

SOME difficulties of choice present themselves in deciding what to say in our last "Frontiers" article. Something obviously should be said about the importance of all the *Worldwatch* publications—the annual *State of the World* Reports, the Occasional Papers, and the magazine *WorldWatch*, which has just begun. This is all very good Frontier reading, and has been a source on which we have drawn. Then, we should draw attention, once again, to the paper started by John Holt years ago, *Growing Without Schooling*, which comes out six times a year and now has forty pages of reading matter fundamental to the formation of the future. The new address of GWS is 2269 Massachusetts Ave., Cambridge, Mass. 02140.

Of equal importance is *Annals of Earth*, publication of Ocean Arks International, 10 Shanks Pond Road, Falmouth, Mass. 02540, edited by Nancy Jack Todd, now in its sixth year.

The musings of Nancy Todd in the current issue of *Annals* relate to the ancient stone structures hidden in the woods and forests near Falmouth on Cape Cod where the work of Ocean Arks is carried on.

We assumed that the colonial settlers who had preceded us in the area had built them as a result of clearing the land or in order to mark the boundary of a field or to enclose sheep.

But after listening to a lecture about these old stones, she said, "it became obvious that they embodied a larger significance."

Now when we go to the woods, where before we saw just low walls, . . . we have learned to see stone mounds and marked trees, vigil places, pointer, marker, and god stones. Walking there has come to be an honoring of a mindscape/ landscape of a time when all life was holy.

Over much the same period of time, during the nearly fifteen years in which I have been exposed to the Gaia hypothesis—the theory that views all the ecosystems of the Earth, together with its atmosphere,

as a complex, cybernetic, homeostatic living entity—its implications also have elicited in me a quiet epiphany, another unspoken "Ah!" . . .

Mindful of the fact that we can no more seize on one theory or understanding of the world as to be more likely to capture the popular imagination than another, any more than we can, as Joseph Campbell reminds us, predict our dreams for the coming night, nevertheless, "a new myth," as he points out, "is rapidly becoming a social as well as a spiritual necessity." The interpretation of Gaia the living Earth, integral and contiguous with ourselves, seems potentially powerfully mythogenic. The concept has the qualities enlisted by Joseph Campbell in *Hero With a Thousand Faces* as essential to a mythic thought system which he says "leaps from heart to heart by way of the brain, and where the brain is unpersuaded, the message cannot pass. The life is untouched." Although scientific validity alone is inadequate to cause such a passage in this era, no thought system which defies scientific evidence possibly can by-pass the brain in transmission from heart to heart. What makes the Gaia theory so compelling is that its message is innately and deeply satisfying at once to mind and heart.

Yet the time has come for subjective inspiration. There are feelings in us that will not be denied, affirmations that less and less require affirmation. We are spiritual beings whose confinement in bodies is becoming uncertain, whose capacity for vision is becoming mote positive every day. The age is changing. The voiceless confusion of matter and energy is making openings everywhere in our minds, even our ills and sicknesses becoming a language of inquiry.

This is the burden of Wendell Berry's new novel, *Remembering*, just published by North Point Press, cloth, \$14.95. The book begins as a recital of the painful memories of Andy Catlett, a Port William, Kentucky farmer, now in midlife, and spending an insomniac night in San Francisco where he has come to speak at an agricultural conference. He is filled with guilt, the pain of having lost a hand to a voracious machine he was using, and the pain of senseless quarrels with his wife. In the pre-dawn hours he wanders the streets of San Francisco, suffering his past. He

broods on what is wrong with agriculture, on what is wrong with his own life, and when, at the conference, it comes time for him to speak, he begins by commenting on what has been said so far.

"What we have heard discussed here this morning," he said, "is an agriculture of the mind. No farm is here. No farmer has been mentioned. No one who has spoken this morning has worked a day on an actual farm in twenty years, and the reason for that is that none of the speakers *wants* to work on a farm or to be a farmer. The real interest of this meeting is in the academic careerism and the politics and the business of agriculture, and I daresay that most people here, like the first speaker, are proud to have escaped the life and work of farmers, whom they do not admire.

"This room," he said, "it's an image of the minds of the professional careerists of agriculture—a room without windows, filled with artificial light and artificial air, where everything reducible has been reduced to numbers, and the rest ignored. Nothing that you are talking about, and influencing by your talk, is present here, or can be seen from here."

He knew that he was showing his anger, and perhaps the fear under the anger, and perhaps the grief and confusion under the fear. He looked down to steady himself, feeling some blunder, as yet obscure to him, in everything he had said. He looked up at the audience again.

"I don't believe it is well understood how influence flows from enclosures like this to the fields and farms and farmers themselves. We've been sitting here this morning, hearing about the American food system and the American food producer, the free market, quanti-metric models, pre-inputs, and outputs, about the matrix of coefficients of endogenous variables, about epistemology and parameters—while actual fields and actual human lives are being damaged. The damage has been going on a long time. The fifteen million people who have left the farms since 1950 left because of damage. There was pain in that departure, not shown in any of the figures we have seen. Not felt in this room. And the pain and the damage began a long time before 1950. . . .

His legs had begun to tremble. And yet he stood still at the rostrum, in the harsh light, in his anger, sounding to himself as if he spoke at the bottom of a well.

"I say damn your systems and your numbers and your ideas . . . In conclusion," he said, "I would like to say that what I have had to say is no more, and is probably less, than what I have had to say."

And now, with the intensity of which Berry is master, memories pour in on Andy Catlett, and he lives through them, the times with his family, with his friends, his wife, until there is little left to remember. And finally he comes back home to Port William and to the region of his farm.

The evening is quiet; there is no wind, and no sound from the stream that here, above the spring, is dry now. The woods is filling with shadows. Everything seems expectant, waiting for nightfall, though the sky is still sunlit. Andy walks slowly upward along the road until he is among the larger trees and the woods have completely enclosed him. And here finally he comes to rest. He finds a level place at the foot of a large white oak, and sits down, and then presently lies down. A heavy weariness has come over him. For a long time he has not slept a restful sleep, and he has journeyed a long way.

But Andy is well again in mind and heart. That is the fulfillment of the ordeal of *Remembering*.