



*Geraniums at home*

*Photo: John Kay*

# NEWSLETTER

**SOUTHERN EAST ANGLIA AREA QUAKER MEETING**

**May 2021**

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**GLOSSARY  
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## Meetings for Worship

(Under COVID regulations)

### CLACTON

Sundays 10.30 am

### HARWICH

### COLCHESTER

Sunday 10.30 am

### EARLS COLNE

Sunday 10.30 am

### SUDBURY

Sunday 10.30 am

### AM ZOOM

Sunday 10.30 am

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Charles Bather

## The Case Against Competition

By Alfie Kohn

When it comes to competition, we Americans typically recognize only two legitimate positions: enthusiastic support and qualified support.

The first view holds that the more we immerse our children (and ourselves) in rivalry, the better. Competition builds character and produces excellence. The second stance admits that our society has gotten carried away with the need to be Number One, that we push our kids too hard and too fast to become winners — but insists that competition can be healthy and fun if we keep it in perspective.

I used to be in the second camp. But after investigating the topic for sev-

## Editorial

Hello Friends

I had the heart-warming good fortune to be approached at a party by a parent of one of the students I've been helping at school this year in my role as a learning support assistant. The young man was too shy himself but had urged his mum to tell me that I've been an amazing teacher to him. Of course, I felt wonderful at this, and still do to be honest. But it got me thinking about the countless kindnesses we experience and never acknowledge, even when those acts were surprising, extraordinary or transformative. I recall feeling incredibly lost and down when a train-ticket seller called me 'sweetness' — he would never get to know how special that felt in that moment. A smile can do it too, or a hello, even a coffee after Meeting and there's an infinity of others.

My personal favourite though is an Indian bus conductor I knew as a child. He was always immaculately turned out with short-cut hair and a

eral years, looking at research from psychology, sociology, biology, education, and other fields, I'm now convinced that neither position is correct. Competition is bad news all right, but it's not just that we overdo it or misapply it. The trouble lies with competition itself. The best amount of competition for our children is none at all, and the very phrase "healthy competition" is actually a contradiction in terms.

That may sound extreme if not downright un-American. But some things aren't just bad because they're done to excess; some things are inherently destructive. Competition, which simply means that one person can succeed only if others fail, is one of those things. It's always unnecessary and inappropriate at school, at play, and at home.

perfectly ironed uniform. What was so special was that he made me feel so special, and I'm not even sure how. Perhaps I was in want of attention, and he let me show off. My whole family knew of this special man, who on occasion would run the risk of declining my bus fare, sometimes wrapping his hand warmly round mine instead.

Years later, walking down Priory Street, I noticed an elderly Indian gentleman shuffling along with a stick. Could it be him, some 30 or 40 years later? When I asked if he used to be a bus conductor, he told me he had, and it was him. There in the street, I told him what his kindness had meant to me as a child, decades earlier. He was happy, if not all that surprised and explained that he was a Christian who tried to treat everyone as his neighbour. We hugged in the street and this wonderful man seemed to glow.

Saying thank you to this man was an extraordinary honour and sharing this story feels good too. But I also know, to really honour his kindness, I have to wrap it up and pass it on.

Think for a moment about the goals you have for your children. Chances are you want them to develop healthy self-esteem, to accept themselves as basically good people. You want them to become successful, to achieve the excellence of which they're capable. You want them to have loving and supportive relationships. And you want them to enjoy themselves.

These are fine goals. But competition not only isn't necessary for reaching them — it actually undermines them.

**Competition is to self-esteem as sugar is to teeth.** Most people lose in most competitive encounters, and it's obvious why that causes self-doubt. But even winning doesn't build character; it just lets a child gloat temporarily. Studies have shown that feelings of self-

worth become dependent on external sources of evaluation as a result of competition: Your value is defined by what you've done. Worse — you're a good person in proportion to the number of people you've beaten.



In a competitive culture, a child is told that it isn't enough to be good — he must triumph over others. Success comes to be defined as victory, even though these are really two very different things. Even when the child manages to win, the whole affair, psychologically speaking, becomes a vicious circle. The more he competes, the more he needs to compete to feel good about himself.

When I made this point on a talk show on national television, my objections were waved aside by the parents of a seven-year-old tennis champion named Kyle, who appeared on the program with me. Kyle had been used to winning ever since a tennis racket was put in his hands at the age of two. But at the very end of the show, someone in the audience asked him how he felt when he lost. Kyle lowered his head and in a small voice replied, "Ashamed."

This is not to say that children shouldn't learn discipline and tenacity, that they shouldn't be encouraged to succeed or even have a nodding acquaintance with failure. But none of these requires winning and losing — that is, having to beat other children and worry about being beaten. When classrooms and playing fields are based on cooperation rather than competition, children feel better about themselves. They work *with* others instead of against them, and their self-esteem doesn't depend on winning a spelling bee or a Little League game.

**Children succeed in spite of competition, not because of it.** Most of us were raised to believe that we do our best work when we're in a race — that without competition we would

all become fat, lazy, and mediocre. It's a belief that our society takes on faith. It's also false.

There is good evidence that productivity in the workplace suffers as a result of competition. The research is even more compelling in classroom settings. David Johnson, a professor of social psychology at the University of Minnesota, and his colleagues reviewed all the studies they could find on the subject from 1924 to 1980. Sixty-five of the studies found that children learn better when they work cooperatively as opposed to competitively, eight found the reverse, and 36 found no significant difference. The more complex the learning task, the worse children in a competitive environment fared.

Brandeis University psychologist Teresa Amabile was more interested in creativity. In a study, she asked children to make "silly collages." Some competed for prizes and some didn't. Seven artists then independently rated the kids' work. It turned out that those who were trying to win produced collages that were much less creative — less spontaneous, complex and varied — than the others.

One after another, researchers across the country have concluded that children do not learn better when education is transformed into a competitive struggle. Why? First, competition often makes kids anxious and that interferes with concentration. Second, competition doesn't permit them to share their talents and resources as cooperation does, so they can't learn from one another. Finally, trying to be

Number One distracts them from what they're supposed to be learning. It may seem paradoxical, but when a student concentrates on the reward (an A or a gold star or a trophy), she becomes less interested in what she's doing. The result: Performance declines.

Just because forcing children to try to outdo one another is counterproductive doesn't mean they can't keep track of how they're doing. There's no problem with comparing their achievements to an objective standard (how fast they ran, how many questions they got right) or to how they did yesterday or last year. But if we value our children's intellectual development, we need to realize that turning learning into a race simply doesn't work.

**Competition is a recipe for hostility.** By definition, not everyone can win a contest. If one child wins, another cannot. This means that *each child comes to regard others as obstacles to his or her own success*. Forget fractions or home runs; this is the real lesson our children learn in a competitive environment.

Competition leads children to envy winners, to dismiss losers (there's no nastier epithet in our language than "Loser!"), and to be suspicious of just about everyone. Competition makes it difficult to regard others as potential friends or collaborators; even if you're not my rival today, you could be tomorrow.

This is not to say that competitors will always detest each other. But trying to outdo someone is not conducive to trust — indeed, it would be irrational to trust someone who gains from your failure. At best, competition leads one to look at others through narrowed eyes; at worst, it invites outright aggression. Existing relationships are strained to the breaking point, while new friendships are often nipped in the bud.

Again, the research — which I review in my book **NO CONTEST: THE CASE AGAINST COMPETITION** — helps to explain the destructive effect of win/lose arrangements. When children compete, they are less able to take the perspective of others — that is, to see the world from someone else's point of view. One study demonstrated conclusively that competitive children were less empathetic than others; another study showed that competitive children were less generous.

Cooperation, on the other hand, is marvelously successful at helping children to communicate effectively, to trust in others and to accept those who are different from themselves. Competition interferes with these goals and often results in outright antisocial behavior. The choice is ours: we can blame the individual children who cheat, turn violent, or withdraw, or we can face the fact that competition itself is responsible for such ugliness.

Studies also show, incidentally, that competition among groups isn't any better than competition among individuals. Kids don't have to work against a common enemy in order to know the joys of camaraderie or to experience success. Real cooperation doesn't require triumphing over another group.

**Having fun doesn't mean turning playing fields into battlefields.** It's remarkable, when you stop to think about it, that the way we teach our kids to have a good time is to play highly structured games in which one individual or team must defeat another.

Consider one of the first games our children learn to play: musical chairs. Take away one chair and one child in each round until one smug winner is seated

and everyone else has been excluded from play. You know that sour birthday party scene; the needle is lifted from the record and someone else is transformed into a loser, forced to sit out the rest of the game with the other unhappy kids on the side. That's how children learn to have fun in America.

Terry Orlick, a Canadian expert on games, suggests changing the goal of musical chairs so children are asked to fit on a diminishing number of seats. At the end, seven or eight giggling, happy kids are trying to squish on a single chair. Everyone has fun and there are no winners or losers.

What's true of musical chairs is true of all recreation; with a little ingenuity, we can devise games in which the obstacle is something intrinsic to the task itself rather than another person or team.

In fact, not one of the benefits attributed to sports or other competitive games actually requires competition. Children can get plenty of exercise without struggling against each other. Teamwork? Cooperative games allow everyone to work together, without creating enemies. Improving skills and setting challenges? Again, an objective standard or one's own earlier performance will do.

When Orlick taught a group of children noncompetitive games, two thirds of the boys and all of the girls preferred them to games that require opponents. If our culture's idea of a good time is competition, it may just be because we haven't tried the alternative.

**How can parents raise a non-competitive child in a competitive world?** Competition is destructive to children's self-es-

teem, it interferes with learning, sabotages relationships, and isn't necessary to have a good time. But how do you raise a child in a culture that hasn't yet caught on to all this?

There are no easy answers here. But there is one clearly unsatisfactory answer: Make your son or daughter competitive in order to fit into the "real world." That isn't desirable for the child — for all the reasons given here — and it perpetuates the poison of competition in another generation.

Children can be taught *about* competition, prepared for the destructive forces they'll encounter, without being groomed to take part in it uncritically. They can be exposed to the case against competition just as they are taught the harms of drug abuse or reckless driving.

You will have to decide how much compromise is appropriate so your child isn't left out or ridiculed in a competitive society. But at least you can make your decision based on knowledge about competition's destructiveness. You can work with other parents and with your child's teachers and coaches to help change the structures that set children against one another. Or you may want to look into cooperative schools and summer camps, which are beginning to catch on around the country.

As for reducing rivalry and competitive attitudes in the home:

- Avoid comparing a child's performance to that of a sibling, a classmate, or yourself as a child.
- Don't use contests ("Who can dry the dishes fastest?") around the house. Watch your use of language ("Who's the best little girl in the whole wide world?")

that reinforces competitive attitudes.

- Never make your love or acceptance conditional on a child's performance. It's not enough to say, "As long as you did your best, honey" if the child learns that Mommy's attitude about her is quite different when she has triumphed over her peers.

- Be aware of your power as a model. If you need to beat others, your child will learn that from you regardless of what you say. The lesson will be even

## That's so Interesting

Reproduced from "Quora"

Richard Strachan

A giant ship's engine broke down and no one could repair it, so they took it to a mechanical engineer with over 40 years of experience.

He inspected the engine very carefully, from top to bottom. After seeing everything, the engineer unloaded the bag and pulled out a small hammer.

He knocked something gently. Soon, the engine came to life again. The engine has been fixed!

7 days later the engineer mentioned that the total cost of repairing the giant ship was \$ 10,000 to the ship owner

"What ?!" said the owner.

"You did almost nothing. Give us a detailed bill."

The answer is simple:

Tap with a hammer: \$ 2

Know where to knock & how much to knock: \$ 9,998

stronger if you use your child to provide you with vicarious victories.

Raising healthy, happy, productive children goes hand in hand with creating a better society. The first step to achieving both is recognizing that our belief in the value of competition is built on myths. There are better ways for our children — and for us — to work and play and live.

From [www.coursehero.com](http://www.coursehero.com)

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## Lessons to Learn

The importance of appreciating one's expertise and experience ...

The words "it's easy" and "that's all", should be set aside. Why? Because maybe the experience is the result of struggles, experiments and even tears.

Like the picture above:

If I do a job in 30 minutes it's because I spent 10 years learning how to do that in 30 minutes. You owe me for the years, not the minutes.

(If I can finish a job in 30 minutes, it's because I spent 10 years learning how to do it in 30 min-

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utes. You paid me for those 10 years, not 30 minutes).

This sentence reminds me of someone's advice on respecting and wisely respecting the work of others.

There I also learned to see people ...

When they do not respect others, at the same time he has humbled himself.

Expertise and experience, that's expensive.

Unfortunately, our people still look down on that.

-JMM



## Philosopher of the apocalypse

**From the ashes of the Second World War, Günther Anders forecast a new catastrophe: technology would overwhelm its creators**

Audrey Borowski is postdoctoral fellow at the MCMP at the Ludwig Maximilian University of Munich, as well as a research associate at the University of Oxford where she completed her DPhil. Her interests range widely from the early modern period to the 21st century, from Leibniz to catastrophe and the philosophy of artificial intelligence.

Edited by [Sam Haselby](#)

As the commander of the weather plane that supported the dropping of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima on 6 August 1945, Claude Eatherly did not feel any particular animosity towards the Japanese, involved as he was in committing arguably one of the most barbaric acts of the Second World War with complete indifference. Eatherly carried out his mission, oblivious to its ultimate finality. How had it come to that? How was it possible that, as the philosopher Günther Anders later wrote, ‘the amount of wickedness required to accomplish the ultimate crime, a disproportionate crime, was equal to zero’?

B-29 Superfortress ‘Straight Flush’ with its commander Claude Eatherly, centre, back row. He later became a friend and correspondent of Günther Anders. *Photo courtesy US Air Force*

The work of Anders (1902-92), a German philosopher and essayist of Jewish descent, bears testimony to some of the 20th century’s major disasters and their effect on the intellectual landscape of the time. Anders set out to theorise those disasters and the impact of technology on modernity and the human condition, in particular technology’s gradual domination over all

aspects of human activity – the commodification, dehumanisation and even derealisation of the world that had resulted from that domination.

Exiled to Paris in 1933, Anders eventually wound up in California, and in the Hollywood film industry of all things, where he supported himself by writing film scripts and doing odd jobs in factories and movie repositories. There, he closely observed the dramatic rise of consumerist culture – from the ashes of the Second World War and Western humanist ideals – while attending seminars held by members of the [Frankfurt School](#). Despite his complicated relationship with [Theodor Adorno](#), much of Anders’s critiques and concerns overlapped with Adorno’s in seeking to come to grips with modernity’s darker side. Much later in life, from his hospital bed, Anders would declare their *oeuvre* complementary in providing an ‘encyclopaedia of the apocalyptic world’ that had recently unfolded. In 1950, he returned permanently to Vienna.

Anders’s work has long remained unknown in the English-speaking world, perhaps because of what Herbert Marcuse described as its ‘unsparingly critical pessimism’. Yet, it already prefigured key themes later addressed by the philosophers Jean-Luc Nancy, Bernard Stiegler, Jean-Pierre Dupuy and Zygmunt Bauman; and it has recently gained new currency and relevance. Alarmed by some of the social effects of the new phantasmagoric world that had taken shape around us, Anders set out to dissect it and find out how it had inured us to – and even led us to embrace head-on – the devastating effects of technological development, and even our



*Devastation after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, Japan; undated photograph. Courtesy the Department of Defense/Department of the Air Force*

potential extinction, in order to prompt us to break from it by mobilising fear.

As he set out to tackle the challenges faced by the human condition – and the threats to its very existence – Anders jettisoned the academic style of his teachers [Edmund Husserl](#) and [Martin Heidegger](#) for a more accessible style of philosophical language that paused to consider historical realities as fully fledged philosophical objects. Auschwitz and Hiroshima, in particular, with their mass-production of deaths on an industrial scale, marked turning points in Anders’s thinking. These catastrophes had been made possible by the progress of science and technology, progress that had brought the very existence of our world into jeopardy.

The advent of the nuclear age had transformed peace into the perpetual preparation for war, and, in an interesting reversal of Carl von Clausewitz’s dictum that war is a continuation of politics by other means, threatened to cancel politics altogether by ensuring the mutual destruction of the belligerents. Anders deplored tacticians’ and politicians’ collective blindness, their unconsciousness in seeking to instrumentalise the threat of annihilation for political purposes – a gamble that relied on their very

ignorance. In the early 1940s, he wrote (translations from the French my own):

None of us has a knowledge commensurate with what an atomic war could be ... which means that, in this field, no one is competent and that the apocalypse is therefore, by essence, in the hands of the incompetent.

The modern use of nuclear power had blurred the distinction between civilian and military, and rendered the possibility of disaster omnipresent. A threshold had been irredeemably crossed when mankind deliberately hung a sword over its head and created the conditions for its self-annihilation.

For Anders, the disasters of the 20th century were simply the logical outcome of a pernicious process that had already been underway for many years, involving the gradual exclusion of mankind from all production processes – and, ultimately, from the world created by those processes. The real catastrophe in this regard, which Anders hoped to make ‘visible for the first time’, lay in the transformation of the human condition, a transformation that had become as naturalised and imperceptible as it was destructive. ‘The atom bomb,’ he argued, was ‘thus the ultimate emblem of an unearthly, unsettling and haunting force channelled by complex technological objects: it illuminates that the more “our” technological power grows, the smaller we become; the more unconditional and unlimited the capability of machines, the more conditional our existence; the more machines connect us by virtue of their very existence, the more we are also singled out as being expendable and inadequate.

Like his first wife, the philosopher [Hannah Arendt](#), Anders paused to reflect on the retreat of human morality, and on man’s ability to suspend his ability to reflect, to take leave of his sensitivity and empathy.



*Günther Anders on his way to Hiroshima in 1958. Photo courtesy the Austrian National Library and Günther Anders Archive.*

No task was more pressing than examining those processes ‘inscribed at the very heart of our technical modernity’, which meant that ‘the repetition of the monstrous is not only possible, but it is probable’.

Technology restricted our experiential horizons, offering only ready-made worlds

At first protective, technology and artifice, by mediating every dimension of human life, had exacerbated our alienation in the world and now threatened to overwhelm us. In his landmark work *The Obsolescence of Man* – whose first volume (subtitled *On the Soul at the Time of the Second Industrial Revolution*) appeared in 1956, and second volume (*On the Destruction of Life at the Time of the Third Industrial Revolution*) in 1980 – Anders delivered a blistering indictment of modern-day consumerist, technological reality. The modern work model, with its extreme technical division of labour and chains of abstraction, had made the worker lose sight of the end product (and environmental consequences) and reduced his function to mere repeti-

tive execution or monitoring. The worker performed standardised work of little intrinsic value – geared mainly towards profit-making – in which there was little possibility for self-expression or the cultivation of a work ethic.

For all its benefits, technology restricted our experiential horizons, offering only ready-made worlds and predetermined modalities of experience carefully determined by corporations and advertising industries. As Anders wrote:

The whole world, in so far as it is offered, preestablishes the actions, opinions, feelings that we take into consideration, in short: our entire lifestyle, that our obedience is ensured without our needing to perceive an order as such. Consuming what is free is our obedience, as is delivering the order we receive.

The proletarianisation of labour went hand in hand with the production of poor-quality products programmed for immediate obsolescence: objects were no longer intended to last, but to be consumed as perishable materials and replaced at a frantic rate in an unending cycle of creation and destruction justified by advertising’s ‘death drive’. The world had been transformed into a ‘ghost’, derealised through an abundance of ersatz products and make-believe realities that extended well into our private lives in the shape of what Anders described as ‘playful products freely delivered [by radio and TV] at home’:

Nothing alienates us from ourselves or alienates the world more disastrously than spending our lives, now almost constantly, in the company of these deceptively intimate beings, these spectral slaves that we introduce in our living rooms.

This ‘techno-totalitarian empire’ threatened to ‘liquidate’ us and reduce us to mere cogs of the megamachine. In fact, the possibility of

our own liquidation is the principle we endow all our technological devices with, regardless of what other special function we entrust to them too. Liquidation is the exclusive principle that informs the construction of machines ... What we exclusively aim at are machines, the functions of which make us superfluous, turn us off, and liquidate us.

Within this 'totalitarianism of apparatuses', programmed obsolescence had been extended to man as he had found himself increasingly assimilated to the technology of production. He had been gradually deprived of his autonomy and ability to create a world for himself, and his freedom was reduced to the stark choice between adequacy within the technological world or exclusion from it for failing to comply with its imperative to continuously produce and consume. By investing all dimensions of human existence, it had ushered in the complete pacification and subordination of man within a fully consumerised society.

This logic that inhabits them comes from the roles that they have been made to play since their invention: saving human labour, increasing production, exploiting nature. This is the gist of the talk about the millions of passive Eichmanns, freed from thought and responsibility, rather than act, who perform unthinking tasks other than in purely instrumental ways. Man is probably not a machine, but he behaves as such in a situation where the machines impose his operating rules. Indeed, the progress of technology should not be understood as necessarily being the progress of mankind: far from it, they are not accompanied by a progress of thought, reflection and responsibility, since they eliminate their intervention and even often make them impossible.

Crucially, man increasingly found himself enlisted in the production of his own disappearance 'in the

most natural manner possible'. Anders set out to analyse the 'new variety of shame' that had been imposed on man for having been born, not made. Our design was 'blind and uncalculated', our bodies 'stiff, recalcitrant and limited', unlike 'immaculate products, which are carefully designed through and through' and to which we can never measure up. Technological modernity had imposed our unilateral surrender to machines, rendering our capacities to understand, feel or act redundant and superfluous in the expectation of becoming 'absolutely consubstantial' with machines and freed of our 'shortcomings' by them. For Anders, the root cause of our apathy lay in the discrepancy that had arisen between our faculties, especially our imagination, and our actions, in such a way that 'we are unable to conceive what we can construct; to mentally reproduce what we can produce; to realise the reality which we can bring into being.'

The ability to kill thousands at the press of a button was no longer matched by the ability to take the measure of the calamity wrought. This 'promethean lag' often anaesthetised our faculties, including our ability to fear the danger that threatens us, for the simple reason that we cannot know what we cannot understand or represent concretely or morally to ourselves. These limitations in us induced a state of irresponsibility, a form of nihilism in action that maintained us as atomised individuals while we laboured toward our own irrelevance and extinction.

Some of Anders's predictions are eerie in their prescience of how devices and machines have come to mediate our thoughts, discussions, ideas and even relationships, cramming our minds with addictive and pacifying frivolity.

Stage-managing masses the way Hitler did has become superfluous:

if one wants to strip man of his personality (and even make him proud to be a nobody), it is no longer necessary to drown him with in the mass ...

No depersonalisation, no degradation of man is more effective than the one that seems to preserve the freedom of the personality and the rights of that individual. Each separately undergoes the 'conditioning' process, which works just as well in the cages where individuals are now confined, despite their loneliness, in their millions of isolated units. This treatment is inconspicuous since it is presented as fun, since it conceals from its victim the sacrifices it demands of her and leaves her with the illusion of a private life or at least of a private space. We will fill people's minds with what is futile and fun. It is good to prevent the mind from thinking through incessant music and chatter. Sexuality will be placed at the forefront of human interests. As a social tranquilliser, there is nothing better ...

In general, we will make sure to banish seriousness from life, to deride anything that is highly valued and to constantly champion frivolity: so that the euphoria of advertising becomes the standard of human happiness and the model for freedom. Conditioning alone will thus produce such integration that the only fear – which must be maintained – will be that of being excluded from the system and therefore no longer able to access the conditions necessary for happiness.

Our 'blindness in the face of the apocalypse', which, according to Anders characterises the Third Industrial Revolution, enables us 'to make plans and to live as if everything ... were going to continue as before'. This belief in progress, persistently ingrained since the Industrial Revolution, makes any end to human history inconceivable.

Faced with the idea of the apocalypse, our soul forfeits. Under these conditions, the idea of the apocalypse is no more for us than a simple word.

Much of the recent technological takeover of our lives has been underpinned by the myth that it was synonymous with emancipation and progress – a conceit it was suspect to challenge even while that very imperative further contributed to the growth of inequalities, the destruction of nature and the waste of resources. ‘The real terrorists’ in this regard are the so-called experts in charge who were as ignorant as us but ‘who continuously frighten our common world with the threat of destruction.’ Rather than ‘enlightening’ man, the progress of technology had ended up further anchoring his obsolescence and placing him outside of history.

In light of the looming environmental crisis, our growing servitude to a soulless consumerist society built on waste and exploitation, and the increasingly mediated nature of reality, Anders’s analyses remain strikingly pertinent. Despite increasing media representation of these threats, we live in what Anders called ‘the age of the inability to be afraid’ and still overwhelmingly remain passive in the face of this development. Even when objectively aware of the dangers linked to the climate crisis, the collapse of biodiversity and the diminution of resources, we prefer to continue to pay lip-service to them to better avoid direct confrontation with them. We take refuge in ignorance, even in reckless overconsumption. And yet, faced with the prospect of our not so remote extinction, ‘Do we,’ as Anders challenges us, ‘have the right to sit idly by? Is the mortal gravity of our future ... a carte blanche to laziness?’

To cultivate and educate the faculties that have been rendered impotent by technical development, Anders invites us to draw on the memory of past disasters to uphold

an image of man in his creativity, ingenuity, sensitivity and responsibility. If we are to survive, according to Anders, ‘we must practise understanding the unseen as the present at all times, and educate the next generation in this understanding and the anguish it demands.’

Above all, we need to resist the temptation to naturalise that which has victimised us and laid the groundwork for our extinction, but instead safeguard our humanity and power as individuals. It is imperative to emerge from our slumber by widening the limits of imagination in order regain awareness of the human, social and moral consequences of our actions, and to conceive an adequate responsibility for any disproportionate consequence. Only then can we hope to ‘keep [our] conscience alive in the age of the machine’.

Anders maintained that widespread opposition to morally irresponsible production and consumerism was possible

Crucially, against the prevailing indifference instilled in us by the ambient technological nihilism, Anders tried to impress upon us the necessity to rebel and panic, turning fear into a revelation and object of lucidity. In this manner, he prefigured the ‘enlightened catastrophism’ theorised by the French thinker Dupuy. Convinced that humanity was on borrowed time, Anders hoped to ‘sow panic’ and wrest his readership from its apathy: ‘Because he who sees the danger in panic, and not in the danger against which we warn those who are anxious to be anxious, distorts the truth and wilfully blinds his neighbours’ – and to design a new morality capable of taking into account new catastrophes and the preservation of mankind.

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[Curio](#), an Aeon  
partner



Specifically, Anders enjoined us to protest and revolt against the fatality of techno-totalitarianism. Drawing on the socialist struggles against capitalist servitude and the proletarian successes of the 19th century, and on his own reflections on atomic bombs – ‘nothing is more false than to assert that in our time we would no longer have the power, the same duty of resistance’ – Anders maintained that a determined and widespread opposition to certain modes of social organisation and morally irresponsible forms of production and consumerism was possible, for example through unions and political movements. He also called for strike action against production and consumption.

We would therefore have to explain to them that a strike of a totally new kind is necessary today, a strike whose object is fundamentally different from that of all the strikes that have taken place until now: that the strike is today desirable not only when it comes to combating intolerable working conditions or wages, but also when the products that we are asked to manufacture lead to unjustifiable effects; that he who feels in himself even a spark of responsibility has a duty to refuse to take part in the manufacture of such products, regardless of the salary offered for it.

By refusing to collaborate with an oppressive order, by creating forms of resistance to any order that perpetuated massacres, devalued us as human beings, atomised societies and imperilled our very existence, we could then perhaps hope to salvage man from a conformist throwaway culture.

In *The View from the Moon: Philosophical Reflections on Space Travel*, Anders, decades before a new generation of billionaires attempted to colonise space, imagined looking back at Earth from the Moon. It is perhaps still not too late to regain a sense of our shared destiny.

## Peace Testimony

Maggie Taylor-Sanders

Good morning. You might know that in the two World Wars many Quakers were conscientious objectors who either refused to take part in the fighting or who followed their consciences into the Friends Ambulance Unit. Quakers were not alone in this stance but they do have a specific Peace Testimony which is a commitment to non-violence that has been a central part of what it means to be a Quaker since the mid-1600s. But does that mean that all Quakers have been, or would be, conscientious objectors in the future? No it doesn't, some Quakers fought in the World Wars and others would do so again

should their consciences lead them in that direction. That's the difficult thing about being a Quaker, we don't have doctrines or creeds, or a specific set of beliefs that we are required to follow, instead we have the freedom, and the burden, of discerning the truth as we see it based on our deep experience of being in the world, and the human respect we have for that of God in everyone and everything.

It's really not easy for anyone to know the right way to behave when faced with the injustices in the world, the violence in Syria and the Gaza strip, or closer to home when we see people adversely affected by government efforts to reduce social spending. Since human beings became social beings there have been

those who are prepared to work hard for peace and social justice. But what informs and sustains their selfless efforts? At the heart of the way a peace-maker is in the world is what is IN the heart of that individual person, and that arises out of their still and quiet experience of what some call the Spirit, or God, or what anyone, whether they are religious or atheist, would call our deep inner wisdom. That is a way open to all of us, as part of our human inheritance.

*Radio Hereford & Worcester, 'Quaker Thought for the Week', 20 July 2014*

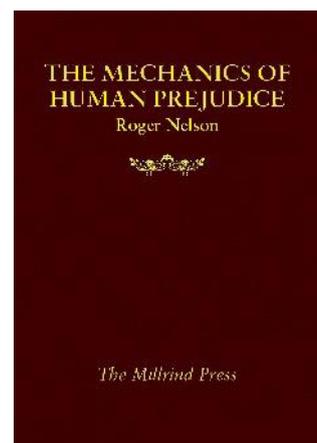
## Mechanics of Human Abuse

John Kay

Roger Nelson, of Earls Colne meeting is in the process of publishing an extensive current political essay. It is called "The Mechanics of Human Abuse" and it will soon be reviewed in the Newsletter. At his request I have placed it online in its

entirety in my favourite flipbook website Calameo. If you would like to read this in its entirety and you don't have difficulty with reading a computer screen you may go directly to it by going: [HERE](#)

If you prefer to read a 144 page document in proper book format I'm afraid you will have to wait until hard copies are available from either Roger or me.



## Treasurer & Premises Convener

Melanie Read

Friends are requested to consider the need for the following appointments which are necessary for the continued good running of Colchester Meeting.

We need a convener on the Premises Committee to help the committee to move forward in all its responsibilities with regard to Colchester Meeting. The Treasurer position also becomes vacant soon and this position is imperative for Colchester Meeting. Please consider if you have the skills and enthusi-

asm to fulfill either of these positions. Nominations will be happy to hear from you.

The Local Meeting treasurer is responsible for the management, coordination and oversight of the financial and accounting affairs of the Local Meeting:

The Local Meeting treasurer is responsible for maintaining records of payments and receipts to ensure there is a clear audit trail of all transactions, will be given an electronic gizmo to securely log online to make all payments and view receipts, is responsible for reporting annually on the ac-

counts held in the local bank account.....

For a more detailed description of the job, please reply to Rebecca Hallewell, Julia Usher, Freya Woodville or Melanie



## Weekly collections, Colchester

Chris Samuel

As Friends will know, there was a suspension of 'in person' Meetings for Worship during the COVID pandemic. However, following their resumption there is a wish also for resumption of weekly collections at the close of Meeting for Worship, and these started again on **Sunday, 3 July**.

Rosalind Kaye and Chris Samuel have been considering which charities might be supported in these collections. Previously, those supported have spread across a wide range, and included collections for Local Meeting and Britain Yearly Meeting. The view has been taken

that future collections should not include LM and BYM, which Friends can support by scheduled giving. It was also felt that it would be best to concentrate (but not exclusively) on Quaker charities and those particularly dear to Friends' hearts, which might not be as greatly supported as those which are more well known.

To lessen the administrative burden, it has been decided that a nominated charity be supported by weekly collections for four weeks, before moving on to the next.

Examples of these charities are: Corrymela, Brummana High School, Medical Foundation, Freedom from Torture, Friends' World Committee for Consultation, Quaker Council for European Af-

fairs, Campaign Against the Arms Trade and Quaker Housing Trust.

In view of the current tragedy of war in Ukraine, it is proposed that the first month's collections be for The Red Cross. After that, suggestions for future collections would be welcomed from Friends and Attenders. Please let Chris Samuel have your suggestions - [christophersamuel1955@hotmail.com](mailto:christophersamuel1955@hotmail.com).

**ART RETREAT**  
All Levels  
All Media  
*In the South of France*  
**September 24-30**  
6 to 10 Days of creating and camaraderie  
(optional non-programmed days September 23, October 1 & 2)  
Explore the region with your eyes or brush

Email Amy & Chamba, amis-résidents, for more information & to enroll  
[centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com](mailto:centre.quaker.congenies@gmail.com)  
[www.maison-quaker-congenies.org](http://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org)  
+33 (0)4 66 71 46 41

Kate Hale, Facilitator

### Quaker Attenders

If you are thinking of attending the Area Meeting this coming Saturday please send an email to the Area meeting Clerk ([anne@watsnees.co.uk](mailto:anne@watsnees.co.uk)) saying that you would like to attend the meet-



## Music Week at Congénies



## *Music Week at the Centre Quaker de Congénies in the South of France*

*Saturday 10 to Sunday, 18 September, 2022*

Lift your spirits with 5 to 8 days of musical adventure at Maison Quaker, located in a lovely valley between the Cévennes Mountains & the Mediterranean Sea. Experience or talent not necessary--just a willingness to sing, play, learn or listen



- 5 to 8 Days at Maison Quaker
- Facilitated program from Sunday evening to Friday morning. The other 3 days are optional and can be used for sightseeing: Attend market day in the medieval village of Sommieres or visit local Languedoc –Provencal sights. Or just relax, sing or play at Maison Quaker.
- Facilitator: Jeff Dershin, entertainer and educator, will lead us on a fun-filled five day encounter with music through folk-songs, spirituals, and popular music of the 20th century, <http://jeffdershinmusic.com/>
- Bring your instrument or your voice—or just your ears!
- Non-musical partners welcome. You will be surprised—you will enjoy it also!

**All are welcome, Friends and friends!**

Getting Here is Easier than you Think: Email us for details about transportation and Covid guidance, security, and requirements.



Contact Judy or Dave at:  
**Centre Quaker de  
Congénies**  
[http://www.maison-quaker-  
congenies.org/](http://www.maison-quaker-congenies.org/)  
[2kashoffs@gmail.com](mailto:2kashoffs@gmail.com)

