

Many years ago a little girl asked, “when you grow old do you grow down again?”

Now that I am old, I can answer the child whose name I cannot recall.

Yes, dear, we do grown down. Not so much in size -- only a few inches, most of us -- but we become like children again.

— Curious just to be curious, not seeking profit or power.

— Seeing ever more wonders all around, or even inside ourselves. Wow, another little pain in my left thumb. The younger me then says *what does that mean, what illness can that be a sign of*, but the older me says “Wonder, wonder, it IS.” For the first time I really look at a thumb.

— When you are old it is all right to look at a stone for half an hour. Pick it up, feel its heft, it’s warm but inside feels cold. Or watch those little lizards that walk up, down, and sideways, and even walk on the ceiling. I wonder what my world looks like through that little guy’s eyes.

— We get tired more than kids do, maybe. I can’t remember being tired when I was your age — i’m still talking to the same girl, who was maybe six, — but then, I can’t remember whether I was tired yesterday. Who cares, eh?

— And, you know what is hard sometimes, like kids really old people cannot do all the things grown-ups do. I cannot carry a 50 pound bag of scratch — that’s chicken food. But then I just think around that obstacle. You know what that is, don’t you? Something that’s in your way. You can’t jump over it, or kick it out of the way, so you walk around it. I figured if I can’t carry fifty pounds, then maybe I can carry half, or less. Ten, fifteen, twenty pounds are good too. So I find another bag and make three trips to the pond where we feed the chickens. You do that too, don’t you? You figure out how to do stuff. Yeah, sure.

— And another thing is I cannot walk as fast as other people do. Maybe you could? Those long steps and rush rush rush. So, I just take my staff and walk at the pace I can walk.

— So, we do grow down again. And you know it’s much more fun being old and not having to worry about clocks and calendars. And no more boring cocktail parties, smiling, smiling, showing teeth. Usually I did not feel like smiling, but when you’re grown up you have to do a lot of things you really do not want to do.

I’ll omit the girl’s comment about her mother’s tummy.

“Growing down” is an excellent concept. Some people in French-speaking nations have thought of the word *décroissance*, translated as *de-growth*. Somehow that does not sound well in English. You cannot undo growth, but you can grow down, using less rather than always more.

To me growing down means learning to live simpler, always more simple. Basic needs; no wants. We have been tricked with all that talk about always more. How can there be always more? More rubbish to throw away!

Our society, our civilization so-called, we who think that progress means MORE should start thinking LESS. Isn't it obvious that there cannot be an eternal more?

There is one very good reason for ***growing down*** :

SURVIVAL

Don't knock it.

Isn't survival a wonderful motivation for us all to grow down?

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