

## OUTGROWING THE WAR

WHILE it is certainly true that the issue of war and peace is the major preoccupation of those who think and write, these days, there are times when it seems that those who understand it best have little to say directly on the subject and seldom even use these words. For them, what we loosely call peace is something long ago achieved, while war is an activity that is simply unthinkable. In them the mix that we call human nature has reached a stage where the focus of their lives shuts out behavior that leads to war, so they feel no need to talk about it.

Meanwhile, the best writing concerned with putting an end to war, whatever else it says about plans and mechanisms for establishing enduring peace, almost always reaches the conclusion that without a fundamental change in the way people think, feel, and act in their everyday lives, there can be no peace. Peace plans which leave this out claim to be hard-headed, but they ignore the failure of manipulative political schemes to do much more than change the language used by those who are convinced that war is inevitable and have resolved that the only way to solve the problem of war is to win it.

Today, however, it has become obvious to all but weakminded people that no nation can win a nuclear war—that the weapons are such that all will be losers, and those whom we term innocent civilians most of all. In addition, more and more people are realizing that there can be no such thing as a "righteous nation." How can the use of a nuclear bomb be conceived of as righteous, knowing what we know about its effects? So suddenly—perhaps too suddenly—we are relieved of the obligations of patriotism, although not of love of country and fondness of place. Yet we have the *habits* of patriotism and can hardly throw them off without the development of other loyalties—and, we ask, what might they be? For

instruction in this, we could read Thoreau's "Civil Disobedience" and his "Life Without Principle," to see what the shaping loyalties of such a man were like.

Another pole of loyalties is slowly developing in the world, well described by the Polish poet, Czeslaw Milosz, in the *Listener* for Feb. 18, 1960. He wrote:

There has never been such curiosity about the whole past of Man on the Earth, nor so many signs of exploring civilizations in their sinuous growth. We enter a sesame of our heritage, not limited to one continent. And this is accessible to the many, not only to some specialists. For instance, there has never been so great an interest in the art and music of the past. A price has to be paid, and recorded music or reproductions of paintings have their reverse side in cheap "mass culture." There is also danger of syncretism. Yet a new dimension of history, understood as a whole, appears in all its interdependences. We deplore the dying out of local customs and local traditions, but perhaps the rootlessness of modern man is not so great, if through individual effort he can, so to say, return home and be in contact with all the people of various races and religions who suffered, thought, and created before him.

It seems clear that we can say that a peaceful world can come into being only among people whose primary loyalty is to the things which make for peace and make war impossible. The study of peace, then, is the study of men and women who have this loyalty—how they think and live their lives. Thoreau is our outstanding example. He was loyal to justice and he withdrew his loyalty from any human institution that insistently practiced injustice and he preferred going to jail to paying his taxes to a national state that supported slavery. Parents who think this way are likely to have children of the same persuasion. When there are enough people like that, no governmental organization will be able to send its young men—

and now young women—off to war. There is a sentence in an article by Mark Sommer (author of *Beyond the Bomb*) in the summer *Whole Earth Review* which generalizes this rule: "A global peace system must base itself on local peace systems that are already alive and thriving."

What are these local peace systems? They are the patterns made by people who live according to their loyalties—what have become their natural convictions about right and wrong, good and evil, avoiding harm to others. How do people develop these loyalties?—that is the great question. For those who have them there is no problem; their peace is already made. For the rest of us, the problem may be stated in various ways—how, for example, to be willing to stand alone. What does this mean? It means a quality of moral self-confidence not given to very many. How, then, is it acquired? We hardly know, but one suspects that a good family and community environment is the best help in learning to stand alone. Sometimes standing alone may exact a very high price—even life itself, as was the case for many of those few who refused to conform with what the Nazis, during their days of power, demanded of all Germans.

What we are after is a quality of human being, the kind of person for whom simplicity of life comes naturally, and if someone cornered us and insisted on examples, we'd probably say, "read biography." Reading is not as good as knowing someone like that, but getting acquainted with, say, a man like Arthur Morgan from what he has written and has been written about him can be an education in itself. We choose Morgan because he shows the great simplicities that are possible for a man who himself led a complicated life. (Works by and about him are available from Community Service Books, 114 Whiteman Street, P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387.)

Successful peacemaking, which begins with human character, is probably a lot simpler than most people think, although once human nature at its present stage of development is understood,

there will be common-sense rules that are simplicity itself. Mark Sommer gives the *Federalist Papers* as an example, saying of the authors:

They were not naive about the nature of human motivations and the perennial attractions of power. They assumed that human beings would always act primarily in their own self-interest and planned their institutions accordingly. They shrewdly divided authority within their peace system in such ways as to impede undue concentrations of power, even at a certain cost in efficiency. What they produced in the U.S. Constitution was an operating manual for a working peace system.

And their design has proven more durable than anyone at the time could rightly have expected. With good reason we have since become a good deal more skeptical of our capacity to design the social systems we inhabit. The twentieth century has given us all too many examples of over-designed political systems. Clearly there is as much danger in doing too much planning as in doing too little. But what if, sadder but wiser now about the power of reason to rule, we once again engaged in a process of deliberate design—this time not as founders of one country but as founders of one planet?

In the concluding words of this article, Mark Sommer says:

In addition to its various institutional components, a global peace system will necessarily include a nonmaterial dimension, a set of subtle but fundamental shifts in attitude and behavior to make it possible for irreconcilably different societies to coexist. . . . The most fundamental shift that needs to occur is not a comprehensive resolution of differences between East West but a common agreement to accept both differences of temperament and a commonality of fates. The chief contestants in the global argument are like convicts chained together at the ankles, unable to gain freedom for themselves except by cooperating with one another. By their common effort to break the chain, they will forge the bond to one another that will free them all.

Something should be said about the processes by which character is formed, since without a degree of inner transformation, no plan, however excellently conceived, will accomplish the good intended. For this we turn to what is probably Arthur Morgan's best book, first published in

1936, *The Long Road*. In a summarizing passage he said:

The end we should seek is that every human activity, in government or in business, in science, in art, and in every field, shall be judged, not on the prevailing ethical level, but by the highest possible standards on which an intelligent consensus of judgment can be achieved. Repeatedly, individuals or small groups gain a discriminating view of human conduct and by great effort rise above the mass, and then in the course of a few generations the distinctive character they achieved seems to be lost again in the mass, as a wave that has risen to a high crest sinks back into the ocean. Yet I repeat, wherever a genuine contribution has been made to human living there tends to be a residue, and the accumulation of those residues constitutes civilization.

Every person who has poured the energy of his life into an effort to achieve a pattern of living that has enduring significance, craves that the results of his efforts shall not be lost. Seeing the blind stumbling and intolerance of men, and realizing his own shortcomings, he would do whatever he can to throw light on the path of social evolution and to accelerate its progress.

I am satisfied that, in general, our limitations in this respect are not biological. We see very simple-minded men who rank low in intelligence, who yet, having lived in communities where dignity and fineness of character were common, have acquired those characteristics as unconsciously as they acquired speech. Such men are social if not genetic assets. I am satisfied that there exist in human nature and in the circumstances of our environment all the resources necessary to accelerate social evolution to perhaps a hundred times its present rate, resolving internal conflicts, achieving new cooperation and new harmony, conserving old values and creating new ones, bringing into being a new social world, as science and industry work largely with inert materials, whereas in social evolution it is conceivable that the materials may themselves awake and conspire to speed the process.

While Morgan hardly mentions war and peace, he is surely considering here the very foundation of peace, since the kind of commitment and effort he speaks of is certainly required for making peace.

Another kind of writing that seems peculiarly valuable on the subject is a seldom quoted pamphlet by David Mitrany, who was born in Bucharest in 1888, taught at Harvard, and at the time when this pamphlet, *A Working Peace System*, was first published by Chatham House, in 1943, was professor in the School of Economics and Politics of the Institute for Advanced study at Princeton, New Jersey. By "working peace system" he means cooperation among nations for specific ends they have in common, as distinguished from political arrangements that are difficult to make because such arrangements are commonly seen as a threat to national sovereignty. In an opening paragraph he says:

We realize now that the League failed because, whatever the reasons, it could not further that process of continuous adjustment and settlement which students of international affairs call "peaceful change." But they themselves, taking the form for the substance, all too often thought of it mainly as a matter of changing frontiers. We shall have to speak of this again, but what peaceful change should mean, what the modern world, so closely inter-related, must have for its peaceful development, is some system that would make possible automatic and continuous social action, continually adapted to changing needs and conditions, in the same sense and of the same general nature as any other system of government. Its character would be the same, for certain purposes, only the range would be new. It is in that sense that the League's work has in truth been inadequate and ineffective, as one may readily see if one reflects whether a change of frontiers now and then would really have led to a peaceful and cooperative society.

The point that Mitrany makes, again and again, is that technological progress demands international cooperation in an increasing number of ways, and that use of international agencies for specific purposes, obviously needed and welcomed by those who see how well they work, becomes a natural means of education in the advantages of cooperation. National boundaries are not abolished, since moves in this direction would lead to endless argument, but they are made irrelevant by ignoring them. This is what Mitrany means by his sub-title: "An Argument for

the Functional Development of International Organization." Writing in the midst of World War II, he said:

The task that is facing us is how to build the reality of a common interest in peace. But with a revolutionary element injected into war that demands also a new sense of peace. Not a peace that would keep the nations quietly apart, but a peace that would bring them actively together not the old static and strategic view of peace, but a social view of it. As General Smuts said in a recent speech: "this is the social century." Or one might say that we must put our faith not in a protected peace but in a working peace; it would indeed be nothing more nor less than the idea and aspiration of social security taken in its widest range. The number of problems which take on a world character is growing apace, partly because we have a better understanding of them—and know that with economics as with epidemics and drugs, the evil must be attacked at the source and therefore through international action—but also because of their technical peculiarities. Such is the nature of all the wonderful technical inventions that each harbors within it as much a threat as a promise. . . .

It is not without significance that of the League of Nations only the functional services have survived, including the I.L.O., and that they are readily assumed to be capable still of playing an active part in any future international scheme. Pivotal countries like the United States and the U.S.S.R. could become vital links in a functional network when they could not all be made parts of any formal political scheme. Nor does it seem possible in any other way to combine national autonomy with universality; national agencies would not be displaced, but might indeed derive fresh life and scope from wide functional coordination with the outside world. At the same time, action through functional agencies would minimize the intrusion of power politics in the guise of foreign help, or the wasteful use of international help by national agencies. Finally, alone in this way could we hope to prevent the damage done to international relations in every so-called peace settlement by continuing the division into enemies and friends after the conflict. Even if at the end of the war certain disabilities are to be imposed upon our present opponents in the political and military spheres, we could for the rest let them share those activities which in our interest as much as in theirs need to be organized in common from the outset. That would help all Europe better than reparations, while through such detached cooperation

for specific practical ends the people whom we now fight would also best be "re-educated" into a new sense of common values. We could do all that without doing violence to our feelings, but also without damaging the world's new life.

It is interesting how unimportant nuclear weapons are made to seem in this discussion, in the days before they had been used and were known. Mitrany wanted us to put aside childish things—the mania for constitution-making, for elaborate law-making beyond the capacity of any population to live up to, while learning how to *grow* the means of cooperation by working together toward specific ends that can be pursued without fear and anxiety. He says in his epilogue, which is filled with good sense, especially the first sentence:

Peace will not be secured if we organize the world by what divides it. But in the measure in which such peace-building activities develop and succeed one might hope that the mere prevention of conflict, crucial as that may be would in time fall to a subordinate place in the scheme of international things, while we would turn to what are the real tasks of our common society—the conquest of poverty and of disease and of ignorance. . . . The elements of a functional system could begin to work without a general political authority, but a political authority without active social functions would remain an empty temple. Society will develop by our living it, not by policing it. . . .

We do not know what will be the sentiments of the peoples of Europe and of other continents at the end of the war, but we do know what their needs will be. *Any* political scheme would start a disputation; *any* working arrangement would raise a hope and make for confidence and patience.

It seems especially worth noting that the thinking of David Mitrany is now continued by Mark Sommer. He says in his *Whole Earth Review* article that the management of city traffic is a peace system that works very well, remarking: "To my knowledge, no one has ever sought to take over city traffic and run it for personal advantage." He adds:

There are many other nonpartisan peace systems already present at the global level—the international

mail system and the telephone network, for examples. These are largely open systems with access available to most all who wish to use them. Blockages are inevitable from time to time, and constrictions in communications between East and West continue to impair the health of the global peace system. Nevertheless we have something here to build upon. Peace systems already operate in dozens of little-known roles at the global level, but their dependability leads us to forget them. "How could this be peace?" we ask ourselves. "It's so ordinary!"

So it is, also, with the spreading interest in bioregionalism, already on the way to replacing national loyalties for a large number of people. This spontaneous allegiance to the laws of ecology may in time prove a cornerstone of the foundation for world peace, helping to make an environment in which it will be much less difficult for us to become Thoreau-like people. Peace, in short, will be the way of life for all those who have outgrown war.

## *REVIEW*

### THE PROMETHEAN ROLE

WHAT kind of reading should people be doing, these days? A *Los Angeles Times* (Aug. 20) report on the annual meeting of the Association for Humanistic Psychology, held this year at San Diego State University, indicates that these "liberated" psychologists are mixing the frivolous with the serious in what they read. Some of the topics explored in the convention sessions were "communication with the spiritual world, the corporation as lover, planetary vision." Yet some of the leaders are uncomfortable about all this. "It's time," they say, "to move beyond the touchy-feely stuff, beyond feeling good about oneself, and into the realm of social and political action." One speaker, Maureen O'Hara, recommended that the AHP disengage itself from "the fakirs . . . taking us for a monetary ride" and to "rededicate ourselves to scholarship." She asked: "Do we continue to follow charismatic leaders—pseudopriests and pseudoscientists—or do we get back to thinking?" But the *Times* writer relates:

The action, and the crowd, that evening was in a room below where Durchback Aknete, a healer-priest from Togo, West Africa, was evoking the spirits to send people into twitching, jerking trances from which they were to awake enlightened.

One of the volunteer participants . . . later told the others in the room, "I kept getting a message that there's one presence and one power in the universe." Karen, who had just awakened from a lengthy trance, reported, "I became part of another world. . . ."

Others, however, declared the time had come for humanistic psychologists to link up with those on "the old cutting edge," such as the ecology and peace movements. Maureen O'Hara said we need to "start keeping each other honest," and asked:

"Who are going to be our authorities? When are we going to say, 'This is just plain old superstition?'" When, she wanted to know, was AHP going to rediscover debate and criticism?

The *Times* writer commented:

Obviously, her message was not being heard by all. In a nearby workshop, participants sat and chanted in unison, "Your life is valuable, whatever you choose to do with it." They meditated, following instructions to "picture the word 'relax' on the back of your forehead."

What can one say to all this? Suggest some serious reading, we have already implied. But what? A book we have been looking through lately—worth regular rereading—is Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots*, written early in 1943, in London, where the author died later in the year. The Free French had asked her to compose "a report on the possibilities of bringing about a regeneration of France," and this book, published in English in 1952 by Putnam's, is her report. The translator, Arthur Wills, observes in a foreword that "Simone Weil addresses herself to men of every nationality, but more particularly, of course, to those who share the spiritual heritage of the West."

Who will be our authorities? asked Maureen O'Hara. The power of Simone Weil's book lies in the fact that she became her own authority. If she adopted an idea from someone else, she first made it her own by thinking about it intensely. So we can say that she evolved a rigorous metaphysics out of herself. This is illustrated by her direct attack on her assignment—the regeneration of France. The business of the social community is the service of human needs. She begins, therefore, with the needs of the soul. Here are her first two paragraphs:

The notion of obligations comes before that of rights, which is subordinate and relative to the former. A right is not effectual by itself, but only in relation to the obligation to which it corresponds, the effective exercise of a right springing not from the individual who possesses it, but from other men who consider themselves as being under the obligation toward him. Recognition of an obligation makes it effectual. An obligation which goes unrecognized by anybody loses none of the full force of its existence. A right which goes unrecognized by anybody is not worth very much.

It makes no sense to say that men have, on the one hand, rights, and on the other hand, obligations.

Such words only express differences in point of view. The actual relationship between the two is as between object and subject. A man, considered in isolation, only has duties, among which are certain duties toward himself. Other men, seen from his point of view, only have rights. He, in his turn, has rights, when seen from the point of view of other men, who recognize that they have obligations toward him. A man left alone in the universe would have no rights whatever, but he would have obligations.

It becomes evident from Simone Weil's numerous essays that from girlhood she thought about the meaning of being human and decided that the choice of and fulfillment of obligations is the true human role. By the time she was ready to die she was absolutely convinced of this and wrote as though it were beyond question. There have of course been others with the same conviction and, usually, have been of the caliber that A. H. Maslow would call "gold medalists," meaning the best of the human race. His point was that if we are looking for definitions and models, pick the best to go by, not just an "average" specimen. Joseph Mazzini, the great Italian revolutionist, was one such human, a man who adopted the same principle of human identity as Simone Weil. In his essay, "Faith and the Future," written in 1835, he said:

Right is the faith of the individual. Duty is the common collective faith. Right can but organize resistance: it may destroy, it cannot found. Duty builds up, associates, and unites; it is derived from a general law, whereas Right is derived only from human will. There is nothing therefore to forbid a struggle against Right: any individual may rebel against any right in another which is injurious to him; and the sole judge between the adversaries is Force; and such, in fact, has frequently been the answer which societies based upon right have given their opponents.

Is this all we seek? Ought man, gifted with progressive activity, to remain quiescent like an emancipated slave, satisfied with his solitary liberty? Does naught remain in fulfillment of his mission on earth, but a work of consequences and deductions to be translated into the sphere of fact; or conquests to be watched over and defended? Because man, consecrated by the power of thought, king of the earth, has burst the bonds of a worn-out religious

form that imprisoned and restrained his activity and independence, are we to have no new bond of universal fraternity? No religion? no recognized and accepted conception of general and providential law?

Elsewhere, on this ground, Mazzini found fault with Rousseau, declaring:

Starting from the philosophy of the *ego* and of individual liberty, he robbed that principle of fruit by basing it, not on a duty common to all, not on a definition of man as an essentially social creature, . . . not on the bond that unites the individual with humanity of which he is a factor, but on a simple convention, avowed or understood.

Simone Weil found similar fault with the French Revolution. After saying that obligations "belong to a realm situated above all conditions," she went on:

The men of 1789 did not recognize the existence of such a realm. All they recognized was one on the human plane. That is why they started off with the idea of rights. But at the same time they wanted to postulate absolute principles. This contradiction caused them to tumble into a confusion of language and ideas which is largely responsible for the present political and social confusion. The realm of what is eternal, universal, unconditioned is other than the one conditioned by facts, and different ideas hold sway there, ones which are related to the most secret recesses of the human soul.

It would be a good idea for the humanistic psychologists to give serious attention to one of their founders, Abraham Maslow, and regularly read the book that made him famous—*Toward A Psychology of Being*. One of the concluding chapters of this book is titled "Health as Transcendence of Environment," in which he declares the need for this transcendence, which means independence of the environment, "ability to stand against it, to fight it, to neglect it, or to turn one's back on it, to refuse it or adapt to it." He gives the reason for this:

To the extent that we try to master the environment or be effective with it, to that extent do we cut the possibility of full, objective, detached, non-interfering cognition. Only if we let it be, can we perceive fully. Again, to cite psychotherapeutic experience, the more eager we are to make a

diagnosis and a plan of action, the *less* helpful do we become. The more eager we are to cure, the longer it takes. Every psychiatric researcher has to learn not to *try* to cure, not to be impatient. In this and in many other situations, to give in is to overcome, to be humble is to succeed.

The last paragraph of this book is a perceptive discussion of the difficulties which the humanistic psychologists are now experiencing. He is speaking of the need to broaden the literature of psychology, saying:

Most difficult of all, however, judging by my own inhibitions, will be gradually opening up our journals to papers written in rhapsodic, poetic or free association style. Some communication of some kinds of truth is best done in this way, e.g., any of the peak experiences. Nevertheless, this is going to be hard on everybody. The most astute editors would be needed for the terrible job of separating out the scientifically useful from the great flood of trash that would surely come as soon as this door was opened. All I can suggest is a cautious trying out.

What, we might ask in conclusion, do Simone Weil and Abraham Maslow have in common? They both are prometheans—that is, humans who, throughout their lives, responded to the strong feeling of obligation to help and teach.



## **COMMENTARY**

### **"WHY BE GOOD?"**

AGAIN and again it becomes evident that the readers of MANAS are our editors-in-the-field, since they so often send us material for quotation and comment that originates in sources we have not even heard of, much less have accessible. An example is some pages copied from the *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophers* published last September. They include the Presidential Address by Quentin Lauer of Fordham University, delivered in December of 1985. His subject, surprisingly enough, is "Why Be Good?" He starts with Socrates and Plato and develops what seems a fruitful discussion. Here we shall quote from his conclusion at the end of a ten-page paper:

It has been said that value (including moral value) cannot be the subject of scientific investigation, and with this I concur completely. . . . But, it might be asked, is not science itself a value which enriches our lives? To this, it would seem, the answer has to be, "not always." . . . There can be no question that scientific knowledge is worthwhile having, and when we are told that science is "value-free," we are not being told that it has no value; we are being told that it leaves value out of consideration in its investigations—which is not to say that the *scientist* leaves values out of consideration in his or her investigations, we are human beings first, and after that scientists, or philosophers, or whatever. Yes, there is a very significant sense in which science is "value free," and that in itself is adequate proof that we cannot let science dictate life—life without value is not life. . . .

There is little question that science *qua* science has made no contribution whatever to ethics, that science cannot come to grips with the reality or the quality of the human *person* at all. There is little question either that science poses many problems to ethics; which is not to say that ethics and science are antagonistic. It does, however, say that ethical thinking might have to ask the question as to whether what is scientifically desirable is also morally desirable. It is clearly not irrational, it would seem, at least to ask the question whether it is morally desirable to put a man on the moon—or whatever else our scientific advances have made possible—witness

the contemporary concern over ecology. Science can tell us *how* to get done what we *want* to get done, science has nothing to say about the wanting. All of which brings us back to our original question: "Why be good?" The answer, it would seem, is that it is the rational thing to do; to be a human being and not a morally good human being is not to be human, not to be rational.

It is pleasant to know that professors of philosophy are now saying such things.

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### SOME IMPROBABLE HEROES

BACK in the days before MANAS was started in 1948, the *Los Angeles Times* was going strong. It was profitable for the publishers but it wasn't much of a newspaper. It is still profitable today, but a far better paper. One reason is the feature writers who seem to have fairly complete freedom in what and how they write, making it sometimes very good.

We have an example in mind—an article by Robert Scheer in the July 10 issue on the schools in New York that he went to some thirty to forty years ago, and which, probably last May or June, he went back to inspect. Today those schools—P.S. 96, Christopher Columbus High School, and City College of New York—are not as good as they were in the 1940s and 50s, but there is ample explanation for this and they are still good enough to command Scheer's admiration and respect. In his school days, Scheer says, "the world looked to this city's system as a model for what free, universal education could achieve."

Then democracy meant first of all quality education for everyone, the poor, minorities, immigrants included, with New York showing the way.

Now public education almost everywhere is perceived more as a problem than a promise. In New York, as in many urban areas, people who can afford it turn to private schools and starve the schools left to the rest. Others, like me, pull up in station wagons depositing their children at carefully selected suburban schools eager to make sure their kids profit from the inequality in public education.

Look at the schools Scheer went to. He started with P.S. 96 in the Bronx. Returning there, he found Martin Unterberger as principal, of Scheer's generation, but a man who didn't leave the Bronx when it declined but stayed to cope with the problems of its schools, while Scheer left for California a long time ago. He muses:

What makes Unterberger so tough that he is still in the Bronx serving, while I am in Huntington Beach

shopping? Didn't we both go to "City," City College of New York, uptown, to be precise, where we majored in social commitment before we majored in anything else? And what is social commitment if not staying where you are when it's become a mess and helping your own? . . .

Unterberger's car, parked a block from the school, was stolen one day this past winter, but whatever the chaos outside, every morning at a quarter of an hour before the first class the leather covered doors of the old auditorium are opened and kids file in to collect themselves and remember where they are. In a school. . . .

The classrooms are quiet and purposeful, hallway traffic bustles but is orderly and the taxed resources of a tiny cafeteria serving shifts of hungry youngsters prove adequate to provide for many their best meal of the day. Despite enormous differences of language and prior education, most of the kids seem to come through.

The Bronx is not the old Bronx any more. It used to be mostly Jews and Italians.

In the old days this part of the Bronx was a sanctuary from the sweat, boredom and despair of the dead-end garment shops. A happy place, bustling with intellectual energy, ambition and the pursuit of excellence. No one expected to have their kids work at their parents' job. All was possible through the magic of learning—and the palaces of magic were the schools. Now they are often, at best, temporary sanctuaries from child abuse, drunkenness, street gangs and other ingredients of a pervasive fear.

The question of fear is not irrelevant to the life of a Bronx principal. Imagine this demure man, who is shorter than some of the sixth graders walking past him in the school's still institutional green halls, who will go outside to confront the vandals that appear twice his size. He will play Edward G. Robinson (who, I can't resist noting, also went to City) and stare down or call the cops, whatever works to protect his little garden of learning.

Unterberger wants his school to be a garden: "Many of our children come from depressed areas, the south Bronx, Harlem, and when they first come here they are overwhelmed, they have never seen such a beautiful tranquil place." Unterberger cannot use the word "children" without implying treasure the way others might speak of their stocks of jewelry.

Unterberger and the teachers work hard for these children. They are proud of the poetry

written by a student who, years before, had entered as a functional illiterate.

How has the Bronx changed? Besides other things, the people have changed.

We thought we had a melting pot with our mostly Jewish and Italian base and a few Puerto Ricans and blacks thrown in for some additional spice. But it was nothing like this.

The Jews and Italians now make up less than 20% of enrollment, whereas only 20 years ago they numbered more than 90%, mostly Jewish. Their place has been taken by blacks, Puerto Ricans, Yugoslavs, Cubans, Vietnamese, Afghans, and representatives from virtually every South American and Caribbean country. At least 10 languages are used in informal cafeteria conversation along with English.

This crazy choir including Cambodians, Iranians and Ukrainians is welded together by a variety of techniques. While stressing that P.S. 96 is a "traditional school with great emphasis on academic skills and disciplines," Unterberger adds that "we try to build in certain values: concern for fellow students and other people beside themselves. We try to tell them what we expect when they come in from other outlying school districts and from the Caribbean and think they can do what they want. They soon find they can't. We have standards and they fall in line rather nicely because we are interested in them." (It is not unusual in the Bronx to refer to the Caribbean as an outlying school district.)

How do these children do in school? According to Unterberger, "Seventy-five per cent of his students read on or above grade level on the last New York statewide reading tests." Scheer comments: "not bad, considering that a significant minority of them, Unterberger estimates 20%, knew little or no English when they first showed up." No wonder Scheer calls Unterberger, who says "he is no different than many other overworked and underpaid teachers around the country," an "improbable hero." So is Grace Rosa, the principal of Christopher Columbus High School, a few blocks away in the Bronx from P.S. 96. She has been principal for seven years, struggling to improve the quality of education. Scheer says:

Columbus' success is relative. Last year it made the list of one of the worst schools in New York, as did almost all of the New York City schools. Such is the state of public education at the high school level in a city that once set the national standard for free education.

Most of the other schools failed to meet statewide standards in math, reading, writing and drop-out rates. Mrs. Rosa is quick to point out that Columbus flunked on only one count, its 10% dropout rate. But even there she can claim improvement since the rate was a whopping 23% when she first took over.

"What," asks Scheer, "has been lost in the 35 years since my class graduated?" Answering, he says: "It can be summarized as a vanished expectation of excellence." This cannot be said of City College, which is also very different from what it was when Scheer went there—a place with ambitious students and a number of very distinguished professors. Of this College he says:

To judge City, one has first to establish the standard, and I happen to cherish the one set out by Horace Webster the college's first president who in 1849 said, "The experiment is to be tried, whether the children of the people—the children of the whole people—can be educated; and whether an institution of learning of the highest grade can be successfully controlled by the popular will, not by the privileged few." Judged by that standard, CCNY is an enormous success.

Most of "the people" in New York City are black, Puerto Rican and immigrants and those are the people educated by this college. Three out of four of City's students are nonwhite, which breaks down into 33% black, 25% Latino and 17% Asian. City can also stand as the peoples' U.N. with half its students having been born in more than 80 different countries. . . . City is now fifth in the country in producing black engineers, coming right after schools that had been historically black colleges. The engineering program at City is highly respected and is one of the largest suppliers of engineers to AT&T, which has reciprocated by making some grants to the college. City is also among the dozen leading schools in the country for placing minority students in medical school.

In general, Scheer is proud of the schools he went to in New York. One can see why.

## *FRONTIERS* A Difficult Subject

IN her preface to *The Spiritual Dimension of Green Politics*, Charlene Spretnak, co-author with Fritjof Capra of *Green Politics: The Global Promise*, tells about the origin of her new book in a way that explains a certain reluctance we felt to give it attention. The book was written as an address for the annual meeting of the E. F. Schumacher Society in the fall of 1984. When she told the executives of the Society that she wanted to talk about the "spiritual" dimension, this idea "sent ripples of concern through some of the Schumacher board members." They wanted a *regular* lecture on Green politics, "not something that might be embarrassingly soupy." However, she had her way, and after reading the book one sees why. Our own reluctance was something like that. "Spiritual" is one of the *buzz* words of the time, so often waved as a flag that it has almost no meaning at all for many people. Reading like that is not something we seek for use here. Yet we found that Charlene Spretnak, born a Catholic and educated in a Jesuit university, where, she said, she "lost her faith," has a working definition of spirituality that seems acceptable for a start. Actually, much more than that might not be understood. In her short section, "What Is Spirituality?" she calls it "the focusing of human awareness on the subtle aspects of existence, a practice that reveals to us profound interconnectedness." She goes on:

A materialist explanation of life works somewhat well at the gross levels of perception, much as Newtonian physics can explain the behavior of matter in a certain middle range. At the subatomic and astrophysical levels, however, Newtonian explanations are inadequate. Similarly, our perceptions at the gross levels—that we all separate from Nature and from each other—are revealed as illusion once we employ the subtle, suprarational reaches of the mind, which can reveal the true nature of being: all is One, all forms of existence are comprised of one continuous dance of matter/energy arising and falling away, arising and falling away.

While this imagery leaves out the heart of the matter, to our way of thinking, which is that spirituality means the activity of consciousness, prior to its reflection in matter, the imagery is only an analogy, as the next paragraph reveals:

The experience of union with the One has been called God consciousness, cosmic consciousness, knowing the One mind, and so forth. It is the core experience common to the sages of all the great religions and has been expressed in the rapture of Christian saints as well as the simple words of a *haiku*. It is not a one-time realization but, rather a level of understanding that deepens. . . . Such experiential, rather than merely intellectual, awareness of the profound connectedness is what I hold to be the true meaning of being in "a state of grace." Awe at the intricate wonders of creation and celebration of the cosmic unfolding are the roots of worship.

A quotation from a further page of the book—which has only 96—indicates what she regards as the spiritual outlook in Green thinking:

The disparity between Judeo-Christian religion and ecological wisdom is illustrated by the experience of a friend of mine who once lived in a seminary overlooking Lake Erie and says he spent two years contemplating the sufferings of Christ without ever noticing that Lake Erie was dying. Even when Catholic clergy speak today of St. Francis of Assisi, whom Lynn White nominated as the patron saint of ecologists, they often take pains to insist that he was not some "nature mystic," which, of course, would taint him with "paganism."

Religion that sets itself in opposition to Nature and vehemently resists the resacralizing of the natural world on the grounds that it would be "pagan" to do so is not sustainable over time. . . . Knowledge of Nature must precede respect and love for it. We could urge that ecological wisdom regarding God's creation be incorporated in Sunday school as well as in sermons and prayer. We could mention in the church bulletin ecological issues that are crucial to our community. There is no end to what we *could* do to focus spiritually based awareness and action on saving the Great Web of Life.

One thing one learns from this book is the transformation going on in religion in the West, especially in America. To be "religious" no longer means belonging to a church, but rather the plainly

emerging tendency to think as Charlene Spretnak has been thinking. The statistical account of what religion means has less and less meaning. This is clearly true of West Germany, also, where the Green movement began, taking as its key principles "ecological wisdom, social responsibility, grassroots democracy, nonviolence, decentralization, and postpatriarchal consciousness." The German Greens she talked to while working on the book she wrote with Capra taught her something of importance. She says:

I asked questions on the entire range of Green politics, and then near the end I asked each one, "Is there a spiritual dimension to Green politics?" Nearly all of them answered in the affirmative, after which I asked, "How is it manifested? I don't notice much attention to it." At that point they would often look down or look out the window and finally explain that because the Nazis manipulated religion, especially a pre-Christian, Nature-based religion (the Nordic myths and "sacred" soil of Germany), it is practically *verboten* to bring religious impulses into German politics today. In addition, I was told that those German Greens who had come from a Marxist background squelched talk of spiritual values and the feelings of reverence for Nature, which had been prevalent in the Greens' first campaign, the European Parliament election of June 1979. In short, I learned on my first research trip that the spiritual dimension of Green politics is unlikely to come out of West Germany, even though it provides motivation for many German Greens.

This may or may not prove a disadvantage for the Germans. It may turn out that their unwillingness to use religious language may accelerate their development of religious philosophy, each one for himself, freeing them of the weight of cultural tradition. Charlene Spretnak seems to join Wes Jackson in his view that the displacement of pre-Christian pantheism by belief in an anthropomorphic God laid the basis for Enlightenment materialism. She says:

Once reverence for the mysteries of the life force was removed from Nature and placed in a remote judgmental sky god—first Zeus, then Yahweh—it was only a matter of time before the "Great Chain of Being" would place the sky god at the top of "natural order" and Nature at the bottom. . . . Gary Snyder,

who is a deep ecologist and a historian of culture as well as a poet, has expressed the matter quite succinctly: "Our troubles began with the invention of male deities located off the planet."

Passages like this are good reason for reading Charlene Spretnak's book. The publisher is Bear & Co., Santa Fe, New Mexico, the price \$4.95 in paperback.