

## ECONOMIST OF TRANSCENDENCE

IN 1940, Ernst Friedrich ("Fritz") Schumacher, then twenty-nine years old, his wife, Muschi, and their son Christian, were living in England on a working farm in Eydon, Northamptonshire, in a small cottage. With the help of a friend, Fritz, a German, had found work on the land as an "enemy alien" for a man who liked and admired him. This saved him from an internment camp, except for a three-month interlude. Finally released, he returned to Eydon where he remained for eighteen months. By reason of his evident background, the owner, Robert Brand, asked him for comment on how the farm was run, and Fritz made a number of suggestions which Brand liked, but the men refused to adopt on the ground, "We have always done it like this." His suggestions were part of a larger pattern of thinking about agriculture and the economic questions he had studied at the university, and as a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, and later as a student, then a lecturer, at Columbia University in New York. He had emigrated to England early in 1937, having decided that he could not become a part of Hitler's war machine, which would be fighting against the true Germany in which he believed.

This story is told by his daughter, Barbara Wood, in her biography, *E. F. Schumacher: His Life and Times* (Harper & Row, 1984, \$19.50), an informing and enjoyable study of a great man. His personal life and career as an economist (his father had been an economist and started a school of economics in Berlin) had its place in his plans, but larger issues also engaged his attention—increasingly as the years went by. During the war years, as Mrs. Wood points out—

Not surprisingly his thinking revolved around the most fundamental question of the day: how could real peace be achieved? He was not concerned with the short term question of how to win the war, but with questions that were much more basic. What caused wars to recur? Were there any removable

causes of war? How could things be arranged so that a lasting peace could be achieved? What was needed in a post-war world? What could be done about Germany to remove not only the effects of the present war but also the more fundamental tendencies that might lead to war again in the future?

This last question absorbed him both as a German and as a citizen of the world. The problem of Germany he now saw was greater than the repercussions of the First World War, which he had blamed for so long. Now that he used a much wider range of tools for his analyses, his more advanced economic thought, his newly discovered political understanding, and a rigorous application of scientific thinking which ruthlessly rooted out all emotional reaction and moral judgments, he could put the problem into a wider context.

The starting point for his ideas was that first most important question of all: What causes war? Fritz knew that it would be the height of folly to believe that he could find the conclusive answer to this question and above all he wanted to make a practical contribution. He knew it could serve no purpose if he were to analyse the causes of war if nothing could then be done about them. Only removable causes were of interest. He suggested "that to look upon war as an accident written large is a useful way of looking at it—useful because it makes you see all sorts of things. Dangerous corners; slippery surfaces; level crossings; not *only* drunken drivers and reckless speeders. . . . There is no one single, simple solution." In his analogy to accidents, Fritz pointed out that it was the aim of traffic experts to make roads safe, not to fix the blame for accidents. He saw his task as making the hazardous road of international relations a little safer, so that when the next driver drunk with lust for power should lurch and swerve along its path there would be less risk of the rest of the world being drawn into another ghastly conflagration. . . .

He believed that he had hit upon something fundamental although he kept stressing: "I am *not* claiming that the economic causes of war are the sole and exclusive causes. I *am* claiming that they are important—important because we can do something about them. . . . Let us remove all removable causes

of war and not waste time searching for 'sole' causes, 'fundamental' causes."

He maintained, for one thing, that a basic cause of war was that the economically strong nations sought a favorable trade balance, which gets the rest of the world into "unpayable debt." It was, he said, the obligation of surplus countries to get rid of their surpluses by increasing their imports from abroad, making it possible for deficit countries to finance their deficits. If, he said, "all nations strive to earn more than they spend, they want the moon. If they set their mind to it with determination, they must get into conflict with one another." Mrs. Wood summarizes:

Fritz considered himself anything but a utopian. His aim was to further world peace by action. He had understood that war had underlying economic causes which were partly due to faulty thinking—praising the rich and powerful surplus countries and condemning the weak deficit countries—and which were institutionalized by the way the international economic system worked. His task was to devise a new system which encouraged a different attitude to trade whereby surplus countries had to spend what they earned in the long term while financing the deficits of the economically weaker countries with their surpluses in the short term. In order to achieve this, Fritz believed it was essential that world trade be organized on a multilateral rather than a bilateral basis, and that order would be maintained by a central banking and clearing system which would keep tabs on all the to-ings and fro-ings of world trade, making sure that all short-term imbalances tended towards long-term balance.

Fritz was in touch with John Maynard Keynes while he was a farm laborer and Keynes was naturally interested in thinking which so closely resembled his own. Keynes invited him to visit, and when Fritz asked for a day off from the farm at Eydon, the manager asked, "What do you want to go to London for?" Fritz answered, "To take tea with John Maynard Keynes." The farm manager thought Fritz had gone off his head.

Fritz was now a freethinker, taking the view that believers in traditional religion were unable to think. He wrote:

I personally, should feel that the "religion of humanity" can give these non-thinkers far more valuable and truthful assurances, viz. that every good man considers it his sacred duty to fight poverty and disease wherever he can, relentlessly, determinedly, without the thought of personal gain that he will devote his best energies to improving the social and political system, to render justice more complete, security of life and limb more perfect.

Although the war was still going on and Fritz had a much reduced income, he was becoming known in Britain. He was working for the Oxford University Institute of Statistics as a salary less than his wage as a farm laborer, so he began writing for the press, starting with the *Observer*. His command of English was impressive and other papers gave him assignments. "He wrote leaders for the *Times*, articles for *Peace News*, the *Architects' Journal* and many other publications." An issue which loomed was the prospect of post-war unemployment. The secretary to Sir William Beveridge, who had made a famous report on the Social Services, and planned one on full employment, hired Fritz to draft a report on this subject. His work was given to Beveridge, who confronted Fritz with searching questions and then, satisfied, accepted the draft as the basis of his report, which was published in 1944.

During the last months of the war, in the early spring of 1945, Fritz was appointed to work with the American Bombing Survey of Germany, headed by John Kenneth Galbraith, whose task it was to determine why the bombing of German industrial targets had done so little to destroy Germany's industrial strength. He was issued an American army uniform and given the rank of colonel. After flying over the country and visiting sites of the bombings, he estimated that "eighty per cent of the housing stock was still intact and seventy-five per cent of the industrial plant." The entire economy, however, had ceased to function. "There was no transport, no postal service, no economic activity of any kind." With the restoration of peace the reorganization of these activities would take time because the de-Nazification program was eliminating the top

administrators throughout the system and it would be difficult to replace them. Meanwhile Germany was flooded with between twelve and thirteen million refugees expelled from Eastern Europe. Money was no longer the currency, cigarettes having become largely the means of exchange.

Early in 1946 Fritz was granted naturalization as a British subject, enabling him to work for the British Control Commission in Germany. He was then thirty-five. His job was "Economic Adviser" and he soon realized that "coal was the lynchpin upon which the recovery of Germany depended." The rule then was no German coal for Germany—the Allies wanted all of it—an ultimate folly since the restoration of German industry depended upon coal from the Ruhr. There were many other discouragements and by 1949 Fritz was looking for a change in his work. In November he was offered the job of Economic Adviser to the British Coal Board, which he was glad to accept and return to England. His biographer says:

While fighting for a proper coal policy in Germany he had learnt that energy was fundamental to all economic activity, that the recovery of Germany depended on coal output. He had realized that energy was the foundation stone of industry, and coal, being indigenous to Europe, was the foundation stone of the European economy. In putting the coal industry on a firm footing he was working at the very center of the economic life of the country. The British industry, although nationalized since 1946, consisted of a host of different scattered mines whose owners had for years jealously guarded their independence and which now had to be welded into a cohesive whole. He realized too that a strong indigenous coal industry was in the interests of peace. If an industrial nation could avoid depending on imported energy it would be avoiding the dangers to peace that international trade in such a sensitive commodity would bring.

Fritz bought a house in Caterham in 1950, forty minutes from London, where he lived with his family until he died. There he had a four-acre garden which became his joy to take care of. He joined the Soil Association (later becoming its president) and learned the arts of organic gardening from such teachers as Sir Albert Howard and Lady Eve Balfour. Food and fuel, he

said in lectures, were the two primary factors in the economy. His job was not demanding of his time and he used the daily train ride for reading such books as Prescott's *Conquest of Mexico* and *Peru*. His interest turned also to the Orient and Eastern philosophy and mysticism. He now began to see the limitations of "rationalism, logic and reason" on which he had wholly relied. A passage in Radhakrishnan's *Eastern Religions and Western Thought* made a deep impression on him. The Indian philosopher wrote in 1939:

The present crisis in human affairs is due to a profound crisis in human consciousness, a lapse from the organic wholeness of life. There is a tendency to overlook the spiritual and exalt the intellectual. . . . The business of the intellectual is to dispel the mystery, put an end to dreams, strip life of its illusion, and reduce the great play of human life to a dull show, comic on occasions but tragic more frequently. The primitive cults which helped their adherents to live healthily and happily on their own plane are dismissed as crude superstitions. Everything is stripped of soul, of inner life. This world is all and we must rest content with it.

Fritz wrote to his parents in Germany:

Through this contact with Indian and Chinese philosophy and religion, my whole way of thinking has come into motion. New possibilities of knowledge (and experience) have been opened to me of whose existence I had no inkling. I feel as men during the Renaissance must have felt. All the conclusions I had come to have to be thought through again. And it is not only thinking that is influenced. But it is not easy to describe this. I have the feeling that I will look back to my forty-first year as a turning point for the rest of my life.

In 1953 he met Edward Conze, an English Buddhist and scholar who taught him the Buddhist philosophy, leading him to declare, a little later, after his experience in Burma where he had gone as an economic adviser, "I am a Buddhist." The life of the Burmese was indeed an anomaly for a European visitor. While the common people were utterly poor, they seemed completely at peace. Fritz wrote to his wife: "Even some of the Americans here say: 'How can we help them, when they are much happier and

much nicer than we are ourselves?" While the Burmese government was not ready for the advice he would give—being persuaded rather to follow the Western formula—Fritz wrote a program for a Buddhist land. When economic "progress" reaches the point of sufficiency, it should stop; after that, "it is evil, destructive, uneconomic." In his paper, he said:

A Buddhist economy would make "the distinction between 'renewable' and 'non-renewable' resources." A civilization built on renewable resources, such as the products of forestry and agriculture, is by this fact alone superior to one built on non-renewable resources, such as oil, coal, metal, etc. This is because the former can last, while the latter cannot last. The former cooperates with nature, while the latter robs nature. The former bears the sign of life, while the latter bears the sign of death. It is already certain beyond the possibility of doubt that the "oil-coal-metal-economies" cannot be anything else but a short abnormality in the history of mankind—because they are based on non-renewable resources and because, being purely materialistic, they recognize no limits. . . .

Readers will recognize here the fundamentals of Schumacher's economic philosophy as embodied in the work of the Intermediate Technology Development Group, which he later (1965) formed with George McRobie (his assistant on the Coal Board) and a friend, Julia Porter. Its work was effectively launched by the appearance in the *Observer* of his article on Intermediate Technology in August 1965, which brought an immediate and wide response.

Fritz's thinking had changed:

In the past his plans had depended on government action, on the changing of "the system," on structural alterations. The concept of intermediate technology was free from this necessity. The earliest slogan he had coined held the answer: "Find out what the people are doing and help them to do it better." Action would result not from government intervention but from the people themselves. Here too lay the great power and appeal of intermediate technology. In it the most humble people could find hope that they could raise themselves above grinding poverty.

The response to intermediate technology came from all over the world from people who were actually spending their time trying to improve farming methods, or small businesses, or manufacturing. It gave hope to people of all levels, to the farmer who could improve his output by a better designed hand-plough, to the builder who could make more mud bricks with a more efficient hand-press, to the potter whose hand-made pots grew at twice the rate on a wheel powered by foot pedal or even a small engine rather than a wheel spun by hand.

Fritz had been right all along. It was possible to achieve results without power and force. But what he had not realized was that those whose humble daily actions seemed quite insignificant were those who had the power to change the world. It was this message of hope, that each individual had the power to effect change in his own humble, apparently insignificant life, that spread like wildfire and that led to the most dramatic change of all in Fritz's life.

He was now called upon by the rulers of African countries for help and advice. He visited Tanzania and Zambia, then South America—always by request—and in Peru he found confirmed what he had learned from a visit to India in 1962—that the common people, the peasants, needed protection from Western mass-produced goods, as Gandhi had advocated. "What was needed was a level of technology better than the simple methods used in the rural hinterland, more productive than the traditional tools, but far simpler and less capital intensive than the modern technology imported from the West." Finally, he left the Coal Board in order to devote more time to the spread of these ideas. Meanwhile he had become a Roman Catholic, following the advice of Gandhi, who had said: "In matters of religion I must confine myself to my ancestral religion; that is, the use of my immediate surroundings in religion. If I find my religion defective, I should serve it by purifying its defects." His wife, Muschi, died of cancer in 1960, and later Fritz married the girl who had been a household helper, Vreni Rosenberger. He had four children by each wife, eight in all—four boys and four girls.

Free of his duties at the Coal Board, Fritz had time to write his books. *Small Is Beautiful*, which embodied a simple and clear exposition of intermediate technology, came out in London in 1973, and a little later in the United States (Harper & Row). After a time it became a bestseller throughout the world.

He came to the United States twice to lecture and to encourage the formation of groups for the promotion of Intermediate Technology, which came to be called Appropriate Technology, although he preferred "Intermediate" as containing the content that seemed most important to him. He drew record audiences in all parts of the country. His first visit was in 1974, the second in 1977, which proved a triumph on nearly all counts. He met with Governor Brown in California and President Carter in Washington. Brown later spoke at Fritz's funeral. Overworked, his hair now white, he succumbed to a heart attack on September 4, shortly after his return from America to Europe, on a train going to Zurich, where he was to lecture. He was sixty-six years old.

His other book, *A Guide for the Perplexed*, appeared soon after. In it he gave expression to the principles and ideas which had shaped his life. His daughter chose these words from its ending to be the last in her biography.

The generosity of the Earth allows us to feed all mankind; we know enough about ecology to keep the Earth a healthy place; there is enough room on the Earth and there are enough materials, so that everybody can have adequate shelter; we are quite competent to produce sufficient supplies of necessities so that no one need live in misery. Above all we shall then see that the economic problem is a convergent problem that has been solved already: we know how to provide enough, and do not require any violent, inhuman, aggressive technologies to do so. There is no economic problem and, in a sense, there never has been. But there is a moral problem, and moral problems are not convergent, capable of being solved so that future generations can live without effort; no, they are divergent problems which have to be understood and transcended.

## *REVIEW*

### CHANGES IN LANGUAGE

WHAT is happening to religion? The question is of course too big, yet it is one that needs to be asked. What does "religion" mean? The way we use the term, it has two meanings. In one sense it means a set of answers to the great questions: Who am I? What and where did I come from? Where am I and other human beings going? What are my responsibilities? Why is there so much pain in the world? Is there a reasonable basis for the hope of a better world? Do we in some sense survive death? All of us or just part of us? Which part?

How much "mystery" in connection with such questions is acceptable? Can the faculty of intuition penetrate all the mysteries of life, or just some of them? What can we say legitimately remains mysterious?

The other meaning of religion applies to the behavior and the organizations of people who call themselves "religious." Between the two meanings there is as much difference as there is between, say, patriotism and patriotic organizations—in short, a great deal.

Here we want to discuss only the first meaning, since the major religious organizations of the time seem to be crumbling, many of the members or former members hoping to revivify their faith by incorporating new (as well as very old) elements in what they believe or wonder about. One reason for the breakdown of the forms of traditional religion has been the growth of rationalism since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment. The influence of the Enlightenment has been toward the adoption of mechanistic assumptions, with the result that rationalism has come to mean Materialism. Yet rationalism, the investigatory tool of which is reason, need not be materialistic. Metaphysics is a rational discipline. Leibniz and Spinoza were in some sense rationalists. But rationalism in association with the revolutionary struggle of the

eighteenth century became materialist as a means of combatting the political power of religious organization. Only now are we beginning to recover from the use of Materialism as a weapon against the united power of church and state.

But meanwhile we—or a great many of us—have a distinct distaste for the vocabulary of traditional, inherited religion. We prefer the terms of science in psychology, perhaps because their use does not require us to fight the battle of freedom from dogma again as a result of the words we use. In this the humanistic psychologists, starting, say, with Carl Jung and Erich Fromm, and including Carl Rogers, Karen Horney, Abraham Maslow, and Rollo May, have played a major part.

The distinctive contribution of Maslow was the difference he pointed out in levels of motivation. The last paper in his posthumous book, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (Viking, 1971), is titled "A Theory of Metamotivation," in which the term "self-actualization" is given rich meaning. The self-actualizing person is one in whom the full potentialities of being human seem to become manifest. Maslow evolved a psychology of human health and positive values. Until his work, most of the vocabulary of psychology seemed to be based on pathology or psychopathology, which tended to eliminate the higher or best human qualities from investigation. Maslow determined to repair this neglect. This paper is made of twenty-eight affirmations about the nature of man, presented as scientifically testable propositions. From it we shall take various passages which illustrate what might be regarded as the emergence of a non-moralistic moral vocabulary. In the discussion of the first proposition, "*Self-actualizing individuals (more matured, more fully human), by definition, already suitably gratified in their basic needs, are now motivated in other higher ways, to be called 'metamotivation,'*" he said:

By definition, self-actualizing people are gratified in all their basic needs (of belongingness, affection, respect, and self-esteem). This is to say that they have a feeling of belongingness and rootedness, they are satisfied in their love needs, have friends and feel loved and lovable, they have status and place in life and respect from other people, and they have a reasonable feeling of worth and self-respect. If we phrase this negatively—in terms of the frustration of these basic needs and in terms of pathology—then this is to say that self-actualizing people do not (for any length of time) feel anxiety-ridden, insecure, unsafe, do not feel alone, ostracized, rootless, or isolated, do not feel unlovable, rejected, or unwanted, do not feel despised and looked down upon, and do not feel deeply unworthy, nor do they have crippling feelings of inferiority or worthlessness.

Of course this can be phrased in other ways and this I have done. For instance, since the basic needs had been assumed to be the only motivations for human beings, it was possible, and in certain contexts also useful, so say of self-actualizing people that they were "unmotivated." This was to align these people with the Eastern philosophical view of health as the transcendence of striving or desiring or wanting. (And something of the sort was also true of the Roman Stoic view.)

Here Maslow brings the self-actualizers into bowing distance to the Eastern conception of the sage, if not the yogi. Elsewhere Maslow speaks of the Bodhisattvic path of the Buddha's teaching, remarking that it combines self-improvement with the service of others. The best way to help others, he says, is by becoming a better person. "But one necessary aspect of becoming a better person is *via* helping others. So one must and can do both simultaneously." He adds: "The question 'Which comes first?' is an atomistic question."

The second proposition is: "*All such people are devoted to some task, call, vocation, beloved work ('outside themselves').*" Following is the discussion:

In examining self-actualizing people directly, I find that in all cases, at least in our culture, they are dedicated people, devoted to some task "outside themselves," some vocation or duty, or beloved job. Generally the devotion and dedication is so marked that one can fairly use the old words vocation, calling, or mission to describe their passionate, selfless and

profound feeling for their "work." We could even use the words destiny or fate. I have sometimes gone so far as to speak of oblation in the religious sense, in the sense of offering oneself or dedicating oneself upon some altar for some particular task, some cause outside oneself and bigger than oneself, something not merely selfish, something impersonal.

I think it is possible to go pretty far with the notion of destiny or fate. This is a way of putting into inadequate words the feeling one gets when one listens to self-actualizing people (and some others) talking about their work or task. One gets the feeling of a beloved job, and, furthermore, of something for which the person is a "natural," something that he is suited for, something that is right for him, even something that he was born for. It is easy to sense something like a pre-established harmony of, perhaps one could say, a good match like the perfect love affair or friendship, in which it seems that people belong to each other and were meant for each other. In the best instances, the person and his job fit together and belong together perfectly like a key and a lock, or perhaps resonate together like a sung note which sets into sympathetic resonance a particular string in the piano keyboard.

Here, surely, Maslow has entered the domain of philosophical religion, without sacrificing his rigor, but drafting his powers of observation in the service of high human ideals. This, one could say, is natural preparation of the scientific mind to begin to think in metaphysical terms. In his account of the self-actualizing individual, Maslow describes the observable traits of a promethean human being from so many points of view that in effect he generates the conception of an entity whose most evident characteristic is nobility of character and purpose. This is what the ancient Greeks termed the *Nous*, from which some modern psychologists derive the adjective *noetic* to characterize the higher aspect of human character. For Maslow the idea of the self-actualizer was formed as a synthesis of his observations of a group of individuals, how they thought and behaved. Toward the end of this paper he says:

I have found it most useful for myself to differentiate between the realm of being (B-realm) and the realm of deficiencies (D-realm), that is,

between the eternal and the "practical." Simply as a matter of the strategy and tactics of living well and fully and of choosing one's life instead of having it determined for us, this is a help. It is so easy to forget ultimates in the rush and hurry of daily life, especially for young people. So often we are merely responders, so to speak, simply reacting to stimuli, to rewards and punishments, to emergencies, to pains and fears, to demands of other people, to superficialities. It takes a specific, conscious, *ad hoc* effort, at least at first, to turn one's attention to intrinsic things and values, e.g., perhaps seeking actual physical aloneness, perhaps exposing oneself to great music, to good people, to natural beauty, etc. Only after practice do these strategies become easy and automatic so that one can be living in the B-realm even without wishing or trying, i.e., the "unitive life," the "metalife," the "life of being," etc.

The concluding proposition is this: "*Many of the ultimate religious functions are fulfilled by this theoretical structure,*" to which he appends the comment:

From the point of view of the eternal and absolute that mankind has always sought, it may be that the B-Values could also, to some extent, serve this purpose. They are *per se*, in their own right, not dependent upon human vagaries for their existence. They are perceived, not invented. They are transhuman and transindividual. They exist beyond the life of the individual. They can be conceived to be a kind of perfection. They could conceivably satisfy the human longing for certainty.

This seems a wholly constructive way to return to thinking about the characterological meaning of religion, providing a language neither materialistic nor theological.

## *COMMENTARY*

### A RARE COMBINATION

WE might draw a parallel between the development of E. F. Schumacher's thinking, as given in his daughter's biography, and Maslow's "hierarchy of needs" in the passages quoted in Review from *Farther Reaches of Human Nature*. There seems a sense in which Schumacher's thinking traversed the hierarchy, reaching finally a realizing sense of the B-realm (see page 8) and deliberately committing his life to the service of others in an area which he well understood.

During the period in which he was a freethinker—barring all feeling and rigorously applying scientific thinking—Schumacher was at least a technical materialist, although his fundamental devotion to the good of others seems evident quite early in his career. But then, after reading Eastern philosophy, he deliberately altered his fundamental assumptions. This was, as he put it, "a turning point" for the rest of his life. In Maslovian terms, he recognized the philosophical foundation of the B-realm and undertook, consciously and deliberately, a course that he had been following only by a kind of "moral instinct." For him to say, "I am a Buddhist," was equivalent to having discovered a metaphysical view of life and the world which he had practiced without rationalizing it.

Fritz Schumacher became that remarkable and unusual combination: a man of high spiritual convictions who was determined to practice what he believed. For him, this meant helping others to lead self-reliant and productive lives. That this intention was in key with the crying need of the world in our time became evident in the extraordinary response to his efforts in behalf of showing the way to intermediate technology.

People all around the world realized that he knew what he was talking about—he had spoken to their condition. He understood the relation between the D-realm of actual human need and the B-realm of character formation and

expression. This practical grasp of how ethics may be applied to the complex problems of our age—how people may actually help other people—and not interfere with their lives or merely get in their way—grew out of the combination we spoke of; or we might say, it was the result of an exceptional capacity for clear thinking, an understanding of human nature, and a profound commitment to the common good.

Those skeptical of these claims, or think them exaggerated, are invited to read his books.

## CHILDREN

### . . . and Ourselves

#### WHAT IS MORAL EDUCATION?

A CRITICAL review article by Christina Sommers (of Clark University) is worth looking up in last summer's *American Scholar*. As a teacher of philosophy, she finds disturbing what she calls the current "reform" of moral education in the schools. The reformers, she says, are so determined not to "indoctrinate" that the very meaning of morality seems to have dropped out of their courses.

Some leaders of the new reform movement advise teachers that effective moral education cannot take place in the "authoritarian" atmosphere of the average American high school. The teacher ought to democratize the classroom turning it into a "just community" where the student and teacher have an equal say. Furthermore, the student who takes a normative ethics course in college will likely encounter a professor who also has a principled aversion to the inculcation of moral precepts and who will confine classroom discussion to such issues as the Karen Ann Quinlan case, recombinant DNA research, or the moral responsibilities of corporations. The result is a system of moral education that is silent about virtue.

The premise of these educators is that "none of us has the 'right' set of values to pass on to other people's children." Does this mean, one wonders, if stories of the authentic heroes that may be found in our history, whose lives are described in literature, will be regarded as containing indoctrination and therefore ignored? Does it mean that the drama of the trial of Socrates is in danger of infecting the young with the Socratic idea of virtue? Does it mean that Orwell should not be read, since, as one student said admiringly of him, "He was a virtuous man!" The *Scholar* writer says:

The student of values clarification [the title given the reform] is taught awareness of his preferences and his right to their satisfaction in a democratic society. To help students discover what it is that they genuinely value, they are asked to respond to questionnaires called "strategies." Some typical

questions are: Which animal would you rather be: an ant, a beaver, or a donkey? Which season do you like the best? Do you prefer hiking, swimming, or watching television? In one strategy called "Values Geography," the student is helped to discover his geographical preferences; other lessons solicit his reaction to seat belts, messy handwriting, hiking, wall-to-wall carpeting, cheating, abortion, hit-and-run drivers and a mother who severely beats a two-year-old child.

No doubt a teacher can make something out of discussion of such questions, but will it be in any sense moral education?

Morality obviously affects judgments of various sorts, but each human being brings to each decision some inner sense of obligation, out of which his moral sense grows. Can there be any morality worth talking about without considering the *obligations* we have, simply as human beings? A case could be made for saying that "rights" do not exist in the natural world, but are a social creation, an order of relationships generated by the practice of obligations. That, at any rate, is what the Dialogues of Plato are about. Is there any historical character worth talking about, worth remembering, who did not have a strong sense of obligation? Are the Buddha and the Christ not to be regarded as models of moral deportment? Shall we omit study of the character of George Washington, of Abraham Lincoln, because admiring their virtues might function as indoctrination? In short, should the sources of moral inspiration be left to chance?—which is to say, the mass media and their total indifference to morality except in lip service to clichés?

Christina Sommers says:

It is not surprising that teachers trained in neutrality and the principled avoidance of "moralizing" sometimes find themselves in bizarre classroom situations. In a junior high school in Newton, Massachusetts, a teacher put on the blackboard a poster of a Hell's Angel wearing a swastika. The students were asked to react. "He's honest anyway. He's living out his own feelings," answered one. "He's not fooling, said another. When the students seemed to react favorably to the Hell's Angel, the teacher ventured to suggest that "an alienated person might not be happy."

After a similar discussion in a class of Harvard undergraduates, a teaching assistant remarked to the professor, "You know, I think that if some of our students were sitting as judges at the Nuremberg trials, they would probably acquit—or at least pardon—most of the Nazi defendants." The professor took the view that the students believed in "no fault" history. He had given a course on the Holocaust, and was disturbed to find that "a majority of students adopted the view that the rise of Hitler and the Nazis was inevitable, that no one could have resisted it, and that in the end no one was responsible for what happened." The difference between the views of these students and that of Freeman Dyson, who in World War II had directed British bombing missions over Germany, seems worth noting. The following is from Dyson in Kenneth grower's *The Starship and the Canoe*:

"After the war was ended, I read reports of the trials of the men who had been high up in the Eichmann organization. They had sat in their offices writing memoranda and calculating how to murder people efficiently, just like me. The main difference was that they were sent to jail or hanged as war criminals and I went free."

There seems material for moral education here, but who will use it?

The reformers are doubtless right in deploring "moralizing," but surely everyone needs to think about his moral obligations, and most of us are helped by having examples of this sort of self-inspection. We may need a few new words, too, along with the familiar ones, such as courage, compassion, responsibility, consideration, pertinacity, integrity, and truthfulness.

In the autumn issue of *In Context*, a new quarterly published in the state of Washington (P.O. Box 215, Sequim, Wash 98382), Catharine Burton considers what the decentralized, holistic society will be like. An entire range of virtues will certainly be necessary in order to make it work. She says:

Translated into guiding principles, the process of self-organization maintains the integrity of the whole-system through mutually enhancing,

cooperative relationships which sustain and nurture the evolution of all parts as well as the system as a whole. In this new context, a reverence for life becomes a superordinate value. Such principles and values foster new processes for organizing society. . . . What is humanity's role in this sacred web of life? Some have suggested that humanity could be the nervous system of the Earth organism, a kind of "global brain," to use physicist Peter Russell's phrase, that allows life on earth to be conscious of itself. . . .

To know our bioregion is to know and connect with our home planet. It is to breathe with the earth and to know ourselves as part of the sacred web of life. To know this place—where its waters come from, its trees, its wildlife, its food, its energy, its wisdom and its spirit is to know ourselves as a whole. . . .

There is something else, however, which is a part—a crucial part of this vision of planetary governance. This is a new accounting system, a new bottom line for the planet. No longer will the health of a nation be measured solely by a Gross National Product which declines with longer-lasting products and better health care and increases with accidents and war. Instead, life's own accounting system will provide a planetary health index, a mature process of whole system accountability. Such an index recognizes our accountability to life, to the planet, to our human family, to the elements, to our children and to future generations who will inherit this earth. . . .

New economic institutions are being designed to be self-organizing and self-regulating that practice workplace democracy using human-scale ecologically conscious technologies. New approaches to peace are being created beyond deterrence and détente toward communicated understandings of each other's needs and fears, with a mediation of and not a violent eradication of differences. New schools fostering the growth of the whole person, natural methods of medicine, new forms of spiritual celebration of life are all ways in which the new order is being manifest.

Well, "manifest" perhaps, in plans and dreams, along with small-scale heroic practice. But extraordinary virtue will be necessary among the people who bring this holistic society into actual being. What would the "reformers" of moral education say, if confronted by responsibility to such a requirement?

## *FRONTIERS* Sanitation, Water, Diet

WORLD health care is not a subject of great popular interest, yet the reader of the *Worldwatch* paper, *Improving World Health*, is likely to find in its 64 pages things that will be remembered. The contents are largely made up of the contrast between conditions in the developed nations and those in the developing countries. This amounts to comparing the health of the rich with the health of the poor. In the developed countries, heart disease, strokes, and cancer are the cause of nearly seven tenths of the deaths, while diarrhea, respiratory infection, and miscellaneous afflictions take about the same proportion in the poor countries. As the author of the Paper (No. 59), William U. Chandler, says at the beginning: "Nations that could afford it have invested heavily in medicine and sanitation, and as a result, their children are ten times more likely to survive to adulthood than the children of the least affluent. Adults in richer lands also live longer, although, ironically, many now die prematurely of diseases associated with affluence."

Sanitation measures and clean drinking water are primary needs in the developing nations, along with a better knowledge of nutrition, especially for the young. Diet education and reform is what the affluent need. The writer says:

Children of the Third World die of diseases usually not considered lethal elsewhere. Diarrhea, complicated or brought on by malnutrition, causes about a third of all child and infant deaths. Pneumonia vies with diarrheal diseases as the leading taker of the young life. . . . Comparison with the developed world indicates the magnitude of this disaster. The worst incidence of infant mortality in the United States in 1982 was in Washington, D.C., where 2 per cent of all babies alive at birth died before their first birthdays. This high rate, almost double the U.S. average of 1.1 per cent, was due in part to low birthweights and poor prenatal care in the very young, often impoverished women. In Upper Volta, however, 21 per cent of all infants die. More than 76 countries today endure infant mortality rates greater than 10 per cent, and in regions of India and

within some countries in Africa the rate exceeds so per cent. These areas not only fare catastrophically worse than developed nations, but worse than several developing countries as well. China and Sri Lanka, despite income levels among the lowest in the world, have infant mortality rates of "only" 4 to 5 per cent. Low death rates have also been achieved in parts of India, Thailand, and Haiti, where primary health care procedures—midwifery, maternal education on breast-feeding and weaning, vaccinations, oral rehydration of victims of diarrhea, and antibiotics against respiratory infections—have been implemented.

In reading these figures one is led to wonder about conditions in societies which have not been much affected by the impact of Western industrialism. There are no statistics, of course, yet some of the worst practices noted in this pamphlet result from misapplications of Western ideas. Formulas instead of mother's milk for babies did not originate in tribal superstition! Mr. Chandler writes:

All primary care workers should be trained to promote breastfeeding; its advantages have been abundantly documented. Studies around the world have shown that artificially fed infants are several times more likely to contract diarrheal diseases and die. Healthy mothers can satisfy an infant's nutritional requirements through breastfeeding for at least six months and thus avoid the risk of infection carried by contaminated formulas or water. The colostrum, or foremilk, that flows from the mother's breasts immediately after birth is rich in antibodies that will protect the baby from diseases against which it otherwise would have little resistance. The milk itself is more nutritious than any substitute, and it is free—the money saved can be used to assure the nourishment of the mother. The importance of breastfeeding is obviously much more critical when clean water and sterile containers are unavailable for preparing formula.

Failures in breastfeeding emphasize the need for promoting good weaning practices. Exclusive breastfeeding for many women is not practical for more than a few weeks. A survey in Barbados showed that 90 per cent of all mothers believed breastfeeding to be superior, but only 45 per cent breastfed fully at three months, and only 17 per cent at six months. The gap between belief and behavior

probably is due to the mother's need to work outside the home and a lack of daycare facilities near work.

Indifferent and tyrannical governments can be a major problems. Doctors and nurses in Somalia handed to passersby leaflets complaining of the government's failure to implement health care, and were imprisoned for four years without trial. Another difficulty:

Peter Bourne, president of Global Water, Inc., an organization formed to help implement goals of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, relates two stories that capture the meaning water carries for human health. The first comes from an African woman asked whether she understood the importance of encouraging her children to wash their hands after defecation, particularly before eating. She replied, "I have to carry our water seven miles every day. If I caught anyone wasting water by washing their hands, I would kill them." The second comes from another African woman asked how having water taps installed in her village had changed village life. Her immediate response was, "The babies no longer die."

In the developed world dietary habits are the main problem, obviously related to both heart disease and cancer. Yet the solutions are not obvious at all:

Heart disease has been linked to the very foods people in the developed world have been taught are most wholesome: eggs, beef, and dairy products. Reports seem to come daily that everything from mushrooms to peanut butter causes cancer. Indeed, human metabolism itself may with age lead inevitably to these diseases. But cancer and heart disease rates can vary widely around the world, a fact that suggests they can be reduced. The risk of breast cancer, for example, is more than four times greater for an American woman than for a Japanese woman, possibly because the American diet contains two to four times as many calories from fat as the Japanese diet. Japanese who move to the United States and adopt American eating habits develop rates of colon and breast cancer similar to the Americans. . . . Diets high in fiber and vitamins E and A seem to protect against colon cancer. Diets high in pickled and salt-preserved foods, including those of Scandinavians and Japanese, seem to increase stomach cancer. Diets of poorly preserved foods, common in Africa, increase the risk of liver cancer because the powerful carcinogen of aflatoxin is produced in these foods by

bacteria. Westerners are exposed to aflatoxin in peanut butter, but their low rates of liver cancer suggest that their overall risk due to this factor is low. Studying variations such as these, epidemiologists Richard Doll and Richard Peto, in a landmark study published in 1981, estimated that 35 to 50 per cent of all cancers, in the United States, at least, could some day be avoided by adherence to dietary guidelines.

Quite evidently we all have a lot to learn about health care. The concise papers issued by the Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, put an enormous amount of information in a few well-chosen words. This one is four dollars a copy.