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WAYS OF THINKING ABOUT CHANGE

AMONG the longings which come to the surface in people's lives, these days, is the hope of finding, at some time or other, a place to live among others of friendly and sympathetic mind where one can feel and be useful, and pursue goals of decency and promise. The expression we have for such a situation is "the good society," but where is one to be found? If one cannot now be located, is it at all possible or reasonable to go about the creation of such a society?

The question is at least reasonable, although the obstacles seem great. What resources have we for thinking about how to make some sort of beginning? Well, there is, first of all, the record in literature of past societies which seem to us to have been better in many respects than ours. We should start, of course, with the assumption that past achievements can never be repeated in the same terms. Even past visions of a good society, however much they touch our hearts, are hard to conjure before our eyes with the same enthusiasm and hope. Try, for example, reading Walt Whitman out loud to a group of friends. The century between Whitman's time and ours puts a cruel damper on the feeling he once was able to inspire. People have changed, obviously in some ways for the worse; but have we changed in any way for the better? The answer to this question is difficult to conceive.

A change for the better in a child is not at all the same as such a change for an adult. What is the measure of the "goodness" of a change? If you contrast the happy feeling of a person engrossed in his illusions with the disenchantment of one whose expectations have been smashed by experience, which will you say is the better of the two situations? And yet, in each sequence of development, there seems to be a climactic sort of "rightness" for the best of that sequence, although no longer right for the sequence that will follow. To be periodically driven into depression by the breakdown of our assumptions seems one of the laws of human life, and if we can learn to be objective about this, then the question becomes: What is the attitude to be assumed which will see us through the vicissitudes of both personal and social history? If we recognize in this question the essence of what we are trying to find out, then it becomes legitimate to look at some of the good societies of the past for pointers and suggestions.

Where shall we look? Well, Stefansson provides a wonderful account of the life of the Eskimos of the Coronation Gulf district of northern Canada, before the invasion of white civilization had had much effect on them. The Eskimos lived a tough life in hazardous circumstances, but what they made out of it makes you ashamed. (See his book, *I Believe,* edited by Clifton Fadiman.) Similar accounts are available in studies of the American Indians, such as Laura Thompson's *The Hopi Way,* and in *Preconscious Foundations of Human Experience* (Basic Books) Trigant Burrow gives quotations from similar studies. Still another source would be Arthur Morgan's book, *Nowhere Was Somewhere,* a study of utopias in the light of the idea that these dreams of good societies were nearly all founded on actual history in the past.

Here, however, we draw on one of the selections from Lafcadio Hearn made by Kenneth Rexroth for a book he edited, *The Buddhist Writings of Lafcadio Hearn* (Ross-Erikson, Santa Barbara, 1977). Why pick Japan? One must read Hearn to see why. He fell in love with the old Japan as it was before the impact of Westernization had spread. The old Japan had the exquisite qualities of a Buddhist country and hardly anyone has written about the life of the people there as well as Hearn, who adopted their ways himself, as much as he could. In the

contribution called "Buddhist Allusions in Japanese Folksong," he begins:

> Perhaps only a Japanese representative of the older culture could fully inform us to what degree the mental soil of the race has been saturated and fertilized by Buddhist idealism. At all events, no European could do so; for to understand the whole relation of Far-Eastern religion to Far-Eastern life would require, not only such scholarship, but also such experience as no European could gain in a lifetime. Yet for even the Western stranger there are everywhere signs of what Buddhism has been to Japan in the past. All the arts and most of the industries repeat Buddhist legends to the eye trained in symbolism; and there is scarcely an object of handiwork possessing any beauty or significance of form—from the plaything of a child to the heirloom of a prince—which does not in some way proclaim the ancient debt to Buddhism of the craft that made it. One may discern Buddhist thoughts in the cheap cotton prints from an Osaka mill not less than in the figured silks of Kyoto. The reliefs upon an iron kettle, or the elephant heads of bronze making the handles of a shopkeeper's hibachi;—the patterns of screen-paper, or the commonest ornamental woodwork of a gateway; the etchings upon a metal pipe, or the enameling upon a costly vase—may all relate, with equal eloquence the traditions of faith. There are reflections or echoes of Buddhist teaching in the composition of a garden;—in the countless ideographs of the long vistas of shop-signs;—in the wonderfully expressive names given to certain fruits and flowers;—in the appellations of mountains, capes, waterfalls, villages—even of modern railway stations. And the new civilization would not yet seem to have much affected the influence thus manifested. Trains and steamers now yearly carry to famous shrines more pilgrims than visited them ever before in a twelve-month;—the temple bells still, in despite of clocks and watches, mark the passing of time for the millions—the speech of the people is still poetized with Buddhist utterances;—the literature and drama still teem with Buddhist expressions;—and the most ordinary voices of the street—songs of children playing, a chorus of laborers at their toil, even cries of itinerant street-vendors—often recall to me some story of saints and Bodhisattvas, or the text of some sutra.

For the sensitive, aesthetic Hearn, battered by life in raw, acquisitive America, coming to Japan at the age of forty, this experience of the common life of the people was at once a kind of revelation of human possibility and the beginning of a personal transformation. In his introduction Rexroth says:

> There is no interpreter of Japanese Buddhism quite like Hearn, but he is not a Buddhologist. Far from it. Hearn was not a scholar, nor was he in the Western sense a religious believer. What distinguishes him is an emotional identification with the Buddhist way of life and with Buddhist cults. Hearn is as good as anyone at providing an elementary grounding in Buddhist doctrine. But what he does incomparably is to give his reader a feeling for how Buddhism is *lived* in Japan, its persistent influence on folklore, burial customs, children's riddles toys for sale in the marketplace, and even upon the farmer's ruminations in the field. For Hearn, Buddhism is a way of life, and he is interested in the effects of its doctrine upon the daily actions and common beliefs of ordinary people. Like the Japanese themselves, he thinks of religion as something one does, not merely as something one believes, unlike the orthodox Christian whose Athanasian Creed declares: "Whosoever would be saved, it is necessary before all things that he believe. . . ."

Actually, Buddhism is more of a philosophy than a religion; no system of thought makes higher intellectual demands on those who try to understand it; but the remarkable thing about the beliefs to which it leads among common folk is that the simplification to the level of their understanding involved no perversion of doctrine, no exploitation of their faith. A passage from the writings of an English traveler, G. Lowes Dickinson (in his book, *Appearances*, published in 1914), makes this exquisitely clear. He is writing about the impact of the sculptured images of the temple of Borobudur in Java, disclosing, in one series, the story of the Buddha, including his previous embodiments, taken from the Jataka tales.

> For example: Once the Buddha lived on earth as a hare. In order to test him Indra came down from heaven in the guise of a traveler. Exhausted and faint, he asked the animals for help. An otter brought fish, a monkey fruit a jackal a cup of milk. But the hare had nothing to give. So he threw himself into a fire, that the wanderer might eat his roasted flesh.

> Again: Once the Buddha lived upon earth as an elephant. He was met by seven hundred travellers, lost and exhausted with hunger. He told them where water would be found, and, near it, the body of an elephant for food. Then, hastening to the spot, he flung himself over a precipice, that he might provide the meal himself. Again: Once the Buddha lived upon earth as a stag. A king, who was hunting him, fell into a ravine. Whereupon the stag halted, descended, and helped him home. All round the outer wall run these pictured legends. And opposite is shown the story of Sakya-Muni himself. We see the new-born child with his feet on lotuses. We see the fatal encounter with poverty, sickness, and death. We see the renunciation, the sojourn in the wilderness, the attainment under the bo-tree, the preaching of the Truth. And all this sculptured gospel seems to bring home to one, better than the volumes of the learned, what Buddhism really meant to the masses of its followers. It meant, surely, not the denial of the soul or of God, but that warm impulse of pity and love that beats still in these tender and human pictures. It meant not the hope or desire for extinction, but the charming dream of thousands of lives, past and to come, in many forms, many conditions, many diverse fates. The pessimism of the master is as little likely as his high philosophy to have reached the mind or the heart of the people. The whole history of Buddhism, indeed, shows that it did not, and does not. What touched them in him was the saint and the lover of animals and men. And this love it was that flowed in streams over the world, leaving wherever it passed, in literature and art, in pictures of flowers or mountains, in fables and poems and tales, the trace of its warm and humanising flood.

To this day, the European or American visitor to Buddhist lands is touched and moved by this influence, which has become both leaven and inspiration in the life of the people. It leads to conversion without persuasion, as in the case of Fielding Hall, a British administrator in rural Burma during the closing years of the last century, as shown in his remarkable book, *The Soul of a People*. It exercises its gentle command over those who would be helpers and reformers in the reconstruction of society. E. F. Schumacher is an example. Despatched to Burma in 1955 by the U.N. as an economic adviser—he had already been profoundly affected by Buddhist philosophy (through George Conze, with whom he studied in England) and won over to views he later expressed in "Buddhist Economics" by reading Gandhi—the impact of Burma, as his daughter put it in her biography of him, "was far greater than he had expected." He wrote home to his wife:

> The people really are delightful. Everything I had heard about their charms and cheerfulness proves to be true. They move about in a very strange way. There is an innocence here which I have never seen before—the exact contrary of what disquieted me in New York. In their gay dances and with their dignified and composed manners, they are lovable; and one really wants to help them, if one but knew how. Even some of the Americans here say: "How can we help them, when they are much happier and much nicer than we are ourselves?"
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> . . . I think there is really some work for me to do here but it may be negative rather than positive, persuading them not to do various things rather than telling them what to do. Because of the positive side they need no advice: as long as they don't fall for this or that piece of nonsense from the West, they will be quite alright following their own better nature.

Barbara Wood, his biographer, goes on:

> Fritz's specific task was to evaluate the work of an American team of economic experts, and to make suggestions about the fiscal and trading position of Burma. The longer he stayed in Burma, the lower his opinion of the American economists fell. After one month he wrote to Muschi [his wife], "My opinion is that they have given a lot of sound advice and have also done a lot of damage (because they are all American Materialists without any understanding of the precious heritage of a Buddhist country), and my problem is how to get my views across without making enemies. So far, I have succeeded."
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> Three weeks later his remarks were less charitable: "I am writing my final report. . . . It is a difficult report to write, because I really want to tell the Burmese Government a few truths about the quality of the advice they are getting. . . . But how to put it?"

It may now be a little clearer why we began this discussion with some account of the thinking and feeling which seems to come naturally in Buddhist lands. Schumacher's great contribution was to show the relevance of the ethics and philosophy of Buddhism to modern problems This

may be the richest resource we have in thinking about the foundations of a good society. While we can't really "imitate" the Buddhists, we may be able to adapt some of their principles, perhaps even using other language, to liberate our minds and satisfy our needs. This is exactly what Schumacher did. His daughter quotes his paper, "Economics in a Buddhist Country":

> "Economics means a certain ordering of life according to the philosophy inherent and implicit in economics," he wrote in a paper to those who might have ears to hear. "The science of economics does not stand on its own feet: it is derived from a view of the meaning and purpose of life—whether the economist himself knows this or not. And . . . the only fully developed system of economic thought that exists at present is derived from a purely materialistic view of life." Materialistic economics was not compatible with spirituality, Fritz argued, not with Christianity, Hinduism or Buddhism. Yet, while no system of economics existed that was compatible with spirituality, there existed an economist whose economics was based on such criteria. This was Mahatma Gandhi. "He had laid the foundation for a system of Economics that would be compatible with Hinduism and I believe, with Buddhism too." Gandhi's economics were derived from the concepts of *Swadeshi* and *Khaddar*, and he had said that the poverty in India was largely due not to the adherence to these concepts but departure from them. *Swadeshi*, economically speaking, could be summed up by saying: if you cannot get what you want in India then never mind the deprivation, you must do without it. *Khaddar* meant to spin with one's hands and wear nothing but homespun garments. Fritz applied these concepts to modern economic problems, to the sort of questions he was supposed to be considering.

He concluded his last book (*A Guide for the Perplexed*) by saying: "There *is* no economic problem and, in a sense, there never has been." The human problem is moral. With right moral understanding applied, our economic problems would simply dissolve.

If that is so, one may ask, why do so many Westerners dislike, and even despise moral ideas? The answer to that can only be, because they are the inheritors of a culture in which the abuse and corruption of moral teachings have over centuries, exceeded the corresponding weaknesses and failures of other civilizations, past and present, in any part of the world. The aggressive French materialist, Julien Offray de la Mettrie, anticipated and summed up the conclusion of Western intellectuality in his notorious book, *Man a Machine*, in 1748, declaring that the world "would never be happy unless it was atheistic." This was the surgical remedy adopted by the *philosophes*, having been made to forget, by the hideous crimes of the Holy Inquisition, and the peculiarly odious associations of Church and State in Europe, that the religious impulse is natural to man and cannot be erased. Their justification was great but their reasoning faulty. Their campaign has been continued to this day. We quote once more from Christina Sommers' *American Scholar* (Summer, 1984) article on the efforts of certain contemporary educators to "reform" moral education. She speaks of how they work with students, in high school and college:

> In these dialogues the teacher avoids discussing "old bags of virtues," such as wisdom, courage, compassion, and "proper" behavior, because any attempt to instill these would be to indoctrinate the student. 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 of social concern as the Karen Ann Quinlan case, recombinant DNA research, or the moral responsibilities of corporations. The result is a system of moral education which is silent about virtue.

What can we do about the re-education of these moral educators? Nothing, apparently. They haven't the slightest conception of what morality is. Work with a pick and shovel on some raw frontier might do them good, but then, moral education includes voluntary self-education;

anything else works backward, as they in their best moments suspect.

A while ago we spoke of the unholy work of the Inquisition as accounting for the Western dislike of morality. The Puritans were almost as bad. Thoreau, reading in the ecclesiastical history of old New England, came across this item and put it in his journal: "In 1665 the Court passed a law to inflict corporal punishment on all persons who resided in the towns of this government, who denied the Scriptures." Thoreau added: "Think of a man being whipped in a spring morning, till he was constrained to confess that the Scriptures were true!"

There are of course worse offenses, but this seems sufficient, over the years and the centuries, to create a culture founded on skepticism and suspicion of morality. It seems likely that, finally, the only really moral men and women we have had in this country are those who have left institutional religion behind. Even the gentle Emerson found he had to leave the Unitarians. We shall leave the definition of morality to another time, saying here only, that to be of value morality must have passed before the bar of honest skepticism. What is *honest* skepticism? It is unangered questioning in the light of reason; it is the justifiable doubt growing out of discovery that human thought, especially when it is made authoritative, may be filled with error, including plausible error.

What kind of morality will work without authority, without enforcement, without indoctrination? The morality that begins with the proposition, "At least, do no harm." It would also be a morality which finds no distinction of great importance between what is reasonable and what is true. This means, if science is the art of knowing what is true, that science must also open the doors to metaphysics, since truth is not only concerned with the visible. Is there any other way to start out constructing a good society?

REVIEW
WHAT JOHN MUIR HAS TO TEACH

THE life and work of John Muir are far more than a part of the conservation movement in the United States, important as this may be. His personal career gives a clear white light on what it means to be a human being, and this question, in the present, has become more urgent than any of the other issues which are now before us. For this reason the recent book, *The Pathless Way,* by Michael P. Cohen, published by the University of Wisconsin Press ($25.00), becomes especially valuable. The author seems to have exceptional insight into the motives which animated and supported Muir throughout his life, perhaps because of his own years spent in the high Sierras of California, and because of certain qualities he has in common with this extraordinary human. The author, in short, is worthy of his subject. We take from his Introduction some passages which reveal the character of his work:

> This book is not a biography of John Muir. Although it has a firm foundation in biographical fact, it is not meant to retell the life. Instead I chose to occupy myself with what I call Muir's spiritual journey. I was interested in his thinking while in the mountains. I wanted to know what kinds of philosophical questions he asked, and what kinds of answers he received while wandering in the Sierra. I wanted to investigate the conscious decisions he made and how he embodied them in his writing. I was particularly interested in Muir's ethics. What was a right relation between Man and Nature, and how could that relationship be transacted? Why, for instance, had he become an advocate of National Parks? I wanted to know what his life meant, but I found that to be an impossible, if not arrogant, question. So I began to ask what his books suggested about his life, or mine.
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> Just as Muir felt no desire to separate himself from the mountains he loved, or to treat them as objects, so I have felt for many years now. Further, I knew that when I began to question Muir's decisions, I was also exploring my own thoughts about the mountains, and about parks. I do not wish to deny a simple fact. This book about Muir is also a book about my own thinking; and not only my own thinking, but the thinking of a whole community, of my generation.

Muir loved the mountains with his mind as well as his heart. He was both scientist and poet. His mind gave both depth and structure to his feeling about the mountains, while his heart provided a visionary leaven to the facts he learned from reading and from observation—mostly from observation, but a *being* kind of observation. His real knowing was always the result of some form of self-identification. The knowledge of such a man has a wholeness at which we marvel, leading to convictions that we all need but don't understand how to obtain. These are the qualities which make Mr. Cohen's book so valuable; he speaks to our condition.

What, most of all, did Muir accomplish? What was the mother lode of all the wealth of his mind, the foundation of his intellectual and moral self-reliance, the undying fire which gave him the power to inspire? These questions have more than biographical importance. They stand for qualities that now seem exceedingly rare in human beings, qualities which, unless we begin to develop them, will by their absence be the cause of our continuing self-destruction.

What did Muir do during the formative period of his life? He deliberately and systematically freed himself from his times. Is that really possible? The answer, of course, must be yes and no. The freedom we speak of is the freedom to consult oneself instead of the prevailing authorities of one's time. What we turn to in making decisions determines what we do with our lives. And since, as history shows, every epoch has its peculiar blindnesses and false assumptions, the only free minds are those which work their way out of this confinement. It is this freedom which enables the wonderful few who have it to exert a leverage for the improvement of their times. No one else really knows how. Muir became a writer not because he liked to write—he didn't like writing at all—but because writing is an instrument through which leverage is applied.

Much of Cohen's book is devoted to Muir's development of the tools of leverage, sometimes to the compromise he was obliged to make in the service of the weak—the only legitimate excuse of compromise.

We don't want to give space here to the early facts of Muir's life. Cohen provides what is needed, and other books (for brief reading) such as Stewart Udall's *The Quiet Crisis* and *Speaking for Nature* by Paul Brooks outline the chief events in his career. The real point is that Muir became the conscious architect of his life and what he would make of it. Cohen shows how Muir did this, giving as a starting point Muir's comment in something he wrote in an early work: "Well, I have precious little sympathy for the myriad bat eyed proprieties of civilized man, and if a war of races should occur between the wild beasts and Lord Man I would be tempted to side with the bears." The following is from the section in Cohen's book titled "The Flight from Orthodoxy."

> Muir had begun the bold and arduous task of reexamining values he had absorbed during his first thirty years of life. It was not a project he was likely to complete very quickly. Because the world was not divided into neat dualities, it was difficult for him to establish a coherent set of beliefs that would replace those he had learned in civilization. As he rebelled against the doctrines enforced upon him in his youth, he rejected at first almost everything he had learned which might be called cultured or civilized. Sometimes his excitement might have led him toward a more radical position than he realized. But he was following a life of principle, not wise policy, as he walked through the South and came to California. It did not trouble him yet that his values would be a social liability for the rest of his life.
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> He thought that he would begin to solve his philosophical dilemma by simply escaping from civilization, and going solitary into the woods. And he attempted to establish a set of implicit resolutions. As I see them, he would:
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> —Leave civilization and society, and enter the self-consistent realm of nature
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> —Forget the workings of machines and start considering the way plants, flowers, beasts—and his own soul—grew
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> —Reject the false and abstract doctrines of Christianity and learn his philosophy directly from Nature
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> —Liberate himself from the social expectations of manliness, and accept himself as an equal though humble member of Nature's community
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> —Leave Man's arbitrary time, and enter Nature's eternal realm
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> —Cease to believe that Man was the Lord of Creation, or was providentially given dominion, and accept the limitations of human aspirations
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> —Cease to see Nature as commodity and accept her true responsibility to herself
>
> —Cease to believe that philanthropy was the highest good. He would pledge his allegiance to Nature.
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> Though they were not entirely new aspirations, in 1867 he decided it was time to test them. What made his later life so remarkable was that he realized how fruitless his past had been and how meaningless it would be to keep up with the times. He tried to step out of history. He realized that the education he sought wasn't available at any university, on any farm, or in any machine shop. He had to seek reality outside any social realm. It was not easy to retire from society, though Muir himself would later suggest that he easily shed the doctrines and lessons which had been taught to him through his youth. "I never tried to abandon creeds or codes of civilization; they went away of their own accord, melting and evaporating noiselessly without any effort and without leaving any consciousness of loss." This wasn't true. The process was far more conscious and far more trying than he wished to admit at the time or in later years. . . . It was a personal and spiritual crisis for Muir to leave behind his father's farm and his father's values as well.

This, as we understand it, is what is meant by growing up. Muir was one of the few who actually did it. Yet how wonderful it would be if we could establish his example as a norm for all human development! To regard as childish or even adolescent all thought processes which still are dependent on the surrounding culture, to believe that truly human life begins only when the cultural umbilicus is severed and we find in the world the nourishment we need and prepare it ourselves—that is the example that Muir set. He pursued this course of self-maturation in

California, herding sheep and reading Shakespeare.

What was his curriculum and how did he use it? At one time the Great Tuolumne Canyon in the Sierras became his school. Of his way of working he wrote:

> This was my "method of study": I drifted about from rock to rock, from stream to stream, from grove to grove. Where night found me, there I camped. When I discovered a new plant, I sat down beside it for a minute or a day, to make its acquaintance and hear what it had to tell. When I came to moraines, or ice-scratches upon the rocks, I traced them back, learning what I could of the glacier that made them. I asked the bowlders I met, whence they came and whither they were going. I followed to their fountains the traces of the various soils upon which forests and meadows are planted; and when I discovered a mountain or rock of marked form and structure, I climbed about it, comparing it with its neighbors.

Who wants to know all that about plants and rocks? No question could be more irrelevant. Muir was simply showing how *all* real learning takes place If you want to know something, that is the way, the only way, to go about it. But the students of nature give us, it seems, the best examples. In his *Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold speaks of "thinking like a mountain," in order to understand its life, needs, and requirements. Muir applied the same principle to the Sierra glaciers.

COMMENTARY
A POWERFUL ATTRACTION

IT seems possible—if not probable—that there may be readers who will regard this week's lead article as containing propaganda for Buddhism. After all, it does contain arguments in behalf of the Buddhist way of thinking and the Buddhist way of life. Yet in general, MANAS does not advocate any particular religion and avoids becoming a channel for arguments which prefer one religion to others. Why, then, quote Lafcadio Hearn?

Because, we may say, Hearn, like some others, went through certain transitions reflecting the history of Western civilization. As a youth, he turned away from the sectarian Christianity to which he had been exposed as a child and adopted (more or less) the philosophy of Herbert Spencer. One could say that he was *driven* away from any form of Christian orthodoxy by attitudes and practices which seemed to him completely unreasonable. Then, at forty, he went to Japan, where he found himself deeply affected by "the Buddhist way of life." The spirit of the Buddha seeped into his being, and while he did not declare himself a convert, he seemed more Buddhist than anything else. Call it, then, a return to religion as a foundation outlook, rather than as a believer in a set of doctrines.

So we quoted him on how Buddhism affected the lives of the Japanese people. We quoted him because we have come to share his view that the foundation outlook of a religious attitude is the basis of a good life, and that those touched by the influence of the Buddha seem freer from the sectarian spirit than those affected by other religions, although there are divisions among the believers in Buddhism as among followers of the other ancestral faiths.

What does Buddhism add to the Humanism which seems the most popular halfway house between materialism and spiritual philosophy, in the Western world? It adds the transcendental factors of immortality and rebirth, under the law of Karma. What does Buddhist thought leave out? It leaves out the personal "Creator," a God to whom one may pray. This makes for religion which has powerful attraction for minds which have come to believe that a foundation outlook is essential.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
AN UNSOLVED PROBLEM

FROM time to time readers send in to this Department material—newspaper clippings, copies of magazine articles, extracts from books—that seems to them worthy of attention. We are always glad to see such items, but do not always find them of use. What, then, is "good" material for use here? Ideas in which people are likely to find ways of acting are obviously good, and also conceptions of meaning which may deepen one's understanding of life or refine the power of judgment. What about the material we don't see how to use effectively? It may on the surface seem to have importance—or to be not without importance yet whatever you do with it is likely to be flat or have only casual interest. Geniuses may be able to turn almost anything into something worth reading, but even the best commentators may find it difficult to accomplish this every week. So we try to find especially good material.

Take for example a discussion of "Love and Violence"—actually based on the increase of reports of incest in the news, together with the reflections of the writer. This article in a well-known contemporary magazine begins by noting "several television pieces on social themes such as runaway youngsters and battered wives." One of these was about a father, respectable, law-abiding, in his late 30s, who "became so overwhelmed by sexual impulses toward his daughter that he was unable to control them." The writer, after remarking that cultures exist in which such behavior is inconceivable, says that he suspects the father's submission to his impulse of passion

> provoked, along with revulsion, a private nod of comprehension from most Americans who watched the show. The reason for believing that the father's behavior is conceivable is the same reason that both Darwin's theory of evolution and Freud's ideas on human development were initially more widely accepted in America than they were in some European countries. Americans are prepared to believe that humans are so closely related to animals that their biological drives can subdue their sense of what is right.
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> Let me be clear as to the central question: Do all the facets of human nature lie on a continuum with animal nature, or are humans a qualitatively different creature because they possess a consciousness that evaluates the meaning of action, a conscience that characterizes people and their actions as good or bad, and a will that can control morally unacceptable behaviors?

The author, we think, formulates the issue correctly: Are we animals or are we something else? Or rather, are we both animals *and* something else, and if so, what else? Included in this inquiry should be the question of why humans have a range of unlovely and sometimes hideous behavior no animal was ever guilty of, along with, on rare occasions, the reaching of transcendent heights which become wonders of the world! The answer, in abstract terms, is probably best contained in the concise aphorism of some old Roman (or Kabalistic) sage: *"Demon est Deus inversus,"* which means that evil is the lining or "other side" of deity, of the god-like intelligence. The god-like simply refuse to allow the demonic to gain expression; they are god-like because they use their power of choice in this way.

One reason for taking up this question is that, during the past year, we have accumulated a considerable collection of copies of articles on child abuse, most of it having to do with child-molesting, which apparently has become almost common.

What does one say about such a trend, besides deploring it? And what good is that? Writers and moralists have been deploring bad things for thousands of years, without notable effect. The writer we have been quoting—who is, incidentally, Jerome Kagan, a developmental psychologist at Harvard (writing in *Science 85* for last March)—resets the problem in very general terms, then offers comment:

> Television dramas depict vividly how easy it is for anger to well up and force otherwise reasonable people to behave in ways they will regret, even though they will eventually be forgiven if their intentions were not irredeemably evil.
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> In order to rationalize the blizzard of cruelty and aggression in contemporary society, it is helpful, and occasionally therapeutic, to believe that it is not always possible to control open anger, rivalry, and jealousy. This rationalization mutes intense feelings of guilt and dilutes any continuing sense of personal responsibility for hurting others. Although the density of population in Japan is far greater than in the United States, the Japanese believe each person should control his or her anger, and the differential frequency of violence in the two countries is enormous—annually, the United States reports about five times as many violent crimes per capita as does Japan. Apparently, if we believe we can tame our impulses, then we do so.

What can be said about this comparison? Well, we could say that the explanation lies in the difference between "nature" and "nurture," if we add to nature the fact of its duality—its potential for both good and evil, and regard nurture as including the guiding rules of cultural tradition. It can certainly be said of the Japanese that they are among the most tradition-bound peoples in the world. Habits of behavior are instilled in them almost from birth. This is something the American businessmen who go to Japan to learn the secret of industrial success -—look at all those Toyotas and Datsuns on the road—should bear in mind. Would an American work force respond in the same way?

One might argue that in the eighteenth century the Americans declared their emancipation from control by tradition through their war for independence. They claimed, in the voice of their best representatives, that this was in order to do the right things, but the break with tradition freed them to do the wrong things as well. This was a history-making transition—from rule by oligarchies, which were both good and evil, to what we call self-rule, which is the best meaning of democracy. But without external or traditional restraints, freedom is a dangerous thing. It becomes fatally destructive unless the external restraints are replaced by internal restraints. In short, the really good society is and must be a do-it-yourself affair. The Founding Fathers—some of them, at least—understood this and tried to introduce checks and balances on the exercise of freedom, knowing the excesses to which it could lead. But there are limits to what can be done, especially in the face of the opportunities afforded to a young country by a rich and as yet unexploited continent. Americans went out and got what they wanted, and now they are having to count up the cost of the uses they have made of their freedom. The sociologists and psychologists keep on giving us those horrifying figures and, in effect, ask: What are we free men and women going to do about them?

What are the implications of this analysis? They are that human life is a drama: our individual lives are dramas, so also our national life. A drama is a sequence of events which has a beginning, a middle, and an end, and a moral meaning throughout. Our lives are dramas because there are unpredictable elements in them which are believed, on faith, to be based upon the moral decisions of human beings. We make the dramas come out the way they do. We feel this in our hearts, but documenting the belief from history and biography often seems exceedingly difficult. So our faith may waver, or it may practically die out, as it has done under the influence of the claims of Darwin and Freud.

So, from the long-term point of view, the only way we can put a stop to child abuse, and to a lot of other things we obviously ought not to be doing, is by restoring the ground of conviction that the world has a moral order that cannot be violated with impunity. Unfortunately, careful studies by social scientists, while instructive in some ways, are not powerful enough to accomplish this. A deeper motivation must be involved, bringing a profound conviction of who we are, what we are and of what we must do. How is that to be obtained?

The great dramatists, most of all Eschylus and Shakespeare, sensed the answer and did what they could. Some of the great heroes of history understood it, or seemed to, and did what they could. We are thinking of men like Mazzini, Lincoln, and Gandhi. They were only men, but they seemed to behave like gods at crucial moments. Socrates and Tom Paine were among them. Some poets, too, have had intimations. And also educators like Arthur Morgan, who have seen that the self-restraint we need to enjoy a free society has to begin in childhood.

What are the influences that might move us in this direction? They are two: Pain, and inspiration of a heroic nature.

FRONTIERS

Science for Villages

A WHILE back a writer in these pages took note of the fact that Fritz Schumacher preferred the term "Intermediate Technology" to "Appropriate Technology" to express the essential idea of his work. This was because "intermediate" pinpoints the place of greatest need in the modern world—the rural area where the majority of the population lives and struggles to stay alive. He had visited these regions and he knew. Some examples of recently developed intermediate technology are given by Devendra Kumar, editor of *Science for Villages*, published periodically in Wardha, India. He writes about what has been accomplished at the Centre of Science for Villages, since the beginning of his work, which has a Gandhian inspiration.

Last year, 1984, he says, was the eighth of the center's activity. Kumar came there to begin this work from the All India Village Industries Association in Delhi, of which Gandhi had been president and J. C. Kumarappa secretary. He writes (in a general letter to his paper's readers):

> Our work is in four fields. In *Rural Housing and Sanitation* we have found a system of arched roof made from cylindrical country-tiles, which is insulating and once constructed needs no repairs. We have a method of protecting mud-walls by red-clay tiles. We produced cementatious materials from lime and pozzolana and used in the making of hundreds of houses, many wells, and some biogas plants. We have introduced hand-flush lavatories in 50 villages and put soak pits near about 100 village wells.
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> In *Fuel and Energy* we have put up about a thousand new gas-plants in the villages. We fabricate gas-stoves of red clay. We have undertaken training and propagation of an improved wood cook-stove.
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> In *Tools and Improvements* we are studying the status of supplies at one place where the womenfolk of the village make agricultural and other tools of improved design. We have also made and helped to install ball-bearing-fitted pulleys which are popular with the village women who draw water from wells.
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> Under *New Industries and Crafts* we have worked on various new articles which can be made by the village potters. We are now studying the leather industry in the villages and have sent a few artisans for expert training in leather technology. We have evolved an industry based on agro-waste. Banana plant stem is being made into pulp and then into paper products.
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> The activities of all of us are only a small manifestation of the totality of our holistic approach. My prayer is that the activities of each one may reinforce those of others and become a wave that could influence the whole world.

We might add here some of Devendra Kumar's remarks (in the last September-October *Science for Villages*) on the kind of technology that needs development. For rural India this is technology that adds to productivity without creating economic division among the villagers. He says:

> Most of the modern techniques tend to become capital intensive, and the more "advanced" a process, the less it benefits the small man.
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> As such technologies are adopted, a sharpening of disparities ensues. Thus technology has helped to widen the gap between the haves and have-nots. With application of this technology the economic distance between the rural and the urban as well as that between the third and the affluent world has been on the increase. This kind of technology is such as could lead only to megalopolistic concentration of wealth and power. The primary unit of population, the village community, should therefore be made the model for techniques which would help increase its production along with distributive justice. This means that the techniques adopted should be within the range of capital and management capacities of the less privileged people—the common man.
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> If the new technique helps productivity increase by modes which only the prosperous among the community can afford, it will bring about concentration of wealth in the hands of a few. The economic improvements in South East Asia during the last decade have proved this. A survey recently made in this area showed that food output increased during this period, but—and this is significant—the number of people living below the level of subsistence has unfortunately remained the same. Actually, increased output benefitting the strong has-hit the weak still more. So the appropriateness of a

> technique requires that it play its role in economic equality as well. Since the strength of a chain lies in that of its weakest link, our technologies should help the last man.

The desirable technology is one of service to all, the weak as well as the strong. Kumar asks that this be made the test of proposed improvements. He also asks:

> Does the communitarian spirit increase? In our villages in India there are community wells from which all families fetch drinking water. This helps conviviality and fellow-feeling in the community. When in some villages, individual houses got water taps fitted, this form of common community spirit was reduced. If safe drinking water could be supplied at one place where the womenfolk of the village could gather to meet and talk, it would serve better. We should not encourage the individual competitive tendencies in people but develop social and cooperative qualities. There should be an economy based on free association of people in a cooperative venture, using techniques that can be shared by all. This would help set the pace for a peaceful world. The technology needs to be decentralized.

This is a kind of thinking that only now is beginning to be practiced in the world. Its common sense, its moral validity, is obvious enough. All that is missing is the habit of thinking in this way. It focuses on the welfare of human beings, on production *by* the masses, not *for* them by somebody else who has not only the skill and power, but also controlling choice. A generation may pass before the habit of moral intelligence is adopted, perhaps helped along by the realities of bitter historical experience. But sooner or later it must come about.

The article by Kumar is a long one, proposing other important considerations, one of them being "Ecological Balance":

> Another important test of appropriateness of a technique is its result on the man-nature relationship. The whole and its components can work only in unison. If production is increased at the cost of other natural laws, the ecological balances are bound to suffer. There shall always be a harmony with Nature in the mode of getting the needs of humans fulfilled from mother-earth.

Why, one wonders, isn't this sort of thing taught to young people in the schools?