

BUDDHIST ECONOMICS

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RIGHT LIVELIHOOD is one of the requirements of the Buddha's Noble Eightfold Path. It is clear, therefore, that there must be such a thing as Buddhist Economics.

Buddhist countries, at the same time, have often stated that they wish to remain faithful to their heritage. So Burma: "The New Burma sees no conflict between religious values and economic progress. Spiritual health and material well-being are not enemies: they are natural allies."¹ Or: "We can blend successfully the religious and spiritual values of our heritage with the benefits of modern technology"² Or: "We Burmans have a sacred duty to conform both our dreams and our acts to our faith. This we shall ever do."³

All the same, such countries invariably assume that they can model their economic development plans in accordance with modern economics, and they call upon modern economists from so-called advanced countries to advise them, to formulate the policies to be pursued, and to construct the grand design for development, the Five-Year Plan or whatever it may be called. No one seems to think that a Buddhist way of life would call for Buddhist economics just as the modern materialist way of life has brought forth modern economics.

Economists themselves, like most specialists, normally suffer from a kind of metaphysical blindness, assuming that theirs is a science of absolute and invariable truths, without any pre-suppositions. Some go as far as to claim that economic laws are as free from "metaphysics" or "values" as the law of gravitation. We need not, however, get involved in arguments of methodology.

Instead, let us take some fundamentals and see what they look like when viewed by a modern economist and a Buddhist economist.

There is universal agreement that the fundamental source of wealth is human labour. Now, the modern economist has been brought up to consider "labour" or work as little more than a necessary evil. From the point of view of the employer, it is in any case simply an item of cost, to be reduced to a minimum if it cannot be eliminated altogether, say, by automation. From the point of view of the workman, it is a "disutility"; to work is to make a sacrifice of one's leisure and comfort, and wages are a kind of compensation for the sacrifice. Hence the ideal from the point of view of the employer is to have output without employees, and the ideal from the point of view of the employee is to have income without employment.

The consequences of these attitudes both in theory and in practice are, of course, extremely far-reaching. If the ideal with regard to work is to get rid of it, every method that "reduces the work load" is a good thing. The most potent method, short of automation, is the so-called "division of labour" and the classical example is the pin factory eulogized in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*. Here it is not a matter of ordinary specialization, which mankind has practised from time immemorial, but of dividing up every complete process of production into minute parts, so that the final product can be produced at great speed without anyone having had to contribute more than a totally insignificant and, in most cases, unskilled movement of his limbs.

The Buddhist point of view takes the function of work to be at least threefold: to give a man a chance to utilize and develop his faculties; to enable him to overcome his ego-centredness by joining with other people in a common task; and to bring forth the goods and services needed for a becoming existence. Again, the consequences that flow from this view are endless. To organize work in such a manner that it

becomes meaningless, boring, stultifying, or nerve-racking for the worker would be little short of criminal; it would indicate a greater concern with goods than with people, an evil lack of compassion and a soul-destroying degree of attachment to the most primitive side of this worldly existence. Equally, to strive for leisure as an alternative to work would be considered a complete misunderstanding of one of the basic truths of human existence, namely that work and leisure are complementary parts of the same living process and cannot be separated without destroying the joy of work and the bliss of leisure.

From the Buddhist point of view, there are therefore two types of mechanization which must be clearly distinguished: one that enhances a man's skill and power and one that turns the work of man over to a mechanical slave, leaving man in a position of having to serve the slave. How to tell the one from the other? "The craftsman himself," says Ananda Coomaraswamy, a man equally competent to talk about the Modern West as the Ancient East, "the craftsman himself can always, if allowed to, draw the delicate distinction between the machine and the tool. The carpet loom is a tool, a contrivance for holding warp threads at a stretch for the pile to be woven round them by the craftsmen's fingers; but the power loom is a machine, and its significance as a destroyer of culture lies in the fact that it does the essentially human part of the work."⁴ It is clear, therefore, that Buddhist economics must be very different from the economics of modern materialism, since the Buddhist sees the essence of civilization not in a multiplication of wants but in the purification of human character. Character, at the same time, is formed primarily by a man's work. And work, properly conducted in conditions of human dignity and freedom, blesses those who do it and equally their products. The Indian philosopher and economist J. C. Kumarappa sums the matter up as follows:

If the nature of the work is properly appreciated and applied, it will stand in the same relation to the higher faculties as food is to the physical body. It nourishes and enlivens the higher man and urges him to produce the best he is capable of. It directs his freewill along the proper course and disciplines the animal in him into progressive channels. It furnishes

an excellent background for man to display his scale of values and develop his personality.⁵

If a man has no chance of obtaining work he is in a desperate position, not simply because he lacks an income but because he lacks this nourishing and enlivening factor of disciplined work which nothing can replace. A modern economist may engage in highly sophisticated calculations on whether full employment "pays" or whether it might be more "economic" to run an economy at less than full employment so as to ensure a greater mobility of labour, a better stability of wages, and so forth. His fundamental criterion of success is simply the total quantity of goods produced during a given period of time. "If the marginal urgency of goods is low," says Professor Galbraith in *The Affluent Society*, "then so is the urgency of employing the last man or the last million men in the labour force." And again: "If . . . we can afford some unemployment in the interest of stability—a proposition, incidentally, of impeccably conservative antecedents—then we can afford to give those who are unemployed the goods that enable them to sustain their accustomed standard of living."⁶

From a Buddhist point of view, this is standing the truth on its head by considering goods as more important than people and consumption as more important than creative activity. It means shifting the emphasis from the worker to the product of work, that is, from the human to the subhuman, a surrender to the forces of evil. The very start of Buddhist economic planning would be a planning for full employment, and the primary purpose of this would in fact be employment for everyone who needs an "outside" job: it would not be the maximization of employment nor the maximization of production. Women, on the whole, do not need an "outside" job, and the large-scale employment of women in offices or factories would be considered a sign of serious economic failure. In particular, to let mothers of young children work in factories while the children run wild would be as uneconomic in the eyes of a Buddhist economist as the employment of a skilled worker as a soldier in the eyes of a modern economist.

While the materialist is mainly interested in goods, the Buddhist is mainly interested in liberation. But Buddhism is "The Middle Way" and therefore in no way antagonistic to physical well-being. It is not wealth that stands in the way of liberation but the attachment to wealth; not the enjoyment of pleasurable things but the craving for them. The keynote of Buddhist economics, therefore, is simplicity and non-violence. From an economist's point of view, the marvel of the Buddhist way of life is the utter rationality of its pattern—amazingly small means leading to extraordinarily satisfactory results.

For the modern economist this is very difficult to understand. He is used to measuring the "standard of living" by the amount of annual consumption, assuming all the time that a man who consumes more is "better off" than a man who consumes less. A Buddhist economist would consider this approach excessively irrational: since consumption is merely a means to human well-being, the aim should be to obtain the maximum of well-being with the minimum of consumption. Thus, if the purpose of clothing is a certain amount of temperature comfort and an attractive appearance, the task is to attain this purpose with the smallest possible effort, that is, with the smallest annual destruction of cloth and with the help of designs that involve the smallest possible input of toil. The less toil there is, the more time and strength is left for artistic creativity. It would be highly uneconomic, for instance, to go in for complicated tailoring, like the modern West, when a much more beautiful effect can be achieved by the skilful draping of uncut material. It would be the height of folly to make material so that it should wear out quickly and the height of barbarity to make anything ugly, shabby or mean. What has just been said about clothing applies equally to all other human requirements. The ownership and the consumption of goods is a means to an end, and Buddhist economics is the systematic study of how to attain given ends with the minimum means.

Modern economics, on the other hand, considers consumption to be the sole end and purpose of all economic activity, taking the factors of production—land, labor, and capital—as the means. The former,

in short, tries to maximize human satisfactions by the optimal pattern of consumption, while the latter tries to maximize consumption by the optimal pattern of productive effort. It is easy to see that the effort needed to sustain a way of life which seeks to attain the optimal pattern of consumption is likely to be much smaller than the effort needed to sustain a drive for maximum consumption. We need not be surprised, therefore, that the pressure and strain of living is very much less in, say, Burma than it is in the United States, in spite of the fact that the amount of labour-saving machinery used in the former country is only a minute fraction of the amount used in the latter.

Simplicity and non-violence are obviously closely related. The optimal pattern of consumption, producing a high degree of human satisfaction by means of a relatively low rate of consumption, allows people to live without great pressure and strain and to fulfill the primary injunction of Buddhist teaching: "Cease to do evil; try to do good." As physical resources are everywhere limited, people satisfying their needs by means of a modest use of resources are obviously less likely to be at each other's throats than people depending upon a high rate of use. Equally, people who live in highly self-sufficient local communities are less likely to get involved in large-scale violence than people whose existence depends on world-wide systems of trade.

From the point of view of Buddhist economics, therefore, production from local resources for local needs is the most rational way of economic life, while dependence on imports from afar and the consequent need to produce for export to unknown and distant peoples is highly uneconomic and justifiable only in exceptional cases and on a small scale. Just as the modern economist would admit that a high rate of consumption of transport services between a man's home and his place of work signifies a misfortune and not a high standard of life, so the Buddhist economist would hold that to satisfy human wants from far-away sources rather than from sources nearby signifies failure rather than success. The former might take statistics showing an increase in the number of ton/miles per head of the population carried by a country's transport system as proof of

economic progress, while to the latter—the Buddhist economist—the same statistics would indicate a highly undesirable deterioration in the *pattern* of consumption.

Another striking difference between modern economics and Buddhist economics arises over the use of natural resources. Bertrand de Juvenal, the eminent French political philosopher, has characterized "Western man" in words which may be taken as a fair description of the modern economist:

He tends to count nothing as an expenditure, other than human effort; he does not seem to mind how much mineral matter he wastes and, far worse, how much living matter he destroys. He does not seem to realise at all that human life is a dependent part of an ecosystem of many different forms of life. As the world is ruled from towns where men are cut off from any form of life other than human, the feeling of belonging to an ecosystem is not revived. This results in a harsh and improvident treatment of things upon which we ultimately depend, such as water and trees.⁷

The teaching of the Buddha, on the other hand, enjoins a reverent and non-violent attitude not only to all sentient beings but also, with great emphasis, to trees. Every follower of the Buddha ought to plant a tree every few years and look after it until it is safely established, and the Buddhist economist can demonstrate without difficulty that the universal observance of this rule would result in a high rate of genuine economic development independent of any foreign aid. Much of the economic decay of South-East Asia (as of many other parts of the world) is undoubtedly due to a heedless and shameful neglect of trees.

Modern economics does not distinguish between renewable and non-renewable materials, as its very method is to equalize and quantify everything by means of a money price. Thus, taking various alternative fuels, like coal, oil, wood or water power: the only difference between them recognized by modern economics is relative cost per equivalent unit. The cheapest is automatically the one to be preferred, as to do otherwise would be irrational and "uneconomic." From a Buddhist point of view, of course, this will not do; the essential difference between non-renewable fuels like coal and oil on the

one hand and renewable fuels like wood and water-power on the other cannot be simply overlooked. Non-renewable goods must be used only if they are indispensable, and then only with the greatest care and the most meticulous concern for conservation. To use them heedlessly or extravagantly is an act of violence, and while complete non-violence may not be attainable on this earth, there is none the less an ineluctable duty on man to aim at the ideal of non-violence in all he does.

Just as a modern European economist would not consider it a great economic achievement if all European art treasures were sold to America at attractive prices, so the Buddhist economist would insist that a population basing its economic life on non-renewable fuels is living parasitically, on capital instead of income. Such a way of life could have no permanence and could therefore be justified only as a purely temporary expedient. As the world's resources of non-renewable fuels—coal, oil and natural gas—are exceedingly unevenly distributed over the globe and undoubtedly limited in quantity, it is clear that their exploitation at an ever increasing rate is an act of violence against nature which must inevitably lead to violence between men.

This fact alone might give food for thought even to those people in Buddhist countries who care nothing for the religious and spiritual values of their heritage and ardently desire to embrace the materialism of modern economics at the fastest possible speed. Before they dismiss Buddhist economics as nothing better than a nostalgic dream, they might wish to consider whether the path of economic development outlined by modern economics is likely to lead them to places where they really want to be. Towards the end of his courageous book, *The Challenge of Man's Future*, Professor Harrison Brown of the California Institute of Technology gives the following appraisal:

Thus we see that, just as industrial society is fundamentally unstable and subject to reversion to agrarian existence, so within it the conditions which offer individual freedom are unstable in their ability to avoid the conditions which impose rigid organization and totalitarian control. Indeed, when we examine all of the foreseeable difficulties which threaten the survival of industrial civilization, it is

difficult to see how the achievement of stability and the maintenance of individual liberty can be made compatible.⁸

Even if this were dismissed as a long-term view—and in the long term, as Keynes said, we are all dead—there is the immediate question of whether "modernization," as currently practiced without regard to religious and spiritual values, is actually producing agreeable results. As far as the masses are concerned, the results appear to be disastrous—a collapse of the rural economy, a rising tide of unemployment in town and country, and the growth of a city proletariat without nourishment for either body or soul.

It is in the light of both immediate experience and long-term prospects that the study of Buddhist economics could be recommended even to those who believe that economic growth is more important than any spiritual or religious values. For it is not a question of choosing between "modern growth" and "traditional stagnation." It is a question of finding the right path of development, the Middle Way between materialist heedlessness and traditionalist immobility, in short, of finding "Right Livelihood."

That this can be done is not in doubt. But it requires much more than blind imitation of the materialist way of life of the so-called advanced countries.⁹ It requires above all, the conscious and systematic development of a Middle Way in technology, of an "intermediate technology," as I have called it,^{10, 11} a technology more productive and powerful than the decayed technology of the ancient East, but at the same time non-violent and immensely cheaper and simpler than the labour-saving technology of the modern West.

E. F. SCHUMACHER

London

NOTES

1. Pyidawtha, *The New Burma* (Economic and Social Board., Government of the Union of Burma, 1954, p. 10).
2. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
4. Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, *Art and Swadeshi* (Ganesh and Co., Madras, p. 30).
5. C. Kumarappa *Economy of Permanence* (Sarva-Seva-Sangh Publication, Rajghat, Kashi, 4th ed., 1958, p. 117).
6. K. Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (Penguin, 1962, pp. 272-273).
7. Richard B. Gregg, *A Philosophy of Indian Economic Development* (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1958, pp. 140-41).
8. Harrison Brown, *The Challenge of Man's Future* (The Viking Press, New York, 1954, p. 255).
9. F. Schumacher, "Rural Industries" in *India at Midpassage* (Overseas Development Institute, London, 1964).
10. F. Schumacher, "Industrialisation through Intermediate Technology" in *Minerals and Industries*, Vol. I, No. 4. (Calcutta, 1964).
11. Vijay Chebbi and George McRobie, *Dynamics of District Development* (SIET Institute, Hyderabad, 1964).

REVIEW

CHINESE BUDDHISM AND THE WEST

THERE are timeless questions hidden beneath the historical matters investigated with great care and impartiality by Holmes Welch in the second volume of his three-volume study of Chinese Buddhism. The first volume, on the practice of Chinese Buddhism, has had notice in these pages (MANAS, Oct. 18, 1967), and the third, which will deal with what happened to Buddhism in China under Communist rule, is yet to appear. The book at hand, *The Buddhist Revival in China* (Harvard University Press, 1968, \$11.95), is concerned with the efforts of Chinese Buddhists to survive and to expand their influence during the century 1850-1950—a period of extraordinary change and disturbance throughout the Far East.

It is probably a mistake to praise any book as "without bias," since even the most careful observers are still fallible human beings, but one can safely say of Mr. Welch's work that it is without animus, and he is certainly interested in doing even justice to Chinese Buddhists, and in redressing wrongs done by the religious if scholarly prejudice of earlier days.

The activity to which this volume is devoted began to make itself felt in the 1860's, when Yang Wen-hui, a young Chinese of exceptional character, found in a bookstore in Hangchow a copy of *The Awakening of the Faith in the Mahayana*. Reading it changed his life. This inspiration lifted him above certain personal frustrations and dilemmas and thereafter his energies and all the resources he could spare were given to learning, teaching, and spreading Buddhist doctrines. He organized a print shop and issued book after book himself, until his savings were gone. He obtained scholarly help in England from associates of Max Müller and sold the scientific instruments he brought home to China to get the money to print more Buddhist texts.

From this beginning the "Buddhist Revival" branches out into a vast maze of highways and byways, and the ordinary Western reader, who is likely to be ignorant of Chinese geography, culture, and history, can hardly find his way, even with Mr. Welch's untiring help. Yet with careful reading and some skipping back and forth, a pattern emerges, and it is then that the reader senses the presence of the "timeless questions" we spoke of at the start. *Why*, for one thing, did *The Awakening of the Faith* stir Yang Wen-hui to lifelong commitment? Knowing the form but not the spirit of what he did leaves out the essence of history. We cannot blame Mr. Welch for this. If we must blame anyone or anything, the culprit is the entire theory of knowledge under which Western scholarship operates. Some Buddhists might feel this way about it, which is one reason why they have had such a hard time "surviving" in modern times. They might argue that the reader *ought* to respond to the impulse to put down Mr. Welch's book and to seek out the text that moved Yang, hoping to feel for himself what Yang felt. And, indeed, how else is this history to be understood from the inside?

In 1893, a generous Baptist missionary, Timothy Richard, brought Yang into contact with Anagarika Dharmapala, a young Ceylonese Buddhist who had founded the Maha Bodhi Society to further a renewal of Buddhist thought. The two workers for Buddhism apparently kept in touch and in 1908 Yang received a letter from Dharmapala "agreeing that they should make a common effort to revive Buddhism in order to spread it throughout the world." This motive would color a great many of the later happenings described in Mr. Welch's narrative.

Again there is the question of the animating power of such intentions. How shall we grasp the quality of this underlying resolve and recognize its continuing presence, however attenuated, diluted, or even vulgarized in later years, without reading, say, the autobiography of Dharmapala as it has appeared, chapter by chapter, in the *Maha Bodhi*

Journal over a long period of years? The purity of this man's purpose ought to be understood as a kind of historical force.

We might propose some kind of rule for the study of great religious movements. Should one, for example, permit himself to form judgments of Gandhi's career and its influence on Indian history without spending hours with the *Bhagavad-Gita*, and without careful attention to Tolstoy and Ruskin and Thoreau? It seems entirely reasonable to say that no one can hope to understand what Gandhi thought and did without at least an effort to see through his eyes and to feel what he felt. And Gandhi is a crucial key to modern Indian history—and, incidentally, to the Buddhist revival in Gautama's native land.

How many particulars of history would one need to amass for generalizing purposes in order to determine by inference the quality of the inspiration which, however remotely, underlies them all? Such questions are too big to handle here. Yet when the subject is the world-moving influence of Gautama Buddha, they ought to be asked.

Mr. Welch finds, in consideration of what his researches reveal, that the title of his book may be misleading—an idea owing more to his predecessors in the field than to his own conclusions. Three currents of religio-philosophic culture pervade China—Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian. The influence of Buddhism, which is everywhere, was sought by the Chinese, who sent men of learning to India to obtain instruction. The interpretation of a "Buddhist Revival" was made by Westerners who saw what the Buddhists were doing in order to survive the impact of the European invasion of China, the effects of which worked at various levels. Mr. Welch writes in summary:

The Buddhist revival began, I believe, as an effort by laymen to reprint the scriptures destroyed in the Taiping Rebellion [1857-64]. It gathered momentum as the discovery of Western Buddhist scholarship stimulated the need for Chinese Buddhist

scholarship, and as the invasion of China by Christian evangelists and missionaries led to the idea of training Buddhist evangelists and sending missionaries to India and the West. Up to this point, only laymen were involved. The monks, isolated and secure in their monasteries, carried on as usual. But in the last decade of the Ch'ing dynasty, when moves were made to confiscate their property for use in secular education, the monks began to organize schools and social-welfare enterprises as a means of self-defense. They too began to be aware of the need to counter the denigration of Buddhism, to which Christian missionaries had added a new dimension.

The fall of the Ch'ing in 1911 removed the checks both on confiscation and on private organization. Parties, lobbies, and clubs were springing up everywhere. It was logical for the monks to form a lobby to protect their property and for laymen to start clubs that could serve as centers for studying and spreading the dharma and provide members with what Christian laymen could get at the YMCA. All these efforts, clerical and lay, expanded and interacted over the next forty years, reaching a peak that was cut off by the Japanese invasion of 1937. . . .

The Western impact on China exacerbated the sense of intellectual insecurity that was common near the end of a dynasty. (It was during such a time of troubles that Buddhism had first taken hold.) In particular the contact with Western religion made some Chinese dissatisfied with the latitude and fuzziness of their own religious tradition, in which most people were partly Confucian, partly Buddhist, partly Taoist. . . . The lay Buddhist movement burgeoned. . . . To choose Buddhism in a search for religious identity meant that one was choosing to be Chinese. It was an expression of cultural loyalism, a denial that things Chinese were inferior. Many of those who chose Buddhism were content to take it as it was. Others felt a need to change it into something that commanded greater respect, both from foreigners and from their own countrymen. This brought cultural royalism into conflict with the need for status—another thread that runs through the Buddhist revival. The need for status—intellectual status—led to the necessity of meeting the challenges of science and Western philosophy, of Marxism, and of Christianity. It helped to bring about the revival of interest in Dharmalaksana, the birth of Buddhist scientism, and participation in modern, Western forms of social welfare. It accentuated the fear of superstition and accelerated the shift from practice to study and from religion to philosophy.

These are the lines of pressure which shaped the external appearance of the Buddhist revival. Yet these cannot be the only forces at work. One thinks of the nineteenth-century revival and reforms of Buddhism in Siam, of the two-year conference of all Burmese Buddhists called by U Nu in 1954, and of the struggles to be understood made by the present-day Buddhists of South Vietnam, for whom Thich Nhat Hanh is so able a spokesman. Surely there is in all this stirring something more positive than defenses against Western influence. Yet this influence has been a touchstone which exposes weakness, and Mr. Welch, in detailing Buddhist responses, is both friendly and just. Actually, he is again and again the defender of the Buddhists against careless and sometimes malicious reports, and gives his readers many reasons for realizing that both the Buddhist monasteries of China and Buddhist laymen throughout the land have contributed elements of balance, goodness, and even "therapy" to a country sorely in need of all three, and may continue to do so.

COMMENTARY

ALTERNATIVES TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

THE argument of Kenneth Clark (see "Children") for new schools to replace the existing ones in the cities deserves further development. Precisely because of the schools' bigness, a new beginning is necessary. This is not so much a "moral" as a practical question. The resistance to change of large organizations is notorious, and in this case demonstrated by what Harold Gores says about big city schools, as well as evidenced by Kenneth Clark's observations concerning the bad habits imposed on city educators and administrators from the start. Dr. Clark continues:

If this is true—if our system of training and promotion rewards the wrong characteristics—then our hopes for reform are minimal, if not totally futile. In short, we are in bad shape if reform is dependent upon the present educational establishment.

To save our urban schools, we must first demonstrate to the public that the present level of public school inefficiency has reached a stage of public calamity. It must be demonstrated that minority-group children are not the only victims of the monopolistic inefficiency of the present system, but that white children—privileged white children, whose parents understandably seek to protect them by moving to suburbs and enrolling them in private and parochial schools—also suffer, both potentially and immediately.

One way to change this situation, Dr. Clark thinks, would be to end the complacent security of existing public school systems as "protected monopolies." He lists seven sorts of schools which might be established to compete with the public schools, and so grade up the entirety of education in the United States. (This would not be the first time an intelligent social community adopted this policy. Many years ago, the Danish government gave no-strings-attached subsidies to the Danish folk schools for adult education as a means of setting higher standards for that nation's public schools. Measures of this sort are simply educational common sense.)

As alternatives to existing urban public schools, Dr. Clark proposes regional state schools, federal regional schools, college- and university-related open schools, schools financed by private industry, schools sponsored by labor unions, and Army schools such as those which have already repaired some of the damage done by the public schools to teen-agers.

Wide attention to these alternatives could have a profoundly loosening-up effect on people's thinking about education. Who knows but that, in time, some of the simple suggestions of Paul Goodman, as for example the one for store-front neighborhood schools, might get a try.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves SCHOOLS IN THE CITIES

IN July, 1967, a five-day conference on "The Schoolhouse in the City" was held at Stanford University, through the cooperation of the Educational Facilities Laboratories. A total of thirty-nine papers were presented by authorities representing many levels of educational activity. A book with the same title as the conference (Praeger, 1968) presents seventeen of these papers, with an introduction by Alvin Toffler, who edited the volume. (The paper of the greatest general interest and usefulness is likely to be Bayard Rustin's contribution, "The Mind of the Black Militant.")

Except by readers already involved in the heroic tasks and frustrations of urban education, who will want to study it carefully, this book may serve best simply as an object-lesson in the enormous complexities of any sort of reform in areas of high population concentration, especially when the situations to be remedied are more defined by the pain they produce than by the light of a beckoning vision. Two papers in particular illustrate the difficulties which arise when attempts to improve the urban schools become foci of political controversy. Preston R. Wilcox reports what happened when the parents of the children in Public School I.S. 201 in New York sought control over the school's administration. We quote only the background issues, which are put clearly:

Why do Black people seek control over their local schools? After watching the failures of the present school system, they have concluded that those in control of the system define its objectives in terms of white America. The present authorities use such phrases as "the entire system" or "Negroes aren't the only ones who need better schools." Activists, however, recognize these as euphemisms for maintenance of the degrading *status quo*. The tragic fact is that, regardless of intentions Black Americans are not treated as full participants in the society but essentially as a group to be considered after the

interests of others have been attended to. So long as this remains true, school programs will continue to draw heavily on white middle-class assumptions.

The essence of the struggle, therefore, has been to help the Black and poor residents of the ghettos understand that the present system, in the last analysis, was organized for the protection of "others"—not Black Americans. Indeed, it has been established fairly conclusively on the basis of ethnic composition, performance scores, per capita expenditures, teacher turnover and assignments, and the figures on up-grading of minority-group staff, that many large urban complexes have, in fact, dual school systems—one white and one Black but both controlled by whites.

The minority-group student thus finds himself in the curious position of being miseducated by a system that represent everybody's interests but his. Such students are ordered to attend school under compulsory education laws seemingly for the express purpose of being convinced of their own uneducability. Those Black students who were able to negotiate the schools had to adopt the views of their oppressors. They had to listen to discussions of history that highlighted the honesty of George Washington but not the fact that he was a slave-owner. In short, the Wasp model was substituted for one with which Black students could more readily identify.

It is this tendency to deliver *generalized* white products into *specialized* Black communities that set the stage for the thrust by Black communities to take control of the schools set up to serve their children.

The other paper, "Decentralizing Urban School Systems," by Mario D. Fantini and Richard Magat, deals more widely with the movement for local control, in terms of the Bundy Report made late in 1967 to the New York State Legislature by a Committee headed by McGeorge Bundy. Its proposals for decentralization and "increased community awareness and participation in the educational process" ignited passions that reached national proportions—gaining support, surprisingly enough, from Max Rafferty in California, three thousand miles away! Two conclusions seem evident. One is that the Bundy Report embodies an idea whose time has come. The other is that application of the idea will be against the bureaucratic grain of the educational

establishment and will therefore be hesitant and slow. The comment of Harold B. Gores, president of Educational Facilities Laboratories, on the failure of urban school systems to adapt themselves to the advantages of even physical innovation (in school building design, etc.) could be broadened to apply at all levels of educational advance. After listing numerous good school facilities developed *outside* of big city limits across the country, he said:

Our cities are too complex in their decision-making to respond quickly to advances in the state of the art. From the record, it would appear that the bigger the school district, the less likely it can grasp the advantages of technological progress.

The rest of the book is largely preparation for appreciating the proposals of Kenneth Clark, in "Alternatives to Urban Public Schools." The hard common sense of establishing other kinds of schools, in preference to a long and probably failing struggle to better the existing ones, seems self-evident. Dr. Clark exposes and rejects the rhetorical elements in debates about the schools. As professor of psychology at City College in New York, and chairman and staff director of Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited (Haryou), Dr. Clark probably knows the problems of the ghetto and its schools as well as any man in the United States. "Our urban schools," he says, "are spawning hundreds of thousands of functional illiterates who are incapable of playing a constructive role in our society and who cannot be integrated into the economy without costly remedial education, even in such basics as reading and arithmetic." Efforts at remedying this situation, he says, are "blocked by the rationalizations and self-serving explanations of many educators." Mainly at fault is "the selective process involved in the training and promoting educators and administrators for our public schools"—a process, he says, which "emphasizes qualities of passivity, conformity, caution, smoothness, and superficial affability, rather than boldness, creativity, and ability to demand and obtain those things that are essential for solid and

effective education for all children." The only workable alternative, in his opinion, is completely new schools.

FRONTIERS

Their Humanity Was Showing

PEOPLE in large numbers sometimes reveal their quality—that is, their humanity—in the circumstances of sudden change. A collapse of the authority under which the members of a society order their lives may disclose what sort of people they are—whether or not they practice an inner ordering. It is always worth while to wonder how the people of a community would behave if the Black Plague, or a Pied Piper, or unexpected great wealth, came to town. Or an overwhelmingly powerful military invader. How would Middletown, U.S.A., have coped with a Nazi occupation? It is fair to say that no sort of pretense does any good when things like that happen. People show what they are really made of, and the situation seldom gives them more than one try.

Milton Mayer's account of what happened in Czechoslovakia after the Soviet tanks rolled across the border on August 21, 1968, is concerned with such matters. His Occasional Paper, *The Art of the Impossible*, published last April by the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, seeks general enlightenment from the ways in which the humanity of the Czechs came into view during their ordeal—an ordeal which now continues.

After all, what other really good reason have we for studying history? Important to us is not just "human behavior," but behavior for the best reasons. If it becomes evident that people can do well for the best reasons, then we need worry far less about what they may do for bad reasons. We can concentrate on giving them good, better, best reasons.

Milton Mayer is an articulate Humanist, Pacifist, and Christian—we are not sure about the order, and it probably doesn't matter. He is uniquely qualified by personal experience to write about the Czechoslovakian revolt, to try to divine its meaning, and to find in it what encouragement

he can for the rest of us. Woven into his account of the behavior of the Czechs under Soviet political domination are numerous strands of Czech history. You get the impression that the Czechs are among the most civilized of the Europeans and that if a present-day case for the excellence of European culture can be made, the Czechs may be the people who will supply the most evidence:

If the Soviet invasion was a military classic, the Czech resistance was (and is) a psychological masterpiece; very possibly, though it is too soon to be sure, approaching an innovation in mass behavior. The Czechs didn't fight, in Western man's sense of fight—that is, with spiked clubs, paving blocks or atomic bombs. They capitulated. But the manner of their capitulation may prove and in some respects already has proved, to have been a glorious victory.

Well, the Czechs didn't go down fighting, but they did resist. They exhibited a somewhat neglected aspect of the dignity of man. Human sensibility proves its survival in the form of humor. This is one of Mayer's main points: Why is it that tough-guy defense of human dignity almost always dulls a people's sense of humor? That a man without arms is still a whole man is one of the Czech's demonstrations, even though, as Mayer points out, there is no love in their hearts, just now, for the Russians.

What had happened? In 1946 the Czechs voted to install a Communist government. They got a Stalinist government which lasted until Czechoslovakian Communist reformers overthrew the Novotny regime in January, 1968. They thought that at last their long peonage to the Soviet economy was ended. As Mayer briefly tells:

Inside Comecon the Czechs were the great creditor nation with something like a billion dollars piled up, but they could not lay their hands on the hard currency they needed to modernize their industrial plant. Unlike those of Russia, Germany, and Japan, the Czech factories had not been rebuilt after the War but were, instead, to be retooled with baling wire to meet the Russian heavy industry demands. In the Spring of '68 Dubcek asked the

Russians for a half-billion-dollar hard currency loan, which of course meant capital goods purchases in the West. The Russians replied—with tanks in August, after the Czechs had brazenly asserted they would get credits wherever they could. . . . On the night of August 20-21 when they were kidnapped and taken to Moscow, the Czech Communist leaders took the cure in one massive dose. The cure, that is, of Russia—not of Communism. But they took it quietly.

The Czechs were not heroes, in the same sense that the Danes under the Nazi occupation were not heroes. They precipitated no genocidal proceedings. But they acted like men, just as the Danes had acted like men. Mayer is exceedingly fond of the Czechs. He has spent a number of years in their country, since 1946 and before August, 1968, teaching and preaching. His articles on the ordeal of the Czech Christians under Communism, his understanding and admiration of Joseph Hromadka of the Comenius Theological Faculty in Prague (see Mayer's book, *What Can a Man Do?*), make superb humanistic reporting, and much more than reporting. Here, in this story of the Czech resistance, the circumstances are those of the politics of power, but the content is the excellences of powerless men. There is also cultural history. The performance of the Czech people seems to Mayer to combine the courage of John Huss, the humor of Good Soldier Schweik, and the insight of Franz Kafka. When, in August, the Russians invaded their country with half a million troops, the Czechs, it seemed, became as one man-and-a-half:

August 21 handed them as a gift what they had never stirred themselves to achieve; their nation unified as few nations I can think of ever have been. It united Communist, non-Communist, and anti-Communist in a front not of parties but of persons. . . . It was a universal union of volunteers, without a conscript among them. It was not a crossed-finger union of war with its hollow assertion that "we are all Englishmen (or Americans or Frenchmen or Germans) now," the union of politics-as-usual transparently plastered over by coalition while the struggle for domestic power proceeds apace, while the black market battens, while the class distinctions are exacerbated by the sharp division between those who serve at an uncomfortable loss and those who serve at

a comfortable gain, while profit, preferment, and exemption are negotiated 'mid the bombs bursting in air. It was a union without any trace of the compulsion and repression that war invariably introduces in the name of unity. It was a union of an ungoverned nation, an instant consensus that threw up instant bridges between the deep social divisions. . . .

Was what they did "non-violence"? In a way. At any rate it had the form of non-violence. It wasn't the classical non-violence of a Gandhi. It was non-violence of the means. Better than violence, Mayer thinks. And to assume a virtue if you have it not—although there wasn't any pretense to virtue in this instance—sometimes gives people ideas about the desirability of virtue *per se*. But the mood, well—

. . . what are we to say of a people who wrote on their walls in August, "Soviet Circus Back in Town—Do not Feed or Annoy the Animals"? The Czechs taunted the Russians. They mocked the Russians. They scorned the Russians. They defied the Russians. They harassed the Russians. They starved the Russians. They ignored the Russians. They avoided the Russians. . . .

Nonviolence is a frame of heart: What was in the Czech heart as the tanks came thundering through their streets? The corollary of nonresistance to evil is, "Overcome evil with good." The presupposition of nonviolent resistance is love of the evildoer. "To love," says Aquinas, "is to will the good of the other." Love's object, when the other is doing evil, is his deliverance from his evildoing: his redemption. I have not seen, read of, or heard of a Czech who loved the Russians on August 21; not in St. Thomas's sense.

And yet, as Mayer says, the Czech resistance "bore the character, if not the principle, of non-violence, the practice without theory." However, there is also this, that in the history of Czechoslovakia there was a man, Petr Chelcicky, who found nonviolence in the Gospels and wrote about it, four hundred years before 1876, the year in which Tolstoy changed his life, and in which he read Chelcicky. And there is this:

After August Czech students and young workers—undifferentiated between believers and nonbelievers—debated and discussed nonviolence everywhere. And in late November, when the

Government called them in and begged them not to demonstrate in the streets, 65,000 university students "struck" nonviolently in their dormitories for seventy-six hours without incident, and the strike posters in front of Comenius Theological Faculty included a proclamation which just might be the handwriting on the wall:

Nonviolent resistance against injustice and despotism is the only way of carrying forward the truth.

The use of violence is madness.

Returning evil for evil leads to hatred and war which employs any and every means of vanquishing the adversary.

The issue is not the conquest of the adversary, "victory."

The issue is the victory of valid truth binding the black as the white, the good as the wicked, the conservative as the liberal, the student as the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia.

But good soldier Schweik is also making his contribution. He understands the full import of "the Brezhnev doctrine" and how it must be respected. The Brezhnev doctrine, precipitated by the daring of the Czechs in acting like an independent nation, declared that "the sovereignty of each socialist country can not be opposed to the interests of the world of socialism, of the world revolutionary movement." Mayer quotes Schweik's assessment:

"You see," a Czech friend of mine said, "the Brezhnev doctrine places a very heavy responsibility upon us Czechs. If we find that socialism is endangered in the Soviet Union, the new doctrine requires us to invade it."