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GANDHI—FROM WEST TO EAST

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I WISH to share some personal thoughts on the relevance of Gandhi today, by briefly discussing the following five questions:

(i) Does it make sense to distinguish East and West when talking about Gandhi?

(ii) Did Gandhi ever go to the West or, to put the question in a more provocative manner, was he probably a "Westerner"?

(iii) How was Gandhi received in the East, and what was India's reaction to his message?

(iv) What are the reasons for his recent rediscovery in the West?

(v) How to explain the strange fact that Gandhi needs obviously the blessings of the West before he will be reconsidered seriously in contemporary India?

We need not discuss in detail the different cosmologies that characterize the Hindu-Buddhist and the Christian-Protestant answers to the riddles of man's existence as a unique living being—unique in the sense that he has developed the faculty of symbolic communication through language, and of sharing and storing of knowledge via texts.

The Western man thinks in linear concepts of progress and in dualistic dichotomies of good and bad—of man versus nature, of mind versus matter. He has, during the last four hundred years, developed this dualistic worldview into a system of "science," i.e., an explanation of so-called "reality" according to certain sense data matched with a set of mental formations called "theories." This kind of Western objectivity is exactly what Buddhists call *"anubodha"*—knowing accordingly, dependent knowledge, "Objective Science." Thinking in terms of object and subject is another Western dichotomy, for *homo faber* the tool with which his mind tries to explain and manipulate matter. Thus only those aspects of reality matter to him which can answer according to his dualistic world-view of man against nature. To be or not to be, is for him the main question. Brought up in the boxes of rectangular thinking in alternatives of "yes" or "no," he has extreme difficulties in even vaguely grasping the symbols of a circular world-view of conditioned genesis in which every "now" is understood as a flux of momentary change in an endless stream of becoming and re-becoming.

If we look at our surroundings, this fundamental difference becomes obvious. Compare, for instance, the rectangular patterns in Europe, a necessary consequence of man conquering nature more "effectively," with the circular structures by which farmers in South Asia try to fit themselves into a given natural environment. To keep all life going and not to make only man's industry grow is the rationale of their subsistence economy. The full moon does not challenge them to rocket out of their habitation but leads every month right back into the meditative context of life.

The Western man splits material reality into particles so that it can be fed into computer machines with a rigid binary logic. The Eastern man tries to overcome this separation from the cosmic whole through training of mindfulness so that he begins to realize the liberating truth of *tat twam asi* [that thou art].

The term "Sarvodaya" was coined by Gandhi when he translated for his compatriots in South Africa in 1908 selections from John Ruskin's *Unto This Last.* In his autobiography, he describes the decisive influence of this anthology of four essays—first published in the *British Cornhill Magazine* in 1860, on the "First Principles of Political Economy"—had on his life from the day

when he read them on a train journey in 1903: "The book was impossible to lay aside. It gripped me. Johannesburg to Durban was a twenty-four hours' journey. The train reached there in the evening. I could not get any sleep that night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya* (the welfare of all)."[1]

When Gandhi started a settlement of about 1,100 acres in the vicinity of Johannesburg in 1910, he named it "Tolstoy Farm," showing his respect for the grand old man in Yasnaya Polyana who lived a life of voluntary simplicity among his former serfs. "Next to the late Rajachandra," Gandhi wrote in *Young India* in 1921, "Tolstoy is one of the three moderns who have exerted the greatest spiritual influence on my life, the third being Ruskin."[2]

In the appendices to his dialogue on *Hind Swaraj, Gan*dhi recommended twenty titles for his readers' perusal "to follow up the foregoing." Among them are, of course, two books by Ruskin and Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience,* but the first six books listed are by Leo Tolstoy, with whom Gandhi exchanged several letters during 1909-1910 to inform him about the Movement and his new farm in South Africa.

Was Gandhi only the medium through which the thoughts of Western thinkers—Ruskin, Tolstoy, Thoreau—were fed into the minds of the Indian Congress? And what about his ethic of "bread labor" and rigid punctuality, under the dictatorship of a huge pocket-watch attached to a *dhoti?*

There have indeed been several attempts to identify Gandhi as a Westerner. In a seminar on Max Weber, for instance, sponsored by the Ford Foundation and held at the National Institute of Community Development in Hyderabad in 1966, the Indian participants—mostly social scientists—were led to ask themselves whether there were "strains of belief within the Hindu belief system which under favorable conditions could lead to the savings-productive investment-income chain reaction, as there were in the Judeo-Christian belief system"?[3] Gandhi was depicted as "a hard-working ascetic" who seemed to "coincide exactly with the Weberian notion of the ascetic Protestant."[4]

Lloyd and Susanne Rudolph went even a step further. In their study, "Political Development in India," they compared Gandhi with Benjamin Franklin and juxtaposed their daily schedule.[5] The Chicago School—whose decisive influence I shall come to—had finally discovered in India a functional equivalent to Protestant asceticism. The "modernity of tradition" had been proved and a Western development theory of growth had stood its universal test.

We need not waste much time to prove the fallacy of these Eurocentric interpretations. Sarvodaya—the welfare of all—was for Gandhi an altruistic ethic of self-realization. Truth (Satya) and Freedom (Swaraj) as the ultimate aims of self-realization can only grow in an atmosphere of nonviolence (*ahimsa*). Such an atmosphere will prevail only in a society where an equal share is given "even unto this last." Each individual must therefore work for "the welfare of all." This was Gandhi's simple explanation of the concept of Sarvodaya, and the "constructive program" was the instrument with which he tried to link his own self-realization to that of the weaker sections of the sub-continent.[6]

To quiet a revolutionary thinker, a society can either shoot him or enshrine him as a holy man. India reacted to Gandhi in both ways. His universal concept for the self-realization of man through nonviolent actions in the search for truth had been integrated by and into the Congress Movement in such a way that it seemed to have served its purpose when national independence was achieved. Only then did Gandhi realize that he had been misled by his hopes. At the end of his life he had to confess: "In placing civil disobedience before constructive work I was

wrong. I feared that I should estrange coworkers and so carried on with imperfect Ahimsa."[7]

During his last days Gandhi made various attempts to change the direction of political thinking and bargaining. On 27 January 1948 he wrote: "The Congress has won political freedom, but it has yet to win economic freedom, social and moral freedom. These freedoms are harder than the political, if only because they are constructive, less exciting and not spectacular."[8]

Two days later, Gandhi drafted a New Constitution for the Indian National Congress. Being his last piece of writing, prepared one day before his assassination, it was later taken as his "Last Will and Testament." In it Gandhi repeated that "the Congress in its present shape and form, i.e., as a propaganda vehicle and parliamentary machine, has outlived its use. India has still to attain social, moral and economic independence in terms of its seven hundred thousand villages as distinguished from its cities and towns." The All India Congress Committee is therefore advised "to disband the existing Congress organization and flower into a Lok Sevak Sangh," or voluntary organization of Servants of the People.[9]

Gandhi then sketches a system of decentralized government, with the village as its main working unit. For the workers of the proposed "Lok Sevak Sangh," Gandhi formulated ten basic principles and guidelines for action which can be seen as a kind of shorthand of the earlier Constructive Program.

As we know, these proposals, which aimed at a social and cultural revolution to get rid of the "rotten boroughs leading to corruption and creation of institutions, popular and democratic only in name,"[10] were held to be "utopian" by Jawaharlal Nehru and his colleagues in the Congress and the Constituent Assembly. They feared that the power vacuum created by a dissolution of the Congress structure might lead to a civil war and a Balkanization of the subcontinent. Moreover, they believed that one could no longer putter around with village crafts and home industries in the middle of the twentieth century. The India of their dreams needed a central power and planning authority to carry out the ambitious development projects destined to raise the economy to the standards of the modern world.

According to Nehru, the Congress had never considered the Gandhian view of society as exemplified in his *Hind Swaraj*, "much less adopted it."[11] Great as Gandhi's influence had been, he had not succeeded in convincing his own party of his view of how Indians should live and govern themselves. It was not a spinning wheel but steel mills, not an oceanic circle of autonomous village panchayats but the Central Planning Commission in New Delhi which became India's true symbols after independence. Harold Laski and the influence of his London School of Economics had overruled both the teachings of Ruskin and Tolstoy and Gandhi's E'ractical attempt at an alternative explanation and solution of India's problems. An economic theory of growth based on an unshakable belief in the universal validity of its modernization paradigm had won India and the socio-cultural potential of its villages had, at least for the moment, lost.

It has, however, taken only two Development Decades for the Western paradigm of development to prove its invalidity in the newly independent countries of the Third World. The main elements of this paradigm are the emphasis on economic growth, capital-intensive technology and centralized planning. Underdevelopment, according to this paradigm, is mainly the result of internal factors such as traditional ways of thinking, an inefficient bureaucracy, outdated land tenure systems, castebound immobility, and the deep-rooted rural bias of the population.

My generation was trained in the techniques of creating a "revolution of rising expectations" aimed at transforming a subsistence economy into a modern market economy with a free flow of cash crops and ready-made goods. We laughed when we were told the story of a cobbler who,

after getting handsome *bakhsheesh* from a foreigner, takes to rest for a few days, since the additional and rather unexpected income is more than sufficient to keep him going. This was the kind of traditional, backward, nonprofit-oriented attitude towards work that simply had to be overcome. Working purely to satisfy one's limited needs would get society nowhere. Where, then, did we want it to go?

When we look back, it seems rather strange that this question was not asked seriously enough during the 1950s and the 1960s. A naive belief in progress as a self-justifying process led us into the "backward regions" with missionary zeal. Western man was so proud of his obvious material achievements, measured in terms of urbanization energy consumption, and "auto"-mobility, that nobody felt inclined to listen to those few who were asking about the ultimate cost. We were proud of the doubling of the life-expectancy of children in the West and tried not to take any notice of the modern killing capacities that we developed simultaneously.

Does the average European citizen know, for instance, that the 60,000 atomic missiles and bombs that have by now been piled up in the bunkers of the industrialized societies amount to an average of three tons of conventional explosives per world-citizen? Does he realize what it means that the defence budget of one Super Power alone, namely the United States, has been raised to 178 billion dollars for 1981 and to 222 billion dollars for 1982?[12] Most probably not. So far the outward glamour and glitter of an iron cage of consumerism has successfully supported his illusory belief that he lives in a golden age of affluence. And this is so despite the fact that we now have the Global 2000 Report to the President, the latest of many alarming bulletins of what is ahead. It states that by the time today's 10-year-olds are thirty, there will be less water available, less fertile land, less clean air, less wilderness. One-fifth of the species with whom we now co-inhabit this planet will probably be extinct. There will be less natural diversity, less leeway for waste and conflict, and the gap between the affluent and the hungry is expected to widen.[13]

The corresponding figures of self-destruction and despair are equally appalling. In West Germany, for instance, every day 10 old people aged sixty and above commit suicide. In 1978 alone, nearly 14,000 West German youths attempted suicide, and nearly 600 pupils, mostly from high schools, killed themselves in the same one year.[14]

These few data from our anomic "brave new world" should suffice. They are not new to our readers. But they certainly strengthen my firm conviction that a culture based on individual competition and material achievement has reached the point of self-destruction. Accumulation of technical fitness to successfully compete with others—the revolutionary principle that brought economic rationalism to world dominance during the last 400 years—has begun to turn against the human species as such. If it wants to survive, the Occident needs indeed a new Orient-ation.

More and more concerned groups, and especially the younger generation, have become aware of the limits of growth and are beginning to see the world around us as a closed system in which the so-called development of the North and the underdevelopment of the South are mutually dependent. These deformed relationships, of which many of us are well aware, though only on an abstract and theoretical level, can be illustrated as follows: "If the world were a global village of 100 people, 6 of them would be Americans. These 6 would have over a third of the village's income, and the other 94 would subsist on the other two-thirds. How would the wealthy 6 live "in peace" with their neighbors? Surely they would be driven to arm themselves against the other 94—perhaps even to spend, as Americans do, about twice as much per person on military defence as the total income of two-thirds of the villagers."[15]

It is in this general context of new value orientations and the quest for human survival that the rediscovery of Gandhi's message in the West has to be seen. In contrast to the late 1960s, when redress of all societal evils was sought in a total revolution of the whole system, what we now see is the rediscovery of the individual. "Voluntary simplicity" has become a force that is backed by a major shift in public opinion.

The phrase "voluntary simplicity" itself stems from an article that Richard Gregg published in the *Viswaa Bharati Quarterly* as far back as August, 1936. Greatly influenced by the writings of Ruskin and the teachings of Gandhi, Gregg had argued that the way to master the increasing complexity of modern life is not through still more complexity. Instead, we need to "turn inward to that which unifies all—not the intellect but the spirit—and then to devise and put into operation new forms and modes of economic and social life."[16] The will to do without can counter-balance the forces of greed and competition that perpetuate our destructive economic system.

For Gandhi, village reconstruction and work for the welfare of all were not timely techniques to save the Indian state machinery but means of achieving Truth (Satya) and Freedom (Swaraj) as the ultimate aims of self-realization. He firmly believed that the village community and village economy were the only units which would enable the individual, with all his human deficiencies, to work both for his own self-realization and that of his neighbors. He did not strive for equal opportunities on the abstract level of per capita income; instead, he relied on the functional diversity and cultural heterogeneity of the Indian subcontinent. Its rural inhabitants would know best how to adjust to the potential of an area if only they were allowed to think and act on their own behalf.

Western alternatives are based on what is needed to keep those already living below the poverty line from starving. While Sarvodaya defines a maximum necessary for the well-being of all, development technocrats measure the minimum energy input required to keep individual labor intact and craving for material acquisitions growing. This juxtaposition shows that the development concept under Sarvodaya does indeed offer an alternative. It starts with a new definition of aims, one which is made possible by reference to a value system that differs fundamentally from the world-view which governs modern thinking.

When discussing my studies on Sarvodaya with an Indian friend, Dr. D. C. Wadhwa from Gokhale Institute, who had worked in the Bhoodan-Gramdan Movement for several years, he commented sceptically: "I think that the cancer of Western economic development has grown to such a magnitude that one will have to die with it now. Its secondaries have reached each and every part of our body and therefore it is impossible to escape the inevitable. Nothing else is now acceptable."

It was this kind of defeatism which Ivan Illich had in mind when he expressed his concern that it was the Western scholars who were coming up with Gandhian ideas and concepts. In India in 1978 he is reported to have said that he felt it would be a tragedy if India had to "re-import" Gandhi from the West.[17] Yet the fact is that most Indian scholars no longer consider a Gandhian approach "feasible" for their country.[18] At the same time, however, they use the jargon of the dependencia-theory without realizing that Gandhi had described the international dialectics of industrial development long before the model of center versus periphery was introduced. As early as 1928 he had pleaded: "God forbid that India should ever take to industrialism after the manner of the West. The economic imperialism of a single tiny island kingdom is today keeping the world in chains. If an entire nation of 300 million took to similar economic exploitation, it would strip the world bare like locusts."[19] Gandhi was, moreover, absolutely certain that it made no difference how the forces of production were

organized. Capitalism or socialism were for him surface phenomena that had no significant influence on the destructive aggressiveness of industrialism as such. For an Indian farmer it indeed makes no difference today who tries to exploit him; no matter whether it is Russian state socialism or Western private capital, the terms of exchange are against him in both cases. In 1940 Gandhi had anticipated these basic similarities and warned his countrymen: "Pandit Nehru wants industrialization because he thinks that, if it is socialized, it would be free from the evils of capitalism. My own view is that the evils are inherent in industrialism, and no amount of socialization can eradicate them."[20]

We have to accept that, for the time being, a wholehearted Gandhian approach to South Asia's problems is missing in the region. Despite the many official declarations of good intent, things are allowed, or even planned, to move in other directions, and the demonstration and penetration effects of the First World's systems are felt everywhere, both on the material level and in the mental make-up. No matter how far we travel, Coca Cola has been there before, even in Peking.

It is quite obvious that "development," the modern theodicy, has been accepted by India's Westernized elite and their social scientists. A universal development concept helps to explain their own well-being and relative affluence and leaves a hopeful perspective even for those who are still backward or "behind schedule." "The fortunate is seldom satisfied with the fact of being fortunate," said Max Weber. "Beyond this he needs to know that he has a *right* to his good fortune. He wants to be convinced that he 'deserves' it, and above all, that he deserves it in comparison with others. . . . Good fortune thus wants to be legitimate fortune."[21]

An evolutionist view of "modernization and development" thus serves a double purpose. Not only does it legitimize the relative affluence of the "functional elites" in a "developing" society; it suggests that the Third World can "take off" and even "catch up" if only it follows the path of the First World. It remains to be seen whether this modern view is consistent enough to determine the tracks along which action will be pushed by the dynamics of interests in India. For the time being, India's development planners and their academic advisers think that they have learned their lessons in Oxbridge or Haryale well, when they attempt to refute a Gandhian view of India as "passive" or "static." They try to discover the functional prerequisites of an "active" and "dynamic" Hindu society. Dazzled as they are as a Westernized elite by the outward glitter of the "iron cage" and its false promise of a rapid victory over suffering, they search for the modern shortcuts that will lead the country straight into it.[22]

As a Westerner I remember that the systematic study of ancient Sanskrit and Pali texts started in Germany in the early nineteenth century. These first indologists have had a tremendous impact on the development of nationalist thought in India and Sri Lanka. Men like Max Muller and Wilhelm Geiger gave a new self-esteem to a growing intelligentsia who, with their help, rediscovered the "glorious past" of their own countries. I also remember, moreover, the inspiring example of Alice Boner's work. She threw new light on the Sun Temple in Konarak[23] and she helped to rediscover the heritage of the Kathakali tradition of Indian dance.[24] Just imagine that she and Uday Shanker had been unable to raise money in India in 1930, to finance a troupe of classical artists, since nobody dared to identify himself with vulgar native dance. "I dare say," wrote Uday Shanker to the Maharaja of Baroda in February, 1930, "that in Europe Indian dance is now looked upon with more reverence than in our own country."[25]

The same holds true of Gandhi and his Sarvodaya concept which is more and more relevant for development thinking in the West. This will become only too obvious during the Third Development Decade, which will reveal the

final collapse of the modernization paradigm and its related strategies. At the same time, it is quite clear that South Asia's development elites cannot admit this. They must defend—at all costs—the foreign-oriented development theories and policies of their respective countries as the only justification for their own relative affluence. The moment they confess that the common man can never hope to attain this affluence, they will have to resign. Thus it will take some time yet for Gandhian concepts to be rediscovered in their country of origin.

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NOTES

[1]*The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi,* edited by Shriman Narayan (Navajivan Publishing House, Ahmedabad, 1968), Vol. II, p. 445.

[2]Quoted from Ostergaard and M. Currell, *The Gentle Anarchists. A Study of the Leaders of the Sarvodaya Movement for Non-Violent Revolution in India* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1971), p. 32, fn. 5.

[3]C. P. Loomis and Z. K. Loomis, eds., *Socio-Economic Change and the Religious Factor in India: An Indian Symposisum of Views on Max Weber* (East-West Press, New Delhi, 1969), p. 22.

[4]*Ibid,* p. 39

[5]L. I. Rudolph, and S. H. Rudolph, *The Modernity of Traditio: Political Development in India* (The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1967). p. 223

[6]For details see the chapter "Gandhi," pp. 3-15, in Kantowsky, *Sarvodaya: The Other Development* (Vikas Publishing House, New Delhi, 1980).

[7]Quoted from *Osterguard and Currell* (see fn. 2), p. 3.

[8]*The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (see fn. 1) Vol. IV, p. 372.

[9]M. K. Gandhi, *My Picture of Free India* (Pearl Publications, Bombay, 1965), p. 107.

[10]*The Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (see fn. 1), Vol. IV, p. 373.

[11]Quoted from G. Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstones of a Nation* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1966), p. 39.

[12]*Neue Zurcher Zeittung,* 6 March 1981.

[13]*The Global 2000 Report to the President* (US Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1980).

[14]Hans-Eckehard Bahr, Du hast keine Chance, aber nutze sie. in *Die Zeit,* 10 April 1981, p. 43.

[15]Example from front-jacket of: Taking Charge. Achieving Personal and Political Change through Simple Living. by: The Simple Living Collective, American Friends Service Committee (Bantam Books, New York, 1977).

[16]R. Gregg, "Voluntary Simplicity," Reprinted in *The Coevolution Quarterly,* Summer 1977, pp. 10-27

[17]*Gandhi Peace Foundation Newsletter,* Vol. 2, No. 1, January 1978.

[18]See, for instance, Rajni Kothari's refutation of a Gandhian model as "utopian." Raini Kothari, "India: An Alternative Framework for Rural Development," in *Another Development: Approaches and Strategies* (Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala, 1977), pp. 208-26.

[19]M. K. Gandhi, My *Picture of Free India* (Pearl Publications, Bombay, 1965), p. 52

[20]*Ibid,* p. 52

[21]Max Weber, *Essays in Sociology* (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1948), p. 271.

[22]For a detailed discussion of the misinterpretation of Max Weber in India—caused by Gerth/Martindale's wrong translation of Weber's study on Hinduism/Buddhism and the "Personification" of Weber in the US in general—see my article "Max Weber on India and Indian Interpretation of Weber," in *Contributions to Indian Sociology* (New Series), Vol. 16, No. 2 (1982).

[23]A. Boner and S. R. Sharma with: R. P. Das, *New Light on the Sun Temple of Konarak: Four Unpublished Manuscripts Relating to Construction, History and Ritual of this Time* (Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office Varanasi, 1972).

[24]A Boner, "The Theatre in the Jungle," *Indian Arts and Letters,* Vol. Vll, No. 1 (1933), pp. 37-45

A. Boner, "Kathakali" *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art,* Vol. III, No. 1 (1935), pp. 61-74.

[25]Quoted from a letter, dated 25 February 1930, shown in the exhibition "Alice Boner und die Kunst Indiens," Zurich, Rietberg Museum, 19 August 1982—2 January 1983.

REVIEW
EXAMPLE, NOT POLICY

IN *The Simple Life* (Oxford University Press, 1985, $19.95), David Shi, a historian, tells the uneven story of moral aspiration in the long struggle in the United States of minority groups to persuade the rest of the population to adopt habits of self-restraint and abstinence. He begins in New England with the Puritans, examines the efforts of the Quakers in Pennsylvania, and the recurring renewals at self-reform of the latter, provides a long section on the Transcendentalists, a review of the life of Arthur Morgan, gives adequate space to John Muir and John Burroughs, to Scott Nearing, to Ralph Borsodi and Mildred Loomis, and ends with E. F. Schumacher and Wendell Berry.

It took about a hundred years for the Puritans to prove to their sorrow that preaching and punishment would not make simplicity the choice of Americans with a continent at their disposal. The Founding Fathers, more Deist than Puritan, have a chapter which enlarges our understanding of these extraordinary men. They read history and hoped to reproduce in America the disciplined spirit of early republican Rome. As Prof. Shi says:

> In reorienting the Protestant ethic along more secular lines, American republican thought turned from theology to history for its wellspring, discovering a rich tradition of simple living in Western culture dating back to classical antiquity. Colonial readers especially identified with the pastoral poetry of Virgil and Horace and the histories of the late Roman republic written by Sallust, Cicero, Livy, Tacitus and Plutarch. These and other Roman writers portrayed the Republic as a serene, pastoral nation of virtuous citizens. As long as the majority of Romans had remained simple, rustic husbandmen devoted to public good rather than to selfish interests, Rome had thrived. But spectacular success on the battlefield during the second century B.C. proved too powerful an intoxicant for the sober republicans, and Rome began to experience a moral crisis from which she never recovered.

Americans, the founders thought, might be able to avoid this disaster. Isolated from Europe by an ocean, with a great continent to explore and exploit, they would not be led into imperialistic adventures. Sam Adams, a most unambitious man, was devoted to the welfare of his countrymen. We think of him as mostly an incendiary revolutionist, not knowing that he had a strong Puritan heritage. Adams, Shi says, "remained confident that once Americans recognized the severity of their situation, they would indeed be capable of both militant patriotism and moral transformation." He wrote in 1774: "I think our countrymen discover the spirit of Rome or Sparta." More skeptical, John Adams said in 1775:

> We must change our Habits, our Prejudices, our Palates our Tastes in Dress, Furniture, Equipage, Architecture, etc., but We can live and be happy. But the question is whether our People have Virtue enough to be mere Husbandmen, Mechanicks, and Soldiers? They have not Virtue enough to bear it always I take for granted. How long then will their Virtue last? till next Spring?

Yet at the time of the Revolution, public support for patriotic simplicity, Prof. Shi says, "was greatest among the lower social orders—the common laborers, seamen, and servants, as well as the lesser artisans, struggling journeymen, and apprentices." Disillusionment, however, came early. John Adams, for one, was unable to share in Jefferson's dream of "a decentralized republic of simple manners and civic virtue."

> Shays' Rebellion and other disruptive incidents indicated that many commoners were behaving in a dangerously unrepublican way. In state after state, a dramatic shift in political power had occurred since 1776. Men of humble origins and parochial interests began to displace the gentry in seats of power. The popularly elected state assemblies violated traditional property rights by printing excessive amounts of paper money and by staying judicial action against debtors. Such developments led many of the Revolutionaries who earlier had been optimistic about America's republican potential to reveal a defensive, conservative strain reminiscent of Puritan magistrates and divines. *"We have probably,"* concluded George Washington in 1786, *"had too good an opinion of human nature in forming our confederation."*

Jefferson struggled in behalf of his decentralized, agrarian republic, hoping to avoid the class strife that comes with urbanization. "The mobs of great cities," he claimed, "add just so much support of pure government, as sores do to the strength of the human body." Yet his confidence was waning. As the writer says:

> But Jefferson's agrarian republic had quickly been replaced by the forces) of expansive commercialism and the alluring appeal of Hamiltonianism. More and more Americans revealed that they were not content with a simple agrarian way of life. Hence, at the same time he was completing his paean to husbandry in the *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Jefferson admitted that his purely agrarian philosophy could no longer provide a practical guide to national policy-making. "Were I to indulge my own theory," he observed in 1785, Americans would "practice neither commerce nor navigation, but [would] stand with respect to Europe precisely on the footing of China. We should thus avoid wars, and all our citizens would be husbandmen." Yet he quickly confessed that "this is theory only, and a theory which the servants of America are not at liberty to follow. Our people have a decided taste for navigation and commerce."

By the 1830s, a century and a half ago, but only fifty years after the Revolution, cultural leaders in the United States were no longer able to believe in the socializing and moralizing influence of family and home. The contention of the campaigners for a public school system was that "the family alone could not be counted on to carry out the necessary process of socialization. Parents, especially those among the Irish and German immigrants, were portrayed as either too indifferent or too lenient in their attitude toward moral instruction in the household. . . . A universal system of compulsory schools, therefore, must assume the responsibilities of moral instruction for the nation's children." In 1837 Horace Mann gave up his law practice to devote himself, as he said, "to the larger sphere of minds and morals." The law and the church, he argued, were no longer an effective moral force, while pernicious family influences were undermining "the moral development of youth."

> Mann began his campaign for public schools by focusing primarily on the *moral* benefits that universal education would provide for the young nation. Through the new model schools, he argued, "we shall teach mankind to moderate their passions and develop their virtues. . . . Education must be made universal, he contended, because the social problems were universal. His faith in the school as the best instrument for indoctrinating republican morality and civic virtue in an increasingly diverse populace was boundless. The common school, he claimed, "is the greatest discovery ever made by man. . . . Other social organizations are curative and remedial: this is a preventative and antidote."

Yet Mann felt obliged to compromise in order to gain the support of the property-owning class which would pay for the public schools through taxation.

> Education, he assured the respectable citizenry, is "not only the most honorable, but the surest means of amassing wealth." Mann tried to demonstrate that "education has a market value, that it is so far an article of merchandise, that it may be turned to pecuniary account: it may be minted, and will yield a larger amount of suitable coin than common bullion."

But now came the New England Transcendentalists, who purified the idea of simplicity and picked up the gage in its behalf. Retaining Puritan ardor and commitment, but dropping its guilt-feelings, Emerson declared for plain living and high thinking. Unlike his Puritan ancestors, he would not impose his idea of simplicity on others, but would try to inspire them to share in his vision. People, he realized, will go their own pace. Thoreau was of the same persuasion. After experience in teaching school, he said:

> "How vain to try to teach youth, or anybody, truths! They can only learn them after their own fashion, and when they get ready. I do not mean this to condemn our system of education, but to show what it amounts to." How much better than the standardized curriculum was "a constant intercourse with nature and the contemplation of natural phenomena." His own intuitive experience in the huckleberry-field "was some of the best schooling I got, and paid for itself."

We go now to Prof. Shi's conclusion, since it is hardly possible to improve on the counsels of Emerson and Thoreau. He says, finally:

> If this study has a moral, then, it is that the simple life though destined to be a minority ethic, can nevertheless be more than an anachronism or an eccentricity. Although it has been most evident during times of national emergency, it requires neither an energy crisis nor a national calamity to make it appealing. What meaningful simple living does require is a person willing it for himself. . . .
>
> Money or possessions or activities themselves do not corrupt simplicity, but love of money, the craving for possessions, and the prison of activities do. Knowing the difference between personal trappings and personal traps, therefore, is the key to mastering the fine art of simple living.

COMMENTARY
MUSINGS ABOUT ETHICS

THIS week's "Children" ends by asking: Could there be a science of ethics? This is like asking, Does the reality of free will eliminate the possibility of science? And then, there is the additional question, what sort of revision in the idea of science would result from the presence in it of free choice?

In any event, we should give Wittgenstein's thinking on the question. It is his opinion—

> That we cannot write a scientific book, the subject matter of which could be intrinsically sublime and above all other subject matters. I can only describe my feeling by the metaphor, that, if a man could write a book on Ethics which really was a book on Ethics, this book would, with an explosion, destroy all other books in the world.

Wittgenstein is a teacher and his explanation of what he means runs to eleven pages. However, we reproduce his conclusion:

> Ethics so far as it springs from the desire to say something about the ultimate meaning of life, the absolute good, the absolute valuable, can be no science. What it says does not add to our knowledge in any sense. But it is a document of a tendency in the human mind which I personally cannot help respecting deeply and I would not for my life ridicule it.

Is Wittgenstein by any chance right?

He might be considered wrong by those fortunate enough to have a thorough understanding of the universe and its laws—moral laws as well as principles of physical action. Since we are moral beings, it is reasonable to think we live in a continuum of moral law, but we are not deeply convinced of this idea or we would act very differently. What would it take to convince us of the invincible reality of moral law?

Immediate compensation for the moral mistakes we make, instead of effects so apparently distant that we fail to connect them with their causes? That would certainly convince us, but would morality itself drop out of such sure-thing equations? Why, we might ask, is a kind of uncertainty an essential part of morality?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves

FINALLY, A HIGH NOTE

THIS week we have passages from a book and some magazines, all bearing on education. First, then, from the "Comment" department in the *Progressive* for last May:

> It is grossly unfair, of course, to blame the schools for failures that are inherent in our political and economic system. But that is precisely the point: Much of the debate between conservatives and liberals about the role of education is wholly irrelevant, because both sides demand more of the schools than they can possibly deliver.
>
> We would do well to rediscover the idea that education is a process that does not necessarily take place only in schools. Many of us learn far more *outside* the institutional setting than within it. The transmission of values—and, in many instances even of basic skills—may be a task that can be better accomplished at home, in the work place, or in various community settings that are not called schools.
>
> Before we are swept up once more by one or another quick solution to this latest "crisis" of the schools, we should recognize that they are nothing more than instruments of the larger society. They will not be much better than that society in any circumstance, and as a rule they will not be much worse. If we perceive that our school system has failed to meet our expectations and our needs, it is because our society has also failed. And if we want to improve the schools, we had better begin by coping with the failings of society.

The following is from an article by Denis P. Doyle in the *American Spectator:*

> What do Walter Mondale and 46 per cent of Chicago teachers have in common? For starters they're Democrats. They'll vote against Reagan. (If the last election is any guide about 42 per cent will vote for Reagan.) They believe in teachers unions. They're opposed to tuition tax credits. They "believe" in public education as the symbol and expression of American democracy. So much for common knowledge.
>
> They share one other trait that few people know about, however. Walter Mondale and 46 per cent of Chicago public school teachers send their own children to private schools. . . . Although some observers of American education have long suspected that public school teachers send their children to private schools in disproportionately high numbers, there were no good statistics to support the anecdotes.

Now there are figures. The *Detroit Free Press* developed some in 1983, which were published in *Education Week* (Oct. 5), disclosing that 20 per cent of Michigan public school teachers send their children to private schools. The news about what happens in Chicago came out in the *Chicago Reporter.*

> What does it mean? At one level it means just what it appears to—it is the education analogue of the chef who refuses to eat in his own restaurant or the doctor who won't be treated at his own hospital. As University of Illinois Professor Herbert Walberg commented: "Teachers are like auto workers who wisely buy Japanese cars."

What has happened?

> First, in most large school districts teaching is no longer an avocation—it is a job. It is a job in precisely the same way that being a policeman, motorman, clerk, or other public employee is. Its principal purposes are the production of income and job security—if you enjoy the work, so much the better. The distinction between an avocation and a job is important, because for generations we took for granted the self-sacrifice and dedication of teachers who thought teaching was a calling.

From a chapter "The Universal Curriculum" in Page Smith's book, *Dissenting Opinions,* we take a passage on the condition of higher education. Having pointed out that in the nineteenth century the curriculum of the schools and colleges "had broken away from its origins in Reformed Christianity and been established as a separate, independent value, as a procedure by which people *were trained in skills and techniques,* . . . with the goals of good citizenship, getting ahead, Americanism, and so on," Mr. Smith says:

> . . . the American university as we know it today took shape in the period after the secularization of education. It thus embodied secularization in an extreme form. Where important residues of the

earlier religously oriented education lingered on in the atmosphere if not the curriculum of elementary and secondary schools (represented by such notions as making "good citizens" of the students), the college and university became centers of "value-free," "scientific research" and teaching. Any possible coherence was destroyed by innumerable "specialized courses" that were presented as containing the truth or truths—now scientific and scholarly rather than religious—of a particular field or discipline. The new dogmatism was as rigid as the old, and what is more it was disintegrative rather than unifying—a thousand independent dogmas instead of one. The shift was, among other things, from morality to what we might call "operationalism," from what was right to how things worked.

The only problem was, as it turned out, things didn't work that way. Outside of the area of "natural sciences," the new, value-free, scientific scholarship proved, if anything, less capable of explaining and shaping the world of human beings than the old humanistic-religious scholarship.

What I wish to emphasize is that the domination of our common intellectual life by the colleges and universities with their "system of orthodoxies," as rigid as those of any religious zealots, affected every level of the educational experience in the United States. . . . It was thus in the area of higher education that the disintegration of traditional values proceeded at the most rapid rate. Along with their system of orthodoxies, the colleges and universities (the universities were the real culprits, the colleges tagged along behind for the most part) exercised absolute tyranny over secondary school education by prescribing what high school students must study (and how they must study it) in order to be admitted to college.

While the mood of these quotations varies considerably, we shall try to end on a high note by concluding with some extracts from "A Lecture on Ethics" by Ludwig Wittgenstein, which appeared in *The Philosophical Review* for January, 1965. Page Smith spoke of the transition from teaching what is right to teaching how things work. Wittgenstein is interested in the meaning of "right," which he conceives to be the content of ethics. He begins by quoting from Moore's *Principia Ethica* the definition, "Ethics is the general inquiry into what is good." He adds:

Now instead of saying "Ethics is the inquiry into what is good" I could have said Ethics is the inquiry into what is valuable, or, into what is really important, or I could have said Ethics is the inquiry into the meaning of life, or into what makes life worth living, or into the right way of living. I believe if you look at all these phrases you will get a rough idea as to what it is that Ethics is concerned with.

He seeks an illustration:

Supposing that I could play tennis and one of you saw me playing and said "Well, you play pretty badly" and suppose I answered "I know. I'm playing badly but I don't want to play any better," all the other man could say would be "Ah then that's all right." But suppose I had told one of you a preposterous lie and he came up to me and said "You're behaving like a beast" and then I were to say "I know I behave badly, but then I don't want to behave any better," could he then say "Ah, then that's all right"? Certainly not; he would say "Well, you ought to want to behave better." Here you have an absolute judgment of value whereas the first instance was one of a relative judgment. The essence of this difference seems to be obviously this: Every judgment of relative value is a mere statement of facts and can therefore be put in such a form that it loses all the appearance of a judgment of value.

Could there be, then, a science of ethics, of what is right?