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A CHOICE OF ORIGINS

CULTURE is the flow and consequence of the efforts of human beings to find out about themselves. The symbolic activities of society are collective expressions of partial self-realization. Social organization is of course turned to lesser purposes, such as satisfying economic needs and establishing desired relationships, but the quest for meaning remains primary, however it may be covered up by other claims and preoccupations.

This seems the chief burden of *Culture and Practical Reason* (University of Chicago Press, $17.50), by Marshall Sahlins, a comparative study of contemporary anthropological theory. While essentially a critique of Marx, this work contends more broadly that man, as a meaning-seeking being, turns whatever he needs to do into a vehicle for the expression of his search for meaning. His life and being are not shaped, except superficially, by the pursuit of either biological or economic ends:

> It [the book] takes as the distinctive quality of man not that he must live in a material world, circumstance he shares with all organisms, but that he does so according to a meaningful scheme of his own devising, in which capacity mankind is unique. It therefore takes as the decisive quality of culture—as giving each mode of life the properties that characterize it—not that this culture must conform to material constraints but that it does so according to a definite symbolic scheme which is never the only one possible.

This "contest between the practical and the meaningful" is identified by Mr. Sahlins as "the fateful issue of modern social thought."

What is the meaning of "practical" here? It is the simple, everyday meaning. Practical undertakings are getting enough food, clothing and shelter to stay alive. They are, as we say, the "utilitarian" side of life. This book is a critique of social theory which interprets the entirety of human expression and culture as an effect—a mere intellectual superstructure—of these practical pursuits. As the author says:

> History is too often written in utilitarian style, as if it were decided by the distribution of resources and skill people display in manipulating them. The content of the economizing varies, but all our social sciences participate in the going conception that society is produced by enterprising action. Society is the set of relationships empirically constituted by the pursuit of private interests with the means on hand.
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> Perhaps this helps to explain the peculiar relation to nature characteristic of Western culture. . . . So far as I know we are the only people who think themselves risen from savages; everyone else believes they descend from gods. This could well be a fair statement of the difference. In any case we make both a folklore and a science of the idea, sometimes with little to distinguish between them. The development from a Hobbesian state of nature is the origin myth of Western capitalism. But just as Hobbes did not conceive that the commonwealth abolished the nature of man as wolf to other men, but merely held that it permitted its expression in comparative safety, so we continue to believe in the savage within us—of which we are slightly ashamed. At an earlier period it was *Homo economics,* with a natural propensity to truck and barter, which idea rationalized bourgeois society to itself. It took but two centuries to evolve another species, *Homo bellicosus,* or so one might name that contentious human ape popularized by a number of modern writers to account for about everything wrong at the moment.

One begins to see why Mr. Sahlins described the contest between the two views—the symbolic and the practical—as "fateful." What we think about ourselves has a decisive effect on what we do. The more persuaded we are that our behavior arises from the potentialities of apes, the more ape-like we become. The more the acquisition of material goods is believed to be the sole purpose of life, the more fiercely we set out to acquire, not only a sufficiency, but all we can get. Our theories of human nature are by no means

objective studies—they are *self-fulfilling prophecies.*

The tough-minded claim that economic purposes are all-powerful, that the modes of economic activity are the archetypal for human behavior, results in an odiously diminished symbolism. The business institution becomes the model for the conduct of the university. Churches adopt the methods and hire the experts of sales promotion. People "buy" and "sell" ideas as though they were commodities. We have made a symbol system out of our rejection of symbolic meanings, using for images of value the economic processes put in their place. As Mr. Sahlins says:

> The objects and persons of capitalist production are united in a system of symbolic valuations. But if our own economy does not elude the human condition, if capitalism too is a symbolic process, wherein lies the uniqueness of Western "civilizations"?
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> Perhaps in nothing so much as the illusion that it is otherwise—that the economy and society are pragmatically constructed. Yet the situation is not so simple, for even the illusion has a material basis. . . . One might say that if production reflects the general scheme of society, it is looking at itself in a mirror. . . For us the production of goods is at the same time the privileged mode of symbolic production and transmission. The uniqueness of bourgeois society consists not in the fact that the economic society escapes symbolic determination, but that the economic symbolism is structurally determining. . . .
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> What is finally distinctive of Western civilization is the mode of symbolic production, this very disguise in the form of a growing GNP of the process by which symbolic value is created. But such institutionalization of the symbolic process only makes it more elaborate, as well as less subject to control and more dangerous. More elaborate because it encourages all the human capacities of symbolic manipulation within a single social order, and thus generates an enormous cultural growth. More dangerous, then, because in the interest of this growth it does not hesitate to destroy any other form of humanity whose difference from us consists in having discovered not merely other codes of existence but ways of achieving an end that still eludes us: the mastery of society's mastery over nature.

What, essentially, is the writer calling for? He is proposing that we begin to read the meanings of human experience in terms of our own values, longings, aspirations, and whatever self-knowledge we are able to claim. We cannot explain ourselves solely in terms of machine principles, simply because of the impressive practical achievements of physicists and the engineering applications of mechanistic cause and effect. The laws of biology, while a wonderful and fascinating outcome of the study of organisms, in no way account for the human qualities of human beings. The ways of the market and the uses of money are not transactions typifying human potentiality. We are what we are, and our essence is none of these limiting things, however much we may employ them for the practical arrangements of our lives.

Interestingly, the anthropologists seem most frequently brought to realizations of this sort by encounters with "primitive" societies. These societies have embedded in their customs, rituals and traditions, conceptions of meaning which were not in the least derived from "practical" undertakings. In fact, often the practical undertakings served also as symbolic representations of transcendent meaning. Richard Herz put this beautifully in *Man on a Rock:*

> Karl Buecher collected hundreds of songs echoing the divine animation that springs forth daily under a thousand different skies—songs which people used to sing during the ceremony we call work. Chinese peasants, moving into the mountains every morning to gather tea, sing a hymn in honor of their enterprise, which they compared to a pilgrimage to the Western paradise. The Volga boatmen "accepted the universe," and the women of Madagascar acted, when they cultivated the rice fields, like bayaderes trying to please a god.
>
> Miguel Covarrubias, in his book on Bali, describes the banjars, or cooperative societies as we would call them in our dry idiom; they watched the magic of work unfold with proper art and majesty in their Indonesian eden, when night fell, they sent the arpeggios of their tireless orchestras through fragrant vales. . . .

> The medieval workers in Flanders and Lyons, toiling in the music of crepuscular cities, rolled the stone from the tomb of their narrow space, their triumph over the refractory material of the world was not mere routine, but was understood by them in its vast metaphysical connotations. Work interpreted as spiritual discipline gave these people a superhuman patience, detachment from results.

It is something of a puzzle that these majestic and even awe-aspiring gnostic dramas are to be found chiefly in primitive societies, or at any rate in social formations belonging to the past, as though their loss is a price we have paid for our modernity. For some time now, scholars have been performing acts of cultural and philosophical recovery, bringing restoration of respect for ancient forms of thought. Where did these archaic symbolic expressions come from—so ordering in their effect on human life, suffusing the tasks of daily existence with a dignity that makes the "work ethic" of our own time seem only a shallow expedient?

And what of that remarkable consensus referred to by Mr. Sahlins: "everyone else believes they descend from gods"! This is a feeling of ancestry which, if we should ever regain it, might unite some Promethean capacities with the Promethean burdens of our lives. We hardly know, however, what the ancients or primitives meant by "gods." Speaking of influential scholars such as James Frazer, J. D. Unwin observed in *Sex and Culture:*

> It is on misleading translations that all theories as to alleged "nature-spirits and "nature-worship" have been founded. . . . No tree or rock is revered *qua* tree or *qua* rock. It is regarded with veneration because the power of the universe is manifest there, the power being the same whether it be in a tree or a rock. This power is often conceived not as an entity but as a quality. . . . Is it not plain that Mr. Fewkes was right when he said that "in the use of the words gods, deities, and worship we undoubtedly endow the subject with conceptions which do not exist in the native mind"?

Yet the term "gods" does have a working meaning for us. It stands for an order of intelligence that comprehends the world, knows how to use its subtle forces and resources, and has a beneficent purpose in working with the world. Since such capacities are at least potential in human beings, it is not unreasonable to conclude that men are undeveloped gods, or children of gods. Useful here may be the Hegelian idea that the World-Spirit generates the universe "in the hope of attaining clear self-consciousness," which is matched or anticipated by the ancient Puranic idea of the divine progenitor, Brahmâ, being constantly "moved by the desire to create." Creation is prelude and concomitant of all self-discovery, and conscious creation is uniquely the attribute of man on earth, suggesting at least the germ of godlike powers. Again as Hegel said, the Deity *"objectivises himself as Nature,* and again rises out of it."

We might ourselves say that spirit, animating the forms of matter, makes the world of nature; that man, as partly conscious spirit, struggling against his confinement by physical nature, is continually devising new rules to make the conditions of his life freer and more tolerable; while the gods, conceived as graduate humans who know what they are doing, are no longer subject to the confining illusions of life. They have "risen out" of them.

This sort of free-wheeling speculation is of course not permitted for anthropologists, even though, in retrospect, such conceptions, however veiled, make the very stuff of culture. According to Boas, Culture is "a process of rendering experience meaningful," and it "necessarily proceeds on a theory—of nature, of man, of man's being in nature." Sahlins says that "the creation of meaning is the distinguishing and constituting quality of men." Culture, then, is more than philosophy and religion—it is the sum of these, but also what human beings make of them in their lives. We are all born into a world of culture, and as Ortega says, "in view of the fact that we have not assisted in its construction, we tend to believe that it is the work of no one in particular, even that it is reality itself." The architects of culture

are the men whose ideas remake the human conception of reality.

But are these ideas, however initially inspiring, no more than a succession of great and enclosing networks of illusion? What chance have we to know the world and ourselves as both really are?

When such questions are asked—and they are asked in this book—culture is already unstable and in flux. Until quite recently we have confidently believed that the "real" world is the world of physical experience, external forces, and concrete human action in pursuit of material necessities. But now we are realizing—indeed, we hardly need to be told—that this physical world is in danger, in some ways exhausted and coming apart under our hands. Like our society, perhaps because of our society, things will not hold together. The sense of human meaning, which alone gives existence coherence, has been excluded from what we regard as knowledge. The "gods" have been ordered to go back to where they came from.

A way out of this mess, apparently, is gradually being found under the guidance of instinctive cultural tropisms or deep-lying organic intuitions, rather than from reconstruction of a rational system of holistic belief. Sudden reversals of a century of indoctrination in our "savage" heritage and Spencer's and Darwin's "struggle for existence" are hardly possible, although the authority of these ideas about ourselves is being eroded by book after book stressing the cooperative aspect of all nature and animal life. The old animist "superstitions" of the "lower races"—seeing souls or spirits in every form of life, and "gods" as the parents and guardians of all mankind—are not being revived in their original letter, but more and more people are beginning to act *as if* they could believe in such things.

There are as yet no widely held metaphysical doctrines which support the growing interest in ecology, but a practice consistent with ancient belief in the unity of man and nature has ever stronger advocacy. The logical supports for human association in smaller, more autonomous communities are based on studies of human experience and recognition of the disasters resulting from centralized authority and control—yet the *feeling* which would support a corresponding metaphysics is evident enough. The decline in the acquisitive spirit seems more a spontaneous change in taste than an active response to moralistic campaigns and exhortations. People are seeking simplicity because it is *better.* Reduction of desire for elaborate material possessions and ingeniously devised luxuries removes the clutter from everyday life, allowing deeper currents of experience to make themselves felt.

The promising forms of liberation in our time seem to be developing under the inspiration of what might be called the higher pragmatism. We look at societies and communities of the past, not so much for what they believed as for how they lived, and to see what were the visible effects in all directions of those modes of existence. The underlying metaphysics—or what might be a metaphysics indicative of these ways of life—is only suggested by occasional intuitive insights. Ian McHarg and some others speak of the pantheism—the omnipresence of deity—which comes naturally to ecological thinkers. Essayists sensitive to the awakening spirit of the times distinguish between the true reason of the comprehending, synthesizing, and creative *nous* of the higher mind, and the merely calculating, measuring, and rationalizing capacity.

There is, in other words, a tacit metaphysics, spontaneous in its presence, undeveloped in its implications, yet powerful in inspiration, which pervades the constructive changes now going on. We look at our science, demanding that it be turned to other purposes, at the same time recognizing that its language, habits, assumptions and methodological direction are alien to the changes we desire. Our scholars, therefore, examine the scientific practice of the distant past,

noting that it seldom became dictator of ends or shaper of the philosophy of human life. There have been past societies in which science was the servant of purposes which conformed to the natural fitness of things—a science which did not deform and mutilate the earth, imposing dehumanizing social systems, but devoted its skill to heightening the benefits of natural processes and enlisting human intelligence in their support. There have been, we are discovering, cultures in the past which knew: "ways of achieving an end which still eludes us: the mastery of society's mastery over nature."

As we proceed, these seemingly spontaneous progressions suggest intuitive contact with a higher order of natural law—a system of internal relationships and order which empiricism forbids us to theorize about, but which life increasingly demands that we obey.

A splendid example of how this may work is found in the career and thought of A. H. Maslow. He began with the psychological theory which prevailed in the culture of the time the claims of the behaviorists. But he early discovered that this theory of man's nature did not *fit* with the realities of human life. It was a reductive doctrine, neglectful of all those wonders which open-minded inspection of human beings made evident to him. Breaking with the confinements of such theories—which had application only to a narrow band of behavior—he began to elaborate the indispensable assumptions of a psychology of health and human possibility. He made himself acquainted as a scientific observer with the most excellent people—men and women—he could find. He declared for the universal promise of the manifest achievements of the few. He studied the ways of thinking of these "subjects," their modes of acting, their feelings of value, and the influence of these pervasive qualities on themselves and others with whom they were associated.

Little by little he began to restore to the language of psychology the terms required by a psychology of health—sometimes borrowing from the past, sometimes inventing his own words. The ideal man, for Maslow, was the *Bodhisattva* of ancient Buddhist teaching—the altruist who lives to serve mankind. Such, in fact, were the "gods" of ancient philosophical religion. In speaking of the self-actualizing person, he listed so many qualities and attributes of human excellence that, when done, he had very nearly completed an "anatomy" of soul—a presence in the round of a substantial non-physical being, seated in the body, yet moved by longing for power of transcendence. An aspect of the basic human predicament, he said, is that "we are simultaneously worms and gods."

Until now, our science has closed down its focus to inspect only the "worm" side of human beings. But today the godlike in us is struggling to announce its reality and obtain its requirements. Yet the forms of godlike speech, the concepts of godlike action, and the ends of godlike behavior are lacking in our culture. That such language, thought-forms, and objectives once existed is at least evidence that they may exist again—reincarnate, so to speak, in a culture that evolves a hospitable matrix for these animating principles. The logic of any future metaphysics will have to be a *working* logic whose consequences are seen and felt, illustrated and amplified, at all the levels of human experience. This is the positive bequest of science to the age of tomorrow.

REVIEW

TENSIONS IN WORDS

SOME words are inanimate, making them safe to define and use without much wondering reflection; but others are still charged with life and therefore filled with ambiguous and changing meanings. The way you use this second sort of words gives you away—reveals what you care about or believe is "true." Such words do not and cannot have fixed meanings. A positivist shouldn't ever use them, but like the rest of us, he has to. C. S. Lewis wrote an excellent book about these words—*Studies in Words* (Cambridge University Press, 1960), and now Raymond Williams has done another—*Keywords—a Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (Oxford University Press, $3.50)—an attempt, he explains, to settle for himself the difficulty he was having with words like "culture." Culture once meant behaving the way the best, most knowledgeable people behave, but now it means *whatever* groups of people do by habit or inclination. Culture, like Nature, Love, Individual, Society, and Progress, is a word whose meaning can't be nailed down, and shouldn't be. You have to feel out the preferred or pertinent content of such words at the time of writing, and alert the reader to the meaning you intend.

Mr. Williams speaks of this:

> Some people, when they see a word, think the first thing to do is to define it. Dictionaries are produced and, with a show of authority no less confident because it is usually so limited in place and time, what is called a proper meaning is attached. I once began collecting, from correspondence in newspapers, and from other public arguments, variations on the phrases, "I see from my Webster" and "I find from my Oxford Dictionary." Usually what was at issue was a difficult term in an argument. But the effective tone of these phrases, with their interesting overtone of possession ("my Webster"), was to appropriate a meaning which fitted the argument and to exclude those meanings which were inconvenient to it but which some benighted person had been so foolish as to use. Of course if we want to be clear about *banxring* or *baobab* or *barilla,* or for that matter about *barbel* or *basilica* or *batik,* or, more obviously, about *barber* or *barley* or *barn*, this kind of definition is effective. But for words of a different kind, and especially for those which involve ideas and values, it is not only an impossible but an irrelevant procedure. The dictionaries most of us use, the defining dictionaries, will in these cases, and in proportion to their merit as dictionaries, list a range of meanings, all of them current, and it will be the range that matters.

The range of current meanings is of course important, but past or lost meanings, compared to present ones, may be more useful as a light on the changes that take place in thinking, over the years. "Nature," for example, once meant the unredeemed stuff of the world, in all its earthy variety. "Nature" made us sin, and nature-worshippers were usually "atheists." But now, for a great many, Nature is practically a synonym of the spontaneous, pantheistic presence pervading all that man has not yet found a way to spoil. The word has and has had many other shades of meaning and usages. Lewis devotes sixty pages to them, Mr. Williams six, but both writers make plain how wrong it would be to try to settle on a single meaning for this word. Substituting a bunch of half-valid synonyms for its various meanings would not help, since we very much need words which embody syncretisms, if only to keep writers from pretending that they have found a way to do away with the inherent contradictions of the human condition.

It is good to read books like *Studies in Words* and *Keywords,* mainly to become more aware of the necessary ambiguities in all valuable terms, and to learn caution in using them. Such awareness would go a long way toward eliminating the fallacy of misplaced certainty in what people say and put on paper. This would be a reform that might even do away with war.

Exercise of caution might also illuminate the disagreements among people who seem to be working for the same basic objectives. An illustration would be the dialogue which took place recently between two eminent men, both of

whom had done much in the way of planning and establishing better forms of human community. One of the two saw the problem as requiring more human capacity to cope with complexity, whereas the other insisted that only by seeking simplicity could the way be found to a harmonious life.

There was probably a real conflict of goals between these two, yet there is also a sense in which there could have been far greater agreement. The complexity of the world is real; there is a sense in which it must be understood in order to grasp the simplicities underlying endlessly subtle relationships. In other words, there is nothing simpleminded about the application of simplicity to the complexity of the world.

What the advocate of simplicity was really talking about was the necessary elimination of the unnecessary complication in our lives—the ridiculous multiplication of wants, the unlimited expansion of personal desires and "needs," requiring complex means of satisfying them. He also saw something quite wrong with the progressive subdivision of the sciences into more and more "disciplines," each with its own vocabulary and confidential expertise, to the point where dialogue with anyone not working in the same field becomes futile.

Simplicity, for the complex mind of the human being, means a lack of rigidity in thinking; it means a flow of thought which recognizes the unities in the complexity of natural phenomena. Simplicity, we could say, obtains its meaning only in confrontation with complexity, while complexity is understood only as it is absorbed but not actually dissolved by simplicity. All the good (value-charged) words, that is, are implicit compositions of opposites. They are cognitive resolutions of opposites, according to our intent in using them.

There is also the danger of seeking *premature* agreement. This, too, calls for illustration. What, for example, would be a premature simplicity? People who move to the country unprepared for a "simple" life on a farm, soon experience the pain of doing without certain complex amenities. Then there are the formidable simplicities involved in giving up war. How could we survive without an army?

When the youthful William Penn, having become a Quaker, went to George Fox and asked what he should do about his sword, the founder of the movement which became the Society of Friends replied: "Wear thy sword as long as thee can, William."

In his article on "Voluntary Simplicity" (MANAS: Sept. 4 and 11, 1974), Richard Gregg described a somewhat similar interchange with Gandhi:

> If simplicity of living is a valid principle there is one important precaution and condition of its application. I can explain it best by something which Mahatma Gandhi said to me. We were talking about simple living and I said that it was easy for me to give up most things but that I had a greedy mind and wanted to keep my many books.
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> He said, "Then don't give them up. As long as you derive inner help and comfort from anything, you should keep it. If you were to give it up in a mood of self-sacrifice or out of a stern sense of duty, you would continue to want it back, and that unsatisfied want would make trouble for you. Only give up a thing when you want some other condition so much that the thing no longer has any attraction for you, or when it seems to interfere with that which is more greatly desired."

Gandhi's reply to Richard Gregg seems a good example of the freedom of speech allowed to a wise man when conversing with someone who isn't looking for excuses to do only what he wants. Gandhi covered this possibility by saying, "as long as you derive *inner* help and comfort from anything, you should keep it." But in a world so twisted out of shape by an excess of "unsatisfied wants," Gandhi might have spoken somewhat differently to someone else, and especially if something besides books were at issue.

COMMENTARY
A COMMON THEME

A BOOK that might prove valuable to those who are wondering about the alternatives in greater simplicity of life is *Taking Charge,* a Bantam paperback ($1.95), put together by the Simple Living Collective of the American Friends Service Committee of San Francisco. It begins with a statement of how typical Western habits affect other people in the world:

> Simple Living is not a simple issue. At base it is a means of reasserting control over the material objects in our lives and the processes by which they are produced, distributed, and used; in short, it means taking charge of these aspects of our lives. . . . This is a crucial task in the United States and in other societies that have emulated it, where tremendous efforts are made to turn consumption into an end in itself. . . . many of the rest of the world's people are kept poor and hungry in order to maintain high levels of consumption in the United States and other "high-income" countries. American consumers have become unwilling and often unwitting co-conspirators in the economic oppression of other human beings and the political oppression that usually accompanies it. . . . Meeting the basic material and political needs of the hungry and powerless is as much a task of the simple living movement as reclaiming control over our own lives. . . . We believe that much of our production—weapons, advertising, fast food, private automobiles, and many other items—contributes to the deterioration of our quality of life as well as that in poorer countries.

The contents of *Taking Charge* range over the whole area implied by this introduction. The book is filled with practical suggestions on the simplification of everyday wants and needs.

When Leopold Kohr, writer of this week's Frontiers, arrived at the University of Puerto Rico in 1958, to become professor of economics there, Ivan Illich joined the faculty at the same time. Some years later, contributing a foreword to one of Kohr's books, Illich said that in going over its pages he was "embarrassed to find that the values of smallness, multi-centeredness, effective decentralization, deprofessionalization, deceleration and autonomous structuring which our generation has been 'discovering' had been just as clearly and much more humorously formulated by Kohr, before we understood what he was teaching."

Hence our particular pleasure in being able to present Prof. Kohr's account of "Fritz" Schumacher's life and work.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE SENSITIVE ONES

IN *The Captive Mind* (1953), Czeslaw Milosz told why he could no longer stay and write in Poland under the communists. It was the systematic campaign against human individuality that drove him away. The weapon of the campaign was fear. In the West, he said, there is also fear—fear of losing one's place on the ladder of "economic" achievement, fear of unemployment. But the method of reshaping human nature used by the communist ideologists is to spread a universal fear. "Gold alienates man from himself; naked fear, which has replaced capital, alienates him even more efficiently." Milosz gives the theory of progress which begins with fear:

> To the extent that man, terrified as he is, learns to fulfill his obligations to society of his own free will and with joy, the dosage of fear is to be reduced. And, eventually, a new man will be born. Whether he can be born while such methods are applied is a question of faith.

This, it seems clear, is the behaviorist system of altering human material, starting with "negative reinforcement," the "positive" rewards being supposed to come afterward, when prosperity arrives. A "New Man" is to be produced: "Books, films, and radio all have as their themes this transformation, and the instilling of hatred against the enemy who would want to prevent it."

Now, twenty-four years later, another writer has left home for the same reason. Last April Reiner Kunze and his wife and daughter came out of East Germany—driven out, apparently, by threats. His book, *The Wonderful Years,* which last fall sold 150,000 copies in West Germany, was the reason—an intolerable offense. It is a slight book, a page or two to a subject, yet devastating in its simple, unemphasized account of everyday life for children and adults who are subjected to the ideological remolding process. An example, perhaps about his daughter:

> She regrets that her vision is not impaired. If her vision were impaired, she could wear wire-rimmed glasses. The parents of a student who wore wire-rimmed glasses to school were warned: wire-rimmed glasses are an imperialistic fad, decadence. To prove it, the teacher presented illustrations from a Western magazine showing long-haired males wearing wire-rimmed glasses.
>
> The morning she could go to school in wire-rimmed glasses would be a day she'd be glad to go. Her great-grandfather had worn wire-rimmed glasses. He was a miner. To prove it, she would display the photos.

And another:

> "Marcuse? You've got a book by Marcuse? Can you lend it to me?"
>
> I said that in this book Marcuse examines philosophy from 600 B. C. to the present.
>
> "That's okay."
>
> Two and a half millennia of philosophy, now that was something, I said. At sixteen, a person might not yet have the background.
>
> "It doesn't matter. I just have to read it."
>
> I gave her the book. I'd be sorry, I said, if she put it aside after the first few pages and never picked it up again.
>
> "Oh, don't worry. Not if it's by him."
>
> I said she knew there are two Marcuses.
>
> "Yeah? But this one, he's the one who made the student rebellions?"
>
> She meant Herbert Marcuse, I said. This one was Ludwig Marcuse. The book was about what makes a human being a human being.
>
> "Oh, I see." She glanced at the spine. "Then I don't need it."

And one more:

> For her English lesson, which she takes privately with an elderly Englishwoman, she carries her books in a shoulder bag of coarse unbleached linen, in the style of an infantry haversack, with English words on it. One afternoon, when coming from the English lesson, she enters the school, the home-room teacher discovers the haversack and asks

for an explanation. He may certainly assume, he says, that someone publicly sporting a piece of U. S. army equipment is displaying certain sympathies, and that such sympathies are incompatible with the privilege of attending secondary school in a Socialist country. Does she think there can really be any pardon for such behavior?

Her eyes graze him and she remains silent.
Her parents are summoned to school.
The printing on the bag reads:

INFANTRY TROOPER'S KIT
INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

1. Kit must always be a mess.
2. Records only—no books.
3. Keep bottom clean for pens.
4. Carry no bomb—fill with love letters.
5. Fight for peace and do not fall except in love.

Reporting an interview with Kunze in the *Manchester Guardian* (Aug. 7), Michael Getler relates:

Kunze says there are still many young people in East Germany "who are looking for social change and to achieve more justice for people. But their number is still very small in comparison to the masses."

In a typical high-school class of 24 students, he says, probably two students are "absolutely in conformity with the system by virtue of their education and influence of state organizations. They would do everything they are asked scrupulously, with fanaticism even, believing that they are doing the right thing."

"Another two pupils would be the sensitive ones. But if they stick to their principles, if they don't want to compromise themselves, they will have to leave school. They wouldn't be allowed to go to a university. They might even commit suicide. They have to take the consequences."

The rest of the typical class, he says, are those who have been educated to accept opportunism and are willing to accept it.

"You get all kinds, from simple opportunists to calculating cynics who say: 'I want to go to a university, to become an engineer, to have a good position, a house, a car. I will say everything I'm asked to say and make my way."

"But those two students who don't want to give in," Kunze adds, "there are really thousands of them. Those are the ones who won't make their way, yet they are the ones on whom everything depends."

There isn't much to say about situations of this sort, except to note that the proportions among the students seem about right—the same, that is, as elsewhere. Human nature is indeed about the same all over the world. People may appear quite different in a lot of respects, but the distribution of moral integrity which stands up under pressure has always been sparse. Yet those who have it, as Kunze says, "are the ones on whom everything depends."

Can anything be done to improve this distribution? In East Germany, say? Fostering moral integrity is always a local affair. It can't be done for other people. Judging from what Reiner Kunze says, advocating moral integrity there would be inviting people to martyrdom, and that is something no one has any business doing except for oneself. But how is it fostered in local communities, at home? By rewarding it? That doesn't seem right. "Not giving in" cannot be turned into some sort of expectant transaction. Integrity for value received is a contradiction in terms. Integrity is not half of some deal, but wholeness, human completion. The one thing we might be able to do is reduce the penalties of integrity. We could try to make it permissible—not, that is, so expensive for people who have been led to believe that making deals is the only way to live.

FRONTIERS
E. F. Schumacher

[This memorial appreciation by Leopold Kohr was prepared for the British monthly, *Resurgence,* and appears here with the kind permission of the *Resurgence* editors.]

IF the Nobel-Prize selection committee had wished to give the prize in economics to an innovator, they would have alternated not between the repairmen of the left and the repairmen of the right side of the ship of state, caught in the increasing pull of the Niagara River a mile above the Falls; they would have selected Dr. E. F. Schumacher, whose death on 4 September 1977 of a heart attack in Switzerland tore him away at the very time his ideas were close to a breakthrough. He was one of the few economists who had really something new to offer. Instead of concentrating on mending the sides of the overgrown hull of the ship, he suggested: get out of it. Save yourself in a fleet of small lifeboats.

A one-time protegé of Lord Maynard Keynes, who brought the young German student during the last war from internment on an isolated English farm to the fermenting halls of Cambridge University, Schumacher first captured the famous economist's attention through a paper on *Multilateral Clearing* which he had written between tending the fields. When it was published in the spring of 1943 in *Economica,* it caused some embarrassment to Keynes who, instead of arranging for its separate publication, had used the essay almost verbatim in his famous *Plan for an International Clearing Union* which the British Government issued as a *White Paper* a few weeks later.

In his swift rise, Schumacher became chief editorial writer on economics for the prestigious London *Times,* a Kissinger-like achievement for a native German so early in post-war England. In this capacity he was, among other things, in due course charged with the somewhat uncomfortable task of preparing, many years before the event, the obituary of Maynard Keynes, of whose theories he had by then become increasingly critical. He subsequently served as adviser to the Indian Planning Commission, as well as to the governments of Zambia and Burma—an experience which led to his fascinating essay on "Buddhist Economics." For the final twenty years before his retirement he held the position of Chief Statistician of the British Coal Board, the world's largest enterprise. I presume it was his attempt to penetrate the inextricable complexities confronting the overblown political and economic giant organizations of our time which gave him the first idea for writing *Small Is Beautiful* which, among many other things, revealed him as the only one who had accurately and consistently predicted, for fifteen years before it was dramatized by the Arabian oil boycott, the approach of the world's current fuel crisis.

Schumacher's basic development theories can be summed up in two catch-phrases: Intermediate Size, and Intermediate Technology.

About the first he wrote: "A given political unity is not necessarily of the right size as a unit for economic development. . . . In this matter [of appropriate size] it is not possible to give hard and fast definitions. Much depends on geography and local circumstances. A few thousand people, no doubt, would be too few to constitute a 'district' for economic development. But the community of a few hundred thousand people, even if fairly widely scattered, may well deserve to be created as a development district. The whole of Switzerland has less than 6 million inhabitants. Yet it is divided into more than 20 'cantons' and each 'canton' is a kind of [autonomous] development district, with the result that development towards formation of vast industrial concentration is minimized."

In other words, the first half of Schumacher's development philosophy is based on the administrative idea of superimposing on large-area states a cantonal structure of such modest unit-dimensions that vast industrial concentration (with all this entails in imbalance, ineptitude, and diseconomies of scale) becomes not only unnecessary but also uneconomical.

The second half of his system—Intermediate Technology—is the direct consequence of the first. For once a development district is "appropriately" reduced, it becomes possible to fulfill a society's

material requirements by means of less expensive and simpler equipment than the costly, computerized, labour-saving machinery necessary for satisfying the massive appetite for the remedial transport and integration commodities without which a farflung modern market community cannot exist. Though this means a reduction in productivity, it does not mean a reduction in the product which a smaller society needs for the enjoyment of even the highest humanely attainable standard of living.

Putting it differently, the reduced efficiency of *intermediate* technology provides the same amount of goods, but at a higher cost in labour, than can be achieved under conditions of labour-saving *advanced* technology. However, since higher labour costs (in terms not of wages but of working hours) mean simply that the desired level of production can be achieved only by full rather than partial employment of the available labour force, they represent *socially* no additional cost at all. They are in fact a benefit. It is unemployment—the degrading saving of manpower through the inappropriate use of advanced machinery—which is the prohibitive cost no society can afford to pay in the long run. For unlike earlier forms of unemployment, the unemployment caused by excessive technological progress spells in the end only one thing—the revolt of the unemployed.

This is still only vaguely understood by modern growth theorists for whom intermediate technology means merely a step backwards. One has to go back all the way to Vespasian to encounter a government advanced enough to realize the social value of higher rather than lower costs. As Suetonius tells us: when an inventor offered the Emperor to transport giant columns to the top of Capitol hill at an unheard-of low cost, Vespasian rewarded him richly for his technical genius, but dispensed with his services with the remark: "You must permit me to let also the man in the street earn his bread." By the standards of modern economics, all this kind of idea would earn a student in Harvard or Oxford is a failing grade.

Lately, however, with orthodox economics having run its course, and hiding its ineptitudes in mathematical obscurantism of Nobel-Prize-winning proportions, Schumacher's ideas, particularly on the question of how to sponge up unemployment and at the same time solve the energy crisis, have long begun to make their impact in Asian and African countries, whose leaders realize that what is needed is not highfalutin theory but a bit of horse sense. People such as Indians, or Zambians, and lately even leaders such as Governor Brown of California and President Carter of the United States (though not yet the economists advising them) seem to be among the first since Vespasian to understand once again after their talks with Schumacher that that *New* Man, whose coming they all await with such impatience, is in need of two props: an *older* mode of production in the form of *intermediate technology,* and an older political environment in the form of more translucent, smaller, more meaningful societies.

There was also another side to Schumacher's praise of smallness of which few of his admirers were aware. This had to do neither with technology nor with political organization, but with the composition of delightful verses for his children. I was fortunate to acquire some of them when, after his week's stay as my guest in Puerto Rico in 1973, I made him sign a paper "to balance his accounts with me." After an initial shock, he laughed when he found out that what I wanted was not money but the text in his own handwriting of the poem he had recited to me earlier that day, and which I should like to share with my readers in memory of a friend who inspired us all, not only by his wisdom and charm but also by the abiding humour of his humanity:

Little children, surely,
Age us prematurely.
Though, if all be told
They keep us young when old.

LEOPOLD KOHR