

he endeavors—as far as in him lies—to do good, and to go on his way rejoicing.”—(*Ethics*.)

How up-to-date was the Dutch philosopher? It was for good reason that one of our greatest contemporary novelists has penned his sincere tribute to our subject when he confessed in his self-revealing soliloquy: “I look upon my first reading of Spinoza,” says W. Somerset Maugham in *The Summing Up*, “as one of the signal experiences of my life. It filled me with just that feeling of majesty and exulting power that one has at the sight of a great mountain range.” Indeed, to the thoughtful reader of today, Spinoza’s course or blueprint to Utopia is no product of wishful thinking and fuzzy-minded optimism. His ethical aspirations and logic are in line with the aspirations and reasoning expressed by the foremost thinkers of modern times. “In a rational ethic,” says Bertrand Russell in *Conquest of Happiness*, “it will be held laudable to give pleasure to anyone, even to oneself, provided there is no counter-balancing pain to oneself or to others. The ideally virtuous would be the man who permits the enjoyment of all good things whenever there is no consequence to outweigh the enjoyment.”

Spinoza’s humanitarian sentiments are best expounded by the ultra-modern Aldous Huxley in his Introduction to *Bhagavad-Gita* when he warns us that “there will never be enduring peace unless and until human beings come to accept a philosophy of life more adequate to the cosmic and psychological facts than the insane idolatries of nationalism and the advertising man’s apocalyptic faith in Progress towards a mechanized New Jerusalem . . .” While the renowned British historian Arnold J. Toynbee places the seal of approval with a profound summation in effect that “it is our moral plight in our small atom-bomb haunted planet that makes our physical weapons dangerous” (*New York Times Magazine*, May 1, 1955), and again, that “mankind’s success in bringing human conduct under the rule of ethics in practice has, so far, been very unequal in human affairs; in

international relations we are living in a primitive age of anarchy.”—(*New York Times Magazine*, May 29, 1955). But, as Professor Toynbee’s distinguished countryman assures us in his credo, there is no room for pessimism. “Science can, if it chooses, enable our grandchildren to live the good life by giving them knowledge, self-control, and characters productive of harmony rather than strife.”—(Bertrand Russell: *What I Believe*.)

Thus, throughout the ages, unbound by man-made frontiers and prejudices, there is a “network of loyalties held in common” which is dedicated to the Better Life, and which by its very nature is not utopian and cannot be diverted, destroyed, or halted by tyrannous assaults and misrepresentations. It is well at this point to recall the gentle words of the ancient sage: “Man is born good, but ignorance makes him bad; he knows no better. Let us have patience, let us teach him and make him better. Then we will have a better world.” Even the great Disraeli had a word for it in his *Sybil*: We are all born for love. It is the principle of existence and its only end.

It is conceivable that Spinoza would agree then that the real dilemma of our twentieth century and what this Atomic Age now needs most is not bigger material structures of puffed-up pride, but more respect for the dignity of the humblest of human lives; more concern for the sacredness of all mothers’ sons throughout this inhabited world; not more awe-inspiring mechanical monsters and gadgets and man-made heavenly satellites, but more security, more human kindness, more individual and collective happiness and peace.

Such was the faith and the vision of the prophets the world over, of the Nazarene, of the saintly Gandhi; such was also the faith and the vision of our own Founding Fathers, who braved to dream and dreaming boldly labored to bring closer to materialization a peace-loving Brotherhood of Free Men. It is left to the guardians of today and a revitalized unified religion of tomorrow to accept the challenge of this Atomic Age.

A Laboratory of Better Living*

LEONARD S. KENWORTHY

Adobe houses with the letters “D.D.T.” painted on their side walls by insect control brigades, school children drinking milk from tin cups or gourds, experimental plots of sesame, castor beans, or some new variety of corn, coffee, or sugar cane, trenches being readied for new water pipes or sewage disposal conduits, and bulldozers scooping up the earth for new and enlarged airports—these are some of the signs of change taking place today in Central America.

The old picture of that region as an isthmus of frequent revolutions needs to be discarded or retouched. Upheavals there are at times, but even more radical changes are being made in the ways of life for the ten million humans in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. These five underdeveloped countries are undergoing a non-violent revolution which is far more significant than any of the violent revolts of the past or of recent days.

These nations differ greatly, but they have several

common problems with which they are wrestling. They are trying to provide better transportation, better health and housing, better food and agriculture, better power and industrial development, and better education. These five goals have been adopted informally, just as long ago they adopted the five major volcanoes of Central America as a symbol.

Transport is vital where the backs of human beings or tiny two-wheeled carts drawn by oxen have served for centuries as the chief way of getting goods to market. In this part of the world a good highway or airport is of prime importance in raising the standards of living for the men and women whose average per capita income ranges from an annual \$60 in Honduras to \$146 in Costa Rica, compared to \$1,425 per person in the United States.

Honduras has concentrated on air travel. She is the largest in area and the smallest in population, and her citizens are scattered. Her quickest and cheapest way of binding them together, of giving them contact with the outside world, and of affording them markets

*This report is based on first-hand observation, and is released by *Worldover Press*.

1955: Spinoza Brought Up to Date

DAVID GITTLEMAN

What was it in particular that turned the Biblical scholar anathema to his dogmatic yet well-meaning community, made him change his name from the good Hebrew Baruch (Blessed) to Benedictus, forced him to accept the hospitality and solitude of an attic in a Christian household, finally to emerge the God-intoxicated seeker after truth and wisdom, whose greatness soars with the passing of the centuries?

Benedictus de Spinoza (1632-1677) was a pioneer of humanity, a spiritual and ethical rebel who set out to re-evaluate accepted standards, using the yardstick of free research and reason. His aim was to understand, to ennoble, and to strengthen the moral character and ethical content of living man so as to make it possible for the growth of a humanity with dynamic spiritual discriminations. He looked upon man as a product of omnipresent godliness, with unlimited capacities for high idealism and noble emotions, disciplined by logic and a will-to-do-good. But he realized that man will never be true to himself until he actually lifts himself above those abominable practices which degrade his innate human and humane dignity. He was a lover of peace and freedom; but his inquisitive mind and yearning soul could not be appeased with ritual or mere freedom of the jungle. He felt that nations can be steered by means of precept and moral training to follow things that would lead to personal and universal edification. Well aware of man's wavering multiple personality and the recurring breakdown in the moral leadership of organized society, he held fast to the Talmudic adage that knowledge (Torah) is greater than priesthood and the royal purple; and he proceeded in bold strides to glean the best from the dry compost of a strife-infested past undermined by its own contradictions and ill practices.

Spinoza himself epitomized Lao-tse's principle in action, namely, that though he who overcomes others is strong, he who overcomes himself and his own unfavorable environment is indeed mighty. He could find evidence that within the mind of mortal man there are latent immortal divine ideas and aspirations capable of peaceably revolutionizing human society, and thus actually bring down closer to earth the prophetic vision of the Kingdom of a Loving God within reach of man. Joining the contemporary visionary, Spinoza too would plead that if it is possible for a man to reach out to the universe and draw down power to light our cities and homes, why can we not reach out into the same universe and draw out spiritual power to illuminate this world, to drive away the dark shadows of fear, prejudice, war, and economic troubles?

The humble polisher of lenses saw with his inner eye unity and love and beauty in the mechanics of the Cosmos, and wanted us all not to miss this thrilling experience of living a richer and nobler life triumphant. The Dutch philosopher would sympathize with the current verdict that the tragedy of life is not that men perish or lack the means, but that they cease to love—a sacred sentiment which is being replaced by a glamorous parody flashed as an ill substitute on the silver screen. It was the late Santayana who maintained from his ivory tower that man is not made

to understand life, but to love it. It is to Spinoza's credit that he labored to fuse both understanding and love in the service of his fellow men for the greater glory of an omnipresent creative godliness. For in his own life, he replaced book-religion and church-religion with a life-religion or, as he himself phrased it—"the more things the mind knows, the better does it understand its own strength and the order of nature; by increased self-knowledge it can direct itself more easily and lay down rules for its own guidance and, by increased knowledge of nature, it can more easily avoid what is useless . . . the less men know of nature the more easily can they coin fictitious ideas."—(*On the Improvement of the Understanding*.) This bold approach to the general subject of cherished norms and prejudices was matched by a righteous zeal which formed the very essence of his monumental *Ethics*. Enlightenment is a virtue which carries its own rewards.

The ethical rebel challenged his elders and the status quo of the seventeenth century with the provocative declaration: "Man thinks."—(*Ethics*); and he labored to fuse phenomenal reality into an all-embracing dynamic moral pantheism. "Men who are governed by reason," he went on to explain, "that is, who seek what is useful to them in accordance with reason—desire for themselves nothing which they do not also desire for the rest of mankind, and, accordingly, are just, faithful and honorable in their conduct." Of course, the author of *Ethics* knew well that from the days of hoary antiquity, reaching out to the tragic much too plausible episode of fratricide with the murder of Abel, *homo sapiens* has been a wolf to man—(*Homo Homini Lupus*); hence his contention that faith must be more than a mere appeasing ritual of ancient custom. Religion must be steeped in the daily workings of fellowship, mutual helpfulness, and justice. For Spinoza the words "Do unto others as ye would men should do unto you" had a positive meaning, reflecting the actual way of life—the Will of God dedicated to the moral good of all mankind. In fact, he himself was permeated with Hillel's admonition: "Do not unto others what thou wouldst not they do unto thee." He thus pitched his warrior's tent in open battle against all tyranny, injustice, force, and dogmatic opinion. Aiming to sanctify and humanize the lot of mankind, he set the example by refusing to sell his own integrity for a conventional mess of pottage when tempted to do so.

Now, in the year of our Lord 1955, we hear again the familiar cry for the stronger arm; and the dreadfully ominous race is on—men and nations build power, more power, and are in a mad rush for a mightier balance of power. Spinoza, too, had a word for it. But his conception of "the stronger man" points to a course that would avert calamities and strife and would actually usher in the saner order of peaceful cooperation and mutual aid. Says Spinoza: "He that is strong hates no man, despises no man, and least of all things is proud . . . he strives before all things to conceive things as they really are and to remove the hindrances to true knowledge, such as are hatred, anger, envy, derision, pride and similar emotions . . .

internally, has been through air transportation. Today there are seventy-five airports in Honduras.

El Salvador is working on a major highway across the southern part of its territory, with financial help from the International Bank of the United Nations; Guatemala is building up several roads fanning out from the capital. Costa Rica's greatest effort has gone into a new airport at El Coco, which enables more and larger planes to serve the Capital, San Jose. Through leadership of the Economic Commission for Latin America steps are taken to integrate the plans of all these nations for an overall Central American highway system. At the center of such a plan is the Pan American Highway, about 85 per cent finished.

In most of this planning the United States has played an important role, as also in construction, through technical help and through substantial sums of money for equipment and materials. But the interested countries themselves match the gifts from the United States and sometimes exceed them.

To anyone who cares about the lives of human beings, health conditions in large parts of Central America are shocking. For example, the average life expectancy in El Salvador is currently around 30 years—and the figures are similar for most of Central America. Water supplies are usually bad, infant mortality is very high, a large percentage of children suffer from intestinal parasites. Many pregnant women are ill with severe anemia.

But there is another side to the story, too. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the U.N., the World Health Organization and its Latin American branch—the Pan American Sanitary Bureau—the United Nations Children's Fund, the Technical Assistance program of the U.N., and other groups, are vitally concerned. And for those who are skeptical about local governments pulling their own oars, the fact should be underlined with heavy pencil lines that they are. El Salvador for example increased its public health appropriations from 200,000 *colones* in 1940 to 3,300,000 *colones* in 1953. Few if any governments in the world could show comparable support for better conditions. Nicaragua allotted \$128,160 in 1953-54 for child feeding programs, a sum which represents more than the entire budget of the Health Ministry five years ago.

The work of UNICEF in child feeding has been outstanding. At the height of its program, in 1952, it was feeding dried milk to 300,000 boys and girls, largely through the schools. That was a feat in itself. More important in the long run, however, is the effect UNICEF has had in stimulating national governments and private groups to carry on such work by themselves.

In Honduras sixty water systems have been built in the last eleven years with the help of the Point Four program and its predecessors. The extent of the campaign against malaria, one of the worst scourges, may be gained from the figures of June, 1953, in Honduras, where 4,000 homes were sprayed with D.D.T.

Central America is of course the center of banana and coffee plantations, and large sections of the population are dependent for their cash income on one crop. Thus one major task is to diversify agriculture. Another is to halt erosion and promote soil conservation. A third is to find more protein products to supplement the heavy diet of corn and beans. A fourth

is to improve the domestic animals. Progress is being made in all these directions. Cotton output has substantially increased, especially in Nicaragua and Costa Rica. Rice production has had a big spurt in all the countries, with output in Nicaragua during 1951-52 twenty-five times that of 1947-48.

Guatemala has undertaken a reforestation program, and a locust control program in Honduras has made headway, both sparked by the F.A.O. Contour farming and irrigation are spreading, and the use of hay machinery has brought progress, especially in Costa Rica. Animal diseases are being studied and checked. The Institute of Nutrition for Central America and Panama, in cooperation with F.A.O., W.H.O. and UNICEF, is moving ahead with surveys of food habits and experimenting with ways to increase the protein content of food, for this is the greatest diet deficiency for most persons. Iodine content in food is essential to prevent endemic goiter, which is prevalent, and ways of utilizing iodine are being found.

Power for homes and factories is one of the many needs in modern nations, but unfortunately Central America lacks coal, oil, and gas. However, it does have a few rivers which are suitable for producing electricity. The most important single project recently has been the task of harnessing the Lempe River in El Salvador, the largest river in the isthmus. This is the culmination of a years'-old dream, and has been aided by the U.N. International Bank. Sometimes called the T.V.A. of Central America, it may well transform the whole central part of El Salvador. It will supply electrical power, provide water for irrigation, and probably lead to a wider diversification of industry than has hitherto been possible.

In Costa Rica a similar project is under way to dam that country's Rio Grande at La Garita, west of San José. Plans are under way for a second hydro-electric plant at the Reventazon, east of the capital. Plans drawn for Nicaragua call for a 25 per cent increase in farm and industrial production within five years. Dried milk plants, so valuable for children, are being built or will soon be in prospect. Small industries are gradually developing. In Costa Rica factories have been started for making matches, glassware, industrial yeast, shoes, sugar refining, and for canning tuna and pineapples. In El Salvador two cement plants and a shoe factory, turning out 1,000 pairs a day, have recently been opened.

Illiteracy is still very high in this part of the world. Recent figures are difficult to obtain and often unreliable, but the estimates indicate only 30 to 35 per cent literacy in most of these countries, with about 20 per cent in Guatemala and 75 to 80 per cent in Costa Rica. No major campaigns against illiteracy are under way which compare with the ones in Mexico or Turkey a few years ago, but slow progress can be reported. More than a year ago, Guatemala was the scene of some promise with its system based on twenty pilot or demonstration institutions and some twenty other schools grouped around each of these.

Sensing the need of vocational training, several of the countries are seeking to improve industrial and pre-vocational education. Plans for a new school have been drafted by an American working under Point Four in El Salvador, and a Swiss educator has done a similar job in Costa Rica under UNESCO. In Honduras a vocational school has been started at Catacamas, for agriculture, paid for by the government, but

promoted by the Institute of Inter-American Cooperation. Teacher education has also claimed the attention of these nations. Wisely, they have begun to develop rural training centers to encourage young men and women to teach in the outlying areas and to obtain their training in such neighborhoods. Work along these lines has been progressing in Honduras, Costa Rica, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

The two chief agricultural schools in this whole region are the Pan American School of Agriculture in Honduras, sponsored by the United Fruit Company,

and the Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences in Costa Rica, opened in 1944, and affiliated with the Organization of American States.

These examples of evolutionary change illustrate the social, economic, and educational revolution now occurring in these five neighbor nations of Central America. Each of these examples may mean little by itself, but taken as a whole they augur well for the improvement of life in a small but increasingly important segment of our present-day world.

The Religionists Make "One World" Difficult

JOHN MALICK

As it looks from this Ohio town there are three trends that must alarm those who know about them. The first is the number working against public schools. This strikes at the base of our kind of life for the *nation*. The second is the number hacking away at the United Nations. This strikes at the top, our last hope for the *planet*. The third is the divorce of Christian theology, which is practically a give-away program, and Christian ethics that makes heavy demands in practice.

All these are moving along, even snowballing. All have their propaganda on a large scale, with the mass media of communication on their side. Most Americans would be disturbed if they knew the extent of these trends. We see three newspapers from two states, eight or ten widely read magazines and hear what comes over radio and television. From all these sources one would hardly suspect that such movements are going on. All that we know about them is from a half-dozen critical publications of small circulation. We doubt if fifty people in this county see them. While all these trends are devastatingly important they are not news while they are creeping along to their ends. They seldom emerge into the light of news and free discussion. Newspapers generally do not touch them. These trends run into the rule against raising religious controversy among the readers. In a letter to a newspaper we summarized a national survey of those working against the public schools, the ecclesiastical, business, tax reduction, superpatriot, and white supremacy groups. All these names were deleted in the letter as published in the "Readers' Column."

Few know how many of the churches are against the public school kind of knowledge. Logically, all Christian churches should be against it. The public schools have to stick to their regular kind of knowledge in contradistinction to the revelation kind, which from the standpoint of the schools is not knowledge at all. All the churches are quite right about this fear of exposing their doctrines to the public schools. A number of churches see this and would like to educate their own as proper church members rather than as proper citizens. If Federal funds are made available for church schools, a considerable number of children would be withdrawn from the public schools.

Against the schools are the business groups whose chief objection is the cost. Those in the upper income brackets, like those sending to parochial schools, do not use the public schools anyway and naturally object to supporting them. Both the business and church groups keep representatives on the school boards for

the sole purpose of watching the budget. The super-patriots are against progressive educators. The white supremacy advocates would rather not have schools at all than to have them open to Negroes with equal opportunities in the same room.

Universal education has never been universally popular. Educating all seemed quite preposterous at first. How would such people know their place in the social scheme and keep it? They would be more difficult to use profitably and to manage easily. Those engaged in large scale printing usually have not wished educated readers. Run the list in the drug stores and at the newsstands in the hotels. More highly educated readers would lessen this demand to the point of bankruptcy. There is no insistent demand for educated voters. Both parties just now are worried about what to do with Suburbia. They have learned to read, moved out from the wards where they stayed put, to the suburbs where they are quite out of control. Many lines of profitable activity depend upon the gullibility of easy believers. That is, public schools have precarious standing. At first they were looked upon as Social Security and Old Age Pensions are now. There was no obligation for us to do that much for people. Educating a person does do something to him. He is never quite the same again. The chances are he is never quite as easy to pluck and to plunder.

Even in the field where most of the jobs are, there seems to be less and less demand for the schools to help prepare the jobholders. For an increasing number, what education they have cannot be used in their work. They might do their work better with *less* education, at least be more contented. Many employers from the standpoint of their business have little interest in public schools. They prefer to train their own for their own purpose which is not an all-round education such as the democratic state has to have. The demands of employment more and more remind one of Huxley's *Brave New World*, Orwell's 1984, and Bertrand Russell's *The Scientific Outlook*. That is, education for the job now is much less than the state has to have for its citizens. The pressure against public schools is just naturally strong with all these demands for indiscriminating readers, voters, customers, patients, clients, pewholders, laborers, listeners on the air, and watchers on the screen.

The most aggressive and effective opponent of the public school now goes under the name of Catholic Action. In the United States this movement has just arrived at open and vocal opposition to schools. This change of Catholic status is evidenced by greater influ-