

JWM

MORALITY: PRACTICAL METHODS

May 1, 1976  
T-401

- 1 Sometime ago I read Small is Beautiful very quickly and was very taken by it. You probably know that we got in touch with Schumacher in London. He came in to see us, talked to our group and they had a fine time with him. In the last week I had a chance to read the book with some thoroughness. The first thing that impressed me was that the book was poorly organized. It is obvious that the author had a set of lectures and homilies that he quickly put together. That, however, should not bother people like us who are trained in the methods of transrationality which are based on the charting method. More and more I have come to see that those who do not know the charting method have trouble thinking transrationally. Knowing charting means that the first thing to do after numbering the paragraphs is to run your fingers through them, writing down one or two words that hold each paragraph across your chart. Once you get your words for each paragraph on the chart, then you can hold them in your head and begin to think. Then, you begin to build the dramaturgical dynamics of the materials you are dealing with to get hold of the transrational. When you do that, it is very simple to reorganize a book the way it ought to be organized or at least to put it in one form of rational organization.
  
- 2 I was struck during a recent Ecclesiola that the teacher (who did a good job) did not know any more about charting than if she had never been in the Order. The chart put up on the board was shocking. I am not criticizing the teacher. I am beating myself a bit. If I had to point to the methodology upon which we are built, it is that methodology. If you do not have charting grounded in your deeps then you literally do not know how to operate. That method is directly related to the problem of how to become a gun. "The gun" has become a matter of urgency for us. "The gun" has become life and death, both in terms of doing Town Meeting and Social Demonstration in mass numbers. Actually it first began to become life or death the moment we thought about going Areal. I am still sick at heart that we have not put our mind around the Xavier principle. The key to the Xavier principle is the charting method. You take whatever is yours in terms of firm delimitation and treat that as a universe which forces transrationality, which is what the charting method is all about. Anything that we call spirit method or anything that we call social method is based simply upon the charting method or the whole concept of transrationality. So I sat there in great pain even though other aspects of the teaching that night were very, very stimulating.
  
- 3 That evening we were studying the chapter on "Buddhist Economics". Now, anyone that thinks there is such a thing as Christian economics is wrong. Thus it follows that anybody that talks about Buddhist economics is also wrong. Not only that, Mr. Schumacher himself in the last sentence of Chapter Three, just before the one on "Buddhist Economics" tells us the same thing. In essence he says there is not such thing as Christian Economics,

Muslim Economics, or Buddhist Economics, but now I am going to deal with Buddhist Economics, and he includes a chapter on it. The abstractions are a painful burden almost beyond what anybody could endure. Now if that chapter were at the end of the whole book and he were doing a spirit spin on Buddhism, there would be some very exciting things in it. Where it is and the way it is done is just sheer abstraction. You will be proud of me when I tell you that I kept my mouth shut during the whole study until the last five minutes. Then I moved and ripped that chapter to pieces. One thing I said was that our job now is to find a way to block that whole chapter, that abstraction, from the minds of everybody in the Order who might possibly be assigned to a social demonstration. As I sat there I felt like I was back in 1952 where that kind of abstraction was a historical necessity. But we are so far from that time of sitting around and thinking about a fine idea in history, it is hard to remember that there ever was such a time. Because we are in the time of doing, I fear the Schumacher book.

4 However, what he has to say is in Part III called "The Third World." There are four parts to the book. When we laid out a lesson plan we should have run our group study through Part III first, then Part II followed by Part IV and last of all Part I which are the metaphysical reflections including the chapter on Buddhism. Now I am dealing with transrationality and not so much with that book. But I want to underscore that this book is absolutely crucial. Part III needs to be taken to pieces the same way we took The Wretched of the Earth to pieces. We really taught that book which is one of the finest pictures of Maoism that can be found anywhere. You know something? I look back on that book as a terrible book. At the time I was excited by it, as everybody was, yet we learned some fine things out of that book. One thing that interests me from a different perspective--the perspective of human development as over against the perspective of revolution, is that more and more I am convinced that you have to go to the country in order to get to the city.

5 The most important thing that happened in the second consult in Majuro was that it forced us to rewrite the initial manual in a more sophisticated form, which came out of the writing of five or six consults. In one sense, that is the most important thing. On the other hand, something crucial happened in that second consult that I still do not have my mind around. Therefore, I have not been even remotely interested, as I was earlier, in doing a second consult any place else though I know a second consult will have to happen in each demonstration, in time. It became clear out there that in order to do Majuro the one really urban center, you have to go to the outer islands. I now believe with a passion that to do Chicago you have to go to rural Illinois. To do Bombay, you have to go to Maliwada, and so on, around the world. Isn't it funny how language, the greatest thing man ever invented, has so many perversions--hidden within the language itself? There is an unlimited number of possible perversions, especially at the level of abstract language (which I am all for because I am an intellectual even though I try to pretend that I am not). Anyway, we called it the Marshall Island Human Development Project. Because of the title it became extremely

difficult for us to finally see that what we had set up was the Majuro Human Development Project, no matter what we called it! Going to the outer islands was replication and without replication you might as well not do anything.

6 Anybody who is going to be assigned to a social demonstration projects needs to master Part III of Schumacher's book and be extremely cautious about the rest of it. What we do not want out in a demonstration project is abstraction. This is so subtle in all of us that we all can get caught in it. That is what the chapter on Buddhist Economics was. All of us are intellectuals in one sense or the other, and we are most vulnerable about this. I was excited about that chapter. Even though I saw the horns of Satan, the golden hoof and the tail creeping along in it, I was still excited about it. What Schumacher says there is right. The whole group at the Ecclesiola, including myself, was sucked into it. When I made my outburst I came at it through the women. Now what he says there about Buddhism is really not about Buddhism but about abstraction. That kind of economy has made sheer animals particularly out of the women in rural India. It only takes one little trip to a village like Maliwada to see what I mean when I say that it has made sheer animals out of the women. Now the men, due partly, I suppose, to Indian male chauvinism, are only half animals in those villages. But it is that economy that I was drooling over with some excitement, in abstraction, that made them far less than a sheer beast of burden.

7 One of the delights of my life was to discover in Indonesia that an honorific title was added to the word they use for "water buffalo" so that the whole thing means "our very dear friend, the buffalo." By golly, they knew what they were doing. Without "our very dear friend, the buffalo," no one would be in Indonesia today. Well, in Maliwada our very dear friend the buffalo lives in a far, far better set of circumstances than the women of Maliwada. I am not sorting out India. The same is true in the realms where that kind of simplistic economy denies, for even one moment, the glory of technology. The fact that you women are not beasts of burden relative to that economy is because we are living on the other side of the technological revolution. You have had the glorious gift of technology delivered to you. In one sense that is all that demonstration is doing. All we are doing is being a viaduct to convey a moderate degree of technology to the rural people in the developing nations that enables them to get off of four legs at least and begin to stand on two feet. Now Mr. Schumacher has this clearly spelled out in Part III of his book. We need to master that section. This is where my passion is. I think a part of it is something like this: "Lord, how in the world did you choose such an unworthy group of people to participate in this kind of significant human service at this time in history?" That both makes me want to shout and not utter another word the rest of my life. It is great that we are studying that book now.

8 I want to mention two or three things. I felt I had to show up at the General Conference of the Methodist Church. Though I only stayed a very short time, others stayed on to do the work. To be truthful, it is very important that at this moment, in terms of the outrageous move we are making, that we comfort and ensure the church (I picked

these words carefully) that we are radical historical churchmen. The response of the ones that I had the chance to talk to about what we are doing is unbelievable. They are extremely supportive. It is an obvious change. This creates a state of pathos in you where sometimes you strike back a bit when you encounter a sense of change. Even though they strike back, they know that in some way or another the church was not sent into history to build the church but to serve mankind. We deeply know that. Even those of us who pack up two bags and run away because we think that we are not being religious still know that.

9 I saw and had breakfast with Bishop Goodwin, among others. He is one who invited us to Selma. I first knew him in Alabama, years and years ago. When I mentioned the fact that we might do one of these demonstrations in a poor, rural black town in the backwash of Alabama, Mississippi or Louisiana he was extremely interested. I think in the terms of a "Selma of the 70's". It needs to be the most deprived rural community we could find. He said, "Why don't you let me pick out, say five, six, seven such villages. Then we could go together to decide which ones you want to do." That is something for the established church! His area recently got a whole shipload of wheat and sent it to India.

10 Our colleagues in Washington D.C. have selected a community. My guess is that it is 98% black. I saw one white family when we visited there. It is about five minutes from the capital, well-insularized and in the heart of the city, so you really have a community to work with. There are just 2000 people. I would have preferred 5000, I believe, but that is all right. Replication is possible. The Bishop was extremely excited by that too. He said to my brother, "Jim, let's you and I go immediately to Ivy City and look at it." For the established church, I think that is something.

11 The Methodist Conference itself was quite disappointing to me. They do such things as bring in 12,000 proposals and 6000 of them have to do with matters of sexuality and ordination of specific groups. Now I am all for many of the proposals, but what bothers me is the church's dealings being filled with its own internal business. The Conference only meets every four years, and the world is filled with suffering and meaning, yet they sit out there for two weeks talking about internal affairs. No matter how important those issues are, you are still gazing at your internal life. That hurts me. They spent almost all their time on those issues. Now at the same time I believe with my whole heart that the church is beginning to care all over again and that the church has nothing but terrible suffering ahead as it undergoes metamorphosis. I have not had a baby, but, you know, you have to cooperate with getting it born. The main thing is to cooperate with that birth. The same is true with the church. You do not have to wait until the new form comes to participate in history, you have to cooperate with the metamorphosis. You know, in one sense, that is our job. Maybe we ought to conceive of ourselves as midwives in anything that we are doing. We are trying to arouse those who care in the world, trying to get them in focus again.

- 12 But I wonder if there is anything else that can happen to the Protestants that can wake them up to that participation in the new birth except that the timbers fall out from under the Roman Catholic Church itself. That is a terrible thing, but I believe that the Protestants are depending on the security of Rome itself. If the timbers would start to break there, and you remember she is our Mother, it may be that we would have the hell jarred out of us. And I believe things do not go well in Rome.
- 13 You know what happened with the Primate of England. Pope Paul reached back and got that abbot up in Appleford in Yorkshire land, and jumped him over all the Bishops and made him Archbishop, the Primate of England itself. He was ordained the day after the Isle of Dogs consult. Just last week the Pope gave him the red cap. Isn't that something? Paul said he wanted a spiritual man in there and he got it.
- 14 Now the next thing: I believe these are the underlying contradictions to social demonstration. One is that we need a symbolic large funding success. Right now our hands are tied in pushing that any further. We can not wait until you get funding to start a demonstration. We have the consult. The very next morning we start work on the project programs. If we waited to start until we received the funding six or eight months later it would have been just as well not to have the consult. How our colleagues are "making it," I do not know. But we have to treat them exactly the way we treated the Religious Houses when they started. We do not send them a nickel from here. We do send them a rupee on their last gasp going down into starvation, but not before! Otherwise, we are going to have a subtle built-in tyranny that Chicago is running the situation. When they accuse us of that from the Areas they are wrong. When they think seriously about running things out there, all they are going to think about is "If our bellies are going to be full, we are going to fill them. If we are going to do our program, we have to do it." And finally, those who control the economic have a strange kind of power that some people rush after until they get that control. And then they wish that they didn't have it.
- 15 The second contradiction is forces: we need adequate, trained forces. That is why I am worried about the charting. We particularly need people who know how to move it, move it, move it--now, today! I am more and more intrigued with the image we built out of Fifth City, of the twenty plates spinning on twenty sticks, all at one time. The juggler had to keep them all spinning. That will make a strategist out of you if nothing else will! You have to spot the weakest one and put your whole effort there. As you move the weakest spot, your other hand gives the other plates a tap to keep them going. But, you have to concentrate and you have to move it, move it, move it!
- 16 The third contradiction has to do with what I am calling the repository. That is how we can have goods, data, expertise and experts available to push into any needed spot at any moment. The Social Demonstration Post is working on that now. By the way, everybody needs to have a copy of Schumacher's article, "Intermediate Technology" that appeared in Center Magazine from Santa Barbara. That is a description of the kind of repository we are talking about.

17 The fourth contradiction is replication. Now in the arena of replication and in the light of those contradictions, we had certain work to do. The most crucial one was seeing McNamara of the World Bank. We all have the charts, now, don't we? These are crucial and they are also good. One shows the ninety-five million dollars that is necessary in order to move Maharashtra.

18 # The most affirming experience I have had for a long time is the time we sat with McNamara. We had worked a long time to get that appointment. To exaggerate an interior feeling, we dared never put our foot in India again until we saw McNamara. He is about the hardest guy to see short of the late czar of Russia that I can think of. It would have been easier to see Ford. (I have never gotten over my little boyishness, and I don't want to get over it. I remember once, coming in between people to the coat of an United States Senator. He never knew it, but I touched his coat. Even though I didn't know anything about awe then, it was a wonder to me. Now that boyishness is something I don't want to get over). When I first went to see McNamara I was looking so hard at his face and was experiencing "touching his coat," that I forgot to tell him who I was. Then I woke up-- you know that fraction of moment sometimes when you are not sure you know your own name. Well, I had to think for a moment before I could tell him my name.

19 # McNamara is quite a man. He worked with the figures on those charts. He has several rules of thumb as to the cost, and we passed them. It was shocking! He divided millions by this and the other thing and he said, "You have projected about \$300 per head. That is just about right." That was something. He had several other kinds of criteria. Thank God for our corporateness. You understand the way we win something like that. I probably have got something like a peanut brain, but no I don't! I am wired in with so many brains that you couldn't even begin to count them. And he asked me, "Tell me concretely, what are you going to do economically in those villages?" So I blurted out, "Well, we intend to triple their income in three years." "Ahh," he said, "Double would be enough." "Well, I think we can quadruple them." He said, "You might be able to," And certainly in Maliwada all it would take is one little light industry to double their income. Just one industry! To say nothing about anything else. Again that shows how they have been neglected. And then he told us about a situation where in eight years they were going to try to double the income of the people. He was excited, tremendously excited. The thing that excited him was replication. It was also true of the president of Harvard University. Mr Kaul of India said one village is nothing more than a curiosity. Replication is the crucial thing. McNamara liked our plans for replication, though in this situation he was being asked for twenty-eight million dollars in the form of a forty-year loan at no interest. In one sense they don't even care whether they get the money back but in another sense they do. Though we could not at that time come out with a direct proposal he understood and was very, very affirmative without actually committing the twenty-eight million dollars. The next step, of course, is to have the Indian government directly ask the bank for the twenty-eight million. In this kind of situation we are playing the chicken-and-the-egg game.

If you do not have much going in India you might as well not go to the World Bank. But you have to go to the World Bank to get a significant project going in India. Therefore we are doing the chicken-and-the-egg job. I hope that now enough has been done that the next step that has to be done in India is going to resolve that whole situation and that it will move.

20 A week ago we saw Hubert Humphrey. He was extremely friendly and collegial. The thing that made him collegial was the fact that twenty-five Town Meetings have taken place in the state that he represents in Congress. He knew about them and pressed hard for us to give him a list of the other Town Meetings scheduled there, and said that he needed to go to one. He is a busy, busy man but he got on the telephone to AID and set up an appointment with a man that we had not been able to get to see. We saw him immediately. AID has pretty well said that they are going to give us a grant for nine million dollars in India. Now once again there has to be movement from India to AID to get that money. Anyway, the McNamara thing went well.

21 Coolidge has been anxious for us to meet the President of Harvard. President Bok is concerned about how Moral Philosophy or Ethics can be taught on the undergraduate level in this time. Coolidge knew that we had been thinking in that area, and therefore thought we ought to go talk with Bok. Bok said that the biggest problem in universities now is that the students are no longer interested in the Humanities. They will study extremely hard in medicine, law, and business, but the Humanities are gone. He contrasted that with what was there right after World War II, and he is worried. He is a concerned man. The Humanities in one sense are nothing else but dealing with moral philosophy, in a deep rich sense of that word. Every poem is on that subject. Every movie is on that subject.

22 During our visit he became tremendously excited and helped us on several levels. He spelled out to us in detail that replication was the only thing that was needed. He likened this moment in history to the time some years ago when anybody who cared was doing something about the slavery situation in the United States. He could have mentioned other examples. The issue today is the eighty-five per cent of the people in developing nations that have not been touched by technology. Right now, as Schumacher said, there are two universes in each one of those nations. One universe is the fifteen per cent who live as well as you and I do. They may not get as many rupees as you and I do, but their standard of living is like ours. The rest, the eighty-five per cent, are the other universe. There is a gap between them. And that gap is the moral issue of our time. This is another way of saying that our concern today is with local man and local community. Now, that was extremely crucial.

23 Then he got excited about replication. When we asked him about going to Knowles, who came from that part of the country, (a surgeon who is now head of the Ford Foundation) he said that when we go to Knowles we have to point out replication. Last year he went with

Knowles to various nations in Africa to look at community development projects. They discovered several fine projects but they had stayed right in their own particular little places, getting finer and finer and nothing was happening to the nation as a whole. He said he thought Knowles would latch on to the replication concept. He could not believe the formula of 25, 250 and 25000 villages. He also pointed out on his own that when you have done your 250 either the whole thing would have failed or the momentum would be there to do the 2500 and the 25,000, and nobody would need to be there priming the pump.

24 The last thing he suggested, and maybe the most exciting, was that we think through a plan so Harvard students could spend a semester in a social demonstration. We might begin with forty students, five in Maliwada, five in Majuro, five in Jeju Do, five in Kawangware. They would go to our social training school for two months and then spend six months in those villages. When they came back to Harvard, the next semester would be a course for credit in which they corporately think through what they saw and what happened to them. This is the answer to how you do Ethics with the undergraduate. Do you see that? We really met with the right guy. When he was in law school, Chester Bowles, the Ambassador to India, made arrangements for Mr. Bok to go there for four months and work in a village. He said, "The thing I remember most is that I could not wait to get on that plane and get out of there. The suffering had been too much for me to bear." You want to know what made Bok the kind of a sensitive university president that he is today? That experience would have to be one of the foremost happenings.

25 Here is Morality: being shoved up against the raw needs of the world without any buffer. We have just said this is the crucial need of our time. When he got on the plane, forces over and beyond his control had sensitized his conscience in a new and deeply profound way. Here is morality. It does not come out of textbooks of moral philosophy. It comes through unshielded engagement with the underlying issues of the time in which we live.

26 He said, "You get a brief description of what this would look like on my desk immediately, and we will see what we can do." Now I am clear why we saw Bok. It was not really for the initial reason we needed to see him. But now we have reasons to have gone to see him. If this happens at Harvard, we would have a way into other universities in the Western world that could be unbelievable. I think the hour has come when we must do that. He was extremely excited about Town Meeting and I made one of the mistakes of my life. At the end of my list was a note reminding me to ask him to let us do a Town Meeting with the undergraduates of Harvard. I forgot. Isn't that terrible? I remembered it in car leaving the appointment. I believe he would have said, "Yes, but let us see how we will go about setting it up." Many of us came out of the student movement or participated in it on campuses, and it is gone. All of us know there has to be a way back. Wouldn't it be something if the way back was Town Meeting? Perhaps the way is having a group of students sit down for one day and collectively bring their brains to bear on the issues that face our nation and their immediate situation.

27 The Town Meeting. I have necessarily been almost fanatically concerned with social demonstration. But I repeat, that is not the crucial thing we are doing now. The crucial thing is Town Meeting. Now, Town Meeting has not developed quite the way we intended. Nothing we have ever done has, yet there always has to be a plan to get something started that will create its own dynamic. Therefore the way it has developed is not surprising. As I look back over the meetings since June of '74 when we had those thirty-nine Town Meetings, I see a rational pattern to the development that has been unbelievable. I think that this quarter is going to be a shoot-off, but it is not going to get the snowball coming down the mountain. And it is not going to get going during the summer. But if we do not keep at it during the summer and keep at it hard all summer long, it is not going to break loose in terms of our whole life. You already sense that we are not who we used to be and can never return to what we have been in the past. Those major cities are going to come off in their own way, like Washington is going to come off the last week in June. That is going to be absolutely incredible. We are going to find ways to get to more Adas, Ohio or more Adas, Oklahoma or back country--outback as they say in Australia. That has to speed up. In the next few years they are going to be a lot more important than doing Washington. Right now, doing Washington is crucial.

28 Then we are going to take another shift that you have already thought through which may occur at this time next year. You are pioneering in it already. That shift will be to do Town Meetings in special communities. We have to move to the high schools and maybe the elementary schools of this nation. We have to move to a constituency of black villages in this country. We have to have one of these on every Indian reservation. The fact that we have had one with the Blackfeet across the border of Canada or with the Eskimos up north is tremendous. I can see us doing Town Meeting within corporations, within business communities themselves. You can figure out other special constituencies.

29 Secretly, as you do too, I have never surrendered the number of 10,000 meetings and two million people which is roughly one per cent of the people in the United States. We had to cut down to 5000 because some of our psyches couldn't stand ten. But deep down underneath we have to really think about ten thousand. Built into replication of social demonstration around the world is a Town Meeting. Six months ago the idea that we were going to have Town Meetings in 700,000 villages in India was somewhat of a balloon, a daytime Walter Mitty. Today, in terms of concrete possibility, that is no longer out in the realm that the will-of-the-wisp lives in.

30 We are going to see that profound awakening of humanity is what a new civilization, a new social vehicle finally is all about. And we are going to be far more clear at that time that the Christ happening is the happening of awakening. Or that the happening of awakening is the Christ happening. At General Conference they were extremely interested in talking radically about the new kind of evangelism. Town Meeting is at the fore of that.