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GROWING UP ABSTRACTLY

[This interview with Paul Goodman, with questions by Ben Reade, is reprinted by permission from the April issue of *Renewal*, published by the Chicago Missionary Society.]

What do you think the purpose of education should be? I don't like that question . . . because it puts the emphasis on the artificial nature of education. The education occurs anyway, given any small animal which grows up into a society, especially a highly cultured society. The child will be educated through the processes of imitation, adaptation, identification, self projection. And from the other side, he will be trained, abused, exploited, and loved quite naturally—and all of this is education. Besides all this, of course, there is an aspect, in human action, of deliberateness where we can set a goal and speak of purpose. But we must remember the other: that education goes on anyway. It's equivalent to growing up well or badly.

Now, to answer your question. In so far as it is a deliberate act, education is an effort to preserve the child's maximum natural potentialities, and in such a form as to enable the child to cope with the culture he grows up into in order to be most useful to himself and to the community.

What is useful to the community might be, in many ways, to alter the community.

What did you mean by the title of your book, Compulsory Mis-Education?

We have a compulsory educational system, and in this country, as in England, the intensity of this compulsory system is increasing. If there is no effort made to examine what is called education, then this deliberate imposition on the child can easily swing over into a compulsory harming of the child. And I think by and large that's occurred: that is, our school systems at present do more harm than good.

In what ways?

By regimenting, wasting the child's time of life, robbing the child of childhood and the ability to play, imposing explorative tasks. I would compare what we do—very coldly—I am not exaggerating—with the kind of thing Marx describes in *The Working Day:* the nine-year-old is put in the factory and the employer says the labor is not economic, but it gets the child into good work habits so that later he can be useful to society. Now the bulk of public school work is aimed at what amounts to an apprenticeship for economic purposes and really has nothing to do with the child's own future advantage. We're beginning to outdo the Birmingham manufacturer of 1850. He started at nine; we start at three.

You're saying that our formal system of education is really pointed at satisfying the economic needs and so-called national goals of our society?

Yes, but of course education has always been that way, whether formal or not. And therefore you have to ask whether the *goals* are good for the people in the society. In primitive times also, young people grew up to take part in community life. In a South Sea island, they learn to thatch roofs; from four or five years old they learn to take hold of the fishing nets and play at being grown up. But the tasks in such primitive societies were rather more what a child could easily develop to of his own volition. And it's also true that the primitive community was by and large rather good for the children. Now this might or might not be the case in any advanced society, and you have to look at this very carefully.

You say in your book that the goals of our society are highly questionable?

That's right, and since the goals are questionable you find that the methods become very suspect. Take an example: For most purposes a class size of 20 may be good for a child, one teacher to 20 children . . . But they put the child in a class where there's one teacher to 35; then they say, well, now we can't afford more teachers, so this is better than nothing. But on the contrary, I don't think it's better than nothing. That difference in class size may change a situation in which a child can be paid some attention to, and not get lost in the shuffle, into one in which the child is turned into a cipher or entirely lost.

And that might be worse than staying at home?

That's right.

Would you say that perhaps the greatest stimulus to education in the last few years—to formal education—seems to have been scientific and technological? We can date a lot of it, I think, from Sputnik.

Well, yes. It's that, but it's also the contrasting problem—you know Conant's *Dynamite in the Slums.* Those are the two things. On the one hand a need for more scientific apprentice training on the part of the defense department and a few corporations, the Defense Education Act, and things of that kind. And on the other hand, everything which is now called the War on Poverty: that is, to take the vast outcast group and somehow get them back into the stream of middle class society. The upgrading of the curriculum has been for scientific purposes—technological purposes really. I don't think anybody pretends that we know how to train or provide a curriculum for creative scientists; but at least you can train technicians. As for the other, those are largely problems of how to get more Negroes who can be qualified for college; or at least off the streets.

Now in the first case, the technological emphasis, do you think this is bad?

I don't think the goal is bad. I think it's wrongheaded in the sense that the number of children who will actually grow up into professions that require that much scientific training might be one in a thousand. I think it's absurd to distort the education of all the others for this. Secondly, for that one child, my feeling is that some kind of apprenticeship actually in General Dynamics or General Electric would probably get him there sooner better. My chief objection, though, to the scientific upgrading of the curriculum is that it has tended to omit that kind of scientific education which I think every citizen should have. In *Compulsory Mis-Education* I cite some of these areas which are taken from progressive education: like learning to repair your own refrigerator; or training in the moral beauty of science, you know, the feeling for accuracy and honesty, which is in fact incompatible with the production of PhDs. Because in order to get to the PhD level, we want them just to do well on the tests lower down.

The effect then is that the upgrading of the scientific curriculum distorts the education of 999 children in order to get that one.

That's right, and it also robs them of the necessary science they need.

What about the second emphasis, the desire to bring the outcasts back into the American mainstream?

My feeling is this: If a bad environment is preventing the children from using their wits, then the first thing to do is to change that environment. What we're doing is avoiding that by this other means. Let me give you an example. Our streets have become extremely bad for children, both in poor neighborhoods and in rich neighborhoods because there are too many cars. Almost 70 per cent of the population lives in metropolitan areas. These urban areas have become entirely unliveable for children. Now those cars are really not necessary in the urban areas—I mean if we planned better and didn't keep putting money in the pockets of General Motors. There's no reason

why we couldn't use buses and taxis and close down four out of five streets in this city. Then in these streets there would be some possibility of community life for small children. That in my mind would be more valuable than all the pre-school training being emphasized by educators.

What you're saying then is improve the environment in which they live?

Let me put it this way. The act of education is a very simple one. It's simply this: that at age nine or ten or eight a child under his or her own steam walks into something like a museum or an aquarium—just because he's interested, and without being taken with the class. If you can accomplish that, you can give up all the rest of school. Aristotle defined the soul as the self-moving maker of structures. What we've done by the kind of environments we've given children is to take away that self-moving quality, and the possibility of simple structures.

Then instead of substituting another environment for several hours a day which pre-schooling does, you want to change the home and neighborhood environments?

I would add, not changing just the physical plant, but the attitudes of the knowledgeable grownups—the druggist, say—to the children. So instead of kicking them out of his drug store, he explains something to the children. Or the garage mechanic. I'd rather pay him the money that we're giving to the teacher and say "Look we'll give you twenty bucks a week, and if kids come around, waste a few minutes with them." I think it would really pay off more in terms of the entire education of the children—it would pay off much more and cost less. In the end there's no growing up except into the community. What we do in formal schooling is to abstract from the community things we think are useful for the child, and then we cut them up into little bits and pieces called lessons that unnaturally abstracts them further. Then somehow the child is supposed to go out into the world and reapply all this. It seems to me it would be much more rational to say, "Let's not abstract these things in the first place, but try to make communication bridges whereby the child can safely be exposed to what's real." As a method, it's much more psychological.

Let me show you what I mean. New York is studying a proposal to make pocket playgrounds in the backyards of tenement buildings. Now a couple of years ago a group of kids in Harlem did just that—put in swings and stuff. Then the Real Estate Board of New York City, very eager to save money for the city, sold the right of way to the property, a little courtyard about 20 feet wide, to a real estate promoter. This guy then offered to sell back the right of way to the kids for $4,000. So they no longer have their playground because they didn't have the right of way. In a new city playground proposal, a playground costs $32.000. The drinking fountains, pavement, shrubbery and so forth would cost $10,000. You wonder where the other $22,000 is to go. My guess is mostly administration. Now here these kids did all this themselves for $800. If you had given them $5,000, they would have done it as well as the city or better—and they would have planned it themselves and they would have gotten something out of it. The kids will tear the benches to pieces in the city-built park, but not if they had made the thing themselves. Building their own park is intensely educational—far better than their schooling. This is upgrading education. See, we've put the money in the wrong place on the one hand and we've discouraged the kids on the other hand. That's very poor.

It's pretty artificial . . .

It's artificial and its damned expensive. And it's more than that—it's discouraging. It takes away all enterprise from the kids and yet the whole aim of education ought to be, as I said, to get the kid to do something under his own steam. And if he once does, then he can learn anything.

I'll give you another example. Pratt Institute runs a library school and they asked me to take over the class for an afternoon. I know nothing

about library schools so I asked them what their problems are. The present problem came out to be the following: It used to be that the children went to the library in order to browse around and pick out books, detective stories and so on. They'd take maybe eight books under their arms, read them, then bring them back. And they were gobbling up these books. Now they've upgraded the school systems and the result is that the children come into the library and never do anything except ask for a reference book—never take any books home, never read anything on their own. And the library has become utterly useless to the children. What they wanted from me was, how can they protect the libraries from the school system? Isn't that dreadful?

But don't the factors that shape the child's initiative come chiefly from his home environment?

I don't think you have to shape a child's initiative. What you have to do in the first place is not punish it.

How can the underprivileged environment allow the child to grow up under his own steam, as *you put it?*

There are more distinctions that have to be made than we make when we usually talk of cultural deprivation and cultural poverty. Consider sensory deprivation. In a certain sense a child growing up in a Park Avenue apartment is deprived as much as a child growing up in a slum—when he goes out the door there's nothing beautiful in the urban scene. Probably the Park Avenue scene to a small child is even uglier than a slum street. More lifeless and cold and more like a fortress. That's one thing. The Harlem child will tend to suffer perhaps from the opposite defect: namely that in a slum there's too much noise; there's too much social interaction. His circuits get clogged. The child doesn't have any quiet in his own room. I suppose also that the parents scream too much and the voices might be too loud for the child. That would perhaps be not so much clogging as frightening, which results in the mind clamming up. However, there are speech styles that develop at these different levels. There's an English linguist who distinguishes between public speech—that's the speech of the lower class—and formal speech, the middle class speech. He happens to think that this middle-class speech, which is the speech that's required by the school system, is quite excellent. But if you look at it from the psychologists' standpoint, you can see that it has many traits which are highly psychoneurotic—obsessional and compulsive. There's much too much emphasis on the use of the word "I." The speech is much too much *about* the thing rather than being speech of action, which good speech is. The middle-class child has been made to feel too early that he's responsible, and therefore guilty. And he's bribed in all kinds of ways by the middle class parents to develop a kind of inner check (an "honor system"), which is quite irrelevant to the child. Whereas the child of the lower class uses more imperatives and outcries and leaves out the "I." His speech is more concrete, less emptily abstract, more direct. From the poet's point of view this is far better speech. Wordsworth made that point long ago, that it was much easier to turn the speech of farmers into poetry, than that of the city bred. And, in fact, if you compare poor people of different countries, such as, let's say, the Irish against the English, you find that the Irish poor speak far more beautifully, indeed far better than the American middle class. In other words it can't be the poverty as such that makes the difference. It must be some kind of sensory deprivation or fright that has occurred.

Now the only point I want to make by this long speech is that there are obviously all kinds of subtleties and differentiations involved here, and these get left out by our people who talk about pre-school training. Because they're interested in only one thing: in that aspect of the culture of the poor which prevents children from taking on the culture of the school. But humanly speaking, the culture of the poor might in many ways be superior to the culture of the schools. When we say a Negro or Puerto Rican child is not ready for

school, what we're really saying is, he's not ready for middle-class school.

So this means tailoring the system to the child rather than trying to fit the child into the system?

Yes, but the whole matter is vastly over-analyzed and over-rated. Leave out all the formal notions of education with a big E . . . and you see we educate all the time in our families, when we would rather see the child happily active than not. If any child shows some interest in something and says, give me that, then we automatically give it to him. We don't think this is education, but of course that's exactly what it is. From six to twelve, to make a big deal about curriculum seems to me to be altogether out of line. The children have lots of self-starting in them. They're continually being stimulated and they continually want things, and ask questions. The only problem is to have enough stuff around to put things in their way, and people to answer questions.

What are some practical ways of doing this in the slums?

A good deal of the bad performance of small children—and this applies to all classes—is that their tongues clam up and their minds clamp because they're afraid. They exist in fear of the big official building and the peculiar routines which are entirely foreign to them. This happens the very first day they walk into that school. And since the frightening stimulus is repeated continually, they never do unblock. John Holt, in his recent book, *How Children Fail,* shows that exactly the same thing happens in a plush private school as happens in a Harlem school—except that the rich kids have learned at home a series of devices to fake performance because the hostile environment they're coping with at home is the same as in the school. It demands the same kind of performance. The author was, to his sorrow, able to discover that they never really answered his questions but they watched his feet and face for clues as to whether they were giving the right answer. They were hoaxing him all along. Now the slum child hasn't learned those clues, and when he's frightened his non-performance is very blatantly revealed in just looking at you with big eyes and having nothing to say, or mumbling some stupidity. It seems to me then that the real way of coping with that is to cut the whole school institution much more down to size. Therefore have a very small school, say in a storefront, with up to 30 kids right off the street, and so that the children can leave and get out if they feel frightened. Tell the kids: You don't need to stay if you don't want to. Just hang around—it's your block, you're used to it. Leave anytime you want and come back when you want. We might then perhaps alleviate the shock effect of going into that other world. Also if we cut down on administration and a lot of the capital costs we can increase the important point of education—namely the exposure of children to attentive adults who can answer their questions and put things in their way. We have one school for slum children in New York that I have some connection with—my daughter teaches there—where the ratio of teachers to students is about one to eight whereas in the public school system it's about one to thirty-five. And yet the budget for that school is no higher.

You mean the cost per student?

That's what I mean. The cost per student is lower in the little school than in the big school where all the money goes to administrators. Naturally if you get one of these big boxes with 1,400 children in it there's an enormous amount of administration—you have guidance counselors, remedial reading teachers, truant officers, principals, assistant principals, secretaries. Most of these functionaries are paid higher than teachers. But if you only have three teachers with 25 to 30 children in a little storefront, all that can be dispensed with. There's no need for administration beyond what the teachers say to one another. It's all remedial reading if you want to call it that. You don't need truant officers because the kids can come and go away. They

might as well come. In short we cut down the expenses which have nothing to do with the real act of teaching.

I've proposed to the Ford Foundation that a half dozen schools like this be tried out. And they seem to be interested in it. The problem is going to be, as it is in the little school we have, to get the official school system not to penalize or try to prevent—by saying there are fire violations and so forth.

What would happen in these storefront schools? How much so-called formal education would there be?

That ought to depend entirely on what the teachers guess at, or their own style. The one thing you can't do is make a teacher teach in a style which doesn't fit him or her. You see I want to give the teachers as much freedom as I want to give the children. Otherwise you won't have a spontaneous relationship.

I would man such a school this way: I would have, in order to satisfy the Regents in Albany, one regularly licensed teacher who would have a feeling for this kind of thing. This would be the director. Then you would pick up from the graduating class of any college two assistants. You ask, who in this class likes children and would like to pay attention to them? And you'd get dozens of applicants—there's no question about it—because it's an interesting job. Now the little school where my daughter works is a little on the formal side. She thinks the kids really ought to learn reading and at a certain hour of the day they are more or less cajoled into wanting to learn to read. But then on the other hand she's discovered that if you take seven or eight to the Museum of Natural History, you could spend a whole year there with those children, and there's always something interesting. She complained to the museum—and I was very proud of her for this—that all the cards on the exhibits were aimed at superior high school or college students. They're in complicated language, and they're excellent; but there's no reason why there shouldn't be also another card in much bigger type that says, "These are the bones of an animal that lived long ago and we dug the bones out of the ground and it was a hard job to put them together." Something like that, so that a child, under his own steam, might finally go alone.

Which is the ideal . . .

That's the ideal of education: to get the child to roam into that museum on his own steam. If you've done that, you've done it. Does that answer your question?

Yes . . . very good . . .

Whether it's formal or not—it certainly wouldn't be as formal as the public school system—doesn't matter. But if the teacher feels that there's something beautiful about formal instruction, then it will exist. See, I'm against the whole notion of pre-ordained curriculum. I think the curriculum should occur out of the interaction of the children and the teacher. And I think the less said about that beforehand the better, because the essential education situation is that a grownup who knows something is paying attention to a child who is coming on under his own steam. Now if you preserve that essential educational relationship, curriculum will tailor itself. The whole notion of the pre-thought has something phony about it. To put it another way, good education is like the old Italian style of *commedia del arte* where the actors make it up as they go, according to their own spirit and according to the particular audience that's there. Now that's the hardest kind of theater, of course. And this kind of education is really terribly hard; but it's the kind of thing where a teacher can pay attention, spontaneously innovate and do brilliantly. It's damned hard if you work in a preordained school system to be a brilliant teacher. You know, you can be pretty good; but you can't be brilliant because you can't dwell in the instant. And all real learning is taking place at the instant—it isn't taking place in a lesson plan.

In your book you said that in 1963 dropouts were conned into returning to schools that were the cause of their dropping out in the first place; hence there was very little hope they would stay the second time.

In fact the great majority of them didn't.

Didn't stay? Right. Now, what would you do with the dropouts?

Well, the idea—especially after puberty—of learning in a scholastic way, that is, by doing lessons, really fits very few. What percentage I don't know, but probably not more than 15 per cent of the population. This is an extremely special way of learning to grow up. Most people like to be more actively engaged in some activity which is for keeps, really doing something where they believe there will be a product, something to show for the effort. In which case, the discipline doesn't come from the form of the subject; the discipline comes from the success of the concrete useful task. Now there are many children who underachieve badly. They're obviously bright, verbal, have all kinds of skills, and yet do miserably in a scholastic setting. A number of these drop out and a number of them are just C and D students, when they obviously should be A students. For the bright underachiever, to use that kind of language, I would propose finding real activities in the community which are highly intellectual and yet for real. It isn't too hard to find those: Take working on a small newspaper. The youngster in the junior or senior year of high school or maybe the freshman year of college could act as a cub reporter, do makeup, learn something about printing and at the same time help in the business office. That's a well rounded curriculum equivalent in every way to an excellent scholastic high school curriculum. Now it costs us $1,000 a year—in this city, $1,100—to keep a kid in high school; a vocational high school is even more expensive, coming to $1,400. All right. Supposing you put that $20 to $30 a week in the kid's pocket as an apprentice. Find a local newspaper. They exist all over the country; every county has one. Most of them are just gossip sheets. A certain number of those could turn into real useful local newspapers to countervail the national mass-medium newspapers which brainwash the public. And tell the boss: Look, we'll give you 15 paid apprentices—we might even give you a little capital money because we're going to save money by not putting 2,000 youngsters in a new high school. (It costs us about $6,000,000 to build a high school for that number in New York.) But you are not to treat these apprentices just as wage slaves; in fact you're not paying their wage—we're paying them. You get their help and you get this capital money if you make sure they get experience in your local newspaper, community radio station, or little theater.

I urged the Peace Corps to include 25 per cent of the right kind of slum dropouts or farm kids, whom up to now they've been rejecting. I pointed out that they couldn't possibly fill out the forms, which are very terrifying. The Peace Corps people asked, How can you get them? I said go around to a settlement house and ask which kids have the good Peace Corps attitude—the youth worker will tell you that; the Police Athletic League will tell you that. The Peace Corps is a very educational environment. The problem came up, what about foreign languages? A psychologist at the Peace Corps said, these kids can learn a foreign language just as well as anyone else—except that they'll be illiterate in two languages. They're now illiterate in English; so they'll be illiterate in Hindi. What difference does it make? These then, are alternative educational experiences for the bright kid that the scholastic system doesn't fit. I'm just saying the platitude that people are different. And the notion that schooling is a neutral thing rather than a highly specific way of being in the world is overlooked. And if it's a highly specific way of being in the world, obviously it fits only a highly specific group; and if you force anyone else into the highly specific experience, he will sabotage it in one way or another. He'll give token performances and

fake. If he has strong extrinsic rewards he'll get by—and that's true in the middle class. Or he'll run away or fail if he doesn't have the extrinsic rewards to get by—and that's true in the lower class. But there are quite as many real dropouts in the middle class as in the lower class, because the schooling doesn't really fit. The difference is they don't show up because middle class kids have the art of faking the middle class way. That's the way they've been trained.

That's the way they've been brought up?

Yes. The lower class kids don't feel that they need to fake in that way because they're not going to be rewarded anyway. They're not going to get good jobs anyway. So therefore they might as well quit. Now the trouble is, we make no other provision for their education. It's school or nothing.

What we're doing then is providing one monolithic means of education.

Yes. Everyone recognizes that the group to be educated is heterogeneous, but they seem to think that in some way we can take the school system and accommodate it to the different types. They fail to realize that the school system itself has a sociological effect. That's the one thing they won't discuss. Now frankly I'm fed up, because you find that everytime the President gets together a task force on improving education, they never, never discuss the question, does the school itself have a sociological effect? And they never ask any of us—and there are a number of us who hold this point of view—to the meeting. In other words the improvement of education is a baby of the structure of the schools—the school establishment. And therefore, so far as I'm concerned I wouldn't give them a penny of federal aid until they really are willing to cope with what education really is and realize that although schooling is very fine, it's very fine only for those who thrive in it. And for those who don't thrive in it, it's deadly.

And to enable most of the kids or all the kids to thrive in some sort of educational situation a number of different techniques have to be applied.

That's right. That's right. And when I say a number, I mean 50. Now this makes it very hard for the administrators. But that's just too bad. The administrators, I think, are overpaid anyway, and they might as well work for their living.

PAUL GOODMAN

New York, N.Y.

REVIEW
THE ESSAYS OF JOSEPH WOOD KRUTCH

THE book, *If You Don't Mind My Saying So: Essays on Man and Nature* (William Sloane Associates, 1964), is in effect a Krutch anthology. The title is borrowed from the name of Mr. Krutch's Department in the *American Scholar* and the book includes material which appeared there as well as in other journals between 1955 and 1963. John K. Hutchens, who edits this collection of Mr. Krutch's writings, says in his introduction:

> Somewhere in the pages that follow, Joseph Wood Krutch speaks of himself—but without waving a battle flag, because that is not the Krutch style—as an "unregenerate humanist." That is to say, in this age which bows contentedly to the authority of science and the generally apathetic conformism of our society, a rebel. He would, I must imagine (for I never have met him except through the printed word), gently reject the label of rebel. What, he might quietly ask, is so very rebel-like about going one's own way, disdaining or rather disregarding fashionable factionalism, saying what one thinks, and reserving the right now and then to change one's mind? What else is a civilized man, the inheritor of a great humanist tradition, expected to do?
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> That a number of presumably civilized men in Mr. Krutch's lifetime have taken a quite different road, although the same great tradition was theirs for the following, only says the more about him. It chiefly says, I believe, that he has always had the strong if reticent self-assurance of one who is good both in mind and in heart but wastes no time in thinking about it. For one thing, apart from his innate modesty, he has had too many other things to think about.

Supporting evidence of what Mr. Hutchens says may be found in *More Lives than One*, Mr. Krutch's intellectually adventurous autobiography published in 1962, Krutch first envisioned himself as a mathematician, then discovered at the University of Tennessee that literature was more important to him than "exact" science, and after graduate study at Columbia began teaching dramatic literature and doing a new sort of reviewing of books and plays for publications. As a biographer he lived closely with the thoughts of both Henry David Thoreau and Samuel Johnson. When, finally, he was obliged to move to the Arizona desert, relinquishing his Brander Matthews professorship at Columbia, he turned his amateur talents as a naturalist from the East Coast ecology to an entirely different region. Re-established in health, he produced in Arizona the much-loved books *The Desert Year* and *The Voice of the Desert*, and enjoyed the freedom to write as he wished for both the *American Scholar* and the *Saturday Review*.

For quotation from the present volume, we choose a passage from "Novelists Know What Philosophers Don't." MANAS readers who have become admirers of W. Macneille Dixon's *The Human Situation* will recognize in the following a kind of "spiritual" kinship between these men of otherwise quite different temperament:

> Art is more convincing than philosophy because it is, quite literally, truer. The novelists are, to be sure, less clear and less precise. But for that very reason they are truer. Every philosophy and every "ideology" must sacrifice truth to clarity and precision just because we demand of a philosophy or an "ideology" greater clarity and precision and completeness than is compatible with human knowledge or wisdom. What is most true and most valuable in any philosophy is not the tight and inclusive system which it presents but those glimpses and divinations and *aperçus* which the philosopher later formalized into his philosophical system. Most of us are not Platonists or Spinozans or Nietzscheans. We have accepted insight from each while rejecting the whole which each pretends to present. And it is just the philosophical superiority of art, not only that it suggests the complexity of life and human character, but also that it is everywhere closer to the most genuine and the most justifiable portions of man's thinking about life.

Krutch has written much on what might be called the "mystical" relationship between Man and Nature. This was first published in 1961:

> To what extent should man, to what extent dare he, renounce nature; take over the management of the earth he lives on; and use it exclusively for what he sometimes regards as his higher purposes?

> Extremists give and have always given extreme answers. Let us, say some, "return to nature," lead the simple life, try to become again that figment of the romantic imagination, "the noble savage." Henry David Thoreau, the greatest of American "nature lovers," is sometimes accused of having advocated just that. But he did not do so, he advocated only that we should live more simply and more aware of the earth which, he said with characteristic exaggeration, "is more wonderful than it is convenient; more beautiful than it is useful, it is more to be admired and enjoyed than used."
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> . . . Others talk about "the biosphere" (loosely, that which has been here defined as the natural world) as contrasted with "the noosphere" (translated as that portion of the earth upon which man has imposed his own will so successfully that whatever conditions prevail there do so because of his will). It appears that civilization, according to this notion, is to be completed only when the noosphere is the whole earth and the biosphere is completely subordinated to the human will. . . . But would man, whose roots go so deep into nature, be happy should he achieve such a situation? . . . He would have no different companions in the adventures of living. The emotions which have inspired much of all poetry, music, and art would no longer be comprehensible. He would have all his dealings with things he alone has made. Would we then be, as some would imagine, men like gods? Or would we be only men like ants?

The concluding piece in the present volume has a theme made familiar by Mr. Krutch's earlier book, *The Great Chain of Life.* "There is no doubt," he writes, "that some of the most remarkable examples of what seemed to our ancestors proof of 'design' occur among plants and among the very primitive animal organisms where the push if it existed at all must have been very slight." And, he adds, "there is no conclusive argument against the assumption that it existed from the beginning and increased slowly as time went on rather than that it emerged discontinuously at the moment when a primate became a man." Further:

> Sir Julian Huxley, as cautious a scientist as one could find is orthodox enough when he writes that "natural selection converts accidents into apparent design." On the other hand, he admits in evolution a "desirable trend" toward "the higher" (not merely the more complex) and although he warns that "If we take the monistic or unitary naturalistic view demanded by evolutionary logic, matter and mind cease to appear as separate entities; they are seen as two necessary attributes or aspects of the single universal world stuff." And to me, at least, this seems to suggest that mind might be operable on a very low level. Loren Eiseley goes further. "If 'dead' matter has reared up this curious landscape of fiddling crickets, song sparrows, and wondering men, it must be plain even to the most devoted materialist that the matter of which he speaks contains amazing, if not dreadful powers."
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> In quoting from these eminent authorities I do not mean to suggest that they would necessarily be sympathetic to all, or perhaps to any, of the notions I have been trying to put into words. But they do, so it seems to me, suggest that not all competent scientists believe the last word has been said on the question of Evolution.

Our world, in short, is an open World of Life, while the World Machine is only its shadowed abstraction—at best a convenience for physicists, at worst a nightmare of nineteenth-century materialism from which, with the help of men like Mr. Krutch, we are at last recovering.

COMMENTARY
NOT QUITE "NON-EXISTENT"

"OUR knowledge of how to cultivate the human resource, as *the* sovereign value, for its unknown potential of growth (as against the present practice of processing it for a predetermined and 'practical' application)," says D. G. Poole in Frontiers, "is almost non-existent."

Perhaps we should devote some space to people who have been trying to assemble knowledge of this sort. High on the list would be Ralph Borsodi, one of the founders of the Decentralist movement. Many years ago, Mr. Borsodi pointed out that the engineers who design productive equipment are obsessed by the ideal of "bigness." He argued that if the same ingenuity were applied to the design of small units of production, it might be found that numerous small factories spread around the country would give better over-all economic service than the monster industrial establishments of the present. Borsodi also set a personal example in a decentralist way of life by working out techniques of home production of food and clothing and demonstrating the rich potentialities of subsistence farming in a region which allowed him to pursue his profession.

It is not a matter of whether the pattern of living established by Mr. Borsodi will work for everybody. Actually, there is little decentralist value in a plan that can be said to work for "everybody." Independent non-authoritarian living requires individual use of the imagination, ingenious improvisation and adaptation. Readers who have been inspired by Borsodi's book, *Flight from the City*, have not "imitated" him, but have used the same principles to create highly individual ways of life. Meanwhile, out of his work has come an association called the School of Living, which publishes a monthly journal, *Way Out* ($4.00 a year), and a monthly newspaper, *The Green Revolution* ($3.00 a year, or $6.00 for both papers, from the School of Living, Lane's End Homestead, Brookville, Ohio).

People with this background will easily understand what Paul Goodman says in this issue about education.

Erich Fromm addressed himself to the problem spoken of by Mr. Savage, in *The Sane Society*. Arthur Morgan, resuscitator of Antioch College, and director of the Tennessee Valley Authority, has spent his entire life studying the dynamics of character formation through the agency of the small community and has written many books on the subject.

Interestingly enough, the decentralist writers and humanists, almost to a man, are people who have found workable ways of practicing what they preach. For this kind of reform and regeneration, you don't need a Master Plan.

FRONTIERS

In Place of "Therapy"?

THE chief non-political argument of the present has to do with the relationship between men and machines. In large measure, it is a contest between a narrow and often naïve optimism on the part of champions of advancing automation, and the bewildered doubts and intuitive resistance of humanist thinkers. A just-published book, *The Machine in the Garden* (Oxford University Press), by Leo Marx, promises to bring some order to the argument by placing it in an historical context. We shall seek a review copy, but meanwhile there is an excellent discussion of the volume in the April *Progressive.*

The encouraging thing about some of the expressions on this subject is the rising philosophical self-consciousness which frames the issues raised in an essentially *human* perspective. For example, in the April number of *Change,* a publication of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, D. G. Poole observes:

> . . . the most intriguing and challenging aspect of the Cybernetic Revolution is that it compels new definitions, not only of an economic and social nature, but of man himself. One is compelled to ask, "Am I no more than an organic computer?—If the cybernation faculty of a human being were to be isolated and set to one side, what would be left?—Might there not be, after all, back of this performer-operator, this coping faculty of management, an authentic resident, a hidden and silent habitant whom we have characterized in the past with old-fashioned and little-understood terms such as 'soul' and 'spirit'—If there is a dimension of experience which is not 'doing' and which might be termed 'being,' what is it and where is it?"

This is not a question, Mr. Poole points out, that can be referred to the computers. "Appeals to the cybernation faculty to displace or override itself are pretty certain to fall on barren ground." Our aim, he proposes, should be increasing humanization, and this can only mean finding ways of becoming "more conscious, more aware, more sensitive, more capable of feeling." He then comments:

> Given the realization that the human resource is *the* sovereign value, our knowledge of how to cultivate it for its unknown potential of growth (as against the present practice of processing it for a pre-determined and "practical" application) is almost non-existent. The (known) techniques are essentially therapeutic and pathologically oriented—designed to re-humanize, in a measure, people who have been "normally" dehumanized. The people to whom they are being applied are, with few exceptions, sicker than they know. Their symptoms might be described as civilized, academized, regimented, exclusive, frightened, successful, and white.

Actually, the two sides of the argument about machines are being developed in separate universes of discourse. *Change* reprints from the Los Angeles *Times* some extracts from an article on "The Computer Age" in which the writer, Irving Bengelsdorf, quotes John Diebold, said to have "invented" automation, who declares that by 1970 the American Telephone and Telegraph Company "expects to have more machines talking to each other over telephone wires than people." And Simon Ramo, president of Bunker Ramo Corporation, is quoted as implying that the shortcomings of the human brain in doing "repetitive, simple, routine tasks" need no longer slow the march of progress. According to Dr. Ramo:

> Synthetic intelligence would aid us in every respect where the human mind is applied; in government, industry, finance, transportation, education and the professions. The total national brain-power would be multiplied enormously, as every human brain would be extended by low-priced synthetic memory, synthetic logic, and synthetic sensing, contemplative and decision-making elements.

But Mr. Poole is not speaking to such points when he continues the observations quoted above. He is not addressing himself to the quantitative extensions of what we are now able to do, but to the quality of the present life of human beings, regardless of how much they are able to "do"—or "have." Writing in British Columbia, he turns to

people there who seem to know more about the quality of a good life than those who are pursuing it armed with all the "techniques" of Western civilization. He says:

> If one is to look beyond therapy for a natural practice which consistently seeks to honor life and growth in the individual, above all "practical" considerations, I know of no place to turn except to some of the native Indians. They tell me, for example, that the reason why they are neither impelled by white incentives nor attracted to white civilization, the reason why the whites cannot understand them, is that the Indian relies principally on intuitional knowledge and abilities rather than purely intellectual manipulation of facts and statistics. They evince a respectful admiration for white techniques, white industry, white machines, but this is tempered with a whimsical impatience. One has the feeling that they observe the upstart white man as a sage might observe a child. One of them said to me recently, "The bulldozer is truly a mechanical marvel, but the trees it uproots and smashes are living miracles." Despite our determined efforts to extinguish him, perhaps the Indian has succeeded in preserving something which the white community now needs more than any other thing.

Well, if Mr. Poole is right, and the only known method of "rehumanizing" Western man is "therapy," what have the therapists to say about the problem? Erich Fromm made a fairly explicit comment in the *Saturday Review* for Jan. 4, 1964:

> . . . consider the nature of our bureaucratized, industrial, mass civilization. Our approach to life becomes increasingly mechanical. The aim of social efforts is to produce things, and in the process of idolatry of things we transform ourselves into commodities. The question here is not whether they are treated nicely and are well fed (things, too, can be treated nicely); the question is whether people are things or living beings.
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> People love mechanical gadgets more than living beings. The approach to man is intellectual-abstract. One is interested in people as objects, in their common properties, in the statistical rules of mass behavior, not in living individuals. All this goes together with the increasing role of bureaucratic methods. In giant centers of production, giant cities, giant countries, men are administered as if they were things, and they obey the law of things. In a bureaucratically organized and centralized industrialism, men's tastes are manipulated so that they consume maximally and in predictable and profitable directions. Their intelligence and character become standardized by the ever-increasing use of tests, which select the mediocre and unadventurous over the original and daring.

Interestingly enough, characteristic "human" capacities selected and encouraged by these methods are precisely those over which Dr. Ramo tells us the machines are a vast improvement! It follows, then, that when we get the machines, we won't need all those "mediocre and unadventurous" people to do the "repetitive, simple, routine tasks." The dictate of our basic principle—Competition—is plain: These people are unnecessary. "Maybe," as Dr. Fromm says sadly, "the neutron bomb which leaves entire cities intact, but without life, is to be the symbol of our civilization."

But since he is not really a defeatist, Dr. Fromm sets the problem in terms that anyone can understand:

> To speak of the necrophilous quality of our industrial civilization does not imply that industrial production as such is necessarily contrary to the principles of life. The question is whether the principles of social organization and of life are subordinated to those of mechanization, or whether the principles of life are the dominant ones. Obviously, the industrialized world has not found thus far an answer to the question posed here: How is it possible to create a humanist industrialism as against the bureaucratic mass industrialism that rules our lives today?

Mr. Poole agrees; he says that the knowledge we need to answer this question "is almost non-existent." So it becomes absolutely necessary to ask it again and again.