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THE PROBLEMS OF THE AGE

ON at least a few occasions, a picture does seem to be worth a thousand words, but usually a caption is needed to make its value evident. In this case we are thinking of a photograph which appeared in the *Unitarian-Universalist World* (one of our exchanges) for March 1, showing a young woman taking part in a meeting. She is shrugging in wonder, her arms outstretched, her fingers extended, her face almost popping off the page with friendly expostulation. *"How can you say that?"* she is asking someone (not in the picture) identified as a "young liberal," who has just asserted that "personal goals are not worth working for."

On this question—its implications, and the various answers that might be made—turn practically all the dilemmas of the time concerning what is most important to do with one's life.

But before examining the question it may be well to dispose of certain proposals which lead into exitless box canyons. A tough, "gut-level" argument would be that just getting enough food, clothing and shelter for staying alive is the only real objective for a vast number of people, and that this settles the question at once in favor of the "young liberal." But such a response overlooks the need to decide what it is good to stay alive *for*, since the short-term crisis philosophy that stops with the demand for economic necessities—which means living in order to eat—leaves human beings aimless and without orientation the moment they have enough to eat. Moreover, since the people who argue most contentiously about these matters commonly do have enough to eat, it seems evident that they are making up a philosophy, not for themselves, but for others. A certain artificiality, if not fanaticism, is likely to result.

Another matter deserting attention is the designation "young liberal." What is a liberal? The commonest meaning of the term in radical circles is that a liberal is a soft-headed intellectual who is unable or too timid to recognize the need for militant action. In conservative terms, a liberal is a fuzzy-minded dupe of Marxist propaganda who fails to see the self-defeating flaws in all welfare state programs, but is determined to have his sentimental, moralistic way no matter what the hard facts of human nature and history disclose.

What is the meaning of "liberal," by derivation? Before it acquired its present, almost exclusively politico-economic implications, it represented the view that human beings are essentially free in nature, and that the best expression of themselves, under self-determined conditions, is the highest good. The political reading of liberal, then, would be as a stance in behalf of individual freedom, or what appear to be the conditions of freedom. The powers of the state, the liberal would say, are to be exercised to secure individual freedom, since all value is ultimately realized by individuals who are free. All other general welfare functions of government are subordinate to this one, in liberal theory.

What happened to this meaning of "liberal"? Well, it was argued that so long as there is economic bondage and political control in behalf of the possessors of great wealth, human beings cannot be free: *therefore,* social revolution is the first necessity of liberalism. Liberals who do not admit this are inconsistent and ineffectual, it was said.

But the means of social revolution seem to have abolished the ends of liberalism. In any event, contempt for individual goals has been a prime weapon of the rhetoric of revolutionaries for so long that many well-intentioned people still

feel guilty if they catch themselves thinking very much about personal fulfillment. The basic assumption behind this emotional response is that any cultural aspiration or desire for individual growth, including religious or philosophic realization, unless it is hitched and subservient to clear-cut revolutionary purposes, is socially irresponsible, a trivial distraction, and indefensible. Only the revolutionary program has relevance to human welfare—hence the aggressive advocacy of Socialist Realism in the arts, along with, for example, the condemnation of Socrates as a flunky of the owning class, and its indifference to virtually all activity but the achievement of revolutionary power. There are of course various versions of this outlook, involving qualifications and minor compromises. Its inner logic, however, probably reaches climactic fulfillment in Nechayev's *Revolutionary Catechism,* and its practical goal is defined by Lenin's conception of the achievement of pure power through the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Such conceptions of ends and means fade slowly, and once they have saturated a generation or two with the sweeping persuasion of their abstractions—behind which lie the penetrating fluids of moral frenzy—only the erosions of personal experience, plus time for reflection, can wear them out. Thus Eldridge Cleaver, if correctly reported in *Newsweek,* is no longer a Marxist-Leninist and wants to come home; having visited Russia he now thinks Soviet society is "static" and that America needs "a strong defense." Or, one might be driven to long second thoughts by reading in the second volume of *The Gulag Archipelago* that "it was less dangerous under Alexander II to keep dynamite in one's home than to shelter the orphaned child of an enemy of the people under Stalin."

But after one is weaned of these passionate partisanships, what then does one do? Some of the problems which ensue are described by Warren Wagar in his review of Peter Berger's. *Pyramids of Sacrifice* (*Saturday Review,* Feb. 8). After noting Berger's account of the failure of totalitarian socialism to deliver the promised "material abundance" (although this author finds the Marxist critique of capitalism still valid), Mr. Wagar examines his resolve to abandon "abstract formulas" and to seek more or less pragmatic ethical solutions. What, in this approach, will be the background guide for decision? The reviewer says:

> Berger's first sin is to follow the maddeningly ambiguous procedure of all "ethical" pragmatists and to veil the sources of his values. If there is to be no overarching ethical theory and no ideology, but only, says Berger, a humane "ethic of responsibility," what do we mean by responsibility? To whom or what shall we be responsible? To human welfare? Well, then, what is "welfare"? What is "humane"? What does cutting social costs to a "minimum" involve?

These are all questions bearing directly on the relation between personal and social goals. Not very remarkably, Mr. Berger observes that "man needs religion." In basic agreement with him, yet dissatisfied with what he describes as Berger's contentless anti-formulas, Mr. Wagar comments:

> In the final analysis, all religions, including Christianity fail to deliver the cargo they promise, but religions and ideologies do not fail to deliver something else of more significance. They give us anchorage: meaning and purpose in the work of life. As the traditional religions indubitably fade, the ideologies replace them, and what humanity needs now is better myths, not disenchanted counsels of prudence and patience. If our current myths martyr us, if they tear the living hearts from our breasts with Aztec knives, the appropriate answer is to summon up religious or ideological faith of a higher order, to make a higher civilization less unworthy of our humanity. Or try.

Debunking alone, this critic says, has for its real effect "to nurture numb acceptance of the status quo." He then adds as a conclusion:

> Nothing is easier than exposing the incongruous distance between the goals and the results of any movement in human affairs. Being human, we always fall short. But who are the real realists—the debunkers who blink with astonishment at the failures of faith or the prophets who give us energizing visions?

Well, as Mr. Wagar says, up to this point we have had easy going. It has not been difficult, using historical evidence, to put question marks in the place of confident declarations about what people ought or need to do—including both sides of the issue we started with: social versus personal goals in life.

Naturally enough, the reader is likely to interrupt, and to resist this dichotomy. He may ask: Are social goals and personal goals mutually exclusive? Not at all? Sometimes? Always?

Ideally, one may think, they are one. Well, then, pick your heroes the persons who embody a synthesis of goals—and examine their careers. You might look, say, at Gandhi, Tolstoy, and Thoreau, at Blake, Plato, and Emerson, and then "evaluate" what they accomplished, or tried to accomplish. In making this effort one finds wheeling into action a wide variety of assumptions and questions concerning human good and how it is reached. Plato made Socrates say that the ideal Republic could not be realized for a long time, perhaps never. Can we wait? Gandhi, at the end of his life, spoke of his Himalayan blunders, and seemed in some ways a saddened man, although he kept working until the last. Blake, far from winning friends and influencing people, was widely regarded as mad by his contemporaries. Tolstoy never joined a Tolstoyan community. Emerson is sometimes condemned as a timid, armchair thinker who would never walk on a picket-line, in contrast to Thoreau, who at least went to jail for a day.

What about artists as a class? Can you talk about artists as a class? Do Van Gogh and Dali associate easily? Would similar judgments apply to both Picasso and Rembrandt? To Chopin and Schoenberg? Bach and George Gershwin? We are headed for a morass with questions like these, and need to escape into saving generality. Something by Macneile Dixon may help:

> When you enter the temple of the arts you enter a building dedicated to the Muses, and the soul is there disturbed by a sense of how great and terrible, how strange and beautiful is this universe of ours. Make human life as trivial as you please, there remains the simple, positive, undeniable fact among other facts—the eating, drinking, walking and talking—that we are taking part in cosmic affairs, of a magnitude beyond all imagination to compass or language to express. All finite things have their roots in the infinite and if you wish to understand life at all, you cannot tear it out of its context.

With this the defense of the arts, as ennobling gift to the world as well as individual fulfillment for the artist, may rest. It manifestly rests on vast assumptions, of course—one is the assumption that we do indeed take part in cosmic affairs—another, that the world is a better place for all by reason of a Michelangelo, a Bach, a Shakespeare, and because of the philosophical and visual magnificences of the Orient—and, finally, that some substantial increment of the generosities of these contributors to the common good survives in our minds and hearts, enriching our lives.

All that we know, it has been said, is known only through what we are. The man, then, who increases the radius of our being by what he does—not automatically; we have to participate—unites the social with the individual. Have social movements no need of sensibility? We can, we think, here omit the adjective "artistic" without objection. "Artistic" may in the end turn out to be a pettifogging term. The archaic Greeks had no such word, and the Balinese, whose common life, according to Covarrubias, was a majestic art form, disdained to use it.

Well, we are dealing vaguely with the question before us, but the issue is not really joined. We could go on—talk about dedicated teachers who give themselves to the growth into richer lives of small children, and who are never heard of, who do not write books. We could call to mind "Nate Shaw," the black man whose life is mirrored—with impressive faithfulness, it seems—in Theodore Rosengarten's *All God's Dangers*, and ask if there is anyone with the hardihood to declare that Nate Shaw did not leave the world a better place, when he died, for his having lived in

it. How, indeed, do you measure these things? Will you use the rule-of-thumb of discarded ideologies that we now know, mainly, by the blood they spilled, the tyrannies they justified, the countless courageous but unnamed victims they liquidated, the slogans they turned into justification for genocidal laws or wars? Choose your own villains; the options are amply diverse. Or will you accept the high but undeveloped rhetoric of Dixon and other exemplars of the poetic art, practitioners of the Humanities?

We need new myths, Mr. Wagar says. What will the myths tell us? Or rather, what do we want to know?

Do we want to know whether, if we get a little farm somewhere, and become properly "organic" and learn to do everything right, that this will be both personal and social fulfillment? Where are such investments in conscientious individual enterprise banked to produce income for the common good? What are the continuities of human decency? Can we have a myth that speaks to this? Myth, metaphysics, or ethics grounded in some new, Maslovian sort of science—we do need working hypotheses, if not vital faiths, that at least comprehend and acknowledge such questions, even if they do not afford answers.

So let us go out. on some slender limb of speculative inquiry. We can best begin by asking a few questions. The attainments of ancient high civilizations which our archaeologists are beginning to understand and admire more and more—of the Egyptians, for example; of old philosophers and teachers of India; of the sages as well as the craftsmen of pre-Columbian America—do these excellences, insights and vision, heroic commitment and epic nobility survive only in our antiquarian reconstructions of what they did? Was Bertrand Russell, in the last analysis, right—and does the disintegrating sway of time reduce all that splendor to meaningless dust?

Well, what else? The answer should be given with care, since what we say of those old peoples will have to apply in principle to *us*. Is the conservation of the good only in history, or is it, perchance, in souls? Do souls return, or must they park for ages in some celestial limbo until they wither away from cosmic boredom?

Where are the true gains of existence consolidated—in the products we keep on producing or in the modes by which we live and work, feel, think, and dream? What is the good of human beings, of which we are now and then supremely confident, and then by turns so skeptical that we gloat at those Aztec knives and learn mad disciplines for sharpening them?

In what perspective of historiographic theory do we consider whether or not there has been "human progress"? What are the symptoms of progress? In which human beings are they best reflected? Maslow thought we should choose the gold medalists, the Olympic prize-winners of mankind, instead of reading off statistical averages, if we want to find out about human development and the prospects for both individual and social good. Look at the best men, he said, not a sampling of the masses, when setting goals for education.

The managerial benefactors are likely to object. The greatest good for the greatest number, they will say, and reach confidently for the cards to make a new deal. But what *is* the greatest good for the greatest number? Do they know? Does anyone?

An argument of this sort tends to degenerate into the same sort of confrontation we set out with: Enough food, enough clothing, enough shelter must be obtained first, we are told; and, put this way, so abruptly in the verifying presence of a world filled with hungering people, the claim may seem hard to dispute.

Well, could you have a more *American* philosophy? We started out getting "enough" of all those things—read Arthur Schlesinger's

revealing essay, "What Then Is The American, This New Man?"—and then, somewhere along the line, we found it natural to expand the definition of "enough" until it became ridiculous—or rather, obscenely *too much.* The bread philosophy dissolves into tricky ways of increasing one's appetite as soon as you get enough bread.

So, unless you ignore history you cannot say simply that the greatest good for the greatest number is to get people fed, clothed, and housed. The stockyard level of thinking is not for humans. Nor can we afford to learn this lesson all over again from "experience." The kind of ignorance we practice has grown too resourceful, too powerful.

There are some other considerations. Suppose we say that, conceivably, there is a way of living in which individual and social fulfillment are naturally balanced and joined. But then we come up against the difficulty of writing the program. At what level of generality do you describe the norm of human goodness—or "duty," as people used to say a long time ago? Would Edward Bellamy, if he came back among us, dare to attempt such a task? Or would he, in the light of a hundred years of variously mixed personal and social endeavors, decide to compose an allegory or two, hoping that this might help people to find their own way?

There are all those differences among human beings—moral differences such as Lawrence Kohlberg describes—and less classifiable idiosyncratic tendencies which cause people to become hairdressers, policemen, bricklayers, bookkeepers, radio announcers, movie actors, ceramic artists, salesmen, kindergartners, college presidents, bankers, guitarists and folk-singers, flute players and ballet dancers . . . and so on. There are other modes of classification, probably better ones—the four castes, the three estates—which make either launching platforms or prisons, anchors or niches, depending on how you think of them.

Nor can we leave out of consideration those rare individuals who raise the meaning of being human to the nth power by resisting all classification. A human being, we might say, echoing Pico della Mirandola, is a being who has the power to recreate himself—so you *mustn't* classify him, try to take over his role. This would be prejudicial to his freedom to alter his own destiny.

But if you don't classify him, it will be said, the diversities of human life will soon turn into an indiscriminate welter of conflicting tendencies—an incomprehensible mess. If you want to understand social life you have to make a vectorial analysis in order to tell what is happening, and this requires the classification of the causal agents, who are men.

So the sociologists insist that you have to classify people according to the way they behave. But then, after twenty years, it is hard to tell whether they are talking about people or termites. Finally along comes an angry man who says that the masses ought to be the *subjects* of history, not its objects, and he, with some justification, charges that the sociologists, who started out as conscientious scholars, have become tools of the power structure—their "objectivity" having made them morally passive and accepting of the status quo. They regard human behavior in very much the same way as the physicist regards what his theory and his instruments tell him about atoms—or, more lately, protons, electrons, positrons, and quarks (our account of these items of physical "reality" may not be up-to-date).

The stratified social injustice the angry man tells about is there, all right. But can he remove it? Does he understand the nature of evil? Evil, he will say, is pain and injustice. But what is the good, and what is justice? Can he explain this? Pain and injustice are privations of the good and can hardly be defined without knowledge of the good. So back to food, clothing and shelter. We can't do without them, so they can stand for the good.

We have come full circle—as often happens in matters so obscure—returning to a place before the clarification provided by Warren Wagar, who said that "what humanity needs now is better myths." What, then, are myths? The vital content of myths is always transcendent meaning—the meaning behind the external meaning, by which we are so repeatedly betrayed.

We accept, then, that the myths we need will go beyond the testimony of the senses—reach out for a meaning that we feel, but find it difficult to express and difficult to confirm. Mr. Wagar implies that anything less than a solution—even a tentative, working solution—of this sort will be unworthy of our humanity. He is almost certainly right.

Meanwhile, one thing seems sure. No matter what myth we devise, accept, or renew, not all men will embrace it. It needs, then, to be a credo that is serviceable to minorities or even to single individuals, and at the same time spreads benefits to others, whether they recognize it or not. It must work for both the individual and society. At all degrees of development and acceptance. On what grounds do we say this? On Emersonian grounds:

> Every revolution was first a thought in one man's mind and when the same thought occurs to another man, it is the key to that era. Every reform was once a private opinion, and when it shall be a private opinion again, it will solve the problem of the age.

REVIEW
DIRECTIONS OF BECOMING

A THOUGHTFUL reviewer in the London *Times Literary Supplement* remarked nearly ten years ago that Albert Camus, while an avowed resister of all "absolutes," listened intently and with sympathy to serious persons whose views derived from belief in absolutes—namely, members of religious orders. He had, it seemed, something in common with these people, although not by any means their beliefs. Camus' absolute, if we dare to suggest it, was his own humanness, his spontaneous generosity of spirit. He couldn't make much human sense out of the world, but decided to die trying, and eventually, perhaps, he did.

Now we have for review a remarkable—if brief—work by a Dominican nun, Sister Annette Buttimer, who teaches Geography at Clark University (Worcester, Mass.). It is Resource Paper No. 24 of the Association of American Geographers (1710 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20009), titled *Values in Geography* ($1.00). By declared intent, this paper represents the quest of scholarly integrity for avenues to moral certainty—or for what certainty may be possible as a basis for action (action, for scholars, is the expression of judgments about improvement of the human condition). The impartial, self-searching spirit of Sister Annette's inquiry insistently reminded us of the similar quality in Camus. In its development, the paper is sophisticated and broadly learned. For a conclusion, the publishers have added the comment of four other eminent geographers. Taken together, the work of these persons is likely to amaze the lay reader with its comprehensive inclusion of practically all the central issues of human life. Who, remembering school courses in geography, would have expected so wide and deep an approach to knowledge?

But this is not really the point of our notice of Sister Annette's work, which is a fine example of the sensitive self-consciousness and questioning of an increasing number of those in the learned professions—persons who have lately discovered the inner connection of all that they do with age-old philosophical issues, and who are resolutely becoming generalists as a result. Who, then, is Sister Annette Buttimer? She identifies herself as "a native Irish girl, sent to this country to be a Dominican sister, who has become involved in social contexts as varied as Cork, Leuven, Glasgow, Seattle, Paris, Lund, and Worcester." Edward Gibson, a geographer of Simon Fraser University, B.C., describes her qualifications for the study of values in geography:

> In less than a decade her studies of the French School of Human Geography have established her as one of the leading humanistic geographers in Anglo-Saxon literature and her experience, not only in Britain but on the West and East Coasts of the United States of America, has extended her appreciation of human predicaments and the intellectual frameworks guiding local cultures. Indeed, the transcendental intellection which enables her to describe our condition with such lucidity many readers may find oppressive since it threatens their image of safe objectivity.

Which, of course, is exactly what the social sciences are sorely in need of.

We shall not attempt to review here the musings and subtleties of this writer, nor report her conclusions, which are not, after all, conclusions so much as the adoption of a spirit, the exposure of a mood. Yet there are paragraphs which quickly illustrate what the reader may expect from these thirty-six or forty rather large pages of text. The following comes almost at the start:

> Once I gave a lecture on population problems to a group in Seattle, proudly demonstrating the geographer's way of handling data at an aggregate level, of relating demographic processes to space and natural resources, and then proceeded to make recommendations about how such processes could be managed and controlled in the interests of humanity. After the lecture, someone asked me about the rights of individuals and the sacredness of the human person. Taken aback, I was not sure whether this

question revealed extreme naivete or profound wisdom. Later I began to see the incongruity. While the metaphorical language of systems and processes made some sense in the analysis of data, it became ridiculous when I used it to suggest "solutions" for the problem. For all their æsthetic splendor, my models were inadequate to deal with the pathos and drama of the human experience. Another event provoked a similar kind of question about my geography. During a seminar on the planning of health and welfare facilities in Britain, when I was trying to elucidate arguments for and against the centralization of facilities, a student interrupted and asked "but who pays you?" I began to realize how much my models were better suited to serve the interests of the supplier of services, rather than of those who were to use them.

What happens to the professional outlook of one in whom such realizations dawn?

I want my native world to be the *subject* of its actions, author of its own biography, formulator and agent of its own development plant, free to choose its destiny within emerging Europe. Each time I return home, I experience again the conflict of two world views on regional development. The Cartesian social-scientist-cum-social-engineer perspective with its built-in values of efficiency, rationalization of agrarian structures, streamlined transportation grids, and hierarchically ordered service networks, juxtaposes itself against my nature world view with its own rationality, its own "ethnoscience" of the situation, construing the future (or neglecting to think about it) in its own terms. I live the drama and trauma of Ireland today: economic growth, rationalization, techno-structures, and syndicates are probably inevitable. The critical question is how are these to be guided, by whom, and for whose benefit? The emergence of this kind of consciousness during the past decade, and the remarkable progress of cooperatives in rural Ireland appear to me as valuable as do Paulo Freire's *conscientizacao* projects in Brazil and elsewhere. I see value, not so much in the content or character of their strategic goals sought or achieved, or in a particular political philosophy, but in the process of becoming which they allow to their subjects. Within the framework of this perspective, the conflicts between culture-bound, role- or context-defined "values" were not resolved, but could be placed in a large universe of discourse. Again, experiences suggested this conclusion, for it was in attempting to live them that I learned not so much what to be or do, but in what direction to become.

This is enough to illustrate the sort of transformation in the practice of science that A. H. Maslow predicted and worked for in *The Psychology of Science*. Maslow also spoke of the Taoistic approach and its quiet productiveness for people who seek understanding. So, to increase the interest in Sister Annette's inquiry, we end with something that social scientists might have said about it, in quite another mood, a few years ago, had they then encountered her work:

Tao in itself is vague, impalpable—how impalpable, how vague!

But Lao tse goes on:

Yet within it there is Form. How vague, how impalpable! Yet within it there is substance. How profound, how obscure! Yet within it there is a vital principle. This principle is the quintessence of Reality, and out of it comes Truth.

Learning in what direction "to become" is indeed the vital principle that is able to unite subject and object, and without the abdication of self-consciousness—which is, after all, only another name, perhaps a better one, for science.

COMMENTARY
CHANGE WITHOUT CHANGE

MURRAY BOOKCHIN, in *Liberation* for last February, shows the dangers in transferring large-scale manipulative thinking to the movement for ecological reform. Watchful of the inroads of a mistaken "ecotechnology," he fears that the broadly philosophical approach of ecology, which seeks the harmonization of humanity with nature, will be converted into "mere environmental engineering, making the organic approach dissolve into systems analysis." In one place he describes discernible trends in this direction:

> The landscape of alternative technology is already marred by this regressive drift, especially by mega-projects to "harness" the sun and winds. By far the lion's share of federal funds for solar energy research is being funneled into projects that would occupy vast areas of desert land. These projects are a mockery of "alternate technology." By virtue of their scale, they are classically traditional in terms of their gigantism and in the extent to which they would exacerbate an already diseased, bureaucratically centralized national division of labor—one which renders the American continent dependent upon and vulnerable to a few specialized areas of production. The oceans too have become industrial real estate, not merely as a result of proposals for floating nuclear reactors but also long strings of massive wind generators. And as if these mega-projects were not enough, Glaser's suggestions for mile-square space platforms to capture solar energy beyond the atmosphere and beam microwaves to the earthbound collectors would redecorate the sky in science-fiction industrial installations. Doubtless, many of these mega-project designers are well-intentioned and high-minded in their goals. But in terms of size, scale and ecological insight, their thinking is hardly different from that of James Watt. Their perspectives are the product of the traditional industrial revolution rather than a new ecological revolution, however sophisticated their designs may be.

Bookchin looks to "the mature innocence of a future society, ripened by the painful wisdom of history." He concludes:

> What should count when confronted by a technical work is that we are not beguiled from these immense themes—this sweeping drama in which we split from blind nature only to return again on a more advanced level as nature rendered self-conscious in the form of creative, intelligent, and spiritually renewed beings. To deal with alternative energy sources in a language that is alien to social ecology, to reify the literature on the subject as a compendium of gadgets—a mere encyclopedia of gimmicks—would be worse than an error. It would be a form of betrayal—not so much to those who have worked in this field as to oneself.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
. . . ANON SAVES, ANON DAMNS

IT is true enough that language is but one form of communication—that it is filled with ambiguities and resources for self-deception—yet language is also a common denominator of all that human beings do, and when we wish to alert one another to the partisanships of habitual speech, the Procrustean proclivities of inherited grammar, and the glamorous suasions of rhetoric, we use language to explain what we have to say.

Language does far more than yoeman service in all departments of learning. Suppose one were to pursue a study of ancient Greece: Where would one start? Tastes differ, but, early or late, W. Macneile Dixon's *Hellas Revisited* should be on the reading list. This twentieth-century scholar knew classical literature—especially that portion of it put into fine English—and in his uses of learning whole continents of perception and understanding are made to come alive for the reader. Hardly anyone quotes more appositely—and delightingly—than Dixon. Well, Dixon went to Greece armed with the usufruct of Greek inspiration and accomplishment, then wrote a book about his travels. Its readers will probably never forget the substance and texture of Athenian democracy—and they will know where to go to refresh their memory on, say, the scope and limitations of Greek music.

What can one say, briefly, about the ancient Greeks? There are both contracting and expanding (brief) utterances. Happening upon a paperback (Holt, Rinehart & Winston) of tales and poems by Melville—whose discourses on the whiteness of the whale can be intimidating—we found some repeatable lines. This poem is called "The Attic Landscape":

> Tourist, spare the avid glance
> That greedy roves the sight to see:
> Little here of "Old Romance,"
> Or Picturesque of Tivoli.
>
> No flushful tint the sense to warm—
> Pure outline pale, a linear charm.
> The clear-cut hills carved temples face,
> Respond, and share their sculptural grace.
>
> 'Tis Art and Nature lodged together,
> Sister by sister, cheek to cheek;
> Such art, such Nature, and such weather
> The All-in-AII seems here a Greek.

Then four lines on Greek Architecture:

> Not magnitude, not lavishness,
> But Form—the Site
> Not innovating wilfulness,
> But reverence for the Archetype.

Plato, one supposes, would have found Melville an acceptable poet to live and write unmonitored in the Republic. There is vast suggestion in these lines, yet questioning, too. To say that the "All-in-All seems a Greek" is no blasphemy, because of the seems. It notes the splendor of a temporal achievement by a race of men, using exaggeration, yet with a feeling of proportion, as a tool of art.

Because, perhaps, of our quotation from Allen Wheelis' *The Moralist* in a recent lead, Harper has supplied us with two more of this San Francisco psychoanalyst's books (in handy paperback—*The End of the Modern Age* and *The IlIusionless Man*). Dr. Wheelis seems to have rare understanding of what his profession calls the "assumptive world" of our time, and of its consequences in how people think about the world and themselves in their daily lives. He seems to know that when you fold back, one by one, the tissues of assumptions you have made, recognizing the element of illusion in each, you reach at last—*what?* A dreadful abyss of emptiness or the stuff of Reality? Could we actually bear an encounter with reality? How great is our need for the stuff of illusions?

Raising such questions turns Dr. Wheelis into a pragmatic sort of Buddhist—that is, the Buddha was one who saw that the only practical response to the threat of mind turned against itself lay in the compassion of human for human. Only the spontaneous generosities encouraged and practiced by those who are knowingly on life's

perhaps endless pilgrimage—or Odyssey—could return meaning to its course of alternating hope and despair. But since such generalizations, while suggestive and necessary, remain shallow when declared from the sidelines, Dr. Wheelis embodies this outlook in a modern allegory, a pleasantly unpreaching tale. *The IlIusionless Man* begins with the childhood and growth to cynical adulthood of a model man of analytical unblief, describes his meeting and inevitable romance with a "visionary maid"—his exact psycho-emotional opposite—and ends with light-hearted fictional synthesis that suits the level of the problem as he has set it. What makes Dr. Wheelis' work valuable is that he doesn't reach for conclusions as conclusions, but as *tools.* He has stopping places—we all need stopping places—but they are always also starting-places. Reading Wheelis, you wonder about the responsible handling of illusion—those which are identifiable as illusions and those which are not. Is there a sense in which illusions should be regarded as the building blocks of both teaching and growth? Which illusions should have tender regard, as utilities of art and learning, and which deserve uncompromising censorship? Ibsen wrote *The Wild Duck* to explore this question.

But are there times when you put aside even these very important questions and cry out in the best language you can find that the hour has come to *see* what is true and right, and to rally to the colors? Macneile Dixon, an Englishman perfectly at home in these fields of inquiry, thought in 1940 that such a time had come. He wrote in much the same mood as Archibald MacLeish wrote ("The Irresponsibles," *Nation,* May 18, 1940) in the United States, to arouse his countrymen from their moral indifference to a struggle to save the world. There is, it seems, hardly any truth declared with ardor as spur to vigorous application which does not appear bittersweet in retrospect. Dixon addressed all those of his time who qualified as "illusionless men," diagnosing their passivity with the tools of the cultural historian. This was their intellectual past:

> A deadly dialectic loosened and undermined human confidence in all the codes and conventions, the rules of life implicit in the existing constitution of society. Every argument, it was presently discovered, met its match in a contrary argument of equal force, until in the mellay nothing appeared capable of either proof or disproof. How in such a wild and whirling world could human relations in any solid or ordered form be preserved or sustained? To know what to do you must first know what to think, and what was one to think? Do I exaggerate? Tell me, then, of any firm ground in science, in politics, in economics, in religion, in morals upon which I can stand in security, or lay the first stone for an enduring home of thought. Show me a conclusion in physics, in biology, a theological tenet, an ethical principle, a law of life that has not been called into question, upon which doubt has not been cast. Have I, perhaps, in the surest of the sure sciences, in mathematics a secure retreat? "Mathematics," announces Mr. Bertrand Russell, in a famous epigram, "Mathematics may be defined as the subject in which we never know what we are talking about, nor whether what we are saying is true." . . . Can I confidently suppose that every event must have a cause? I should be sadly out of date were I to make any such antiquated assumption. Have I never heard of Hume's criticism of causality, or Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle? Was it religion in which we put our trust? Worse and worse. Surely there is no one in these enlightened times so ignorant as to be unaware that religion in any form whatever has, by the leaders of modern opinion, been finally set aside as nothing more than "the whimsies of monkeys in human shape"?

What does Dixon set against these depressing conclusions, with which, by now, virtually everyone is acquainted? He says:

> I suggest to you that the most noble and potent of human instruments, the intellect, has one, but in respect of the concerns of society, a fatal weakness. It destroys faster than it can build. Moreover it does not, and in its very nature is unable to provide the cement that holds communities together. . . . "Science without conscience," said Rabelais, "is the ruin of the soul." To that pregnant utterance we may add a saying by an acute thinker a generation ago, "the fatal flaw in this emotionless culture is that it contains no sort of human amalgam strong enough to hold society together."

FRONTIERS

California and Points South

CONCEIVABLY, a series of jolts compelling step-by-step adjustment to another way of life will prove the only means of basic change for the people of Southern California—who are probably not very different from people in other parts of the world. An article by William Greenburg in the *Sierra Club Bulletin* for February shows that the smog which has harassed dwellers in the Los Angeles Basin (extending from the coast to some eighty miles inland) since the second world war continues to increase. This article also shows that Southern Californians are either unwilling, unprepared, or unable to do much about reducing their air pollution, made worse than in other urban areas by a meteorological phenomenon, called an inverted temperature bowl, which causes the cloud of smog to resist being blown away.

"Today," says Mr. Greenburg, "smog is spilling beyond the brim of the Basin, over the mountain walls into the desert beyond." In 1974 it reached as far as Indio, a desert community about 150 miles from Los Angeles, and 75 miles beyond the eastern fringes of the Basin. Smog is also besetting Victorville, no longer impeded by the 9,000-foot mountain range which separates this city from the Los Angeles area. Riverside, on the eastern edge of the Basin, is also suffering, and San Bernardino has reported degrees of pollution serious enough to make people sick—worse than in Pasadena, called "the heart of the Los Angeles Basin smog cauldron."

So the smog is getting worse and worse, and scientists who report on its spread are sometimes threatened with law suits for daring to suggest that resort communities are no longer healthful, sunlit areas attractive to tourists.

What can be done about it? The federal Environmental Protective Agency, accused by local anti-smog officials of moving in like "gang-busters," declares that only gasoline rationing to cut down traffic will have a noticeable effect on Los Angeles smog. The EPA is probably right, but when you think of how far most or many people in the Los Angeles Basin travel every day, just to get to work—and the generally spread-out character of practically all the places people need or want to go—it becomes understandable that getting rid of smog is going to be a long-term project. Any such achievement is likely to be the result of a succession of impacts of practical necessity—one after another—rather than of the edicts, however well-founded, of a federal agency. But happier causes may also lubricate the change. Along with the rising price of fuel there is decentralization of industry and increasing popularity of locally produced food (cutting down on truck transport), together with broadly improving tastes as a result of more ecological awareness, and finally the new spirit of a coming generation that may be quite ready to *start out* in life without a car or a motorcycle. These are some of the factors that may eventually make smog, or much of it, a thing of the past.

But maybe the smog won't all go away—ever. MANAS researched the subject back in 1949, and published an article, "The Ominous Cloud," in the Jan. 9, 1950, issue; and we haven't printed much about it since. Hardly anything has changed except the amount of smog, although there is better understanding of its cause—which includes practically all of us who live in the region. At that time we learned that the seafaring discoverers of San Pedro Harbor, long ago, called the Los Angeles Basin the Valley of the Smokes—because it was a dry, dusty place with a lot of organic materials floating around in the air. Actually, it is something of a puzzle why so many people decided to settle in so physically inhospitable a desert area. But they did, and now they are here, millions of them, needing billions of gallons of water from other parts of the state and neighboring states in order to stay alive.

Some day, when we have a Paideia (cultural community) worth talking about, we'll think more carefully about the siting of cities. Some day, it

may become common practice to listen to the advice of men like John Wesley Powell, who more than a hundred years ago wrote a still classic analysis of the best land and water use for arid regions in the United States—which, of course, was virtually ignored. (See Stewart Udall's summary of Powell's report of 1878 in *The Quiet Crisis.*)

The provocative value of good criticism is well illustrated by Alex Comfort's review of Ivan Illich's *Medical Nemesis* in the *Manchester Guardian* for last Dec. 21. Dr. Comfort has no quarrel with Illich's basic contentions—he is grateful for them—but he also says that today's concerned physician is "aware like Illich of over-medication, over-professionalization, the severance of medicine from the community, the decline of clinical and humanistic 'wholeness'." Dr. Illich, he maintains, should seek a more precise target for his criticism. "Illich may have taught school but he hasn't practiced medicine. . . . What Illich lacks is the sharpness which comes from responsibility." Well, yes. While you read Illich, you think of how difficult he makes it for the good doctors Dr. Comfort speaks of. Illich, of course, says he doesn't intend to make medical men whipping boys, that he is examining the technocratic state of mind as the shaping force in modern society. He also makes the positive recommendation of more paramedical services, remarking somewhere that registered nurses could take care of about 85 per cent of the ills of rural Mexico.

So, after you have read Illich, it might be a good idea—applying Dr. Comfort's comment—to read about the kind of responsibility that is needed for true perspective; and, made to order for this is Lini M. De Vries' *Please, God, Take Care of the Mule,* a small but exciting paperback published (in English) in Mexico—by Minutiae Mexicana, S.A. de C.V., Insurgentes Centro 114-910, Mexico, D.F.—at $2.00 U.S. currency.

Mrs. De Vries is American born, of Dutch parents. She worked her way through school, and after various interruptions—such as a stint of nursing wounded Loyalist troops in Spain in 1937—obtained a degree in public health from Columbia Teachers College in 1948. Because of her background in the Spanish struggle against Franco, jobs were difficult for her to find in New York (it was the McCarthy era), so she emigrated to Mexico in 1949, bringing with her a three-year-old daughter, and made a place for herself there by devoting her talents and knowledge to the welfare of the Mexican people. For five years she taught hygiene and health care to both children and grade-school teachers in the mountains of Oaxaca. Her book's title is based on perilous experiences riding steep trails to outlying villages, her life often being wholly dependent on a sure-footed mule. Later she taught at the University of Veracruz, and then she established the Institute of Mexican Studies in the University of Morelos.

Her book is about her experiences in Oaxaca. One of the first lessons she gave in her new, stumbling Spanish was to children, teachers, and all the villagers who came to see what the "foreigner" was like—packing in six deep to the wall. This mountain village had just installed piped water to community taps, so a lesson in physiology began with the circulatory system:

> "Do you have pipes in your body like the water pipes the village now has?" They looked at me as if I were mad. As they shook their heads, I continued: "But you do have a piping system, and a pump that pumps a river carrying many things to all parts of your body. . . . place your three middle fingers, not too hard, on your wrist just below your thumb. Press gently. What do you feel? . . ."