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VISION AND NECESSITY

BACK in the early months of 1960 when Paul Goodman was contributing to *Commentary* the articles that were later to become the backbone of *Growing Up Absurd*, Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary*, wrote in the April number of that year:

> I believe that issues exist. It is an issue that our society still lives by success, conceived in terms of status or money, and that the pursuit of success encourages the development of the worst human qualities and strangles the best. It is an issue that the curiosity of our children wastes away daily in the schools. It is an issue that work provides no satisfaction for the great majority of Americans, whether they sit at machines or behind desks. It is an issue that the air is filled with lies, that "public speech" has lost all connection with reality. It is an issue that everything we get *costs* too much—too much money, too much energy, too much spirit. These are not issues that will be raised in any Presidential election but then so much the worse for Presidential elections. Intellectuals do raise them from time to time, but in a mechanical way, as though they had trouble remembering what once burned fiercely in their souls—a vision of what a decent human life on this earth might look like—and could only remember their bitterness at the refusal of others to share in the vision. . . . Do intellectuals wish to change the world? Then let them work on the consciousness of the age and forget about parties and movements. Let them attend to their dreams of the good life and the good society, while others fret about pushing bills through Congress or winning votes and elections.

This is an order of conviction which is immediately acceptable at one level of understanding, yet fades and is forgotten when we turn to "practical affairs." How, after all, does one work on "the consciousness of the age"? How are changes in goals and objectives induced in human beings?

The two ways we have of thinking about "a decent human life on this earth" are really poles apart, since the inner sense of enjoying meaning and having human fulfillment is not the direct result of effort toward some concrete achievement. It comes rather from a feeling nourished by undefinable existential currents. A change in consciousness is more a change in stance, in elevation and perspective, than in activity, although a change in activity often follows naturally from a change in stance. The effects of a change in consciousness are hardly predictable. The man who climbs to a high peak will see the entire landscape, quite different in shape from what was visible at some lower altitude. All proportions and relationships alter. Things themselves do not change, but the new perception changes the observer's relation to them, and therefore the value he puts upon them.

Explaining this to others who still look at the world in the old way may seem practically impossible. Sometimes we can be impressed by the penetration of those who see the world from another elevation, yet remain unable to have the same perception. Freud once warned his followers that "one poet's or philosopher's insight was worth more than a carload of sociologists and their camp-followers," but neither he nor anyone else has explained how such insights can be translated into common understanding.

Yet this was what Norman Podhoretz was in effect demanding. Not much else matters, he said, if there is no fundamental change in the way people view themselves and their life-goals and undertakings.

In what mysterious motivation do such changes originate? Why will one man, in the midst of a struggle, suddenly pause, shrug his shoulders, say "It doesn't matter," and withdraw? And why will another, drifting through the motions of a mediocre career, one day seize the reins of decision and set out in an entirely different

direction? We know little about such behavior, save that it happens, and that sometimes it has far-reaching results. Does the individual feel some sweeping reason to redefine "success," removing it from the category of things externally measured to make it into an inward or private vision?

Why should the ordinary "pursuit of success" encourage the worst and strangle the best in human beings? Not merely because "success" as we commonly think of it involves material rewards. It happens because we have a rigid standard for identifying successful achievement. Good human lives are filled with diversity. The decisions which shape them cannot be anticipated, except, perhaps, in their moral tone. A uniform definition of success rules out the differences among human beings. The abolition of difference puts an end to individuality, or, more simply, to freedom. The matter has complexity since people sometimes assert that freedom means the right to be the same as everyone else, to have what others have and do what they do.

Actually, then, the "advertised" satisfactions of the good life are its very opposite in their tendency—are, in fact, part of another world where the true meaning of being human has no recognition. In a just published study, *From Poverty to Dignity* (Anchor Press/Doubleday, $8.95), Charles Hampden-Turner, a radical sociologist, shows that people who are exposed to the influence of media communications and advertising are absorbing dehumanizing images of themselves. They are called, not to self-energization, but to passivity, self-indulgence, and submission. As Hampden-Turner says:

> For one thing, the mass media of the dominant society teach "consumer traineeship," not hard work or struggle. There issue from TV sets and magazines invitations to indulge, spend, lick, snuggle bask, masticate and devour. Whatever asceticism and self-denial were needed to build giant organizations in the first place are now detriments in training consumers to covet products in an affluent society.

People with money enough to be responsive consumers may turn the consumer image of themselves into a constellation of reflexes which, for lack of an alternative, will control much of their lives. For people without money the consumer image may mean unslaked appetites:

> To the poor such titillations are poison. They cannot afford the scale of consumption presented, and still less can they afford the suckling psychology of privatized enjoyments. Before them is a Barmecide feast that triggers all the "relaxation responses" associated with ingestion, *and* the "frustration responses" associated with gagging and an unfilled gullet. No wonder there is rage and violence.

This writer also shows that the system of uniform goals or success symbols creates not only uniform consumers, but also uniform products:

> The amount of money spent on advertising tends to be inversely proportionate to any real difference between rival products. Advertising's function is to differentiate artificially what is basically homogenous, like laxatives, cigarettes, soft drinks, aspirin, toilet paper and so on. To insist shrilly upon the distinction of the undistinguishable and undistinguished is its central technique. Caught between a desperate fear of losing customers through genuine innovation and losing customers through the intrinsic dullness of the product, advertising's "tigerish" solution is an ersatz novelty perched precariously upon a limp conformity. . . .
>
> Whatever meaning was once present in marketing tends now to diminish with increasing affluence, for that meaning derived from physical necessity. The consumer balanced the purchase of one good against that of another, his usually rational choice spurred by unsatiated physical wants for health and survival. Today the principle of declining marginal utility makes every "new" product incrementally more boring than the last one, and the harsh discipline of survival is replaced by foolish whimsy of "dreamy softness, Lux in four colors to mix, match and have fun with." John Kenneth Galbraith has even prophesied a day when "the voice of each individual seller may be lost in the collective roar of the all together. . . . Silence interrupted perhaps by brief, demoniacal outbursts of salesmanship will ensue."

Well, that day has arrived, since "whimsy" now seems to be about all that is offered in many appeals to the consumer. The product is taken for granted.

What has this to do with developing a way of life which does not encourage the worst and strangle the best? How can you make anything good out of the patterns of consumption? Wouldn't it be better to *ignore* these psychological mechanisms of the acquisitive society?

The trouble is that people will still go to the store—they have to. They are going to purchase food, shelter, clothing, and transportation. Hampden-Turner believes that if they could learn to supply these things to one another on a sensible basis—he calls it "social marketing"—then a better understanding of human fulfillment and good might develop.

There is unavoidable relationship between the economic affairs of people and the spirit which pervades their lives. Who, then, should define that relationship: the commercial suppliers or the people themselves? Hampden-Turner reasons that if distributing goods and services were managed by people who *understand* what a decent human life on earth is like, then "social marketing" would become a transforming influence. He calls attention to the Community Development Corporations around the country—ten in California, for example, and five in Alabama—which make things for the market on a co-op basis, and appeal to the public in a way that may "help end the pathological split between moral and economic forces."

From Poverty to Dignity is described as a strategy for poor Americans, but the psychology on which it is based is humanistic and universal. The good life it seeks for the poor is the outcome of self-recognition of one's individuality and competence, joined with synergistic relationships with others. This takes place in community, where a dialectical progression of self-confirmation and self-transcendence leads to richer complexity for the individual and increasing mutuality with others. A central point is that people must themselves join together to make a better life:

> Historically *no* poor migrant groups in any country, at any time, have climbed out of poverty on therapeutic ladders proffered by an elite. Urban ethnic groups in America have emerged from poverty, *as groups*, by creating and manning their own institutions. Without dominating certain institutions such as the needle trades (Jews) and laundries (Chinese), without a high, expanding demand for low-skilled labor which made unionization and collective bargaining possible, without ethnic grocers, suppliers and other small businessmen that made capital accumulation possible out of rising wages of ethnic workers, without bossism, the urban machines, and patronage jobs, millions of immigrants could not have made it.

The illustrations given here may be a bit bewildering, but the writer is describing a dialectical process, not a fixed moral level of operations. He supplies examples of self-energized social formations, not models for imitation. The idea is to develop and use institutions which are one's own, so that competence can grow, confidence can be confirmed, and diversity be experienced, in company with over-all vision. One of the meanings of transcendence, in social terms, was given by the Black leader, James Farmer, a few years ago when he said that Blacks need to strengthen the ghetto *and* get out of it. Reconstruction is not escape but a graduation exercise. Freedom comes, not from breaking bonds, but from making them into tools.

In this book we see the new tendency in sociology to regard observed human beings, not as "objects" to be defined but as selves to be understood and respected. "Equality and justice are not paradisiacal states from which Man is fallen, nor are they just norms which glue—but *essential aspects of the methodology of knowing.*" Hampden-Turner also says:

> Equality is a promise by men and women to all their fellows that the definition of excellence will never be closed. We should treat others as equals, especially *distant* others, because they may be discovered to have a value, undreamed of in our philosophies, which qualifies our existing values in a way that transforms our symbolic universe.

The research undertaken by Mr. Hampden-Turner is obscure for the reason that it is difficult to see how people change in their thinking and their ideas of what ought to be. A non-manipulative sociology will not attempt to "condition" people to behave according to patterns designed by experts, but will rather give attention to the creation of social matrices in which innovation, self-reliance, and resourcefulness are likely to occur. Such work is basically unpredictable, in the same sense that the fruit of educational effort is unpredictable. This author lays stress on the fact that no one labors for the good society without some risk-taking or self-exposure. The mechanists and manipulators cannot tolerate any plan except one which guarantees a sure thing. A humanistic sociology will have no part in this, if only for the reason that no one knows enough about human potentiality to make sure-thing decisions for other people. *From Poverty to Dignity* proposes a non-self-defeating way for men to think about themselves and one another. Its conclusions are readings taken off from different levels of social development. The author says, in effect, that tomorrow we will see better, know more, have greater understanding of ourselves and our fellows.

At the outset we quoted Norman Podhoretz on the profound contradictions in our lives. We feel the necessity for change, but the mechanisms of change remain unknown. Create a matrix, says Hampden-Turner—an institution hospitable to change—in which people can move around, execute their own plans and conceptions instead of following orders from above. Self-reliant habits enable us to see that often the bad things we experience are no more than misused tools. Again and again in *From Poverty to Dignity* we see how the tools people have misused can be turned to reconstructive purposes. The author ignores prejudicial labels. He says in his Preface:

> I regard myself as "radical" in my willingness to alter root conceptions and make hopefully novel syntheses, but not as the kind of radical who takes current left-wing rhetoric to its farthest logical extremity.
>
> My preferred definition of radicalism has caused great strain and misunderstandings. Many who supported me when I began this work later moved into vehement opposition with severe economic sanctions. Community Development Corporations which I describe and advocate in this book are just such a synthesis between business corporations (right) and community change agencies (left). Similarly, my strategy for "social marketing" is a synthesis between commercial advertising (right) and Movement politics (left). It has amazed me how much tension and ambivalence such "mongrel" conceptions produce as each polar camp seeks to purify itself. Even supporters of these conceptions are often found, on closer examination, to be secretly ashamed of that ingredient borrowed from the other camp.

It is natural enough, if you want to help change the world, to enter into its processes. If people are obviously doing things wrong, it is natural to want to show them what would be right. But finding out what is right, and also *works*, turns out to be a matter of endless experiment, of failures and frustrations, of disappointments, and a few modest successes. Various formulas are available. One may say: Well, since we can't tell what would be right, or just how to do it, we can at least stop doing things that are harmful. But stopping what is harmful proves difficult when it has strong momentum. One of our correspondents, Bosco Nedelcovic (6001 North 18th Street, Arlington, Va. 22205), has put together a paper arguing for another sort of voluntaristic institution as the means of taking the production of food, shelter, and clothing out of the existing economic system. The purpose would be to habituate people to get along on just what they need to live decently, and no more—and in this way gradually put an end to the exhaustion and pollution of the planet's resources.

Why do we need a special agency—a "modern tribal corporation"—to do this? Because, Mr. Nedelcovic says, the existing market economy is bound to insist on continual growth to preserve and increase the number of available jobs. Anything "that smacks of reducing the

overall output of goods and services or curtailing the consumer demand for them—however desirable it might be to preserve the environment or control inflationary pressures—immediately raises the specter of unemployment." If, he says, we put our subsistence necessities on another basis, and work part-time to pay for simple food, clothing, and shelter and transportation, then we can stop worrying about "survival," letting the market economy slowly shrink to a more natural scale of operations. The long-term goal:

> The objective pursued here is not charity, not temporary employment or makework in times of crisis, but a legitimate and ultimately self-sustaining alternative to the treadmill of the market system; one that, if developed to a sufficient scale and found desirable by a sufficient number of people, might eventually point toward a wholesale redirection of human endeavor—a gradual and humane cultural revolution, if you will, American style. . . .

How would all this work? Directions, Mr. Nedelcovic says, are found in Paul and Percival Goodman's *Communitas* (chapter 7) and in Lewis Mumford's *Technics and Civilization* (chapter 8), and he quotes at length from both these sources.

The point of telling about this here is that such thinking is aimed at the problem of motivation—the "redirection of human endeavor." This, it seems clear, is where our problem lies. The secret of how people let go of old ideas and embrace new ones will probably always remain mysterious. Freedom and causal explanation belong to different levels of awareness. But the making of fields and matrices in which change originates is an innate human capacity. And vision and necessity can at least meet and work together in such places.

REVIEW
ERNEST GRUENING

THE career of Ernest Gruening—doctor, journalist, federal official, governor, senator, energetic citizen and uncompromising human being—makes fine reading for Americans who are depressed and discouraged by the conduct of the affairs of the United States during recent years. Dr. Gruening, who died recently at eighty-seven years of age, tells the engrossing story of his life in *Many Battles* (Liveright, 1973, $12.95). The title is accurate, yet the book is not a grim recital. A rippling humor pervades this account of political struggles which range from efforts to put an end to America's gunboat diplomacy (of which Gruening learned when the U.S. Marines intervened in Haiti, taking control of the customs house and dictating the terms of a new constitution) to his early and continued opposition to the Vietnam war. The youth of today know Dr. Gruening mainly as the Alaska senator who, with Wayne Morse, voted against the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, but this book shows the consistent purpose which animated his public life for more than fifty years. And from his youthful days as a reporter and newspaper editor, he worked to support and strengthen decency and integrity in both industry and government.

In addition, *Many Battles* brings to the reader intimate and persuasive evidence of the devotion to public good of countless individuals in political life. In this respect the book recalls Gifford Pinchot's *Breaking New Ground.* The other side of the picture is not slighted, lying and corruption in politics made Gruening's career a series of encounters with exploiting manipulators, unreliable and self-seeking politicians, and domineering businessmen. But what the reader remembers are the numerous instances of public-spirited action and self-sacrificing conscientiousness which characterized so many of the men and women who worked with Gruening for the good of the people and the nation at large. This is a book which reveals what a man of principle can accomplish for his country in the relationships of national policy and public trust. It also shows that all genuine public welfare requires a foundation of moral responsibility in the people themselves, as well as faithfulness and honesty in elected and appointed officials.

Ernest Gruening was born in New York City in 1887. His father, who had emigrated from East Prussia in time to enlist on the side of the North in the Civil War, was a pioneer ophthalmologist. Ernest was expected to follow in his father's footsteps, but after graduating from Harvard Medical School he decided that journalism would suit him better. His first job was on Hearst's Boston *American,* where he met Ben Ames Williams, then a rewrite man, and Ring Lardner, who was writing sports. Before long he was doing feature stories for the Sunday edition, and running into social issues which attracted his attention. He campaigned for better wages for people who were underpaid, and for pensions for retired employees—rare in the days before World War I. A high point of his reporting experience was an interview with Helen Keller, who put her hand on his lips, understanding by touch all he said—even a sentence in German, to which she replied in the same language after only a moment's hesitation. He was now on the Boston *Herald,* which advanced him to editorial writer. In 1914 he became managing editor of the Boston *Traveler,* the *Herald's* afternoon edition. As an executive, he fought for fairness to the employees, which meant continued friction with the publishers. In one case he succeeded only by threatening to quit unless an aging correspondent was kept on the payroll until she recovered from an illness. The *Traveler's* desk men were given these instructions by Gruening:

> In editing stories which involve Negroes please handle as follows:
>
> Ask yourselves how the story would read if the word Jew, Irishman, or Swede was substituted for the word Negro.
>
> Refer to the color of the individual only when it is of particular and special interest and when the story

> is manifestly incomplete and inaccurate if the color of the person involved is concealed. This would apply to lynchings, interracial marriages, and when a colored person gains unusual and exceptional prominence, such as the ranking of a colored girl at the head of a class of white children.

Up to that time, no Boston paper had followed this practice. Gruening also brought critical honesty to drama reviews, eliminating "puffs" disregarding the quality of plays offered in Boston. He fought the management to justify honest and perceptive reviews, and won. Under his guidance the *Traveler* campaigned for vindication of Leo Frank, a young man falsely accused of rape and murder in Georgia, but while Frank's death sentence was commuted, he was murdered by an antisemitic mob which broke into the prison. While Gruening was managing editor, the *Traveler* grew in circulation, but his refusal to tone down or omit stories offensive to special interests finally lost him his job. Next he became editor of the Boston *Journal,* which Frank Munsey had nearly ruined and then sold to a group of young Harvard graduates with strong ideals but little money. On this paper Gruening continued his policy of editorial integrity, fighting Jim Crow practices, opposing wartime censorship of the press, war profiteering, and blind anti-Germanism, including "atrocity" stories which the paper denounced. The *Journal* also defended academic freedom, castigating Nicholas Murray Butler for expelling two Columbia professors who criticized conscription for a foreign war. The paper's circulation soared, but so did its deficit, and it eventually expired, making Stuart Chase write to Gruening that "liberty gets another wallop in these glorious days of democracy," adding: "I think you have driven a wedge into journalism that will widen and widen."

Frank Munsey hired Gruening to tell him what was wrong with the New York *Sun.* After three weeks of observation he said to Munsey, "If you could keep your hands off entirely, you'd have a fine shop," thus ending his days on the Sun. He was then invited by Garet Garrett to join the New York *Tribune* as managing editor. Gruening was now becoming known for both his skill and his independence. At the *Tribune* he also had trouble with the conservative prejudices of the publishers, and finally, after a totally invented libel against him was printed by Hearst's *Journal,* they asked him to leave. Going to court, he won the balance of his salary for the year's contract, and Robert Benchley quit the *Tribune* to protest the treatment of Gruening. Next he took over the business management of *La Prensa,* an ailing Spanish language weekly in New York, building it into a lively and successful paper—an association which brought him into contact with writers and thinkers of Latin America and Spain.

In 1921 Oswald Garrison Villard asked Gruening to become managing editor of the *Nation.* Here he worked with Lewis Gannett, Ludwig Lewisohn, and Carl and Mark Van Doren and their talented wives. The Haiti incident brought the beginning of a ten-year campaign by the *Nation* against the misuse of America's power to exploit small and helpless nations. In 1922 Gruening took his family—his wife and two sons—to Mexico to look into the reasons for the failure of the United States to recognize the regime of President Obregon, a responsible leader who was trying to put his country back on its feet after long years of revolutionary turmoil and devastation. Gruening reported the high-handed treatment of our neighbor to the Southwest in the *Nation* and *Collier's,* earning the deep gratitude of Mexican patriots and the special appreciation of Obregon, then returned to New York to write his first book, *Mexico and its Heritage,* a much admired history.

His next adventure was to start a newspaper in Portland, Maine, which led to head-on collision with the corrupting Insull interests in that state, and to an advertisers' boycott of the *Portland Evening News,* Gruening's paper. The boycott ended with the collapse of the Insull empire, but Gruening went back to the *Nation* to join the group of editors who had taken it over from

Villard—Freda Kirchwey, Joseph Wood Krutch, and Henry Hazlitt. Without Gruening, the *Portland Evening News* lost its spunk and folded four years later.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt was now President and Gruening sought him out to talk about Latin-American policy. Roosevelt sent him to Cordell Hull, Secretary of State, who seemed friendly to Gruening's objection to American intervention in Latin-American affairs. Roosevelt appointed him advisor to the U.S. delegation to an Inter-American conference in Montevideo that Hull was to attend. There were various problems, and some that Gruening could hardly anticipate:

> When I walked into the Secretary's study where a delegation conference was scheduled, the gloom was unmistakable.
>
> "What's wrong?" I asked.
>
> "Haven't you heard?" I hadn't.
>
> "Saavedra Lamas has introduced a resolution providing for an observer from the mother-country, Spain."
>
> "What's so bad about that?" I asked.
>
> "Can't you see, Gruening," said Clark. "It will be an observer at this Conference. At the next it will be a delegate from Spain. It will then no longer be an Inter-American Conference. It will be an Inter-Hispanic Conference. The Spanish-speaking countries outnumber us eighteen to three if you count Brazil and Haiti on our side. They'll run it right through. We haven't a chance to stop it."
>
> It struck me as a wholly needless alarm. "There's nothing to that," I said airily.
>
> "What do you suggest?" asked Clark.
>
> "That's easy. We should support the resolution in principle. We should say that it will enrich our discussions. We should get the Brazilians to request an observer from their mother-country, Portugal.
>
> "I think I can get my Haitian friends to request an observer from their mother-country, France, maybe one from Africa.
>
> "We should explain that we're all for it, but that we're embarrassed, because if we ask for an observer from the mother-country, England, the Irish will get mad, and we'll have to yield because we can't afford to lose the Irish vote. But if Ireland is in, we'll also have to have an observer from Scotland and one from Wales."
>
> By this time the gloom was lifting. The group was beginning to laugh.
>
> "Wait a minute," I said. "I'm not through yet. If we had four from the British Isles, how about our Germans, Dutch, French, Italians, Scandinavians and all the rest that made America? We can explain that we'd be in a pack of trouble, if we leave them out. But how many mother-countries can we insist on?"
>
> The word spread. In a few hours the idea of mother-country observers was laughed out of existence.

This illustrates Gruening's presence of mind. Other problems were more difficult, but he met them with the same imaginative resourcefulness, sometimes winning against serious odds. Soon after the conference in Montevideo, in a talk with Roosevelt, he said he thought America shouldn't have any colonies, and the President appointed him Head of the Division of Territories and Island Possessions, inviting him, in effect, to help them to independence or to become states. So Gruening in time became governor of Puerto Rico, governor of Alaska, and then one of Alaska's senators after statehood had been achieved.

There is drama and struggle on every page of this book, with much insight into the human side of politics. Ernest Gruening brought vision to every task he undertook, and reading the life of this tireless man is both pleasure and inspiration.

COMMENTARY
A TEST CASE

SINCE there is now so much talk about "education," it seems a good idea to underline the common sense of what Arthur Morgan did with Antioch College. (See "Children.") Griscom Morgan writes:

> The university is largely part and parcel of a society itself progressively disoriented. The details of the larger society have been revolutionized by the knowledge and technology that has now been made available. But an adequate order of life by which to live in this changed world has not been pioneered. The university within itself cannot do this. . . .
>
> The academic world throughout the period of schooling has assumed that it should act as a kind of cream separator by which the potential leadership and gifted are segregated out from the less gifted to be given special training by which they could rise into a separate caste of income, status and locale of living. The mark of success of the small community high school graduate, and of working-class high school students is to leave the local community or working class neighborhood and make good in the metropolis. . . . The societies and communities left behind are increasingly less cultured, less well led, less progressive, less prosperous, and more alienated from those better educated and more privileged. . . .
>
> Pioneering new orders or ways of life requires expression in a whole way of life in communities, including industry, agriculture, culture, spiritual life and all that is requisite for wholeness. This is necessary if youth are to have a perspective of viable, healthy and competent ways of living into which they may themselves grow. . . . Without an alternative "real world," youth, however idealistic, in revolt or radicalized in school, generally fall back to the ways of the world available to them. The nearer they come to recognizing that they must leave the school or the university, the more they are dominated by and conform to the cold world of "reality." The college that presumes to educate for a better world and has associated with it no competent better order of life is preparing idealistic students for cynicism, defeat and futility. . . .
>
> What was accomplished in Yellow Springs was part of another basic departure in educational and social philosophy in an endeavor to correct another basic fault in what had happened to Yellow Springs before the new beginning in 1921. Antioch had previously "educated" all the youth in town susceptible to college training; they then migrated to the middle class world of large metropolitan centers. The new Antioch sought to reverse this process in Yellow Springs as a test case of beginning a new order.

Suppose all the small colleges now in trouble undertook a similar "test case"? What other experiment would be as worth while as this one?

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
A GOOD COMBINATION

A FEW months ago (May 22) we quoted here a paragraph by Arnold Toynbee on the issue of general education for all. Toynbee said:

> In countries where the system of Universal Education has been introduced, the people are in danger of falling under an intellectual tyranny of one kind or another, whether it be exercised by private capitalists or by public authorities; and, if they are to be saved from both of these two almost equally lamentable fates, the only third alternative is to raise the standard of mass-cultivation to a degree at which the minds of children who are put through the educational mill are rendered immune against grosser forms of either private or public propaganda. This is no easy task.

Our comment expressed skepticism of "mass-cultivation," but we have since come across some proposals which, although not involving "mass-cultivation," directly address the problem Toynbee described.

In *Community Comments* for last April, Griscom Morgan examines the role and method of education established at Antioch College by Arthur Morgan in 1921—a practice successfully continued, he feels, until the late sixties, after which it went into noticeable decline. Griscom Morgan's title is "The Place of Higher Education in Society, and its Relevance to the Community." While Toynbee was not referring to "higher education," it may be that, considering our scant resources for change, the college level is a good place to begin. Hope that this might work is given in a concluding paragraph by Griscom Morgan:

> Educational innovation has been too largely an end in itself, like the changing styles of Detroit automobiles. The future requires a more profound development designed to serve the real educational needs of society, and it must take full advantage of past accomplishment. We suggest that a major step ahead is the uniting of the Antioch College work-study program and its heritage of excellent scholarship with the Scandinavian prototype of the people's college [the Folk Schools] for students seeking education for life. Of the latter Sir Richard Livingstone wrote that it is "the only great successful experiment in educating the masses of a nation."

(There are doubtless new books on the Danish Folk Schools, but old ones are probably as good since the initial achievement was in the nineteenth century. We have relied on Joseph K. Hart's *Light from the North* and *Christen Kold* by Nanna Goodhope [the Kold biography was issued by the Lutheran Publishing House, Blair, Neb., in 1956].)

Antioch's record of achievement is briefly put. This expiring institution developed "from being one of the poorest and most hopeless of American colleges and universities in 1991 to being ranked one of the top three in scholarship in 1933 through comprehensive examination of American colleges by the Carnegie Commission. It came to attract a high quality of student body from a wide variety of backgrounds and weathered the severity of the depression." What did Antioch accomplish through its combination of work on a job in the community with studies at the College? According to Louis Adamic, who made a comparison of the alumni of various liberal colleges, only the Antioch graduates had somehow learned to resist the universal tendency to conformity to the ideas and practices they found around them. Adamic found that "Antioch students were in continual tension between the college community with its intellectualism and the reality of the outside world." For this reason "they had to develop their own individuality and pattern of life such as would not be merely a reflection of the surrounding culture." In Antioch's early days, Arthur Morgan consciously formulated the basis for thinking of education-in this way:

> There is a tradition greater, older, more vital, and more precious than that of scholarship, which because it has been universal, we have ignored or held in contempt. I refer to the tradition of the common life. Scholarship touches man s needs at many points. The tradition of common life informs

him, guides him, corrects him, disciplines him in a thousand ways that scholarship cannot.

Gruntvig, the learned champion of the Danish folk schools, had written far earlier: "Scholarship is one thing, and education and fitness for life is another. . . . Scholarship will lead scholars astray if it is not confronted by an education of the people which obliges it to take present-day life into consideration, just as education of the people will soon degenerate into superficial polish if scholarship does not keep it alive." Morgan knew nothing of Gruntvig in the 1920s, but as an educator intent on the formation of human character he saw the needs of the students in exactly the same light. Indeed, this is the light which all really observant teachers see by. Montaigne, Gandhi, Ortega, and many others are on record with similar recognitions. The school, Vinoba said, ought to be the focus of the intelligence of the community, in behalf of the community.

At the beginning, as President of Antioch in 1921, Morgan set out to make the college a practical resource for the good of Yellow Springs, Ohio. Griscom Morgan says:

> Arthur Morgan observed that colleges rarely had positive results to show in their home towns for their educational pioneering. So he set out to develop a better order in association with the college in the village in which Antioch is located. As Antioch rose from being one of the poorest and most hopeless of American colleges in a dying community to being one of the top ranking, the social base in Yellow Springs was similarly developed to the point that it came to have unique economic, cultural and educational qualities and to be led by people of sound purpose.

Since the contribution of Antioch to the local community was probably a key to its other successes, what the college actually did for Yellow Springs ought to be looked into in detail. For this purpose, the best source is *Industries for Small Communities—with Cases from Yellow Springs* (1953) by Arthur Morgan (available for $2.50 from Community Service, Inc., P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387). Morgan says in the Preface:

> At first the development of industries was somewhat related to Antioch College. The revival of the college was more than just an attempt to rescue a moribund institution. It was an effort to give expression to a philosophy of education which had been in the process of development for twenty-five years. In general, this philosophy was that education should be concerned with the development of every important element of human personality and of human interest. In every phase of education and living, whether in philosophy or literature or science or economic life, while education is helped by knowing *about* things, it is most creative and productive when we actually participate—by exploring, experimenting, practicing our subjects—until we have so mastered them that we actually live by what we have learned. Our practice discloses elements which were overlooked in our theories, and so disciplines and corrects our theories. . . .
>
> There was a desire to create industries in association with Antioch College so that students and faculty together might actually learn by the process of exploration, inquiry and development, and by practice in an effective operation. Also, it was hoped that this process might contribute to the economic support of the college. A real test of economic competence is, Can the undertaking survive and "pay"?
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> Sociologists and reformers may write books about the shortcomings of industry and business, "but what do they know about it since they never ran a business"? Few efforts to improve the standards of American business can be so effective as actual cases of businesses conducted by wholesome standards.

Through a combination of the spirit and practical approach of Antioch's beginnings with the communitarian inspiration and training for life of the folk schools, Griscom Morgan envisions a new beginning for education.

FRONTIERS

The Question of Meaning

WE are all familiar with the tough-minded argument that what we need is more science, not less, and more technology, not less. The world, the argument proceeds, is dependent upon increasing technical know-how for food supply, adequate housing, and the transport and communications required to cope with ramifying population problems. We cannot, in short, survive in a technologically static world, and to ignore the fact is to seek return to primitive and death-inviting barbarism.

The argument has force. Its answer, which proposes a simpler way of life, just enough consumption, and restorative relations with the earth's resources, may be an adequate reply, but it, too, leaves unanswered certain questions which a scientific civilization has not considered worth raising for several centuries. For the most part, these are "why" questions.

Why, for example, are human beings involved in the materials, laws, and physico-chemical and biological processes of the earth? What are we doing here? What does life *mean?* We know of no "scientific" answer to this question. The scientific view is that the question is either meaningless or unanswerable. With somber eloquence, Bertrand Russell gave the scientific outlook back in 1903: "That all the labours of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of Man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins—all these things, if not quite beyond dispute, are yet so nearly certain, that no philosophy which rejects them can hope to stand."

How, then—we must not ask why—did the universe come into being? "Accidental collocations of atoms," says Russell, echoing Lucretius. Meanings, then, are no subject for scientific discourse.

Well, there are other outlooks on the world. Christians say the earth and man's presence upon it are for the greater glory of God. Hedonists and some theologians declare on different assumptions that we are here to enjoy ourselves. The alchemists insisted that we have a "work" to do. Plato maintained that existence is for refining our understanding to the end of emancipation from bondage to body and sense. The Gnostics claimed that souls are imprisoned by bodies, that knowledge will set them free. Others suggest that humans have a Promethean mission—to elevate and spiritualize the coarse rind of matter by tuning its psychic fibers to a higher pitch—for even atoms, the Buddhists say, move toward conscious levels of being and awareness.

These are not doctrines to which scientists pay attention. They are not doctrines to which most of the modern world pays attention. Yet without some answer to the question *why?*, how can we say what is good to do in the world? How can we tell what adds to or subtracts from the fulfillment of human destiny?

The big argument, today, after all, is about human destiny or human fulfillment. For example, in the *Teilhard Review* for October, 1973, John McHale, of the Center for Integrative Studies at Binghamton State University, New York, replies to the critics of technology:

> The hypothesis could be advanced that rather than technologies being alien to man's human quality, it may be that his supporting technologies and organizational forms are, in effect, one of the prime factors which *make him human.*
>
> This set of ideas has been termed *evolution-by-prosthesis* in which we may speculate that, in the evolutionary scale, man remains in a curiously arrested balance, or more slowly developing stage between animal and man, and that this balance has been achieved as man partially sidesteps the natural genetic process of adaptation to this environ—when he creates material and non-material extensions of himself which amplify his organic capacities and evolve for him.

After detailing the various ways in which men extend their physical capacities through mechanics and electronics—using wheels instead of longer legs, telescopes and cameras instead of better eyes, and various wave-lengths for worldwide speaking and hearing as well as seeing—Mr. McHale says: "In terms of this evolution-by-prosthesis, we may characterize all of the large-scale industrial activities of man—the extraction, digesting, processing, and manufacturing—all the large-scale energy-converting, channelling and usage—as the evolution of his *external metabolic system."* He is arguing, in effect: Since we are *doing* all these things, who can claim that they are not "natural"?

> As created, renewed, and ultimately directed by human life and its close association with human evolution, technology may be viewed, therefore, as being as organic as a snail shell the carapace of a turtle, a spiderweb, or the airborne dandelion seed.

Mr. McHale goes on to suggest that evolution is amplified not only by physical tools and devices, but also by "invisible tools such as language, number, symbol, and image systems," including "religion and philosophy and science." In addition, "information" has become "the new property which we carry in our heads, or use to program the machines which create those goods and services which we require." These extraordinary resources, he contends, have changed the setting of our evolutionary undertaking. Survival or coping with scarcity is no longer the goal, in his view, but learning to *choose* what we shall do, wisely and ethically for the common good, since technology has armed us with such great capacities. Technology ought not to be regarded as a scapegoat. The "real environmental crisis" is not technological but "an institutional and value crisis."

Well, here we are, in the world, and it follows that we ought to know as much about the place as we can, but must it then be that our lives are altogether dependent upon techniques of managing the world's physical energies? Isn't the distillation of meaning more important than elaborating material structures? Is technological organicism the climax of human achievement, or are philosophers and great religious teachers—who managed without much technological extension of their powers—better exemplars of human potentiality? If we are here to learn, then what are the lessons of our experience of material existence? Have we learned anything if, stripped of technological accessories, we would be reduced to psychic infancy? Are tools, however excellent, a substitute for the dream of immortal life? Hammers and saws are fine things to have; television and computers are not without uses; but would a fully developed man be therefore dependent upon them? Technology may be a necessary stage of our planetary development, but technology has no language for defining the goals of higher ranges—which may be subjective, as, indeed, *Nirvana* is subjective. The climax of human evolution may be that state or condition where all but man's wisdom is left behind.