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RECONSTITUTION OF PURPOSE

ONE way of speaking of the present would be to say that we are now in the midst of the ordeal of changing from collectivists into individuals. This is a loose account of what is happening, since both "collectivists" and "individuals" are undefined terms, but here they are not used in any politico-economic sense. And we didn't say "changing *back* into individuals," because this would imply that a more blessed state once existed, and we're not sure that such blessedness was ever achieved in the past, within the memory of man. The meanings we intend for these terms should become more specific through discussion.

Sometime in 1959 the editors of *Life* suggested to Edwin Halsey of the Claremont (California) Graduate School that he do an article about America's "National Purpose"—what it is or what it should be. *Life* didn't use what he wrote (for reasons that will be evident), and his essay appeared in the May 20 (1960) issue of Pomona College *Student Life*, and later in the radical pacifist magazine, *Liberation* (from which we quote). Dr. Halsey began:

> Defining America's national purpose in 1960 is like trying to legislate "the American way of life." The whole project like many projects—is misconceived. The attempt is "un-American" according to our best standards. Maybe we should say that the purpose of the American nation-state today is to become obsolete.
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> One of the troubles with being an editor of *Life* is that one loses the ability to think freely. For that one has to remain an amateur and a person of no public importance—a *non*-V.I.P. Meanwhile *Life* editors think up debates like "What should be our national purpose?" It never crosses the back part of their minds that nations do not or should not *have* purposes, that nationality today is almost a synonym for moral purposelessness. A modern nation is a large group of people who have forgotten the purpose of life. Insofar as these people can share a *national* purpose, it is nefarious, involving massive retaliation and public hatred and tribal religion. National leaders behave like juvenile delinquents. . . .
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> Originally, the deepest consensus of our people was centered in Biblical religion; it was a unity that could neither be enacted by legislation nor administered by officials nor "promoted." The laws of God and the promise of eternal life provided purpose for early Americans. Recently and gradually, we have come to believe that the "nation" can establish its own purposes, and that politicians, businessmen, and journalists can provide the vision that Isaiah believed essential for the survival of any people.
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> Let us stop inventing organizations with fictitious "characters' and "personal rights," such as our modern corporations and nation-states are supposed to have. We are seeing things that aren't there. These organizations are merely the idols of our modern polytheism, the beasts in a jungle of unbalanceable power which destroys the world-wide brotherhood of individual men. Having put our credulous faith in engineers and generals, even in entertainers, we are now a lonely, threatened crowd. And perhaps, above all, we have chosen to believe in death—in our power to inflict death on those we momentarily disapprove of, and the necessity of our having to suffer its final victory over us.

One of the many things that Dr. Halsey seems to be saying—for he is really saying a great many things—is that the motives and dynamics of our collective action, these days, are *mercenary* forces compared to the qualities that energized the common interests and efforts of Americans in their beginnings, and for a time thereafter. With the fulfillment to overflowing of our material needs, the collective enterprise turned sour from an excess of self-interest and isolating acquisitiveness. Parallels not without point have been drawn between the declining years of Rome and the recent history of our own country, and while we retained some of our Roman dignities until the days of the first world war (see Sondra Herman's *Eleven Against War [*Hoover Institution Press, 1969] for interesting evidence of this), today the beliefs which in 1917 could be honestly held have fallen to the level of shabby pretense. The major institutions of the land have been almost entirely emptied of their original moral content. This is true not only of government, but also of dominant industrial groupings. Consider for example the ostentatious devotion to conservative piety that was characteristic of *Life* a few years

before it was forced to liquidate. Not inaccurately, E. I. Hayakawa, writing in the Winter 1960 issue of *ETC.*, which he then edited, described the pseudo-theological stance of the Luce publications as "neo-scholastic," observing:

> . . . the *Time, Life,* and *Fortune* group of magazines . . . seems to have a central cadre of editorialists whose task it is to expound the metaphysics of the Luce empire. That metaphysics is sternly otherworldly; it asserts repeatedly that the basic questions confronting man are religious. It sternly opposes pragmatism, positivism, and excessive reliance on science. In an Easter editorial, for example, *Life* (March 30, 1959) excoriated "secularism," which "refuses on principle to ask questions which science cannot answer"; this non-religious view, the editors asserted, is responsible for "the triviality and self-indulgence of American life."
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> In view of how strongly the editors of *Life* feel about the triviality and self-indulgence of American life, one wonders how they could bring themselves to include in the same issue page after page of expensive and attractively laid-out advertising for Pontiac ("personal attention to quality is the secret of giving the customer a car he'll enjoy"); Soft-Weve ("the 2-ply tissue by Scott, the most noticed little luxury he'll enjoy") and a spread of three full pages to say that Marlboros are obtainable either in soft pack or flip-top box. The reader is left at quite a loss as to what *Life* wants him to do: (1) to accept God and give up secularism and self-indulgence, or (2) to order a new Pontiac.

Mr. Hayakawa didn't bother to point out that *Life's* journalist-theologians were also expert casuists who would find it no great task to persuade people that they could easily do both.

In furtherance of this analysis of the decline of American purpose, and in evidence of the "purposelessness" referred to by Dr. Halsey, there is this from Paul Goodman's *Growing Up Absurd:*

> Consider the men and women in TV advertisements, demonstrating the product and singing the jingle. They are clowns and mannequins, in grimace, speech, and action. And again, what I want to call attention to in this advertising is not the economic problem of synthetic demand, and not the cultural problem of Popular Culture, but the human problem that these are human beings thinking like idiots; and the broadcasters know and abet what is going on: *"Fruitily, bubbily, Hoffman's is dubbily good as good can be!"* Alternately, they are liars, confidence men, smooth talkers, obsequious, insolent, etc., etc.

It seems well to note in passing that Goodman exercised a vast influence for the reason that, while he was an uncompromising critic, he never lost his humanist manners, which means that he never forgot that the human beings who had been made captive of such degrading activities and professions *were* human beings, and that they, too, needed help. In contrast, the angry men who believe in bloody revolutions and liquidations, when they are successful, end by becoming managers of the dictatorship of the ex-proletariat. It was to them that Bertolt Brecht might have addressed his unpublished protest at the time of the East German revolt of 1953. In a short poem, "The Solution," Brecht said:

> After the rising of the 17th June
> The Secretary of the Writers' Association
> Had leaflets distributed in the Stalinallee
> In which you could read that the people
> Had lost the Government's confidence
> And could only win it back
> By redoubled efforts. If so, would it not
> Be simpler for the Government
> To dissolve the people
> And elect another?

Earlier, we suggested that Dr. Halsey said a great many things in the article he wrote on "national purpose." One was in criticism of organizations with "personal rights," which, he added, have the effect of destroying "the worldwide brotherhood of individual men." This is well expressed, but it is not a new idea. In the first chapter of *The Need for Roots,* Simone Weil spoke of the folly of advocating freedom of expression for interest-groups. She wrote:

> Generally speaking, all problems to do with freedom of expression are clarified if it is posited that this freedom is a need of the intelligence, and that intelligence resides solely in the human being, individually considered. There is no such thing as a collective exercise of the intelligence. It follows that no group can legitimately claim freedom of expression, because no group has the slightest need for it.
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> In fact the opposite applies. Protection of freedom of thought requires that no group should be permitted by law to express an opinion. For when a group starts having opinions, it inevitably tends to impose them on its members. Sooner or later, these individuals find themselves debarred, with a greater or lesser degree of severity, and on a number of problems of greater or lesser

> importance, from expressing opinions opposed to those of the group, unless they care to leave it. But a break with any group to which one belongs always involves suffering—at any rate of a sentimental kind. And just as danger, exposure to suffering are healthy and necessary elements in the sphere of action, so are they unhealthy influences in the exercise of the intelligence. A fear, even a passing one, always provokes either a weakening or a tautening, depending upon the degree of courage, and that is all that is required to damage the extremely delicate and fragile instrument of precision that constitutes our intelligence. Even friendship is, from this point of view, a great danger. The intelligence is defeated as soon as the expression of one's thoughts is preceded, explicitly or implicitly, by the little word "we." And when the light of the intelligence grows dim, it is not very long before love of good becomes lost.
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> The immediate practical solution would be the abolition of political parties. Party strife, as it existed under the Third Republic, is intolerable. The single party, which is, moreover, its inevitable outcome, is the worst evil of all. . . . We all know, besides, that the rival teams in the United States are not political parties. A democracy where public life is made up of strife between political parties is incapable of preventing the formation of a party whose avowed aim is the overthrow of that democracy. If such a democracy brings in discriminatory laws, it cuts its own throat. If it doesn't, it is just as safe as a little bird in front of a snake.

Simone Weil, of course, must be read in a certain way. A means of "enforcing" her edicts is hardly imaginable. What is invaluable in what she says is the moral vision behind her argument. She doesn't believe in adversary procedures, nor in rhetoric that persuades through deception. She thinks power for partisan ends immoral. How, then, could the ideals she proposes ever be realized? Only, it seems clear, by the gradual evolution of better institutions which grow and flourish because they are the institutions which people are willing to nourish with their allegiance and support. The partisanships of the past will die out only when they are no longer *felt* and kept alive by human beings, for then the institutions erected and strengthened by those partisanships will become vestigial organs—retained for a time, perhaps, for sentimental reasons, like the monarchy in England, but no longer integrated with the dynamics of society. The generation gap doubtless has many causes, but one obvious explanation of the difference of opinion between parents and the maturing young lies in the rejection by so many of the young of institutions that have been reverenced or cherished by past generations.

Years ago, Czeslaw Milosz remarked in a *Listener* article:

> There has never been such curiosity about the whole part of Man on Earth, nor so many signs of exploring civilizations in their sinuous growth. We enter a sesame of our heritage, not limited to one continent. And this is accessible to the many, not only to some specialists. For instance, there has never been so great an interest in the art and music of the past . . . a new dimension of history, understood as a whole, appears in all its dependencies. We deplore the dying out of local customs and local traditions, but perhaps the rootlessness of modern man is not so great, if through individual effort he can, so to say, return home and be in contact with all the people of various races and religions who suffered, thought, and created before him.

So, while "nations" are plainly going into a decline—as they obviously should, considering the amorality of their undertakings—*people* are beginning to establish new sorts of relationships and social formations. They are relating more directly with one another, refusing to be frustrated in their hungering after "the world-wide brotherhood of individual men." The "grand tours" of the young, today, are more like planetary hitch-hikes than anything else. Nationalism is for them totally without meaning, and "national purpose" a ridiculous expression, just as Dr. Halsey implied.

The "collectives" of the past—the past and the present—gave a certain shape and coherence to human affairs. We know this, if only from all the talk of breaking with "conformity." And from the generalizations of Halsey and Goodman and Hayakawa—which could be multiplied into whole libraries of criticism from contemporary authors—we have no difficulty in identifying the extreme ugliness and destructiveness of the powerful nation-states and their associated institutions. And today even middle-of-the-roaders do not hesitate to condemn what is happening to the earth and the air and the seas and streams, as a result of the sudden expansion of technological industry in the past fifty years. Meanwhile, an essential brittleness and

incapacity for change is characteristic of nearly all the major institutions of the time.

In view of these conditions, the passage from collectivist living to individual ways is stormy, hazardous, and painful, if at the same time exciting and venturesome. It is also extremely disorderly, and in some ways brutally destructive, since where there are no rites of passage, and little sense of destination, wildness and nihilism are difficult to avoid, especially in a mass society upon which such changes are pressed by forces that sometimes seem demonic as well as liberating.

What then can be done? A thousand prescriptions are being offered, some good, some bad. Probably, a large variety of prescriptions is needed, since a relocation of the center of the gravitational force which governs thinking and behavior affects people in countless ways. Yet since the movement is plainly toward individual life, individual meanings, and individual fulfillment, and since, at the same time, there is a growing awareness that the true good of each one is inseparably connected with the good of all, one thing is certain: there is now a deeply felt need of knowledge of who or what human beings are. The Platonic philosophy was meant to serve this need.

It would be difficult to improve upon Francis M. Cornford's brief statement of what that philosophy is in essence. In a modest volume first published in 1932, *Before and After Socrates* (now in paperback), Cornford said:

> Socrates' discovery was that the true self is not the body but the soul. And by the soul he meant the seat of that faculty of insight which can know good from evil and infallibly choose the good. Self-knowledge implies the recognition of this true self. Self-examination is a discipline constantly needed to distinguish its judgment from the promptings of other elements in our nature, closely attached to the body and its distracting interests. Self-rule is the rule of the true self over those other elements—an absolute autocracy of the soul. For this inner judge of good and evil is also a ruler. The true self is a faculty, not only of intuitive insight, but of will. . . .
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> The special name given to the true self in the later writings of Plato and Aristotle is *nous,* a word commonly translated by "reason." To the modern ears ' spirit is a less misleading term because reason' suggests a faculty that thinks but does not also will. Plato and Aristotle regard this spirit as distinct from the *psyche,* which is inseparably associated with the body and perishes with the death of the body. For the perfection of the spirit the Greeks used the ordinary word for "goodness," *arete,* and this had better not be translated by "virtue." "Virtue," at all times, means conformity to current ideals of conduct. The virtuous man is he who does what the rest of society approves. The Socratic society dismisses this conformity under the name of "popular virtue." Plato puts the virtue of "the respectable citizen" on the same level with the unremitting pursuit of duty characteristic of bees, ants, and other social insects. This is not what Socrates meant by "goodness." The whole content of his mission was to supersede the childish morality of blameless conformity by an ideal of spiritual manhood rising above the commonly acknowledged bounds of human capacity. This was to substitute for a morality of attainable virtue, such as the world respects and rewards, a morality aspiring to a perfection unattainable save by a few men whom the world has rejected while they lived, and only learnt too late to worship as heroic or divine. Such a man was Socrates.

This is a philosophic account of individuation—the objective of all the high religions, which has been the vision of excellence, uniting the human and the divine; in truth, a vision which was the basis of every great civilization the world has known. It is found in Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity, and is implicit in Taoism, and all the great mysticisms. It needs a modern idiom, but one which grows without loss of quality or majesty of utterance. Essentially Pythagorean in conception, it lies behind every great attempt to awaken the hearts of men to the potentialities lying within themselves.

REVIEW
REDISTRIBUTION OF POWER

THE process of social change requires work on all fronts, and even if theoretical analysis of changes now going on tends to be a dull affair, this analysis has a legitimate function in opening and preparing minds for still further change. *Decentralization in Yugoslavia and India* by Nageshwar Prasad, while presenting much theory, is largely a study of what has happened in Yugoslavia since 1945, in comparison with efforts toward decentralization in India. Lay readers will hardly be interested in the details of such a comparison, but the over-all significance of the changes involved should not be underestimated. It should be said, first, that Indian planners are especially interested in Yugoslavia because of the degree of success which has attended the movement toward decentralization there. Despite the fact that the two cultures are quite different, and also their forms of government, they both recognize the value of decentralization.

The open break between Yugoslavia and Russia came in June of 1948 when the Cominform adopted a formal resolution expelling Yugoslavia from its fold. Yugoslav criticism of Soviet Communism became aggressive about a year later. The Russians, spokesmen said, were ignoring Marx. After the dictatorship of the proletariat there should come a time, Marx said, when democracy would grow stronger, bureaucracy would diminish, and the state would wither away. Just the opposite was happening in Russia, the Yugoslavs said. They took steps to move toward both economic development and democracy. A good summary of what they have accomplished since the split with Soviet Russia is given by Fred Warner Neal, of the Claremont Graduate School, in his Foreword to Prasad's book:

> The Yugoslavs started with neither [economic development or democracy]. They have by no means achieved either. Yet they have faced up to the problem and have asked the right questions. They have acquired a healthy pragmatism without losing their ideological orientation. They have experimented and experimented—sometimes with bad mistakes, sometimes with notable successes. The unique Yugoslav system does not always work in fact the way it says it does on paper (is there some system that does?). But neither are the new institutions a façade. Workers *do* manage factories. Planning is *not* dictated from on high. Local governments *do* have very wide autonomy. The elections are—quite often if not always—meaningful. And living standards have risen greatly. Twenty years ago, Macedonia, in South-eastern Yugoslavia, had the grinding, stinking poverty of the Middle-East. Today it does not. Yugoslavia is still a poor country, but hunger and the more acute forms of privation have been licked. Moving from Western Yugoslavia to Italy or Austria today is not much of a contrast.

This is not to ignore the notable offenses against the rights of individuals as understood in the West. Djilas spent many years in jail for being critically outspoken of the Tito regime. He is out of jail now, but Mihjalov is in, as Fred Neal says. Yugoslavia does not have a Supreme Court that will reverse bad decisions like the conviction of Dr. Spock, but there is a constitutional court which has ruled against the government in some instances. Neal also says:

> And, if Yugoslavia is not moving toward democracy of the western type, still it is moving toward a democracy which means far more in terms of personal freedom than is associated with other "Communist" states—far more, in fact, than one might have anticipated two decades ago, considering Yugoslavia's dark heritage of the past. And for foreigners—at least for Americans and Indians—the difference is absolute. We do not even have to have visas to enter Yugoslavia.

Decentralization in Yugoslavia was accomplished by worker management and control of the factories and by the reorganization of the government of the country into semi-autonomous communes, each of which was intended to be a viable socio-economic unit. During the Stalinist period, from 1946 to 1950, the local committees were mere representatives of the central government. After the formation of communes, they served the people as elected representatives in the communes, of which there were about four

thousand in 1953, but only 577 in 1964, since larger communes were found to be desirable. As of 1963 the average population per commune was 32,673. The Commune Assembly has two houses: the Commune Chamber, having representatives from residential areas; and the Chamber of Working Communities, which is constituted of representatives from industry, agriculture, transport, education and cultural pursuits, healing and welfare services, and various administrative and association activities. The communes have some 800 functions, but the primary activity is economic management, since all value is derived from economic life, according to basic political theory in Yugoslavia. The people have the power of referendum and recall over all elected officials of the commune, and they sometimes exercise it.

Yugoslavian ideology is essentially Marxian, and the constitution of the country reflects this view. India's constitution, in contrast, is that of a liberal democracy. In India the move toward decentralization was not so much the result of trial and error, as was the case in Yugoslavia, for in India it was plain from the beginning that the life of the country lay in the villages. However, Mr. Prasad's summary of the efforts of the Indian government to foster local development in the villages reads like a recapitulation of the warnings made from time to time by the Gandhians concerning what *not* to do in relation to rural reconstruction. It was early discovered that government agents working in the villages were unable to generate the interest of the villagers. The planning was done by experts who lived in urban centers, and then the instructions given were carried out at the village level. This was a process of self-defeat, since the problem was to stir local initiative. As Mr. Prasad puts it:

> In an under-developed economy, planning tends to be centralised as soon as the state enters the process. Centralisation breeds bureaucratisation which in turn stultifies the initiative of the people, curbs people's participation and slows down the rapid pace of growth. Centralism is a product, therefore, of the state entering the arena of planning.

While the government had the idea of reviving the old panchayat rule of the village—a council of five "elders"—the panchayats of the new regime were "complete agents of state governments." They were not responsible to the people. Their role was no longer the traditional one, and they too easily became involved with political factions, of which, in the Gandhian view, they should have remained completely independent. After detailing the various limitations on self-government at the local level, and the obstacles to generating self-reliance and autonomy because of the rule of central authority and political factionalism, Prasad comments:

> In the context of such wide powers still in the hands of the state government officials, one wonders if at all democratic decentralisation is really an advance over the position held by these bodies during the British period.

Mr. Prasad's review of decentralization in India has two sections, one being devoted to the activities of the government, which we have briefly described, the other concerned with the Gandhian approach of Vinoba Bhave and Jayaprakash Narayan, popularly known as the Gramdan Movement or the Sarvodaya Movement. The fundamental thinking along these lines began with Gandhi, who long ago gave voice to opposition to the large-scale organization of power coupled with technology, with publication of *Hind Swaraj* in 1908. There was hard-headed thinking in Gandhi's views on "machinery." Prasad says:

> Gandhi was conscious of these trends in modern technology. Concentration of economic power was what he considered to be the result of the large scale industrialism of the present age. "I want the concentration of wealth, not in the hands of a few but in the hands of all. Today machinery helps a few to ride on the backs of millions." Writing yet on another occasion Gandhi said: "What is industrialism but a control of the majority by a *small minority?"* That the concentration of economic power is a phenomenon of large industrialism was the main theme to which Gandhi returned again and again. "Organisation of machinery for the purpose of concentrating wealth and power in the hands of a few

and for the exploitation of the many, I hold to be altogether wrong. Much of the organisation of machinery of the present is of that type."

Concentration of economic power in the hands of a few is bad because, in Gandhi's view, it leads to the exploitation of the majority by a minority. Exploitation in any form was, therefore, synonymous with violence. A system whether in the hands of the few or of the state, but based on such exploitation, was bound to generate violence. "You cannot build nonviolence on a factory civilisation, but it can be built on self-contained villages," said Gandhi.

Prasad continues:

It should not be assumed that Gandhi advocated a return to medieval techniques. On the contrary, his technique was to make judicious use of science with a view to achieving enough production to meet the needs of the villager. . . . What he really was concerned with was the indiscriminate multiplication of large-scale industries bringing in their wake multitudinous problems. "If we could have electricity in every village home," said Gandhi, "I should not mind villagers plying their implements and tools with the help of electricity. But then the village communities or the state would own power houses, just as they have their grazing pastures. But where there is no electricity and no machinery, what are idle hands to do? Will you give them work?"

Today the importance of what Gandhi is saying here is quite obvious. He had what we now think of as post-industrial awareness, and hoped to accomplish an "ecological revolution" without waiting for his country to learn from the bitter experience that is now so much the problem and dilemma of the people of the United States.

For the same reason, the best of modern thinking is now plainly post-Marxist. To locate culture-shaping activity in economics is to make economic welfare the highest good. Yugoslavia, therefore, will probably have to go through the same painful cycle of post-industrial awareness that has now overtaken the industrially advanced societies. A society which has only economic goals reaches a point at which its vision is consumed by the achievement of its goals, and then crisis *must* ensue, for the very basis of human striving has been dissolved.

The present-day Gandhians in India, and those of similar persuasion around the world, have already made that discovery. Under the heading, "Philosophy of Decentralisation," Mr. Prasad draws on Jayaprakash Narayan:

First of all, Jayaprakash Narayan takes a general view of democracy as it exists today in the modern world. The central theme of his reflections on democracy is the ever multiplying material wants. It is in this coil of indiscriminately growing material goods of life that democracy today finds itself caught. For him, therefore, multiplication of wants and democracy are two antithetical entities. "It seems patent to me," he says, "that democracy cannot coexist with the insatiable hunger for more and more material goods that modern industrialism created."

Why? Jayaprakash answers: In the first place, emphasis on unlimited production of material goods is bound to create imbalance in human affairs in the sense that exclusive attention to the material side of life will obscure the higher values of life—spiritual and sublime. Such an attitude to life is sure to lead to scramble for more and more with the result that mutual conflict and coercion will become a general feature of our individual and social life. And all such tendencies, in turn, are sure to produce their leveling influence on freedom and democracy. In the second place, the unrestrained growth of material means of life, as if by a logic of its own, breeds inequalities in society. The growth of inequality is sure to bring the intervention of the state at one stage or the other; for the state must regulate the distribution of goods in such a manner as not to permit, once again, undue imbalance in the social scale. This means increase in the power of the state—a factor militating against democracy as such.

This is the foundation of the decentralist movement in India, described in operation by Sugata Dasgupta in *Social Work and Social Change* (Porter Sargent) and by Erica Linton in *Fragments of a Vision.* By now, its common sense should be manifest to all. Nageshwar Prasad's book, *Decentralisation in Yugoslavia and India,* is published by Navachetna Prakashan, Rajghat, Post Box 116, Varanasi, U.P., India, at 30 Rupees, and $6.00 in the United States.

COMMENTARY
LEVELS OF "MORALITY"

FRANCIS CORNFORD'S observation (page 7) that Plato did not use the term for "virtue" with the meaning he attached to *arete* recalls Lawrence Kohlberg's discussion of moral education (quoted in MANAS for March 7). As a result of his study of the moral ideas of children, Kohlberg found that they pass through some six stages, only the last or highest stage being of a quality that would correspond to Plato's idea of *arete.* Yet practically all the stages are encountered by Socrates, as reported in the Dialogues.

At Kohlberg's first or lowest stage, actions are judged by whether they bring reward or punishment, or lead to physical and material power. The second stage is characterized by a hedonistic view of human relations, with actions based on an exchange of favors or advantages. The third stage is defined by the desire to gain the approval of a group—loyalty being to the group and its opinions, which determine right and wrong.

The fourth level of morality depends upon authority or law, which is fixed by either the state or a religion and is the primary value. The fifth stage is illustrated by the social contract and the mutual obligations it describes, as in, for example, the Constitution of the United States.

Of the highest or sixth stage, Kohlberg says:

> Morality of individual principles of conscience that have logical comprehensiveness and universality. Highest value placed on human life, equality, and dignity.

He adds:

> Stages 1 and 2, which are typical of young children and delinquents, are described as "premoral," since decisions are made largely on the basis of self-interest and material considerations. The group-oriented Stages 3 and 4 are the "conventional" ones at which most of the adult population operates. The final "principled" stages are characteristic of 20 to 25 per cent of the adult population, with perhaps 5 to 10 per cent arriving at Stage 6.

Plato, Cornford says, regards the "popular morality" (what Kohlberg calls the "conventional" stages) as similar to the conformity characteristic of "bees, ants, and other social insects." Plato's objective was to arouse people to seek ways to reach the sixth stage. Actually, Kohlberg once used Socrates to illustrate his sixth stage.

What, one wonders, are the implications of this sort of research, not only for educators, but also for law-makers and advocates of social change? Gandhi, it seems to us, is the only reformer who takes such questions seriously.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
NOTES ON RANDOM EDUCATION

AN interview with Bill Coperthwaite in the January *Mother Earth News* is rich in reflections on education. Coperthwaite has become rather well known by reason of his adaptation of the yurt, the skin-covered domes of Asian nomads, to other methods of construction, and his plans are now being used increasingly by people interested in low-cost housing. Coperthwaite has formed the Yurt Foundation, partly as the basis for carrying on experiments in alternative ways of building yurts, and for wider purposes. He is interested in the preservation of the lore and skills of simple ways of life, and their practical revival.

Bill Coperthwaite has traveled a great deal and in this interview was asked by the *Mother Earth* writer if the idea of the Yurt Foundation grew out of his contact with other cultures. He replied:

> Not really. The foundation developed from an earlier plan of mine for a school-centered community here at Buck's Harbor (Maine) . . . that's what I bought the land for. At that time I thought early education was the key to social change. I wanted to provide a learning atmosphere that would help children grow into adults who were capable of sound economic, social, political and moral decisions. Then I began to have doubts about the school project, and about the whole child-centered approach. It struck me that the one thing a child growing up today lacks most is the opportunity to listen to serious adult conversation. There are times when kids *should* be seen and not heard. Group life that revolves around a child—with everyone sitting and listening to him all the time—doesn't necessarily help him to grow.
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> Many adults (including teachers) are spending a lot of time as professional baby sitters, taking care of children instead of being concerned with our own growth. I believe, though, that a youngster who grows up among people who are excited about their own creativity and intellectual development has one of the best learning environments imaginable.
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> While I was mulling over these doubts, I suddenly realized that I had my project set up backward. I saw that what we really need are communities dedicated to encouraging the optimal growth of *all* people . . . children or adults. If you need a school in such a community, you build one . . . but the community remains primary and the school a spinoff, not the other way around.
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> At the same time, I'd been thinking about how to live simply, close to the realities of life . . . and about the need for knowledge that gives people like me the options from which to create our own patterns. Here was a chance for research and study that would be valuable, and fun too! I realized, moreover, that I had a vested interest in getting more people to work on the information that would help me design a better life, and also that my knowledge was valuable to others who wanted—as I did—to live more simply. Obviously, collecting data wasn't enough . . . we'd need to experiment with the information and publish the results for the use of others. So I got the idea of forming a community to work on these lines.
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> Then I had to figure out how such a community could raise its own food, construct its own buildings *and* provide itself with the cash it needed. Fortunately, at about that time my yurt research started catching people's interest and plans for these buildings began to sell. Since the yurt was a graphic symbol of the blending of old folk knowledge with modern experience—and since the design was bringing in some income to support more work of the same kind—it seemed good to call our community the Yurt Foundation.

One of the tasks which the Foundation has set itself is the collection of information about the skills of other cultures. Coperthwaite says:

> More specifically, the customs of small rural groups provide us with alternatives that we're not aware of because we're conditioned to think in terms of standardized methods. The use of locally available materials is a good example. The Finns, for instance, believe that lilac and the small mountain ash are two of the best woods in the world for making rake teeth. Because modern industry uses white oak for that purpose—to be sure of an adequate supply of material—we in this society don't realize that there are these other possibilities . . . when in reality we could make a rake out of that bush in the front yard that would be better than the commercial product, would cost nothing, and would involve us in its fashioning.

There seems an essential healthiness about everything Coperthwaite does. For example, he doesn't think much of begging grants as a means

to support the kind of work he is doing and hopes to do more extensively. He says:

> Though many organizations today depend on begging for their funds, I think it would be sad if the Yurt Foundation did this also. To run an educational establishment on grants in *this* country doesn't prove a thing. People from India can look at it and say, "Sure, you can develop an organization concerned with social design because you've got lots of money." I'd like to show that work like ours can be done anywhere in the world where there are people interested in searching for a better way to live . . . that money matters less than attitudes.
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> Certainly money can help the work of the Yurt Foundation advance faster, and I'm willing to accept donations, but I'm concerned that we do not become dependent on gifts.

Why is collecting information of this sort important?

> Traditional knowledge is the product of thousands of generations of handing down from father to son, mother to daughter . . . and once that chain is broken we have to start all over again, which can be pretty much impossible. But if we can find and learn certain kinds of knowledge while they're still being transmitted, then we can become part of the chain and pass on what we know to other people throughout the world.

Another interesting thing about this research project is that "experts" are not required. As Coperthwaite puts it:

> . . . the whole point is that anyone can contribute. A little kid on a trip abroad with his parents can notice different kinds of boats—for instance—and be curious enough to wonder *why* they're different, to take pictures to talk to the boat-builders. Then when he mails in his results he can feel—and rightly—that his actions have helped that knowledge.

This example makes us think of a book reviewed in Frontiers for Jan. 19, 1979—*East Is a Big Bird*, by Thomas Gladwyn, an educator who went to the Caroline Islands to study the people of the Puluwat Atoll. While there he learned an enormous lot about how they made their canoes and even mastered the kind of "astronomy" they used in their navigation. The details of how they fashioned those great seagoing canoes make fascinating reading, and are clearly pertinent to Coperthwaite's project. (Gladwyn's book was issued by Harvard University Press in 1970 and should be easy to get in New England.)

One thing Coperthwaite has already done is study the crafts of the Eskimos. He went to Hooper Bay in Alaska in 1967 and there found much of the traditional knowledge still in use. He was depressed, however, by the fact that the Eskimo children were growing up without any respect for these old skills and ways. So, after Coperthwaite had collected examples of the work of the Eskimos he put together an exhibit of the best and most representative artifacts, adding more from other sources, and then, having what amounted to a traveling "museum" of Eskimo culture, showed it in various remote Eskimo villages. The idea was to help with the restoration of their feelings of dignity about themselves and their past.

> As always happens when I've lived with another people for a while, I wished there was some way I could repay the Eskimos for what they'd been teaching me . . . and my regret over their cultural oppression gave me an idea for doing so. It struck me that these people's art and artifacts had been stolen from them for centuries and put in museums. Because I had connections with museums and libraries and universities that the Eskimos lacked, I thought I might be able to get some of these objects back for them to see. . . . As it turned out, I was able to create the project as I'd planned.
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> "Learning by doing" is an exciting concept . . . but I've been reversing the phrase lately and talking about "doing by learnin"." I've come to realize that—because I raised their self-esteem—I did more for the Eskimos by going to learn from them than I could have done for them in any other way.

There is much more in this article about the values implicit for children in all such activities. Meanwhile, what Bill Coperthwaite says about the Eskimos will be enlarged in meaning by reading Farley Mowat's *People of the Deer.*

FRONTIERS

People on the Land

A GROUP in Saugus, Calif., called Earthmind has a farm which the members hope will gradually turn into a "large classroom" concerned with living on the land. They have just issued a "booklet" on how to build a methane generator, and plan other investigations: "One set of problems which needs research is how can the average American, stucco house, with its already existing systems, be cheaply and reasonably made more ecological?" The paper on methane production has 28 legal-size pages and is available for $1.25 from Earthmind, 26510 Josel Drive, Saugus, Calif. 91350.

Well, we've read the directions on the methane generator and don't really feel ready to go out and build one. This is, we suspect, an unavoidable defect in all directions given by people who have already done things like that. Too much is taken for granted; on the other hand, to spell everything out would mean a ridiculous amount of detail. A person who is planning to participate in this sort of activity needs to work for quite a while at making practical devices, so that he begins to feel more at home with diagrammatic instructions and semi-professional engineering shorthand. Not that there is any shorthand in this booklet on making methane—there isn't, and it is obviously written by a beginner for other beginners, which makes it encouraging to read. But an enormous abyss separates written instructions from successful practice. This booklet, by David House, may be just right for stirring the reader to look further into the subject of methane production.

What *is* methane? It is the chief ingredient of natural gas. It occurs in nature as a hydrocarbon (CH_4) that is produced by the decomposition of organic matter in marshes, and can be used as a fuel. Human or animal wastes can be broken down both aerobically and anaerobically to generate methane, the remaining compost then being available as fertilizer.

> Very generally, one pound of cow manure will yield one cubic foot of gas per day at 75 degrees F. Vegetable matter produces more than this per pound. An installation of 4-5 cubic meters is sufficient for one family of five or six.

Methane would be an ideal fuel to run an automobile, except for the difficulty in converting it to a liquid state to reduce its bulk. It will neither carbonize the pistons nor contaminate the oil, and in cars might be five or six times as efficient as gasoline. But the impurities (hydrogen sulphide) in generated methane would have to be removed.

Santa Barbara's *Survival Times*, issued by the Community Environmental Council, 15 West Anapamu St., Santa Barbara, Calif. 93101 (also the address of the Santa Barbara branch of the New Alchemy Institute), has an interesting article on this city's Milpas Co-op, which was organized to supply its members with organic foodstuffs. According to this story:

> The primary objective of Milpas Co-op is to regularly supply its members with the healthiest, not necessarily the cheapest food (although the co-op's prices are better than markets in most instances). The members saw their co-op as an alternative to the health food stores, which, although a vast improvement over the supermarket wasteland have taken upon themselves an elitist attitude that often carries over into their prices.
>
> Milpas Co-op saw its move as an eco-political gesture as well. With few exceptions (Continental Grain buying out Oroweat Breads and El Molino) the organic growers/distributors will have little to do with agribusiness. The economic relationship between agribusiness and the petrochemical industry is multi-faceted. The companies which manufacture the poison chemicals we spray on our crops and dump in our soils often made the herbicides that were used to defoliate the forests and fields of Vietnam. Corporate giants which financially fuel the military regime in Saigon also own huge acreages in California where the miserable working and living conditions of Chicano farmworkers are exacerbated by the insecticides they breathe and touch as they harvest the nation's food.

> The co-op also views its role as one of creating a bigger consumer demand for organic products. This would help to create a successful market for small farmers who want to stay on the land and repulse the forces of monopolistic agriculture which result in the foreclosure of some 200 small farms each week.

Those who are unused to thinking of co-ops in this way might find worth reading a book published years ago on Swedish co-ops—*Sweden: The Middle Way*, by Marquis Childs. In Sweden, a powerful co-op movement has systematically protected the people from extorting monopolies and overpricing by large manufacturers. For many years, affluence has stood in the way of the development of co-ops in the United States. But things are different now, and "affluence" doesn't mean very much when money can no longer buy good food, clean air, unpolluted water, sensible education, quietude and harmony. People who want these things need to seek out and support suppliers who think in terms of these values, and the co-ops may prove a valuable instrument for widening the avenues to a more healthful life, even though surrounded by old institutions and ways.

While much of the material in *Survival Times* is about problems and ecological enterprises in Santa Barbara, some articles are of general interest. An issue which came out late last year (Vol. 2, No. 10) has an interview with Laurie Kokx, a young woman who is managing her parents' 75-acre citrus ranch in Ojai. The operation is entirely "organic" in approach and in this discussion Miss Kokx describes the vegetables she plants when old trees are removed from the grove.

> I have put in row crops of broccoli, onions, garlic, peas and jerusalem artichokes. These row crops are marketed, but they also have another purpose in that they promote beneficial insect populations for the citrus. It is a natural insectary. The row crops help to contribute pollen and nectar as food for these insects when no pests are around, and also give secondary breeding places for new generations of the beneficials.

Another article in this issue, by Paul Rellis, tells about Boston's Fenway Garden, located beside a cattail bog filled with blackbirds. On this land there is space for 500 small plots being worked by 300 Bostonians who like to garden. It is a lovely spot, turned into a checkered garden area during World War II, and now farmed by people who enjoy raising vegetables and fruits on the naturally rich soil. Fenway Garden delights the eye of the visitor to this older part of the city, on the Charles River in old Boston town.