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SOME UNOFFICIAL THOUGHTS

FOR the past several hundred years, men of major talent and conspicuous intellectual ability have devoted their energies to collecting knowledge about the physical or natural world. The justifications for this engrossing project have been stated so many times, with such variety of persuasion, that it is hardly necessary to repeat them. And the desire to know is so obviously an expression of man's intrinsic nature that attempts at "explaining" it soon turn into somewhat tautological celebrations. We cannot really explain what we are, but rather use what we are to explain other matters.

Yet there is a difference between the desire to know and certainty in knowing. Awareness of this difference gives what we call Science its distinctive meaning. A man can be mistaken, he can confuse belief with knowledge, and the idea of science, or of certainty in knowing, would be meaningless without this lesson of experience—that men can be terribly mistaken. Historically, then, science is a body of doctrine concerning the discipline of certainty in knowing, and it is also a body of conclusions growing out of the application of this discipline to experience of the natural world.

However, it is often said that the certainties of scientific knowledge are achieved by severe limitation of scientific inquiry to areas of experience that submit to the rules of scientific method. This seems to be true. With considerable show of reason, the founders of science resolved to look only at those aspects of the world which were objectively definite, for what was the use of seeking measurable certainty where it is impossible to obtain? So, in time, the image of the world that resulted from the abstractions of scientific definition came to be widely regarded as both the substance and the extent of reality.

While various men of philosophical inclinations, including eminent scientists, have questioned this limited account of "reality," they found it difficult to offer an alternative view that could be subjected to the kind of testing that is generally accepted as the means to reliable knowledge. About all that such men have been able to say is, "Well, let us keep our minds open to wider possibilities." A tempered expression of this sort occurs in the writings of Arthur E. Morgan (taken from the selections in his recently published volume, *Observations*). He says:

> Only during the period of modern science, extending over less than five hundred years, has there been a great accumulation of clear and specific knowledge concerning many phases of man and of his world. Only during the latter part of that period has there emerged the idea of the mastery of his destiny in place of the old idea of escape. As we come down to our own time we see that developments in physics, biology, psychology, and in other fields are so revolutionary as to require far-reaching and radical changes in human thinking and outlook. Developments which may throw light on human prospects on the earth are so frequent and so dramatic that we wait in suspense upon the pronouncements of our leading scientists, as a prisoner at bar awaits his sentence. . . . For us to assume at this particular instant that progress in human understanding has reached a point where we can now definitely appraise the nature, prospects, and significance of human life in any of its fundamental aspects, seems to me to be naïve.

One cannot conclude from this quotation that Dr. Morgan lacks either respect or enthusiasm for science. His point, rather, is that science is but one of the departments of knowing. He writes elsewhere in the same book:

> I live an "in-between" life. I am committed to the scientific method and spirit, yet I refuse to give up intuition and aspiration as guides to action. I want complete sincerity and commitment of purpose, yet know that all my purposes are tentative and

> immature. I want to live by principle, yet believe that all principles of action are relative. I want to determine belief and opinion by evidence, yet I have intuitive affirmations which I will trust rather than to trust my own personal experience as a guide. . . . The agnostic is the man of balance. Never one side of a question but he sees the possibility of the other side. . . . But the agnostic *life*—the life whose emotions, whose vital sensibilities question whether life is good or not—this is an unbalanced life.

These judgments by Dr. Morgan in behalf of a balanced life are hardly classifiable in terms of scientific knowledge They do not refer to the physical world. Yet they seem to embody the scientific *spirit*—they are measured, impartial judgments based on the experience and reflections of a man living in the physical world. Could we call them a formulation of the sort of knowledge that is possible concerning the *human* world?

Is this a legitimate or a merely imaginary distinction—this giving of the human world an identity of its own? Have we justification for proposing that there are dynamics for human life which are separate from or independent of the dynamics of the material universe?

Well, one might argue that these are questions which can be considered, or ignored, according to personal inclination, while the laws of the material universe represent the conditions of physical survival, and a man cannot neglect them without peril to his life. By this comparison, the idea of a distinctively human world is made to seem a purely optional conception, probably of little importance.

On the other hand, it could also be maintained that believing in a distinctively human world need not have the consequence of making a man a fool in relation to the laws of the physical world. And there is ample testimony to show that not all men—least of all the best men—have regarded physical survival as the sufficient fulfillment of human life. A case might be made for the idea that physical survival is only the minimum requirement of human life, with no bearing at all on whether or not that life is good, or even "worth living."

Still another position might declare the possibility that the "material universe" has much richer potentialities than are now comprehended by science, so that this distinctively human world may some day be recognized as only a significant subdivision of material reality. But that disposes of the question by adding unknown dimensions to our idea of "matter"—which we perhaps ought to do anyhow, on general principles; and it does not help to clarify whether or not an autonomous science of human life should be attempted.

Let us press the issue to extremes. If science is regarded as a means of relating to particular aspects of the physical world in order to do what we want to do—supply practical needs, control various natural forces and resources—if this is the meaning of science, then it does not even pretend to contribute to "meaning" in the human sense, but is simply technique. There are those—the "Positivists"—who define science more or less in this way. There are others, however, who maintain that science is fundamentally an attempt to accumulate knowledge about the real world and everything in it, hoping that, somehow, when scientific knowledge is more complete, even philosophical or human meanings will be disclosed by the vast synthesis of natural processes that will then be before our eyes. It is difficult to quarrel with this generously open-ended view, but impossible, on the other hand, to wait with folded hands for its consummation.

There is also a third account of science, which sees it mainly as therapy and salvation from the delusions of blind faith. In fact, it is impossible to understand the enormously influential role of science in modern civilization without taking into consideration the once all-pervasive systems of religious belief which the scientific outlook has largely replaced.

What we call "Materialism," the assertion that the physical world is the only real world, in terms of which *everything* must be explained, is not the

result of impartial investigation and reflection, but is essentially an aggressive, polemical rejection of what was taught for thousands of years about another, non-physical world, and taught in wide diversity of doctrine with a great deal of internal contradiction. Materialism, as a theory of knowledge, seemed to offer the absolute advantage of replacing with single, uniform, and verifiable explanations the guesses, inventions, and deceptions of religious belief. And this is only the intellectual side of its benefits. The frequent alliance of religious authority with forces of social injustice armed the advocates of Materialism with moral passion. To stamp out other-worldly belief was seen as the means of stamping out the chief sources of social evil in the world. It is clear from eighteenth-century history that the early popularizers of the scientific, this-world outlook deliberately merged the world of distinctive human meaning with the world of physical reality with the intention of *rescuing* human values from the tyranny of theological control. Their idea was to establish rules for human knowing which would absolutely prevent anyone from claiming other-worldly authority. By limiting the possibility of knowledge to this world, and confining truth to what could be publicly established through scientific evidence, the problem of fraudulent authority would be eliminated from human affairs, and this would in itself do much to bring about an actual instead of a mythical Millennium.

This plan might have worked, if, indeed, the world of human meaning were no more than a particular face of the physical world investigated by science; but as it turned out, and as we now know, the increase of knowledge of the physical world did not bring a corresponding illumination of the world of human meaning. Scientific progress did not diminish the common human propensity to confuse belief with knowledge. And the pretense of some men to scientific authority, either to gain support for their social theories, or to win customers for their products, rivals in many ways the priestly claims of past history.

Yet there can be hardly any doubt that the spirit of science—its insistence on impartiality, its preference for agnostic questioning as against emotional acceptance, and its implicit humanitarianism—has been responsible for much of the moral resilience remaining in present-day civilization. This spirit is also behind the gradual emancipation of humanist thought from the assumptions of doctrinaire materialism. And as the various schools of Humanism assimilate the insights and integrating conceptions of the new Humanist psychologists, the idea that there is indeed a world of distinctively *human* knowledge, independent of the findings of physical science, will undoubtedly gain greater influence.

Yet this development is not only a contribution of the recent innovators in psychology. These ideas are "in the air." Take for example another of Arthur Morgan's insights:

> One clear fact has emerged in my mind. In our more human characteristics, in several respects men have outgrown their animal equipment of motivations and impulses, and our progress as men requires us to challenge our biological drives not in all things, but as thinking and experience indicate. That means that men have a real fight in achieving mastery over those phases of their animal nature that need discipline. Recently Julian Huxley, the biologist, expressed the general conviction of students of evolution when he said that through intelligence and its uses the cultural evolution of men can proceed "many hundreds of times as fast" as biological evolution. Men who take advantage of that possibility will be making contributions to human progress.

That human beings need a wisdom more penetrating, a comprehension more universal, than any of the biological or hereditary "givers" of human life—that they need, in short, the vision of transcendence, and the will to transcend—seems the conclusion of all men who, whether practitioners of science or not, decide that there is indeed a distinctively human world with laws and dynamics of its own. In the past—prior, that is to the scientific revolution—it was almost always assumed that this human need (and the longing which corresponds to it) represents the partial

presence, here, in the physical world, of the reality of another world, a world of "spirit." The common doctrine was that heaven and earth meet in man, and that the vortex created by the union in him of the dissimilar forces of these two worlds produced the contradictions and vulnerability as well as the wonder of human nature. We may get back to that view, some day, but for men so recently freed from the oppressions of dogmas about the heavenly world, and its powers and principalities, this still seems a quite dangerous doctrine. We don't *know*, and scientific method has made us very respectful of authentic knowing. Actual knowing is not a capacity that should be cheapened by any sort of eager belief. Yet kept to the status of an abstract or speculative idea, without the possibility of becoming in any way "official," the idea of another world has undeniable attractions.

In the first place, it adds metaphysical symmetry to the picture of the universe and man. How far, one wonders, might we go in this direction, without risking another age of superstition? But it may be equally important to ask: Why not stay where we are, learning to be content in the region marked off by vigorous, agnostic humanism?

Perhaps the best answer to the second question would be that even the agnostic humanist is bound to have private thoughts and wonderings about the *sources* of the distinctively human qualities of human beings—the strivings and aspirations which can have no physical and perhaps no biological explanation. No man of mind is ever satisfied to remain behind static barriers concerning human possibility. And the risks of letting transcendental ideas mature into implications of other-worldly possibility become really dangerous only when these ideas are turned into tools of ideological power. That, at any rate, is the lesson of European history. If we say on principle that there ought to be no barriers to *any* kind of thinking, save when it is made into an official doctrine involving control over the minds and lives of men, we provide the conditions for wholly free philosophizing.

But what sort of other-worldly doctrines have led to psychological and social oppression? There is no confusion here. It is thinking—if it can be called that—which makes men fearful of "spiritual" authority. Any man, group or caste which claims special access to supernatural forces and the power to determine the reward or punishment of others in a life after death, and which uses these claims to control human behavior on earth, is an anti-human authority. But just as anti-human, we should add, would be a political authority which uses coercive power to enforce belief in dogmatic materialism and acceptance of the claim that all ideas of a spiritual world or reality are invariably priestly lies. The issue, then, is not in what a man affirms or denies, but in whether or not he claims an *authority* beyond or outside of reason for what he says.

There is a further consideration in this matter of otherworldly reasoning or thinking. It is quite possible, it seems, for this sort of thinking to be pursued without being named or even recognized by the one who does it. The fact is that dozens of skeptics, agnostics, and atheists can be identified in history as having behaved according to canons which are more consistent with other-worldly thinking than with conceptions based on observations of the "realities" of the physical world. In this world, by the light of sense experience, death is extinction—the final defeat of the organism's struggle for existence. Yet self-sacrifice is a form of human behavior as common among unbelievers as among believers. Free-thinkers have been as constant in high ethical commitment as any follower of an other-worldly religion—and certainly more so in times of religious corruption. They have walked the earth with as much devotion to moral ideals as any man who thought of himself as practicing the rules of a spiritual order while living a material existence.

This sort of unannounced and unclaimed other-worldliness remains functional to the

metaphysics of a transcendental order, though it ignores or even denies the doctrinal conceptions which are commonly used to rationalize such modes of life.

One could argue, on the basis of these demonstrations of virtually godlike behavior in unbelieving men, that the "doctrines" of other-worldly religion or philosophy are only one dimension of the truths they purport to represent; that when a man *acts* in behalf of the common good, totally forgetting his own material interests; or acts, again, for the sake of generations yet unborn—that when he behaves in this way he is proclaiming the deathlessness and universality of his true identity. There is a sense in which death is only an ephemeral appearance for him, since its threat has no power to dissuade him from action he regards as humanly necessary and right.

But why, in any event, should it be proposed that the logical ground of such behavior is other-worldly? Well, it need not be *insisted.* Yet if such matters are kept "unofficial," there is reason for considering every possible justification or explanation of human nobility. And the best way to prevent any one theory of human life from becoming dogmatic is to give free and thoughtful consideration to them all.

In other words, serious thought about human meaning should not capitulate or concede so much to the extreme swings of public opinion regarding such questions. Consider, for example, the curious fact that the incredibly exacting morality of the existentialist idea of individual responsibility has hardly been equalled in rigor except in the Buddhist teaching of Karma, by which every man is similarly held accountable for the consequences of every act. The existentialist claim is that a man is a man, and must act like a man, no matter what; if he falls below the level of true manhood, he must pick himself up and try again. He must do this in spite of any and all adverse circumstances and influences. A man has no excuse for not behaving like a man. Why doesn't the existentialist avail himself of the cosmological background of Buddhist and Upanishadic metaphysics? The answer may lie in a study of the extreme intellectual and moral conditionings of European history. It is as though European man's dignity, having been frustrated and denied for so long by dehumanizing otherworldly claims, resolved fiercely to reverse the field on *all* theories of transcendence, and to demonstrate the timeless reality of the human spirit by acts consistent with nothing but the naked intuition of itself! It is as though a few distinguished men decided to dispense with a high theory of man by anticipating it with an even more wonderful fact, for if the fact of man's noble calling could be acted out in total neglect of any and all doctrines, who then would want doctrines, or from wanting could suffer deception by them?

The world, it is true, lags far behind the example of such men. But here, incidentally, may be illustrated the dramatic difference between the science of the material world and the possible science of the distinctively human world. For in the science of the physical world the object is to identify the reliable uniformities in each range of the natural order. But when we study man, if the object is human improvement, we look for the most uncommon, the most differentiated of the species—for the man who has most effectively transcended the monotonous uniformities of self-centered behavior—and we attend to what *he* reveals in thought or action about the meaning of human life. Sometimes we are able to see at least family resemblances in what various men of this caliber have to say. The science of material things grows with our awareness of the principles of external control, but the science of man seems to begin with discovery of the necessity of internal, *individual* control. This should be reason enough to render ridiculous any claim or expressed hope that a true science of man can ever be made "official."

REVIEW
THE TRANSCENDENTALISTS

THERE are numerous books on community, but too few dealing with those small communities of men who, combining imaginative vision with great moral energy, give the thought of their time a new and enduring elevation. Community is an essential form of the good life, but more important than form is the original shaping intelligence. The Platonic and the Florentine Academies are examples of this order of intelligence. The Founding Fathers make another. The American Transcendentalists are still another, with which Harold C. Goddard's *Studies in New England Transcendentalism* is concerned. First published in 1908 by Columbia University Press, this doctoral dissertation was restored to print by Hillary House in 1960 and is now available from Humanities Press, New York.

Dr. Goddard traces the origins of Transcendentalist thought in the European cultural tradition and illustrates its influence in the lives of its chief American protagonists. The figures chosen for study are William Ellery Channing, Amos Bronson Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Theodore Parker, and Margaret Fuller. The author begins by showing that the Transcendentalists gained their name from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, but gave it a much freer and more popular meaning. As Dr. Goddard says:

> *Transcendental*, in its philosophical sense, was used in connection with this New England movement in a broad and often very elastic way; yet, after all, it had a quite definite and unmistakable meaning, nor can that meaning be said to have undergone any development or change. Emerson, at the beginning of his lecture, *The Transcendentalist*, tells us plainly what that usage was:
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> "It is well known to most of my audience, that the Idealism of the present day acquired the name Transcendental, from the use of that term by Immanuel Kant of Königsberg, who replied to the sceptical philosophy of Locke, which insisted that there was nothing in the intellect which was not previously in the experience of the senses, by showing that there was a very important class of ideas, or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquired; that these were the intuitions of the mind itself; and he denominated them *Transcendental* forms. The extraordinary profoundness and precision of that man's thinking have given vogue to his nomenclature, in Europe and America, to that extent, that whatever belongs to the class of intuitive thought is popularly called at the present day *Transcendental."*

Dr. Goddard offers a clarifying summary of the ideas held in common by the Transcendentalists:

> Transcendentalism was, then, first and foremost, a doctrine concerning the mind, its ways of acting and methods of getting knowledge. Upon this doctrine the New England transcendental philosophy as a whole was built. What the nature of that philosophy was, as has been said, is a matter of general agreement. . . . Of course on minor points there is still plenty of room for controversy. One may discuss endlessly, for instance, how far Emerson's God was a personal being. It may be pointed out wherein in one respect Theodore Parker contradicts Bronson Alcott, or how in another Emerson differs from Margaret Fuller; and indeed in this connection it should not be forgotten that these transcendentalists were variously adapted, by both nature and training, for pure metaphysical thinking. But after everything has been said, there remains no possible doubt that in its large outlines they all held an identical philosophy. This philosophy teaches the unity of the world in God and the immanence of God in the world. Because of this indwelling of divinity, every part of the world, however small, is a microcosm, comprehending within itself, like Tennyson's flower in the crannied wall, all the laws and meaning of existence. The soul of each individual is identical with the soul of the world, and contains, latently, all which it contains. The normal life of man is a life of continuous expansion, the making actual of the potential elements of his being. This may occur in two ways: either directly, in states which vary from the ordinary perception of truth to moments of mystical rapture in which there is a conscious influx of the divine into the human, or indirectly, through the instrumentality of nature. Nature is the embodiment of spirit in the world of sense—it is a great picture to be appreciated; a great book to be read; a great task to be performed. Through the beauty, truth, and goodness incarnate in the natural world, the individual soul comes in contact with and

> appropriates to itself the spirit and being of God. From these beliefs as a center radiate all those others, which, however differently emphasized and variously blended, are constantly met with among the transcendentalists, as, for example, the doctrine of self-reliance and individualism, the identity of moral and physical laws, the essential unity of all religions, complete tolerance, the negative nature of evil, absolute optimism, a disregard for all "external" authority and for tradition, even, indeed, some conceptions not wholly typical of New England transcendentalism, like Alcott's doctrine of creation by "lapse." But always, beneath the rest, is the fundamental belief in the identity of the individual soul with God, and—at the same time the source and the corollary of this belief—an unshakable faith in the divine authority of the intuitions of the soul. Insight, instinct, impulse, intuition—the trust of the transcendentalists in these was complete, and whenever they employ these words they must be understood not in the ordinary but in a highly technical sense. Through a failure to observe this point, and on the supposition that the word "instinct"—in the phrase "Trust your instincts"—has its usual meaning, scores of persons have completely misunderstood and grossly misrepresented the teaching of Emerson and his associates. Intuition—that is the method of the transcendental philosophy; no truth worth the knowing is susceptible of logical demonstration.

This final passage about "intuition" guards against the careless view that the transcendentalists believed certainty in thought could be easily obtained. Dr. Goddard devotes a section to the efforts of both Alcott and Margaret Fuller to control their emotional impulsiveness, of which they became painfully aware. And Emerson, he shows, never indulged himself in merely rapturous enthusiasms.

Much of this book is devoted to certain inevitable paradoxes in transcendentalist thought. How, for example, should a man who believes that the human soul is of the same essence as Deity distinguish between what is possibly a "divine accent" in his utterance, and the merely human or quite erroneous expressions? And what about the reading of books? Should a man devote much time to the thoughts of others when he has such glorious potentialities within himself?

Dr. Goddard's concern for such matters shows his own kinship with the Transcendentalist school. There is the spirit of quiet participation in his examination of these themes. The enjoyer of books and essays written many years later by Dr. Goddard will find in this study of the transcendentalists just about what he might expect of a young man who four decades later would provide lovers of literature with *The Meaning of Shakespeare.*

American Transcendentalism, you could say, came to birth as the reform of a reform. It arose from the discomforts felt by generous and impartial minds within the confinements of the Unitarian religion, itself a departure from the harsh dictates of the earlier Congregational Calvinism. In his final chapter Dr. Goddard traces the various influences which found unity in the thought of the New England reformers. Transcendentalism was, he says, a kind of "French Revolution of American religion." Then he adds:

> Yet the moment we utter such a formula we are constrained to take three-quarters of it back, so vitally different, after all, the two revolutions really were; and the more we reflect the more we feel that this French Revolutionary spirit is rather the indispensable emotional atmosphere in which transcendentalism was to be engendered than the real essence of the movement itself. . . .

The American movement was a Platonic revival; its members were inspired by Coleridge and Wordsworth; they learned German to read Goethe and Schelling; and they studied the sacred books of the East. Yet there was another primary current in their make-up:

> The fact of paramount importance is that these influences came to a group of men who were embodiments in its noblest form of the old New England character. *They were Puritans to the core. This*—and in making the statement it is not forgotten that England was the home of Puritanism—*was the signally American contribution to transcendentalism.*

But these distinguished individuals purged the Puritan heritage of its self-righteousness, and exchanged its cold and narrow rationalism for a

wide hospitality of mind. And, as Dr. Goddard says:

> Not every New England Puritan who read Coleridge and Carlyle became a transcendentalist. It was only in especially prepared minds that the new philosophy found congenial soil, in minds possessing among other things, perhaps, an inborn mystical capacity. So if transcendentalism was the union of a character and a philosophy, it was such a union taking place at a definite time, in specially fertilized soil, under particular conditions. . . .
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> If these things be true, Emerson's relation to his age, then, may be taken as typically transcendental: he was a poet and literary man appealing to the sense of beauty; he was still more a teacher appealing to the love of truth, but doubtless even more than poet or philosopher, he was the prophet and teacher appealing to the will, to the moral and religious nature of man. So, too, transcendentalism: it was a literary movement, a philosophy, and a religion, all in one. There is a Platonic fitness in the triple relation.

For readers who already admire the Transcendentalist writers, this book will add useful historical unities; and those who have explored only a little in this field will find it an engaging invitation to read more.

COMMENTARY
A DISTILLATION

THE book, *Observations,* by Arthur E. Morgan (quoted it this week's lead article), is a compilation of aphoristic expressions drawn from the entire body of Dr. Morgan's writings—the accumulation of some seventy years—put to "ether by the late Vivian Bresnehen. The book has 324 pages, divided into sections covering six general areas—Values, Society, Ethics, Education, Philosophy, and Miscellaneous. In his Introduction, J. Dudley Dawson writes:

> Those who have been close associates of Arthur Morgan often speculate about the human qualities which have made him one of the truly great men of our time. His modest manner, simplicity of living, and intense dedication to both long range purposes and immediate needs have been a central source of strength and influence, though often obscuring him from the main stream of public attention. Observing him in thought and action reveals many distinctive characteristics: the uncanny ability and will to delve into every conceivable aspect of a situation to be faced; the unlimited solicitation and checking of facts, ideas, and opinions from objective and personal sources in order to make a judgment on matters of importance; the extraordinary capacity to combine intuitive with rational processes of thinking (a habit he has deliberately cultivated); the interest and energy to take up any task, no matter how small, to meet an immediate need of a neighbor or a long range need of society; a persistent drive for accuracy, thoroughness and completeness; a constant fertilization of his own ideas and thinking by keeping an active and open companionship with thoughtful people; and finally his never-ending search for meaning and truth and his dedication to purposes which enrich life and society as a whole.

What would be the most enduring element of the lifework of a man like that? Opinions may vary, but we think it is what Mr. Dawson calls "the extraordinary capacity to combine intuitive with rational processes." This is not a capacity of which much can be said. It represents a stance in the midst of life—both a dive into it and an elevation above it. Effective use of intuition does not submit to definition and should not be tortured by analysis. Possibly what Dr. Goddard is quoted (in Review) as saying applies equally here: "no truth worth the knowing is susceptible of logical demonstration."

At any rate, what this indefinable *stance* may bring to human life is nonetheless the demonstration of *Observations,* and it gives the volume a timeless value. One might add that the peculiar contribution of Arthur Morgan has been to show that it is entirely possible to apply timeless values to the limited circumstances of time and place. His book glows with the presence of this achievement. The publisher is the Antioch Press, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387, and the price is $6.00.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION: SOME HISTORY

IN 1965, speaking before a gathering of school administrators, Harold Taylor predicted a revival of the ideas of Progressive Education. For years president of Sarah Lawrence College, Dr. Taylor was himself an active Progressive educator. In this address, titled "Whatever Became of Progressive Education?", he said that the necessities of the "war on poverty" would oblige teachers "to face the problem of the individual child, to deal with each child in his own terms where he is, what he is, what he is ready to do, how he can best be taught, how he can achieve his own intellectual independence."

While there may be various reasons why the mood of the progressive educators of the 1930's could not be wholly revived in the 1960's, Dr. Taylor's account of the meaning and intent of this movement seems briefly accurate:

> The philosophy underlying the progressive approach to education is one of progress and development, whether in individual human growth or in the case of whole societies. Full growth of the human intelligence cannot be achieved unless the conditions of that growth exist, and, accordingly, education must take account of the entire complex of factors which affect the life of the child. On the other hand, if a society is to advance to higher levels of quality, it will do so only through advances in the quality of its educational system. Education must therefore take on a social dimension, and the school and college must be considered to be instruments of social change and agents of cultural and social growth.

Implicit in this statement are the sources of the tensions which led to persistent conflicts within the Progressive movement, and also, in time, to angry political attacks on its leaders. Any serious effort to revive Progressive Education, along the lines suggested by Dr. Taylor, will need to take account of these tensions.

But a consideration of this subject ought to begin with full recognition of the moral inspiration which brought Progressivism to birth. The strength of this inspiration grew out of large-hearted, spontaneous, altruistic concern. It was love of children and devotion to their needs as growing human beings that gave this great educational reform its commitment and ardor. If, during the late 1930's and in the 1940's, confusion and cross-purposes developed among progressive educators, these troubles had honorable origins, and it is hardly possible to understand what happened to the movement without gaining, first, some appreciation of the feelings and intentions which found expression in those devoted to the Progressive cause. It may be doubted that the stimulus of the legislative war on poverty will generate a comparable flow of resolve.

But what were the "tensions" on which the movement foundered? If this question can have a clear answer, it is to be found in a new book by C. A. Bowers of the University of Oregon, *The Progressive Educator and the Depression*, published in paperback ($2.95) as one of the Random House Studies in Education. From concern for the good of the child, Prof. Bowers shows, many progressive educators turned to practical plans for a society that would allow them to serve the child's interest more effectively. In order to teach well, they said, the teacher must become a social reformer.

Well, how do you "change" society? There was no lack of theories of social change during the early 1930's, when America was deep in the throes of the Great Depression. Fear, insecurity, and manifest injustice were all about, and good Americans have never been lacking in devotion to justice. How do you get justice? First you get power, and then, having both power and good intentions, you *institute* justice and other righteous arrangements. Leaping directly into his subject, Prof. Bowers says in his first paragraph:

> In 1932, George Counts, a professor of education at Teachers College (Columbia), challenged American educators to reach for political power and lead the nation to socialism. Many of the nation's leading educational theorists who accepted his challenge and spoke out about the purposes of education during the depression years possessed a sense of mission that had been a characteristic of American educators since the nineteenth century.

> Only their ideas about the social function of education had changed.

The result of this proposal was the division of the ranks of progressive educators into two factions:

> One faction argued that the social and moral condition of man could not be improved until his social environment had been radically overhauled. Motivated by the same feeling of mission that characterized their socially conservative predecessors, members of this group believed that it was to directly reform economic and social institutions. By promoting such involvement, they were raising the fundamental theoretical problem of the progressive education movement. This group believed that the educator should identify the prevailing social ills and then deliberately use the schools to correct them, and their opponents felt that the educator should leave the task of social reform to others and concentrate on giving the student the necessary noëtic skills for functioning later as an intelligent and socially effective adult. The opposing faction, although they were interested in creating a better society, thought social improvement could be achieved through indirect means only. Their first concern was to release the creative energies of the child. If the child were freed from the domination of an unsympathetic adult world and if his creative powers were nourished, they thought, he would be better equipped as an adult to identify for himself those areas in society that required reform. Although the two factions of the progressive education movement held opposing points of view on the school's responsibility for social reform, they both claimed to be the true custodians of the principles of progressive education that John Dewey had promulgated in *Democracy and Education.* The depression brought these underlying doctrinal differences to the surface and intensified the ensuing conflict that left the progressive education movement deeply divided from the early nineteen-thirties until 1947. In that year, those who advocated that the educator should make social reform a direct responsibility of the schools finally won control of the moribund movement.

This seems an adequate summary of a book of more than 250 pages detailing the arguments, passions and polemics of progressive educators of differing persuasion over a period of some twenty years. It is easy to see that disaster came to the progressive movement from the politicalization of the ideals of education, yet not so easy to see how this misfortune might have been averted, given the temper of the times, the urgencies of human need, and the delusions of Americans generally concerning the efficacy of political power. The impact of the depression brought home to all persons of intelligence the helplessness of a society in the grip of the massive malfunction of a complicated technological structure—and how could all this be avoided save by intelligent planning to prevent conditions of poverty and want from continuing on and on?

Prof. Bowers' book is important as a means of recognizing the integrity of the men who were involved in this argument. After all, their confidence in the potentialities of power expressed the common faith of those days, and it was their irrepressible concern for children that drove them into the position which made them so vulnerable to attack. One also learns from this book the necessity of the ardor of intelligent men in behalf of education. By comparison, their mistakes are unimportant, since few teachers are really "political people," but in this case they found themselves launched into politics by what seemed to them the inexorable logic of the times. One is struck, in reading the reports of debates and manifestos, by the efforts of these teachers to practice intellectual honesty. Some of them changed their minds, and if the uncertainties of others made them ineffectual in controversy and failures as partisans, this weakness was a credit to their personal integrity. One learns from this book not only the follies of politicalizing educational objectives, but also the greater folly of making men like these teachers the targets of remorseless political attack. The book is not a book about who was right and who was wrong. It is a book about deep and still unsolved human problems, from which the critics of Progressive Education have as much to learn as even the most doctrinaire of the "social reformers."

FRONTIERS

At the Time of Death

ONE page of the material in the current (fourth) edition of A *Manual of Simple Burial,* by Ernest Morgan (Celo Press, Burnsville, North Carolina, $1.00), will give an idea of the contents and importance of this booklet:

> We have, in the United States and Canada, an amazing custom of displaying dead bodies in a costly and elaborate routine. Each year, in response to this custom, nearly two million American families put themselves through an emotional ordeal and spend upwards of two billions of dollars doing so.
>
> When death occurs in a family in which there has been no planning, the survivors find themselves virtually helpless in the face of entrenched custom, and dealing with a funeral director who expects them to follow this custom. Through advance planning, however, a family can have the precedent, information, and moral support needed to get the type of service it wants.
>
> Advance planning is needed, not alone in making arrangements with funeral directors, but for working out understanding within the family. A young man killed recently in an accident left a widow and young children with no savings. Both husband and wife believed in simple burial, and the widow was fortunate in getting a funeral director who encouraged her to carry out her desire for a simple and economical arrangement. The young man's mother, however, though she was unable to help with the expenses, insisted on an elaborate funeral.
>
> Since there had been no advance planning, the wife was unable to resist and not only had to endure a type of ceremony which was distressing to her, but had to face life with small children, her husband gone, and a thousand-dollar funeral debt hanging over her.

Mr. Morgan's booklet was prepared to help people to avoid such situations and to stimulate recognition that no one needs to submit to ostentatious and costly conventions at the time of death. He points out:

> A departure from prevailing burial custom, if carefully planned in advance, and responsibly carried out, is normally accepted by family and friends and respected by the community. If attempted without advance planning it is likely to fall through or else can lay the family open to conflict, embarrassment and public misunderstanding.
>
> To help with advance planning, non-profit funeral and memorial societies have been formed in some 120 cities in the United States and Canada. These societies cooperate with funeral directors, sometimes by having contracts with them and sometimes by advising their members as to which firms provide the desired service. . . .
>
> With the guidance of these societies thousands of member families are now being helped to secure dignity, simplicity and economy in their funerals. In the year 1966 the Peoples Memorial Association [of Seattle, Washington) alone was instrumental in helping 600 member families in which deaths occurred to get exactly the services they wanted, at savings conservatively calculated at around $300,000. Yet the one-time membership fees paid by these 600 families totalled less than $1200—and the families are still covered for future need.

The *Manual* fulfills various needs. It supplies much practical information concerning the immediate obligations of survivors at the time of death, providing a check-list which may be followed by the one assuming responsibility for funeral arrangements and cremation or interment. It describes in detail the functions performed by funeral and memorial societies, the first of which were founded in 1939. It tells how, in 1962, on the initiative of the Cooperative League, plans for an organization of all these groups were laid, resulting, a year later, in the formation of the Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies. The *Manual* reproduces the by-laws of this association, tells how to organize a memorial society, and lists the various member societies by state and city, as of a year ago. (Frequent editions of the *Manual* keep this list up to date.) The address of the Continental Association is 59 East Van Buren Street, Chicago, Ill. The present edition of the *Manual* also lists cooperative burial associations, mostly in Iowa and Minnesota.

The *Manual* has a number of sections (totalling 64 pages), including a thoughtful discussion of the meaning of death and suggestions for simple services. It gives the

following explanation of the high cost of conventional funerals:

> There are about 1,800,000 deaths each year in the United States. Divide these between 24,000 morticians and you have only 75 funerals per year. Forty-three per cent of these morticians handle less than one adult funeral per week, and only twenty-five per cent handle as many as two per week. . . . The situation in Canada is much the same.
>
> An official of the National Selected Morticians (a leading trade association of the funeral industry) remarked that 2,000 firms could handle all the funeral business in America. Even trebling his figure, there are four times too many. A community which is adequately served by one bank, one printshop, and one lumber yard will commonly have several fully equipped mortuaries, all of them standing idle even half the time. A printer whose plant stands idle even half the time can hardly survive in free competition. His prices will have to be too high. How do the 43 per cent of the morticians manage whose plants are idle over 80 per cent of the time?
>
> They manage because they can and do charge the overhead of days or weeks of living expense and idle plant to a single funeral. This is possible because competition does not exist in their business in the same way it does in other businesses.

Of greatest interest, perhaps, to some readers will be the account of the extremely simple but entirely adequate procedures adopted by the members of Friends Meetings in Ohio, Maryland, and North Carolina. The needs incident to death are met directly by a committee:

> The routines are handled by friends without pay: making the box, attending to legal details, removing the body, conducting the memorial meeting and extending fellowship and assistance to the family. The experience of shared responsibility has proved to be a maturing and meaningful one.
>
> At time of death, or when death is expected, the first action is to give the family support in whatever ways may be needed. Help with the children or with food, a lift with the housework, hospitality for visiting relatives—a rallying of friends in a quiet coordinated way. This is done by the Meeting, not just by the committee.
>
> Immediately on death a committee member takes the death certificate to the county health office and gets a transit permit. The next of kin endorses the Registration of Intent and signs an authorization to cremate. (He also gives the committee a check made out to the crematory for the cost of cremation. Later he pays the committee for the cost of the lumber in the box plus legal fees and incidentals. No personal services are paid for, and the total expense is usually under $100.)
>
> The time and place of a memorial meeting are decided, generally three or four days after death. Friends and relatives are notified and an obituary is given to the newspapers. Apart from consulting on the general plan of the memorial meeting the family is not called upon to make any decisions at the time of death.
>
> The committee gets from its storage a plain plywood box of suitable size, places the body in it, loads it into a station wagon and delivers it to the crematory or medical school, where a receipt is obtained. The metal handles are removed from the box and taken back for future use. In the case of cremation the ashes may be called for in a day or so, or may be sent by mail.

In this case, what mortuary advertising call the "last personal service" is performed by friends, simply and devotedly, with no intrusion of "business." This seems a natural return to individuals of the role of caring for one another, and in a spirit which, in any event, cannot be purchased.