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A MODEST PURSUIT OF REALITY

HAVING in mind inquiry—rather a foray—into the formidable subject of "Reality," we begin by taking Plato's advice. Whenever, he said, you want to look at large questions, questions on which human opinions are many, ambiguous, contradictory and uncertain, it becomes necessary to divide them up. Where do you divide them? At the "joints," he said, as a good butcher would do. Don't just hack at them anywhere. So, looking for natural joints in the subject of Reality, a passage of wisdom and charm in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* came to mind.

> To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was the wilderness an adversary to the pioneer.
>
> But to the laborer in repose, able for a moment to cast a philosophical eye on his world, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life.

For the laborer engrossed in his projects, the how-to books deal with reality. This is the outlook of the engineer and we can't do without it. In order to think about the meaning of life, we need at least to be clothed and fed. Gandhi said this quite simply. To the hungry man, he said, God dare not appear except in the form of bread. We see the point of that. But if we also agree that bread, while necessary, is not sufficient, the question becomes How much bread do we need? When does it become suitable—or even necessary—to tell the engineering department of our being to relax and get out of the way? R. H. Tawney put the matter with characteristic reserve: "From a spiritual being who, in order to survive, must devote a reasonable attention to economic interests, man seems sometimes to become an economic animal, who will be prudent, nevertheless, if he takes due precautions to assure his spiritual well-being."

What Tawney called "due precautions" became for Schumacher a central theme. In a paper prepared in 1974, "Modern Pressures and Environment," he wrote:

> The whole of human life, it must be said, is a dialogue between man and his environment, a sequence of questions and responses. We pose questions to the universe by what we do, and the universe, by its response, informs us of whether our actions fit into its laws or not. Small transgressions evoke limited or mild responses; large transgressions evoke general, threatening, and possibly violent responses. The very universality of the environmental crisis indicates the universality of our transgressions. It is the philosophy or metaphysics—of materialism which is being challenged, and the challenge comes not from a few saints and sages, but from the environment. This is a new situation.

It is new by reason of the dimensions of the crisis, and perhaps new, also, because of our growing awareness that the skills of the engineer offer no solution. In other words, we can no longer put off the sort of reflections about meaning which Leopold said are normally pursued by the laborer in repose. We now have to learn to think about large questions while hard at work. As Schumacher said:

> Today, the same message reaches us from the universe itself. It speaks the language of pollution, exhaustion, breakdown, over-population, and also terrorism, genocide, drug addiction, and so forth. It is unlikely that the destructive forces which the materialist philosophy has unleashed can be "brought under control" simply by mobilizing more resources—of wealth, education and research—to fight pollution, to preserve wildlife, to discover new sources of energy and to arrive at more effective agreements on peaceful coexistence. Everything points to the fact that what is most needed today is a revision of the ends which all our efforts are meant to serve, And this implies that above all else we need the development of a life-style which accords to material things their proper, legitimate place, which is secondary and not primary.

There are of course several unopened boxes of meaning in this passage. What, for one thing, is the philosophy or metaphysics of Materialism, and what may be wrong with it? And what is what Tawney called "spiritual wellbeing"? We'll come back to these questions, since their importance is obvious, but Schumacher has something further to say about the application of what is no doubt the materialistic theory in our common life:

> The "logic of production" is neither the logic of life nor that of society. It is a small and subservient part of both. Its destructive effects cannot be brought under control—so that the destructive forces cease to be unleashed. The chance of mitigating the rate of resource depletion or of bringing harmony into the relation between man and his environment is non-existent as long as there is no idea anywhere of *a life-style which treats Enough as good and More-than-enough as being of evil.* Here lies the real challenge, and no amount of technical ingenuity can evade it.

The crux of this passage is the meaning of "enough." How does one decide when enough of any "thing" or collection of things has been obtained? This question soon provokes another inquiry: What are we doing here? Are we just "surviving," as the evolutionary biologists might tell us, or are we accumulating things which satisfy our appetites and also enjoying ourselves to the limit (or more), as some psychologists might maintain; or does our life have a meaning beyond such activities? We certainly need an answer to these questions in order to have any sort of opinion on what "enough" may mean.

The question of what we are doing here seems connected with our "spiritual well-being." Implicit in Schumacher's argument is the idea that we can't really tell how to serve our material well-being properly without taking the stance of our spiritual nature and judging in its light. The neglect of that light, he suggests, has allowed the numerous excesses which are giving both the planet and its inhabitants such a bad time.

This is where the issue begins to define itself. That light doesn't shine in the same way for each one of us. Or if it does, we see it differently. Some of us, perhaps, are more fogbound than others. The matter becomes embarrassing to talk about, and undemocratic, too. People see the light at different times, in different relations, and there is a vast literature of claims and counter-claims concerning what is the *true* light. Except for determined materialists, we may all agree that there *is* a spiritual light, but the consensus usually stops right there. And after listening to the confusion of arguments about it, the engineer says, "I told you so," and goes back to the brilliant, precise, and demonstrable calculations that he learned from Galileo and some others.

During the three hundred years occupied by the shaping of this general response—the one made by the engineer—it began to seem apparent that modern man could get a pretty good idea of "reality" without attention to any sort of unearthly light. Looking for "meaning," it was implied, early in our century, would only distract us from learning to understand, "objectively," how things work. "Science," said the eminent biologist, Lloyd Morgan, "deals exclusively with changes of configuration, and traces the accelerations which are observed to occur, leaving to metaphysics to deal with the underlying agency, if it exist."

In other words, the definers of reality in our time would have nothing to do with "metaphysics." The rigor and method of this discipline were not only unknown to them, but regarded with virtual contempt. Schumacher and others now maintain that this deliberate avoidance of the realm of moral and metaphysical ideas—because of its "subjectivity"—has resulted in practical disaster because the questions requiring moral and metaphysical answers are no longer even asked. And today, as Schumacher notes, the reproaches no longer come from only "a few saints and sages," but from outraged Nature herself.

What, then, is Materialism? We take the answer from Chapman Cohen's *Materialisim Restated* (London: Pioneer Press, 1926):

> . . . the essence of the Materialistic conception is that all the changes in this world of ours, physical, chemical, biological, and psychological, are strictly deterministic in character. The one thing that would be fatal to Materialism would be the necessity for assuming a controlling and directing intelligence at any part of the cosmic process. Against any such necessity we have the whole force of scientific thought. Science has been able to develop only so far as it has set on one side this primitive anthropomorphic conception and worked as though Materialism were an accepted fact.

This seems a clear enough statement. One of its meanings is that there can be order—wonderfully impressive order—without any intelligence behind it. Another meaning is that there is no directing intelligence in man, since we are part of the cosmic process. (This seems to drain all significance from the word "intelligence," but materialists do not appear to be troubled by the loss.)

The attitude opposite to Materialism—call it "Idealism"—has abbreviated expression in a familiar sentence by Immanuel Kant, in his *Critique of Pure Reason:*

> Two things fill the mind with ever new and increasing wonder—the starry heavens above me and the moral law within me.

This utterance bears the quality of man's spiritual being. Such wonder springs from the feeling that there is an order of reality which is not physical, and we think or believe this without seeing anything of it with our physical eyes. Its reality has undeniable presence for us, but we are wholly unable to "explain" it to others except in symbolic terms.

What, then, is Spirit—a reality implied by Tawney's reference to "spiritual well-being"? We have difficulty with this question because most of our working definitions relate to material things—which can be measured or otherwise described—whereas spirit is precisely not something that has materiality. Yet the word has meaning. What meaning? We might begin to get at it by saying that spirit is the principle in us which is *aware.* That is to say, spirit is consciousness. We need to say more, because there are levels of awareness. We are aware of bodies and physical existence and are able to compose large manuals relating to the characteristics and properties of the visible world. But we are also aware of certain familiar concomitants of living in the world—heat and cold, dark and light, up and down. These are qualities of the world or the things in the world, but they are not really independent qualities since they are partly the result of our modes of awareness. Our consciousness participates in them. They are the product of both subject and object. Then there are other qualities to which we give much attention, in which our awareness really dominates, such as pleasure and pain. Still another level of awareness presents us with ideas such as knowledge and ignorance, and also a large range of paradoxes turning on terms like illusion, analogy, similitude. Next there is the consciousness of both love and hate, each with a wide range, and beauty and ugliness, and what we call wisdom, the meaning of which is more implicit than explicit, and probably will remain so. Finally, we have consciousness of our consciousness.

It seems a kind of folly to be too systematic about these matters, yet the distinctions are there and need to be made. It is of interest, also, that the language we use to consider and discuss them is largely borrowed from the categories of sense experience. The meanings we develop for these mostly subjective areas are expressed in analogues. Without too much strain we could say that the language relating to the activities of consciousness is a symbolic language, based on parallels to sense experience, although we know perfectly well that it does not refer to sense experience. Speaking of Nature, Emerson made this explicit:

> Nature offers all her creatures to [the poet] as a picture language. Being used as a type, a second wonderful value appears in the object, far better than its old value, as the carpenter's stretched cord, if you hold your ear close enough, is musical in the breeze.

> "Things more excellent than any image," says Jamblichus, "are expressed through images." Things admit of being used as symbols, because nature is a symbol, in the whole, and in every part. . . . Since everything in nature answers to a moral power, if any phenomenon remains brute and dark, it is because the corresponding faculty in the observer is not active.

Again, what is Spirit? It is the consciousness of the poet, the human, looking at forms, movements, and signs of itself in other forms. How does spirit behave? We know only from what we do ourselves, and then, in some measure, from the evident patterns of other human behavior which we learn to generalize. We have longings to go out, and out, and then to go back and back. We hunger to know, then to realize, and then to join our knowings and realizations with other centers of consciousness and knowing. We feel love for our fellows, who seem and indeed are *alter egos,* and then, because they too have gone out but in other directions, we may feel dislike for them, sensing the otherness in them more than the relatedness to ourselves. Spirit or consciousness does all this, depending upon its modes of perception and the direction and focus of its awareness.

Since we know some of these things about ourselves, and since a category of consciousness is good and evil, we have also what people call *conscience,* which, broadly speaking, is our sense of what *ought* to be. Conscience is as much a part of human experience as the sun in the heavens, although for some the skies of conscience may appear to remain cloudy for a long, long time. The meaning of conscience can be expanded to an identity with what we call intuition, or reduced to backward-looking regrets. The point is that intuition or conscience makes us aware of both what is and what ought to be.

The laborer in repose, then, when thinking about the meaning of his life and how best to spend the rest of it, gives rein to this inner (spiritual?) faculty. This is the pursuit of his spiritual well-being, and if we can abide the paradox that spirit, while expressing itself in individuals, is also one, then spiritual well-being means the good of all. Ethical ideas come from this root reality.

By these reflections about consciousness—the consciousness of human beings—we are led to the view that the nature of man is an *unfinished* nature, something yet to be completed, since we are continually moved to act by longing. It is as Socrates explained in the *Symposium*—one who loves is incomplete. His completion is his work in the world. The vision of completion is the real world, since we move toward or away from it, and design all our theories in terms of what we believe to be the right moves to make. All theory seeks some completion.

As human beings strive for completion—and we are most fully human during this striving—the real world is seen as the world beyond. Socrates, speaking for philosophers in the *Republic,* said that he would live by the laws of their *ideal* city, bringing this reply from Glaucon:

> I understand, he said. You mean the city whose establishment we have described, the city whose home is in the ideal, for I think that it can be found nowhere on earth.
>
> Well, said I, perhaps there is a pattern of it laid up in heaven for him who wishes to contemplate it and so beholding to constitute himself its citizen. But it makes no difference whether it exists now or ever will come into being. The politics of this city only will be his and of none other.
>
> That seems probable, he said.

The geometer's insistence on the priority of the world held in his imagination echoes the Socratic commitment. As Louis J. Halle puts it in *Men and Nations:*

> We accept the straight line as a concept of perfection that exists only in the imagination. We assume that the mark on the paper represents an attempt to imitate it with necessarily imperfect results. Suppose, however, that a critic of this reasoning should assert that the penciled line, while it might be regarded as an imperfect representation of the concept of one-dimensional extension in one direction, might better be regarded as a perfect representation of the concept of a shape that had just

> such length, just such width, and just such variations from straightness.
>
> I reply that there is no such concept. The straight line, as we have defined it, presents itself to our minds as an elemental concept in nature, while the shape that corresponds exactly to the mark on the paper has no such standing. . . . I conclude that we have in our minds, as a matter of nature, a pattern of logical order that finds its expression in certain elemental concepts. When we look out at the concrete world we do so in terms of this pattern. We look for correspondences to it, and what we find, at best, are only approximations, correspondences that are more or less imperfect. Finding them, our vision strains to see in them correspondences for which we are looking. It strains to correct the disorder, to assimilate it to the pattern of the ideal order which exists as a fact of nature in our minds. In the imperfection of the one world, consequently, we see the perfection of the other.

People affirm this principle in various ways—that Reality, which is what we want to realize, is beyond the world of the senses, although it may even create, however imperfectly, much of the world of the senses. As the potter, Carla Needleman puts it: when she tries to work mindlessly with the body alone—

> it quickly becomes evident that when I try to "let go" in this way I am reaching "down" into the body—that is, into the animal body—not "up" toward the intelligent body. . . . Of course, the thought has not gone away and is in some peculiar way responsible for the results of the idea that I can just shut off all discrimination and "allow" pure creation to take place. It's an atheistic thought, as a matter of fact, as if creation could exist in the absence of a Creator, or I could throw a pot with my lower jaw slack and a foggy look in my eyes!

The philosopher, the geometer, the craftsman, the poet, the artist—all the makers of wholes—say the same thing, that the real world is the world of the imagination. Nietzsche declared that when we lose the sense of reality for this real world, then our visible world begins to lose its coherence. Actually, all or any of the worlds we inhabit are held together by the power of our consciousness. This being the case, where does "reality" lie?

REVIEW
MORONS OR MEN?

[This article in review by Harold Goddard, teacher of English literature and author of *The Meaning of Shakespeare*, was supplied to us by a member of his family. So far as we know, it has not been previously published. We are happy to present it here as an example of a richly endowed mind at work. Discussed is the somewhat soured brilliance of another richly endowed mind—Albert Jay Nock, whose effective writing deserved the thoughtful critical attention given it by Harold Goddard. His review shows how the resources of literature may be used by one who knows them and imaginatively understands their potentialities.]

IN his article, "Are All Men Human?" in the January, 1926, *Harper's* [oddly enough, we couldn't find it in *Harper's*], Albert Jay Nock suggests a possible key to many of the most puzzling moral and social problems of our time. The fact may be, he declares, that the great mass of mankind are not human beings at all but creatures "psychically incapable of progress beyond, say, the level of an eight-year-old human child." Mr. Nock insists that he is making out a case neither for nor against this hypothesis. But the tone of his essay and the character of his references to men like Hamilton and Hegel show how he inclines. "I do not at the moment," he says, "recall a single apparent anomaly in the collective behaviour of man that this idea does not resolve." His article, as can be seen from its title, which might have been "Are Most Men Morons?", falls in with a widespread tendency at present to look on the whole democratic movement of the last century and a half as a "thundering blunder."

It is not my intention to attack or defend Mr. Nock's thesis directly. Instead, I should like merely to set over against each other two quotations which floated into my mind as I was reading his essay, in the belief that the contrast between them may be more illuminating than many pages of discussion.

The first—words of a psychiatrist in a case before the Municipal Court of one of our largest cities—appeared in a newspaper under the caption: MORONS SAVING U.S. CIVILIZATION, EXPERT ASSERTS. If the report in any way misrepresents the speaker, whom I will leave anonymous, it is at least perfectly characteristic of a familiar attitude:

> It is no exaggeration to state that morons are the most indispensable class of our citizens. Our whole industrial civilization rests upon their shoulders, and could only exist by their labor.
>
> They do, and do well, with satisfaction to themselves, most of the routine tasks incident to an age of machinery. Nobody else would or could do certain kinds of these tasks.
>
> An intellectual, with his energy running toward goals not dreamed by the moron, would wreck the works in an hour if he was set to do the work of a factory. Even outside the deadly factory there are many jobs that the subnormal can do as well as those more highly endowed—in homes, on farms, in construction trades and in many other places.
>
> All of us know many men with moron intelligence and low school proficiency who are steady workmen, supporting their families and keeping the laws of the State. No one would deny their social and economic value.

Following which, the psychiatrist goes on to point out that while the moron must receive great credit for his value as a worker he is at the same time responsible for much crime. A reservation that provides food for thought.

And now over against this let me put part of a letter from William James to his wife, written in Vienna in 1882:

> I wish you could have been with me yesterday to see some French pictures at the "Internationale Kunst Ausstellung"; they give an idea of the vigor of France in that way just now. One, a peasant woman, in all her brutish loutishness sitting staring before her at noonday on the grass she's been cutting, while the man lies flat on his back with a straw hat over his face. She with such a look of infinite unawakedness, such childlike virginity under her shapeless body and in her face, as to make it a poem. Dear, perhaps the deepest impression I've got since I've been in Germany is that made on me by the indefatigable beavers of old wrinkled peasant women, striding like

> men through the streets, dragging their carts or lugging their baskets, minding their business, seeming to notice nothing in the stream of luxury and vice, but belonging far away, to something better and purer. Their poor, old, ravaged and stiffened faces, their poor old bodies dried up with ceaseless toil, their patient souls make me weep. "They are our conscripts." They are the venerable ones whom we should reverence. All the mystery of womanhood seems incarnated in their ugly being—the Mothers! the Mothers! Ye are all one! Yes, Alice dear, what I love in you is only what these blessed old creatures have; and I'm glad and proud, when I think of my own dear Mother with tears running down my face, to know that she is one with these. Good-night, good-night!

William James was just as capable as any professional psychiatrist of taking a scientific attitude toward low intelligence, but he was also capable, as this letter demonstrates, of something more.

So too, I might add, was W. H. Hudson, whose sensitive portrait of the old samphire gatherer (in *A Traveller in Little Things*) notes just what James does, in Hudson's own simple but incomparable way. I can quote only a few sentences from it, but I hope they may suggest its flavor:

> . . . her figure was that of a feeble old woman, yet she moved—I had almost said flitted—over that damp level ground in a surprisingly swift light manner. . . . [She had] thick grey hair on an uncovered head, a lean dark face with regular features and grey eyes that were not old and looked steadily at mine, affecting me with a sudden mysterious sadness. For they were unsmiling eyes and themselves expressed an unutterable sadness, as it appeared to me at the first swift glance; or perhaps not that, as it presently seemed, but a shadowy something which sadness had left in them, when all pleasure and all interest in life forsook her, with all affections, and she no longer cherished either memories or hopes.

Before handing over this question which Mr. Nock pronounces "by far the most important of all that are now before the world" to the anthropologists and psychologists, on whose omniscience he seems to rely, it might be well to ask whether they also are capable of "something more." For is it not just possible that this is "something more" than a scientific question?

May it not be that these creatures-that-pass-for-men are neither animals nor men, but both, and that whether their brutal or their human element is to be ascendant will depend on how we treat them, which in turn will depend on what we think of them? If we think of them as inferiors, we shall enslave them. History proves that or it proves nothing. In which case we shall need again the warning of Abraham Lincoln:

> If A can prove, however conclusively, that he may of right enslave B, why may not B snatch the same argument and prove equally that he may enslave A? You say A is white and B is black. It is color, then; the lighter having the right to enslave the darker. Take care. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with a fairer skin than your own. You do not mean color exactly? You mean the whites are intellectually the superiors of the blacks, and therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule you are to be slave to the first man you meet with an intellect superior to your own.

If Lincoln is right, the branding of other men as mentally inferior has uncomfortable logical consequences. "Shall I not treat all men like gods?" asked Emerson. "Oh yes, *Emerson,"* you say, dismissing him without remembering, probably, that that transcendentalist suggested a solution to our own problem of slavery which, if adopted, we now retrospectively see might have saved us the Civil War. But there are plenty of other wise men beside Emerson. Indeed, it is significant that the group of writers who probably understood the masses of humanity as well as any highly articulate men who ever lived—the pre-War masters of Russian fiction—share completely the attitude of William James. It is fashionable just now to say that Tolstoy sentimentalizes his peasants. I am not so sure. But certainly Dostoevsky doesn't, nor does Chekhov who, it will be remembered, was himself only a little over a generation from serfdom.

Readers of Dostoevsky's masterpiece will recall how Ivan Karamazov, on the way to his

third and final interview with his father's murderer, collides with a drunken peasant and leaves him fallen to perish in the snow and how, after that interview, when the forces of regeneration have begun to work within him, Ivan stumbles on the same peasant's motionless body and gives him help. There is profound symbolism in that simple incident.

Says a character in Chekhov:

> I was growing used to the peasants, and I felt more and more drawn to them. . . . There really was filth and drunkenness and foolishness and deceit, but with all that one felt that the life of the peasants rested on a firm, sound foundation. However uncouth a wild animal the peasant following the plough seemed, and however he might stupefy himself with vodka, still, looking at him more closely, one felt that there was in him what was needed, something very important which was lacking in Masha and the doctor, for instance and that was that he believed the chief thing on earth was truth and justice, and that his salvation, and that of the whole people, was only to be found in truth and justice, and so more than anything in the world he loved just dealing.

If anyone misses in the American factory worker the virtue that Chekhov finds in the Russian peasant, that does not affect the argument, for its absence may be attributed to social and religious rather than biological differences. The factory worker certainly comes from nothing *lower* than peasant stock.

If we may grant that our one hundred and fifty years of democracy have not been a total success, we should not necessarily attribute that fact to the poor quality of "human" stock. It may have been because we have trusted too automatically to political democracy without taking the trouble to create social democracy—because you and I have for our own supposed comfort allowed other men to be treated not as individuals but as a crowd. *All* men so treated react as brutes—if they are awake enough to react at all. "Infinite unawakedness!" That is what William James found in the loutish peasant woman. It is a startling phrase. To kill a man in his sleep has always been reckoned one of the lowest of crimes. Even a beast of prey, it is said, will not do that. What right have we to stab with our moral and intellectual judgments men and women who may be just asleep? After we have made an honest attempt to awaken them it will be time enough to submit them to our intelligence tests. And, most importantly, before we condemn the masses of men as inferior beings we should be sure that our judgment is not tinctured with unconscious shame at accepting our happiness at the price of their toil:

> "We go on, and on, and on . . . We take from life what is hardest and bitterest in it, and we leave you what is easy and joyful; and sitting at supper, you can coldly and sensibly discuss why we suffer and perish, and why we are not as sound and satisfied as you."

How shall we treat our fellow men? *That* is the supreme question. Are we going to line up on it with Hamilton and Hegel, or with Jefferson and Lincoln, with Tolstoy, Dostoevsky and Chekhov, with Emerson and William James? On one thing we can all agree. It will make a terrific difference.

HAROLD C. GODDARD

COMMENTARY
THE "INDISPENSABLE CLASS"

EVIDENCE of the sort assembled by the psychiatrist quoted by Harold Goddard in this week's Review led a young Australian, Niall Brennan, to report the results of some "experiments" (during 1940-42) with subnormal girls classed as "morons." Given jobs in Australian factories producing radios and textiles, they performed so well that the managers described their work as "at least equal to, and in many cases better than" the accomplishment of "normal" girls. The psychiatrists in charge of the institutions caring for the girls were quite pleased, and so were the industrialists. The young women (subnormal men, too) found fulfillment in earning a living, while the employers now had a supply of docile, reliable labor during the war years when manpower was scarce.

Brennan, however, thought the really important question had not been raised:

> When morons can be fitted into industry on an immediate parity with the normal employees, the question, on whose level this equality has been achieved, must also be asked. It may be good to discover that in a modern industrial plant there are conventional processes which can be performed by a boy with a mental age of less than eight years, and a severe lack of muscular coordination. It may be fine for the boy. But what were the "normal" adults doing in this same process before the crippled and retarded boy came along to do it for them? No really normal person can afford to ignore the frightening implications in the discovery that many "normal" men and women are working in jobs at which subnormals are equally and sometimes more efficient. . . . If the demands made on a man by society are no greater than those which can be satisfied by a moron, then the unwanted faculties of a normal man will atrophy, and the next and near stage is the conversion, more accurately the subversion, of a normal man into a moron. Just how far is all this industrial progress making morons out of men? It is a question worth trying to answer.

The answers Brennan found by working at various jobs and studying their effects on himself and others supply the contents of his book, *The Making of a Moron* (Sheed and Ward, 1953). Naturally enough, the book becomes a relentless criticism of the methods of achieving efficient production and profitability in business. It remained for E. F. Schumacher to make the same criticisms and then propose changes in the conduct of economic affairs that would have an opposite effect on human beings.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
TALENT AND GREATNESS

TRYING to find the reason for high human achievement is like wandering through a forest looking for the Holy Grail. Now and then you see a glimmer of light through the trees, but its origin is never disclosed. We have words, of course, which represent stages of this inquiry—words like "creativity" and "genius"—but these words only redefine the question without answering it.

Yet there are things that can be found out about achievement, and these become the strength of Elizabeth Monroe Drews' last book, *The Higher Levels of Human Growth* (Philosophical Library, $11.95), posthumously published. A lifetime of concern for the gifted young enabled the writer to deal with some of the questions that do have answers on this subject.

The problem is set early in the book:

> As anyone knows who has ever dropped a handful of seeds into a furrow of soil, the plants do not emerge all alike. They will vary in height, in bushiness, in strength, in their flowers or fruit. On a certain scale, growth can be counted. It is quantifiable. You can weigh it, or measure it. But on another scale, growth is qualitative. It goes beyond the measurable. The oak tree differs in kind, and not merely in degree, from the acorn.
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> Consider this point in the case of human beings. We, too grow from quite minute beginnings, from the fertilization of an ovum by a sperm. The new-born baby has inherited its potentialities, which will develop as they are helped or hindered by the surrounding environment. Who can foretell the outcome? The baby may end up an imbecile or an Einstein, a St. Francis or a Stalin. What is exciting in this is that the possibilities are infinite and the development of capacities unlimited. And most exciting of all is the growth which occurs at the highest levels. For this is where norms and averages are forgotten. It is here that individuals transcend themselves by leaping into the unknown. Here, humanity reaches for the stars. The persons who function at these levels are the *avant-garde* of the human race.

Elizabeth Drews then asks: "But who are these individuals? What do we know about them? What can we learn from them?" Naturally enough, with such an inquiry in mind, she uses a Maslovian approach. You could even say that she *had* to follow Maslow, for where else, in modern thought, will you find an orderly psychology of health and achievement?

The first critical point is that there are distinctions in achievement:

> The human beings who have attained to the higher levels constitute three major types. The first of these is the creative person. These are the individuals with special skills or talents which enable them to be exceptionally productive in a particular medium or metier. Outside that area they may be quite ordinary people. Within it, they are outstanding. This has been called "special-talent creativity." At the highest point on this scale stands the genius—literally, the person who is one in a million and whose qualities are beyond classification. What marks out this group is the frequent contrast between their achievement in their special field of expertise and the nature of their social relationships. The creative artist, for example, can be a difficult human being.
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> The second type may be characterized by the term which Maslow employed to describe the results of his research. This is the self-actualizing person. Self-actualization, as he describes it, is a sense of fulfillment at the highest level of development. One's capacities have here matured to a point of perfect harmony, both within the self and in relation to others. Peace has supplanted competition, so that the individual uniqueness appears wholly compatible with an awareness of the unity of our species. . . .
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> Finally, there is a third group of persons who, as their name implies, go even beyond the self-actualizing. These are called transcendentalists in philosophy, mystics in religion.

Elizabeth Drews deals briefly with the problem of distribution. After all, high achievement is not a democratic phenomenon and geniuses are one in a million. But there is ample evidence that all human beings have the potentiality of high achievement. Maslow regards the promise of this capacity as an aspect of psychological health, remarking that a good soup

is more creative than a second-rate painting. And as the writer says:

> Whether we are artists or artisans, mathematicians or mothers, nurses or nuclear physicists, it has been noted again and again that all forms of creativity display some common attributes—e.g., imagination and originality. The seeds are in all of us. Our need is to stimulate them to grow and then keep them growing.

What can teachers do to encourage those seeds to sprout? This is the ultimate question in education, and one that few attempt to deal with since it has little to do with teachable skills. Ortega gave the only possible answer by saying that the teacher's primary job is not to "transmit the cultural heritage," but to arouse the hunger to know.

Elizabeth Drews goes on to distinguish further between the levels of achievement:

> . . . the creative person may be triumphantly successful in the field where he or she possesses special talent, but may be a failure as a human being. In its extreme form, this may be observed in the cases of some of the geniuses of the human race. Michelangelo and Beethoven were notoriously difficult personalities (the problems of the latter being accentuated by the affliction of his deafness). So were George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell, and Frank Lloyd Wright. . . .
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> The upshot of all this is that a distinction must be drawn which is very important in psychological terms. One needs to distinguish between two broad types or classes of creativity. The former expresses itself in the development of some special talent. The other involves the growth and maturing of those persons who will attain a higher ethical level. Such an individual is at peace within the self and in relation to others. The difference was stressed by Maslow, who referred to these two types as special-talent and self-actualizing. The latter are always psychologically healthy; the former, as often as not, unhealthy.

To illustrate self-actualization at its best, Elizabeth Drews chose four examples—Abraham Lincoln, Jane Addams, Florence Nightingale, and Leo Tolstoy.

> All four had one essential quality in common. They were blessed with minds well out of the ordinary. Tolstoi, by any standard, was a literary genius, as well as being a distinguished social philosopher. Lincoln's speeches are the evidence of a truly superior intellect whose matching of clarity of thought to lucidity of expression has few parallels in the history of statesmanship. Jane Addams brought a powerful mind to bear on the problems of humanitarian reform, expressing her ideas in books as well as in the programs of Hull House. And Florence Nightingale not only wrote official reports which swayed two such conservative institutions as the British military and medical professions, but her laborious statistical work revolutionized the hospitals and paved the way for new policies in reducing the incidence of disease.
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> But the essential quality of all four—what made them great—was something which went beyond intellect. It was their faith in humanity. Each of them felt it, each lived by it, each translated it into deeds. This faith was universal in scope. It knew no limits of time or place. To sense that all human beings are one body and one soul is an insight which the self-actualizing not only formulate rationally but feel intuitively.

This linkage of the ethical with the intellectual seems basic in all the really great humans.

FRONTIERS

Economics—the Demoralized Science

SCIENCE, as often declared, is prediction. If this is the case, we have no science of human life. The authorities who have been predicting for us are bewildered failures, and some of them admit it. This becomes evident in the critical survey of futurology by James Traub in the *Saturday Review* for December. Futurologists say a few interesting things, but they are very poor at forecasting the future. As Mr. Traub says:

> Most of them have done a competent job of discussing the consequences of basic modern trends: the advent of post-industrial society, the continuing alienation from large institutions, accelerated growth in the Third World, and the like. But ask them to recall a specific long-range forecast that correctly foresaw a change in trend, and futurologists get evasive. They not only have forecast all sorts of things that have yet to come to pass, but have missed, pretty much to a man, the major upheavals that have largely shaped the past decade. Economist Lester Thurow sums up the failure of forecasting: "These people would only be useful if they could tell us about change. But did any of them predict the war in Vietnam, the sudden drop in the growth rate of the population, the advent of structural inflation, or the intensity of the entrance of women into the labor force?"

Accurate prediction is at low ebb, these days. Even those expert prophets, the insurance company actuaries, no longer feel confident about their calculations, as Hazel Henderson pointed out a couple of years ago. (This is the underlying reason for the rapid increases in rates.) What about the economists in general: How are they doing? Writing to propose a new economics (in the *Ecologist* for last September-October), Edward Goldsmith quotes *Business Week* on the breakdown of once-reliable economic indicators, and comments:

> Something has gone radically wrong and, as Alan Codrington points out, it is not just "an occasional breakdown or shortcoming in analytical capacity, but an overall loss of confidence. It is not just that the least able are stumbling, but the finest minds are missing the mark so widely."
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> This can only mean that it is not our individual economists who are to blame but economic theory itself. This is also *Business Week's* conclusion: "When all forecasts miss the mark, it suggests that the entire body of economic thinking—accumulated in the 200 years since Adam Smith laid the basis for modern theory with his inquiry into *The Wealth of Nations*—is inadequate to describe and analyze the problems of our times."

What about Marxism in relation to such failures? The relevance of this question is made plain by Murray Bookchin, an anarchist writer and critic, in the Canadian radical quarterly, *Our Generation*, for last summer. He does not list the mistakes in prediction of Marxian doctrine, but goes to the core of its underlying assumptions:

> At its best, Marx's work is an inherent self-deception that inadvertently absorbs the most questionable tenets of the Enlightenment thought into its very sensibility and remains surprisingly vulnerable to their bourgeois implications. At its worst, it provides the most subtle apologia for a new historic era that has witnessed the melding of the "free market" with economic planning, private property with nationalized property, competition with oligopolistic manipulation of production and consumption, the economy with the state—in short, the modern epoch of state capitalism.

Recalling Marx's claim to "scientific socialism," and the proud parallel drawn in the Preface to *Capital* between the method of the physicist and his own analysis of England's industrial capitalism, Bookchin says:

> What decisively unites both the scientism of physics and the Marxian dialectic, however, is the concept of "lawfulness" itself—the preconception that social reality and its trajectory can be explained in terms that remove human visions, cultural influences, and most significantly, ethical goals from the social process. . . .
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> We must pause to weigh the full implications of this turn in what could be called Marx's "theory of knowledge." Greek thought also had a notion of law, but one that was guided more by a concept of "destiny" or *Moira* than "necessity" in the modern sense of the term. *Moira* embodied the concept of "necessity" governed by *meaning*, by an ethically conditioned goal fixed by "destiny." The actual realization of "destiny" was governed by justice or

> *Dike* which preserved the world order by keeping each of the cosmic elements within their appointed bounds. The mythic nature of this conception of "law" should not close our eyes to its highly ethical content. "Necessity" was not merely compulsion but *moral* compulsion that had *meaning* and *purpose.* Insofar as human knowledge has a right to assume that the world is an orderly one—an assumption that modern science shares with mythic cosmologies if only to make knowledge possible—it has a right to assume that this order has intelligibility or meaning. It can be translated by human thought into a purposive constellation of relations. . . . Given the eventual need for nature philosophy that will guide us toward a deeper sense of ecological insight into our warped relationship with the natural world, we are by no means free of a less mythic need to restore this Hellenic sensibility.

The Enlightenment, Bookchin says, divested natural law of moral content, and Marx completed the demoralization by turning human beings into "economic categories," as representatives of "class interest," no longer individuals "possessed of volition and ethical purpose." From the viewpoint of the present disorders and impending crisis, then, the Communist and Socialist nations are no better off than the "free enterprise" countries.

The "new economics" Edward Goldsmith proposes would turn economic activities into elements in a larger scheme—the Biosphere, as Robert Heilbroner says, "seen as a single system." This would require ordering economic relations "in the light of the total experience of man"—which means using the forms found in pre-market and pre-industrial societies, in which the idea of general laws, including moral law, prevailed. Very little would be left, Mr. Goldsmith says, of the "discipline of economics as we know it today.

How would all this work out? We don't know. We have some theories, expressed in the language of idealism, as to how our society ought to conduct its affairs, but predictions here are extremely difficult, too, for the reason that when things begin to change, the circumstances on which our predictions are based also change, sometimes for better, sometimes for worse. Ruth Benedict's conception of the synergistic society may prove the best basic guide. Meanwhile it is interesting to read in No. 20 of *Self-Reliance* the numerous progress reports on communities around the country where citizens are taking their energy problems into their own hands. This decentralizing trend, sometimes called regionalism, is increasingly strong all over the world. Except for the principles expounded by Schumacher and Leopold Kohr and a few others, we may not have an over-all theory of change; but then, with the distribution of power as it is today, we may not need one. Growth in the right direction is undoubtedly a step-by-step process, learning as we go. The theory will come as we grow up to it. We might even meet the old Greek idea of *Moira* half way.