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January, 1972  
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## HOW DO WE DECIDE?

As all of you are aware, there are many ways in which we could approach the topic, "How do we decide?" We could look at it through the eyes of the mathematician who develops a series of equations to come to the best decision with respect to two values. We certainly could look at it through the eyes of the executive or leader who can utilize what is presently being called a "decision tree" to help him decide. We can look at this question through the eyes of a gambler or one who is a fatalist and simply "toss a coin." But, more importantly, it seems to me, we must look at how to decide what is "good" or "evil" in this modern day with the rushing technology and all the myriads of assistances we have in helping us make up our minds about so many things. Although I will take a little time to view some of the thoughts of great philosophers with respect to the decision between right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil, it will be my intention to illuminate mostly what is called today "the generation gap." I feel that there are more interesting questions in the decision area with respect to the rightness or wrongness of the attitudes of the generation which is coming into power at this point.

In many people's eyes, this generation is already in power because with the 18-year old vote, as you all are aware, the nice balance between the Democrats and Republicans is upset in this country and we may have a president as well as many other governmental figures selected by the decisions made by that group which is "18 to 21" and certainly part of the new generation. Their ideas about what is right and what is wrong come to me from many sources--particularly my personal relationships with students at the University. I am quick to state, however, that I have no way of ascertaining the

rightness of the sample that I use. I meet students through classes, through committee work, through organizations of students on campus, and through a variety of social and political activities in which I am involved. None of these students are picked out because they are typical. They happen to have picked themselves out as being individuals who make some input into my thinking. Some of the thoughts that will be expressed come from two books that have had substantial impact on the thinking of many people dealing with the younger generation--The Greening of America and Future Shock. But when it is all boiled down there is nothing that can be stated by me that I do not have to take responsibility for. For this reason, what I say will be my ideas about what is right and what is wrong and I do not blame Charles Reich or Alvin Toffler for the thinking that I have done, nor do I give credit, entirely, to Plato, Aristotle, Thomas Aquinas, Francis Bacon, Spinoza, Kant, or Hegel. These men, nevertheless, have influenced my thinking and I would be unfair and doing "wrong" rather than "right" if I did not identify some debt of gratitude for their influence on my thinking.

At the very outset it is important to call attention to a comment made by Aristotle at the outset of his Nicomachean Ethics in the very third paragraph he indicates the problems which we will face again and again. Aristotle says, and I quote, "our discussion will be adequate if it has as much clearness as the subject matter admits of, for position is not to be sought for alike in all discussions any more than in all the products of the crafts." (Book 9, p. 339) Having been given this disclaimer, the clarity of the following quotations is assumed to be adequate. Of course it is recognized that not every one will be able to enjoy listening to complex abstractions; some of the pleasure that follows the pain comes from the release from this painful experience. And some of the things that are right are only right because they are different



from those that are wrong. With this kind of complexity in front of us let's see how we decide what is nice or virtue. In Book 3 of Topics, Aristotle goes on to discuss this problem.

The question which is a more desirable, or the better, of two or more things, should be examined upon the following lines: only first of all it must be clearly laid down that the inquiry we are making concerns things that are not widely divergent and exhibit great differences from one another (for nobody raises any doubt whether happiness or wealth is the more desirable), but things that are nearly related and about which we commonly discuss for which of the two we would rather vote, because we do not see any advantage on either side as compared with the other. Clearly, then, in such cases, if we can show a single advantage, or more than one, our judgment will record our assent that whichever side happens to have the advantage is the more desirable.

First, then, that which is more lasting and secure is more desirable than that which is less so; and so is that which is more likely to be chosen by the prudent or by the good man or by the right lover or by men who are good in any particular line, when expected to make their choice as such, or by the experts in regard to any particular class of things; i.e., either whatever most of them or what all of them would choose; that is, in medicine or in carpentry those things are more desirable which most, or all, doctors would choose; or, in general, whatever most men or all men or all things would choose, that is, e.g., the good: for everything aims at the good. You should direct the argument you intend to employ to whatever purpose you require. What is "better" or "more desirable" the absolute stand is the verdict of the better science, the role laid to a given individual whose standard may be his own particular science.

Even in Aristotle's day we were relying upon "experts" and the so-called critics to help us decide whether an idea was good or bad, right or wrong.

The idea that "experts" decide what is "good" or "bad" is an interesting one when one considers our belief in a democratic society. There appears to be a contradiction since a fundamental tenet of the democratic way is that the members of society decide mutually what is "good" or "bad." Admittedly, the popular will is led by those who have been selected to represent all the people. Are these the "experts" who decide what is good or are they the communicators of the values that are expressed by the members of society?



Perhaps, we should be realistic in appraising the ability of elected representatives to reflect the value systems of their constituents. Although they represent the voters, they cannot represent them completely since the voters themselves do not agree. In other words our elected representatives must make choices about which values held by which voters should be reflected in their decisions. These "experts" not only choose the ideas of the majority who selected them but also the minority who may have "right ideas" and, in our system, have rights. Thus, the elected representatives and the selected teachers must make choices if only in their own self-interest, e.g., so that they may keep the power and responsibility which are needed to carry out their interpretation of right and wrong.

In President Eisenhower's farewell speech of January 17, 1971, he indicated one aspect of this question as he warned of the power of the "Military Industrial Complex":

Conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence--economic, political, even spiritual--is felt in every city, every state house, every office of the Federal Government.

We recognize the imperative need for this development. Yet, we must not fail to comprehend its grave implications. Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society.

In the councils of Government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military/industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.

In another context returning to the Dialogues of Plato, Socrates is talking with Protagoras and we hear, first, the comment that introduces the subject: "and would admit the existence of good?" "Yes," answers Protagoras. And Socrates goes on and says, "And is the good that which is expedient for man?" And Protagoras responds, "Yes, indeed, and there are some things which

may be inexpedient, and yet I call them good." And, in the following passage, we hear the variations in the thought of good coming out for the first time to my knowledge when Socrates explains that what is good for one is not necessarily good for all. In the following passage, "When you say, Protagoras, that things inexpedient are good, do you mean inexpedient for man only, or inexpedient altogether? And do you call the latter good?" "Certainly not the last," he replied, "for I know of many things--meats, drinks, medicines, and ten thousand other things which are inexpedient for man and some of which are expedient, and some of which are neither expedient nor inexpedient for man but only for horses and some for oxen only, and some for dogs; and some for no animals, but only for trees; and some for the roots of trees and not for their branches as for example, manure, which is a good thing when laid about the roots of a tree, but utterly destructive if you throw it upon the shoots or the young branches; or take, for instance, olive oil, which is mischievous to all plants, and generally most injurious to the hair of every animal with the exception of man, but beneficial to human hair and to the human body, generally; and even in this application (so various and changing is the nature of the benefit) that which is the greatest good to the outward parts of man, is a very great evil to his inward parts, and for this reason physicians always forbid their patients the use of oil in their food, except in very small quantities, just enough to extinguish the disagreeable sensation of smell in meats and sauces." (Dialogues, Book 7, p. 50)

Having agreed that what's good for the goose may not be good for the gander and vice-versa the two dialogue experts continue on to discuss whether or not pleasure is the criterion for deciding whether something is good or not.

In the following dialogue the difficulty of dealing with superlatives and oversimplification is hopefully illuminated. The relative quality of

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that every entry should be supported by a valid receipt or invoice. This ensures transparency and allows for easy verification of the data.

In the second section, the author outlines the various methods used to collect and analyze the data. This includes both primary and secondary data collection techniques. The primary data was gathered through direct observation and interviews with key personnel. Secondary data was obtained from internal company reports and industry publications.

The third section details the statistical analysis performed on the collected data. Various tests were conducted to determine the significance of the findings. The results indicate a strong positive correlation between the variables being studied. This suggests that the factors being examined have a significant impact on the overall performance of the organization.

Finally, the document concludes with a series of recommendations based on the research findings. These recommendations are designed to help the organization optimize its operations and improve its financial outcomes. The author suggests implementing the following strategies:

- 1. Enhance data collection processes to ensure accuracy and completeness.
- 2. Regularly review and update internal reports to reflect the latest data.
- 3. Invest in training for staff to improve data handling and analysis skills.
- 4. Monitor key performance indicators closely to identify areas for improvement.

The author expresses confidence that these measures will lead to a more efficient and profitable organization. The document is intended to serve as a guide for management and provide a clear understanding of the current state of affairs.



"good" is stressed and the importance of change demonstrated. This passage, in my opinion, sheds some light on what may be part of our problem in looking at the values of the younger generation. Are members of our older generation willing to rethink their values which have been developed in the cauldron of experience? Are we, perhaps, intolerant because we fail to recognize that the memory and knowledge of the young cannot be as long or as great as ours. Yet, we need to let them learn from experience. Things and ideas taught are less valuable than things learned from experience to most people. This does not imply we must start afresh with each generation, but it does imply that we must be patient and adaptable and not rail against those who would test our tenets. We shall hear a dialogue that is very perceptive between Socrates and Protarchus as recorded by Plato.

We start off with Socrates: "Is the good perfect or imperfect?"  
 Protarchus answers as follows: "The most perfect, Socrates, of all things."  
 Socrates: "And is the good sufficient?"  
 Protarchus: "Yes, certainly, and at a degree surpassing all other things."  
 Socrates: "And no one can deny that all percipient beings desire and hunt after good, and are eager to catch and have the good about them, and care not for the attainment of ending which is not accompanied by good."  
 Protarchus: "That is undeniable."  
 Socrates: "Now let us part off the life of pleasure from the life of wisdom, and pass them in review."  
 Protarchus: "How do you mean?"  
 Socrates: "Let there be no wisdom in the life of pleasure nor any pleasure in the life of wisdom, for if either of them is a chief good, it cannot be supposed to want anything, but if either is shown to want anything, then it cannot really be the chief good."  
 Protarchus: "Impossible."  
 Socrates: "And will you help us to test these two lives?"  
 Protarchus: "Certainly."  
 Socrates: "Then, answer."  
 Protarchus: "Ask."  
 Socrates: "Would you choose, Protarchus, to live all your life long in enjoyment of the greatest pleasures?"  
 Protarchus: "Certainly I should."  
 Socrates: "Would you consider that there was still anything wanting to you if you had perfect pleasure?"  
 Protarchus: "Certainly not."  
 Socrates: "Reflect. Would you not want wisdom and intelligence and forethought and similar qualities? Would you not at any rate want sight?"

Protarchus: "Why should I? Having pleasure I should have all things."

Socrates: "Living thus you would always throughout your life enjoy the greatest pleasure."

Protarchus: "I should."

Socrates: "But if you had neither mind, nor memory, nor knowledge, nor true opinion, you will, in the first place, be utterly ignorant of whether you are pleased or not, because you would be entirely devoid of intelligence."

Protarchus: "Certainly."

Socrates: "And similarly, if you had no memory you would not recollect that you had ever been pleased, nor would the slightest recollection of the pleasure which you feel at any moment remain with you; and if you had no true opinion you would not think that you were pleased when you were; and if you had no power of calculation you would not be able to calculate on future pleasure, and your life would be the life, not of a man, but of an oyster. Could this be otherwise?"

To quote an example of this concept of right and wrong and what's good or bad from a less reliable source and one, certainly, whose antiquity cannot be accepted to be as great as that of our friend Socrates. I am referring to a little comment which I have repeated often when talking with associates about the possible role for a person like myself. Some twenty-five years ago or more, I reevaluated my career goals and found that I really wanted to be a communication expert. I thought through all the places where I might perform in this role and finally discovered a small town in Maine which I thought had all the characteristics of living and the opportunities that I would need in order to provide the input to this kind of life. After thinking about this for some time I became very excited about it and was about to drop everything in metropolitan New York and go up there and buy a small weekly paper to "use my abilities" and "enjoy myself." At this point in time a wise friend of mine suggested that perhaps this would have been excellent if I had never been exposed to the rest of the world. I had already savoured Europe and many parts of the United States. I had been living in a cosmopolitan atmosphere surrounded by many of the great cultural activities that New York boasted then and, although it's more difficult to get them now, still boasts. At

that point in time I recognized what I think I now see in the Socratic comment that what is good and pleasant can only be good and pleasant compared to something else. And, therefore, with my reference point set a little too high, I gave up my thought of spending the rest of my life as an editor of a weekly newspaper in Maine. Sometimes, I think I might have been more productive as the simple pleasures there might have convinced me, and, perhaps some of my readers, that the whole world existed within the twenty-mile radius of the newspaper itself. At any rate, the idea that good is relative and what is right is relative to something else--namely to something that is wrong--comes into focus when we read and hear these kinds of ideas. A little later on we read in the Dialogues of Plato a statement by an Athenian stranger that all things are relative and that we try to produce through education images which are satisfying to those of us who are educating. I hope that you will glean from this that the Athenian stranger was very much of a John Birchist of his time. I am not at all sure that this will please many of you, but I am sure that this may be the genesis of the respect for elders. The Athenian stranger speaks:

The inference at which we arrive for the third or fourth time is, that education is a constraining and directing of youth towards that right reason, which the law affirms, and which the experience of the elders and best has agreed to be truly right. In order, then, that the soul of the child may not be habituated to feel joy and sorrow in manner at variance with the law, and those who made the law, but may rather follow the law and rejoice and sorrow at the same things as the aged--in order, I say, to produce its effect chants appear to have been invented, which really enchant, and are designed to implant that harmony of which we speak. And, because the mind of the child is incapable of enduring serious training, they are called plays and songs, and are performed in a play; just as when men are sick; and ailing in their bodies, their attendants give them wholesome diets in pleasant meats and drinks but unwholesome diets in disagreeable things so they may learn, as they ought, to like the one and dislike the other. And, similarly, the true legislator will persuade, and if he cannot persuade, will compel.

I am not at all sure that the Athenian stranger was attempting a forecast, but similarities with today's "education" and, what some of us might call "siren songs," exist.

Is Nixon being influenced by Plato when he moves from persuading to compelling via the Phase technique which started in August? Are the elders attempting to "educate" the younger generation--and others--when the "law affirms" that marijuana is illegal to take, push, or even have in your possession? Is this an example of something "which the experience of elders and best (THE EXPERTS AGAIN) has agreed to be truly right?" Perhaps, in the marijuana and the economic controls concepts we may begin to see the battle lines which are really being drawn between generations through the difficulty of speeding the changes in viewpoints which have occurred so slowly over time.

Thinking of these two rather diverse examples can we say that an Arnold Toynbee would brush aside these problems for they will be resolved. An Alvin Toffler might say that we are looking at the results of "Future Shock" as changing mores are buffeted by the speed of change. Our system of government--the democratic way--the market economy--the free society--has moved over the generations toward the acceptance of greater restriction on freedom of decision in the institutions which have been developed--the corporations--the courts--the legislative bodies. At each juncture there have been some who felt change was too fast--but at this juncture the numbers complaining about change have increased and those wanting it increased. The institutions for instituting change have appeared too slow to many of those who want change. Nixon wants to hurry the change in our "economic cycle" so that he can use the political institutions to help him in this magic year, 1972. Young thinkers want to hurry the change in laws about marijuana so that they need not feel either guilty about breaking the law or so disdainful of the law and system that all institutions are suspect and in discard. Maybe the ancient philosophers can get our grey matter churning. What do you think?

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Suspecting that many of you may feel that your speaker is wallowing in the ancients and not dealing with the "modern nitty-gritty" let me jump a few centuries and look back only a short time--150 years. We are talking in Toynbee time when we call 150 years short--but we are also recognizing Toffler time as the accelerating pace may make us exceed in 15 years the changes that we can now reflect on that have occurred in 150. My learned friends will have already decided that I am going to use George Hegel as a thought starter. Incidentally, does it sound disrespectful or strange to you as it does to me to use George's first name? Just a little dig to get you to be introspective about the way we look at things. At any rate Hegel does seem to be talking to the idea that has been capsulized into "do your own thing" when he attempts to define right;

In speaking of right...we mean not merely what is generally understood by the word, namely, civil law, but also morality, ethical life, and world history. These belong just as much to our topic, because the concept brings thoughts together into a true system. If the free will is not to remain abstract, it must in the first place give itself an embodiment, and the material primarial available to sensation for such an embodiment is things, i.e., objects outside us. This primary mode of freedom is the one which we are to become acquainted with as property, the sphere of formal and abstract right. To this sphere also belong property in its mediated form as contract, and the right in its infringement as crime and punishment. The freedom which we have here is what is called a person, i.e., a subject is free, free indeed in his own eyes, and who gives himself an embodiment in things.

The idea of a person being free to do his own thing is, it appears, not very new. The differences that I perceive between what the two generations think is the way to decide many questions stem from the speed at which we are changing--in many areas of society and in many facets of people's rights and responsibilities. Is the older generation sticking to the ideas which Reich has called Consciousness I and Consciousness II while the youth strives mightily to develop a Consciousness III. At the risk of insulting many of you

who have read The Greening of America by repeating what you know and at an even greater risk of oversimplifying Reich's ideas, let me sketch how I perceive the three Consciousnesses:

Consciousness I is the self-actuated struggle of man to succeed against the hostile environment and fashion some comforts for himself. It embodies at one time the idea that hard work and self sacrifice will cause happiness for self and family over time. The Horatio Alger concept oversimplifies but conveys much of the sense of this idea which still finds adherents among us. Consciousness II involves the idea that science by discovery and organizations by production will make the world a fine place to live and is embodied in William Whyte's Organization Man. <sup>Consciousness III;</sup> The striving for material things no longer motivates large segments of our "younger generation" as they have known little fear of being hungry or without clothes or shelter. Chasing "mammon" has been replaced by chasing "love" and "justice" and "freedom." The Consciousness III thrust is towards a better life for all. It needs ways of overcoming "boredom" and lack of purpose. It is evidenced in "marches" and "protests" and "communes" and "wanderings."

Those of us motivated by Consciousness I and II want the youth to adopt our motives, behave in ways that we understand and can applaud, live by our mores and abide by our laws lest the world we know and think we understand disappear. We do not want to have our sons, daughters, and grandchildren "throw away the baby with the bath water." We are trying hard to persuade them by any means to "behave" in ways that we can understand. But, can we understand their ways without their backgrounds? Must we throw away all our decision devices to truly "hear" what they are saying? I submit that a little listening will let them speak in tongues we can hear. That a little more listening and we can begin to communicate. They are good at listening

if we do not expect them to "hear" that we have the answers when they can see that we do not. The rules by which we decided and are trying to decide may have been perfect--or nearly perfect--for us. But, their decisions must be made on what they perceive we have accomplished in the realms that motivate and interest them. With full stomachs and revulsion against inequities they feel they are asked to accept our values--but, who among them needs our values? We have not achieved what they feel are justifiable goals for humans.

Already some of the students at OSU are asking to be taught how to develop values that may be relevant instead of learning how to do things that do not seem important to them or are perceived as "having lasting values." Scientific advantages and advances are seen as rushing their society to the brink of self-destruction. They see the virtues in learning how to use what is available but feel they get little help in examining the way the older generation has done it.

The speed of change and great ability to see--via satellite and jet travel--what the world is like seems to have widened the "gap" between those who still think they have the power to control and those that are getting it. Most of us must have voted to give more of the youth the vote and now we quiver from fear and frustration. We rail against their value systems and complain about their habits. I am not at all sure that my mother was not smarter than many mature women today when she let my brother and me go to a dance in white mess jackets and crew cuts when we were trying to be ahead of our time in the early thirties. We learned that we were ahead when we were taken for waiters. Whether they are right or wrong will be decided and, probably, not by us, but by them. How do we decide? You must answer for yourself. I am only sure that we will decide, and that the next generation will be asking many of the same questions.