Chapter 1
The Meaning of Progress

Change is not progress.
H.L. Mencken

Suppose that all your objects in life were realized; that all the changes in institutions and opinions, which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant; would this be a great joy and happiness to you?
Autobiography of John Stuart Mill

Will our sons and daughters be better off at the dawn of the third millennium than our grandparents were at the start of the twentieth century? Nobody would have posed this question in 1900; the answer was too obviously yes. Now many intelligent observers doubt future progress. The twentieth century with its vicious total wars, the holocaust, ethnic cleansing, and environmental degradation has put an end to hopes that society and mankind will achieve perfection and even raised doubts as to whether life will continue to improve.

In the eighteenth and nineteenth century, virtually all literate people in Europe and North America accepted without question the existence and desirability of progress. Prior to the Enlightenment most people had viewed life as static. Reflecting the view that fashions and living conditions were unchanging, the medieval artist portrayed early Christians dressed in contemporaneous costumes and inhabiting fifteenth century castles. A growth in knowledge of history and science gradually led to the realization that human life had changed over the centuries. As a consequence after 1750 most Westerners embraced the concept of progress for mankind if not for the non–human world.

The perception that life, the earth, and the universe were constantly changing grew only slowly even in Europe and North America. In the nineteenth century, Darwin upset the public's conviction that animals and humans had always existed in their current form. Even scientists regarded space and the universe as static before the acceptance earlier in this century of the "Big Bang" origins of the cosmos. In fact Darwin and his contemporaries considered evolution and progress as the same. For much of the non-Western world, however, the notion of human progress was unknown — although Buddhists and Hindus believed in spiritual advancement — and remains even now unaccepted. Today, many intellectuals, environmentalists, Third World advocates, and ordinary men and women question whether society has actually progressed.

What is Progress?

As the quote from Mencken indicates, "Change is not progress," but progress requires change. Thus neither the "Big Bang" nor evolution necessarily implies progress, although I will argue that both have resulted in advancement. Mankind has made progress; improvements in society are indispensable and almost inevitable; and economic growth and progress are vital goals. The alternatives to progress are stagnation, deterioration, and the eventual extinction of all life.

Progress can be defined as an improvement in the well-being of human beings. Although some may consider this an excessively anthropocentric view, the author and the reader are part of the human race. Under most circumstances everybody would put himself or herself and his or her kin ahead of other lives — human and non-human — and especially prior to the inanimate world. Of course, under special situations men and women do sacrifice themselves and, if need be, their families for a cause, but such behavior is the exception rather than the rule. Self preservation and preservation of one's family has always been an inherent human instinct. Moreover, if intelligent life fails to survive and observe the universe, does the cosmos' existence matter?

Although progress can be identified with improvements in public life, civilization, ethical behavior, religious observance, this work will endeavor to reach an accord by concentrating on measures that virtually all agree are gains for humans. To do so this chapter will consider the most widely accepted measures of improvement in human well-being, starting with the ones that would command in almost all societies near universal approval: longer life spans, reduced infant mortality, and better education.

We mortals enjoy only a few years of life; some believe that we will experience a reincarnation or an eternal life in another world, but we know only about these few years given us on this globe. Anything that adds a little time, especially additional years as a healthy active individual, contributes to mankind's progress. As important or almost as important to most adults is the well-being of their children. Whether their offspring live or die, are well nourished, educated and offered the opportunities to better their life deeply concerns almost all parents. Virtually all cherish freedom from fear of violence whether from other humans or from the government. Deep-seated religious or ethical beliefs may lead some to rank other changes as more important to progress than the measures described here, but I will concentrate on the most common denominators and emphasize those alterations in the situation of Homo Sapiens that command nearly universal acceptance.

Human advancement is any change that makes some people consider themselves better off without making anyone else worse off. Economists call this the Pareto principle. Some commentators will disagree with this definition. A number of modern liberals may put egalitarianism above individual welfare; others may see the state as more important than the well-being of ordinary men and women. Nevertheless, the Pareto principle, based on individual choice

— each person is either better off or unaffected — is the only clear criterion for evaluating various situations.

Typically changes result in some people benefiting while others feel worse off. The invention of the automobile threw the manufacturers of buggy whips out of work. The introduction of democracy normally reduces the power of a preexisting autocracy. Abolition of apartheid in South Africa advances the well-being of blacks, but endangers the social and economic status of the whites. Although most people would probably view all three of these examples as progress, making an objective case that mankind has advanced when some have gained and others lost is impossible. To do so would mean comparing the benefits for one group with the losses for another. If most people are better off and others are only slightly worse off, one can, however, make a judgment. Moreover, even though a change adversely affects a number of people, their children and their children's children may be made better off. That would be progress.

Progress means more than economic growth. It means a longer and better quality life for a larger proportion of people. A society that reduces the number of men and women who must lead lives that are as Hobbes described them (1651, pt. i, ch. 13), "solitary, poore, nasty, brutish and short" is achieving progress. Improvements in human welfare constitute progress. A country or population realizes progress when change results in any of the following: longer lives, reduced infant mortality, decrease in morbidity, increases in people's options, greater equality, more freedom or a reduction in fear of other people or of their own rulers.

A major component of progress is improved life expectancy and diminished maternal and infant deaths. Although longer lives may be a burden if the quality of the extra years is wretched, as long as individuals have the option of ending their existence and refrain from doing so, we must conclude that people prefer lengthier lives to shorter ones. Moreover, greater life expectancies lead people to report that they are happier with their lives (Veenhoven 1984: 152). A reduction in infant mortality is a clear improvement in psychological well-being — parents quickly bond with their infants and a loss is almost always traumatic. Moreover, if a family wishes to have a specific number of offspring, a reduction in early childhood deaths means that fewer children need be born to achieve the desired family size. As societies advance, however, these measures will become less relevant. There is a limit to both infant mortality and life expectancy. Infant mortality can only decline so far, certainly not below zero. The upper limit for human life is subject to considerable dispute, but few if any would content that there is no bound. Many would claim that 85 years represents the normal life span, although some have put forward higher figures.

A related measure of progress would be average caloric consumption, especially for low and moderate income countries. For wealthy nations, where many people are concerned with being fat, this indicator is faulty, but for most other places it relates closely to well-being. Although caloric requirements vary for individuals by size, sex, activity, and climate, food consumption,

within limits, correlates with life expectancy. On the other hand, animal studies have shown that semi-starvation can prolong life, at the expense of reproductive activity. Whether a very restricted diet would extend life for men and women is unproved, but I would be disinclined to treat longer life expectancies achieved at the cost of involuntary starvation and the absence of sexual activity as progress.

Critical to progress is a life free from fear. People can dread nature, disease, hunger, other humans, and the state. More wealth, technology, and education lower the dangers from natural calamities. The Loma Prieta earthquake, for example, killed fewer than 70 people in affluent California while the same magnitude quake in poor Armenia massacred thousands. Famines today are unknown in all but the poorest areas; even in those, war and revolution are more to blame than crop failures.

A country in which people dread arbitrary arrest, imprisonment, or torture by the police is fundamentally flawed and cannot be considered desirable, no matter its putative benefits. A society in which crime is rampant and people fear for their lives or property is an inferior place to one in which men and women can go about their daily concerns without anxiety about safety. Personal safety and freedom from fear of arbitrary government action are, therefore, important components of human well-being.

Many economists do equate progress with a growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) — more goods and services per capita are considered progress. Higher incomes ease peoples lives, make them more comfortable, provide them with additional options, and satisfy desires for amusement, prestige, and pleasure. Wealthy people live longer and healthier lives. Yet additional possessions often fail to bring happiness: many people eschew piling up worldly goods; for some too many belongings can be a burden.

For many people, acquiring a service or product may bring greater happiness than its possession. A large number of men and women enjoy the act of shopping, but once the product has been purchased, it may soon become almost invisible perhaps providing less pleasure than its acquisition. Although people enjoy their possessions, often it is the race or the search for the goal that is more satisfying than the end.

Limits to Progress

Progress in the eighteenth and nineteenth century meant the triumph of reason over superstition and ignorance. The dominance of reason would lead to a world free from war and terror. Society and mankind were expected to move towards perfection. Certainly the twentieth century has put an end to such hopes. Yet there remains a belief that conditions have improved and can advance much more. Reason may never fully rule man; violence may never be eradicated; social, personal, and intellectual problems will always exist. Our expectations must be lowered — perfection is unattainable. Yet society can make progress towards reducing the worst blights.

Crime will always be with us no matter how rich, educated, or socially caring we become. For one reason, it is a sensible strategy for some people to live off of others — to be parasites on the rest of society. This type of behavior is readily apparent in other species where parasitical behavior is well known and an established and profitable survival pattern. Contrary to what we are taught in grade school, crime can pay especially if most of us are honest. The more trusting and the less crime in a society, the more profitable it becomes for some to prey on the gullibility of others. Since most crime, especially theft, burglary, robbery, and extortion take little formal education and offer opportunities for anyone with even minimum skills, the less educated and violence prone will often take up this economic niche. Even some highly educated individuals will indulge in crime, although they will not compete with those participating in street crime. Those with education will swindle, cheat, and specialize in white collar illegal activities.

Even rich countries continue to experience problems. Utopia does not and cannot exist. No matter how wealthy a nation becomes, it will always have its poor — if only those who have less command over resources than others. It is said that Indira Gandhi when reading in *The New York Times* a list of the "neediest cases," pointed out that these poor people would be considered rich in Calcutta. They had roofs, running hot and cold water, indoor plumbing, central heating, and adequate food. Human society has almost always enjoyed a surplus over basic subsistence. Poverty must be a relative concept, unless it is confined to those teetering on the edge of starvation. Indigence and feelings of well-being are a function of expectations, which are typically based on past experiences or on others in similar situations.

Many social scientists define the poor as those with income less than one half the median, which establishes that the poor will forever be a substantial fraction of the population. Some people will not have the capacity, interests or opportunities to acquire the education needed to deal with the modern world. Growth in technology and incomes requires an improvement in productivity. Productivity in turn is dependent on education, skills, technology and capital. Those people without skills and education will fail to keep up. Not all can be educated or motivated. Moreover, some may prefer to live off the generosity of others. Consequently a number of people will invariably earn little or no income.

Mankind is a product of natural selection and evolution. As an animal, he cannot escape his heritage. People will be born with severe physical and mental handicaps. Some will be violent; a few will wantonly kill or maim; many will be incompetent, a great number will be stupid, insane, or emotionally distraught; no one will be perfect. Although genetic treatments may be able to eliminate some of the major inherited disabilities, it is likely and probably desirable, that genetic engineering of humans be limited. Consequently crime, murder, poverty or at least relative poverty, sickness, suicide, and most of the troubles facing the human race will continue. As long as people recognize the limits of progress, that is it cannot bring perfection, a faith in progress and

an understanding of what it is remain possible. It will bring neither paradise, perfect people nor flawless societies.

Nineteenth century writers often asserted incorrectly that human nature is ultimately perfectible (Bury 1932, 162-163, 167-169, 226-227, 233,, 338-341). The concept of the perfectibility of *Homo Sapiens* lies behind the major tragedies of the twentieth century — communism and fascism. Although men and women remain imperfect, the conditions of life and the opportunities for mankind are improving, and these improvements constitute progress.

In fact, were progress to bring perfection, would it be perfect? Philosophers throughout history have had great difficulties in describing utopia. What one person might consider heaven would be hell for another. To me the Earth represents a near perfect world that requires man to struggle, innovate, and learn in order to survive and prosper. Others view the human community as intolerable and dream of one without violence, hunger, disease and want and which would be filled with love. Such a perfect world in my opinion would be tedious, predictable, without purpose or direction, and would probably result in mass suicides, hedonistic self-destruction, blind violence, and a refusal to reproduce. Perfection would be the enemy of change and progress. Since improvement would be impossible, perfection would remove all incentives to betterment.

Consider a world in which everyone had all his or hers needs taken care of; in which there was neither sickness, nor poverty, jealousy, rivalry, anger nor hatred; in which there were no tragedies; in which everyone was highly educated, living a life of ease and plenty. Would this be a human world? Would this be an interesting world? What would motivate people to do anything but sleep, eat, gratify their sexual urges, or take out their boredom through violence? If humans find great satisfaction in the process of struggling for a goal, then perfection would rob mankind of its greatest source of achievement. Progress means improvement not perfection.

Probably one of the most overlooked ills of mankind is boredom. Cursed with self–awareness and intelligence, for most of history people have faced drab routine lives with little excitement and entertainment. Perhaps the early hunter-gatherers enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, but once men and women began farming, life must have been dull in the extreme. Illiterate, without lights to see after dark, and faced with a routine that varied only with the season and the weather, peasants looked to the church for relief. Even today people search endlessly for escapes from themselves and their ordinary lives. Games, story telling, feasting and drinking all play a role in relieving monotony. Television helps fill a void, as does the movies and in earlier ages the theater. Today, travel, sports, literature, and music all help tranquilize the tedium.

The search for a relief for boredom may explain the attraction of religious sects, fanatical political movements, and the attraction of war and revolution. If a war is short and relatively bloodless, the public may find it great entertainment. The Gulf War fit that description. During the early days of that action, businesses stopped while people were transfixed by television and

cheered "smart bombs" going down chimneys, cruise missiles racing through the streets of Baghdad, and patriot missiles intercepting Iraqi scuds. The description of the Allied attack given by CNN reporters in Baghdad live held the public spellbound. At times over 90 percent of the public supported President George Bush's actions in the Middle East, especially his war making. As Robert Nisbet writes (1989: 7):

> for large numbers of people [major wars] relieve, if only briefly, the tedium, monotony, and sheer boredom which have accompanied so many millions of lives in all ages. In this respect war can compete with liquor, sex, drugs, and domestic violence as an anodyne. War, its tragedies and devastations understood here, breaks down social walls and by so doing stimulates a new individualism. Old traditions, conventions, dogmas, and taboos are opened under war conditions to a challenge, especially from the young, that is less likely in long periods of peace. The very uncertainty of life brought by war can seem a welcome liberation from the tyranny of the ever-predictable, from what a poet has called the "long littleness of life." It is not the certainties but the uncertainties in life which excite and stimulate — if they do not catastrophically obliterate — the energies of men.

Nobody can question the almost exponential rates at which science and knowledge have been expanding over the last two centuries, but progress for humans has not always followed. The development of nuclear weapons attests that advancement in scientific knowledge may produce a downside as well as good. George Bernard Shaw wrote in *Man and Superman* that mankind had devoted his most intense endeavors to developing the technology of war. Science as a tool is essentially amoral; society can exploit it for good or evil. It is like a stick, which a man can employ to build a house or to hit his neighbor on the head. Nevertheless, most people, but not all, would agree that more accurate knowledge is beneficial rather than harmful. The naysayers fear that more knowledge will undermine religious beliefs, lead to harmful technology such as nuclear weapons, or subvert ethical principles such as human equality. Many civil rights spokesmen, for example, bitterly oppose research on genetic and biological causes of crime and violence. Better information, however, provides men and women with improved abilities to forecast the results of their actions. Although people can use knowledge for pernicious purposes, the public is better off informed. Even though some may fear science and increases in knowledge, human beings will continue to observe new facts, devise new theories, and discover new information. As long as humans breathe, progress in knowledge is inescapable.

Friedrich Hayek in discussing the inevitability of progress writes (1960: 41):

> The question whether, if we had to stop at our present stage of development, we would in any significant sense be better off or happier than if we had stopped a hundred thousand years ago is probably unanswerable.

In this passage, Hayek is undoubtedly too pessimistic. The simple extension of life span and reduction in infant mortality must be considered as making us "better off" than were our primitive forebears. A millennia ago, there was no writing, no written music, and musical instruments would have been primitive. Although early humans must have enjoyed the music they made, are we not better off with Mozart?

Utopias

Misapplied, the concept of progress has led to attempts to achieve utopias. If progress is possible and humans perfectible, why not establish an ideal society? Unfortunately, endeavors to create earthly heavens generate hell. Not only is one person's perfection someone else's hell, but people are far from malleable. Neither education, propaganda, nor terror can fabricate selfless individuals. From the killing fields of Cambodia, to the gulags of Stalin, to the jails of Havana attempts to create the "new" man have failed and yielded instead suffering, repression, and butchery.

Marx set forth an earth-bound utopia in which man was selfless, private property was abolished, the state withered away, and people were supplied all their wants by others who enjoyed producing those goods. Adolf Hitler proclaimed a new promised land based on eugenics and elimination of "inferior" races. Economists have put forward their own image of perfection based on *Pareto Optimality*, that is a world where no one can be made better off without someone being made worse off. Such a paradise would result from perfect competition and much of the advice economists proffer is based on this recipe. Recently, environmental radicals such as Paul Ehrlich have put forward an image of a modern Garden of Eden with a small population of *Homo Sapiens* coexisting with nature and other species in a harmonious relationship. All of these heavens on earth, with the possible exception of the economist's vision, which is based on choice, require drastic force and dictatorial regimes to accomplish.

Paths of Progress

The path of progress will not always be positive or smooth. From the apogee of the Roman Empire to the beginnings of the Renaissance, Europe regressed. While Rome flourished the bulk of the people were well fed, literate, lived relatively safe lives, enjoyed peace, and benefited from extensive sanitary systems, but after the empire dissolved life degenerated into one of constant warfare, serfdom for the majority of people, hunger and want, illiteracy for almost everybody, and the lack of virtually all luxuries. Within a century or two of the fall of Rome, only the strong had rights. The remainder committed themselves to the service of a master to secure a semblance of safety.

Many other societies have failed to advance past a certain point, eventually becoming non-viable. The Mayan civilization, for example, died out for reasons that are still unclear, although

warfare and environmental destruction apparently were factors (Morell 1991). Ancient Egypt, after flourishing for several thousand years, declined and suffered from conquests by the Persians, the Romans, and ultimately the Moslems. In fact, failed societies litter history. In some cases, these states met stronger, more vigorous groups, which conquered or destroyed them. Other civilizations simply decayed.

Progress does not promise that all aspects of life improve at the same time or at the same rate. Painting, sculpture, and music, for example, can go through periods of magnificent achievements followed by decades or centuries of diminished creativity. Art from periods of greatness will usually survive for subsequent generations to enjoy. We can still appreciate the Egyptian architects of the Sphinx, Michelangelo, Dickens and Shah Jahan, the builder of the Taj Mahal, even though many would argue that current artists are distinctly inferior. Human advancement neither connotes that individuals are better ethically or intellectually. Modern scientists are undoubtedly less gifted than Einstein, Newton, or Copernicus, although they understand more about the world of physics then their eminent predecessors did.

Happiness and Progress

Happiness fails as a measure of progress. Public opinion surveys have shown that rich people do not rate themselves as *much* happier than those with lower incomes. Only the poor are significantly less happy than others. Once a minimum standard of living is achieved, additional goods often fail to bring greater happiness. Survey respondents apparently profess a higher level of contentment with life when their current situation exceeds their expectations and conversely they report themselves as unhappy when they are doing worse than they had forecast. In other words, these surveys simply measure how well people are doing in comparison with what they anticipated. Moreover, men and women adjust their expectations to their circumstances, which means that modern men and women are unlikely to claim to be happier than primitive people would have.

Researchers have measured a small positive relationship between reported happiness and income, but the results are likely to be based on a statistical quirk. The likely explanation for this weak correlation is that people who are earning above average incomes at the time of the survey are liable to contain a number of individuals whose incomes exceed their forecasts. Conversely those who are in the lowest income groups undoubtedly include people who are disappointed in their economic situation and had expected better. If income has a significant random component, then by chance there will be more among the rich who will be pleasantly surprised at their level of well-being than disappointed and the opposite will be true of the poor. Consequently the weak positive relationship between income and happiness is consistent with the view that people adjust their expectations to reality and report being happy or unhappy only if they are pleasantly or unpleasantly surprised.

The evidence suggests that people accommodate to their circumstances, and their expectations adjust to their situations. Change in one's situation can have a major impact on satisfaction or happiness. Being better off than expected can bring happiness, while being worse off may lead to dissatisfaction. As mentioned above, people are often happier attempting to reach a goal, than after achieving their ambition. Once a new level of income or success has been realized, expectations quickly rise to reflect the new position. A world champion skater who achieves *only* a silver medal in the Olympic Games may be depressed, while other skaters are overwhelmed with simply having had a chance to take part.

Research attests that within countries high income people are somewhat happier and more satisfied with life than low income (Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers 1976: 27). The correlation is rather weak and over time there appears to be no relationship between growth in measured income and happiness or satisfaction. One study reported that "using the following social background variables as predictors: age, sex, income, occupation, education, religious denomination, church attendance, political party identification, labor union membership, region, size of community and …race" explained only 6 percent of the expressed satisfaction with one's life as a whole (Inglehart 1986: 3). It is noteworthy that one of the most satisfied groups in a major study of happiness and satisfaction in the United States was older blacks (over 55) — a group that was generally impoverished, had been subject to oppressive discrimination, and was poorly educated (Campbell 1976: 500). Not only were these African–Americans more satisfied than Caucasians of the same age, but they were more satisfied with life than younger blacks! No doubt, having suffered from hostility and discrimination much of their lives, the elimination of "Jim Crow" laws pleasantly surprised them.

Sociologists researching happiness among ethnic groups have found that blacks in the United States were almost as happy as whites in 1946, but twenty years later, after significant progress in civil rights and an appreciable lessening of discrimination, minorities reported less happiness compared with the majority (Veenhoven 1984: 189). No one would argue that the improvement in civil rights for African–Americans was not progress, yet it failed to improve black people's happiness and seems to have led to more discontent than satisfaction. Perhaps this occurred in part because advances in civil rights brought more blacks into closer contact with white middle class society and thus led them to feel relatively deprived as well as have exposed them to more personal slights because of the color of their skin.

On the other hand, a few studies do show that people are happier in richer countries than in poorer, while other data demonstrate a rather weak relationship (Cantril 1965; Veenhoven 1984; Inglehart and Rabier 1986). It may simply be that richer countries are also freer, allowing people to follow their own goals. Richer countries are more democratic, and the public is less subject to bureaucratic or police abuse. Life expectancies are also longer in rich countries and infant mortality

much reduced. Thus, it is uncertain whether the increased goods and services available to citizens of richer countries are a major factor in their reported happiness rather than longer life expectancies, lower infant mortality, or greater democracy and freedom (Allardt 1981). There is no doubt, however, that people living in poor countries are less happy than those that are affluent. Ruut Veenhoven, who surveyed a wide group of states, attributes the correlation between happiness and per capita GNP to the relationship between the latter and "*absolute poverty*" that is, the proportion of the public with insufficient food to sustain life adequately. In well-to-do nations more goods and services do make life more comfortable and provide people with more options for travel, entertainment, recreation, and intellectual stimulation. Moreover, rich countries free people to establish non material goals — a poor person may not have the luxury to campaign against environmental degradation, racism, discrimination, or injustice or simply to spend time on personal relationships and with his or her family.

Measures of happiness or satisfaction, therefore, are poor indicators of progress. Progress must mean something more concrete than such subjective values. If happiness were the sole criterion of progress, then by that definition modern Western societies would have failed to reflect an advance over aboriginal tribes. Who would consider a satisfied poor elderly black man who had spent his life subject to systematic discrimination as having lived in an enviable state?

The struggle, the race, the challenge do bring rewards. The aim may be to achieve wealth, to become famous or important, to serve the poor, or to save the environment. The particular ambition may be less important than the struggle to achieve the objective. An artist, for example, may find the effort to produce a painting more rewarding than contemplating the finished product. Many have established a goal only to find once it was achieved that their lives were empty or less satisfying than they had expected. A person without a dream who is simply working out of necessity will be less content with life than one who is dedicated to a cause, whatever the mission may be. Paradoxically having a goal that is ostensibly *selfless*, such as reducing poverty, is frequently very rewarding and can bring greater happiness than simply accumulating more goods. Or as Francis Fukuyama wrote (1992: 311): "Human life, then, involves a curious paradox: it seems to require injustice, for the struggle against injustice is what calls forth what is highest in man." The revolutionaries who overthrew the communist systems in Eastern and Central Europe, have found that the struggle to achieve democracy was more satisfying that the reality of a liberal society. Few, however, want to return to an existence dominated by the state — although many yearn for the security provided by the old regime. A society that provides men and women with more options for conducting their lives is better than one which narrowly circumscribes their choices or prescribes life styles, employment, and residency. Having a fair set of rules-of-the-game that allow individuals to struggle towards their own goals may contribute more towards

human well-being than robbing people of their opportunities to achieve by providing them with the necessities of life.

Questioning Progress

> The ordinary citizen is far more likely to feel that life in the United States is getting worse than he is to feel it is getting better.

This statement might have been written today, in 1993, but instead it appeared in 1976 and was penned around 1973 (Campbell, Converse, and Rodgers 1976: 2). Such a pessimistic view of the American situation came at the end of a period of almost unparalleled growth. From 1960 to 1973, average weekly wages, after taking into account inflation, increased at an annual rate of 1.8 percent while real disposable income escalated by 3.2 percent — one of the best records registered in American history. In contrast during the boom decade of the 1980s, real weekly wages actually fell and inflation adjusted disposable income inched up only 1.7 percent annually. Apparently vigorous economic growth during the 1960s and early 70s and rising real incomes and wages failed to yield the perception that the world was getting better.

In the course of the Second World War many people suffered death, destruction, and mutilation. The fighting in South East Asia, on the other hand, killed one-seventh the number of Americans that died during the last world war. Most civilians in the United States suffered vicariously if at all while our military were engaged in the Vietnamese War, yet the public was deeply distressed. Currently America is peaceful and prosperous, yet dissatisfaction is high. Present conditions are significantly better by almost any objective standards than they were during the late 1960s, in the first half of the 1940s, or in the depression years of the 1930s, yet a general feeling of malaise is widespread.

As soon as one problem is solved another arises. Today, the public worries about homelessness — a plight that afflicts, according to census figures, approximately half a million people in the United States. Although street people have become more visible, vagrants and panhandlers have always demanded charity. The homeless were virtually invisible when Americans were preoccupied with more imperative concerns. Moreover, in earlier decades, the law permitted the incarceration of drunks, mentally incompetents, and vagrants. However, if the government solved the problem of beggars tomorrow, another issue would take its place.

Part of the public's malaise stems from television and its emphasis on disasters, tragedies, and violence. Viewers as well as newspaper readers are more apt to read about or watch a program on a disaster than one about how well the world is doing. At the same time, the growth in world and the American population means that among the billions on the globe and the hundreds of millions in the United States, a few bizarre individuals will surface and create tragic and violent crimes. The media, of course, will give such stories high visibility. The populace ignores that these

crazies are one out of a hundred million or even a billion souls, most of whom are leading humdrum but quiet lives. These incidents create the perception that the world is becoming a more dangerous place infested with lunatics, although the chances of coming into contact with one is minuscule. The demented have always existed, but, in a large population, numerically more of them will be around to torture, kill and rape.

In earlier ages people knew only about their friends and relatives. Perhaps the newspaper might bring stories of strange behavior in far away places, but the terror involved was remote. Now with instant communications and rapid transportation, the world is a smaller place in which we quickly know about hijackings, mass murders, and serial killers. The constant bombardment of horror stories feeds the notion that the world is degenerating.

The Intellectual Challenge to Progress

In addition, a variety of trends in the Western world have created a challenge to the notion of progress. The growth of the concept of relativism — no society is better than any other; no animal, even man, is superior to any other; no human, no matter how gifted, is worthier than any other — questions whether progress is meaningful. Relativism emanates from the spread of the ethic of egalitarianism which has been advancing at least since the eighteenth century. First power was taken from kings and distributed among the aristocracy and wealthy merchants. Eventually the franchise, economic rights, and civil rights were extended to all men and then to women. Although this has been definite progress for individuals, egalitarianism may be less appropriate when extended to societies, religions, and customs. Few would argue, even today, that Nazi German society should be considered morally equivalent to that of the liberal democratic United States or Great Britain. Yet, in the name of multiculturalism, a number of intellectuals assert that Middle-Eastern cultures with their barbaric treatment of women, their denial of civil rights to their peoples, and their extreme disparities in income are commensurate in moral value with those of the west.

Another factor in the growing disillusionment with progress is the absence of any strong relationship between economic growth and obvious happiness (Veenhoven 1984: 152-154). In some nations strong economic growth has led to a rise in reported happiness; in wealthier ones there seems to be little relationship. Economic historian R. A. Easterlin (1974: 109) found that per capita GNP doubled in the U.S. between 1946 and 1970 but reported happiness remained unchanged. The United States is the richest nation in the world and the wealthiest nation ever in history, yet many are unhappy, sick, and disillusioned with life. Nostalgia for an incorrectly remembered happier time is common (Bettmann 1974). Ignoring all the evidence, a large portion of the American public feels that life is more uncertain and riskier today than ever before (Wattenberg 1984).

Critics of modern society, such as sociologists Jeffrey C. Alexander and Piotr Sztompka (1990: 4), point to the “meaningless consumerism” that permeates the modern Western world. For

them the bumper sticker that says, "When the going gets tough, the tough go shopping!" summarizes modern excesses. This criticism reflects intellectual snobbery. If people enjoy shopping, should they be deprived of the fruits of their labor? Is it appropriate to condemn others because their tastes differ from those of the intellectual, who prides himself on a degree of asceticism? As discussed above, however, additional goods usually fail to boost satisfaction with life, once people are above subsistence levels.

Although it is not necessary to believe in God to have faith in progress, a possible decline in religion has also contributed to the growing skepticism of progress.* Much of nineteenth century European thought was based on a religious belief that the Almighty had set out a purpose for mankind and that civilization was moving towards that goal. The growth of science, with the spreading understanding of the "Big Bang" origins of the universe, however, leaves little room for an activist Deity. Not only has the twentieth century experienced horrors difficult to reconcile with a just and loving Father, but science has relegated a creator to a marginal role, to defining perhaps the magnitude of the physical constants that control nature.In the West the spread of scientific thought has led to a growth in secularism.

Many people feel increasingly that they are living in a universe which is totally indifferent to their well-being. If there is no purpose to life, if life is a chance combination of an assortment of chemicals which in turn are the product of random combinations of atoms resulting from cataclysmic supernovas, can progress be possible? The blind operation of an unknowing universe subject to chance that by remote serendipity produced intelligent beings in a small out-of-the-way portion of an average galaxy fails to support the nineteenth century teleological view of progress as conscious movement towards an improved and better life. This pessimism together with a growing perception, especially among the highly educated, in the irrelevance of God has generated nihilism.

Science, which has brought this disquiet to the public, is mistrusted. The atom bomb and Chernobyl have terrified much of society. Although no one was hurt, the Three Mile Island accident strengthened opposition to nuclear power, the cleanest form of energy. The automobile, even though it has delivered great benefits to the masses, has also produced massive deaths on the highways. Critics attribute the ills of modern transportation to science and technology. People forget that the horse and buggy, which the horseless carriage replaced, created tons of waste — one healthy horse deposits between twenty and twenty-five pounds of manure a day — leaving city

* Since 1957, the percentage of the adult population that expresses no religious preference has nearly quadrupled from 3 percent of the U.S. population (*Statistical Abstract,* 1992, p. 58) to 11 percent in 1990. Church and synagogue attendance has been cut from nearly 50 percent of the population to two-fifths. The enforcement of bans on retailing on Sundays, of gambling, and the rapid increase in non-traditional family arrangements all suggests a decline in religiosity. On the other hand, Gallup polls show that a belief in life after death has ranged from a low of about 64 percent of the population in 1936 (Cantril, 1951, p. 310) to 77 percent in recent decades (*Gallup Poll Monthly,* July 1991, p. 52).

streets a stinking mess. The crowd fears that *Frankenstein* or a new black death will result from biotechnology. Although some have always distrusted science — the blindly religious believed that it might show a supreme being to be unnecessary — modern life with its proliferation of technology has increased the distrust, especially for those who lack understanding of technology and hear constantly about its risks.

Nevertheless even among the highly educated, religion and belief live on. As Professor Kenneth Thompson, a sociologist at the Open University in the United Kingdom, notes in a paper on "Secularization and Sacralization," religion serves a number of roles in the modern world (Alexander and Sztompka 1990: 161-181). For those who are discontented with a large-scale, bureaucratic, impersonal world, religion is a refuge. Professor Thompson quotes (177) two other students of religion, Rodney Stark and William Bainbridge as writing (1985: 527-8):

> In the future, as in the past, religion will be shaped by secular forces but not destroyed. There will always be a need for gods and for the general compensations which only they can plausibly offer. Unless science transforms humans into gods or annihilates humanity, people will continue to live lives hemmed in by limitations. So long as we exist, we shall yearn for a bounty of specific rewards, rewards that in the mundane world are too scarce to be shared by all, and we shall ache for those general rewards of peace, immortality, and boundless joy that have never been found this side of heaven. Secularization has unchained the human spirit, not stifled it in a rationalized bureaucratic outbox.

Critics of the concept of progress often claim that nature and mankind were better off in primitive hunter-gatherer or simple farming communities. This view reflects the Biblical story of Adam and Eve in which mankind lived in paradise until Eve ate of the apple of knowledge. Rousseau in a "A Discourse on the Origin of Inequality" (1950) hypothesized a natural man, leading the good and simple life before "civilization" spoiled humans. It is fashionable, even "politically correct" currently, to view Native Americans as morally superior to the European settlers. Paul Ehrlich, an ardent environmentalist, reflects this vision in claiming that growth is untenable (Ehrlich and Wilson 1991). Extreme environmentalists believe that progress is a myth and economic growth harmful. This view ignores the realities of modern life. If society were seriously to attempt to return to a simple agricultural or hunter-gatherer state, billions of humans would have to die. Without modern technology, farming would be unable to support current populations. Pre-farming life–styles require huge amounts of sparsely populated land in order to support small tribes.

Others who question progress point to higher crime rates, environmental degradation, the extinction of species, poverty in even the richest societies, the breakdown of the family and the explosion of teenage pregnancies, stagnation in many countries, war, and pestilence. As Francis Fukuyama puts it (1992: 3): "The twentieth century, it is safe to say, has made all of us into deep

historical pessimists." These serious problems, some of which may be worsening, are treated in the next two chapters, which focus on whether there has been real progress.

Non-Western Cultural Ethics

Many multicultural advocates contend that the concept of progress and economic growth is a Western idea that other societies do not share. Typically traditional cultures are wedded to a static or cyclical view of life (Davis 1992: 40-44). As Western ideas and technology spread, however, few fail to recognize that change occurs; but many resent the new and resist the notion of progress. For them, change represents a menace to their ancestral ways. These people are right: progress does threaten entrenched customs. Nevertheless, if men and women enjoy longer lives, reduced infant mortality, and more options, such changes must count as progress.

Certain cultures clearly do not share this view. The overthrow of the Shah of Iran reflected in part a desire to halt the rapid Westernization of the country and the perceived threat to Muslin values and religion. In the eyes of the clerics, the changes were far from desirable. Many citizens, of course, objected to the Shah's brutal dictatorship and supported a democratization of Iran. For most elimination of the Shah's authoritarian regime represented progress, but for others the substitution of a theocracy reduced options, especially for women. As long as Iranians lack the freedom to choose between a religious life style or a secular one, conclusions that individuals in Iran prefer a static traditional society are unwarranted.

Some would contend that primitive people may be as happy with their society as those who are more "advanced" and may not want to be "civilized." It is ethnocentric for Westerners to assert that unlettered tribesmen in South American jungles should be brought into the twentieth century. Many native Americans would contend that the coming of "the white man" has substantially harmed them.

There can be no doubt that European immigrants ill-treated the indigenous population. During much of the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth century, white men systematically drove the Indians from their lands, often slaughtering them. The treatment of natives was shameful. "The only good Indian is a dead Indian" was all too prevalent the attitude. Disease brought by the Europeans, war with the immigrants, and reduction in hunting and gathering territories decimated the indigenous population. Indeed progress for native Americans was negative throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth century.

The twentieth century has brought some improvement in well-being for the descendants of the original population. Life expectancy has increased; infant mortality is down; sickness and disease is less common or more quickly and efficiently treated. Discrimination is declining. More Indians may be alive today than populated North America at the time of Columbus! Anthropologists claim that it takes about 2.5 square miles to support a hunter-gatherer. On that basis, the original 13 states could have sustained roughly 145,000 aborigines. This figure is in line

with the estimate by James Mooney (1928), an early twentieth century scholar of native Americans, of 107,800 for the North Atlantic and South Atlantic States (Ubelaker 1976: 287). Douglas Ubelaker, another scholar of pre-colonial history, supports (1976: 237) a figure about twice that of Mooney, which would still be less than the current population of about 250,000, as reported by the 1990 census. On the other hand, in 1830, roughly two hundred years after the first colonists landed and about 150 years ago, only 6,373 Indians survived in the original thirteen states (Tocqueville 1988: 321)!

For other primitive people forcible subjugation, such as that practiced on native Americans or the Australian aborigines, is no longer the issue. The central question is whether these "uncivilized" tribesmen would be better off brought into the modern world. Incorporation into a market economy will almost certainly overwhelm their culture. On the other hand, modern medicine and hygiene will bring longer and healthier lives and a drop in infant mortality. A study of the hunter-gatherer society of the Dobe !Kung found that over 200 babies per thousand died in their first year of life — considerably higher than that of almost any major nation (Howell 1979: 82). In comparison the infant mortality rate in the U.S. in 1989 was 11 per thousand. Anthropologist Nancy Howell estimated that in 1950 the Dobe !Kung life expectancy at birth was about 30 years (1979: 116). In contrast, in 1989, a new born Nigerian could look forward to 48 years of life, while an American baby born in the same year could expect to live over 75 years.

Should the modern world take precautions to isolate and preserve aboriginal peoples in their primitive state? If the answer were "yes," it would be akin to putting such people in zoos where we Westerners could observe their curious ways and where they would be condemned to lives that, if not solitary, would be "poor, nasty, brutish and short." Although many senior members of such simple tribes may prefer to maintain their old ways, their children or their children's children would probably be better off in the modern world. If we judge cultures on the basis of whether their members can lead long, healthy lives, with numerous options, such native communities fail to meet the standard of a satisfactory society and should, therefore, be exposed to the competition of the modern world.

It is utter nonsense to take the relativistic view that the social system of a hunter-gatherer, South American tribe, is as desirable as that of a modern civilization. True, those aboriginal customs may contain a number of valuable features, providing significant benefits to many if not all members of their community. Many of those features may be preserved. The aborigines, however, should be given the opportunity to choose between joining the modern world or staying with their primitive lives.

One can devise a test, at least in principle, in comparing two societies, A and B, whose members each say they prefer their own customs over others: if the members of A, after experiencing B, still choose A, while the members of B, after experiencing A, come to prefer A,

then A is a better society. Ambiguity arises when people in society A prefer A after trying B, and people who originated in B elect B, after experiencing A. In that case one can make no definitive determination as to the preferable society.

In practice, most people who experience modern Western societies favor them to primitive or Third World life styles. People vote with their feet. International migration surges out of the less developed portions of the world, Moslem states or "developing" areas into more "developed," more "Westernized" countries. Western Europe, the United States, and Canada face major problems with illegal immigrants from poorer areas. These population flows do not imply that the migrants favor all aspects of Western culture or that they disdain their own. Taking all factors into consideration, however, they prefer that their children receive an education and face the prospect of decent lives and that they, themselves, become able to afford a few of the luxuries of modern life.

The Western world has come to value equal rights, not only among various ethnic groups, but between men and women. Virtually no non-Western civilization has attempted to give women comparable rights with men. Some may argue that there is nothing ethically superior in our values to those of other societies, but I disagree. The principle that men and women should be given equal opportunity in life implies that women should face unbiased possibilities in the labor market. This has led to efforts to remove sex based occupational restrictions and to encouraging more women to enter non–traditional professions. In support of the equal rights precept, governments have enacted laws to prevent men from using their dominant position, their larger size and stronger muscles to oppress the "weaker" sex.

The emphasis on egalitarianism has led Western society to value equality before the law and to attempt to prescribe equal opportunities for all humans, no matter what their sex, race, ethnic background, or religion. Few other cultures have been as open to minority or non-dominant groups. As can be seen in Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union, efforts by one ethnic group to tyrannize another is common. It is a particularly Western societal ethic to espouse, if not always to achieve, the goal of equality of races, religions and sexes.

Economic Progress

Economic growth — discussed in more detail in later chapters — means that people are acquiring more goods and services. With greater command over resources, growth provides men and women with additional opportunities, protection from natural disasters, and a more comfortable life style, and thus represents an important component of progress. Men and women can travel more frequently, be better entertained, eat more nutritious, satisfying and even more exotic foods. Their lives can be more comfortable, safer, and better informed. Thomas Hobbes wrote (1651: pt. 1, ch. 13) that before there were governments and civilization most men had "No Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare and danger of violent

death." Economic growth reduces the proportion of the population experiencing those appalling conditions.

Researchers have demonstrated a strong correlation between national income and the physical qualities of life among developing nations (Williamson 1987). A quick look at the data should convince anyone that wealthy industrial nations, including Japan, enjoy lower infant mortality rates, longer life expectancy at all ages, better nutrition, and much higher literacy rates than Third World states. One demographer, Donald Bogue, asserted that (1969: 580-581), "The more carefully one studies the situation, the more one realizes that almost every major accomplishment of 'industrialization' helps to bring about a reduction in mortality."

Economists typically use changes in GNP, the total market value of the final output in an economy, on a per capita basis as a measure of economic growth, but an increase in this yardstick does not necessarily imply progress or true improvement in economic well-being. In fact, as University of Washington economist Morris D. Morris, writing for the Overseas Development Council in *Measuring the Conditions of the World's Poor,* stressed (13): "As a measure of welfare, GNP is fundamentally flawed." Such statistical summaries fail to capture many economically productive activities. National income accounts ignore work that is not directly remunerated in the market place. For example, laundry done at home goes uncounted in GNP; if it is taken to a commercial laundry, measured national income rises. Care of a child at home is again unmeasured, while the use of a child care center would be added to GNP. Do-it-yourself home repair, except for the purchase of supplies, goes unestimated in the accounts.

On the other hand, statisticians subtract nothing for the costs of air pollution, water contamination, and ground damage from GNP. In fact, an increase in traffic congestion resulting in longer commutes and greater fuel consumption would make people worse off, although GNP would be unaffected. National income statistics count the purchase of locks, security systems, and the employment of guards, although these expenditures are necessitated by crime.

To complicate matters, GNP accountants price government expenditures at cost. For some types of outlays, many observers would question these values. Government bookkeepers, for example, add the costs of the military — including nuclear weapons — into national income, but pacifists decry such expenditures and would prefer to deduct them from total expenditures to measure true national well-being. Many economists consider subsidies for farmers as waste, yet when they take the form of the purchase of farm products they count as additions to national income.

It is ironic but true that actual improvements in welfare can result in measured GNP per capita declining. A reduction in infant mortality or an extension of life for the elderly may produce a larger population without increasing output, hence a fall in national income per capita, yet virtually no one would argue that these changes have made people worse off.

Rather than measuring economic growth in gross terms, government accountants should ideally measure economic change by offsetting growth in measured income with such negative factors as pollution, reduction in leisure, increased expenditures for safety and protection of property. Although statisticians have attempted to adjust for such factors, they have all foundered on the difficulties in measuring many of these attributes. What is the dollar value of cleaner air, water, or unpolluted ground? What is the economic worth of being able to walk the streets without fear and without taking burdensome precautions?

As chapter 6 discusses in more detail, nations that enjoy higher national incomes per capita typically enjoy longer life spans and reduced morbidity as well, even though the correlation is far from perfect. For example, in 1984, the GNP per capita of China was only $310 while the comparable figure for Mexico was $2,040; yet life expectancy at birth for the poor communist country was higher than that of the Latin American nation (Sen 1988: 12). On the other hand, per capita income and the illiteracy rate can account for nearly three-fourths of the variation in life expectancy for a wide variety of countries. A gain in per capita income by $1,000 leads to a one-year augmentation in life expectancy while a 10 percentage point rise in the proportion of the population who can read and write boosts the length of life by 2.5 years.

Many studies of the quality of life around the world, including this one, have used life expectancy, infant mortality and literacy rates as basic indicators of well-being (Morris 1979). Although these variables are highly correlated, especially infant mortality and life expectancy at birth, they are probably the least culturally biased indicators of well-being and do reflect basic components of the human condition. Life expectancy, for example, is highly correlated with happiness around the world (Veenhoven 1984: 152). Nevertheless, it is important to supplement these factors with such intangibles as freedom, equality, and security, all discussed in subsequent chapters.

To contribute to progress, however, economic growth must raise the well-being of individuals. Besides the improvement in command over resources inherent in a rise in per capita income, economic growth leads to an enhancement of knowledge and technology. The reverse is also true, that is, an accretion in enlightenment leads to a increase in technology and material prosperity. Whatever the causation, information and growth go together, demonstrating that a rise in human capital — knowledge, skills, and health — is an essential component of economic expansion.

Many regimes have attempted to keep their peoples ignorant, for knowledge leads to demands for reform and change. As Charles van Doren put it in *A History of Knowledge* (xxiii):

> Ignorance remains bliss only so long as it is ignorance; as soon as one learns one is ignorant, one begins to want not to be so. … The desire to know, when you realize you do not know, is universal and probably irresistible. It was the

> original temptation of mankind, and no man or woman, and especially no child, can overcome it for long.

An advance in enlightenment by itself is important to the concept of progress. The spread of knowledge reduces superstition, lessens the employment of useless remedies or potions, and widens the scope of enjoyable pursuits. Learning frees people; it improves their options; it diminishes their vulnerability; it promotes their self-esteem. Education can enhance appreciation of the arts, of music, of culture, and of travel. A more informed society is less subject to discrimination and prejudice. Even if knowledge failed to produce more goods and services, a more enlightened country would be preferable to a less educated or knowledgeable one.

Growth in science has produced an expansion in technology, which among other benefits, has promoted the development and spread of music, an under-esteemed achievement of mankind. The need for and appreciation of euphony and song appear to be universal. Primitive societies have all developed simple musical instruments, dances, and singing. Even Classical Greece, however, employed only a few musical inventions, mainly a flute-like device and the lyre. Little is known about music during the classical period but it must have been simple and monadic. Over the last five hundred years, Western culture has gratified this basic desire through increasingly elaborate devices and tonal arrangements, inventing numerous instruments, the orchestra and a wide variety of musical forms.

In modern times, not only has technology aided the production of music but has expanded its availability. Recordings, radio, television, and the compact disc have made music easily accessible to even the poorest people in Third World countries. Centuries ago only kings or the very rich could afford to be serenaded during dinner; now one turns on the radio or slips a disc into the CD player for almost flawless sound. In prior centuries, although the middle class often trained their daughters to play an instrument, their audience was limited to friends and family and the quality of their music was constrained by the training and ability of the young women. Now not only can music reach a broad group of listeners, but men and women can select the variety — classical, popular, rock, rap — which suit their tastes. On the other hand, because music is so ubiquitous, fewer children are learning to play instruments and increasingly the public is dependent on mechanical reproduction of songs and symphonies.

Equality

Income and political equality contribute significantly to human welfare. A country in which a few have massive wealth while the overwhelming majority of the population lives in poverty is less desirable than a nation which may have the same per capita income but with a more equal distribution. The extent to which income equality is desirable is a matter of personal ideology. Almost everyone would agree, nonetheless, that extreme income inequalities are neither acceptable

nor consistent with democratic and free institutions. On the other hand, government programs to reduce inequalities can adversely affect economic incentives, reduce income growth, and lower national earnings. Communist countries, which attempted to limit income differences, have produced grossly inefficient economies that fail to offer either a strong economic expansion or a satisfactory standard of living.

Extreme inequality is unlikely to be consistent with a stable democratic society. Rather wide differences in earnings may foster revolutionary movements together with efforts by the political elites to stamp out through violence efforts to redistribute wealth. The civil wars and revolutionary movements in El Salvador, Guatemala, the Philippines, and Peru give ample proof of such tendencies.

Some have argued that a much more egalitarian society would be a better one (Rawls 1971), but is it fair or equitable to take wealth from those who have earned it? All who are rich have not acquired their wealth through work: some inherited it; a few stole it; many were simply lucky or were blessed with a unique talent. Nevertheless numerous people who have become rich did so through hard imaginative labor — they earned wealth by contributing to the betterment of the public. If such individuals are to be denied the fruits of their labor, countless people will slack off and society will be poorer. In other words, society faces a trade off between redistribution of income and the generation of income (Okun 1975). The more redistribution, the less income will be generated. By limiting or eliminating financial rewards, communist countries have strangled their economies. Through depriving their people of the right to earn and keep their money, they have robbed their societies of wealth and freedom.

Despite the poverty it produces, the appeal of egalitarianism remains strong. Most people find it distressing to witness the contrast between great wealth and extreme poverty. Beggars provoke public demands that the government supply homeless individuals with the necessities of life. A humane society ensures that no one starves, that everyone has shelter, and that the sick and injured receive medical treatment. Beyond these minimum benefits there is little agreement on how much redistribution is desirable.

Almost everyone, however, would concede that a satisfactory civilization would provide equal opportunity if not equal results. In practice, however, policies to achieve equal opportunity may be controversial and ambiguous. Should one group of people be offered special treatment to remedy the handicaps that discrimination levied on them in earlier periods? Should individuals with disabilities be provided special treatment to enable them to compete with others in the market? Can and should the state attempt to limit the advantages that well-off and well-connected families can furnish their children? Some people inherit wealth; others receive intelligence from their parents; still others obtain special skills or contacts. Each of these gives the recipient an advantage over

those less lucky. Attempts to remedy all but the most egregious inequities appear to be beyond the state's powers.

Nevertheless, the aim should be to offer men and women without regard to ethnic background the same chance to earn a good living, to enter a chosen profession or otherwise to achieve their ambitions. This implies that society should extend to the children of the poor the opportunity to receive a decent education. Moreover, the state should not bar individuals from occupations, lines of work, or professions because of their race, religion, or sex.

Conclusion

Progress has many dimensions. For primitive peoples and for most of the less developed countries of the world, it signifies a reduction in infant mortality, an increase in life spans, and an extension of literacy. For the developed world, which may have achieved life spans close to the limit and in which infant mortality has fallen close to zero, while over 95 percent of the population can read and write, progress entails improvements different in kind and in degree. Simple literacy is no longer enough. Instead one looks for a rising level of education, a betterment of health for all ages and groups of the population, and for an extension in the command over resources. Increased knowledge frees people intellectually, while improved health makes for a better life. Education also makes people more flexible; well schooled individuals can adjust more easily to change. Economic growth, which creates the opportunity to live more comfortably, to extend one's knowledge, to make more choices, and to travel, constitutes an important component of progress. Genuine betterment means that everybody gains from higher incomes. Progress involves the extension of freedom to more individuals and more groups in the nation. A rise in the proportion of the people, no matter what their race, religion, or sex, who have the opportunity to live as they wish and to enter the occupations that best suit their abilities, reflects an advance in the well-being of the human race.

Not all change is progress, especially to all people. Many men and women want to maintain the *status quo*; a goodly number want to halt what others might call progress. As I write these words, I am sitting on a balcony in a remote Greek mountain village. When I first came to this idyllic spot, the town was without electricity. Many, mainly visitors, opposed as an unaesthetic intrusion the stringing of power lines from house to house. To the natives, electricity, which made possible light and refrigeration, provided highly desirable progress. Without that innovation, this village would be dead today, for few would have continued coming here. The local population, which winters in the lowlands, would have remained in their cold-weather homes. During early visits there was no alternative to throwing our trash and garbage down a ravine about 100 feet from our cottage and right behind other houses. Now, with affluence, the city provides twice weekly trash pick-ups, has posted no littering signs at the local picnic spring, and has placed trash cans at strategic locations. Richer means cleaner!

When my wife first came to this village, she rode a donkey. Today the village has TVs, washing machines, tractors and telephones, but no donkeys. Twenty-five years ago, the only sounds were of chickens cackling, goats' bells, and donkeys braying; today these sounds are masked by the noise of motor cycles, car horns and chain saws. Is this progress? To those who live here, yes; to those of us who visit, it is a bit sad, although the beauty of the spot remains unaffected.

As I have said before, a rising per capita income does not necessarily constitute betterment for mankind. Telephones that wake you from a pleasant afternoon's nap on a warm day in sunny Greece do not augment progress. The next chapter will examine history for evidence of real advancement.