

*In our discussion of welfare, we confuse means and ends, the director of the Twentieth Century Fund writes.*

## *The True Welfare: America's Continuing Quest*

AUGUST HECKSCHER

WE AMERICANS seek welfare, and must continue to seek it; but in its ultimate form, we must not suppose we have yet found welfare. More than that: I suggest that the kind of welfare which we have set as our goal is inadequate—even dangerously inadequate—to the needs of the present day.

The American world is extraordinary in the level of material well being which it has attained. The Twentieth Century Fund has cast up and computed some of the advances which our people have already made, and which they are likely to make in the next decade or so. I shall not try here even to summarize the accounting, except to say that by whatever standard one measures it—in terms of gross national product, or personal income, of technological advance or of growing leisure—the results are such as seize the imagination. Never before in the history of the world have such prospects of wealth and ease been laid out before a whole people.

These attainments are the fruit, primarily, of the enterprise and the productive genius of a free people, working within the rules of what, for want of a better word, we must call a capitalistic system. Yet the government, too, has played its

part. The state has the general welfare as its objective, as indeed it was enjoined to do by the Constitution. It has pursued the goal with a good deal of resourcefulness, eliminating many of the injustices which fall upon the individual, mitigating the harshness of the economic system, as in its measures for the unemployed, or the harshness of fate itself, as in its concern for the aged. All that is surely to the good. I have heard people get very angry at the idea of a Welfare State; but I have never heard anyone be very effective in this line, for the simple reason that they could not bring themselves to propose that to fare badly was a nobler goal than to fare well—nor even to propose that in modern conditions the great power of the state should be neutral or passive where evil waits to be overcome.

Very well, then: we have this condition, that one of the grand objectives which have inspired men throughout history has been very largely won. The battles that divided the generation which witnessed the New Deal and the Fair Deal have played themselves out; under President Eisenhower the social welfare policies, once thought revolutionary, have been consolidated and

expanded. Yet in the midst of this achievement there is, unless I am mistaken, a certain disappointment and uneasiness. There is the disappointment of the liberal, who wonders whether there is anything more to be liberal about. More profoundly and significantly, there is the uneasiness of great numbers of men and women who ask whether in material well-being there is an answer to the deepest needs of the social order.

In Europe last year I found myself again and again coming up against this question. We see there examples of the Welfare State having been notably implemented. The people are well protected against the unpleasant eventualities of life, poverty has been substantially lessened, and a healthy environment has been created. In the process the dire prophecies of the conservatives can hardly be said to have been fulfilled. Men have not been subjected arbitrarily to the whims of bureaucrats, parliaments function effectively, and a general air of political freedom prevails. Above all, the Welfare State has not, as has sometimes been predicted, slipped down the fatal road to Communism. Quite the contrary; Communist parties have been at their weakest where, as in Britain and the Scandinavian countries, welfare policies have been most effectively pursued.

Yet all is not quite as it should be. Under the surface in Europe, if I read signs correctly, there is a growing feeling that some of the most disturbing problems of society remain unsolved and have perhaps been aggravated. In a country as socially advanced as Sweden, juvenile delinquency is a disturbing feature of the social scene. Alcoholism is a growing problem. Most mysterious and disturbing of all, suicide reaches the highest rate found anywhere.

There are some who maintain that these evils are residues from an older and less perfect state of society. There are still pockets of poor housing, it is said; there are still islands of poverty and social decay. If these are removed, then perhaps the disturbing elements of which I have

spoken will disappear. I wonder whether the answer is as simple as that.

A more searching answer, it seems to me, is that the very perfection of the environment breeds a kind of spiritual discontent. The ideal state may not necessarily breed the ideal life. Boredom may prove itself to be the inseparable companion of safety, and rather than endure boredom men will seek any escape — antisocial behavior, drink, even self-inflicted death. I believe we have come to the point where we must actually look these possibilities in the eye — face the sobering fact that life has depths and heights which, if they are not plumbed, leave men intolerably dissatisfied. In trying to create highways which would be perfectly safe, we have succeeded in putting the driver to sleep, thus raising new dangers more deadly than the turns and crossroads, the hills and passing villages, which we eliminated at so great a cost. May it not be also that in seeking to create the ideal state of welfare we have evoked a vague discontent which strikes at the very heart of man's existence?

The conservatives of the past generation attacked the methods of the Welfare State; they did not presume very seriously to attack its goal. But it is the goal — it is the end and not the means — which I am suggesting we should re-evaluate now. This is certainly not a task for conservatives alone. Indeed, the next stage of liberalism, as Mr. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., has recently suggested, may be an advance beyond the narrow economic terms in which welfare was conceived in the thirties, and a fresh effort to realize its cultural and spiritual dimensions. Whoever takes hold of this challenge, whichever party makes the issue its own, may well hold the key to the future in this country.

For ourselves, let us begin with an awareness of how frequently the material things we attain have little, if anything, to do with our real happiness. The American is rightly counted fortunate because of his standard of living; yet all sorts of factors

of dubious import enter into the calculation of this standard. We buy more cars, more electric ice boxes, more consumer goods of all kinds; but do we invariably buy them because we feel a true need for them? Do we not too often buy them, instead, because of the subtle pressures (and many pressures not so subtle) which society places upon us? Thinking about these things in Europe, I had the feeling that American life, though seemingly far more spacious and easy, is really less so than in ostensibly poorer countries. A man may have more money here, but he is under more brutal compulsion to spend it, and usually to spend it beyond his present means. Our advertisers like to speak of "casual living"; yet the living they would impose upon us is the very opposite of casual; it is a tense and nervous existence, in which men and women rush about to buy and to do the things which will make their "leisure" ever more "active", and will assure that they are not slipping behind in the struggle to be part of some undefined and constantly changing social group.

As with the individual, so with our society as a whole. It is assumed that the size of our gross national product is a measure of our national well-being as a nation. But is it? Many of the activities which enter as assets upon the balance sheet are actually proofs of mismanagement or of growing deficiencies. Thus in the years ahead we shall be needing to go constantly further down into the earth in order to get at our vital supplies of oil; we shall have to be extracting vital raw materials from low-grade sources. For this purpose we shall develop new machinery, spend more dollars and more human effort; all this will show as an increment on the balance. We shall be busier—but shall we be richer? Shall we not, on the contrary, be poorer because of the necessity to exploit less available sources of raw material? We should be grateful to the engineers and scientists for making it possible to achieve miracles of extraction or synthesis, but we should not confuse

the overcoming of a deficiency with the fact of true wealth.

Again, we shall be creating and buying in the years ahead consumer goods of constantly increasing complexity, goods more difficult to manufacture and more costly in terms of manpower and material. I do not know whether there is a social law which says that each year cars must get heavier and longer and loaded with more gadgets; but someone should formulate such a law, for that indeed seems to be the case. And not automobiles only: every article available to us makes greater demands upon the national budget than its counterpart of a decade or so ago. A radio has more parts than a phonograph, a television set than a radio. The washing machine becomes a drying machine also; and will probably add to its accomplishments before long that of ironing as well. The modern home is not shelter merely, but as filled with machinery, as hungry for power, as the small factory not many generations since. So it goes through all the spheres of the daily life, with everything getting more subtle and refined. These additions in refinement figure as national wealth. But should they necessarily figure as national welfare?

There is a whole additional realm of measures which may at first glance seem more properly related to welfare; yet many of these, I would argue, are curative or palliative; they remedy conditions which a wiser society would not have allowed to arise. The well-known French political philosopher and economist, Bertrand de Jouvenel, gives the example of a community where for generations the working inhabitants have been able to walk to their jobs, finding in the immediate environment the satisfactions and rewards which the whole man seeks. Now the factory is closed and operations are centered in the great city, twenty miles or so away. The working men are transported back and forth by bus; their health suffers, but is taken care of by a battery of social services and state-supported doctors. Or again,

the workers move to the city, and then a whole new range of publicly supported facilities for recreation and medical care are brought into play. In this instance the bus and all its supporting industries are counted as increased national wealth; the schemes for providing substitutes for the natural environment of the workers, and compensations for all that has been taken from them, figure as welfare. But the uncomfortable question remains: might not there have been more true wealth, and more true welfare, if the original situation had been permitted to continue? Could not other means of increasing economic efficiency besides that of closing down the small-town factory have been found? Such questions must haunt, in particular, those who are involved today in the development of underdeveloped countries.

In our society one thinks of the increasing tendency to make the home a narrow center for the parents and children, lopping off all the functions, once so central, of caring for outlying relations and for the older generation. The new homes for the aged, and the new mental hospitals, must seem to the detached philosopher a strangely conceived notion of welfare. He may well ask whether we are not like a person who persuades himself he must have remarkable health because his doctor's bills are so large.

In raising questions about our current concepts of welfare, I am not suggesting that we go back to a policy of tolerating poverty or encouraging a therapeutic degree of suffering. I would suggest, rather, that we enlarge the concept of welfare, so as to make it include elements which have been left out of the present equation. The concept should certainly be based upon the satisfaction of material needs; it should embrace an acceptable degree of security and of protection against hazards. But if it is not to drive people to boredom and worse, it must also include the possibility of adventure, the sense of unfulfilled aspiration, the search for beauty, and the immense consolation of working with others

toward common aims. You may say that such a definition is philosophically true, and even poetically charming; but that it can have very little to do with the policies and operations of the state. Let the state confine itself to mitigating the hardships of life, it may be urged, to providing a frame within which people can live; it is then for the citizens themselves to find the way to live well.

It is precisely this separation which, to my mind, has been one of the roots of our trouble. The state can never be considered apart from the deeper life of the people. It overarches them all; it comprehends and informs them all. The values which guide it are inevitably the values which guide and animate the citizens. If the state makes a static and narrow welfare its chief goal, then the people will not rise above the level of this spring. We shall find the great mass degraded to uniformity and passivity, while the more alert and sensitive of the generation are driven toward despair or toward violent reaction. The only remedy is for the state itself to aim at something higher, to promote a kind of welfare which answers to the spiritual as well as the material needs of men and women.

I wonder if it will seem a paradox if I say that to aim at mere welfare is always and inevitably to miss the mark. There are some things in this world which, however desirable, cannot be made ends in themselves. A healthy man does not think too much about health; the strong man does not think too much about character. They are not hypochondriacs or prudes, but whole human beings in search of the things which stretch their faculties to the full; health and strength are for them by-products of the enterprises in which their lives are spent. It is the same for a mature nation. A while ago we were giving to one public official the portentous title "Secretary for Peace"; and that seemed to me clearly an anomaly, for peace is the result of a whole series of arrangements, the ultimate expression of a universe of policies and purposes. To make it the supreme

end of national policy is almost certainly to invite war.

"Peace," said Spinoza, "is not merely the absence of conflict; it is the kind of goodness which springs from a strong spirit." May we not say also that welfare is not merely the absence of poverty, the lack of suffering and insecurity? It is the kind of well-being which is generated by a free people bent upon fulfilling the best promises of their common life.

The search for comfort, to take another example, is almost certainly self-defeating. The more we try to eliminate the last element of hardness or friction, the more we become entangled in an endless, meaningless quest. There is always a pea somewhere under the princess' pillow. I have talked of this matter with Philip Johnson, the fine architect whose modern houses must often at first glance seem austere and even unwelcoming. He says candidly that he does not begin with the idea of creating comfort, but with the idea of creating beauty; he goes on to argue that in the midst of beauty men and women invariably feel comfort — if not exactly the same comfort which one experiences in a hot bath or an overstuffed divan, at least a kind of inner well-being, the finding of oneself in harmony with the deep nature of things. One may observe in the same vein the contrast between the ideal of comfort embodied in the American automobile — isolated so far as possible from all sense of motion and of the road — and that in the typical European car, where a sense of closeness to the road, of contact with its surfaces and turns, imparts a feeling different from that which one gets in the easy chair at home, but one not without its special exhilaration.

But I leave these somewhat philosophical speculations to return to the actions and conduct of the state. Like a true archer, Plato says, the statesman must always be aiming at that upon which some eternal beauty is attending. He must set his sights upon something beyond comfort, beyond peace, beyond welfare; he must seek the

ideal, believing that these other objectives will be fulfilled in the process. Now it is this quest for the ideal which seems to have been lacking in recent social policies. I take two examples. A year or so ago we introduced the soil-bank in this country, a measure which might have served us well in the conservation of our land, in the restoration of one of our most precious resources. But the measure was put across in circumstances which made it appear nothing more than an attempt to get some money into the hands of the farmers to compensate for the fall in farm prices. It was treated as a means to material welfare only, and it failed because it lacked the sense of the larger purpose, because its connection with the good of the country was never convincingly held up before the people.

In the same way the great Federal road-building program which Congress has approved might be seen as a means of giving a new meaning to our country's life — of restoring our cities, of unifying and invigorating our whole land. When the Federalists in the youth of our Republic stressed a vast program of what they called "internal improvements," principally roads and canals, they envisioned them as something more than material works — as an essential factor in the unfolding of their nation's growth and noble destiny. But today's road program seems to be thought of in terms only of roads, in terms of steel and cement. It is designed to let people get around quicker without ever considering where they are going, or to what end; and as far as beauty is concerned, the motorist possibly may be given the dubious pleasure of looking at billboards much of the way.

For too long it has been assumed in this country that when the government builds it must show a meagre, utilitarian spirit; or that even when it is permitted more luxury it must be conventional and timid in its style. Is this a true assumption? I have the honor to sit on the Art Commission of the City of New York, and I ask

myself as the various plans for public buildings are put before us for our approval: "Are these buildings going to touch and inspire men — inspire with some hint of the meaning and beauty of our day the students who come to this school to learn, inspire with some spirit of gaiety and pride the citizens who are to move about these structures?" I am afraid the answer is too often in the negative. These are roofs and walls; they serve their barest purpose and no more. Yet in great ages the excellence of what the government creates is one of the enduring proofs of a citizenry acquainted with beauty and happiness.

I began by mentioning the extraordinary level of material abundance which America has attained. It is this abundance, this unexampled capacity to produce, which puts upon us a special responsibility to examine the consequences of materialism. Once again, as in the epochs when political democracy was being established on this continent, we must take the lead in asking about ends, and not merely concerning

ourselves with means. In 1848 Europe was still struggling amid uprisings and revolutions to gain freedom from princes. But in the United States of that period the real radicals, men like Emerson and Thoreau, could accept as won the battle against ancient authorities; they were asking more deeply about the results of our new freedom. Was what had been wrung from princes, to be lost to the tyranny of the majority, to the pressures of the great mass?

Today we see the battle against poverty and insecurity largely won, and the question is whether a new kind of spiritual impoverishment is going to be our next enslaver. Emerson and Thoreau gave their answer in terms of the individual, the indomitable individual who seeks excellence for himself, on his own terms; who sets his vision of beauty as the goal before which all must bend. It is to this individual that we too must turn, if our hopes of welfare are not to run out into miseries and shallows, one of the bitterest disillusionments that mankind has known.

# THE DEATH AND JUDGEMENT OF GIOVANNI PAPINI: *An Eschatological Fantasy*

JOSE MARIA GIRONELLA

*translated by Anthony Kerrigan*

*For this reason is it legitimate to believe that one of the consequences of this final end will be the end, also, of the rebellion; that is, the happy return of Satan and his own to the splendor of eternity.*

—Papini

*Translator's note:* Giovanni Papini died in 1956 after a lifetime of controversial writing. A Florentine, he was born in 1881. In his youth he was an atheist, but later embraced Catholicism, and wrote several books which gained him fame as a Christian—though unorthodox—thinker; among them, his *Storia di Cristo* (English translation *The Life of Christ*, 1923), and *Il Diavolo* (*The Devil*, 1955), which sold out various editions in Italy in the first month of publication and aroused a controversy in Catholic ranks as to its orthodoxy. One of the theses of the book is that God could not be truly the God of Love if He continued to hate Satan and could not be truly merciful unless He finally forgave the Devil and allowed him into heaven. Among Papini's earlier books are: *Pragmatismo* (1913), *Stronature* (1916), *L'Uomo Carducci* (1918), *Dante vivo* (1933), *Lettere di Celestino VI agli uomini* (1947). His popularity has been perhaps greater in Spain than in any other country, and the Complete Works are announced for publication soon in Spanish, though there is nothing comparable in Italian. Papini himself said that he was merely "un Unamuno mancato" (a maimed or imperfect Unamuno), a reference to the great heterodox Spaniard Miguel de Unamuno, whose *The Tragic Sense of Life* was put on the Index by Vatican order in January, 1957. The last years of his life were spent in total isolation from the sensory world: he was blind and paralyzed, unable to communicate with anyone but his granddaughter, the only person who could understand his attempts at speech and his dictated thoughts; nevertheless, he worked on, in pain and suffering but willfully undaunted, until the end.

This fantasy by Gironella on the theme of Papini was published in the Madrid daily *ABC*, for Sunday, December 16, 1956. The translation here presented is the only English version which is or will be authorized. In April 1957, Gironella was invited by the Papini family to go to Florence and take up residence in Papini's house.