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# FRIENDS AND CRITICS OF CAPITALISM

STARTING about the time of the Moscow Trials, during which practically all of the original Bolshevik leadership of the Russian Revolution was purged or liquidated by the Stalinist regime, American radicals began to take another look at the hated "capitalist system." After the passage of about ten years of such reflection and close watching of the historical scene, including the Molotov-Ribbentrop Non-aggression Pact of 1939, a definite change of polarity had taken place among all but the True Believers of communist persuasion. By 1945, in other words, men who had never had a kind word for "Free Enterprise" before the great Purge were now offering up qualified praise of the competitive system, and even contributed articles to *Life* in its defense.

One of the most lucid among the radical thinkers who reflected this change in attitude was James Burnham, author of the influential *Managerial Revolution*, who saw in the evolution of the corporate State the emergence of a new decisive relationship of men to property—the relationship of *management*, in which not ownership, but *control* becomes the source of power and privilege. About 1942, Burnham wrote an essay in which he contended that competitive capitalism probably affords more freedom for the individual than any other form of society, since, despite obvious injustices and inequities, under capitalism the conflict of various groups in the struggle for power leaves some "elbow room" for the individual. Whatever its abuses, the rule of capitalism, he pointed out, is better than subjection to the monolithic power of the State. The individual can still move around; he can still ally himself with one or another group. He has, in short, a modicum of freedom under capitalism.

Since this moderate reconversion of the radicals, there has not, so far as we know, been very much significant social thinking of a political character in the United States or elsewhere—thinking, that is, with the dynamic drive of a new idea. There has, however, been continuous criticism of capitalism arising from other sources. Friedrich Juenger's *The Failure of Technology* (Regnery) is an example of a new sort of analysis, more fruitful, we think, than many of the familiar forms. Fairfield Osborn's *Our Plundered Planet* implies another critical approach to the dominant economic system, and Ralph Borsodi's *This Ugly Civilization* still another.

Such books are important, if only because it would be a great mistake to imagine that, since Communism has proved a terrible fiasco so far as the freedom of the individual is concerned, and since the wellsprings of political inspiration seem to have dried up, we may now rest complacently on our capitalistic laurels. Interesting confirmation of this view is found in what seems to us a rather brilliant survey of economic thought and criticism which appeared in *Commentary* for last December. The article, "The Prospects of American Capitalism," is by Daniel Bell, one of the editors of *Fortune.* While the article is really a review of J. K. Galbraith's *American Capitalism*, the general survey of economic thought provided seems of particular value. Mr. Bell starts out by recalling the thesis of John Maynard Keynes, first presented in his 1919 volume, *The Economic Consequences of the Peace.* Keynes here maintained that "thrift" is the ruin of modern capitalism. The life of capitalism, he asserted, depends upon constant expansion, and when the people who make money in free enterprise fail to put it back into industry, stagnation results. In the United States, Alvin Hansen, Keynes's leading American disciple, insisted that idle capital had caused the Depression. "Hansen's conclusions,"

Bell points out, "provided a rationale for New Deal policies: state intervention to move idle capital, attempts to break up 'monopolies,' and a shift to a high-consumption, low-growth economy."

Bell now turns to the late Joseph Schumpeter, an economist who began to receive recognition only a few years before his death in 1950, although his major contentions were first set down in 1912, in *The Theory of Economic Development.* Schumpeter gained this belated popularity because he was a defender of capitalism, and about 1946 capitalists were looking around for good defenders. But, as Bell notes, in Schumpeter the capitalists got a defender who was more than they bargained for. (His defense of the capitalist system is something like ninth-century Erigena's refutation of Divine Predestination, which, to the embarrassment of the Bishop who asked Erigena's help in subduing an annoying heretic, continued in great style to the refutation of Sin and Hell as well.) Schumpeter defends capitalism as bringing more goods to more people at lower prices. This, obviously, is a good thing. Further, Schumpeter defends "bigness" in business enterprise for the reason that "only big companies could afford the huge and sometimes fruitless outlays for research which were necessary for technical change." Hurrah for Schumpeter! But Bell shows that Schumpeter, unlike Keynes, who studied economic processes simply as economic processes, viewed the field of his research in relation to sociological and psychological factors. In Bell's words:

> And yet, said Schumpeter paradoxically, the *vision* of Marx was correct; capitalism is doomed, but not for the reasons Marx advanced. Capitalism decomposes because its mentality creates a social atmosphere hostile to its functioning, and because, at the same time, the bureaucratization of business atrophies its driving force, the entrepreneurial function.
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> Periodically, capitalism is destroyed by its success. The creation of an open society arouses greater wants and expectations than even capitalism can fulfill. After all, even in the ideal circumstances of America it is still not possible to increase productivity by more than 2.3 per cent a year. If the case for capitalism rests on its long-run achievements, in the short run it is the profits and inefficiencies that dominate the picture, and these continually offer ammunition to its critics. And capitalism itself fosters the criticism that threatens it. "The capitalist process," writes Schumpeter, "rationalizes behavior and ideas, and by so doing chases from our minds, along with metaphysical belief, mystic and romantic ideas of all sorts. . . ." The critical turn of mind that such rationality creates knows no bounds, and it turns against all institutions, against all accepted tradition and custom, against all authority; it culminates logically in the creation of the "intellectual." The intellectual is both critic and utopian: he needs a hero. The capitalist unheroically estimates rather than gambles, appraises rather than acts. "The stock exchange," Schumpeter says wryly, "is a poor substitute for the Holy Grail." And so the intellectual, the product of capitalist rationalism, turns his back on the system, and infects the rest of society with his disappointment. Similarly, the state, responsive to the anti-capitalist temper of the society, enacts legislation which is restrictive of the entrepreneurial spirit.

Since Galbraith's book called forth these remarks by Mr. Bell, of which we are availing ourselves so freely, it seems only fair to report that while Schumpeter, with Marx, believes that Capitalism contains the seeds of its own destruction, Galbraith takes a brighter view. He believes that the capitalist system contains the seeds of its own salvation—a faith which he elaborates under the heading of his theory of "countervailing powers." How these powers work is a matter for discovery in *American Capitalism* or in Bell's excellent summary. Of this book, however, Mr. Bell pertinently remarks:

> Yet the book fails in a singular manner. It never answers its own question: *why* are the business community and the left captives to a description of reality which no longer exists; why, in effect, is the myth more compelling than the reality? To reply, as Galbraith does, by supplying a truer picture of the reality is merely like telling a neurotic that his fears are groundless; they may be, but the answer cannot convince the neurotic of the fact until the sources of the fear are laid bare.

Mr. Bell ends his review with observations which, so far as we can see, reveal the actual character of the modern socio-politico-economic problem—and the surprising thing is that so few critics and essayists have had either the intelligence or the courage to say what this writer says:

> The interesting fact is that American ideologues are finding virtues, many of them proper ones, in American capitalism at a time when the basic features of the society are undergoing decisive changes, not under the corrosive acid of "creeping socialism," but the continual pounding of the garrison economy. . . . The statist impulses of a semi-war economy with its technical imperatives must clash with the restless anti-statist attitudes of the corporate managers—with labor standing uneasily along the sidelines. . . . The international situation imposes the same imperatives on Republicans as on Democrats, and the semi-war or war economy that is made necessary by it inevitably casts government in the role of controller and dominator of the economy. The real political question in domestic affairs will then become which of the groups will bear the costs of the added burdens.

Thus war, as Randolph Bourne declared long ago evolves into the sole, irrational authority, resolving all political issues, determining all economic policies. War is the night in which all cows—or shirts—turn black.

# *Letter from*
## CENTRAL EUROPE

INNSBRUCK.—Austria is a "super-socialized" country. It is to be doubted whether any government in the world spends so high a proportion of its income for housing for the aged, pensions, individual health service, children's support, etc., as the Austrian authorities. No real democrat would want another person to remain in distress, and would probably regard Austrian social welfare as a sign of civilized progress, especially since the money is, of course, not paid by the "authorities," but by the nation as a whole, and since the entire experiment is, in this way, based on the good will of the masses who pay the taxes.

Of course, there are shortcomings and drawbacks. As in similar situations, unworthy people obtain advantages, whereas the really needy ones are often either too shy to come forward for help, or for one or another reason do not qualify for the available forms of aid. But the main difficulty seems to be marked by the fact that the program is operated entirely from the material point of view. This attitude also affords explanation of the exaggerated prestige of labor, while science (particularly those disciplines which do not produce any "profits"), excepting technology, does not enjoy the aid any more which, in Europe and particularly in Austria, was so typical during the years before World War I.

A few days ago, riding on one of the small Tyrolean railway lines, I met a conductor whom I had not seen "snapping my ticket" for a few months. He told me that, having been ill for a long time, he had been sent by the public sanitary service to a clinic high up in the mountains, where he underwent a thorough and complicated lung and bronchial treatment which resulted in his restoration to health. He told me how the Chief Surgeon had looked after him, what a clever man the doctor was, and how these men worked tirelessly for more than twelve hours a day. "And you know," said the man, clipping my ticket, "that the Chief Surgeon has less salary than I get!" He looked quite embarrassed and added, "That is not fair."

Since there is no possibility of cutting further the salaries of those who have had academic training, the university fees for students were raised about a month ago, some by 400%, some by 600%. The students protested vehemently, gaining publicity to an extent hitherto unknown in Austria. They organized mass-meetings and demonstrations in the streets of Vienna and tried to make the public acquainted with the fact that they neither come from privileged families (as used to be the case with students twenty or thirty years ago), nor had they any private means at their disposal. Their speakers made it clear that a rather high proportion of their number must do all kinds of work besides their studies, particularly during the holidays, in order to survive. They work as waiters, musicians, miners, errand or milk boys, and so on. Posters carried by parading students declared that "Austria must be a healthy country, since no Nobel Prize-winner has yet died here"—which meant that all the Austrian Nobel Prize-winners have been forced to leave the country of their birth for lack of means to carry on their researches.

The demonstration was partly successful, as the Minister of Education responded by reducing the proposed increases of the fees. The basic problem, however, is no nearer to solution.

CENTRAL EUROPEAN CORRESPONDENT

# *REVIEW*

## SOCRATES

IT seems likely that scholars will never cease arguing about Socrates—whether his greatness was his own, or largely an endowment supplied by his disciple and admirer, Plato. The question doubtless has some importance for the specialist, but it would not have troubled the ancient Greeks, whose feeling for greatness itself may have made them a bit neglectful of historical accuracy. Thus, when A. E. Taylor, a modern scholar who affords deep enjoyment to all lovers of Plato, assigns to Socrates a genius which some of us may believe belongs to Plato, we need not quarrel with him. The moral and philosophical image of Socrates is the great thing—the unforgettable reality for which we need to be supremely grateful.

We looked forward to reading Mr. Taylor's *Socrates* with a special anticipation, and Mr. Taylor has not let us down. True, the book is more than half taken up with gathering the fragments of Socrates' elusive biography, and with defending the author's position that Plato's account is thoroughly trustworthy. In a definitive work of this sort, such sifting of the records is, we suppose, quite necessary. And in the process, an atmosphere is generated which lends to the portrait of Socrates a human quality that might not appear in writing devoted wholly to Socratic philosophy. But what we found most impressive was the sense of the *role* of Socrates (or Plato) in the foundation of Western civilization, which begins to emerge in the opening pages of the concluding chapter, "The Thought of Socrates." As Taylor puts it:

> . . . Socrates created the intellectual and moral tradition by which Europe has ever since lived. *How* this could be is what has to be explained.
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> At bottom the answer seems to be a very simple one, and it may best be given in the elementary way in which it has been stated by Burnet. It was Socrates who, so far as can be seen, created the conception of the *soul* which has ever since dominated European thinking. For more than two thousand years it has been the standing assumption of the civilized European that he has a *soul*, something which is the seat of his normal waking intelligence and moral character, and that, since this *soul* is either identical with himself or at any rate the most important thing about him, his supreme business in life is to make the most of it and do the best for it. There are of course, a minority of persons who reject this theory of life, and some of them even deny the existence of a soul, but they are a small minority; to the vast majority of Europeans, to this day, the existence and importance of the soul is a doctrine so familiar that it seems self-evident. . . .
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> Now the remarkable thing is that we find this conception of the soul as the seat of normal intelligence and character current in the literature of the generation immediately subsequent to the death of Socrates; it is common ground to Isocrates, Plato, and Xenophon, and thus cannot be the discovery of any one of them. But it is wholly, or all but wholly, absent from the literature of earlier times. It must thus have originated with some contemporary of Socrates, and we know of no contemporary thinker to whom it can be attributed other than Socrates himself, who is consistently made to teach it in the pages of both Plato and Xenophon.

Mr. Taylor shows that the idea of *psyche*, found in Homer, can hardly be regarded as corresponding to "soul" in the Socratic sense. The *psyche* is but a shadowy reflection of the man. Something of the idea of the soul is present in the Orphic tradition, according to which the *psyche* has "a permanent individuality, and is consequently immortal, and, in fact, a temporarily 'fallen' and exiled divinity." The Orphic religion, however, by Plato's time, had fallen into "vulgar trafficking in 'pardons' and 'indulgences'," as Taylor notes. To Socrates, therefore, belongs the honor of formulating the idea of the soul as a responsible agent. He took the idea, perhaps, from the secrecy of the Pythagorean teachings, and from the degenerating ritual of the Orphics, and made it the life of *philosophy*.

Where did the Greeks obtain these ideas? More than one scholar has pointed to India as the source. Over a century ago, the English

orientalist, H. T. Colebrook, noted the similarity between Greek and Indian teachings. Both, he observed, taught the doctrine of metempsychosis. As Taylor says, the great concern of the Orphic devotee was "to practice rules of life, partly moral, partly ceremonial, which will lead to final deliverance of the *psyche* from the 'wheel of birth,' and its restoration among the gods." This is the great theme of Gautama Buddha's message to the East, and it is also found in *The Bhagavad-Gita*. Colebrook concludes: "They [Greeks and Indians] agree, likewise, in distinguishing the sensitive material organ from the rational and conscious living soul, the *Thumos* and *Phren* of Pythagoras,—one existing with the body, the other immortal." Colebrook adds that inasmuch as "a greater degree of similarity exists between the Indian doctrine, and that of the earlier than the later Greeks," he is disposed to think that "the Indians were in this instance teachers rather than learners." Among modern authorities, Gomperz and Macdonell share this view.

If this be the case, then Socrates—or Pythagoras, Socrates, and Plato—stood at a great crossroads of human history, becoming the interpreters and transmitters to the West of the profound philosophy of soul which originated in the Orient. In view of the relationship of the Platonic doctrines to the more or less confidential teachings of Pythagoras to his disciples, and to the similarly guarded traditions of the mystery schools of Greece, it may also be suggested that the Socratic idea of the soul, through Plato, entered the arena of daily life and discussion—began to be speculated and philosophized about. As Taylor says:

> Clearly, what is needed for the development of a "spiritual" morality and religion is that the Orphic insistence on the supreme importance of "concern for the interests of the *psyche"* shall be combined with the identification of this supremely precious *psyche* with the seat of normal personal intelligence and character. This is just the step which is taken in the doctrine of the soul taught by Socrates in both Plato and Xenophon, . . .
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> . . . it seems plain to me that we must believe Plato's representations about his Master's firm conviction of the soul's immortality, and in the mouth of a Greek this means its essential *divinity*. This is the real justification of a mission to preach to all men, in season and out of season, the single duty of "tending the soul," and "making it good as possible," whatever the cost to one's fortunes or one's body. But the identification of the soul which it is our first duty to "tend" with the normal self means, of course, that the "tendance" will not consist in the practice of ritual abstentions and purification, but in the cultivation of rational thinking and rational conduct. A man's duty will be to be able to "give account" of, to have a rational justification for, what he believes and what he does. It is precisely by asserting and doing that for which we can give no rational justification that we display our indifference to the duty of "tending" our souls. This is why when Socrates came to discharge his mission his first task was to convict the unenlightened of "ignorance," to show them how little intelligent justification they have for what they do or believe.

We may pause, here, to note in passing that, in the modern "climate of opinion," a man like Socrates would be something of an anomaly. Here is a thinker who proclaims the critical standards of modern rationalism—and practices them assiduously—yet himself reaches conclusions which are anathema to the modern rationalist! The latter, doubtless, would assert that Socrates failed to apply his own principles, that he was still affected by the cloudy superstitions of his generation. We may admit that beliefs about the soul, in modern times, are usually afflicted by irrational assumptions and trimmings, but the modern rationalist critic of Socrates forgets, we think, that about two thousand years of bigotry in religion separate him from the freer air of Athens in the fifth century B.C. He is reacting, we submit, to the intellectual and moral follies of these millennia, and not to any intrinsic unreason in the Socratic doctrine of the soul.

The "mission" of Socrates is the natural result of his determination to find rational grounds for moral conviction. Taylor proposes:

> The thought is that the "work" or "function" of this divine constituent in man is just to *know,* to

> apprehend things as they really are, and consequently, in particular, to *know* good and evil, and to *direct* or *govern* a man's life in which evil is avoided and good achieved. . . . the one thing to be overcome is the putting of "opinion," "fancy," *(doxa),* assumptions which cannot be justified as true, in the place of knowledge.

Out of this intention grows the *dialectic,* which properly means a "method of conversation." Taylor gives a simple account of the term: "The thought which explains the use of the name is that truth has to be reached by dint of dialogue, or debate, which may be carried on between two inquirers, or also within the heart of a single inquirer, as his 'soul' questions itself and answers its own questions."

Here, again, we find a parallel of method between Plato and other ancient teachers who chose the form of dialogue for instruction of their disciples. If, in Plato, we find a greater emphasis on the impersonal character of certainty—the certainty found in principle—this is in accord with the spirit and need of his age, which was to be the foundation-time of the entire cycle of European civilization.

In conclusion, it seems suitable, in the pages of a publication like MANAS, to make expression of profound gratitude to Mr. Taylor for writing this book about Socrates, and to offer like appreciation to the Beacon Press of Boston for publishing it. (The price is $2.50.) To prospective readers, however, we urge that they first read—read more than once—the *Apology,* the *Crito,* and the *Phaedo,* if not other of Plato's dialogues, before opening Mr. Taylor's volume.

# *COMMENTARY*
## A TIDE OF PREJUDICE

ANTI-INTELLECTUALISM appears in this issue in several ways. It is implicit in Daniel Bell's review of Schumpeter's contention (see lead article) that the calculating atmosphere of Western capitalism produces by reaction the modern "intellectual"—the intelligent individual who feels alienated by the unimaginative goals of an acquisitive society. It is in the Letter from Central Europe in terms of the glorification of "sweat-of-the-brow" labor, and deprecation of learning and professional men. It is in Review in the sense that Socrates was a victim of the anti-intellectualism of post-Periclean Athens.

The modern rejection of the intellectual is by no means peculiar to capitalism. Nonconformist thinking was a direct route to a concentration camp in Hitler's Germany. In Russia, simply to have an "intellectual" for a parent has long been ground for deep suspicion. The proper "class origin" of the individual is as important to the Soviet administrators as Nordic heredity was to the Nazis. That the roots of the revolution lay in the work of intellectuals has no effect on the revolutionary bureaucracy, whose theory of "conditioning" makes it logical to condemn almost without exception those who come of bourgeois forebears. Distrust of the intellectual, then, is a massive tendency of our times, and it operates in all types of political systems.

One reason why anti-intellectualism is so persistent may be that it is supported by both good and bad arguments. It is sound enough, for example, to distrust intellectuality when wedded to barren theorizing. The worthlessness of academic jargon and pretentious unintelligibility is sensed by popular instinct and made the butt of ridicule. But at the same time, the skills and insights of the intellectual are feared for their penetrating analysis and revolutionary implications. Those who find their security in static social and political arrangements—whether a capitalistic *status quo* or a bureaucratized revolutionary order easily become indignant against those who dare to question, criticize, and propose criteria of judgment which are independent of prevailing assumptions. The only intellectuals who are ever safe from suspicion are the captive thinkers who submit to the orthodoxies of their time and place.

In what sort of society could intellectuals play entirely constructive roles, and at the same time exercise uninhibited freedom of mind? The answer to this question will obviously involve a new conception of "intellectuals," as well as a revolutionary idea of society.

# CHILDREN
## . . . and Ourselves

THERE are several reasons for vigorous endorsement of Carleton Washburne's *What is Progressive Education*? (John Day, 1952.) In the first place, Mr. Washburne, as he matter-of-factly avers, should be as well qualified to write such an informative treatise as anyone: for four years he was president of the Progressive Education Association; at present he is International Chairman of the New Education Fellowship; he has served as Chairman for the Yearbooks of the National Society for the Study of Education, and has also been active in the American Education Research Association. A friend of John Dewey, he received part of his early schooling under Colonel Francis M. Parker, whom Dewey called "the father of Progressive Education." Secondly, since Progressive education has been attacked with vehemence and vitriol by men such as Allan Zoll, on the ground of alleged "socialistic leanings," many parents are understandably either worried or perplexed as to the political influence of Progressive education upon their children, and Washburne deals extensively with this aspect of Progressive theory and practice. In the third place, Washburne's book enables one to understand that what we call Progressive education is an inevitable historical development, and has been essentially much more the result of scientific and psychological insights than an abstract "ism." Finally, although *What is Progressive Education?* is a brief volume of 155 small pages, it is a brilliant defense of Progressivism, yet enabling the thoughtful reader to discover, between the lines, some of the weaknesses which Progressivism is likely to develop.

Mr. Washburne makes it exceedingly difficult for anyone who reads his book to consider Progressive education in any other light than as a bulwark to Democracy. He begins with analysis of the three basic commandments of the traditional schooling system—commandments borrowed from a medieval pedagogy principally concerned with religious acceptance and obedience. As recently as the early school days of the present generation, the "three basic commandments were, 'Sit Still, Keep Quiet, and Do as You are Told'." Mr. Washhurne continues:

> Under this system there was no possible opportunity for the practice of democracy. Records show that the bulk of the marks for bad deportment in school were for whispering and note passing. Communication among the children was the major thing to be guarded against. Teachers were judged by their ability to "keep discipline," by the ability of their children to "give back the subject matter they had learned," and by the teacher's "loyalty"—meaning obedience—to those of higher authority.
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> This was exactly the system used in the autocracies of Europe, where the deliberate purpose was to make children into obedient subjects.
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> It must be admitted that the more democratic countries of Europe, like our own, also used this same system of autocratic training. That democracy survived in spite of school training for autocracy, is merely an indication of the relative inefficiency of the schools in contrast with the effectiveness of the social factors at work in adult society and at home. Where the schools and the adult society were working hand in hand, as in Germany after 1848, truly obedient subjects resulted.

Washburne insists on the pressing necessity for recognizing that slogans praising democracy may go hand in hand with totalitarian habits of thought and action, and that it is only by thoroughly democratic education from the earliest grades onward that such dangerous confusion can be averted. There is no doubt about the strength of Mr. Washburne's own faith:

> We find that just as the first war "to make the world safe for democracy" resulted in an increase in the dictatorships in the world, so the second world war left us with a still greater menace of world-wide autocracy. Increasing our military might and using it in victorious wars, in both cases were followed by an actual increase in the extent of autocracy in the world, not by an increase in the democracy for which we avowedly were fighting.

> The way to combat autocracy is through strengthening democracy. The strengthening of democracy is a primary goal in progressive schools.

While we have always considered that those who begin some judgment with "there ought to be a law. . . ," are guilty of an inanity of the first magnitude, we nevertheless wish that all critics of Progressive education could be required to read Mr. Washburne's book. This is not to say, however, that the gearing of this movement to the perspectives of modern science has not foreshortened our religious, philosophical, and poetic horizons, and our sympathies are very much with Robert Hutchins and Stringfellow Barr when they point out that classical philosophical study is sometimes the best of guarantees against the acceptance of totalitarianism. Yet the *method of teaching* is important, too, and some good "educating in democracy" is done by Progressive teachers who probably don't think quite deeply enough to be philosophers.

Progressive education is avowedly concerned with method more than with content, and if the Progressives have been so fervent and apostolic about their methodology that they have forgotten to probe the subject of content deeply enough, and have neglected philosophy, religion and classical culture for statistics and the laboratory, this does not detract from their other accomplishments.

Some of the most impressive passages in *What is Progressive Education?* occur in a chapter entitled "Obedient Subjects or Responsible Citizens?" Here Washburne recounts instances wherein parents, distrusting the discussion of controversial issues in the schoolroom, charge belligerently into the superintendent's office only to discover that some similar complaint is being lodged by another irate parent of *opposite* persuasion, who similarly feels that his child is being "indoctrinated in the wrong views." A banker complained to Washburne while he was Chicago Superintendent of Schools:

> "That teacher of social studies is giving my son all sorts of radical notions. I won't have my son propagandized for things I don t believe in!"
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> "Won't you be specific?" I asked.
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> "I certainly will. Jim came home last night and at the dinner table he began talking about labor unions and what they had done for improving the standard of living of American labor."
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> Another complaint came from a woman, an organizer for the International Ladies Garment Workers. She said, "That social studies teacher of yours is undermining all the education I have given my daughter. Last night at dinner she was arguing about the abuses of power by some of our unions. She was talking about racketeering in the unions, about how labor leaders seized control of a union and used it for their own private power and benefit. She is being filled full of capitalistic propaganda, and I won't have it!"
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> These two children were in the same class under the same teacher. It was fortunate for me that the two complaints came almost simultaneously. I had naturally told each parent I would investigate the matter and report back. By the time that I did this, I was able to tell each one about the other, and to point out that if the family was showing only one side of a question, and if the children were thinking honestly for themselves, they would naturally take the opposite point of view from what seemed to them a parental prejudice.

Another of the valuable insights contributed by *What is Progressive Education?* is that the best educational system is one which encourages teachers to feel that they themselves have a great deal to learn in the classroom. Both as teacher and as parent, Mr. Washburne has discovered that the progressively trained child frequently puts him on his mettle, sometimes revealing that some of his own "settled opinions" are unjustifiably arbitrary. When Progressive education serves this end, Mr. Washburne regards it as bidding to be the savior of our nation's noblest ideals:

> Some of the prejudices that parents have are being exposed and analyzed in progressive schools. Prejudice against different races, different religions, different economic or political systems, different classes in society, exist among us all to a higher degree than we realize. We need to examine and

> eradicate our own prejudices, and to be glad that our sons and daughters are being educated to see more objectively, and to value more truly people and ideas to which we react emotionally. That sounds easy, but it is one of the hardest things we can do. Instead of being irritated by the more open-minded approach of our boys and girls, we should try, as best we can, to learn from it.

What are the limitations of Mr. Washburne's book and of Progressive education? A concluding paragraph answers:

> Progressive education, in summary, is simply the ongoing effort to apply the continually increasing findings of science toward helping children and youth to grow up in accordance with the democratic ideal—the fullest possible development of each person's capacities, both as an individual and as a responsible participant in a democratic society.

The "findings of science," as has been often said here, have brought a single and often over-simplified point of emphasis. Science is not concerned with "how men stand with the Gods," as Gordon Chalmers recently put it, and this is a great lack. To have a passionate desire to discover the right and wrong of any situation, and to be determined to act with full commitment when one has made a moral decision, is just as important as "broadmindedness." The one sure thing is that no worthy society can be built in the absence of either sort of value; and, while we presently find so many people attacking Progressive education for precisely the wrong reasons, its pioneers and supporters deserve all the friendship they can get.

# *FRONTIERS*

## A Question of Freedom

WE may wonder, sometimes, if the philosophical and ethical mysteries in massive human injustice will ever become plain. While persons of "scientific" background are likely to argue that the question is an artificial one—that there are no "mysteries" involved in injustice, but only facts—it remains of interest that the portion of the world which has been most exposed to the influence of scientific thinking is precisely the area where emotions run highest against injustice, and where human feelings are most easily mobilized for the righting of wrongs.

The most indignant critics of Colonialism are often men bred in the Western tradition of scientific thinking. Is it not odd that people who learn in grammar and high school and in college that Nature's order is ruled by the Struggle for Existence and the Survival of the Fittest, should be so vociferous in condemning imperialism and the exploitation of subject peoples and native populations? It is almost as though those who agree that Nature knows nothing of Moral Law are the most determined to impose morality upon man—to repair the defects of evolution.

This sort of crusading presents no special philosophical problems—the job is to oppose inequality, to work for the freedom and self-determination of oppressed peoples, and to fight imperialism wherever it appears.

But for others who feel that, somehow, there is a deeper meaning in the relationships of living creatures and the races of men than appears on the surface, the problem is philosophical as well as practical. What part of the Great Design is being worked out when a Cortez brings the ruthless dominance of the Spanish to the shores of Mexico? Where is the moral balance in the progressive extermination of the American Indians throughout the "Century of Dishonor"? How account, in a philosophy of general purpose and meaning, for the corruption and blighting of the island peoples of the Pacific by the invading and colonizing Westerners?

For Easterners, whose instinctive pantheism is linked with the feeling of continuity, the fate of a single generation or several generations of people is but a small segment of their entire career in moral experience, so that either a distant past or an unspent future may bring about a balancing of the ledger. The West, however, has no such easy solution, unless it turns to Plato's Myth of Er for explanation.

But even if Emerson's Law of Compensation is somehow made to apply to the problems of injustice, dilemmas will still confront the impatient Westerner, whose practical bent makes him as interested in moral solutions as in moral explanations. Take the present situation of the American Indians, whose communal ways of life were rudely interrupted and contemptuously disregarded by the white conquerors of the North American continent. Not only was there conquest; there was what we call "subversion," too. Strangely enough, the Indians did not believe in private property. As John Collier put it in *The Indians of the Americas:*

> Tribal society and the communally possessed land were two aspects of a single fact. The earth lived, individuals of the tribe were members of one another and part of the earth. Individuals had no wish to own some one, detached piece of land; they were co-owners of it all. But they were not even co-owners; they were co-operators with the land, defenders of it, at once its guardians and children. "What " the famous Tecumseh had exclaimed, "Sell land! As well sell air and water. The Great Spirit gave them in common to all."

This attitude toward life and property troubled the minds of "progressive" Americans who wanted to see the Indians "get along"; it troubled still more the acquisitive Americans who wanted to get the Indians' lands for themselves. Accordingly, and for both reasons, it became the policy of the United States to attack the tribal, communal principle of Indian life. The "land allotment" system adopted in the 1880's was the

means by which lands were made to revert to individual Indians, who thus became free to sell their land to white men. So, until 1933, through this abrogation of treaties and statutes, Indian lands passed into the hands of white men at the rate of 2,000,000 acres a year.

We hear a great deal, today, from white Westerners concerning the importance of their way of life. The white men claim that unless they continue with their wonted "free enterprise," their souls will be dwarfed, their energies aimless, and their lives without purpose or security. The white men tell themselves and others that their *way* of life is more precious than life itself. But that is exactly how many Indians felt in the I880'5, and after, concerning their *communal* way of life. And exactly what they feared happened to them, despite their struggle to survive. Mr. Collier has recently summarized this phase of Indian history in a paper prepared for *América Indigena* (a scholarly journal published in Mexico City):

> It was Governmentally recognized, contemporaneously (from 1850 onward), that the Indian resisted with extreme efficiency precisely because of his ethnic loyalties, his tribalism, his culture, his corporate community, and his reliance on the pledged word, his own and the other man's word. Hence, there was evolved a legislative and administrative practice which moved squarely counter to the intentions which had wrought out the framework of Government Indian treaties. That practice, which became fully operative after 1870, was directed toward the wholesale dissolution of the Indian community. This intended dissolution included the obliteration of the communal land base, the suppression of the languages, the killing of the religions, and even the separation of children from their families and homes.
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> This enterprise of destruction went forward implacably, and with various implementations, from about 1870 until about 1925. It caused a shrinking of the Indian population; it thrust the Indian to the lowest economic level in the United States; it shrivelled or shattered the community life, and somewhat disoriented the personality, of most of the Indians. These things were done; the historical recounting is undisputed.

In this paper, Mr. Collier describes the program instituted successively by Presidents Hoover and Roosevelt to reverse this deadly trend, and to restore to the Indians what could be salvaged of their ancient independence and tribal integrity. This period of reform, extending, roughly, from 1929 to 1950, is discussed in detail in Mr. Collier's book, *The Indians of the Americas.* (Mr. Collier was Indian Commissioner from 1933 to 1945 and contributed very largely to the shaping of constructive Indian Bureau policies.)

Now, however, the detribalization process has been instituted again, under Indian Commissioner Dillon Myer, and Mr. Collier points out in an open letter to General Eisenhower that the impersonal destruction of the Indian way of life which began in the nineteenth century has been resumed by the Indian Bureau of today. In this letter, which appeared in the *Nation* for Jan. 10, Mr. Collier discusses at length the facts and the implications of the policy inaugurated by Dillon Myer. His analysis of the psychology of the Myer administration seems as likely an explanation as any:

> Mr. Myer has gained distinction through his proper action in breaking up with great rapidity the concentration camps into which 110,000 Japanese American citizens and their parents had been imprisoned after 1941. These camps of the War Relocation Authority had no possibilities for permanence. The people in them were heterogeneous groups, herded in from many neighborhoods and held there by force. They had no proprietory interest in the camps and never considered a future there.
>
> When he became Indian Commissioner, Mr. Myer carried over from the War Relocation Authority his formula of "withdrawal" and "relocation." But the Indians live in genuine and permanent human communities, their reservations and other homelands are theirs by proprietary right; their status is not that of prisoners of the United States but of citizens, with all the constitutional rights of citizens.

The popular argument for "assimilation" of the Indians into the general population of the United States, while possessing an air of plausible

democratic doctrine, is always presented in studied neglect of the fact that the great majority of Indians have not the slightest interest in being "assimilated"; indeed, many of them regard any enforced program of assimilation as practically a fate worse than death. It is a fine moral point, moreover, whether the United States, in its present endeavor to compel the Indians to accept the individualistic American way of life, is not in this as great an offender against the basic principle of human freedom as, say, the communists, who would like to impose compulsory public ownership of land and productive plant upon American society. We resist the communist program as subversive of our freedom. But the Indian resists individualism as subversive of *his* freedom—and if an Indian is not entitled to define the kind of freedom he wants to preserve, why should we be entitled to define the kind of freedom we want for ourselves?

The principle of democracy is not "private enterprise" and economic individualism. The principle of democracy is *self-determination* in all such matters. It is as tyrannical to force a society of cooperators into the social pattern of competition and acquisitiveness as it is to force a competitive society into a pattern of bureaucratic control and compulsory "sharing" of the goods of this world.

Mr. Collier makes this point, along with some others, unmistakably clear in his letter to General Eisenhower:

> With Indian consent if he can get it, without Indian consent if necessary, Commissioner Myer has sought to destroy the trusteeship system both by administrative action and by attempted legislation.…
>
> The program called "withdrawal"—which is no withdrawal but a renewed concentration of control in the Indian Bureau—has won important Congressional support. Not because it has produced financial economies; it has produced great financial extravagances. No, simply because the Indians have large properties which they can protect under federal trusteeship and cannot protect under the Myer program.
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> But there is a greater danger than the selfishness of Congressmen, and it makes one fear that Commissioner Myer's plans may go on even though he does not go on as commissioner. This danger is the trend, with which we are all sadly familiar, in American life at this moment to consider that human, social, and ethnic "differentness"—anything that holds itself out from the fiction of the American melting pot—is anti-American, un-Christian, outmoded, and perhaps disloyal or barbarous.

There would be a certain honesty in wanting simply to rob the Indians of their land. The notion that might is right may not be admirable, but the people who maintain it are least candid in their intentions. On the other hand, the fanatical desire to oblige everyone to conform to the conventional pattern of "good Americanism," while narrow and deluded, is founded on a "do good" psychology which, if sincere, might conceivably learn better from experience. But to want to rob the Indians while pretending to make them over into our idea of "good Americans"—this combines the delusions of both motives and adds a hypocrisy which sinks the entire operation far below the level of either imperialism or fanaticism.

It seems about time for such vociferous defenders of "freedom" as Americans claim to be to look more closely at what they have done to the *original* Americans—people whose history gives ample evidence of a centuries-old tradition and practice of a free way of life.