

COMING OF AGE IN THE WEST

HOW does a civilization come of age? This sort of question can have only philosophical answers, and to those unpersuaded that the synthesis of human knowledge lies with philosophy, philosophical answers are likely to be rejected out of hand, or at least condemned as arbitrary or metaphysical. Yet, as we see it, answers to questions about civilization, which is the common social form through which men seek for ends together, have no meaning at all unless they are philosophical, since to have meaning they must concern ends.

To discuss such questions, it is also necessary to regard civilization as in some sense an organic product—that is, a development with a life and history of its own, as well as being the sum of the lives and histories of the individuals who compose it. This means granting at least a limited validity to the idea of corporate being, which is a dangerous thing to do.

With these conditions for discussion, we propose that a civilization comes of age when its best representatives begin to find ways of giving balanced expression to all their powers and resources, without anxiety or insecurity, although with all the uncertainties which attach to any human enterprise in search of greater understanding. The terms of this expression, quite naturally, would articulate the cultural resources of the age, extracting from them their fullest potentialities.

The proposition having been stated abstractly, it now remains to give it specific content.

We speak of the West. We assume that the West has sufficient cultural unity for it to be spoken of as a "civilization," that is, as having a life of its own with a beginning, a middle, and, in some future time, an end. The West, in other words, has a course to run. What is this course? Every human course is a pursuit of human ends. For man, ends are both inward and outward. The history of events is the history of man's pursuit of outward ends; the history

of ideas tends to represent the history of his pursuit of inward ends. The history of philosophy is the history of human attempts to evaluate the ends, both inward and outward, which men pursue, and also of their thinking about them and their attempts to define, better, and change them.

What is the course that is to be run—is being run—by Western civilization? It is—has been—to take at the beginning the ideas, teachings, assertions, claims, postulates, dogmas, traditions which then existed concerning the ends which are being sought and ought to be sought by man, to look at them critically, to adopt them deliberately or reject them deliberately, and to develop thinking about ends and the means to reach them which becomes wholly rational—independent, that is, of the past. This does not necessarily mean a change in the ends we began with, but it does necessarily mean a change in the *authority* for holding whatever ends we finally decide are desirable and the ones for us. But even if we should finish with the same ends, their content will undergo an essential change in the process—the change from what is known at second hand to what is known first hand. This difference may be greater than we suppose. And it is a difference which varies with the kind of ends involved. It is not necessary, for example, to know all about electricity to get the same result in pulling a switch as would be obtained by a genius in electrical engineering. If the project is to put on a light, and the means is to pull the switch, a five-year-old and a top technologist are equal in their capacity to realize this end, once the means is described by the technologist to the child.

But if the project is to decide about the disposition of human energy for the common good, the man who "has the wisdom" sufficient for this decision cannot "give" his wisdom to another who lacks it. He could, perhaps, make a decision and use it as an illustration of how wise decisions are arrived at, and the others could copy that decision, but they could not copy the wisdom, which by definition is

inaccessible to copying. Having wisdom is having knowledge of values at first hand; to have it at second hand is perhaps to have wise guidance, but it is no longer wisdom itself. This is the enormous difference between knowledge of ends obtained from an external source and knowledge of ends developed by ourselves. It is, one could say, an *absolute* difference.

For a brief survey of Western thought about ends, we shall borrow from a study of cultural anthropology by Robert Redfield, *The Primitive World and its Transformations* (Cornell University Press, 1953). It is Prof. Redfield's view, amply illustrated, that Western civilization had its earliest beginnings in an environment of belief in a universe of moral forces with which human beings have constant and decisive relations. The most important authority in this environment was the authority which provided information about those forces, enabling men to shape their ends conformably to their requirements. A summarizing passage by Prof. Redfield is helpful:

Primitive man is, as I have said, at once in nature and yet acting on it, getting his living, taking from it food and shelter. But as that nature is part of the same moral system in which man and the affairs between men also find themselves, man's actions with regard to nature are limited by notions of inherent, not expedient, rightness. Even the practical, little-animistic Eskimo obey many exacting food taboos, religious restrictions on practical activity, rituals of propitiation or personal adjustments to field or forest, abound in ethnological literature. "All economic activities, such as hunting, gathering fuel, cultivating the land, storing food, assume a relatedness to the encompassing universe." And the relatedness is moral or religious.

We do not, of course, think of the immediate origins of Western civilization as "primitive" in character, yet the Judeo-Christian aspect of this origin is certainly derived from an external authority—the dual revelation of the Old and the New Testaments. The sophistication in thought and the rigorous logic of the exponents of this dominant theme in early Western culture never successfully challenged the idea of the authority of Holy Writ, and Western custom is filled with the remains of

"religious restrictions on practical activity" and other marks of what Prof. Redfield identifies as a "primitive" outlook. He continues:

The difference between the world view of primitive peoples, in which the universe is seen as morally significant, and that of civilized Western peoples, in which that significance is doubted or is not conceived at all, is well brought out in some investigations that have been made as to the concept of immanent justice in the cases of American Indians on the one hand and Swiss children on the other. "Immanent justice" is that retribution for my faults which I believe will fall upon me out of the universe, apart from the policeman or a parental spanking. If I do what I know I should not do, will I, crossing the brook, perhaps slip and fall into the water? If I believe this will happen, I live in no indifferent universe; the Not-Man cares about my moral career. Now, when significantly large samples of children were asked questions about this, the results provide some comparisons of interest to us in considering the difference between primitive and modern world views. Of the Swiss children from six to seven years of age, 86 per cent believed in immanent justice. But the older Swiss children began to cease to believe in it; of those from twelve to eighteen years of age only 39 per cent believed. With the Indian children the development was just the other way; of the younger Hopi children 71 per cent, and of the younger Navaho children, 87 per cent believed in immanent justice. Among the older children of both Indian groups (from twelve to eighteen years of age), practically all (87 per cent and 97 per cent) believed in immanent justice. The modern European child begins with a more primitive world view which he corrects to conform to the prevailing adult view. The Indian child begins with a primitive world view which grows stronger with age. Moreover, in the more isolated Navaho community, the belief in immanent justice is stronger than it is in Navaho communities closer to white influence.

Now comes Prof. Redfield's major conclusion:

If we compare the primary world view that has been sketched in these pages with that which comes to prevail in modern times, especially in the West, where science has been so influential, we may recognize one of the great transformations of the human mind. It is that transformation by which the primitive world view has been overturned. The three characteristics of that view which have been stressed in these pages have weakened or disappeared. Man

comes out from the unity of the universe within which he is orientated now as something separate from nature and comes to confront nature as something with physical qualities only, upon which he may work his will. As this happens, the universe loses its moral character and becomes to him indifferent, a system uncaring of man. The existence today of ethical systems and of religions only qualifies this statement; ethics and religion struggle in one way or another to take account of a physical universe indifferent to man.

Prof. Redfield acknowledges that this transformation "stretches over a very great deal of human history," and that he knows "nothing of its beginnings in the reflective thought of the Orient," which prompts the comment that the thought of the Orient may be regarded as giving less provocation to the modern mind to abandon the world view of "immanent justice," so that the transformation, in the East, may be of a milder sort; but, even in the West, something more is involved in this transformation than an angry rejection of bigoted religion. It is this "more" that we should like to get at.

There is a paternalistic air about traditional teachings of "immanent justice." Even when the conception is essentially philosophical in tone, and expressive of an "order," rather than the rule of an anthropomorphic God, its derivation from a Revelation or some similar supernatural source gives offense to the independent spirit. Just as a youth, when he comes of age, can never grow into full manhood without freely testing for himself what he has learned from his elders, especially if he is to outreach their achievements, so a viable civilization must replace its ancestral morality with independently based convictions.

In the case of Western civilization, the break with the past was filled with aggression and even hostility. In the West, the tradition concerning the "moral significance" of the universe was intellectually ridiculous and morally repugnant. Further, men who dared to make a beginning in the construction of an independent morality, or a rival theory of the moral significance of the universe, were hunted like devils and often ended their lives in flames. It hardly needs pointing out that the strength and even the popularity of so-called "materialistic"

doctrines associated with the rise of modern science are due to the *moral* drive of the first great materialists, who saw in the prevailing religion and its account of the workings of the universe a deadly threat to all reasonable conceptions of right and wrong. Atheism was plainly animated by man's moral instincts. The freethinkers of the French Revolution were moralists in behalf of mankind. What they had heard about the morality of the universe outraged their intelligence, and they resolved to have a better morality—a *man-made* morality.

But what would be its authority? Appropriately at hand was the new and growing knowledge of science. This, the new moralists declared, would be their guide, their revelation to the senses and intelligence of human beings. Eighteenth-century social philosophy has an apostolic fervour. A saving emotion made Diderot turn his powerful intellect to the task of proving that no moral impulse existed in nature. An ethical purpose caused Baron d'Holbach to declaim against the idea of Deity in any form and inspired de la Mettrie to write his notorious book, *Man a Machine*.

In time, the old world view, as Prof. Redfield says, was overturned and replaced by a universe of insensate matter and blind forces, in which men are alien and with which they are at war. It is the business of man, said Thomas Huxley in his lecture on Evolution and Ethics, to overcome the cosmic process. In his time, Huxley was a bolder and more optimistic Existentialist than the present-day advocates of the ultimate senselessness of the world about us.

In brief, the men who made our world, who erected its foundations in physical theory and added its amoral appointments in laws indifferent to human welfare, were rebels against a system which thwarted their own moral impulses. The result of their revolt, once it was well on the way, was the development of another system of constraint. The constraints of materialism, however, were not especially evident until the system had gained some stability and its supporters began to press its assumptions into the social sciences and into psychology. It was then that we felt pinched.

Having outlawed the moral agency in the universe, the revolution against morality in nature extended its conquest to an attack on morality in man. Behaviorism in psychology held a protracted funeral for all significant meanings of the idea of individuality. Very nearly half the world—the Communist part of the world—stands in contempt of any sort of morality based on the idea of a moral agent within the human being, admitting only political criteria for man's behavior. The biologists and the physiologists have spread the notion that man is an organism, and only an organism, and since they are the masters of knowledge of organisms, little remains to be said about man, when they have finished speaking.

Again, we are captives of a system. Again, the system is a powerful enemy of spontaneous morality. Again, the original moral inspiration of the system has waned and its administration has been taken over by bureaucrats and narrow specialists who are content to pursue small tasks within the assumptions of the system.

What has been gained? We have gained this, at least, that we made the present system ourselves. It is entirely our own, its faults and virtues the result of our effort. The gain is in the sense of competence to make our own world view, and to change or improve it, whenever we see fit.

What is likely to happen next? The present tendency, quite plainly, is to restore to man his moral and intellectual individuality. After this is confirmed by general consent, it is probable that the next step will be to restore the moral significance of the universe—not in the old way, according to some authoritative dictation from a supernatural being, or from the enclosing lore inherited from a mysterious antiquity, but out of the hard-bitten intelligence of human beings who feel in themselves both the moral essence of man and the moral significance of nature. We may have all sorts of intimations from ancient tradition to help us in this work; we may find hints and even whole blocks of knowledge in the religions of the past; but what we finally adopt will be our own. No one will have "given" it to us, for it will be forged out of our own experience, observation, and reflection.

One notable step toward the restoration of human individuality is the work of the "self" psychologists, preeminently Dr. A. H. Maslow. What Dr. Maslow stresses is the importance and the necessity of recognizing as real, as a substantial aspect of the human being, his intuitive and feeling nature. These inner qualities, he intimates, are to be regarded as vital elements of man's nature, as qualities-in-themselves, and not derived effects of mechanistic processes. The hidden, obscure part of our being must not be walled off as unreal and condemned to a clandestine existence by the "rational" methods of science. This side of man's life must not be disposed of by some classification made by specialists in the natural sciences.

What this means, for our present analysis, is that the categories of the modern system—the system of a world without morality, without psyche, either in nature or in man—are categories which give institutional grandeur to a neurotic view of life when they are adhered to rigidly. As Maslow puts it, speaking of the whole complex of man's inner life, and what happens when a man represses it:

Much is lost by this process, for in order to protect himself against the "dangerous" portions of his unconscious, he must wall off *everything* unconscious. There was an ancient despot who killed everyone in the city, guilty and innocent alike, in order to be sure that a few guilty ones wouldn't go free. Similarly our man, along with the dangerous emotions, also kills off his ability to play or to enjoy, to weep, to laugh, to loaf, to be spontaneous, to have fun; he gives up his creativeness, his poetry, and his art; he drowns all his healthy childishness, everything fantastic, nonsensical, or "crazy."

Everything that does not fit into the system is ignored, suppressed, or, more ceremoniously, said to be "irrelevant."

Maslow is especially interested in people who have somehow escaped the compulsion to live by the categories of the system—any system—and who accept an *immediate* relationship with the "fresh and concrete" in human experience. As he says, such people

live more in the real world of nature than in the man-made mass of concepts, words, abstractions, expectations, beliefs, and stereotypes that most people

confuse with the world. They are therefore far more apt to perceive what is there than their own wishes, hopes, fears, anxieties, their own theories and beliefs, or those of their cultural group.

In a study of a group of people whom Maslow speaks of as "self-actualizing"—of the sort described above—certain characteristics stood out as common to all of them:

The finding that was most relevant . . . was what I described as "more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it." The first form in which this capacity was noticed was an unusual ability to detect the spurious, the fake, and the dishonest in personality, and in general to judge people correctly and efficiently.

As the study progressed, it slowly became apparent that this efficiency extended to many other areas of life—indeed *all* areas that were tested. In art and music, in things of the intellect, they perceived more swiftly and more correctly than others.

At first this was phrased as good taste or good judgment, the implication being relative and not absolute. But . . . it has become progressively more clear that this had better be called perception (not taste) of something that is absolutely there (reality, not a set of opinions).

If this is so, it would be impossible to overstress its importance, for it implies that the neurotic person is not only *relatively* but *absolutely* inefficient, simply because he does not perceive the real world as accurately or as efficiently as does the healthy person. The neurotic is not only emotionally sick;—he is cognitively wrong! If health and neurosis are, respectively, correct and incorrect perceptions of reality, propositions of fact and propositions of value merge in this area, and in principle, value propositions should then be empirically demonstrable rather than merely matters of taste or exhortation.

This, from the scientific point of view, is absolute *revolution*.

A concluding paragraph of this paper, which is an adaptation of the Alfred Korzybski Memorial Lecture delivered in Chicago in 1957, sums up in general terms:

I have been talking about the too great schism between the rational and the intuitive, or rather about the damages wrought to both the rational and the intuitive by this illegitimate schism. Rationality is

one thing when it is joined harmoniously with intuition; it is another thing, quite different, when it is torn away from intuition and they are made mutually exclusive. So also for common sense and for practical living.

So also for education and language. Cut off from our psychic depths by fear, they are merely defensive maneuvers, frantic efforts at mastery and control, rigid, inflexible, compulsive, partial rather than whole, anxious rather than enjoying, repressive rather than liberating and enlarging.

Dr. Maslow's work is prominent among a number of activities which are helping to free modern man from the pressures and confinements of the prevailing system. Prof. Redfield, quoted earlier, is another who is striking blows for freedom from constraint. At the end of his book, he openly admits that he has broken the oath of scientific "objectivity," and that he cannot help it. Like the old, condemned Bolshevik in Koestler's *Darkness at Noon*, he confesses an incurable "humanitarian" tendency. He *admires* good men.

The bonds of the system are old and wearing thin. Soon, even conventional science will permit us to speak of our intrinsic qualities as human beings, without displaying disdain. And then, when the restraints are gone, we shall have a pleasant sort of intellectual confusion, freedom from authority, and the maturity of a culture which knows where it has been, where it is now, and a little more, perhaps, of where it is really going.

REVIEW

A BOX OF MATCHES

LONDON'S *Peace News*, an international pacifist weekly, has issued a pamphlet, *Tyranny Could Not Quell Them!*, consisting of articles by Gene Sharp, a staff writer and editor of *PN*, on the non-violent resistance of Norwegian teachers to the Nazi occupying forces during World War II.

This sort of material should have wider circulation. It is even more important as a testament to the human spirit than as useful propaganda for pacifists, and the story can be briefly told.

Norway, a small country with only about three and a half million people, was invaded by German troops on April 9, 1940. Military resistance crumpled in June, the rulers and the government fled to London, and the five-year occupation by the Nazis began. At first the people were bewildered, but as Vidkun Quisling's plan took shape, resistance stiffened, with secret headquarters in Oslo. Agents for local resistance were appointed all over Norway. The more Quisling did to convert the people to his plans, the stronger the temper of the resistance became. Then, in February, 1942, Quisling launched the first step of his effort to turn Norway into a Corporate State in imitation of Mussolini's Fascist model.

The teaching profession was chosen as the first that was to conform. Gene Sharp writes:

The former teachers' organization had been abolished the previous June. Now a new one was established with the head of the Hird [the Norwegian version of the Gestapo] as Leader. A decree was issued declaring that all teachers were automatically members of the new organization.

At the same time a new *Nasjonal Samling* Youth Front [*Nasjonal Samling* was Quisling's party] modelled on the Hitler Youth movement in Germany was set up with compulsory membership for all young people between the ages of 10 and 18.

The teachers had been expecting something like this and were morally prepared. Illegal groups of teachers had been formed under an anonymous leadership and four points of resistance agreed upon:

They would not join Quisling's party; they would not spread his party propaganda in the schools; they would obey no order from other than the school authorities; they would refuse to collaborate with the *Nasjonal Samling* youth movement.

When it was announced that Norwegian teachers were now all members of the new organization, the leaders of the resistance in Oslo decided that the teachers should refuse to belong. Mr. Sharp's principal informant, Haakon Holmboe, who was then a teacher in the small town of Hamar, tells how the decision reached him:

"A friend telephoned me one afternoon," he said, "and asked me to meet him at the railway station. There he gave me a small box of matches.

"He told me we teachers were to follow the lead of those who had met in Oslo, and that all the possible consequences had been discussed,"

Then his friend caught the train and was gone.

The match box contained a brief statement, prepared by the Oslo leaders, which read:

"I declare that I cannot take part in the education of the youth of Norway along those lines which have been outlined for the *Nasjonal Samling* Youth Service, this being against my conscience.

"According to what the Leader of the new teachers' organization has said, membership in this organization will mean an obligation for me to assist in such education and also would force me to do other acts which are in conflict with the obligations of my profession.

"I find that I must declare that I cannot regard myself as a member of the new teachers' organization."

This was no arbitrary dictation to the teachers from Oslo hotheads, but a simple consolidation of the known feelings of the teachers. Sharp relates:

In the teachers' resistance no leaders were specially selected. They just arose from the situation. Generally, those who had an idea of something to be done were accepted and obeyed.

"In the middle of the fight we never knew from whom the orders came," Mr. Holmboe said.

In 1942 there were twelve thousand teachers in Norway. On Feb. 20, the day selected by the

resistance leaders, somewhere between eight and ten thousand teachers sent their letters to Quisling's new Education Department. Two days later the bishops of the State Church resigned from their posts and 150 university professors protested against the Youth Front organization sponsored by Quisling.

The Quisling government panicked. The Education Department ordered the schools closed on the pretext that there was not enough fuel. The teachers were threatened with loss of their jobs and with fines. In anticipation of financial difficulties for the teachers, money began to appear from mysterious sources. Mr. Holmboe received a substantial sum to distribute among the teachers in his district. To show their attitude, teachers taught in private homes during the fraudulent fuel famine.

The teachers were ordered by the Quisling government to comply by March 15 or suffer penalties. They did not respond, and beginning on March 20 about a thousand teachers were arrested. The Norwegian police carried out the order to arrest the teachers, so that the latter often had opportunity to select men strong enough to endure the rigors of prison. The police would say that they had to arrest eight teachers in a given district, and would then wait until the school superintendent told them whom to arrest. Eventually, 687 men (women were not arrested) arrived at a concentration camp near Lillehammer, run by the Gestapo. Now began a brutal ordeal intended to weaken and demoralize. The aim was to produce nervousness and insecurity among the teachers. They were roughly ordered about, made to run rapidly wherever they went, and were kicked on the slightest pretext. They were also starved. In the morning they received a cup of *ersatz* coffee. Lunch was a cup of "hot water" soup. In the evening was the only "meal," which consisted of 150 grams of bread per man—one fifth of a small loaf weighing about a pound and a half. That was the diet.

This was the daily regimen:

Each morning there were 1½ hours "torture gymnastics," including crawling and running in very deep snow. Men up to 59 years old were treated "more or less" as young people.

Then they shovelled snow for an hour and a half, then went back to running and crawling.

After several days of this treatment the teachers were invited to withdraw their protests. Only 32 out of the 687 submitted and were sent away from the camp. For the others the "torture gymnastics" were resumed. Several days later 499 of the men were transplanted to another camp, Kirkenes, well inside the Arctic Circle. Here the German Army took over from the Gestapo.

At Kirkenes there were no beds, bedding, or furniture. The prisoners were made to unload boats for the German military.

Meanwhile, the courage of the teachers inspired all Norway. Other teachers repeated their rejection of the Quisling teacher organization. Quisling himself visited a school where the teachers were resisting and denounced them in anger, ending with the words: "You teachers have destroyed everything for me!"

What he meant was that the initial rejection of his Corporate State by the teachers had made it impossible for him to go on with his plans. Eventually Hitler ordered that the idea be abandoned.

The Norwegians think that the teachers defeated Quisling and Hitler. They had no arms. They simply said "No!" and—most of them—stuck by their decision.

The teachers did not think of themselves as heroes. They endured pain and humiliation. They were ordinary men, unused to such a test of their stamina. Some, when sick, gave in, with the consent and agreement of their comrades. But these teachers resisted the most brutal military force of the twentieth century and won out. They were finally sent home—Holmboe after eight months—and greeted by the people with flowers and gifts and freely lodged in the best hotels.

In the United States, copies of Mr. Sharp's pamphlet may be ordered from the *Peace News* Philadelphia office, 20 South 12th Street, Philadelphia 7, Penna.

COMMENTARY
TESTAMENT OF COURAGE

HAVING joined, some months ago, that (rather large, one suspects) band of conscientious souls who set out to read Boris Pasternak's *Doctor Zhivago*, page by page and line by line, and having soon been reduced to the duty stint of about ten pages a day, and then—to be completely honest—having given up entirely, we found with interest, sampled with pleasure, and then devoured Edward Wasiolek's review of the volume in the Winter-Spring *Chicago Review*.

We quote a central paragraph:

These are Pasternak's intentions: to contrast the values of the individual intuitive life and the large impersonal forces of the revolution, and to show in the hero a voluntary self-alienation unto death before these forces. Though discernible, the intentions are expressed with great looseness, some clumsiness, and little dramatic coherence. The characters are weak, the plot line is slender and at times lost in the clutter of almost accidental detail, and the use of coincidence stretches belief beyond credulity. The high and low points of the novel all point to a poet who has mastered well his craft and too little the craft of the novel. The high points of the novel are the lyrical-philosophical reflections on the meaning of history, on the significance of Christ's example, and the understanding of life after death; they are the beautiful expressions of joy in the immediate life of work and beauty and love. But the lyrical-philosophical passages remain fragments, beautiful but disembodied compressed statements of life, coming not from the characters nor from the experiences they undergo, but from the author himself. One cannot help but compare them with the way Dostoevsky's characters, an Ivan Karamazov, or a Raskolnikov, earn their right, through experience to make such generalizations; and as a consequence the way Dostoevsky earns the belief of his readers.

This judgment seems accurate (although it is said that bad translation has greatly weakened *Zhivago* for the American reader). The reviewer thinks the communists have been very stupid in making an issue of the book, especially since, in his opinion, there is so much in it "that could be honestly interpreted in their favor."

Instead [Mr. Wasiolek concludes], the Soviet Government has chosen to dramatize its intolerance and its desperate need to excise every view other than its own. It is they, in their fright before even a moderately good but honest book, who have made *Doctor Zhivago* a great book. As a testament of the courage of one man and the cowardice of a whole government it will always be a great book.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

NEW COLLEGE INFORMATION

ON February 25 MANAS made brief mention of a plan instituted by four neighboring New England institutions of higher learning for the creation of an essentially new college. The summary of "New College" objectives was furnished by a report in the *New York Times*, which can now be supplemented by quotations from a pamphlet, *The New College Plan*. The sponsoring institutions for New College are Amherst, Mount Holyoke, the University of Massachusetts, and Smith.

As we see it, this endeavor is constructively revolutionary, and should have impressive results in leavening the policies of traditional institutions, beginning with the four colleges. The keynote of the enterprise, as expressed by all four of the sponsoring presidents, is the conviction "that the supreme goal of an educational system is the free growth of the individual student and of the intellectual community."

The following paragraphs state the emphasis of "New College":

The most important contribution a college can make to its students is to develop in them a capacity to continue their education throughout their lives. We have become convinced that there are several new departures which could make an important contribution to the evolution of the American liberal arts college in response to the demands and opportunities of our period. The changes we propose reflect widespread opinion in the academic world, but it is not now possible to introduce most of them, on a decisive scale, in existing institutions. They can best be tested and demonstrated by making a fresh start: a new style of college, located among our established institutions, could both profit from their sponsorship and contribute, in its turn, to their development.

It is a widely-held conviction among liberal arts faculties that our system of courses and credits has got out of hand, and that our students are capable of far more independence than they exercise in present college programs. We propose a college which frees both students and faculty from the system which

makes education a matter of giving and taking courses to cover subjects.

At New College, subjects will be covered, not by providing complete programs of courses, but by training the student to master recognized fields of knowledge. A systematic and sustained effort will be made to train students to educate themselves. As freshmen, they will start with seminars especially designed at the first step, not the last, in independence. Other devices, such as student-led seminars associated with all lecture courses, will follow to reinforce this initial experience. Throughout, the program will provide for a type of social interaction which will create a climate favorable to intellectual activities.

Several important features of the New College plan deserve attention. First of all, the professors will begin with a minimum of course obligations. The twenty-to-one ratio of students to faculty will not oblige either teachers or students to pass constantly from classroom to classroom. Each of the fifty members of the faculty will be free to decide most of what he will teach, and much of his time will be given to those faculty consultations and student discussions which develop from spontaneous interest arising during the year. The pamphlet indicates that 'Completeness' will not depend on the course offering, but on the student, since he is made responsible, as he matures, for organizing his study so as to master subjects covered by the field examinations.

His teachers will have time to help him in this enterprise, since their energies will not be largely tied up in giving a number of courses. The field examinations will not be departmental 'comprehensives,' but will cover limited subjects, of a scope larger, however, than any one course deals with. Programs of concentration will be developed by the student frequently on an *ad hoc* basis; he will be free to make any combination of courses, individual projects and field examinations which he can justify to a faculty committee drawn from the three divisions. So there will be no temptation for faculty to say 'We must have such and such a course to prepare our majors for their

comprehensives,' nor will students be encouraged to relax into following a program of courses, from one test to the next, in preparation for a general examination which is made up of questions about each course. The field examinations will periodically be set by outside examiners, so as to assure the maintenance of standards recognized by the professional group concerned."

Theses and field examinations of broad scope will be the chief means of determining the student's progress. But even in these instances, considerable flexibility will be possible, since one specialty may be easily adaptable to a junior or senior thesis, while others may not. There will also be comprehensive examinations in some of the courses, yet the professor may decide, either for the course or for the individual student, whether such orthodox examinations are necessary.

Only three grades will be given on course and field examinations, and these are "failing," "satisfactory" and "distinction." Further flexibility is promised by a plan to allow the student who advances rapidly to complete his work for his degree in three years instead of four—an echo of a controversial proposal once made by Robert Hutchins at Chicago, but with a different orientation. However, the intensive training of the freshman year cannot be skipped, and it is at that time that professors devote the greatest concentration of energy in instruction. On this topic the pamphlet says:

The New College curriculum is designed to establish a pattern of independent behavior by intensive training in it at the outset and to reinforce the habit of initiative thereafter by continuing to provide situations which call for it. Hence the very large investment of faculty time in the freshman seminars of the first term and the combination, thereafter, of student seminars with lecture courses: once established, a way of doing things can be kept going with diminishing reinforcement. So the curriculum gives up the customary pyramid which provides a broad base of factual knowledge in survey courses during the early years and an apex of specialized study in the later departmental seminar

and thesis, where the student learns the tools of a scholarly discipline. Breadth of knowledge is certainly essential; but really to know goes with knowing how to know. Broad knowledge will not be pre-digested for New College students; it will come as a natural consequence of exploration, of "getting around" in their subjects.

In athletics, the college will eliminate expensive and time-consuming intercollegiate competition while making a fairly ingenious attempt to provide equivalent but more satisfactory recreation than is afforded by emphasis upon "spectator-sports." When Hutchins eliminated football in Chicago, intramural athletics was emphasized as a substitute, but in New College considerably more attention will be given to the hosting of visiting teams in the intramural sports; weekend schedules for athletic events will involve a variety of competition, some of it coeducational. One gets the feeling that a student attracted to New College will have just as extensive an athletic life as he would have managed as a top-flight athlete in an orthodox institution, but that his physical capacities will receive stimulus for a much more rounded development, and on occasion more actual pleasure.

In relation to culture and religion, New College is determined to implement the "broad view" with programs which invite sympathetic comparative study. There will be no Christian chapel on the campus, although a suggestion has been made for inclusion of a "meditation room" with no sectarian association. As a matter of fact, much of what we read about the cultural philosophy and religious orientation of New College, as well as the means for instruction proposed, seems to be a reincarnation of procedures (described last week) in the ancient Indian university of Nalanda. At least, even though many forms of highly specialized training will be available, the primary orientation is philosophical.

Never before have we heard such enthusiastic *specific* agreements on the part of prospective

administrators and professors, nor of a college or a university so painstakingly "built" before a single foundation has been laid. New College will not, fortunately, be a particularly expensive institution to construct, for the intention is to draw from the resources of the sponsoring and fathering institutions in the area. The most important building will be, of course, the library, a symbol of the means by which the proposed "training for independence" will go on. The freshman who begins with seminars rather than ending with them, who comes to know something of the meaning of a "tutorial" before he has been a week in residence, will proceed to find his own way to the "field" in which he is most interested.

FRONTIERS Myth and History

HISTORY has its myths, as we all know—that is, each community of civilization, each era, becomes involved in various partisan concerns. These partisan concerns lead, characteristically, to the attempt to explain or justify questionable events as contributing to an intended goal which reflects the egocentrism of a particular group of men. The historiographer is one who, presumably, strives to get behind these "frame of reference" myths of history—or, in other words, outside of "time," as the men who have peopled its various segments have lived it.

The relationships between myth and history and religion are complex, but a clarification of them would explain a good deal about the decline of Christianity as an effective dynamic among professing Christians. We need not even turn to Christian periodicals to be made aware of the grave concern which sincere divines feel regarding the future of Christianity, for newspaper reports of sermons and religious conference speeches are filled with the sombre reflections of ministers on the growing lack of interest in Christian theology. In the *Christian Century* we find a more analytical evaluation of the trend. Take, for instance, some remarks by Martin E. Marty in the *CC* for Oct. 29, 1958, in an article headed "The New Shape of American Religion." Mr. Marty writes:

Radio, television, cinema, magazines and newspapers paperback books. . . . create the value patterns from which churches have scant opportunity to redeem men. These media are thoroughly secularized, even though they participate in the revival of religious interest and share the current religious "kick." But, as the spokesmen of the popular revival itself are quick to point out, if one subtracts the expected article on a religious subject from a mass-circulation magazine, or the once-a-week network bout with religious issues from the rest of its calendar for television or radio: would one be able to discern from the subject matter of what is left that religion—or specifically evangelical Christianity—in any sense informs or once did inform our national culture? When these media are

given over to the churches an embarrassment results; usually a pious overlay of secular values is presented.

A subsequent article in the *Century* (Dec. 3, 1958) touches on the same ground, and ends with a feeble encouragement for a "Christian" future. John C. Bennett, writing on "Faith and Responsibility," says:

We are all familiar with the clichés used to describe the man of today as he is shaped by these forces: he lives in crowds which respond to the same mass media; he is other-directed by a culture dominated by great organizations; he is a conformist because of inner anxiety and for the sake of economic security he knows great loneliness; in his cities and in his suburbs he is almost socialized to death; families are so mobile that they never develop roots anywhere; their relations with their neighbors are friendly but superficial. Structure and discipline have disappeared from family life; the younger generation is often frustrated by its very freedom and sometimes sickened to the point of delinquency.

Such analyses are based on the description of trends. They are only partly convincing because fortunately there are many families and individuals who are not mere reflectors of trends but who possess resources which enable them to transcend the trends with a degree of freedom.

This resistance to trends by *individuals* is clearly related to religious inspiration—or any sort of inspiration, for that matter. In one of Boris Pasternak's letters, we note the somewhat familiar effort of philosophically-minded man to see a brighter future: "I have a feeling," wrote Pasternak, "that a completely new era is beginning, with new tasks and new demands on the heart and on human dignity, a silent age which will never be proclaimed and allowed voice but will grow more real every day without our noticing it." Since MANAS writers are often moved to suggest grounds for this sort of optimism, it is well to pause and note the dangers in any formulation of idealism which depends upon the future for its fulfillment. It is so easy to begin developing a new myth of history, revolving around a pre-visionsed goal, and so difficult to recognize that the sort of "myth" which enables men to transcend the limitations of time—that is,

their frame of reference must represent some universal symbolism out of all relation to temporal history. A long time ago Christianity exchanged its potential symbolic power for a particular theory of human progress, and when the origins of Christianity were given a date, when the history which Christianity was reported to tell was told *in time*, with a beginning and a foreseeable end, it was doomed to end *in time*. The symbol of Christ on the cross, no longer the symbol of Everyman, but simply the elaboration of a supernatural event, moved men to partisan interpretation and alignments—in fact to religious war after religious war. But it failed to move them as universal myths can move.

Some interesting passages on "The Prestige of the Cosmogonic Myth" appear in *Diogenes*, Fall, 1958. Mircea Eliade (in translation from the French) indicates the difference between historical myth and "timeless" myth:

The principal function of the cosmogonic myth is to serve as an exemplary model for the periodic regeneration of time. Each new year is a resumption of time from its beginning, that is to say, a repetition of the cosmogony. A great many of the New Year's rituals can be explained as an attempt to revive primordial time, "pure" time, the time of the creation.

Why did men from traditional societies feel the need to relive the cosmogony annually? In order to regenerate the world by reintegrating original sacred time, the time when the creation of the world occurred. In all the pre-Judaic religions sacred time was the time of the myth, primordial time, in which the exemplary acts of the gods were accomplished. But in reactualizing primordial time, that profane time which was already past, the time that contains death in its own duration was suppressed. All the individual and collective purifications that took place on the occasion of the new year came from the abolition of time gone by and, consequently, after the abolition of all that time had worn out. Time was reborn "pure," just as it was in the beginning, from the very fact that at each new year the world was created anew. By reiterating the cosmogony, primordial sacred time was restored. The re-creation of the cosmos implied the regeneration of time. The

interdependence of the cosmos and cosmic time was so thoroughly perceived by pre-modern man that in many languages the term designating the "world" is employed to mean the "year." For example, certain North American tribes say "the world is past, or "the earth is past," to mean that "a year has passed."

Perhaps here we may touch upon another approach to the psychological factors responsible for Existentialism, in the sense that only that man "exists" who has learned to transcend time, and any or all theories of progress which relate to a sequential development in time; the call is to reach the "timeless moment" of Zen. This is also the "dimension of depth" which Paul Tillich feels has disappeared from recognizable Christianity, and it seems to us that the long Christian dedication to temporal myth has made it next to impossible for a regeneration to take place within the Christian tradition.

Mr. Eliade concludes:

All creations—divine or human—are definitively dependent upon the model which constitutes the cosmogony. To create is, after all, to remake the world—whether the "world" happens to be a modest cabin, a humble tool, or a poem. The repetition of the cosmogony, whether periodic or not, is not an absurd and childish superstition of a humanity squatting in the darkness of primordial stupidity. In deciding to imitate the gods and to repeat their creative acts, primitive man had already taken upon himself that which, later, was revealed to us, the moderns—the very destiny of man. By this I mean the creation of the world we live in, the creation of the universe in which one wishes to live.