VOLUME XXIII, NO. 22
JUNE 3, 1970

MAN AND THE MODERN AGE

IT would be difficult to find a better book than Ortega's *Man and Crisis* for initial guidance in understanding the present intellectual and moral disorder. This work, first published in English in 1958 (Ortega died in 1955), is an endeavor to establish the principles of a science of history. In it Ortega deals at some length with past crises of history, mainly for the comparisons they offer with the present period of uncertainty and change. Ortega's central and controlling view is that the essence of being human, of man's life, lies in his continuous need to deal with his environment, and in the resulting need to know as much about it as he can. But in order to interpret the meaning of his environment, it is necessary to know about himself. What, then, can we, or do we, know about ourselves, beyond dispute, simply from observation and introspection? Ortega gives this answer:

> . . . man is a most strange entity, who, in order to be what he is, needs first to find out what he is; needs, whether he will or no, to ask himself what are the things around him and what, there in the midst of them, is he. For it is this which really differentiates man from a stone, and not that man has understanding while the stone lacks it. We can imagine a very intelligent stone; but as the inner being of the stone is already given it already made, once and for all, and it is required to make no decision on the subject, it has no need, in order to go on being a stone, to pose again and again the problem of self, asking itself, "What must I do now?" or, which is the same thing, "What must I be?" Tossed into the air, without need to ask itself anything, and therefore without having to exercise its understanding, the stone which we are imagining will fall toward the center of the earth. Its intelligence, even if existent, forms no part of its being, does not intervene in it, but would be an extrinsic and superfluous addition.
>
> The essence of man, on the other hand, lies in the fact that he has no choice but to force himself to know to build a science, good or bad, in order to resolve the problem of his own being and toward this end the problem of what are the things among which he must inexorably have that being. This—that he needs to know, that whether he likes it or not, he needs to work to the best of his intellectual means—is undoubtedly what constitutes the human condition.

This is Ortega's basic principle or stance, from which he never departs. For the purposes of this book, however, the principle requires the clothing of culture or history, in terms of which we experience our feelings of both knowing and not knowing, and define our securities and our fears. For while the individual struggle to know has its uniqueness, its inevitable privacy and independent character, we also have a life in our thoughts about one another. One of Ortega's definitions of "society" comes from the fact that other men form a part of the personal life which each man pursues with himself as the unique center, and that his life has a presence in their existence. The interpenetration of human lives creates natural fellowship and interdependence and results in the community of ideas. In consequence, at any moment of history, there is a great collection of commonly held ideas, of more or less stable opinions which give the then prevailing historical epoch its character. We are born into not only a biological environment, but also a common cultural environment. In Ortega's words:

> At any given moment man lives in a world of convictions the greater part of which are the convictions common to all men who dwell together in their era. This spirit of the times we have called the world "in force," the ruling world, in order to show that it has not only the reality which our conviction lends to it, but also that it imposes itself upon us, whether we like it or not, as the most important ingredient in our surroundings. Just as man finds himself encased within the body which has fallen to him by chance and must live in it and with it, so he finds himself with the ideas of his time, and in them and with them—even though it be the peculiar fashion of contending against them—must he live.

> The *mundo vigente,* that world in force, that spirit of the times—with which and in the operation of which we live, in view of which we decide our simplest actions—is the variable element in human life. When it changes, so does the argument of the human drama.

If we think about the way Ortega presents these ideas, it seems evident that he writes in the scientific spirit—and that, indeed, is his claim and intent. Yet his "science" does not prevent him from writing also in a great philosophical tradition. It is his method, his reliance on evidence, that is different. For example, he conceals, although not entirely, the moral ardor with which he is certainly endowed. Nor does he argue from great ethical or religious stipulations, although he is profoundly ethical and not irreligious. He practices a kind of "empiricism," arguing from the findings of both personal and historical introspection, on the ground that his observations can be followed or repeated by others and seen to be correct. Yet Ortega's themes have much in common—even threads of identity—with the philosophical inquiries of such men as Plato and Pico della Mirandola. Man, Pico declared in his *Oration on the Dignity of Man* (1487), is "the free and proud shaper of his own being." The nature of all other beings—including, no doubt, the "stone" of Ortega's comparison—is defined and restricted by unambiguous limits, whereas man can—indeed must—trace the lineaments of his own nature. Ortega is without Pico's grandiloquence, but he says practically the same thing. Only man can draw back from experience, commune with himself, decide who he is, what he must be, and then *design* his own future being.

And when it comes to the careful study of "the world in force," which is the subject-matter of his *Man and People*, Ortega becomes a Socratic. Socrates devoted his life to questioning "the world in force" of his time. Socrates often went into himself, and then went into the market place to listen to the opinions of men and to challenge them. He was one of those who undertook to change "the argument of the human drama." So, in his own way, was Ortega, with his advocacy of "vital reason."

But the activities of men who are movers and changers are not the only decisive element in the great alterations which accomplish the passing of one epoch and the birth of another. Transitions between ages are marked and begun by terrible bewilderments and uncertainties. Change comes when men find it no longer possible to be comfortable with their own opinions. Ortega's recognition of this basic psychological cause of the dissatisfaction of men with the ideas of their times seems very acute. Turbulence and disorder arise when men are simply *unable* to rest content with their opinions. The essential good in human life, sought by all men, is to be in harmony with themselves. There is no particular stage of "progress" or advancement in "intelligence" which can define the good life. The good life consists in knowing what we know, being on the whole content with it and its direction, and in living by it. Hence the serenity of Tolstoy's peasants, which the great novelist envied but could not duplicate for himself. Man's salvation, Ortega proposes, is always "to find oneself, to get back into agreement with one's self, to be very clear about what one's sincere attitude is toward each and every thing." After giving the illustration of the peasant, whose "deep repose" amazes us, he says:

> There are very few of these countrymen left now; culture has reached them, and so has the topical and that which we called socialization; and they are beginning to live on ideas received from the outside and to believe things they do not believe. . . . For his part, the man who knows many things, the cultivated man, runs the risk of losing himself in the jungle of his own knowledge; and he ends up by not knowing what his own genuine knowledge is. We do not have to look very far; this is what happens to the modern average man. He has received so many thoughts that he does not know which of them are those he actually thinks, those he believes; and he becomes used to living on pseudo-beliefs, on commonplaces which at times are most ingenious and most intellectual, but, which falsify his own existence. Hence the restlessness, the deep *otherness,* which so many modern lives carry in their secret selves. Hence the

> desolation, the emptiness, of so much personal destiny which struggles desperately to fill itself with one conviction or another without ever managing to convince itself. Yet salvation would be so easy! Although it would be necessary for modern man to do exactly the opposite of what he is doing. What is he doing? Well, insisting on convincing himself of that of which he is not convinced, he is feigning beliefs, and, in order to ease the pretense in which he lives, drugging himself with those attitudes which are easiest, most topical, most according to formula.

No one who tries to participate at all in the life of the intellectual world of the present can fail to appreciate the exactness of this analysis. Was there ever a period when opinions were so cheaply held, when there was so much froth of available beliefs on the surface of communications? When, as a consequence, so many men seem on the verge of deciding, in self-defense, to try not to think at all!

"It is curious," Ortega observes, "that every crisis begins with a period of cynicism." The pattern is repeated again and again. "The first crisis of the Western world, that of Greco-Roman history, begins by inventing and propagating cynicism." We may say that this is inevitable when convictions are uprooted, when conventional beliefs no longer give support, when trusted authorities falter and fail to give light. Yet cynicism is *not* inevitable since there have been men who lived without sure beliefs yet were not cynical at all. A man can be led by deep, positive convictions without having "sure beliefs." Ortega gives the example of Socrates: "One of the most convinced men who ever trod the earth was Socrates, and Socrates was convinced only that he knew nothing."

Of course, there is a sense in which this is not altogether so. Socrates knew how to be in harmony with himself. He knew that he had somehow to verify what he lived by. He would accept as "true" nothing that he could not test. "The unexamined life," he said "is not worth living." Ortega is of the same persuasion:

> At every moment of the day I must decide what I am going to do the next moment; and no one can make this decision for me, or take my place in this.
>
> But in order to make decisions about my existence, about what I will or will not do, I must have a repertoire of convictions, of opinions, about the world. I am the one who must have them, who must actually be convinced of them. In short that is what life is; and as you notice, all this happens to me alone, and I, only I, must definitely handle it. In the final analysis, each one of us carries his own existence suspended in the hollow of his hand.

The cultural world into which we are born gives us a ready-made repertoire. What should be our attitude toward all these ideas? True or false, we grow up with them around us, they seep into us, saturating us, so that they become the furniture of our minds. For both Socrates and Ortega, recognizing this brings the obligation to question incessantly what until now we have lived by, and has taught us "all we know." As Ortega puts it:

> Concerning the most important questions of reality, I must have an opinion, a thought about them; on that opinion, on that thought, will depend the resolutions which I take, my line of conduct, my being. It is necessary, then, that those opinions be truly mine; that is, that I adopt them because I am fully convinced of them. This is possible only if I have thought them out from their very roots and they have come forth nourished and advanced by undeniable evidence. Now, nobody can give me this evidence ready made; it takes shape for me only when I analyze for myself the matter in question, when I take it to myself and form my own convictions about it. . . . An opinion which I have formed for myself in this manner and which I base on my own evidence is truly mine; it contains what I truly and genuinely think about the matter, and therefore when I think thus I am in agreement with myself. I am myself. And the series of actions, of conduct, which that genuine opinion engenders and which it motivates will be genuinely my life, my real and authentic being.

The man who fails, or fails to begin this attempt to make his thoughts his own, resigns himself to live in a state of "otherness." He has only a borrowed identity, a "conditioned" existence:

> The man in a state of otherness, outside himself, has lost his own genuine character and lives a false life.
>
> Very often our life is that and nothing else—a falsification of itself, a supplanting of itself with something else. A great proportion of the thoughts with which we live are not thought out by us with the evidence in hand. With some shame we recognize that the greater part of the things we say we do not understand very well; and if we ask ourselves why we say them, why we think them, we will observe that we say them only for this reason: that we have heard them said, that other people say them. We have never tried to rethink them on our own account, or to find evidence for them. . . . We have abandoned ourselves to other people and we live in a state of otherness, constantly deceiving and defrauding ourselves.

This is the other meaning of "society"—the society of "binding observance," of prevailing opinion, of "they say" as authority, which nurtures us just as surely as the "society" which is born of our sense of community and our feeling of having a life in other men.

Thus society as a whole is inevitably a mixture of these two great ingredients, of influences from one or the other of these basic polarities. Like all men, or nearly all, "society" is a blend of positive and negative potentialities which anon save and anon damn. In those difficult epochs of history when they obviously damn more than they save, vast changes take place and men struggle to find a new synthesis of ruling ideas and social relationships.

Well, we have used most of our space to repeat Ortega's principles and to illustrate what is at stake for him in the writing of history. Usually, he shows, great historical transitions occupy hundreds of years. A long period of assimilation divided publication of the discoveries of Copernicus and the time of Galileo and Kepler, after which, finally, scientific ideas began to be regarded as primary in an account of the realities of the world. As Ortega puts it:

> . . . up to 1550 the sciences were not world-makers, . . . in order that a single scientific discovery like the Copernican idea should produce an actual world change, it was necessary for men first to decide to acknowledge the fact that, generally speaking, scientific truth is truth of the first class, a creative truth. Only within that general change in the evaluation of the sciences could the Copernican theory radiate all the formidable and vital consequences which were pregnant within it. . . .
>
> This shows that the perspective of life is different from the perspective of science. During the modern age, the two have been confused: this very confusion *is* the modern age.

Ortega dilates on the distinction between the perspective of science and the perspective of life in *Mission of the University;* for this distinction, here, we call attention to the article by Willis Harman, "The New Copernican Revolution," in *Stanford Today* (Winter, 1969), in which the writer gathers evidence to show that the world is on the eve of another great change in outlook, as a result of which, he predicts, the scientific idea of reality "will be considered to be a valid but partial view—a particular metaphor, so to speak." On the positive side, Dr. Harman thinks—and he is joined in this by many others—that the new revolution in thought will bring a restored and perhaps purified conception of man as a self-moving and self-knowing being, reminiscent of Upanishadic, Emersonian, and, today, Maslovian, teachings.

But this great change will not be accomplished without struggle. Modern man lives, or thinks he lives, on "science." As Taine said long ago, while medieval man obtained his dogmas from the Church councils, modern man has them from the academies of science. That this unquestioning faith lives on in places of advanced learning is evident from a recent discussion of Behaviorism in these pages ("Children . . . and Ourselves," MANAS, May 20). There a confident psychologist is quoted as declaring:

> We should reshape society so that we all would be trained from birth to do what society wants us to do. We have the techniques now to do it. Only by using them can we hope to maximize human potentiality. . . . I foresee the day when we could convert the worst criminal into a decent, respectable

> citizen in a matter of a few months—or perhaps even less time than that. . . . No one owns his own personality. Your ego, or individuality, was forced on you by your genetic constitution and by the society into which you were born. You had no say about what kind of personality you acquired, and there's no reason to believe you should have the right to refuse to acquire a new personality if your old one is anti-social. . . . We must begin by drafting new laws that will be as consonant as possible with all the human-behavior data that scientists have gathered.

That this learned man who is also an experimental scientist reveals not the slightest doubt that "what society wants" can be sufficient guide to the reshaping of human personality is evidence enough of how deeply seated is the scientific—or rather "scientistic"—outlook. This outlook, as he defines it, seems the exact reverse of the Socratic view and enterprise. According to the Behaviorists, the life of men is to be examined, judged, and changed by others, not by themselves. The present "otherness" of men's lives, then, from which all of us suffer, more or less—and which Socrates and Ortega find to be our basic ill—is for the Behaviorist the absolute condition of human improvement! We could hardly have clearer confirmation of Ortega's diagnosis, that the confusion of the perspective of science with the perspective of life "*is* the modern age."

REVIEW
RELEVANCE FOR FANTASY

THE ambiguity in human meaning of what seem "plain facts" is well illustrated by a comparison of a fact of human life as seen by Buckminster Fuller with the deductions made from that fact by behaviorist psychologists. The fact in this case is completely clear—that human beings are influenced by their environment. The behaviorist makes this fact the basis and justification of his plan to control and reshape human beings. Fuller declares the same fact as a ground for setting people free to remake themselves. This comes out clearly in Harold Taylor's article on Mr. Fuller in the *Saturday Review* for May 2.

The article is mainly appreciative. Dr. Taylor speaks of Fuller as a man who has "given substance to hope and relevance to fantasy." His first paragraph seems perfect as introduction to what is to come:

> Buckminster Fuller, whose name is high on campus lists of favored environmental persons, is a comprehensive, all-purpose, long-distance, world-around genius-talker who teaches everything to everyone everywhere. Wherever you look, he is in his blue suit, with wide-open magnified eyes, pouring out his ideas in a flood of words, intoxicated by the universe and fed by an internal stream of energy that recreates itself as it is used, and that may very well be a conscious effort by the universe to use Fuller to illustrate its own principles. For him, the universe is simply an endless, beginningless, wrap-around environment, "a non-simultaneous complex of unique motions and transformations."

Fuller, Taylor says, now seventy-five is making a deliberate effort to be understood, and it *is* certainly true that his recent writings are easier to grasp than his early ones. A good way to begin reading Fuller would be with his paper in the *American Scholar* (Spring, 1966), following this with the "Documents" of the World Resources Inventory being continuously assembled at his headquarters at the University of Southern Illinois (Carbondale). Then his exhilarating poem, *No More Secondhand God* (Southern Illinois University Press paperback, $2.25), is delighting confirmation that Fuller is a "spokesman" for the universe!

One of his present occupations is compiling "an operating manual for Spaceship Earth." This "with-it" jargon may be irritating to some, but as Dr. Taylor says:

> Aside from all else, Fuller has a purity and generosity of spirit that make it possible to forgive him almost anything and to stand in awe of so complete a devotion to the interest of mankind. . . . seeing the Earth as a sphere and thinking of it as a spaceship, [he is] spreading the word about the possibilities in life and the enormous capacity of the human mind for making the world work for 100 per cent of its inhabitants. He does all this in a spirit of egalitarian enthusiasm for all mankind, believing in his bones that anything desirable is possible, that by changing the environment we can change the quality of all life. "Unfavorable circumstances, shortsightedness, frayed nervous systems, and ignorantly articulated love and fear of elders tend to shut off many of the child's brain-capacity values."
>
> The main instruction in the operating manual is to put all human efforts into reforming the human environment and stop trying to reform people. They will reform themselves if the environment is right. This means that the causes of conflict between social groups, nations, and ideological blocs will be removed when the needs of all nations are met. Fuller believes that meeting these needs—for housing, food, clothes, and freedom to develop one's life—is not only possible in a practical way but absolutely necessary in order to avoid the destruction of the resources and the people of the planet. Having given up hope that the politicians, the Great Pirates, will do anything about it at all, since their thinking and sources of authority come from a vested interest in the politics of scarcity and nonspending, Fuller turns to education as the major counterforce against destruction and oblivion.

One value of this article is Dr. Taylor's suggestion of the sort of environment Fuller himself provides simply by his presence. In a great many people, especially the young, he inspires trust and enthusiasm. There seems to be no necessary connection between understanding Fuller intellectually and feeling his quality as a human being. While a working grasp of his ideas

is naturally invited, and obtained by some, it is no criticism of Fuller to say that what Taylor calls his "generosity of spirit" is the initial reason for the following he has acquired. The practical implementation of this spirit is of course necessary, since without it enthusiasm becomes an emotional sham, but without enthusiasm people will not go to work at all, or rather, will merely take flight. Fuller, in short, has an energizing effect on other human beings, and a great deal of what he says is simple common sense. The more difficult parts of his teaching—which may puzzle even mathematicians and engineers—need concentrated intellectual effort, but Fuller's extraordinary feats as a construction and fabricating genius make an impressive encouragement.

This is no claim for Fuller's "infallibility," but a way of pointing to his quality and tendency as a man and educator. Dr. Taylor says:

> Special studies, says Fuller, are studies that produce specialists, and specialists are people about to be replaced by computers. The main task of the human intellect is to put things together in comprehensive patterns, not to separate them into special compartments. . . . It is in Fuller's capacity never to leave people the same again that Fuller rises to the level of his genius. That quality is harder to understand from his writing than it is from his physical presence, when he spins out his two-, three-, or four-hour talks, and sets his own mind in motion as he explains what he means. . . . Even when he is outrageously wrong, even when he oversimplifies, even when he over-complicates, even when he jumps to huge conclusions on the slimmest of empirical fact, he changes your mind and extends your consciousness.
>
> Consider one final example. Using as an axiom his own principle of not owning cars but renting new ones at airports Fuller makes the overall deduction that it is time for mankind to stop owning things, and gives us a new proposition: "Possession is becoming progressively burdensome and wasteful and, therefore, obsolete."

It is possible, of course, to find fault with Fuller's proposals. Every utopian thinker is exceedingly vulnerable when regarded from the viewpoint of the status quo. But there is only one really important question to be asked about Fuller: What is his *influence,* in terms of the vision he represents and the interest he excites? The answer can only be that Fuller has an enormously fertile and stimulating mind, and that his influence is in the direction of individual resourcefulness, imaginative exploration, and freely innovating reform.

It is not really important that he may be lacking in some aspects of æsthetic sensibility. It is not relevant to wonder who on earth would really want to live in a house slung from some kind of aluminum totem pole. It doesn't matter that his three-wheeled automobile never found a market, or that geodesic domes may soon be an architectural cliché used by hamburger stands if they keep on going up at the present rate. What matters is the fact that people who are exposed to Fuller will never be the same, and may be moved to make something better of themselves and their environments, in their own way, because of his inspiration and example.

COMMENTARY
CONSERVATION MEASURE

SINCE the start of MANAS in January, 1948, neither the subscription nor the single copy price has been increased. While printing and other costs have gone up materially during the past twenty-two years, and will doubtless continue to do so, we shall keep our rates unchanged for as long as we possibly can. MANAS readers are not "wealthy" and many of them are students, not to speak of overseas subscribers to whom even the present rates may seem "high."

On the other hand, we cannot reduce our costs. Printing and paper must be paid for. Some of the work in getting out MANAS is already done by volunteers, and salaries began and will remain at the "token" level. And while the help contributed by readers has been heartening, we still need to "economize."

Accordingly, we now take a step we have contemplated for some time, partly to save money, but also to provide the small editorial staff with a much needed rest. We are suspending publication for two months, July and August, so that the June 24 issue will be marked Nos. 25-34, and the next succeeding issue will be dated Sept. 2. Any subscribers who feel that this decision works injustice to them are invited to request extension of their expiration date to include nine more issues. Reduction of the number of issues published each year has seemed the best way to conserve our resources, both financial and editorial. It is hoped that most readers will agree.

* * *

We found in a recent paperback mystery novel by Ross MacDonald (*The Three Roads*, Bantam) a passage that we wish had been expanded further. It is dialogue between the chief characters of the story:

> "What work are you planning? Is it good for you to be thinking of going back to work?"
>
> "It's a book I've had in mind for a long time. I call it *The Political Fallacy.* It's nothing startlingly original, the idea goes back away before Thoreau, but I want to make some modern applications of it. The leading fallacy of our times, underlying fascism and communism and even most of the liberalisms, is the belief that political man is man in his highest function, that political forms are the salvation of the individual soul—But don't let me bore you," he concluded miserably.
>
> "On the contrary. Please go on. I take it you are no anarchist?"
>
> "Call me a political protestant. Your true anarchist is the enemy of political forms of any kind. I simply want government to know its place. A state, or a political party, is a means to an end. The end has got to be determined by nonpolitical values, or politics becomes a snake gagging on its own tail. You have an analogous problem in psychiatry, don't you? Whether to prepare your patients for the absolutely good life or for the life of society. That's a crude antithesis but you know what I mean."
>
> "I do indeed. That is one of our basic problems. Especially in a period when the good life and the life of society may be at opposite poles. In an insane society it is the sane man who seems insane."

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
CURRICULUM REFORM

A WISE, witty, and searching article on the problems of modern education was contributed by Jerome Bruner to the *Saturday Review* of April 18. Dr. Bruner is director of the Center for Cognitive Studies at Harvard and had considerable to do with the curriculum reform which got under way in this country about ten years ago. His article is about the discoveries made while establishing this program.

Dr. Bruner begins with an account of the reforms introduced in teaching "science," using physics for illustration. The need to teach *physics* instead of "about" physics became manifest. This meant involving physicists in education, and these professional scientists soon became upset, speaking of the need to make the teaching of physics "teacher-proof." While this, as Bruner says wryly, was like wanting to make people "love-proof," some progress was made. Teaching physics, they found, and as Robert A. Millikan declared many years ago, is teaching problem-solving. It is not teaching how to do this or that particular thing, but teaching the skill or competence of problem-solving. Science, the educators realized, involves two activities—gathering raw facts, and then using the facts to find out how to do things with them. A "mature" science like physics, you could say, is less dependent upon the pursuit of "facts" than the underdeveloped ones that still lack clearly articulated principles. As Bruner puts it: "A good field is one where one doesn't have to go about making such empirical determinations very often, and we know that things are getting better when we can reconstruct how something should be from what is already known rather than being a brave and naked empiricist."

One thinks, here, of Einstein's response when, after the photographs of the 1919 total eclipse of the sun, a friend pointed at the plates and said, "You must be a happy man. There in your hands is the proof of your theory." To which Einstein replied: "Proof! They needed it. I never did."

But this is only the beginning of Dr. Bruner's analysis. The identification of a "good field" as one where thinking has become more important than gathering facts grew out of the realization that doing physics is thinking in the "syntax" of the subject—a mature science is a fairly complete logical language. Science, in short, is the rationalization of the natural world. However, this way of summing up, although seeming satisfactory, leaves out a crucial aspect of science which is not just problem-solving. The most important advances of science come from problem-*finding*, which employs the skills of problem-solving, but breaks out of the familiar usage or grammar of the language. Problem-finding requires "the location of incompleteness, anomaly, trouble, inequity, and contradiction."

Having said this, Dr. Bruner waves negligently at the champions of behavioristic learning theory as he leaves them behind:

> In none of what we have described is these anything like memorization or performing a particular repertory. Conventional learning theories have little to do with the matter, and it seems inconceivable that there stands between you and understanding a missing word of praise or a chocolate bar. Rather, what seems to be at work in a good problem-solving "performance" is some underlying competence in using the operations of physics or whatever, and the performance that emerges from this competence may never be the same on any two occasions. What is learned is competence, not particular performances. Any particular performance, moreover, may become "stuck" or over-determined by virtue of having been reinforced. It is like the wicked schoolboy trick of smiling when the teacher utters a particular word, and before long the teacher is using it more often. But to confuse that phenomenon with language is as much a mistake as confusing the trained seal piping "Yankee Doodle" with the improvisation of a variation on the piano.

Dr. Bruner now turns to other problems. Having shown that teaching people physics means teaching them competence in a language—"an instrument of thought or a skill rather than a 'topic' "—he points out that no one is really successful in acquiring a skill without some awareness of why it is good to have. Mastering the complexities of a skill

needs the spur of a general objective. Dr. Bruner discusses this necessity:

> How did we get off the track in setting up our educational practices? . . . I suspect that part of the difficulty was introduced by wrongly focused theories of learning that lost sight of the forest of skilled competence for the trees of perfected performances. There is a very crucial matter about acquiring a skill—be it chess, political savvy, biology, or skiing. The goal must be plain; one must have a sense of where one is trying to get to in any given instance of activity. For the exercise of skill is governed by an intention and feed-back on the relation between what one has intended and what one has achieved thus far—"knowledge of results." Without it the generativeness of skilled operations is lost. What this means in the formal educational setting is far more emphasis on making clear the purpose of every exercise, every lesson plan, every unit, every term, every education.

The learner, in short, must himself take part in the setting of his own goals, especially since "this is one of the few ways of making clear where the learner is trying to get to.

So now there is a further problem, for the reason that "social goals" and "personal goals" are often not the same. In our society, as we know, the two sorts of goals are increasingly defined very differently. The most intense complaint of the young, and of even the not so young involved in higher education, is that what they are getting in school is simply not "relevant." After some discussion of this problem, Dr. Bruner remarks:

> I am with those who criticize the university for having too often ignored the great issues of life of our time. But I do not believe that the cure in the classroom is to be endlessly concerned with the immediacy of such issues—sacrificing social relevance to personal excitement. Relevance, in either of its senses, depends upon what you know that permits you to move toward the goals you care about. It is this kind of "means-ends" knowledge that brings into a single focus the two kinds of relevance, personal and social. It is then that we bring knowledge and conviction together, and it is this requirement that faces us in the revolution in education through which we are now going.

Something more, obviously, is needed here, as doubtless Dr. Bruner would be the first to say. Some study of those societies, if any, in which desirable personal and social goals have existed in harmony and collaboration is plainly in order. This is the project of utopian studies, and might include, for a start, Arthur Morgan's book, *Nowhere Was Somewhere*, and Abraham Maslow's *Eupsychia*, both works by intensely practical men. And steps should be taken to get fully into print Ruth Benedict's as yet unpublished essay on the Synergistic Society, which only brief quotation shows to be deeply and effectively concerned with the problem of uniting or harmonizing individual and social goals.

Dr. Bruner, however, has something further to say:

> . . . I am convinced, as are so many others, that the way which our ordinary educational activities are carried out will not equip men with effective convictions. . . . education must no longer strike an exclusive posture of neutrality and objectivity. Knowledge, we know now as never before, is power. This does not mean that there are not canons of truth or that the idea of truth is not a precious one. Rather, let knowledge as it appears in our schooling be put into the context of action and commitment.

The balance of his article is devoted to how this might work. It means, for one thing, finding some solution for the differences between men who think of themselves as "knowers" and those who qualify themselves as "seekers":

> The two groups often deplore each other. Just as surely as authority will not easily be given up by teachers, so too will knowers resist the threatening speculations of seekers. Revolution does have difficulties.

And this, quite obviously, is the "Socratic" situation. What is justice, and what *is* knowledge, and what *is* virtue? The revolution Dr. Bruner speaks of can hardly come about, or will almost certainly abort, unless the Socratic inquiry is made the foundation of everything else.

FRONTIERS

Time for "White" Studies?

[This article by Howard N. Meyer is adapted from his Introduction to the book, *Integrating America's Heritage*, soon to be published by McGrath, consisting of the text of the 1968 Hearing of the House Committee on Education and Labor, concerned with the Scheuer-Scott Bill to establish a National "Negro History" Commission. Mr. Meyer is a New York attorney, author of *Colonel of the Black Regiment*, the life of Thomas Wentworth Higginson, and *Let Us Have Peace*, a biography of U. S. Grant.]

THE Congressional power of investigation has a great and productive past. The need to inquire into an aspect of American economic or social life in order to legislate wisely is obvious; the peripheral function of informing all constituencies of facts by means of public hearing—and thereby incidentally arousing voters in districts of lawmakers insensitive to some evils—can lead to abuses, but is essentially legitimate.

Our abhorrence of the wrongs done to individuals and the propaganda for cold war objectives that have been the fruit of the many (probably unconstitutional for lack of legislative purpose) so called "investigations" of subversives should not becloud the issue. It is well to remember that among the constructive and bona fide ones, the first of the truly great exercises of Congressional investigative power was the work of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction of the Thirty-Ninth Congress; its fruit was the Fourteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution.

To recall the Joint Committee of 1865-66 in considering the Hearing of March 18, 1968 (on a Bill to Establish a Commission on Negro History and Culture) is appropriate because Congressman James Scheuer's Hearing called attention to the persistence of a great national evil and the need for a remedy, just as did the Hearings held in 1866 on the conditions in the "late rebel states."

One manifestation of the present-day evil that has evoked the "Negro History" Bill, and which illustrates the scope of the required remedy, has been the treatment by historians of the Joint Committee of Reconstruction itself. They have given it, in current parlance, a most unflattering "image." For many decades prior to the rise of the revisionism that was born with the publication of Dr. E. B. DuBois' *Black Reconstruction*, it had been the fashion of orthodox (white) American historians to treat the Joint Committee, and particularly the man who conceived it and played a leading role in its work, as vindictive, unfair, and unjust. The name of the man so vilified is Thaddeus Stevens.

It has been traditional for historians to claim that President Johnson wanted only a just and conciliatory peace with the slave states. The radical opposition to Johnson's "noble and disinterested" peace program, opposition led by Stevens, was said to have been bent on a brutal and vindictive punishment of the South. However, the real truth is that Johnson's peace was a white supremacist's peace, and Stevens sought only to ensure the freedom of Negroes for which so many whites had fought and died.

One cannot argue here the full case for Thaddeus Stevens, except to suggest that the great weight of the evidence, as disclosed and documented in the scholarly published work of the DuBois era, contradicts the negative image that almost all white Americans have been given of this man. Stereotyped as the incarnation of evil in the film, *Birth of a Nation* (which merely reflected the Southern school of U.S. history that had by 1911 gained total dominance), Stevens has been consistently so treated in text and popularization ever since. The historical truth is that Stevens spoke for the conscience of America, for brotherhood and decency, and his leadership was indispensable to the embodiment of the Fourteenth Amendment in our Constitution. That Amendment, so little understood by most Americans, was the granite cornerstone that survived the subsequent demolition of the structure of equal rights and federally protected freedom that had been erected by the reconstruction Congress.

What is to the point here, and what almost all scholars who now debate the scope and role of "Black Studies" forget, is the significance of the simple fact that Thaddeus Stevens was not Black. Like John Brown of Harper's Ferry, Stevens was no

mere paternalist or philanthropist, he was moved by the perception that no American could be truly free unless all were.

Examples abound of other whites who served the common cause of justice to Blacks. In a review of Kornbluh's *Rebel Voices* (a documentary history of the IWW), in the *Negro History Bulletin*, the writer pointed out that "wobbly" leader Big Bill Haywood insisted that his radical labor organization be integrated, and deliberately violated Louisiana's segregation laws in holding meetings of lumber-workers, at the same time that Woodrow Wilson was segregating federal civil service workers. Dr. John Morsell of the NAACP, in the statement prepared for and published in the Hearing of March 18, 1968, pays deserved tribute (p. 43), to a non-political activist whose name and the scope of whose work are unknown to all but a handful of white Americans, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, chronicler of his regiment's transition from slavery to manhood in his still neglected masterpiece. *Army Life in a Black Regiment.* Higginson's role in the "women's liberation" struggle, forgotten now, was as worthy as his early abolitionism and his pioneering, turn-of-the-century anti-imperialism.

It should hardly be necessary to argue that it is essential for whites as well as Blacks to know about such men as Stevens, Haywood, and Higginson, to study their lives, careers, and the written records of their thought and work. They have been at best neglected and at worst, especially in such cases as that of Stevens and his contemporary, Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner, vilified and made the objects of ridicule and contempt. Such character assassination as they suffered was inflicted not so much to defame the dead as for the purpose of degrading the great causes for which they fought.

At the present juncture of our history, when it almost seems once more that the issues are in doubt, it is in the national interest that some way be found in which all adult Americans (including especially the teachers themselves, products and victims of the same mis-teaching as all their contemporaries) be informed of the true scope and character of past injustices. The efforts of decades of revision in race-relations history will be largely unrequited if the end-product is narrowed into the channel of belatedly telling some Blacks that their race has produced great men. Important as that is, it is insufficient.

To enrich the understanding and to quicken the consciences of white Americans it is likewise insufficient—although important—to make them aware that they are heirs to a common tradition that includes such Black geniuses as Douglass and DuBois. Whites must be instructed that such white men as Sumner and Stevens were giant contributors to the really valuable and rarely published American heritage of brotherhood. Likewise, Blacks who have been repelled by the racism and lawlessness (or the apathy) of much of white America, and driven by it into an extreme form of neo-separatism, need to learn about the good that there has been in the white American past if we are to have any hope for an integrated American future.

Unfortunately, there is the other side to the coin. One is forcibly reminded of it by the publication within the past two years of a new biography extolling the virtues and honoring the memory of President Andrew Johnson. The part played by Johnson in the defeat of a reconstruction based in interracial justice, and thus his guilty complicity in contributing to the giant burden of the present day, is now beyond fair debate. It has been delineated with care in such works as that of the Coxes, McKitrick, Brock, and Harold Hyman. Nevertheless the favorable image of the man graven in the hearts and minds of the masters of the white culture structure is well-nigh ineradicable.

The creation and perpetuation of the Andrew Johnson myth was not an act of abstract or antiquarian heroization. Its purpose has been to aid the evil aims to which Johnson contributed during his lifetime by almost every executive and administrative step during his presidency, and such political actions as combatting and inciting rejection of the Fourteenth Amendment. The myth must be understood for what it is if we are to shake off the albatross of White racism. A forthcoming study by a long time student of the Impeachment Trial of 1868 concludes that it is time to come to grips with the proposition that Andrew Johnson deserved to be impeached and that it was a great tragedy that he was not removed.

Such subjects deserve serious study as part of the wholesale revision of that comprehensive judgment upon our past that is embraced in the term "American history." The Hearing on the Scheuer/Scott bill contributes a significant impetus toward such revision, and properly and admirably so.

Yet there is nothing that one would ordinarily think of as "Afro-American" about Johnson's impeachment or the role of the IWW in labor history, or in the fact that most of the white co-founders of the NAACP were socialist followers of Eugene Victor Debs—a man who has become, in most American school histories, something of an unperson.

So also would one have difficulty including the story of the Scottsboro case within the catch-phrase, "contributions of Afro-Americans and their heritage to American history and culture." Yet a greater contemporary understanding of the issues in that notorious prosecution for an uncommitted rape would have alerted insensitive critics and historians to the evil effect of a recent work of fiction imputing (probably falsely) obsessions and fantasies of raping a young white girl to the leader of our most celebrated slave revolt. Comprehension of the historic role of the rape charge as an instrument for suppressing Black self-organization would have made less acceptable the excuse of artistic "license" to a sensational prize novel.

Little of what has been discussed falls within the innocuous and ingenuous formulation, "These are the missing pages," used by one consultant in Senate testimony in favor of the Bill. The missing pages concept lends itself solely to the name-and-numbers game: a sort of rummaging about for the identity of forgotten inventors, cowboys, and the like. That game succumbs sometimes to the temptation of exaggerating minor achievements, and that can be self-defeating when it goes so far that it is embarrassing to be caught.

The militant activism of Black student groups is useful in drawing more attention than a quiet hearing can to the issues, but the students' efforts will have been counterproductive if the result is as narrow and parochial as sometimes seems to be the case. As Long Island's *Newsday* pointed out, a number of white students who "expressed apathy" toward so-called Black studies courses "said they view them simply as an effort by school administrators to keep Black students quiet." What is needed is a concept of American studies that will arouse and inform not merely Blacks and whites, that will reach not merely students, but all adults, the mis-taught products of an educational system and materials that we now know to have been distorted and viciously unfair to our heritage.

It may be fitting to summarize this discussion with an apt statement from the article, "Racism in U.S. History: Unweaving the Threads," by Beatrice Young, Director of Educational Services for the Illinois Commission on Human Relations, and Ben Solomon, professor at Chicago Teachers College, published in the Winter/Spring 1968 *Changing Education*, organ of the American Federation of Teachers AFL-CIO:

> Afro-American history by itself does not rectify all the White-supremacist distortions of our history. Since White and Black were linked in the system of race relationships falsification of Black experience must necessarily include falsification of White experience.

The battle for justice to the Negro in our history is but part of the battle for justice to the whole truth in our history.

HOWARD N. MEYER

Rockville Centre, N.Y.