VOLUME XXIII, NO. 23
JUNE 10, 1970

MAKING THE FUTURE

IN 1959, long after the period he found so important in American history, Henry F. May published a book called *The End of American Innocence* (Quadrangle paperback, $2.65), in which he showed that the years from 1912 to 1917 were a time of troubling disillusionment for intelligent Americans. It was a time when men of manifest intellectual integrity wrestled with their own convictions and hopes for the future, wondering anxiously about the foundations of their faith. The onset of the first world war was an overwhelmingly ugly event that could not be fitted into any of their calculations. As Mr. May says in a closing chapter:

> Few Americans could grasp, and fewer still could admit, all that the outbreak of World War meant to them and their ideas. Frank H. Simonds, in the *New Republic*, came as close as any contemporary to seeing in 1914 the dimensions of the disaster. "Is it not a possibility," he asked, "that what is taking place marks quite as complete a bankruptcy of ideas, systems, society, as did the French Revolution? . . ."
>
> The nineteenth-century view of history as progress, accepted in one form or another by nearly all Americans, received a shattering blow. Perhaps the most important victim of war was practical idealism, that loosely formulated set of assumptions on which Americans had come to depend so heavily. After 1914 it became increasingly hard to argue that the essential morality of the universe could be shown in the daily course of events. Still more obviously challenged was the special prophetic vision of Social Christianity: the gradual dawn, here on earth, of the kingdom of peace and love.
>
> In the perspective of world catastrophe, nineteenth-century positivism and up-to-date social science seemed remarkably similar, in their fundamental assumptions, to liberal nineteenth-century religion. Everybody, from Charles W. Eliot to James Harvey Robinson, who had predicted the steady, successful application of scientific method to social problems, had some rethinking to do. Either this whole picture was mistaken or—a far more common conclusion in all camps—some particularly powerful, reactionary force had been overlooked. This left the question: what was such a force doing in the twentieth century?

What happened to questioning of this sort? The doubts, one could say, were divided up and allayed by various means. The revulsion toward war went into the pacifist movement and into revisionist scholarship among historians. For many intellectuals, Marx and Freud became the new prophets. The sensate taste and spiralling "prosperity" of the twenties—which ended in the economic debacle of 1929—helped to cover up the issues the war had raised, but raised, after all, as Mr. May makes clear, mainly for intellectuals, and the Great Depression precipitated new problems of practical immediacy. Actually, the war had also brought a general degradation of reason for all those who, however reluctantly, submitted to the persuasions of Woodrow Wilson that it had to be fought. Those whom Mr. May calls the "custodians of culture" needed help in reconciling themselves to this terrible war, and President Wilson gave it to them. In his wartime speeches "only the Germans and their sympathizers stood in the way of the millennial, world-wide triumph of American ideas." Support of that war, like the justifications of very nearly every modern war, produced vast emotional over-simplification, affecting leaders most Americans honored and admired:

> For the custodians of culture the primary issue was not American interests, not neutral rights, not even the rescue of England and France. The ideals they wanted to defend abroad were to them the same as those they had long been defending at home. England, France, and Belgium came to embody all that they had believed in, Germany and her apologists all that they hated and feared. Their whole view of life and history seemed to lead toward this conclusion. If the war was not caused by the special wickedness of Germany, it would have to be accounted for in more general terms. This would

> suggest that all nineteenth-century civilization must be a sham and a failure. . . . It was all too easy to lump together all kinds of loyalty on one side, and all kinds of skepticism on the other. The war provided outlets for angry emotions, already running high against scoffers and cynics, against moral, sexual, and racial insurrection.

Wilson's speech declaring war, which helped to forge this amalgam, won many supporters because its assumptions and purposes embodied "the country's conception of itself and of the world." Yet within ten years its most famous phrase, which asserted that the world must be made "safe for democracy," was often bitterly cited, as Mr. May remarks, "as an example of all that was facile and obsolete in the credo of Wilson's generation." Never thereafter, May thinks, could the same simple-minded faith be generated in Americans. "Even the New Deal," he says, "much more thorough in its innovations than prewar progressivism had ever been, suffered from a serious—in the long run, perhaps a disastrous—lack of ideology." And the general belief in "progress as the direction of history" went into irreversible decline.

Henry May calls his study of the war years early in this century "The End of American Innocence." We have reviewed his judgments and contentions for the reason that an equally skillful writer, Peter Schrag, in a moving contribution to the *Saturday Review* for May 9, now finds that American Innocence has been lost again. Speaking for a later generation of Americans, especially the ones who came here to escape the cruel political tyranny which overtook Europe in 1940, Mr. Schrag writes of the bewilderments overtaking immigrants who had "embraced ideas, traditions, loyalties that other Americans took for granted." What is it, now, to be an "American"? What is the heart of the matter? The displacement of this question caused by war brings no lasting solution, and America, although still a haven, is ceasing to be a *home:*

> The war itself was the greatest of our causes—not just for those who had escaped Hitler, but for most of the Americans whom I came to know during those years. None of us knew then that it was to be the last of the great causes and that the war itself represented not rectification and restoration but the beginning of an age that had to learn to take irony for granted. The great crusade turned into the cold war and the threat of nuclear destruction—the permanence, that is, of change and annihilation. The assassinations of John F. Kennedy and Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the failures of integration and the New Frontier, the war in Asia and its measured yet distinct steps of escalation—all these things came to be . . . reminders of a past when I was not yet an American; reminders not of other identities, but of moments when identities and ideas were driven into exile. . . .
>
> Now we discover that here, too, there was fraud and deception, that Nuremberg may not have been justice but vengeance, and that the high ideals we wanted so much to profess existed alongside the most blatant racism and the most brutal kinds of human degradation. It was Americans who found the bones—and it will be to the nation's everlasting credit that they did—and it is Americans who are trying to rectify the injustices and compensate the victims. *We* discovered Mylai, and it was our kids who tried to stop the war, to fight discrimination, and to battle the hunger and poverty of others. But the bones exist nonetheless, and the claims are still unpaid.

This is a poignant voice. Mr. Schrag's account seems pretty complete in its detail of present contradictions and weak, pretended solutions, coming to the conclusion that we are "a nation of strangely apprehensive people who are offered everything but a sense of continuity and a hopeful future." He adds his own sense of the innocence that has been lost:

> . . . there was, without a doubt, a time when we believed that the future was with the nation, when we did not speak about the silent majority but rather about the common people, and when being outside was supposed to be a temporary condition, something that would be solved by mobility, opportunity, or integration. A generation ago, America still seemed unique in this respect; we regarded our discontinuities as signs of progress: Other things being equal, change was always for the better. This is what distinguished us not only from Europe but from most traditional societies where tomorrow was inevitably like today and where the shocks of time were generally catastrophic. Everywhere but here history was the enemy of man. This is what made America simultaneously so attractive and so infuriating to

those Europeans who understood the innocence of our idealism.

> As a nation, we seemed to control our history and destiny, and it is this that we have lost. We have become a country of outsiders precisely because the world—at home and everywhere else—seems no longer manageable. . . . We had all been believers, believers in ourselves and hence in the future. But events have driven a barrier between the past and the present, and we are now all refugees in our own country.

What can anyone say to this? One ought to ask, of course, if it is really "events" that have brought this about, or the way we looked at them. The present disenchantment is certainly deeper than that which confronted the decent men who decided that they *had* to support vigorous prosecution of the first world war, and except for the most primitive-minded men the blaming of our predicament on scapegoats is hardly possible. It is not so easy, now, to brush away the diagnosis given in 1914, "that what is taking place [is] a bankruptcy of ideas, systems, society. . . ."

The very fury of the search for alternatives, and at the same time the shallow character of much of the criticism of those who are searching, is evidence of the depth of disorder, which increasingly involves ultimate questions of identity and meaning. Quite possibly, the events which Mr. Schrag finds so formidable are but objectifications, inevitable effects of the general failure to deal with these questions either adequately or honestly, over a long period of time. One thing is certain: the "loss of innocence" is now felt by many, many more people than were affected in this way by the disillusionments of World War I. The decline in faith described by Mr. May then had its influence mainly among the intelligentsia, and probably diluted the quality of the leadership of the American people as a result, but the full impact of what happened in the first half of the twentieth century, and is still happening, becomes evident in what are now spoken of as the Generation Gap and the Credibility Gap. The activities, claims, and exhortations of present-day official leaders arouse no confidence at all, and the feeling of being "invaded," in Mr. Schrag's sense, is widespread. As he says in his concluding paragraphs:

> Now the bulldozers of modernization invade the neighborhood like tanks, the high-rise replaces the brownstones, the supermarket drives out the corner store, the cotton picker and the automatic machine uproot, divide, and transform. Men are driven from their places; we have evicted ourselves.
>
> Perhaps it can all be restored, perhaps there will be new crusades that can enlist volunteers of high ideals perhaps even "the environment" will be more than an artificial campaign to make things look good, to deodorize the john and purify the water. For the moment it looks desperately doubtful.
>
> The ravages in Vietnam suggest that our passion for the air and the earth may be more proprietary than humane, and our tolerance of poverty and hunger, foreign and domestic, is hardly a sign of hope.

Can it be that Americans have used up their credit with history? That the power we are in the habit of using, and once thought we used so well, can no longer accomplish what we expect? That history as well as nature has a way of rejecting those who try to exploit its processes? Nature now answers back to those who try to take her riches without attention to the reciprocities that are involved.

These are not, let us note, questions to which either political leaders or the designers of socio-economic systems are willing to attend. They represent largely neglected areas of thought, having much to do with those feelings of "identity" which Mr. Schrag tells us are being driven into exile both here and everywhere else in the world.

It is extremely difficult, in the shadow of formidable social structures pressing upon us from the past, to speak persuasively of the fragile presences, hardly yet born, from which a better future may come. Yet such presences exist. There is a fine line of hope in not yet articulate vision that now finds expression more easily in metaphors than argument. There is a definite and slowly emerging change in the allegiances of

human beings, an alteration in the tastes and spontaneous longings of the young. When the buttons which used to work are pressed, fewer and fewer of the young respond. Many of them, like Ray Mungo, are off somewhere "in search of the New Age." At the same time, the makings of a new philosophy of human identity are in the air and being put to work with the same ardor that people lost in a desert look for oases. The anti-war movement, for all its confusions, keeps on getting stronger and stronger. A new theory of knowledge, based directly on the moral nature of man, is acquiring champions and adherents.

In short, the positive human energies which will combine. eventually, to shape the future, are simply not in the old bad habits that are today producing so much horror and despair. Those habits have little if any trace of the original belief and invention which first formed them. They will soon be only *shells,* rigid and still externally impressive, but increasingly mindless and empty, and exceedingly brittle, as is usually the case with dead forms.

Saying "No" to death often becomes a way of saying "Yes" to life, and it has long been evident to veteran workers in the peace movement that men who finally make the decision to have nothing to do with the processes of war tend to show a natural inclination for choices on the side of life in everything they do. What they give up in decisions of this sort no longer seems a "sacrifice," but the natural result of having new objectives. Meanwhile, compulsion as the means to social order has less and less reality for them. Desirable order is recognized as the spontaneous harmony established by skill in voluntary behavior, rooted in the motivation of individuals who share a common vision.

As time goes on, with the multiplication of such people, the mass social institutions which now exercise a dehumanizing influence are no longer seen as either "real" or "necessary." Ingenious and determined individuals bypass them, while others merely endure them, and the talented and conscientious refuse to administer them. Eventually, such institutions lose practically all their moral significance, becoming, at last, only vestigial organs of a society which has outgrown both their meaning and their need.

Already the United States is the scene of numerous, small voluntary groups intent upon devising new and better ways of living. These groups are partly the result of disillusionment, and they have broken away entirely from the guidance and instruction of present-day "custodians of culture." On the other hand, there is no convenient scapegoat or "enemy" to attract their energies into an organized repressive effort such as war. They know that the ills of the present must be accounted for "in more general terms," and this points directly toward individual effort and uncoerced reform. Actually, we may be witnessing the beginning of a mass psychological discovery that what men do of their own will, spurred by their own dreams, and controlled by their own sense of responsibility is indeed the means to lasting goodness in human life, for both individuals and for the social order.

A realization of this sort is bound to have widely diverse effects, basically resistant to all efforts to "organize" the action to which it leads, and at first so vague in outline as to be practically inaccessible to definition. One of its immediate effects should be the tendency of men to make more space for independent action within existing institutions. Simply because institutions are really crude affairs, blindly mechanistic or legalistic in operation when the subjective flexibilities of the men connected with them are ignored, they can nearly all be turned to fresh purposes by ingenious people. Both the history of law and the history of technology are filled with imaginative deviations from the confinements of conventional institutions. For an example in education, there was the conversion of the obsolete headquarters of a Chicago bakery chain into the finest, most stimulating, and productive design school of the middle years of this century. This was

accomplished by a small group of artists who were practically without money but whose heads were filled with ideas and the resolve to carry them out. And as Ralph Borsodi pointed out years ago, a simple change of interest and direction could turn the enormous resourcefulness of American engineers away from their obsession with "bigness" and toward discovery of even technical advantages in small production units, which would help to reduce the dehumanizing concentration of economic function and power, and labor force, in the cities, which now makes most of the great urban centers of the land practically unlivable places. Once sound tendencies of this sort get under way, many institutions which are too rigid to adapt to authentic human purposes will pass out of existence from lack of nourishment, while others may be destroyed by the rage of impatient men. Already the preliminary subjective processes of far-reaching change are in irreversible acceleration. Their constructive promise is not on the surface of events because it lies hidden in individual reorientation, and redirection of purpose and intentions, with many men still uncertain about what, actually, to do. But it is these qualities that must eventually gain coherence, find forms of action, and make the future. There is nothing else of which it can be made.

REVIEW
PATHWAYS TO SELF-KNOWLEDGE

HEGEL'S mournful aphorism, freely rendered—"The owl of Minerva does not rise until the sun of empire sets"—seems very much confirmed by current events. There may be a less pessimistic way of describing the circumstances which typically attend the birth of wisdom, but the modern obsession with the affairs of great States makes such truths seem inevitably gloomy.

There are those, of course, who identify truth with impressive national being. They would argue that any wisdom born in times of massive political decline would tell us plainly how to cope with the ills of power—how, that is, to regain it. But what if the only wise way to cope with such ills is to abandon power itself?

It may be objected that a "wisdom" no one or only few will listen to has small utility. The objection has undeniable weight. That is, no wise man persuaded of this view has yet been able to discover an acceptable reply to it. Take for example the Socratic version of the rejection of power, as found in the *Gorgias*, where Socrates endeavors to defend the proposition, "It is better to suffer wrong than to do wrong." Discussing the implications of this claim, Hannah Arendt remarks:

> To the philosopher or rather, to man, insofar as he is a thinking being—this ethical proposition about doing and suffering wrong is no less compelling than mathematical truth. But to man insofar as he is citizen, an acting being concerned with the world and the public welfare rather than with his own well-being—including for instance his "immortal soul" whose "health" should have precedence over the needs of a perishable body—the Socratic statement is not true at all.

Well, "wisdom" is of more than one sort, or may be conceived as exercising persuasion at various levels. There is for example a view of the world, of nature and human affairs, which might *imply* support of the Socratic proposition yet not declare it.

Something like this might be claimed for certain lines of recent intellectual development. Holistic conviction and a growing recognition of the interrelation and interdependence of all life are keynotes of this development, which has not only a deeply intuitive ground, but can also be seen as a rigorously reasoned conclusion resulting from the evolution of Western ideas about "reality." The old certainties about "scientific law" and the "objective universe" have been rapidly melting away in recent years. The whole question of the "practical" is now in flux, so far as leading thinkers are concerned, although the old definitions still dominate in the world of political and economic affairs. Indeed, the insistence of "practical" men on applying these old definitions seems at the root of the self-destructive tendencies of the times.

But let us look at some of this "new" thinking. There is for example the following from C. F. von Weizsäcker, contemporary physicist and philosopher of science (in his book, *The History of Nature*):

> Objectifying knowledge is self-oblivious. In the act of knowing I come to know the object, but I do not at the same time come to know the subject. The eye does not see itself, the spotlight stands in the dark. If I am to see myself, a special, new act, a reflection of the light upon myself is needed.

Looking at ourselves, he says, we discover both body and soul. Soul may be conceived as the means of seeing—looking both out and in. The soul makes us aware of both the physical and the psychic "I." One can examine the psychic "I" as though it were an object, which is the practice of psychology. But there remains the subject who pursues this study, and, as von Weizsäcker says—

> I can reflect upon this subject, not as I know it through psychic experience, but as the logical prerequisite that makes knowledge at all possible. I can practice transcendental philosophy like Kant and the idealists. The transcendental "I" has been discovered.
>
> But transcendental philosophy may be asked the question that Kierkegaard raised against Hegel:

> "Where do you stand, you, a man who like a god philosophizes about the absolute? You measure existence by the standards of your thoughts. Before one can think, one must first exist. What are the standards by which your existence is measured?" The existential "I" has been re-discovered.
>
> Here I stop. . . . Every new step reveals that all preceding steps have told of man only what is not essential. And yet he feels that in each step the essence of man was implied. This is the feeling I want to convey with the identification of subject and object. The physical, the psychic, the transcendental and the existential "I" are not four different things, they are only signposts on four different roads that I may follow to reach myself.

The *intellectual* formulation of each of these steps of discovery, taken by itself, has a seeming completeness, and was so regarded during long periods of history. Interaction with experience is apparently the only way of discovering incompleteness, of being forced to look further. In the passage we have quoted, for example, no *ethical* dimension is specifically referred to, yet ethical longing surely calls out more clearly in Kierkegaard's question than as a consequence of the other discoveries.

One might say that carefully thought-out intellectual conclusions concerning subtle realities of cognition and knowing invite but do not compel ethical vision; there is, after all, *some* correlation between intellectual ability and what we call character. Yet the passage to ethical insight from an advanced intellectual position is a step that has to be taken; it is *not* automatic.

Another briefly effective summary of the outlook of leading thinkers is given by Don Fabun in *The Dynamics of Change* (Prentice-Hall, 1967). After characterizing past cycles of development as the Age of Reason, the Age of Science, the Age of Relativism, he speaks of the present as the Age of Unity:

> Having discovered that I cannot separate what I observe from my own act of observation, I begin to study my own way of observing. When I do this I find that my observation does not consist solely of what goes on in my brain, but that my total organism, with all of its history, is also engaged. I discover that my most clever formulations take their origin and significance from an immediacy of felt contact, of fusion and oneness with what is going on, beyond the dimensional limits of symbols, and without the distinction between the self and the non-self. Out of this knowledge comes an awareness of my inter-relatedness with everything, from blind cosmic energy to fellow human beings, the old, verbal distinctions between art and science and religion disappear—becoming an overall oneness of experience.

It is against the background of such emerging views that the new and very practical demands for ecological morality are being made, even though the precipitating causes are present and imminent environmental disasters.

The sudden enthusiasm for responsibility in ecological relationships is certainly all to the good, and obviously consistent with the new thinking, yet there is a missing factor, spoken of long ago by Aldo Leopold, by Joseph Wood Krutch, and, as a man we are about to quote on this subject notes, by Albert Schweitzer. It is the factor of warmhearted reverence for life, as Schweitzer called it, of love of the land, in Leopold's words, and of spontaneous regard for natural beauty and wonder, as Krutch remarked in his essay on conservation. This factor *needs* philosophical exposition, even metaphysical acceptance, in order that its implications may be recognized as both moral verities and practical necessities of the times.

In an article, "Why Worry About Nature?", in the *Saturday Review* of Dec. 2, 1967, Richard L. Means writes of this missing factor in a way that deserves repeated attention. The need for a more universal ethics, grounded in all nature, is his theme. He begins with this quotation from Schweitzer: "The great fault of all ethics hitherto has been that they believed themselves to have to deal only with the relation of man to man." Having noticed the consistent neglect by modern moralists of man's responsibility to nature and other forms of life, Mr. Means turns to Eric Hoffer's contention that it is a mistake to

"romanticize" nature when so much of man's life is a contest with nature, saying:

> Hoffer seems to neglect the possibility that man's cooperation in the subjection of nature need not be conceptualized simply on the basis of brute force. Physical work, mechanical and otherwise—from the labor of the Chinese masses to the works of a sophisticated high-tower steeple-jack—depends on the intrusion of human ideas into the natural world. Aided by machines, cranes, bulldozers, factories, transportation systems, computers, and laboratories, man does force nature's hand. This does not, however, force us to an acceptance of metaphysical materialism, the naive belief that matter and physical force are the only realities. The power of ideas, of values, provides the presuppositions which in the first place create a particular web of human interaction between nature and man. The power of the contemplative idea, the chain of speculative reason, the mathematician's art, and the philosopher's dreams must also be considered. If this point of view is accepted, then the question of man's relation to nature is a much more crucial issue than Eric Hoffer seems to suggest.

Mr. Means's closing paragraphs have matter which relates naturally to the holistic view of the world:

> Why do almost all of our wisest and most exciting social critics meticulously avoid the moral implications of this issue? Perhaps, in the name of political realism, it is easy to fear the charge that one anthropomorphizes or spiritualizes nature. On the other hand, the refusal to connect the human spirit to nature may reflect the traditional thought pattern of Western society wherein nature is conceived to be a separate substance—a material—mechanical, and, in a metaphysical sense, irrelevant to man.
>
> It seems to me much more fruitful to think of nature as part of a system of human organization—as a variable, a changing condition—which interacts with man and culture. If nature is so perceived, then a love, a sense of awe, and a feeling of empathy with nature need not degenerate into a subjective, emotional bid for romantic individualism. On the contrary, such a view should help destroy egoistic, status politics, for it helps unmask the fact that other men's activities are not just private, inconsequential, and limited in themselves; their acts, mediated through changes in nature, affect my life, my children, and the generations to come. In this sense, justification of a technological arrogance toward nature on the basis of dividends and profits is not just bad economics—it is basically an immoral act. And our contemporary moral crisis, then, goes much deeper than questions of political power and law or urban riots and slums. It may, at least in part, reflect American society's almost utter disregard for the value of nature.

COMMENTARY
PHILOSOPHY AND SCIENCE

IF philosophy is a practical pursuit, its first task must be to establish the boundary conditions for enduring change in the conceptual framework (see Frontiers) and seeking to improve it. Philosophy is the discipline involved in reliable knowing. But this is the claim made for science. How, then, does philosophy differ from science?

First, there are various sciences. Science is the formulation of what are presumed to be certainties about nature, and since there are various sciences it is obvious that a given science examines some parts of nature but not others. The conceptual framework of a science is made of assumptions and stipulations that have been found to *apply* to the part of nature it examines. The practice of a science, therefore, excludes two activities. It excludes examination of areas of nature where its conceptual framework is not expected to apply, and it excludes self-examination—of, that is, the conceptual framework. As von Weizsäcker says: "In the act of knowing I come to know the object, but I do not at the same time come to know the subject." A science in frustration and dilemma may reach out beyond itself, but then, we may say, that science experiences some of the birth-pains of philosophy and may even go through an identity-crisis. It suffers extreme insecurity until a new conceptual framework is established.

Philosophy accepts the phenomena of self-examination and continuous alteration of the conceptual framework as its natural condition and endeavor. Not getting rid of dilemma and contradiction, but learning to live with them, as the means of growth, is the business of philosophy. What is traumatic for science is the lifeblood of philosophy. Philosophy as the art of continual self-reference is thus the healer of the troubles of science and the monitor of its aspirations. Without philosophy, science soon becomes guilty of *hubris.*

What, then, is the field of experience in which are found the data of philosophy? It is the learning and knowing process in man, involving study of the formation of conceptual frameworks, which become the language and limiting conditions of all that we know. Actually, the tension which almost always exists between the conceptual framework of the individual and that of "society" may be a special case of the tension between philosophy and science, since science, being what we call "public truth," is in some sense an expression of "consensus." Or, vice versa, the tension between science and philosophy is a special case of the tension between the society and the individual.

Where shall be found rules for resolving this tension? This is almost the same as asking what are the rules for progress in philosophy. The appropriate rules are self-evident. They are spoken of in this week's Frontiers. They form the substance and fruit of Plato's dialogues. They arise from reflection on the nature of man, illuminating the Socratic contention that Knowledge is Virtue.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THE EDUCATIONAL PRAXIS

THE demand for "relevance," so often heard in student criticisms of education at every level, has obvious validity. What is relevant speaks to one's condition, and it is clear enough that present-day education speaks to some past or hypothetical condition of students which does not exist. Yet the programs devised by students themselves for the "free universities" are often less than inspiring. So, filling in the meaning of "relevance" is a task yet to be adequately performed. Various observations by Robert Oliver, in a series of contributions to Columbia Teachers College *Record*, bear on this question. Problems of "relevance," he shows, have long existed beneath the surface of the ambitious public schooling projects carried on in the United States. In the March, 1969, *Record*, Mr. Oliver wrote:

> There is a serious ambiguity in the idea of universal education: its proponents are not clear whether mass schooling should suppress or cultivate the inner man. This ambiguity stems from the nineteenth-century school reformers: they knew that by "common school" they did not mean an ordinary, undistinguished school; but they were not clear whether they meant a school that would teach a common, a shared body of knowledge *to all,* or a school that would offer a common, an equal initiation to the art of self-culture *to each.* When confronted with pressing public issues, the easy course is to look to the schools as a means of paternally imposing a solution to the problem on our progeny: if only all get adequate driver education, vocational training, contact with those of other races and creeds, indoctrination to the American way of life, or what have you, it would seem as if many problems would happily disappear. With Horace Mann if not before, it became customary to see the public schools as a powerful agent of social engineering; the schools could constrain the disruptive, improve the safety of street and home, increase productivity, and spread a sense of patriotic service.
>
> All might be well if schooling for these public ends coincided with the education of each inner man; but in fact, it does not. Consequently, to the degree that the reigning powers manage to harness the schools to the direct pursuit of their public policies, they divert teachers and students from their true public service, the cultivation of the private, inner response. In this way, we jeopardize the future foundation of the public. The fruits of this practice are visible in the way a resentful anomie is spreading among youths, and the most promising antidote to it is the movement towards what has been misnamed as "local control," but what is in truth the client control that has long characterized the practice of medicine and law. This movement may be the harbinger of a renewed appreciation of privacy and its public uses.
>
> At any rate, the prospects of privacy will always seem bleaker than they probably are, for the prospects are—as prospects—presently private and hidden from view. Let us hope with Nietzsche that inwardly people realize that "to let oneself be determined by one's environment is decadent."

But is the present cry for "relevance" an insistence that education return or turn to stirring "private, inner response"? In general, it seems rather an attempt by the students to use the universities and schools, not for better education, but as a means of *getting at* the government, in an effort to make the government change its policies. They do this, we may think, because the schools are accessible to students while the government is not. The policies of the government may be bad. Some of them certainly are. And many schools and colleges, being controlled or answerable politically, have become in large degree instruments of government. The complaint of the students, then, seems to come down to the claim that the public ends and policies which the schools reflect are mistaken and harmful and should be changed to *other* ends—ends which students and many others regard as "relevant."

But there remains the question of whether the schools are properly regarded as policy-shaping and policy-teaching institutions. Mr. Oliver thinks they are both less and more than this. He says in the February, 1969, *Record:*

> Men must deal not only with the problems around them; they must deal with a succession of problems as these stretch over time. Life is a matter of endurance; this fact does not let us off the hook of a single immediate issue, but it does add another dimension to our efforts to cope with the world. In an historical sweep, a temporal specter rises before the practical life—the specter of ignorance. A people can destroy itself by being unable to solve a minor matter, having previously expended its

> powers without cultivating adequate replacements. This deficiency of disciplined ability is ignorance, and its absurdities are the very stuff of history. The threat of ignorance should make us cautious of proposals to enlist educational institutions in all-out efforts to solve issues here and now. The educator, whether teacher or student, is responsible not only to the present, but to the future as well.

The reform and restoration of the schools may be rendered completely impossible by replacing Establishment *ad hocs* with reformist or revolutionary *ad hocs,* in the name of "relevance." The business of the schools is the preparation of the young to weigh and choose among the *ad hocs* with which the times—any times—will require them to deal. The educational revolution, then, is not a matter of choosing improved *ad hocs,* but of removing the ambiguity from the idea of a general education, so that teaching cannot be forced into propaganda functions, either for or against the *status quo.*

Mr. Oliver says of the high meaning of the educational discipline, which he calls "pedagogical praxis":

> In a fuller sense, it is the systematic effort that each man can make to form his personal character to cultivate his intellect and emotions, to choose personally and freely to stand for particular values in the course of a life mysteriously given to him. We are in the midst of an educational revolution in which the education traditionally open only to the gentleman is being demanded as the prerogative of all. To remind ourselves of precisely what this education is, let us turn to the words of a great gentleman, Montaigne. "Bees pillage the flowers here and there, but they make honey of them which is all their own; it is no longer thyme and marjoram; so the fragments borrowed from others the student will transform and blend together to make a work that shall be absolutely his own; that is to say, his judgment. His education, his labor and study aim only at forming that."
>
> Efforts to encourage all men to transform the fragments they encounter into independent, personal patterns of judgment have merely begun. Most schooling entails only training, and popularization usually aims to preclude rather than provoke personal judgment.

This gaining of the capacity for independent judgment is surely the chief aim of education, and nothing could be more "relevant." Yet, as Mr. Oliver says, its pursuit has only begun; the energy that might have gone into furthering this aim has been dissipated by the ambiguities referred to earlier, and by less excusable diversions. Yet if "relevance" now means using the schools and universities as bases from which to prevent certain public men from doing the bad things they are doing, and for launching certain national policies—policies that, indeed, *ought* to be launched—then will education as "pedagogical praxis" have almost ceased. It will have only a righteous propaganda function, although now pursued quite openly, instead of deceitfully and pretentiously, as in the past. Already, says Mr. Oliver—

> On many campuses, quiet scholars find themselves the objects of vocal scorn. The will weighs reason down, and the urge to act possesses the humble thinker. The temper of the time shows itself as Goethe's dictum—"to act is easy; to think is hard"—appears frequently transposed in student essays—"to think is easy, to act is hard." Thus we instinctively denigrate fine intellection and rush, not to judgment, but to commitment, for we feel that the way to mastery lies in the triumph of the will.

Then, his conclusion:

> From every quarter, one hears that ours is a time of crisis and that we must devote all our energies to solving our palpable difficulties *now* or else they will destroy us. This reasoning puts such a premium on perfecting technical praxis that concern for pedagogical praxis seems to be an improper luxury. Little hope can at first be found for solving immediate issues with a set of indirect means for shaping the community through the aggregate of our individual efforts to form our own characters. Hence, our pedagogical mission seems frivolous, and we turn away from it to one of the many perils impinging on us. But the very diversity of these finalities should make us pause. Each different doomsdayer is driven to frenzy by a different problem, ranging from the conservationists' paradoxical outcries against the pollution of streams and the purification of swamps to the familiar standbys of race, war, population, and nuclear armageddon. Without forgetting for a moment the seriousness and merit of these causes, let us be equally sure not to forget the temporal specter: ignorance is always ready to ravage the exhausted victors.

FRONTIERS

Academic Freedom and Revolution

THAT different ideas, attitudes, ideologies, or even political parties should have equality of representation on college campuses is apparently what some people mean by academic freedom. But one could have all this without academic freedom. A collection of parrots might give equal representation to a great diversity of opinions. Surely academic freedom is not merely freedom from constraint but has something to do with the way ideas are conceived and pursued. The flat earth people are not being restrained. Academic freedom is fundamentally the freedom of the mind to think to its fullest capacity. I wish to indicate what I believe to be some of the conditions for its existence.

Freedom to think is in the first place freedom "to follow the argument wherever it goes." This is the opposite of leading the argument where one wants to take it. Following the argument depends in part on an individual's virtues. If he lacks intelligence, imagination, initiative, honesty, courage, his judgment is limited. Freedom to think also involves willingness to thrash things out with others. Here persistence and honesty are more important than politeness. But perhaps the most essential component of freedom of thought is the power to reflect on presuppositions or assumptions. This sort of reflection touches on areas of great sensitivity. One has only to think of Copernicus and Galileo. For many of their contemporaries they turned the universe inside out, reversing values as well. In the general controversy of which this was a part the rack and the stake as well as argument were used as instruments of persuasion. When we look back on such a period of revolution we tend to forget its internal tragedies.

There are subtler kinds of intellectual revolution. Kant had his own "Copernican revolution," holding that "reason has insight only into that which it produces after a plan of its own," which is a reversal of the position that reason is a function of nature. A consequence of Kant's position was that empiricism, the thesis that all knowledge depends on experience, cannot itself be established on the basis of experience. This was a revolution in conceptual framework rather than in theory. Even the most general theories have some connection with observation. A conceptual framework, on the other hand, does not have this tie. It is rather the background in relation to which hypotheses and theories come to be stated. A conceptual framework is neither the work of a purely formal science, such as logic, nor of an empirical science. It comes within the area peculiar to philosophy. Philosophy has provided numerous conceptual frameworks, some of which have had a marked effect on other areas of thought. One might also wish to say that these frameworks have been developed against a background even more general, which may in turn be subject to modification. It is when conceptual revolutions, whether in framework or theory, are related to drastic changes in the conception of values—as was the case with the theory of evolution—that serious crises develop affecting all areas of human life.

The freedom of the mind which makes possible the great revolutions in thought is the core of what I should like to call academic freedom. To say that there is no academic freedom is to say that this kind of freedom of thought is stifled. To say that there is academic freedom is to say that this kind of freedom of thought is a real possibility. In this context the task of a liberal education is to bring about an understanding of these revolutions, to catch thought, so to speak, in its creative moments. Great talent is required for teaching the history of ideas in a way that brings about this understanding. A history of the dead past, that is to say of a past never considered in its birth, is not a history from which we can learn. The point about freedom of thought is not novelty, but rather freshness, spontaneity. It may very well be that we should go back to certain old ideas, but

then we should rethink them in terms that are meaningful to us. Great works are always in need of new translations. The history of thought involves a constant struggle between the letter and the spirit. If we do not engage in this struggle we are most likely to miss the spirit of the present. However it is one thing to say this, another to live it in the actual judgments circumstances require of us.

All around us there are signs of a revolution in thought and spirit. There is a revolt with respect to the relationship between morality and the practice of science. Some scientists are very much concerned about the moral implications of their research. Even the theoretical barrier between science and value is breaking down. The fairly recent positivistic claim that moral judgments are absurd shows signs of being replaced, philosophically at least, by a view that there are moral reasons. The contemporary conceptual framework appears to be growing to accommodate value. Many are familiar with this sort of development in other areas, for example the evolution of the concept of number, which at first did not have room for zero, fractions, irrationals, etc. Positivism was not just a philosophic but a social phenomenon. It had among its reactions the existentialist concept of the absurd, familiar to many in the theater and literature of the absurd and the corresponding quality of life. Sartre said in reference to Camus' *The Stranger* that the absurd man has "the divine irresponsibility of the condemned man." The somewhat underground social revolt against materialism is also obvious. Its connection with the Hippie movement makes some delicate people shudder. But is it reasonable to expect that all value changes be introduced by committees? The God-is-dead movement others find equally shocking; on the other hand many find in it a sign of the vitality of religion, religion being more profound than creeds. The anti-war and the anti-racist movements have clearly long ago rejected the part of being small voices in the wilderness. That we may be in the throes of a great spiritual revolution is a possibility we should not overlook. It could be an even greater threat to the profit motive than Karl Marx, and no doubt, if it occurs many will call it a conspiracy.

We should be prepared for greater changes in our conceptual frameworks than perhaps any we have known of in the past. When I say "we" I do not wish to exclude anyone, but I have in mind particularly our colleges and universities, which have been and still can be centers of light. A special difficulty of the present—one might almost say an opportunity—is the conflict within academic communities themselves, which cuts across faculty, student, and in some cases even administration lines. In my opinion the despairing character of this conflict has its source not only in a deficiency of the required virtues but also in a failure of the historical sense, what I referred to as a confusion of letter and spirit. To say that objections to established methods and values must first be stated in positive terms before they can be acknowledged is to forget the struggle with which ideas are born, is to forget Socrates. This demand is but another way of denying history. If objections can be programmed, then they and their answers are ready for the filing cabinet. This is a time for a great effort of understanding, also for a great willingness for self-criticism—although not self-criticism of the sort represented by "I shall not criticize myself unless you criticize yourself," for this is one of the seeds of war. And especially it is a time for great patience toward public misunderstanding.

ROBERT REIN'L

Tempe, Arizona