

THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT

MAN is a whole-maker. Whether he constructs a unified field theory, fabricates a house to shelter his family, erects a protective wall around his holdings, or wonderingly questions the stars for the meaning of his life, he is intent upon making wholes. He may seek help or he may try to do it alone. He may ritualize the weakness of his attempts to avoid facing the threat of collapse. He may lean on tradition, indoctrinating his children in the duties it recommends to preserve the forms of failing social unity; or, recognizing the uselessness of such programs, he may in desperation cast himself as a destroying angel, determined to cleanse the world of ancient wrong, to get it ready for some mythic wholeness he believes in. The possibilities are endless, but whatever he does, his action always has either an evident or an obscure relation to a longed-for harmony, some vision of a whole.

William Blake must have meant something like this when he proclaimed that all the gods are within. There is a Brahma, a Vishnu, a Siva in every one of us. Not an act of man but reflects some aspect of either creating, preserving, or destroying—destroying with the intent of making all things new. When a physiologist, contemplating the subtle regulatory functions of the human body—or any organism—exclaims at the wonder of homeostasis, asserting this to be the principle of health and longevity, he announces the worship of Vishnu, the god of orderly enduring. Then, along comes someone, perhaps a psychologist, who has noticed that the best of physical organisms sometimes contributes almost nothing to the excellence of human life. This man may also point to the fact that homeostatic perfectionism can result in closed-system thinking. A man is not much of a man, he may say, unless he is able to welcome or invite the unstable equilibrium of growth. A human system must

always be dying a little, somewhere, with new possibilities emerging. Cabbages and amoebae do very nicely under the homeostatic rule, but what ate all our curious complexities *for* if uneventful organic survival sums up the fulfillment we are after?

Meanwhile, some of the most cunningly devised complexities on which we habitually depend, often ignoring their existence, may be destroyed by an indiscriminate wrath which attacks other systems because they have developed into ugly excrescences. So schools and libraries suffer along with less innocent institutions at the hands of angry purifiers and righteous haters. There are even men who, indifferent to the life-necessity of regeneration, see all social structure as evidence of social crime. Any sort of homeostatic balance is identified by them as a lying façade, a front for tyranny and imposition. "They," as Kenneth Keniston put it, "are philosophers with hammers, their favorite theoretical occupation is destruction, reduction, pointing out inconsistencies, chicaneries, hypocrisies, and rationalizations—whatever, in others or in themselves."

Well, this sort of thing is all too familiar. It has partial explanation, today, in the general weakening of the common beliefs of Western civilization, in combination with growing distrust of the quickie improvisations prepared by small-minded men to maintain the crumbling authority of the status quo. This is an age of cracks, leaks, and seeps, of ominous evidence that the healthy "optimism" of only one or two generations ago is no longer possible for anyone. An anxious questioning takes many forms, but its basic meaning is perhaps: Can men any longer live comfortably in arrangements designed and constructed for them by others? Can *any* authorities be relied upon?

It is certainly true that some people are better than others at whole-making, but, speaking socially,—and psychologically,—there seems to be a built-in and growing resistance in most human beings to the ready-to-wear ideas of yesterday's ideologists. Modern political systems founder on some aspect of the conflict between the do-it-yourself impulse, stronger every day, and the plans and projects of specialists who devote their lives to researching the pragmatic necessities of the social whole. These specialists are forever mistaking variables for constants, and vice versa. The resulting breakdown of faith often shows first in the arts, where, on the whole, we think we can afford it, since the old systems of social order hardly took the arts seriously. Alfred Alvarez wrote two years ago, summarizing the symptoms:

With no firm area of common belief or agreement, styles come and go like neon signs. . . . The machinery of communications and publicity is now so efficient that we go through styles in the arts as quickly as we go through socks; so quickly, in fact, that there seem no longer any real styles at all. Instead there are fashions, idiosyncrasies, group mannerisms and obsessions. But these are different from genuine style, which in the past has always been an expression of a certain fundamental coherence, . . .

The "generation gap," no doubt, is largely created by the difference between one generation's attitude toward a once "firm area of common belief or agreement" and the very different attitude of younger people who were growing to maturity while that area was rapidly losing its firmness and coherence.

What, actually, is now missing in the psychosocial environment? Missing, it seems clear, is the confident sense of reality concerning the nature of the world out there, the self within, and the relations between the two, on which familiar ideas of goal, obligation, duty, and responsibility are based. When this confidence goes, feelings of discontinuity afflict the whole-making activities of human beings. Every sort of moral intention becomes open to challenge and questioning. A society which has the *habitus* of this sort of questioning has nothing to fear from its

intensification, but a society used to being managed by purveyors of "belief" finds itself in irremediable trouble. And when parents, if asked questions by the young, shake their heads or repeat the formulas they learned from *their* parents, the young can only feel deserted and alone.

Only fifty or seventy-five years ago, the whole-making energies of most men were easily drawn into the external activities of the time, which could still be believed in. Questions about the self would arise only in rare individuals beset by prophetic intuitions. In those days, a man would come home from work at night, tell his wife a little about his day, then read the *National Geographic* and after dinner explain to his children some of the advantages of being an American. He might also tell them about the promise of scientific discovery. We were really finding out about the world. The spread of Americanism and new knowledge was, as people then called it, Manifest Destiny. Nature was a nut to be cracked, an oyster to be opened, and given a little time we'd have everything under control. Oh, those supremely confident encyclopedias of a very recent past! And, oh, those serious-minded young men of a time a little later, who met in cafeterias and basement apartments to explain to still younger ones the certainty of revolutionary laws of social whole-making that scientific study had made clear—the rationale of an earthly Utopia.

But isn't it *true*? Don't we have to learn about the world out there? How shall we know what to do, except from science? Even philosophers have said this, not just progressive people with knowledge of science and history. Well, philosophers have said something *like* this, and few of them more clearly than Ortega in *Man and Crisis*:

The essence of man . . . 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. . . . in order to live man needs, whether he likes it or not, to form convictions for himself. . . .

Remember that life is no other thing than what we have to do and have to make, since we must make ourselves in making it. . . .

Is it that we have not sufficiently understood what the philosophers taught? Did Ortega—or Socrates, it doesn't greatly matter which—mean that we must do what we have done: Create a body of scientific knowledge about the world which in effect eliminated *man*? Curiously, you hardly need "people" for a technological utopia; you just need obedient robots and a few smart scientists to do the programming and lubricate the gears.

There is a sense in which Socrates said that there is no real revelation of truth save what a man is able to make for himself; and Ortega is arguing that there is no science which is not finally unreliable except in what a man discovers for himself. That, it seems clear, is not the kind of science we have believed in, nor the kind of religion, either. Both leave out the self-making aspect of the destiny of man.

One thing that is beginning to appear true about nature—or Nature—is that it (She) always answers back to man's mistakes at whole-making. (This seems a reasonable deduction from what the ecologists are finding out.) If we could understand how this "answering back" works, we might have the bulk of our problem solved—in principle. Even starting to work on this problem would mean making some vast metaphysical assumption—a Buddhistic or Emersonian postulate about Nemesis or the Law of Compensation—but there is little doubt, meanwhile, about the fact of the answering back. Is there, one wonders, any possibility that Nature may actually speak to us through ourselves? Could, for example, we make a reliable deduction about the origin of our troubles from the

following account of our present condition by Northrop Frye:

In our day we are passing through a period of dominant radical anxiety. We feel that we have already created the conditions of a different kind of society from the one we are living in; as we are not very clear about the nature of that society, we tend to commit ourselves to the process of change itself rather than to a defined goal.

A literary critic gets his clues to such a situation by looking at the emotional values attached to metaphors. The metaphor of technological obsolescence meets us everywhere: there is a general panic about escaping from the obsolete.

A few years ago Norman Cousins declared that "modern man is obsolete." He gathered evidence and wrote a timely obituary for the specializing intelligence that creates a theory of knowledge and a world of technological devices which leave no room for "the self-making destiny of man." Could the radical anxiety Northrop Frye speaks of be a form of "answering back" to this self-defeating enterprise?

If these insights have some bearing on the present moment of history, it is hardly remarkable that hardly anyone speaks, today, without using the charged language of emergency and desperation, of "leaps" and "revolutions." But where shall we look for post-revolutionary plans? On what ground can we hope to light after we leap?

The upsetting—and at the same time reassuring—conclusion many people are coming to is that the ground we ought to light upon is more a subjective than an objective reality. That is what we are beginning to *feel*, but to give this idea definition is something else. And how could anyone leap without seeing ahead? Well, they're doing it. The young are finding blank places and crevices to light on all through the affluent society, and they are talking endlessly, sometimes boringly, about the glorious subjectivity they have discovered. It isn't so glorious, in some of its demonstrations, and the crevices often turn out to have no bottom; but a ready-or-not revolution of

human ends is nonetheless going on. There is not much point in labelling any of these people—beats, hippies, anarchists, drop-outs, whatever—since by the end of the century the names given to what the "next" generation is doing will probably be as extensive as a seed catalog. And it ought to be recognized that the young people are trying to do—some of them—what Ortega said that we all have to do: make ourselves over while making our lives.

But the young don't have much science to help them in; what they are doing. It sometimes seems as if they are trying to start all over again, from the beginning. And that, it seems certain, is why much of what they do appears so shallow and uninstructed. Doomed to failure, you could say. Yet there is the possibility that their failures cannot be as bad as the failures of people who won't even try.

It is hardly a coincidence that while all this is going on a new conception of science is being born among distinguished scientists. Its first principle, as Willis Harman of Stanford put it recently, is that "a true science" will be based on the idea that "that which estranges man from himself is unwholesome." In other words, authentic science will always lend support to *individual* whole-making and will shed light on natural human aspirations. It is now recognized that all scientific knowledge has a subjective component, that the stuff of the human mind becomes part of every theory and gives meaning to every "fact." Science, as Dr. Harman says, must now be regarded as a "particular metaphor" concerned with the nature of the objective world, and the meanings of scientific inquiry are partly determined by the motives and even the feelings of the subject who looks out at the world and interprets its appearance and behavior. The effect of this view, quite plainly, is that there can be no divorce between science and philosophy, that moral value is the inalienable ground of scientific truth. This conclusion is discussed by Dr. Harman

in relation to the practice of science in behalf of man:

The social implications of our dominant basic assumptions regarding the interpretation of subjective experience can be made more specific. At the surface level, so to speak, the nation is beset by numerous social problems which we point to with the terms poverty, crime, racial discrimination, civil disorder, unemployment, pollution, and the like. Experience with attempts to deal straightforwardly with these problems—to tackle discrimination, with civil-rights legislation, to alleviate the ills of poverty with minimum-wage and welfare payments to eliminate ghettos with urban-renewal programs, to deal with civil disorders by increasing police power—indicates that such direct measures typically have unexpected and unintended outcomes. It is as though an "ecology of situations" were upset by a piecemeal approach.

The reason appears to be intrinsic. It seems that these manifest problems are in a sense symptoms of underlying conditions that are more pervasive and less easy to objectify. At another level these problems reside in the institutions of the society, in built-in power distributions, in the traditional roles to which persons are trained, in the time-hallowed structures and processes. At a still deeper level they involve the most basic assumptions, attitudes, and felt values held by the individual and promoted by the culture. The most carefully designed social measures will not achieve their desired goals unless they involve not only rationally designed programs and structures, but also changes in deeply-rooted beliefs, values, attitudes, and behavior-patterns both of the individuals who constitute the "problem populations" and of the self-righteous others who assume that they are not implicated.

To put the matter briefly, there is an enormous demand on the part of the young for fields of action where they will be able to pursue whole-making activities that they think are worth doing. They find very few such activities in our society. They are actors without roles. This doesn't mean that they are "good" actors, or much more than well-intentioned, and some of them are not even that. But in general, if a "side" must be taken, the great majority of the thoughtful people of the time are siding with youth. Along with Dr. Harman, they see that—

In fact, much of today's student unrest centers around the accusation that the society's operative assumptions about man's deepest desires are indeed not consistent with individual inner experience nor in the long-term interest of man or society. A dominant theme among disaffected students is that the American corporate capitalist system manipulates and oppresses the individual.

The puzzling thing about this situation, even after it has been defined and admitted, is that it doesn't submit to "blueprint" solutions. It will give way, little by little, only to subjective recognition that human beings require freedom for whole-making—whole-making of every sort. And that, somehow, this freedom for activity must be balanced by individual responsibility. What is called for, then, is a "revolutionary" change, not in the situation, but in the common state of mind. Most societies are already potentially loose enough to give room to substantial increases in human freedom without passing a single law. In fact, if a transition of this sort were to become noticeable, we might soon get rid of the entire legalistic approach. Involved would be a change in the way people think of the world, of science, and of themselves. Knowledge would be recognized as a dynamic relationship of the individual with his environment and also *with his dreams*. Any other collection of information, masquerading as knowledge, leads to the kind of impasse which Dr. Harman has described. As for the processes of change, Northrop Frye has some useful counsel:

The ethics of change can only be based on a paradoxical union of participation and detachment. We belong to something before we are anything, and what we belong to is a mixture of good and bad. At present students come to the university demanding a greater degree of participation in its affairs, including its decisions. Given the conditions of our time, no reasonable person is likely to deny that this is a normal and healthy demand. But to participate in anything in human society means entering into a common bond of guilt, of guilt and inevitable compromise. I am not saying that we accept the evils of what we join: I am saying that whatever we join contains evils, and that what we accept is the guilt of belonging to it.

Well, Dr. Frye's language may seem to have a theological tinge, but his meaning need not be so read. Putting it in other words, you could say that every generation inevitably inherits the whole-making attempts of its predecessors, and that today we are encountering the shambles of ethical neglect. Why is this so difficult to admit? The answer is plain enough. There was nothing in Western man's idea of knowledge to suggest that ethical values are *real*—that morality is governed by forces, laws, and dynamics which need study and mastery exactly as other forces and laws must be understood. The shock of this discovery seems to be too much for the older generation to sustain.

The trouble with the guilt-innocence equation is that it polarizes judgment into moral absolutes. Talk of innocence and guilt at once puts everything at stake. A man can afford a few mistakes, or even many, but he cannot afford to be *guilty*. A man can make a mistake with only some part of himself, but only the whole of himself can be guilty. The moral agent is always a unity. So, social analysis in terms of locating guilt tends to produce absolute moral judgments.

Whatever these matters involve in essence, a sound educational psychology will always substitute mistakes or "ignorance" for the idea of guilt. It is foolish, of course, to deny the reality of guilt. Moral responsibility is an all-pervasive reality. But it is an even greater foolishness to try to measure the guilt of others. How can anyone tell the moral composition of another man's act which turns out badly—determine how much is ignorance and how much is moral wrong?

An evolutionary theory of human life or progress requires much greater emphasis on overcoming ignorance than on locating guilt. The old saw, Hell is paved with good intentions, is mainly an attempt to infect simple ignorance with moral wrong. The slogan enables people to feel quite comfortable while liquidating the mistake-makers instead of attacking only their mistakes.

Take for example the psychological effect of what Peter Schrag said (in *Harper's* for May)

about the Arabs from whom Malcolm X gained renewed faith in the brotherhood of man. "Arabia," Mr. Schrag remarked, "is still a feudal state which exploits its underclass as ruthlessly as any society on earth and whose record of slavery is unmatched in human history." This judgment, let us say, is "true." What does it lead to? It might lead to a cynical denigration of Malcolm X's restored hope in the possibility of human brotherhood. It *could* generate as response long expositions concerning the subtler forms of slavery which other critics discern in the more "advanced" societies. There is also the argument that the unconcealed barbarism of the Arabs may even be a bit better, morally, than the hypocritical claims of Western democracy that all men under its rule are "free."

What becomes evident is that, arguing in this way, you can convict almost anyone of anything. So, as Prof. Frye says, "whatever we join contains evils," and what we have to accept is "the guilt of belonging to it." Yet there is considerable emotional strain in accounting for social problems on this guilt-innocence axis. Condemnation is a debilitating force in human affairs. A guilty man is thought of as *refusing* to see what is right, whereas an ignorant man is only unable to. It is the universal experience of teachers that far more education is accomplished—more overcoming of ignorance—when people who need to learn are given the benefit of the doubt.

So, the rule of a society which believes in growth or evolution ought to be: Virtue is Knowledge.

To this, however, should be added the profound truth that the greatest effort for progress comes from moral resolve. If this is the case then a double standard seems indicated for the formulation of judgments by human beings. You hold yourself morally responsible, but the worst you charge others with is ignorance. You do this because ignorance has much more objectivity than the grounds of moral decision. You don't know the secret moral equations in the hearts of other

men, but you can see the effects of their mistakes. These effects can be discussed without declaring anyone guilty or demanding punishment. The social whole-making of the future will almost certainly require this approach.

REVIEW

WHAT ANY SCHOOLBOY CAN FIGURE

THE formal study, the objective report, the theoretical construction—such efforts may increase by a little our knowledge of the world we live in, but there are times when the simple human longing to know more about ourselves grows intense enough to displace interest in even the most expert calculations concerning problems and things. The man who writes well about himself cannot help but make the reader think about himself, too, and not so much in a personal, intimate way, as somewhat philosophically. We have in mind the involuntary sort of reverie through which the Odyssey-aspect of a single human life is sometimes felt. For a surfeit of practical information may dramatize the fact that each one of us has an independent line of beinghood, of living identity, which remains curiously independent of all its many dependencies, and which the treatises of doing, getting and spending touch hardly at all.

So it is that Norman Mailer's *Armies of the Night*—filled with a tipsy sort of brilliance, a flashing style which must be admitted even though it seems sorely over-praised—feeds hungers that conventional reporting does not acknowledge. The reality of a man's life is threaded through the account, and since a writer's communication of his own sense of meaning is always his best achievement, such reports give satisfaction that "objectivity" can never provide.

Magazine and book publishers sense this longing in the reader (they feel it themselves), and so from time to time appear "waves" of this sort of personal writing, some of it very, very good. This month's *Harper's*, for example, begins a series called "Going Home in America." The first contribution, by John Thompson, is a reminiscence which fulfills the Ithaca-longing, twining together for readers beyond a certain age the nostalgia and the disenchantment that are the lot of those who grew up with the twentieth century. You can't, according to Thomas Wolfe, go home again. But we all inevitably try. How or where a man looks for the Golden Age—whether he broods on lost Nirvanas, makes chants about a New Jerusalem, or wonders whether Eden can ever be again—may tell us something

about a writer's background or "education," and perhaps disclose the existential level of his vision—but *that* he looks for it reveals simply that he is a man.

Mr. Thompson's Ithaca is Grand Rapids, Michigan. He recreates the scenes and feelings of his youth. The slang, the jokes, the adolescent idiom live again. Contrapuntal to his narrative are quotations from early chroniclers of Grand Rapids, telling what the place was like, about the river and the trees, and how bears sometimes ambled through the streets hardly a century ago. What, truly, do we go back to, when we go home again? The temper of Mr. Thompson's wondering about this is early established:

All hometowns are like Troy, of course, and we all believe with the accurate faith of Heinrich Schliemann that the true Ilion, "seventh of nine settlements on the same spot," still lies there under the mere huge windy tumulus of the present. The Ilion of our childhood has little but its geographical location in common with what stands there now; and that great place established as if by the gods expressly for us to grow up in had little to do with what may have stood there before. Before? Except for Southerners and for some New Englanders, there is no Before for American children. Past, present, and future are all there in that seventh city of Ilion and not only can we excavate it easily and completely but, when we do, it all switches on like some toy city, the lights, trolleys, automobiles, people, all begin to jerk about, there are sounds, whistles, horns, songs; and all those poor little persons, switched back to life, loom once more into their Homeric order, lifting stones such as twenty men couldn't budge today. They rule our lives, rising before us shining or baleful with an intensity far beyond the weak abilities of any other time, they are as irreplaceable, they are as inimitable and yet as potent in stamping with their typed identities all mere mortals who follow them as were the ranked deities of Olympus.

What a high confidence Mr. Thompson has that he will be understood! He will, of course, be somewhat understood, and by people from many other towns. Grand Rapids is only a metaphor for what he has to say. The city by the river does duty for any place with roots, and a thousand other towns would have served as well, or almost as well. The man who writes about going home uses a cipher

which can never be finally interpreted by any manual or book of standard codes.

Is there a schema for such creative work? If there is, it should be kept secret for a while. Schemata are useful only after mastery in practice. If a man could really say on what spiralling level he is writing from—if he could classify the plane of subjectivity as might a Plato or a Plotinus, never sounding like a theologian—he might be trusted to say a little about his method, but not yet, not yet.

A man able to go home again is somehow released from his Babylonian Captivity. He is not of course free, but the bars of his confinement are made of a different stuff. They are fashioned by himself. A man moves from limits to allegiances, from parishes to promontories of the imagination, and it is this deliberate migration by the writer that gives the reader a thrill. Yet fortunate the man who can love the days of his childhood and cherish even its pain. Perhaps this has been—or was once—the chief blessing of being born an American. A continental generosity endowed America's children with wide spaces filled with interesting things, and for a while with a slow-moving sort of time.

Reading Mr. Thompson, you follow the line of his feeling, not the local scenery, nor note particularly the flat accents of the Middle West. You have to do this anyhow, because now the scenery is gone—gobbled up, consumed, eroded—and more obsessive spectacles fill the eye. He says:

Most of your people, Grand Rapids, are less frightened, from day to day, than most people in most places or most times have been. They are not threatened by starvation nor by whips nor by enemy swords, as most of mankind has always been threatened. If they have the supreme threat of hydrogen dissolution hanging over their heads day and night, hanging by a hair plucked from the head of Richard M. Nixon, well, we all live with this (how do we?) and who is to say that this is your fault, or who is to say that anyone knows better than you what to do about it. You are not deliberately cruel, except to yourself, as you say over and over again, "I must be ignorant, I must not aspire, I must not cast doubt, I must bring home the bacon."

Why, one wonders, cannot the ringing truth of what is said here be spread around and be more

deeply understood? Why are the most shattering realizations dispensed in passing anecdotes, lost in momentary asides? The answer is no secret. This world is by no means ready for announcements of "the truth." We live in a world that ignores the truths which can be had simply for the asking, that would be unbearably shamed by admitting only a few of them. It would be much if we could understand the reason for this insistence on pretense. Not the fact of the pretense, but the *reason* for it. The confidence in Mr. Thompson's expressions shows no fear of contradiction. A lot of people know these things. Yet we do not use even the primary arithmetic of the truth we know. What do they teach, nowadays, for psychology in the schools, that we have no familiar explanation of such incredible neglect of the obvious? How do those professors busy themselves?

Mr. Thompson has a splendid freedom of mind, yet which seems almost useless to him personally, since it only deepens his pain. Perhaps he cannot enjoy his freedom unless other men enjoy it, too. (Some great metaphysic of the future is doubtless grounded here.) His closing words are a comment on the reflections of Charles E. Belknap, mourning the fate of three islands in the river which flows through Grand Rapids:

"May not an old man of today be forgiven for a longing that this beautiful playground of his boyhood might have been spared for his great-grandchildren? Only men of deep thinking can tell you how long nature was in creating these islands, but any schoolboy with a piece of chalk can figure how long man was in obliterating the last trace of them."

Thompson says:

Those islands in his dream city had actually existed, rooted in earth and watered by our river and flowering magnificently in the bright real air as well as in his dreams, but we know what he was talking about. He was talking about the city we have all destroyed, cowards, dirty cowards, our hometown of justice and truth where I was born in Grand Rapids.

COMMENTARY

A BARE BEGINNING

THERE is little dignity in assertions of righteousness, and Virtue seldom survives a parade of one's virtues. There is no moral strength in a self-esteem which depends upon deprecating other men.

These are common-sense rules. How does the United States come out, when tested by them?

Poorly, you would say, judging by the official behavior of the nation. But its official behavior is far from its best behavior. It may not even be "representative." Where will you find self-criticism as vigorous as that pursued by the people of the United States? This is a country which, for all its faults—you could spend a lifetime listing them—is resolved to *afford* self-criticism.

Well, criticism is just talk. But some of the talk in the United States today is not cheap. Jack Whitton (see *Frontiers*) did some talking that cost him three years of his life.

It's true enough that the best self-criticism one finds has to be *looked* for. But it's not quite "underground," either. People persuaded that it's good "Americanism" to boast and brag hear this criticism easily enough and complain about it bitterly. They ask: Why can't the critics say something *good* about their country? Why don't they condemn, instead, the terrible things *other* countries are doing?

But that is mainly for weaklings—for people who feel comfortable only when claiming to be "better than" other people.

The point is, if you needed to pick a country where every side of a controversial issue can at least get published, you might decide that in the United States you'd find the biggest spread of all the arguments. Not equal space, of course, nor equal time. This is a country with many inequities, where terrible things are being done. But it is also a country where the deep truth of Northrop Frye's utterance is recognized. He said:

. . . to participate in anything in human society means entering into a common bond of guilt, of guilt and inevitable compromise. I am not saying that we accept the evils of what we join: I am saying that whatever we join contains evils, and that what we accept is the guilt of belonging to it.

The guilt is obvious. What is not so obvious is the fact this country is still a place where men can freely speak out against the evils in which they unwillingly participate. But this is nothing to brag about. It's only a prerequisite, not the achievement, of civilization.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

WHO WANTS TO BE PRESIDENT?

WE have heard, by word of mouth, the (doubtless incomplete) story of the troubles of the president of an Eastern university which has a larger enrollment of black students than most similar institutions. According to the account, every effort has been made to help the black students and to accommodate the facilities of the university to their needs. The president, a man who recently beaded a large university in the South, is extremely sympathetic to their problem. However, his faculty adviser on black students, having identified with the most militant group on the campus, one day came to the president with this request: the cafeteria should serve "soul food" for the black students. The president responded enthusiastically; remembering his own days in the South, he wrote out the menu himself and gave instructions to the manager of the cafeteria.

A few days later, the black student adviser returned with another request: There ought, he said, to be a black chef to cook the soul food. This seemed reasonable, so the president arranged for a black chef to be hired for this purpose.

A little more time passed, and then the black student adviser submitted to the president an extended menu with various new items of soul food, including, as its climax, *opossum!* The president thought a moment, then said to his adviser: "I'll tell you what—we'll cook all the opossum you hunt and bring in!"

After such a brazen failure to cooperate, the black students had no choice but to strike, and strike they did! The president was later overheard to say, musingly, to one of the teachers, "I wonder why, every time I gave in to their demands, they seemed to get mad!"

Speaking in New York recently, Bayard Rustin, a man who has all his life worked for the

rights of Negroes, urged college officials to "stop capitulating to the stupid demands of Negro students." He ridiculed "soul courses," saying: "In the real world, no one gives a damn if you've taken soul courses. They want to know if you can do mathematics and write a correct sentence." The report of his address (in the Los Angeles *Times* for April 28) continues:

He said it was a "cheap way out" for college officials to give minority group students separate programs and living quarters.

Some white professors, he said, desire a "revolution by proxy," and are using unwitting Negro students toward this end.

Rustin said Negro students, for the most part, were "ill-prepared for college education" and that there was "a lack of social courage on the part of this generation of Negro students."

"We don't want the agony of educating the Negro" is the view of many white professors, he said. The only way out of this "very dangerous situation," he added, is "another couple of school generations of integration."

Bayard Rustin, who helped Martin Luther King organize the Montgomery bus strike, and who guided the policies of the 1963 March on Washington, is a black man with the courage to say what he thinks. He has never been a racial partisan and he is not now willing to endorse over-simplifying remedies for injustices which were centuries in the making, merely because they are militant. A point is reached in angry militance when it becomes emotional self-indulgence, and this is hardly a way to either an education or the rights of citizenship. Bayard Rustin knows this, and says it, knowing also how unwelcome it will be.

There is, however, another side to this question. Normal people feel a strong reluctance to single out any "minority group" for generalizing comment, even reasonably accurate comment, about its members. There isn't a man alive who would care to be talked about like that; and, in the case of black Americans—who, as Lionel Abel put it a few years ago, are now entering "the

consciousness of the forum" and are gaining a long-delayed participation in American life—there are special reasons for avoiding even the appearance of condescending observation. Human nature being everywhere the same, it is natural enough that some blacks feel called upon to behave like avenging angels, while others, who would like simply to live better lives and take advantage of opportunities now slowly becoming available, are embarrassed into silence by their angrier compatriots. Only justice, time, and common sense can wear out such problems.

A further consideration lies in the fact that underneath all black demands is intuitive recognition that winning concessions from somewhat intimidated white administrators is not the same as basic human respect. There are really no finite measures or adequate "symbols" of raceless human equality—there is only *the attitude itself*; so that even what seem large "concessions" will be a species of psychological fraud to the students who have asked for them, but really want and should have something else. To ask what can and ought to be given is a reasonable thing to do, and many schools are trying to respond. And to ask for what *cannot* be given, except from an inner growth, may not be reasonable, but this will never prevent all men from longing for relationships with others in terms of basic mutual respect. So the phenomena of the present will no doubt continue until everyone—mainly the whites—have reached to greater maturity.

The guilt and shame of whites are every bit as much an obstacle to maturity as feelings of humiliation and victimization are for the blacks. Neither can be bought off with compensatory gestures. The kind of relationships men find satisfying are an evolution, not the result of a transaction. Perhaps the only thing that will help, in a situation like this, is to resolve to show patience oneself, but never ask it of others. We really have no business talking about one another's special moral obligations. Legal obligations and rights, on the other hand, should be talked about,

and fulfilled and won. The Gandhian principle of never attacking the character of others, even of your opponents, has clear application here. If what is really wanted of others is *growth*, then there is not much point in condemning them and creating an atmosphere which is likely to make growth almost impossible.

FRONTIERS

The Company He Keeps

A REPORT in the *Los Angeles Free Press* (April 25) describes the trial and sentencing of Jack Whitton for refusing induction into the armed forces. He conducted his own defense. After the jury brought in a verdict of guilty, Judge Harry Pregerson told the convicted man: "It's been a pleasure having you in this court room." A few days later, the judge sentenced Whitton to prison for three years.

Jack Whitton, one assumes, was educated in the schools established by this nation to secure its liberties. As a student of law and of history, Judge Pregerson perhaps recognized in Whitton the marks of a free man such as the Founding Fathers hoped a proper education would develop in the United States. James Sullivan, writing in 1798, remarked: "When the mass of people are ignorant, poor and miserable, there is no public opinion excepting what is the offspring of fear." Whitton, the judge doubtless noticed, was without fear. In the old regimes of Europe, Sullivan had pointed out, "a passive obedience to the will of the sovereign is meritorious and proper," while "an inquiry into the origin of civil authority, or an examination of the rectitude of its administration, is an heinous offence." Whitton had been nurtured under no such beliefs. On his day in court he looked into the "origin of civil authority" and questioned "the rectitude of its administration." He claimed that the draft law was wrong.

We have not examined the trial record and cannot say how Whitton constructed his case, but his reasoning was probably compatible with that of older men who make similar inquiries—legislators and scholars. For example, a California Congressman, George E. Brown, Jr., said recently:

The tragic and costly U.S. involvement in Vietnam has been from the beginning merely an accident in a far more significant conflict. This is

our blind and stupid confrontation with Communist China. Having sided with the loser in China's revolutionary civil war, we have persisted in the fiction that Mao Tse-tung and Communist China do not exist, and that Chiang Kai-shek and his exiled countrymen on Formosa are the true government of a quarter of the world's people. To persist in such a delusion for more than 20 years is an indication of how deeprooted are the irrational drives behind our foreign policy in the world. China has never in the past, nor is likely in the foreseeable future, to pose a credible military threat to the United States. Yet, in our arrogance, we have followed precisely the course that makes most probable a military conflict with China. We have supported, protected and encouraged a rump government of Formosa. We have deployed our Army, our Navy, and our Air Force around China's borders, and participated in clandestine violations of her sovereignty in the air, the sea, and on the ground. We have sought to influence the countries on her borders with massive infusions of U.S. dollars, which we describe as foreign aid. We have used our power, political, economic, and military, to deny her the role in the United Nations provided by its Charter, and to prevent economic or diplomatic relations between her and other countries under our influence around the world. This policy has cost us billions of dollars every year for a generation. . . .

Obviously, our policy toward China must change. Born out of our obsession that the victory of Mao-Tse-tung represented an extension of monolithic Communist power over Asia, and directed from Moscow, the policy has survived while the facts proved themselves ephemeral. Today the policy survives on inertia, fueled by an arrogant power that insists on its own interpretation of reality merely because of its power. The nature of the changes required are dear. A satisfactory conclusion to our adventure in Vietnam is the first step.

Two months after this speech in Congress, the first national gathering of Sinologists was called by the National Committee on United States-China Relations. Summarizing the "calm, clear logic of the specialists" in the *New Leader* for April 14, Louis Kraar wrote:

The experts differed in degree and nuance, of course, but their total effort presented a reasonably well-defined composite picture of present-day China. . . . Despite Peking's bellicose rhetoric about spreading revolutionary warfare and guerrilla fighting throughout the underdeveloped world, the specialists stressed that China's military capacity for adventures beyond its own periphery is limited and its actions on the whole cautious. The Chinese militant language and attitude were seen as compensation for the Middle Kingdom's basic weakness: China was not considered an expansionist power.

This view certainly contrasts with the ominous outlook recently presented to Congress by Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird, who maintained that Communist China "still constitutes the most dangerous potential for threatening peace. . . ." It also raises deep doubts about the value of developing an antiballistic missile (ABM) system aimed partly at protecting the U.S. against a long-range missile attack from China. And the perception of a majority of China specialists rejects the Johnson Administration's portrayal of the Vietnam war as a pivotal stand against the spread of Peking-promoted revolutions to other countries. In many ways, indeed, these Washington legends appear as overblown as those propagated by Mao.

A West German scholar, Klaus MeLner, declared that Ho Chi Minh "is certainly no satellite of China" and is more independent, now, of China, than he was ten years ago. The National Committee on U.S.-China Relations is identified as non-partisan and independent, formed in 1966 with financial help from the Ford and Rockefeller Foundations, and from "blue-chip American corporations."

Further pertinent reading would be the February 1969 issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, presenting nearly ninety pages of discussion of China since the Cultural Revolution, contributed by leading China scholars. No summary of this complicated subject can be provided here, although the introductory essay, by Dick Wilson, the editor for this issue, is probably representative. He says:

The possibilities of American policies changing anything in East Asia must be acknowledged to be somewhat limited. There is nothing the

administration can do, for example, to give China a successful non-Communist regime. But the Chinese are intelligent and realistic people: to the extent that communism does not work they will in their own good time quietly abandon it. A far-sighted U.S. policy could plan for a gradual and tactful disengagement from the Nationalist cause in Taiwan; abandon all restrictions on trade and travel in China, unilaterally and without reciprocity, and commission America's many excellent and wise Sinologists to advise it in depth and in detail on how the Chinese government, irrespective of its political color, could best be induced over the long run to join the world community in all its activities and concerns. Only in this way will our children thank us for saving them from inheriting a world more bitterly divided than at any time in its history.

As for the miraculous power assigned by some to Communism's propaganda and subversive activity, David Mozengo, a Far Eastern specialist, wrote in 1966, in a RAND Corporation paper, but embodying his own opinions:

The fear expressed in the argument that neutralism or nonalignment is simply a temporary way-station on the road to Communism, that Peking and other Communists can push over popular nationalist regimes like "dominos" once a communist revolution succeeds somewhere else, is overwhelmingly contradicted by the proven vitality of Asian nationalism in the last twenty years. The Chinese Communists were the first to recognize, more than a decade ago, that genuine non-Communist nationalism was nobody's pushover and that efforts by local Communist parties to prove the contrary bore bitter fruit. . . .

The plain fact of the matter is that Asian Communism's greatest asset is not, and never has been Communist China's potential military threat or her support for revolution. It has been, and continues to be, primarily the existence of incompetence, corruption, and the lack of a genuine, socially progressive, nation-building ethic within the non-Communist elite in every country where Communism has made serious advances. Conversely, the most effective deterrent to Communist gains has proven to be the existence of a non-Communist elite dedicated to solving their country's problems and therefore capable of holding the loyalty of their own people. American military power and aid, in themselves, have not proven adequate to find, build, or to replace a dedicated, hard-working non-Communist elite.

It becomes plain that Jack Whitton probably read too many books by intelligent men. At any rate, somehow, he got himself an education. Whether or not his view of the draft law was based on reasoning like the above, or on some deeper perception concerning the wrong of any military adventure, the Founding Fathers would be proud of him—for he is neither ignorant nor miserable, and his opinions are not "the offspring of fear." He enjoys excellent company, even though he will have to spend his three years in prison alone.