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"WE HAVE NO BLUEPRINTS"

ONE seldom hears mention of Oswald Spengler. When his *Decline of the West* was published in English in the 1920's, scholars riddled him with attacks and hardly ever referred to him again, although the book's life with a popular audience lasted much longer. Perhaps no one speaks of Spengler, today, because he seems to have been far more right than his critics. By almost any criterion, the West is in decline; that part of his diagnosis is accurate enough; and another part of what he said is now repeated over and over again, by other men, in almost the same words. "Civilizations are the most external and artificial states of which a species of humanity is capable." They are "death following life, rigidity following expansion."

For a great many people, however, this judgment has meaning mainly from a "Roman" or Statist point of view. While the modern nation-states possess more brutal, ruthless power than ever before—so much that it frightens even the men who might have to wield it—the simple enthusiasms of past generations seem gone forever. This is a way of saying that men are no longer able to *believe* in "national destiny"—the phrase itself having taken on disquieting and even menacing resonances. The day of the great States is plainly passing, and what is to come by no means clear.

Well, suppose Spengler is right. Suppose the West is going down and out—out, that is, in the terms of the greatness celebrated in national chronicles. There is a Roman proverb which is likely to have as much truth in it as in the darkest of Spengler's pessimism: "The owl of Minerva does not rise until the sun of Empire has set."

Who would you be: Centurion in the days of Rome's vigor, or Epictetus the slave in a later age, but wise? One might of course like to be both, and this is occasionally possible for individuals, although usually quite painful, but here we are speaking historically, and there are certain incompatibilities between wisdom and empire which history compels us to admit.

After the fall of France to the Nazis, Raoul de Roussy de Sales maintained that the French had become too civilized, too humane, to show any heart for the barbarism of war. Perhaps other factors contributed to their weakness, but the explanation may have some truth in it. Let us ask whether reason supports the claim that a certain kind of wisdom cannot be known among true believers in the nation-state. And if this promises, after all, so terrible a destiny to the wise.

But why not a measure of wisdom and a measure of prudent national strength? Abstractly, this may sound like the voice of reason, but the forces of the times may not be willing to compose themselves according to a nice "liberal" balance. History in retrospect may be subjected to commonsense criticism, but its makers are usually attentive to other voices. Some of the voices which may be heard today sound more like the *daemon* of Socrates than a modern liberal's measured compromises.

We know a great deal about the minus-factors in the decline of empire. It is the plus-factors which should now claim attention. One of these is the growing inclination to question. Rollo May, in *Psychology and the Human Dilemma* (Insight paperback), speaks of this:

> . . . the capacity to question basic goals is one of the characteristics which distinguish man as man in the evolutionary scale. And is not the questioning of goals such as the war system, even national sovereignty, our one chance of taking a responsible hand in the directing of our own evolution? My own experience is chiefly on the level of the psychotherapist working with human beings in

> intense anxiety and profound suffering, in some cases on the brink of psychosis—levels, that is, when the usual pretenses of life are thrown aside. I am convinced by more data practically every hour of the day that the patient's emerging capacity to question the goals, let us say, which exploitative parents imposed upon him, or his own sado-masochistic goals, is a highly significant point in his movement toward health. This principle seems obviously true beyond the area of neurosis or psychosis.

Now comes a fundamental statement of principle:

> *To be able to question is the beginning of one's experience of identity.* The function of questioning is that it distinguishes self from the world, makes possible the experiencing of one's self as a subject in a world of objects. The danger, when a person is treated as an object of control and fundamental questioning is prohibited, is that this experiencing of the self as a subject in relation to a world of objects is lost.

There is an obvious tension between the identity which the ideology of an empire regards as essential for its citizens (subjects?) and the kind of identity which Dr. May says results from *questioning.* The death of one identity is necessary for birth into the other. You can hardly "strike an average" in making up your mind about this—too much is at stake to blur the issue—although some practical adaptations may be in order after you decide who you really are. A man with a self-defined identity—the result of the most profound questioning of which he is capable—will still get up in the morning, eat his breakfast and go to work, although he might eventually change his job in the interests of personal consistency. He will certainly begin a process of reorientation with the world, which now appears to him in a different light. He will define his relationships according to his new sense of being. He may find much to differ with. Dr. May is himself a good example of this. Earlier in his book he tells this story:

> When I was invited to lecture on this problem [of Anxiety] before the presidents and personnel officers of the New England Colleges and Secondary Schools, I was discourteous enough to point out to them that the very way they phrased the topic they gave me reflects the depersonalizing tendencies in our culture. That proposed topic was: "What can the schools and colleges do to reduce anxiety and increase productivity in the learning years?" Take, for example, that phrase "to *reduce* anxiety." [If a house is on fire] it would obviously be very unconstructive to *reduce* anxiety, to give the person a tranquilizer under the influence of which he may burn painlessly. The blotting out of consciousness which we have seen occur in neurotic anxiety has exactly the effect of perpetuating anxiety by evading its cause; and I think the tranquilizing mood in our whole culture has a similar cause and effect. . . .
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> Note also the phrase in the above topic, "increase productivity." I have been trying to say that the over-emphasis on productivity in education is exactly a cause of anxiety. *It is the machine which produces;* man creates. For my part I would rather see a cultivation on our campuses of the courage for and possibility of solitude, a rediscovering of meditation, a development of attitudes that will cherish quietness and the opportunity for the student to ponder and think, rather than the emphasis on never-ending productivity.

To overcome the anxiety felt by students, Dr. May says, it must be confronted constructively, and this means "to reconsider the processes and ends of education." And for the larger human community it means reconsidering the processes and ends of life. Dr. May continues:

> I am arguing that the over-emphasis on the Baconian doctrine of knowledge as power, and the accompanying concern with gaining power *over* nature as well as *over* ourselves in the sense of treating ourselves as objects to be manipulated rather than human beings whose aim is to expand in meaningful living, have resulted in the validation of the self by external criteria—which in effect means the *invalidation* of the self. This tends to shrink the individual's consciousness, to block off his awareness, and play into the unconstructive anxiety we saw above. I propose that the aim of education is exactly the opposite, namely, *the widening and deepening of consciousness.* . . . I said at the outset . . . that anxiety is the reaction to the threat to values one identifies with his existence as a self. I now add a corollary: *a person can meet anxiety to the extent that his values are stronger than the threat.*

This general analysis recalls the contrast made earlier, between the Spenglerian law of cyclic

decline and the Roman proverb about the owl of Minerva. The conclusion which seems obvious is that the "widening and deepening of consciousness" both brings and depends upon the decline of empire—obvious, that is, if the discoveries of psychology about the individual have legitimate application to the transitions of historical entities. In the form most familiar to us, history is a description of how men have sought validation of themselves "by external criteria." The shape of history is the track left by external, manipulative power, as manifested in the social collectives we call nations.

But if, on the other hand, history were to be written as the story of the widening and deepening of consciousness, wherever it occurs, it might contain only the most casual reference to nations and states. Yet there is a contrapuntal relation between the climactic phases of external history and the deepening of consciousness. The revolutions of the eighteenth century can hardly be understood without recognizing that they were a collective effect of the questions men asked about the goals imposed upon them by their social and political masters. "The function of questioning is that it distinguishes self from the world, makes possible the experiencing of one's self as a subject in a world of objects." Revolutionary documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Rights of Man are forms of self-definition. They proclaim a new view of man's subjective reality, as contrasted with his objective or controllable aspect. They place the tension between these two views of man at a new level. It is this distinctive range of the tension between man as subject and man as object which gives epochs of history their character.

This being the case, it is appropriate to assert that a period of historical decline is a time during which the manipulative processes begin to overwhelm the self-expressive processes, and that a point is reached when the struggle for social adaptation to this change takes the form of a vast, collective neurosis, marked by all the rationalizations of which the collective neurotic personality is capable. Thus a great confusion arises, and historical excesses embody the desperation to which men are reduced by endless moral contradictions of the times. One of the results of this confusion is a new cycle of urgent questioning—the rebirth which comes with the decline and death of an old order.

In such a period, the hardest problem of all is to find appropriate forms for social expression of the new feeling that men have about themselves as subjects. The questioning is *individual*, but the form of life it develops must be in some way social, and agreement as to its shape can hardly be arrived at except after long and painful attempts to reach a common idea of subjective values. Only then can its corresponding social mechanisms come into being.

This time of effort to objectify inward feelings is filled with deep suspicion of all past resolutions of the problem. Inevitably, men are convinced of the "uniqueness" of the new level of their questioning, and of course they are partly right. The old balances, whatever their services in the past, will not do in the present. The balances for the changed present must be born out of the new synthesis of the subject and object.

This way of looking at great historical changes has its value in helping us to understand the "all-or-nothing" emotionalism which attends them. A decision about the *self* is being made. It follows that the historical emergence of a new cycle of distinguishing self from the world, in which countless men participate, each at his own level, yet inevitably with certain common denominators, will take a fairly long time. Like any true discovery, the new realities, or rather men's perception of them (the same thing), must have time to jell. Activities in response to self-questioning need time to attain the natural objectivity that agreement about them will require. New paths and patterns must be established by human action guided by vision, courage, and boldness. And in any great change, before a new

harmony can become visible, a general social balance must be struck between the creative surge which results from self-questioning and the entropic forces against which it contends—forces which are not only in the old social forms and compromises, but also in every man.

An acceptable philosophy of history would be helpful at this juncture, but is difficult to arrive at when one of the strongest lines of the self-questioning of the times has involved rejection of past philosophies of history. The present is rather an hour of the establishment of first principles, and to elaborate them, to extend them into historical time by rational speculation before they are thoroughly understood, might lead to an early corruption. Men have an instinct for this kind of protection to their nascent thought, their new-born discoveries about themselves. "We have no blueprints" is often heard today, and this is by no means an admission of weakness. It reflects an intuitive strength on the part of men who grasp that their essential need is to deepen and broaden primary self-realization. Theories of history can be worked out later.

Since this is a psychological age, studies of the processes of awareness are providing the most important clues to human growth, and it is natural to find help from psychologists for directing the self-questioning. What could be called the "social"—and potentially the historical—aspect of this questioning is suggested by Gardner Murphy, who said recently:

> The definition of the individual man, encapsulated and sharply divided from his fellows, may well have basically missed the most important point in the human equation. . . .in some yet unexplained fashion man is more completely himself when he is not completely himself, when he has in part lost his personal identity within a larger whole.

Statements of this sort embody the ethical content of the new psychology. Individual recognition of this feeling—and therefore the individual resolution of the paradox it represents—may be seen as the law of social synthesis which operates throughout all genuine self-questioning. To be most truly an individual, in human terms, is not to be isolated, separate and alone—or, as some people say, completely "free." A man's freedom is at its greatest when he sacrifices it by feeling in himself the limits suffered by others.

Men do not make revolutions, they do not write constitutions, nor do they establish schools and cultivate areas of mutuality simply for themselves. They act in these ways out of deep identification with the being of other men. History, you could say, is on the forward swing of a new epoch when the collective actions of men are in behalf of their common subjectivity.

This is, of course, what we said we were not ready for—it is a theory of history, although a rudimentary one. It has support from the facts of our time, and it is consistent with the capabilities of the new spirit since it takes shape from self-questioning. Our social thinking had best be predominantly in these terms—as distinguished from political formulas, however plausible, for a considerable time to come. Only by cleaving to the genius of the new age, relying on its essentially psychological insight, will we be able to guard against those easy solutions which, for all their claims to justice, freedom and peace, are manipulative at root.

REVIEW
THE NEW CLASSICISM

FOR some three hundred years, the comprehending and defining intelligence of Western man has been concentrated on the field of external experience. This focus now seems to be changing. That is, the uncertainty and subtlety in the findings of the oldest and most advanced of the sciences have focussed inquiry on the question of *how* we know, and on the part played in the production of knowledge by the one who does the knowing. This concern with the subject, with the nature of the knower, is having an unexpected effect on thinking about what we already know. As a result, before the century is out, we may find that philosophy will have regained the master role in all significant conceptions of human knowledge, and that science itself will have undergone a great change because of this revival of philosophy.

Various lines of investigation are contributing to this general effect. Studies of sense perception, for example, obliged Adelbert Ames to pursue musing reflections concerning subjectivity. He noticed the dependence of what we "see" upon the interests and past experience of the one who sees. Richard Held's contribution to *Structure in Art and in Science* (edited by Gyorgy Kepes, Braziller, 1965), largely a historical survey of the succession of physiological and optical theories of how the eyes see, ends by pointing out that the crux of vision is shrouded in the mystery of "pattern recognition." The subject, it seems, is equipped with a capacity to identify objects in his field of vision far beyond any explanation we are able to make of it. As Mr. Held, who teaches psychology at M.I.T., says:

> The commonly used explanation that similarity of instances is the source of a common response to disparate stimulation simply begs the issue. We are forced to conclude that having been presented with a relatively small sample of instances, the system can recognize an unlimited set. And such constructive power must entail a set of principles in operation intrinsic to the human nervous system.

This faculty of knowing—of recognition—which works for all human beings, although we do not understand how or why—forms the basis of the far-reaching philosophical conclusions drawn by Michael Polanyi in his recent book, *The Tacit Dimension* (Anchor paperback, 1967, 95 cents). The publisher's summary of its contents is admirably clear:

> In this volume—the 1962 Terry Lectures delivered at Yale—a distinguished scientist-philosopher outlines a new theory of mind. He uncovers the mechanism of an essential process of thinking that he calls "tacit knowing," offering as its paradigm the recognition of moods on a human face: few could say what facial configurations make up, for example, a puzzled expression, but we can all recognize puzzlement. This knowledge of particulars that we cannot itemize, and to which we attend only for their meaning in some other sphere, is "tacit knowledge." Tacit knowledge guides the scientist to problems promising new discoveries. Hunches and intuitions essential to all creative thought are examples of tacit knowledge emerging into full consciousness. In a similar way do new organic forms emerge, by the process of evolution, from the possibilities contained by simpler forms of life.
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> Polanyi explores the moral and political implications of his theory, which he shows to be incompatible with both positivism and Marxism—in that they deny the autonomy of thought—and with existentialism, which demands that man shape himself by his own absolute choice. Rejecting all these doctrines as mental self-destruction, Polanyi concludes by staking out a "society of explorers" founded in harmony with man's true powers.

This book is an important contribution to Humanist Psychology, not only for its moral direction but also for its scientific implications. Dr. Polanyi starts out by inspecting aspects of the knowing process which have been casually noticed for a long time. They are the initial exploratory motions of thought, but as he considers them, describes them, and relates them to the more complete products of full understanding, they take on vital structure and undeniable "concreteness." These indispensable growing-tips of knowing become, for him, an important key to the nature of man.

Dr. Polanyi's practical ability to give shape and meaning to matters heretofore regarded as "intangible" or unimportant is indeed the quality of

the creative scientist, as of the artist. Emerson, for example, has this power, and after reading him the metaphysical regions he has been exploring may remain alive for the reader for quite some time. The new dimensions of reality brought into sight by the scientist are similarly sustained by the objectivity he gives them, although when, as in this case, these dimensions are in the realm of subjectivity, the scientist can be followed only by those who are willing to make a similar effort of imagination.

"Tacit knowing," which is indeed the beginning of gropings for philosophic truth—is fundamentally a reaching after meaning of which, as Polanyi says, we "know more than we can tell." Tacit knowing is some kind of intuitive integration of the particulars of perception. Reflection on this, he shows, "brings home to us that it is not by looking at things, but dwelling in them, that we understand their joint meaning." The particulars are important only for the meaning which they unite to suggest. But if the observer becomes fascinated with the constitution and traits of the particulars themselves, he may shut out their holistic significance. While one can sometimes return from a study of parts and details to the unified reality they form, and with even an improved understanding of the whole, recognition of the crucial importance of the participant-knower and his intuitive whole-seeking is essential to understanding what is known. Dr. Polanyi develops this point:

> We are approaching here a crucial question. The declared aim of modern science is to establish a strictly detached, objective knowledge. Any falling short of this ideal is accepted only as a temporary imperfection, which we must aim at eliminating. But suppose that tacit thought forms an indispensable part of all knowledge, then the ideal of eliminating all personal elements of knowledge would, in effect, aim at the destruction of all knowledge. The ideal of exact science would turn out to be fundamentally misleading and possibly a source of devastating fallacies.

The simplicity of some of the things that Polanyi points out—building on the fact that the incomplete, *growing* character of our knowledge, is the part of it that is really *alive*—gives them a revolutionary character. Thus the pulsating longing to know of a human being is an indispensable element in all that he really knows:

> To accept the pursuit of science as a reasonable and acceptable enterprise is to share the kind of commitments on which scientists enter by undertaking this enterprise. You cannot formalize the act of commitment, for you cannot express your commitment non-committally. To attempt this is to exercise the kind of lucidity which destroys its subject matter. Hence the failure of the positivist movement in the philosophy of science. The difficulty is to find a stable alternative to its ideal of objectivity. This is indeed the task for which the theory of tacit knowing should prepare us.

Throughout this book there is a diverse use of analogue. This makes its content seminal, for the reader is spurred by Dr. Polanyi's illustrations to charge off on exploratory and explanatory expeditions of his own. One gains a sense, while reading, that this inquiry is the successful launching of a new epistemology. The corrective effects of this scientist's thought in respect to scientism, its refutation of the claim of ideologies that truth can have a "class" origin, or that "socialist realism" is a basis for æsthetic judgment, and its critique of the nihilistic skepticism of the Existentialists—all these facets of Dr. Polanyi's theory, as he develops it, seem to outline a new plateau of self-understanding for man.

Although small, *The Tacit Dimension* has the thoroughness familiar to readers of the author's earlier work, *Personal Knowledge* (University of Chicago, 1958). Its difficulties lie in the need for the reader to think in an unaccustomed way—to regard processes of formation as more real than finished products, to recognize finality as uncreative, even dead, as compared to the vitality of learning and discovering. A particular virtue of this book, as "science," is in showing that such distinctions are not matters of poetic preference, but rather rigors necessary to understanding what we are and what we know.

COMMENTARY
THE LAW OF SELF-REFERENCE

MANY of the critical discussions which involve the attitudes of human beings toward their environment generate problems of self-contradiction. Take for example what is said in this week's "Children" article on General Education. The very situation Mr. Roszak describes makes the reader think of exceptions—of instances of teachers who turn the defects of what is offered in the universities into illuminating examples of basic human problems. The insights of, say, a William Arrowsmith are acts of self-reference and balancing correction on the part of a teacher. In the situation in which he finds himself, Mr. Arrowsmith does what self-referring intelligence calls for, and this in effect makes the failure of education into the raw material of successful general education. You could say that by offering the criticism he does, he in some measure invalidates it.

This is the resolving power of self-reference, spoken of by John Stevens (see Frontiers). Conscious perception of the external world and one's relations to it continually changes the appearance—even the "reality"—of that world. The more we see and understand of our environment, the more effective, humanly speaking, become our relations with it. Thus all activities involving self-reference have a paradoxical side. This is helpfully described by Mr. Stevens in a passage not quoted in Frontiers:

> A paradox is no more complex than a simple doorbell buzzer or oscillator. An oscillator is a system which has the characteristic that being in one state causes a change to occur which brings about another state and vice versa, so that the system continues to alternate between two states. A paradox is simply a logical oscillator, and there is no reason to try to legislate it out of existence simply because we find it annoying and cannot yet find a meaningful use for it within contemporary logic.

Every decision to act on the part of a human being amounts to a resolution of the paradox of self-reference. Whatever a man decides to do, it results from making a conclusion about his relation as subject to the world as object. When it comes to forming judgments affecting other men, his decision depends largely on whether he sees them as subjects like himself, or simply as objects. Our judgments about others are always some kind of resolution of the subject-object dichotomy. This may be illustrated by a quotation from Lawrence Hyman's *Dissent* (July-August, 1967) article:

> The civil rights worker, intent upon driving off the white mob, is naturally enough blind to the pathos and courage that might be present in a member of that mob. And if he is to be effective, he is, or should be, oblivious to the divided feelings that may be present in his friends and even within himself. The man of action must concentrate on what is relevant for his purpose.

The entire issue of violence versus non-violence is implicit in this situation. The non-violent stance is an endeavor to keep *open* one's awareness of the other—the opponent—as a subject, or even as an alter ego of the non-violent individual. An oblique appreciation of this resolve to act without making the final judgment implied by violence was given the Negro youth who sent a note to the civil disobedients in jail with him at Santa Rita. He wrote:

> I am not a believer in non-violence as a tactic or a way of life, but I have the deepest respect for people such as yourselves who are not forced by circumstances to rebel, but only by your own moral convictions. . . . I am really happy to see middle class educated white people whom I am able to identify with, because it shows that harmony is still possible.

When Dr. May says that *"a person can meet anxiety to the extent that his values are stronger than the threat,"* he is formulating a psychological law which applies to the way people resolve the subject-object paradox. The stronger a man's values, the more tension he is able to endure as the means of giving others opportunity to strengthen their values and identity as subjects. What all men need to overcome, as Dr. May puts it, is "the sense of treating ourselves as objects to be manipulated rather than human beings whose

aim is to expand in meaningful living." Richard Wright's *Native Son* is the heartbreaking story of a man, Bigger Thomas, who failed in this struggle because of the ruthless, insensate pressure of the dominant white society.

The decision to act in non-violent ways for peace and justice embodies the willingness to endure the trial of treating other men as capable of growth, even though they give little objective evidence of this possibility, instead of demanding that *they* do the enduring. It is deliberately doing what men habitually expect of others, but not of themselves.

The doctrine of the "just war" is an attempt to codify the resolution of the subject-object dichotomy in relation to human conflict. Since it imposes an external standard on the subtleties of self-perception, it inevitably violates in some way the integrity of all those whose primary identity is felt as a human being and not as a moving part in the nation-state. Dr. May puts well the consequences of the war situation for those called upon to take part: "The danger, when a person is treated as an object of control and fundamental questioning is prohibited, is that this experiencing of the self as a subject in relation to a world of objects is lost."

It is probably no coincidence that the deep, profoundly self-inspired rejection of war which characterizes the feelings of so many young men in the present is paralleled, in the sciences, by a growing realization that all knowledge depends upon conscious and participating subjectivity. It is as though, by some glorious, irrepressible paradox, the reality and primary structure of human beings as *subjects* are gaining luminous objectivity in the field of general moral awareness.

Great drama lies in the awesome fact that some people see this reality quite clearly, while others are utterly bewildered by its claims. It is as though, again, a new vision of man on earth is clamoring for acknowledgement. The portents of this vision can be expressed only in subjective and moral language, and this, since it is a language in which we have little fluency, brings all the confusing phenomena of a great travail—cries of pain, tragedies of still-birth, and the wondering innocence of viable new life.

Decision, at such a juncture, depends upon what testimony we are willing to listen to—and where, in the field of oscillation between subjective and objective awareness, we do our "reality-testing."

It is important to remain in this "field," and to resist the polarizing attractions of either absolute subjectivity or absolute objectivity. And it is equally important to recognize how widely different are the external scenes on which large groups of human beings look out. Ironically, at the very moment when the rising subjectivity of many of the young makes them look upon war as self-betrayal, the coldly indifferent environment experienced by Negro youth seems to give them much support for an "anarchism of the deed" sort of response to the impersonal social apathy they encounter on every hand. All men need to feel that their subjectivity reality is understood, and it is natural that, according to their circumstances and what they are compelled to endure, they find different ways of expressing this need.

CHILDREN
. . . and Ourselves
THEY DO NOT WANT POWER

PAUL GOODMAN is an American radical who probably reaches a larger audience than any of his like-minded contemporaries. His popularity is encouraging because it shows that a penetrating common sense can still be made to exert an influence in the United States. Goodman's latest book, *Like a Conquered Province* (Random House, 1967, $4.95), is made up of lectures he gave in Canada recently. In one of these lectures, "Counter-Forces for a Decent Society," he describes the strong moralism of the present generation of youth, which is totally unresponsive to arguments lacking in ethical appeal. Mr. Goodman offers the following explanation:

> Partly this drive to morality is the natural ingenuousness of youth, freed of the role-playing and status-seeking of our society. As aristocrats, not driven by material or ulterior motives, they will budge for ideals or not at all. Partly their absolutism is a disgusted reaction to cynicism and the prevalent adult conviction that "nothing can be done, you can't fight City Hall, modern life is too complex." But mostly, I think, it is the self-righteousness of an intelligent and innocent new generation in a world in which my own generation is patently stupid and incompetent. They have been brought up on a literature of devastating criticism that has gone unanswered because there is no answer.

Goodman is himself a particularly valuable link between the generations because he characteristically looks at life at a level of vital, formative activities and is able to make generalizations of which most people of his age are quite incapable. The young feel the emptiness of the goalless society they have inherited, and cannot take it seriously, whereas Goodman not only feels the emptiness, but is able in some measure to *explain* it. The meanness and moral indifference of existing social and educational structures are behind the revolt of student youth. Goodman writes:

> The philosophical words are "authenticity" and "commitment," from the existential vocabulary. And it cannot be denied that our dominant society is unusually inauthentic. Newspeak and double talk are the lingua franca of administrators, politicians, advertisers, and mass media. Such people are not even lying; rather, there is an unbridgeable chasm between the statements made for administrative reasons or the image of the corporation and what is intended and actually performed. I have seen mature graduate students crack up in giggles of anxiety listening to the Secretary of State expound on our foreign policy with his usual weary good humor. When I questioned them afterward, some said he was like a mechanical man, others that he was demented. Instinctively, they cannot accept the disproportion between his genial manner and his horrible matter, so they project the unreality onto him as a person. (They are right.) And most campus blowups have finally been caused by administrators' animal inability to speak straight. The students have faithfully observed due process and manfully stated their case, but the administrators simply cannot come on like human beings.

It seems obvious that the mindless discontinuities of modern technological culture become, for the young, about all they can see on the scene in which they have come to maturity. Only this sort of "total" reaction can explain the general distrust the young feel for the status quo, and for anyone "over thirty." It is grounded in a *general* reading of experience. Goodman's book, subtitled "The Moral Ambiguity of America," helps the reader to recognize in intellectual terms what the young feel, and which leads them to their present behavior:

> In their own action organizations the young are almost fanatically opposed to top-down direction. In several remarkable cases gifted and charismatic student leaders, white and Negro, have stepped down because their influence had become too strong. By disposition, without benefit of history, they have reinvented anarchist federation and a kind of Luxemburgian belief in spontaneous insurrection from below. They tend to the kind of non-violent resistance in which each one makes his own moral decision about getting his head broken rather than submitting to rigid discipline. If there is violence, they will surely be guerrillas rather than an organized army.

> All this, in my opinion, probably makes them immune to takeover by centralists like the Marxists. When Trotskyists, for instance, infiltrate an organization and try to control it, the rest go home and activity ceases. When left to their own improvisation, however, the students seem surprisingly able to mount quite massive efforts, using elaborate techniques of communication and expert sociology. By such means they will never get power. But indeed, they do not want power, they want meaning.

One reason for the "unreality" felt by students in their educational environment is the abdication of teachers from responsibility to the wider human community. Pursuing some of Paul Goodman's criticisms of higher education in his earlier book, *The Community of Scholars,* Theodore Roszak recently pointed out the peculiar weaknesses of the "Humanities" as now offered in universities. As a rule, professors are more concerned with their "departments" than they are with teaching the young. In his article, "The Complacencies of the Academy" (in *New American Review*), Mr. Roszak illustrates this by saying:

> When the English department, say, at the University of California comes to make its decisions about hiring and firing promotions and tenure, the voting members will be much more concerned about the impressions their appointments will create in the English department at Harvard than in the local student body or the local community. This is what the "community of scholars" means as most academics understand that term.

The anger students feel concerning the indifference they encounter is not without cause. Behind it is an isolating, specializing professionalism:

> Thus for most academics the locus of their allegiance is the department—and beyond the department, the profession. Everything in between . . . is left to the administrator. . . . Students belong to the particular campus on which they are studying. Educating them provides no professional visibility, and therefore designing an educational environment for them is left primarily to the administrators. This problem shows up especially in the handling of general education. General education, being broad and integrative, does not run readily through the narrow channels of the standard professional disciplines. Nor can one make a career in the important schools as a "generalist." So what careerist in his right mind would want to teach courses in general education? When the Columbia University faculty abandoned the sophomore year of its Contemporary Civilization survey, it explained its decision by observing that "the members of the staff do not regard the course as a challenge to their professional skill. . . ."

Placed in the framework of professional scholars seeking to impress one another with technical excellences, the student is made to feel irrelevant—as indeed he is. There are exceptions, of course, and Mr. Roszak points to some of them. University teachers have been vigorous educational and cultural forces—men like Richard T. Ely, Thorstein Veblen, John Dewey, and C. Wright Mills, who continued the great tradition of the French *philosophes.* With more men like these doing the teaching, there would hardly be just a "student" revolt.

FRONTIERS

Freedom and/or Necessity

THE revival of the idea of freedom—long under a mechanistic cloud—is a characteristic innovation of current thinking. Determinism is going out of fashion. It was never much more than a thought-saving device, although, in its scientific beginnings, it was crudely useful in materialistic polemics against theology.

The main reason, today, for affirming man's freedom of choice—in an older vocabulary, freedom of the will—is the general recognition that denial of freedom brings only bad consequences to human life, and that it is not necessary to the sovereignty of natural law.

Two recent publications are devoted to this subject. One, Corliss Lamont's book, *Freedom of Choice Affirmed* (Horizon, 1967, $5.95), is the work of a man who has for years been the chief spokesman of scientific Humanism. The other is a paper, "Determinism: Prerequisite for a Meaningful Freedom," by John O. Stevens, contributed to the Fall, 1967 issue of the *Review of Existential Psychology and Psychiatry.* Together these works give considerable evidence of the decisive character of the new declaration of freedom. Dr. Lamont's book provides a general survey of opinion on the subject, from Democritus and Lucretius among the ancients, and from Augustine as an early Christian thinker, up to the present. What becomes clear is that as the moral ardor of the early mechanists diminished, the anti-human walls of the intellectual rut they created were recognized as intolerable. The common-sense position about freedom—that we *feel* free, and *are* free within limits—is reaffirmed by Dr. Lamont with full documentation from contemporary thinkers. The denial of freedom, he shows, undercuts all logical demonstrations, rendering thought meaningless and human striving ridiculous. If man institutes no causes he has no responsibility and is not a man. Mechanistic argument may have loosened the clutch on men's minds of the priests of Jehovah, but its services soon created another confinement by teaching the helplessness of the individual, who is, therefore, no longer an individual. Following is a concluding statement by Dr. Lamont:

> I am convinced that everyone, even the most vocal determinists, in practice decide and act to a large extent as if free choice existed. The phenomenon of men negating or neglecting in practice what they profess in theory has always been so widespread that we should not be surprised to discover its presence in the day-to-day living of those who formally adhere to the necessitarian doctrine. Jean-Paul Sartre is right when he avers: "We are not free to cease being free." He is right because freedom of choice is an inborn, indigenous, ineradicable characteristic of human beings.

While Corliss Lamont's book is an excellent example of the use of naturalistic reason, free of many of the compulsions of the old war with theology, the paper by John Stevens, although quite brief, belongs to a later generation of thought and seems to have greater philosophical penetration. Mr. Stevens is concerned to show that all acts which reveal self-reference have an element of freedom in them. He develops his argument with the work of Godel and Turing and draws on J. Bronowski to show that the web of deterministic cause can never be an entirely closed system. It is this idea of *self-reference* which seems to add rigorous logical confirmation to the intuitive feeling of being free.

At the same time, perception by a man of the relative determinisms which shape his experience makes the only possible context of his free action. Freedom is choice among alternatives which have reality because they express causal chains which the individual can relate to and modify—or not—as he chooses. The following discussion is a clarifying account of determinism:

> When we think of determinism, we inevitably think of simple causality and we also conceive of some simple causal model, such as the familiar analogy of the mechanical interaction of billiard balls, to help us understand it. Our conception of the ideal interaction of billiard balls is already a significant

> departure from reality because we ignore "negligible" variables. When we then apply our conception of the simplified model to other events which are incredibly more complex there is a real danger that our models and concepts may mislead us, even when relevant data and formulas are rigorously defined and identified. The basic difficulty is that the human mind cannot comprehend the consequences of the simultaneous interaction of more than two or three variables without some kind of crutch. We can easily understand two variables with the help of a line graph, and a three-dimensional model will display three, but in order to comprehend more variables we must rely on laborious mathematical analysis or computer simulation. In order to grasp reality the human mind must isolate a few variables and subject them to an analysis. One of the reasons for the prodigious advance of scientific knowledge has been the development of rules and techniques for isolating systems, "controlling" variables which cannot be excluded from the system, and developing statistical methods and probabilistic hypotheses which deal with uncontrollable variables. However, complete isolation is an unobtainable ideal, and the causal principle in any but artificially isolated systems indicates the limited application of the principle as a description of reality *as a whole.*

Mr. Stevens seems here to have formulated a general guiding rule for the use of computers. Important questions would be: Have any significant factors of human freedom been obscured by the "probabilistic hypotheses which deal with uncontrollable variables"? Are judgments about the nature of man involved? What level of human behavior is affected by these judgments, and is any artificial determinism imposed on people by reliance on the conclusions produced by the computer?

Later in his paper, Mr. Stevens enlarges on the meaning of self-reference:

> According to the theory of evolution, inanimate mechanical processes created living systems which are able to maintain and replicate themselves; they do this through mechanisms which are able to respond both to internal and external conditions in ways that maintain the system. Since this purposeful activity is sufficient to insure the continuance of the system, it is not necessary to impute any other fundamental purpose to living systems, although subsequent evolution and diversification created a multiplicity of biological forms and subsidiary purposes through self-regulatory feedback loops, some of which lie entirely within the organism, such as reflexes and internal homeostats, and some of which require interaction with surroundings, such as in feeding behavior.
>
> All these self-regulatory mechanisms refer ultimately to the state of the organism, and the organism as a whole is a self-referring system.

The writer now establishes a hierarchical scheme of self-reference, in three stages. The lowest is made up of primitive reflexes and fixed mechanical reactions. They are self-referring in virtue of their self-maintaining consequences for the organism. Next are the structures which are modifiable through experience. These involve selective behavior and adaptation to environment, bringing a development which enhances the ability to learn while preserving individual integrity. The next stage is man:

> Human beings apparently represent the lowest rung of the third level, that of self-conscious intelligence. At this level there is not only direct awareness of the internal state and of the surroundings, but also awareness of awareness, which is directly self-referring. Man can not only learn and predict, he can learn and predict about his own knowledge and predictions. Knowledge can be freed from its subjective bias, and its inherent limitations can be allowed for. Moreover the principles of knowledge and feedback can be consciously and systematically applied to all events and embodied in machines and computers.

Mr. Stevens moves to his conclusion:

> The definition of freedom that emerges from this examination of living systems is that *Freedom is the ability of the organism to actualize the goals and purposes determined by, and inherent in, its structure.* Freedom is self-determination—not a violation of lawful behavior, but a type of it.

There is also this useful account of "conditioning":

> Conditioning is often described in terms of an external agent manipulating the organism through reinforcement, while it is equally valid to say that the organism modifies its own behavior in order to exploit the self-reinforcing aspects of its

> surroundings. The crucial question is: *Whose* goals are ultimately being served by the conditioning? No one dislikes being conditioned, provided the benefits exceed the inconveniences. People voluntarily submit to conditioning and eagerly condition themselves in the pursuit of goals. What we dislike about conditioning is the possibility that someone else will condition us in ways that ultimately satisfy his goals to the detriment of our own. This is an everyday social reality and the only defense against it is the same knowledge that establishes freedom. If I know that I am being conditioned I become free to resist it when I foresee undesirable consequences. My knowledge that this is true will motivate me to increase my knowledge, in order to further protect and increase my freedom.

There are other interesting sections in this paper, but we shall have to content ourselves with a final observation. While Dr. Lamont affirms freedom of choice, Mr. Stevens affirms the self, and by developing the conception of the self as a being who acts freely within limits, he shows the transforming effect of self-reference, of consciously thinking as a self in the world, acting in and on the world. It is, indeed, a different world, once the reality of the self is made the basis of thought.