

## ALL-OR-NOTHING MORALITY

THE first half of the January-February issue of *Transaction* is devoted to discussion by the editors and several contributing reviewers of the book, *Report from Iron Mountain on the Possibility and Desirability of Peace* (Dial Press, 1967). The general impression of these writers is that the book is a hoax, yet one that deserves attention. *Report from Iron Mountain* is claimed by Leonard Lewin in an "Introduction" to be the result of the research of fifteen scientists who for three years met once a month inside Iron Mountain in upstate New York, "in an underground nuclear shelter," to do the work assigned to them by a Government committee at or near the cabinet level. These scientists of various sorts were asked to determine what problems the United States would face "if permanent peace broke out," and to draw up a program for solving them. Mr. Lewin claims that an unidentified member of the committee brought him the report, urging that it be published. In their initial comment, the editors of *Trans-action* repeat its essential conclusion:

that while permanent peace may be possible, it probably would not be desirable. To quote the *Report*: "It is uncertain, at this time, whether peace will ever be possible. It is far more questionable, by the objective standard of continued social survival rather than that of emotional pacifism, that it would be desirable even if it were demonstrably attainable."

Peace, the *Report* concludes, is hell. If society is to remain stable wars must continue. "War itself is the basic social system, within which other secondary modes of social organization conflict or conspire." The indispensable functions that war and war preparedness serve are assigned to various categories, perhaps the key ones being economic, political, sociological, and ecological.

The cold-blooded "objectivity" of the report, its casual view that if we lacked enemies, we would probably have to invent them, and its matter-of-fact suggestion that a "modern,

sophisticated form of slavery" might prove to be the most stabilizing structure for our society, are doubtless sufficient evidence that the *Report* is a hoax. Yet the fact that many of its readers have not been *sure* it is a hoax makes its contentions all the more ominous. As the *Trans-action* editors say:

The fact is that the *Report* could have been compiled entirely from authentic sources. There are many social scientists doing this kind of investigation; there are members of the Defense Department who think like this. As one reader has observed, "This provides a better rationale of the U.S. Government's posture today than the Government's official spokesmen have provided. A better title for the book, in fact, would have been the same as Norman Mailer's novel: *Why Are We in Vietnam?*"

The threat that the *Report* holds is not so much that it will be believed and acted upon, but that it has been believed and acted upon. Significantly, TRANS-ACTION has found that those readers who take the book seriously tend to be Government officials. . . . One Defense Department informant has admitted that some of his colleagues have agreed with the *Report's* conclusion that the Vietnam war is sound because at least it helps preserve stability at home. Another informant, who works at the highest levels in strategic planning within the Pentagon, asserted after reading the *Report* that he saw no reason to consider it a hoax, since he often comes upon reports that read in much the same way. Yet a third person—a recent alumnus of the defense Establishment—found the *Report* quite credible. All this testifies to the enormous gap between secret Government assessments of questions of war and peace, of disarmament, and of the "war system" and official public stances. . . .

While all sorts of shattering conclusions are implicit in these few observations by the *Trans-action* editors, the comment of the eight specialists who review *Report from Iron Mountain* develops an explicit critical theme. It is that highly trained technical intelligence may become completely blind to the moral delusions in

the claim that human good depends upon maintaining the *status quo*. A second judgment is that the "objectivity" of the scientific approach in such matters makes these specialists immune to any kind of moral cost-accounting in relation to the objective of stability. No extreme of inhumanity seems to give them pause. If we have to commit "crimes" to keep things going—well, they are not crimes. Survival cannot be criminal.

The vast uneasiness of these social-scientist reviewers of the *Report* is evident in their contributions, for each writer recognizes the utter perversion of the discipline to which he has given a lifetime devotion. While there is no wild language, the measured statements are devastating enough. One critic, Leonard J. Duhl, concludes:

*Report from Iron Mountain* illustrates that the social scientist must re-examine any tendencies to define what is good as what is static and structured. It reveals how an ecological model can be twisted into a highly institutionalized and status-quo-oriented approach that negates the essence of ecology—change, and the participation of all segments of a system in the processes through which that change occurs.

Another contributor, Bruce M. Russett, points out that the putative authors of the *Report* recognize no value but "stability." This is their highest goal:

They are unwilling to take any risks to change the system or to revise the functions that the system serves; they seek survival without caring *what* survives. This unconcern with the *purpose* of America by those who guide its policies is the tragedy of our country and our profession.

Marc Pilisuk adds a depressing note based on some work of his own:

Two years ago I did some research into the military-industrial complex and came to an essentially similar conclusion namely that American society, as we know it, could *not* make the accommodations necessary to achieve disarmament reallocations, to achieve assistance of the type needed to avert extensive violence stemming from underdevelopment, or to achieve internal jurisdiction of disputes.

If the conclusion that current American society is incompatible with peace is valid, the recommendations one makes still depend upon values. *Report from Iron Mountain* remains true to its asserted heritage of the assumed source of all great values, the war system, and it concludes that peace is not to be obtained or desired. Perhaps the recommendation is prophetic for, beneath the rationalizations and moralisms, American policy does continue to make the choices that make future violent conflict inevitable.

There is ample provocation in this material for the angriest sort of attack on the policies of the United States, and this will doubtless be one consequence of the publication of the report. Yet this anger will hardly find a legitimate target. There is no problem of "evil men." There may be Machiavellian twists in the thinking of the industrial-military élite, but the source of our difficulties can hardly be laid to the special wickedness of a particular caste or group. These difficulties are more like the phenomena of an addiction than of a band of plotters.

Some basic *delusion* lies behind this horrifying development; we suspect that it lies very deep, and might even be present in the apparently innocent judgment of one of these critics, to the effect that we have lost concern with "the *purpose* of America."

What is the meaning of this phrase? Continents do not have purposes. Not even the political institutions of the people living on continents have purposes; institutions do not have independent being; they can only *reflect* the purposes of men. The way the purposes or "coals" of the United States have been spoken of in recent years, you would think that the nationality of the American people has some kind of autonomous being which moves toward fulfillment over the heads of the people themselves—and that to avoid disaster they must somehow cleave to that independent purpose. It seems a bit pathetic to find a social scientist resorting to a *mystique* of this sort. On the other hand, it would be far worse if he could think of nothing to appeal to.

A careful reading of Simone Weil's *The Need for Roots* would be useful, here. Only *people*, as she shows, have purposes. Organizations are tools developed to serve the purposes of people. It is the transfer of the value in human purposes to the efficiency, well-being, or "stability" of the tools that has brought us to the insane situation described by the social science critics of the *Report from Iron Mountain*. We need to *stop talking about national goals*.

It is because of this delusion about national goals that many men, when they read Thoreau, feel comfortable in calling him "extremist" and impractical. They are really converted to the view that their good lies in the organizational tools made for them by an earlier generation. There is a sense in which they are not really men, any more, but have let themselves become appurtenances of the social machine.

In the past, fortunate accidents of history have sometimes had the effect of freeing men of the delusion that they must worship and submit to the social machine. One example of this was the settling of the American continent by adventurous European emigrants—men who, in a generation or two, learned how to live well far from the control of a central political authority. If we turn to the literature originated by intelligent Americans during the closing years of the eighteenth century, we may feel the excitement of a period in which men habitually looked upon government as a tool, and organization as a convenience. There is no slavish devotion to the *status quo* to be found in the *Federalist Papers* or in the writings of Thomas Jefferson. It is only when men allow organizational necessities to fill vacuums, to take the place of their own purposes—whether this happens merely by default or acquisitive preoccupation—that the society they have evolved ceases to be a vigorous, ingeniously improvised set of tools and conveniences, and becomes a stratified *sickness*. It is a sickness which forever becomes worse for the reason that men imagine it to be the principle of their health and submit more

and more to the compulsion of adjusting to its neurotic demands. Marc Pilisuk's remark, "that it is the American system, rather than peace, that has grown dangerous and unresponsive to our needs," seems exactly right.

Part of the trouble surely lies in our peculiarly adolescent habit of praising our "system" as the greatest achievement in all history, and in teaching this vanity to our children almost from birth. Since the young have practically nothing to do with the system any more they are only its supposed-to-be-grateful beneficiaries—this exclamatory praise of whatever it is that we have as a "system" becomes a blind secular worship which is truly subversive of any individual morality or social responsibility. Add to this general picture the evolution to power of the technological elite, who have been taught to function like a bunch of junior grand inquisitors, and it does not become so difficult to understand why we find ourselves at this terrible crossroads of history.

There is of course another view of these matters—a view summed up in the fact that the noblest human impulses are always directed toward a greater-than-personal purpose, in behalf of a more-than-individual good. In consequence of this universally recognized moral reality—it is given; it does not have to be proved—the group becomes a symbol of the high and the holy.

A man who loves his country is more of a man than one who cares only for personal family interests. A man whose allegiance reaches out to all the world wins spontaneous admiration from those who begin to see what is meant by this ideal. We can hardly object to these ennobling self-identifications. They make the stuff of all that we know of human excellence. So, perhaps a country does have a "purpose." At any rate, some majestically great ideas were associated with the founding of the United States. And it would be unseemly to say that when the "people of France" gave to "the people of the United States"

Bartholdi's Statue of Liberty, with its moving inscription—

"Give me your tired, your poor  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me .  
...

the French didn't mean what they said, or that Europeans were not really *lifted* by the dream so many of them felt, and a great many of them realized, of a new life in the New World. One could collect a vast number of truly inspiring quotations showing how men felt about the promise of that life, but we won't do it here. We now have too many failures to explain, and the quotations would be embarrassing.

Yet the feelings they represented were not false. Mr. Russett's shy reference to "the *purpose* of America" was a way of recalling their refining and dignifying effect. We mustn't blame him for this, but since he is professor of political science at Yale University we *could* ask him to tell us why, as he puts it, the makers and managers of the present American system are "unwilling to take any risks to change the system," and why "they seek survival without caring *what* survives."

There are probably many ways to answer this question, but we can think of three essential factors that ought to be considered. First, the managers of this system (ourselves) have gotten rid of "morality" as any kind of a norm for what they do. Social Darwinism long ago replaced any subjective norm of behavior in respect to commercial enterprise, and competitive survival as the principle of nature has for generations sanctioned almost any method of triumph over one's competitors. This doesn't mean that there is *no talk of* morality, but the morality we talk about has the vastly convenient quality of appearing only when we want it to, and of always getting out of the way of any really practical project. And the fact is that there is absolutely nothing in our culture to exact pangs of conscience from the men who make this use of "morality." It is the

expected thing—completely above board. They *believe* in it. It all happened naturally.

Then, being enormously impressed by the monuments of our own growth, we are wholly convinced of the scientific infallibility of our methods. You might as well ask a technologist to curse God and die as to invite him to question the assumptions of the system he directs. It is here, in the blind acceptance of system, that technology ceases to be an elaborate organization of ingenious tools, and turns into a sovereign remedy for all ills and the dictator of all necessities—an authority from which all other values are now derived. As Wylie Sypher put it: "The evil comes when method is used (or abused) technologically—that is, when it becomes beguiled by its own mechanism."

So, something far worse than brigandage and thievery and exploitation is involved in what is revealed by *Report from Iron Mountain*. We suffer from the extreme corruptions of a surrogate religion. We are feeling the impact of the uncontrolled drives in the behavior of men who have a gadget which frees them of any need for self-restraint. *Nature* doesn't need any restraint! Just more of the same. Nature can't possibly go wrong.

Even trivial illustrations make the point effectively enough. It isn't with any sense of guilt that the car manufacturers explain that they couldn't possibly make electric cars for the population for thirty years. They *believe* it. And the public believes them. As Paul Goodman said, with his peculiarly penetrating sanity:

*We know* that they could put out an electric car right now. Yet the public as a whole takes this statement seriously. These people are doomed!

The almost total confusion which a situation of this sort represents is a direct outcome of the *general* inability to distinguish between interests and vision. The making of the idea of progress into a scientific doctrine gave it a beautiful externality and removed all problems of moral decision. You just do what is technically

(scientifically) necessary. Then, of course, pursuing interests fulfills vision, and you don't ever have to think about it. Like Forest Lawn, the system takes care of everything. Anyone really progressive is automatically virtuous, and moral criticism becomes a language without grammar, a subject without an object.

It is basically for this reason that today, when the moral disaster in so many of our technology-oriented social arrangements has become inescapably obvious, that long-repressed feelings of wrong and injustice can get out only in forms of nihilist emotion. In a society where moral judgment has been ruled out for generations, only all-or-nothing parameters exist for moral expression. Before morality was nothing, but now it is *all*. This works according to the rule of Michael Polanyi's pithy expression: "moral doubt is frenzied by moral fury, and moral fury is armed by scientific nihilism."

As a society, we have lost all recognition of the use of moral emotion except as a weapon. It is still effective in making people reject and hate, but we do not understand its role in the construction of human community. We do not have a theory of moral man. We have only, one could say, a theory of the moral *mob*. Only the Nechayevs, the nihilists and the terrorists, can operate in a field where history has reduced even the higher qualities of human beings to mechanistic forces. A simple example of how all this comes out in practice, even in the peace movement, is given by Robert Claiborne in an article in the *Village Voice* (Nov. 9, 1967)

It's easy enough to put down people who are frightened by violence as chicken, or middle class, or white liberals, or some other dehumanizing stereotype. What they are, they are. One thing they are, in my judgment, is a big majority in the peace movement, as well as an overwhelming majority of the millions that the peace movement has not—yet—involved or reached. To adopt a strategy involving "direct action" that is explicitly or implicitly violent, to foster mass confrontations that inevitably lead to violence, and, still worse, to put down "mere" protest as futile handwringing, is in effect to tell all these

people to get lost, because we are not interested in their values or feelings.

This is perhaps a happy thought for some "revolutionaries," who would prefer—and say so—a small, "militant" movement to a large "compromising" one. It is not such a happy thought for the Vietnamese, since a small peace movement, no matter how militant, is not going to stop them from being bombed or burned.

*Report from Iron Mountain* is an elaborate symptomatology of our moral emotions in their "nothing" phase. What the political commentators call "Maoism" is probably as good a word as any for what happens when the moral emotions are turned into a "total" weapon.

In neither case, however, is there any awareness of the moral individual. In neither case is there any acceptance of the idea of human growth-processes or any interest in their moral dynamics. It is gradually becoming clear that people who care about man, who are concerned with humanization, who recognize that individual moral development is the key to all personal and social excellence, will soon have to make the very simple choice of boycotting all activities and programs which remain blind to this fact.

## REVIEW

### "AVAILABLE AND PALPABLE TARGET"

IN *Psychology and the Human Dilemma*, Rollo May tells how he explained to a gathering of New England college presidents that the topic they had asked him to speak to them about was a contradiction in terms. They wanted an answer to the question: "What can the schools and colleges do to reduce anxiety and increase productivity in the learning years?" He advised them to stop worrying about "production." Production, he said, is for machines. Man creates, and to do this he needs quiet and time to think.

This was Dr. May's way of saying that schools are places of forced growth in frustration, alienation, and despair. Where do the schools get their mandate to serve such purposes? They get it from Society. Why do they get it from Society? Because Society can not think. Society is the collective projection of miscellaneous mechanisms for the gaining of ends which often have nothing to do with human growth, understanding, or vision. These ends are what the men of our free society say they want, and since they are free to pursue them, and do so, those ends are adjudged democratic and good. All praise to the ends of free men.

An article in the February *Progressive* by Seymour L. Halleck, professor of psychiatry at the University of Wisconsin, and director of student psychiatric services, describes universities as places where unrelieved psychological problems afflict the students because of the war in Vietnam. A careful reading of Dr. Halleck suggests that we ought to think of the colleges and universities in this way, instead of places where the young have opportunity to grow into "maturity."

Dr. Halleck's *Progressive* article, "Students and the Draft," is a study of the complexity of the moral problems the students face. It is very much to the credit of the students that they feel them so deeply. As Dr. Halleck says:

The problem with many youths is that they are so intellectually committed to their idealism that they cannot honestly face themselves when they compromise that idealism. Cynicism does not come easily to the young. In the depths of their consciences they are able to find only two "pure" answers to their personal involvement with the war in Vietnam. If the war is right, then they should not shirk their duty but should help fight it. If the war is wrong, they should do everything in their power to stop it. Although neither course of action is feasible as long as one is a student, there is a part of every student's conscience that says to him, "You either belong in the army or in jail." Anything else is at best a rationalization, at worst a cowardly compromise or "sellout."

That is how the students see it. Dr. Halleck comments:

I am not arguing that this view is rational. Nor am I insisting that it is consciously understood by the majority of students. I do know from my experience in treating and talking to male students that sooner or later they relate much of their malaise, their depression, and their anxiety to guilt over their privileged status. Beneath their painfully reasoned arguments for accepting a student deferment is a nagging fear that they have "sold out."

Part of Dr. Halleck's point is that this underlying problem of the students is inaccessible to them. They can't really do anything about it. If there were some way in which their studies could absorb their energies, there might be some hope, but the academic studies of the present do not do that. They do not seem to have anything important to do with student activities. Discussing "Where Graduate Schools Fail" in the February *Atlantic*, Christopher Jencks and David Riesman say:

Today's students are not protesting the frequently impersonal, inhumane quality of their professors' research, or even the casualness and occasional incompetence of their professors' teaching. They have almost all been bored in class since they were six, and very few even entertain the idea that this is unnecessary. Their anger and resentment focus on other problems, for which remedies are more obviously available: poverty, racism, the war in Vietnam, or even restrictive dormitory hours for girls.

The anti-war movement on the campus, Dr. Halleck believes, grows out of a combination of genuine compassion and rejection of the idea of killing one's fellow men, with the less obvious feelings of having compromised by accepting a student deferment. This psychiatrist writes:

There is no way of understanding what is happening on our campuses without considering the pernicious influence of guilt and fear.

If one opposes the war and is troubled by his protected status, the most rational and psychologically useful action he can take involves joining an activist movement which seeks to end the war. More and more students are choosing this alternative.

The problem with anti-war activism as a means of dealing with one's own conscience is that there is not much that students can do to end the war. As the student perceives his efforts to be ineffective, as he observes the relative non-involvement of his parents and professors, and as he contemplates the business-as-usual atmosphere on the campus, his frustration grows. The activist student cannot understand how supposedly idealistic men like his professors can continue to live their lives as though nothing was wrong. It is not surprising that his anti-war energies come to be directed against the university itself.

The university community is an available and palpable target. . . .

A more discouraging response of students to their guilt and fear is abandonment of all hope in the possibility of living a decent life within this society. Again, there are many factors which contribute to the alienation of students other than the war or the draft, but guilt and despondency generated by their protected status undoubtedly contribute to the increasing sense of meaninglessness and the increasing use of consciousness-altering drugs among today's youth.

If these are the obsessive themes imposed by society on student life, what hope is there for the kind of education described so well recently by Hudson Hoagland? He spoke of the need for education which will bring answers to the question:

How can human behavior be directed into channels of concern for man to replace parochial group rivalries and hates? Clearly new patterns of

thought are needed as never before to meet the crises of our time.

The places of education described by Dr. Halleck embody the *crises* of our time, not their remedies. It follows that if Dr. Hoagland and others are right in saying that the basic changes, the reforming patterns of thought, are to grow out of educational activity, then this activity will have to be new and be begun somewhere besides our colleges and universities. Where?

No one has an answer to this question, although a lot of people seem to be working on one. But until we recognize that exhortations about "improving" education to save the future are really silly, and a waste of time, unless they are in preparation for entirely new beginnings, it will be difficult to take attempted answers seriously.

## COMMENTARY

### EDUCATIONAL OPERATION BOOTSTRAP

THERE is always the problem, when genuinely emancipating educational ideas are proposed, of finding a way to secure the cooperation of people who will not at once see their value, but will need to grow into this recognition. For education, today, is very largely a community enterprise. It seems clear that in order to raise standards in education, we shall either have to lift the social community, too, or, failing in this, proceed without its help.

In this week's "Children," Prof. Bowers says that "the student's power of self-understanding could not possibly be implemented in the schools with the present system of public control." Agreed. How, then, does one go about enlightening school boards, administrators, and various pressure groups? One thing is certain: Education devoted to self-understanding cannot thrive—can hardly be attempted—in an atmosphere of polemics. The first requisite of its delicate invitations is an open, trusting spirit. The enterprise must foster the most tender of growths in the child.

This is an idea of education far in advance of those which now prevail in the social community. Its application would have to be an almost clandestine undercurrent in the attitudes of teachers, avoiding open conflict with politicalized slogans about the function of the schools. It seems obvious that a full-hearted attempt at such truly humanizing education, wherever it gets going, will have to be an independent venture—finding both its freedom and its material resources in itself.

There is a parallel in Buckminster Fuller's discovery, back in 1927, that an advanced technological program for universal human welfare would never find *official* sponsors. The officialdoms of our time, whether of state or industry, are not devoted to the general good. Fuller relates his experience:

I decided to take the initiative, and without benefit of a patron, to investigate what would happen, what could happen, if world society or its industrial

sectors were to apply the highest technology directly to making man a success on earth—not waiting for the new technology to first serve the weaponry and a generation later to piecemeal upgrade the domestic arts.

There were no private, corporate or governmental patrons with inherent need and mandate to underwrite my investigation. No government existed anywhere that said, "I will employ you and continually foster your attempt to make all world men successful exclusively through design science." No sovereign governments existed which represented more than a small percentage of "all" people. Governments will only patronize defense of the enterprise of their own respective nations' promulgations. There were—and are as yet—no capitalized patrons, even among the great foundations, chartered to underwrite such a comprehensive undertaking. I was convinced, however, that the proposition was worth investigating, so, forsaking the *a priori* concept of "Earning a Living" I began the investigation in 1927 on my approximately zero capital.

I soon found something that I will now announce to you as holding right up to this minute in history—that is: That no scientist has ever been retained, or hired professionally, to consider the scientific design of the home of man;—to consider objectively the ecological pattern of man;—to design ways of employing the highest scientific potential, toward helping man to be a success on earth;—to implement total man to enjoy the total earth;—to enjoy the great antiquities—each to enjoy the total earth without cost of disadvantage to any other men. No scientist has ever been retained to do such a task.

The story of how Mr. Fuller went ahead anyway, how he was able to involve architectural students all over the world, persuading them that he and they should do the *designing*—"not waiting for patrons to tell us to go to work and thereby freeing ourselves for the scientific designing of a successful 'livingry' system for man"—is told in *Document 2, The Design Initiative*, published by the World Resources Inventory, Southern Illinois University.

A great educational reform in behalf of Man, it seems to us, is faced by exactly the same situation. No "public" clients or patrons exist for this project. And waiting for them will not make them appear. Their name, in the present, at least, is *Godot*.

# CHILDREN

## . . . and Ourselves

### ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL FOR THE SCHOOLS

[This is a discussion of the importance of human individuality in child education and a proposal for teaching that takes it into account. The writer is C. A. Bowers, associate professor of education in the School of Education, University of Oregon. His article will appear in three parts.]

#### I

ONE of the central difficulties of educational theory in this country, which has been deeply influenced since the nineteen-thirties by the social reconstructionist followers of John Dewey, arises from the way in which the individual has been viewed. The reconstructionists' deep concern with improving the quality of social life led them to regard the individual as having worth only as he is able to contribute to this end. That in a democratic society there is no one criterion for determining whether the individual is making a worthwhile contribution creates a difficulty which they have generally ignored. In identifying the social problems the reconstructionist educators were, at the same time, determining what social values and actions would be considered as worthwhile. Or to put it another way, by first deciding the nature of the ideal society—this is essentially what they were asking their fellow educationists to do when they called upon them to formulate a "guiding social philosophy"—and then educating the student to live within its framework, they were led to emphasize the socializing rather than the humanizing process of education. Consequently, what they set out to develop was the social dimension of man—teaching him the techniques of getting along with others and learning how to work collectively toward common ends. Their approach is, unfortunately, dangerously one-sided, for it ignores the importance and, hence, the development of the inner resources of the individual. Another writer, Marjorie Grene, has made an especially devastating criticism of John Dewey when she charged that pragmatism is afraid to face the ultimate puzzle of human individuality. Although

the individual and his activities are what pragmatism is supposed to devote itself to, it is, she claimed, the adjusted individual, the stereotyped individual, the individual who has forgotten how to be an individual, that pragmatism celebrates. The same criticism can be made of the reform-minded followers of Dewey as well as many of today's educational practitioners. But it should be added that neither Dewey nor his followers gave serious consideration, in the first place, to the importance of developing the inner dimension of man so that he is both aware of his individuality and his responsibility for preserving it against the encroachments of the crowd.

A philosophy of education that has as its primary aim the developing of the student's power of self-understanding could not possibly be implemented in the schools with the present system of public control. Consequently it is necessary to say something about the kind of relationship that would have to be developed between the school and the public before going on to discuss in greater detail an alternative to using the school as a means of socializing the student with either the values of the middle class or of the reconstructionist educators. The present system of local control makes the school especially vulnerable to the demands of dominant and vocal pressure groups in the community. Should a group of concerned citizens take exception to an idea being discussed in the school and bring pressure to bear on the school officials, the teacher's right to pursue the idea further with the class will be contingent upon the school officials, and, perhaps, the school board's ability to resist public pressure. This is, indeed, a slender reed for the teacher to lean upon, as the school board members must periodically answer to the public by standing for re-election, not to mention the goodwill that it must maintain with the public if it expects to have, among other things, its school bonds approved. As the right to free intellectual inquiry has never been institutionalized in the public schools, the classroom teacher has only been able to exist, in the main, by perpetuating the social values that are agreeable to the dominant groups in the community. The social reconstructionist educators fully realized that this was a form of class education; the students were

being socialized with the values favoring the middle class rather than the working class which they wished to support. Their proposal was not for restructuring the relationship between the school and community so the teacher's freedom in the classroom would be guaranteed; rather it was intended to dissuade the teacher from being a passive agent of the reactionary middle class whom they regarded as in control of the schools. They wanted the teacher to identify, instead, with the working classes which had been excluded from influencing school policies and, therefore, the social values perpetuated in the classroom. The solution of the reconstructionists was merely one of re-aligning the teacher's loyalty with a different pressure group in the community. The educational effect on the student would remain essentially the same, only now the values and ideas of a different segment of the community would be imposed on him. Until the structural relationship between the school and community is altered this process of imposition cannot be appreciably changed.

Before the school can become the kind of environment that allows for searching examination, questioning and perhaps a degree of personal testing of social values—which is both free of coercion and reprisal—it will have to be insulated from community pressure which arises when the school deals with controversial issues. Respect for the process of the free play of the intellect and a feeling of psychological and intellectual security on the part of the public would provide the most natural and, it must be added, admirable form of protection. But lacking this, as we presently do, it would be necessary to evolve a form of institutional arrangement whereby the teacher's autonomy in the classroom would be both respected and protected. This would entail relegating the school's administrative officials to an ancillary position; evaluating the teacher's performance in the classroom, the right to overturn decisions arbitrarily in all areas in which the teacher exercises professional judgment, and the denigrating practice of intruding at will into the classroom—and it must be added, unannounced and uninvited—must all be replaced by a system that enables the teachers

collectively within the school to be self-regulating. This might include inviting new teachers to join the staff and the letting go of the incompetent. The teacher has a right to self-respect, privacy, and to make professional decisions without being kept under surveillance by an administrative official who is often more sensitive to community feeling than he is to the importance of free inquiry in the classroom. While the protection of these rights would drastically reduce the community's ability to control what goes on in the schools, it need not be considered as undemocratic.

Democracy has too often been associated with the control of education by the people; perhaps it would be more reasonable to associate it with a process that allows the student the freedom to develop his own individuality. This latter approach would be more consistent with social pluralism and more edifying to the democratic process. Yet, it has its dangers which the public must unconsciously sense. It would mean, for one thing, that the older generation would be less able to dominate the way in which young minds mature, for they would no longer be able to exert pressure on teachers who examine ideas which they regard as closed issues or dangerous in a moral or ideological sense. Conformity is a psychologically reassuring thing for most people, and unfortunately, to them, the school is fulfilling its function properly when it is staffed by people who subscribe to social and moral values acceptable to those groups which form the power structure of the community and when it stamps the students into a mold which these groups approve.

C. A. BOWERS

Eugene, Oregon

*(To be continued)*

## *FRONTIERS*

### Science and Human Freedom

THERE is a kind of science writer or popularizer who takes an especial delight in warning his readers that science cannot possibly keep order in its own discoveries. Such writers, licking their lips, report that there are more scientists alive today than have lived in the entire human past—which is their way of implying that the situation is practically hopeless. Of course, being progressive Westerners, and originators of the world's greatest problems, we shall never give up. Nothing can match the splendor of scientific achievement, and even in failure a proper application of the right technique will render all rivalry insignificant.

There is idle talk about a moratorium on discovery and of the need for more determined efforts to overcome "cultural lag," but none of this tired rhetoric has any effect on the people themselves. The vast mountains of scientific data are accumulating outside the lives of the people. It is a principle of scientific method to *keep* these data outside of human life. Matters which are passed through the lives of human beings no longer have any objectivity. A scientific fact is something that limits you, or threatens you, or which you can manipulate or use to threaten somebody else. It has pure external being, and nothing more.

This is really the fascination of science. You can always exhaust the being of a scientific fact because it was set up to be that kind of an experience. It is by definition external, consumable. This gives that beautiful certainty about the external world which makes the engineers so proud of being engineers and of what they can do. *Wow!* they say, when they tell you about it. And you say *Wow*, too, because there's not much else to talk about.

The really terrible thing about this Fourth-of-July conception of civilization is that it has nothing at all to say about human beings. Other people send up rockets, you say *Wow*, and secretly wonder if you ought to send your young son to technical school to become a rocket engineer. But this world of the engineers has nothing to do with you. It has no

openings which will let you pour your identity into it. It shuts you out, explains that you are irrelevant because you are an entirely accidental by-product of processes of causation to which you contributed nothing. And you are supposed to be *enthralled* by these stories concerned with your irrelevance! Some people do get enthralled by these matters, and this is a good preparation for becoming a specialist in bacteriological warfare, or something else that is really advanced.

It would be interesting, psychologically, to know how much this reductive view of human beings has contributed to the susceptibility of vast populations to the emotional appeal of brutal leaders. There is a sense in which the irrational personal power of these leaders refutes all this scientific stuff about the unimportance of human beings. You get your importance back by identifying with the leader. This kind of importance does not last, of course, and it serves the manipulative purposes of the leader only in crises of great criminality.

All that you can say, hopefully, about such dark explosions of history is that they let the cat out of the bag. The conventional truths about man aren't true. The nihilism of such frightening historical exposes does not, however, come only from the evil men who substitute their terrible lies for the conventional truths. The nihilism also comes from the reflexes of men who have not thought about themselves at all. They have no inner resources—no personal *being* to whom they feel responsible.

How do people acquire a *human* kind of responsibility? They get it from being aware of the history of their own freedom. A man's dignity is what he has made out of himself, in spite of external forces. When a man is proud of his nationality, his race, or even his social standing, if there is any legitimacy in his feeling, it rests on distinctive forms of behavior, not on any sort of accident. When a man says, "I am an American," in the old and original sense, he means he belongs to a group which settled, ordered, and harvested a wilderness for the common good. He means that *he* did it—it did not just happen. The youthful member of a Scottish clan is instructed in the heroism of the clan. No one is able to stop a hero from being himself—this is what

Scottish grandmothers tell their grandsons about the clan, which is a tribe of heroes. You come, they say, of an ancient race, a noble breed. A young man must learn about these things in order to be worthy of his lineage.

History is nothing more than the practice of self-reference in relation to the passage of events. History is how men have *used* their environments, not how their environments made them, which would be anti-history. When you stop talking about human freedom and how it is exercised to overcome circumstances, you take the human element away from history. You make it irrelevant. You turn it into "data" that specialists have charge of and will never use except in some kind of manipulative game. And meanwhile the data themselves, by some independent principle that we hardly understand, keep on multiplying like rabbits so that eventually, as today, there is just too much of it to file or understand.

Of course, when you talk about the importance of human freedom you always draw vigorous objection from the people who love the masses so much they don't want them to have to try to be free. It is hard, they say, and painful, to be free. And there is undeniable truth in the Grand Inquisitor's claim that most people don't *want* to be free.

But this isn't true of people who have studied the history of their own freedom—who have a vital tradition of transcendence. It is only those who have forgotten, lost, been lied out of, the story of their own individuality who don't want to be free. The role of the classic, the epic, the scripture, of all great literature, is to preserve the history of the use of freedom—the operative form of self-knowledge. The ideal of human freedom has always to be protected from the service-station conception of social institutions—which are held to exist to "give people what they want." Education is not, as Bacon thought, a means of showing people how to get what they want; education is an exercise by means of which enough men, it is hoped, will learn to want what is worth having.

To climb out of the abyss created by the mountains of facts that we can't personally use, but

are continually used against us, we shall probably have to start all over again in building a conception of history. Human history is history of transcendence. This is the meaning of life. An organism is a living system which relates to its environment by making the elements of the environment serve the organism's needs, progress, and growth. The organism has in *itself* the principles of selection for this purpose. The range of selection is its freedom. The end of the selection is self-maintenance, perpetuation, development. Growth is advance to a more inclusive, more comprehensive self-hood—transcendence. In a paper which applies this idea of freedom to all life, John Stevens observed:

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.

Here, you could say, are described the scope and purpose of the history of ideas. All the riches of culture, of man's wonderings about himself, about his own past, about his potentialities, about the means and methods of transcendence, are involved in the processes so briefly listed by Mr. Stevens. The most important consideration of all is the fact that knowledge which is not a part and fruit of this process will never be used by man for human purposes. We know this already as a generalization from historical experience. As Northrop Frye put it: "The notion that science, left to itself, is bound to evolve more and more of the truth about the world is another illusion, for science can never exist outside society, and that society, whether deliberately or unconsciously, directs its course." But this principle needs also to be worked out and grasped dynamically, in terms of psychological law.