

ENTERING INTO LIFE

THE student uprising at Columbia University last spring began a spate of comment and criticism almost as continuous as the discussion of the war in Vietnam. Most of the analyses of what happened in April come from teachers or students who show a rather deep identification with the concerns behind the disturbances. Take for example the report of F. W. Dupee, who teaches English at Columbia, in the *New York Review of Books* for Sept. 26. He starts out by recalling the sense of "trouble on the campus," invading the quiet atmosphere of a class in *The Winter's Tale*:

I saw the students growing more and more desperate under the pressures of the War. The War's large evil was written small in the misery with which they pondered hour by hour the pitiful list of *their* options; Vietnam or Canada or graduate school or jail! Naturally, they were edgy, staying away from classes in droves and staging noisy demonstrations on campus. To all this the Columbia Administration added further tension. Increasingly capricious in the exercise of its authority, it alternated, in the familiar American way, between the permissive gesture and the threatened crackdown.

So little unchallenged authority survives anywhere at present, even to the Vatican, that those who think they have authority tend to get "hung up" on it. Many of my fellow teachers shared the Administration's "hang-up." One of them said to me of the defiant students, "As with children, there comes a time when you have to say no to them." But the defiant students weren't children, and saying no meant exposing them to much more than a good spanking. The War was doing far more "violence" to the University than they were. Altogether, Columbia (especially the College where I teach and where the big April disturbances began) had been grim throughout the school year. And while nobody—even the student radicals—expected any such explosion as actually occurred, I would not have been surprised if the year had ended with an epidemic of nervous breakdowns.

Current examinations of the student revolts often begin with this general acknowledgement of

moral sickness in our society, recognizing the protests as an expression of intolerable dilemma felt by the young. The least valuable discussions are those which offer immediate "practical" solutions. For it becomes evident, when various attitudes are reviewed, that there can be no immediate solution. It hardly indicates the scale of the trouble to say that the radical leadership is only a fraction of the student population. All great historical troubles begin this way, and reports from other parts of the world—from France, Italy, Germany, and recently from Mexico, where twenty-six students were killed by police action—make it plain that longings for change are everywhere reaching a crisis intensity among the young.

The *Atlantic* for October gives nearly half its pages to "The War Against the Young," including a searching and reflective essay by Richard Poirier, a declaration by a Columbia student, and a collection of statements by other participants and by observers such as Kenneth Keniston and Erik Erikson. The student, James S. Kunen, puts the student case in a forceful explanation, "Why We Are Against the Biggees." Not to convey his argument, but to illustrate its base, we quote a little:

The Biggees *control*. I read a sixth-grader's history paper about the Spanish-American War. The young boy, having put away his Mattel M/16 automatic rifle for the evening to do his homework, wrote that the 1898 war was fought by America to set the poor Cubans free from tyranny. He added that America traditionally fights on the side of right for justice and freedom and therefore always wins, "like in Vietnam today." The Biggees have that kid right where they want him. They've got his mind; when he's eighteen they'll take his body. . . .

. . . it isn't a free country. You can't drop out of school because you'd be drafted, and you have to study certain things to get a degree, and you have to have a degree to make it, and you have to make it to

get what you want, and you can't even decide what you want, because it's all programmed into you beforehand. You can *say* whatever you want, but you won't be heard because the media control that, but if you do manage to be heard, the People won't like it, because the people have been told what to like. And if they don't like you, they might even kill you, because the government endorses killing by exemplification.

This is background. Mr. Kunen lists the specifics of what is wrong at Columbia—involvement with large-scale acquisitive enterprise, military intelligence, war-oriented scholarship, and the planned invasion of a park used by Harlem Negroes to build a gymnasium (his list is a lot more colorful than this summary)—and says:

Seeing all this, we decided to change it. Of course, if you don't like it you can leave, but if you leave you're going to run into something else you don't like, and you can't go on leaving forever because you'll run out of places to go. So we decided to change it. We petitioned, we demonstrated, we wrote letters, and we got nowhere. We weren't refused; we were ignored. So one day we went into the buildings, and one day somewhat later we were pulled out and arrested and many people were beaten. In the intervening days we were widely accused of having ourselves a good time in the buildings. We did have a good time. We had a good time because for six days we regulated our own lives and were free.

Well, these extracts don't carry the power of Mr. Kunen's statement, but they do show the unlikelihood of any "compromise" settlement of issues which run so deep. The Columbia uprising challenged the foundations of a culture, not surface conditions that can be isolated and judged on their merits. Mr. Poirier, at any rate, sees the confrontation in this light:

In thinking about the so-called generation gap, . . . I suggest that people my age think not so much about the strangeness of the young but about their own strangeness. Why is it "they" rather than "we" who are unique? . . .

Only when the adult world begins to think of itself as strange, as having a shape that is not entirely necessary, much less lovely, only when it begins to see that the world, as it has now been made visible to

us in forms and institutions, isn't all *there*, maybe less than half of it—only then can we begin to meet the legitimate anguish of the young with something better than the cliché that they have no program. Revolutionaries seldom do. One can be sick and want health, jailed and want freedom, inwardly dying and want a second birth without a program. For what the radical youth want to do is to expose the mere contingency of facts which have been considered essential. That is a marvelous thing to do, the necessary prelude to our being able, any of us, to think of a program which is more than merely the patching up of social systems that were never adequate to the people they were meant to serve.

There is considerable evidence that what for some began as an action to reform the university has become—also for some a spearhead to reform society. Recent concessions by the Columbia administration are now spoken of as having a "cooling effect" on student unrest, making an obstacle to renewing the protest. This direction of student intentions forms the basis of a comment by Murray Hausknecht, in answer to the question, "How Shall We Understand the Columbia Uprising?" (in *Dissent* for September-October):

The students believe . . . that the university "ought to be moral," and Columbia was an attempt to *make* the institution moral. It is not the first time in history that men, believing their society to be utterly corrupt and isolated from politics, have set out to make a community and society moral. As might be expected, its course was similar: moral purity in action has rarely served the ends of justice and freedom. The university is not "one-dimensional" (as even Herbert Marcuse concedes), but the activists would make it so. One can transform the university into a base for revolution, a guerilla camp from which to make forays into the surrounding mass of corruption. To exist surrounded by corruption requires strong measures to protect oneself against its influence; a guerilla camp is pervaded by the purity of dogmatism and the certitudes of authoritarianism. But that means *the end of the university*, for its ruling principles are the necessity for the free play of the mind and the acceptance of uncertainty.

In their attempt at transforming the world, the activists have succeeded in transforming only themselves. What was put up "against the wall" at Columbia was their inherited values. And once these

are gone there is no chance for the students to realize their original vision of a moral community.

We have assembled these quotations—there could be many, many more—not in order to make a ground for moral judgments, but to show the difficulty in making them, and probably their unreasonableness at this point. The dimensions of the moral upheaval in the present reach out of sight of ordinary standards of judgment, so that it is more important to try to comprehend those dimensions than to hurry on to decision as to who is "right" and who is "wrong." On the one side we see adults who are beginning to feel that their entire world is in danger; and on the other are the young, to whose longings and pressures Mr. Poirier gives poignant expression:

More hung up on youth than any nation on earth, we are also more determined that youth is not to enter history without paying the price of that adulteration we call adulthood. To justify what adults have made of our young, virgin, uncontaminated land, it's as if we are compelled to show that what happened was necessary. . . . Like our natural wonders, youth will be allowed to exist only on condition that it remain, like some natural preserve, outside the processes that transform everything else into waste. . . .

I have avoided any precise definition of youth because it refers to the rare human condition of exuberance, expectation, impulsiveness, and, above all, freedom from believing that all the so-called "necessities" of life and thought are in fact necessities. This condition exists most usefully, for the nation and the world, in people of a certain age, specifically in those who have attained the physical being that makes them wonderfully anxious to create life, to shape life, to enter into life rather than have it fed to them. It is the people of this age, members of what Friedenberg calls the "hot-blooded minority," who are in danger of obliteration as representatives of youth. It is impossible for them to remain youth, in any sense that would profit the rest of society, and also enter history on the hateful terms now offered them by our political, economic, and technological system. . . .

So, what I'm saying is that if young people are freeing themselves from a repressive myth of youth only to be absorbed into a repressive myth of adulthood, then youth in its best and truest form, of

rebellion and hope, will have been lost to us, and we will have exhausted the best of our natural resources.

This seems the right level for discussing the response of youth to existing society. The issue is not so much what they are doing, or have done, but what they *cannot* do. It is not a matter of measuring out reluctant praise for their spirit and balancing this with cautionary advice, but of recognizing that the proprietors of our society are in something like a King-Canute situation with respect to the tide that is rising in the young. One need not give a blank check to the nihilism so close to the surface in some aspects of the radical movement in order to understand how the young feel. As they look at the present scene, they hardly see a decent choice. One of them, quoted in the *Atlantic*, said: ". . . to condemn today's students wholesale, because they are ready to commit themselves in a fight against the evils they see and because the restlessness inside them forces them to act now instead of waiting for some great moment in their future when they suddenly stop learning and are ready to act, is to condemn the element in my generation that is most exciting and which will eventually show itself as the key to our strength." Another said:

Wherever you want to go everything revolves around profit and private property. Those are the premises, and you can't question the logic. The logic is consistent. . . . But there's a passion for religious meaning, for spirituality that's just been squelched for so long: people are dying for spirituality . . . *Me, I'm dying.*

For a psychological parallel to the resistance that is springing up, one could hardly improve on Czeslaw Milosz' account of how he broke with another sort of "Establishment" thinking and authority:

From outside, it is easy to think of such a decision as an elementary consequence of one's hatred of tyranny. But in fact it may spring from a number of motives, not all of them equally high-minded. My own decision proceeded, not from the functioning of the reasoning mind, but from a revolt of the stomach. A man may persuade himself, by the most logical reasoning, that he will greatly benefit his health by

swallowing live frogs; and, thus rationally convinced, he may swallow a first frog, then the second; but at the third his stomach will revolt. In the same way, the growing influence of the doctrine on my way of thinking came up against the resistance of my whole nature.

There are certain human disasters that cannot be helped by either force or money. They have to be met by distinctively human means or nothing good happens. One of these is the tragedy of mental illness. Is there, one wonders, any correspondence between the problem of mental illness and the other big problems so many people now expect to solve either with force or with money? Will it turn out, finally, that these problems are simply not accessible either to force or to whatever influence money can buy? That they are like mental illness at least in this?

The book which inspired this question is Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, and Signet), an epoch-making contribution to general understanding of both the subtleties and the heroic factors involved in recovery from "insanity." It is the story of various sorts of reconciliation, not the least of which is the recognition, partial in the father, more complete in the mother, by a sixteen-year-old girl's parents that they can do practically nothing to help their daughter to become well—nothing, that is, except try to understand the nature of her struggle, and to get out of the way of the torturingly slow progress she is making toward gaining control over her own life and mind.

It is difficult to say enough about the excellence of this book. For the reader, Deborah Blau becomes a microcosm of the human struggle to be oneself. It would be a mistake to press the parallels with normal life; these exist, but they ought to occur spontaneously. Yet there are clues. One is in the elaborate subjective barriers erected by this unhappy child to protect herself against the usual "techniques" of influencing human behavior. She has, it develops, fled from

her parents' world in order to escape all such techniques.

The doctor who works with Deborah, who helps her back into a world which is itself by no means "normal," is an entirely believable figure. She has the toughness she needs to do her work, and her certainties, learned from experience, are of a sort that the whole world could profit by. This is her comment on the sort of "inventories" of personality which are provided to a psychiatrist for preliminary diagnosis:

In the end it was the girl's age that decided her. . . . Again she looked at the facts and the numbers. A report like this had once made her remark to the hospital psychologist, "We must someday make a test to show us where the health is as well as the illness."

The psychologist had answered that with hypnotism and the ametyls and pentothals such information could be obtained more easily.

"I do not think so," Dr. Fried had answered. "The *hidden* strength is too deep a secret. But in the end . . . in the end it is our only ally."

Then, at the end of the first meeting with the patient:

"If it's all right with you, we will make another appointment and begin our talks, because I believe that you and I, if we work like the devil together, can beat this thing. First, I want to tell you again that I will not pull away symptoms or sickness from you against your will."

This, for the world in general, would be an enormous chasm to cross. How could we possibly agree that everyone must recognize and overcome his own symptoms? We haven't got *time*. But as this story develops, the reader realizes that in mental illness there is no other way. The patient's symptoms are his props for staying alive. Other props, or rather an inner strength, must grow before the old supports can be given up. This is unarguable reality. Nothing else is possible. What if nothing else will work for the recovery of the world?

The doctor, Deborah finds, is far from omnipotent. She can't do anything about a cruelty

the girl witnesses on the ward. In this passage, Deborah's mythical name, "Furii," for the doctor, is used:

"You know," Furii said, "I am not connected with the running of your ward. I cannot break into ward policy."

"I'm not saying that policy should be changed," Deborah said, "unless the policy is beating up patients in pack."

"I have no say in discipline of ward personnel either," Furii said.

"Is Pilate everybody's last name around here?"

At last Furii agreed to mention it in the staff meeting, but Deborah was not convinced. "Maybe you doubt that I saw it at all."

"That is the one thing I do not doubt," the doctor said. "But you see, I have no part in what is to be done on the wards; I'm not an administrative doctor."

Deborah saw the match lighting dry fuel. "What good is your reality when justice fails and dishonesty is glossed over and the ones who keep faith suffer? . . ."

"Look here," Furii said. "I never promised you a rose garden. I never promised you perfect justice. . . . and I never promised you peace or happiness. My help is so that you can be free to fight for all of these things. The only reality I offer is challenge, and being well is being free to accept it or not at whatever level you are capable. I never promise lies, and the rose-garden world of perfection is a lie . . . and a bore, too."

So the parallel breaks down. No one asks, in the sane world, for a rose garden, these days. It's not the same thing at all. Yet there are certain similarities.

REVIEW

UNFAMILIAR MATURITIES

IN any effort to understand the present generation of youth, one ought to read people who are in some sense on their "side"—who give evidence of liking and admiring them. The books of Kenneth Keniston and Edgar Z. Friedenberg are especially valuable for this purpose. Keniston, who studied with Henry Murray at Harvard, and is now at Yale, won a wide audience with *The Uncommitted* (Harcourt, 1965), a psychological study of alienated students, and his just published *The Young Radicals* is one of the best available accounts of the driving idealism and revolutionary politics that in the early 60's replaced the apathy of the "silent generation." Friedenberg's books, *The Vanishing Adolescent* (Beacon, 1959) and *The Dignity of Youth and Other Atavisms* (1965)—concerned with the young of high school age—are written with the affection that comes with close and prolonged contact. Mr. Friedenberg gives incidental instruction in the avenues of perception which are added to scientific "objectivity" by open regard and respect for other human beings.

But despite the importance of psychological studies, the novel is still the richest source of insight into human beings, and often the most influential communication about them. One learns in another way from a distinguished book which dissolves the categories of explanation or analysis as differentiated activities. Because the novel is not didactic, it reaches beyond the artificial barriers created by the scientific approach, affecting the reader at levels of intuitive understanding. (This may also occur, of course, when a humanistic psychologist is something of an artist and able to use the same materials, adding a delicate self-awareness to climactic moments of realization.)

What, for example, has been the over-all effect of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*? More than anything else, probably, it gave the young of that time a feeling about themselves, and the sense of having a champion. Practically a tidal wave of comment, appreciation, and criticism followed publication of this book (in 1951), making almost a cult of Salinger's work, and he is said to have gone

into hiding in self-defense. But since the book appeared, Holden Caulfield's rejection of "phoniness" in the adult world has become a standard response for all but the most colorless and insensitive of youth. And Holden's fantasizing theories of escape from it all are now being acted out by thousands of teenagers.

There have been later books of this sort—a good one is *A Separate Peace*, by John Knowles—and another story of special excellence about teenagers that has just come out is Nat Hentoff's *I'm really dragged but nothing gets me down* (Simon & Schuster, \$3.95). At first it seems a slight sort of book, but that, the reader may feel, is one of the things that make it worth reading. Mr. Hentoff, in short, will not attempt to explain these kids away with any sort of depth analysis.

There are plenty of complexities in the lives of present-day adolescents, but there are simplicities, too. Mr. Hentoff tells the story of a high school senior in the process of making up his mind about things like the draft, which will soon breathe down his neck, and shows the gradual emergence of values which affect his decisions. The book seems to capture the qualities of the present "scene" as young people experience it, in terms of their vulnerabilities and susceptibilities. The reader begins to get a feel for the immunities of the young to the "stakes" of adults, and for the dimensions of their longings and the real if fragmentary character of their dreams.

There is hardly any attempt to achieve "objectivity" by means of familiar norms in Mr. Hentoff's story. But there are father-and-son encounters like the following, in which Sam, the father, after enduring as much of the shattering sound of the hi-fi he can bear, tells his son Jeremy to "turn it DOWN!"

The door opened, and there he was, his mouth set, his son, the familiar stranger.

"Look," said Jeremy, "if you can't listen to this music with the volume up, you're not getting it. It's meant to be loud. Loudness is part of it. It's not listening to, it's listening from the inside. You have to go all the way inside until there's just you and the music, like in a space capsule."

"But you're not living in your own space capsule. You're living here with us."

"Oh damn it, it wasn't that loud anyway."

"Why don't you use those earphones?"

"That's not the same as having the whole room turn into sound. Earphones compress the music, they compress me. The whole idea of rock is to break out of yourself. I mean expand yourself, not turn yourself into a little ball."

"Well, I'm afraid you're going to have to control your expansion until you have your own apartment. When you're living with other people, there are certain compromises you have to make. It's elementary civil liberties, Jeremy. I have the right not to be assaulted by your music."

"What's the use? O.K., O.K., you win again. I kept it down and it's still not enough."

Jeremy ran into the room, rushed back with a record in his hands, and with much hard breathing finally cracked it in two. You could be much more dramatic, Sam thought, with those old 78s.

"Now that's stupid!"

"It's over, it's over. Don't you understand? You've won. Enjoy the silence. Dig the silence. I'm going over to Eric's. The civil liberties are more equally distributed over there."

"I didn't say you could go out. And after this tantrum—"

Jeremy went back into his room and slammed the door. Now the silence behind that door was like a thing, a lump of spite. The father stood, feeling his heart pound, pound to get out, to get out at whom? At what? There was a beast inside him in the clotted silence, a non-electronic beast, give it that much credit. That's how Stalin killed Lenin. He knew Lenin had high blood pressure and he made him angrier and angrier until he killed him. I wanted a son, the father stared at the door, and I got my assassin.

The trouble with the young isn't only that they want what they want; now they have "principles" which make whatever they want right.

The story grows from Jeremy's encounters with his friends, with his family and relatives, with militant Negroes, with his teachers, and with girls. Slowly it becomes evident that there are independent maturities developing in these youngsters, different from the measures used by older people. A common ground is lacking. Irremediable loneliness results,

and desperate self-assertion in which heroic qualities sometimes appear, but never in the adults. In a class in which a sophisticated visiting speaker had explained why he would participate in war, saying that he cared more about being "relevant" than being "pure," one of Jeremy's friends (Mike) announced that he would go to jail rather than be drafted. The professor asked:

"And if, having gone to jail and thereby having retained your innocence, in this narrow sense of the word, you saw by the time you were sixty or seventy that your country had not changed and the world had not changed?"

Mike stood up and jammed his shaking hands into his pockets. "Look, there are some things you have to do whether they work or not. Violence is *wrong!* War is *wrong!* Maybe it wasn't against the Nazis. I don't know. I wasn't around then. But I do know it's wrong now and I'm not going to be part of it. You killed a lot of people, and that doesn't seem to have bothered you very much. I don't want to be like that. And if I let you trap me by what you call reason and logic, I could become like that. I'm just not going to be part of it. Maybe that's being irrelevant, but you've got to start somewhere if you're going to change the world, and I'm starting with myself. . . ."

Toward the end a shape for the life Jeremy will live, in the next few years, gets a little definition. Not much, but enough. Mr. Hentoff will not anticipate. He imposes no "oughts" on these young. He won't write about more than he can see and understand. In some years of intimate contact with the young—he isn't so old, himself—this writer has come to honor what he understands and to wait and see about what he doesn't. By these means he generates the reality behind the story. If the young have only vague feelings, that's what he reports—that, and something about their direction. His books, therefore, reveal more of the human becoming process than learned studies of the young. The tentativeness of the artist about unclear matters becomes at the ethical level a basic respect for human beings and the form of hope this respect implies.

COMMENTARY

"INSTITUTIONAL" CRISIS?

IN addition to the materials quoted in this week's lead on the trouble at Columbia, an excellent "objective" account in the September *Transaction* gives a blow-by-blow report of the disturbance. The writer Ellen Kay Trimberger, who was an instructor in sociology at Columbia at the time, titles her report, "Why a Rebellion at Columbia Was Inevitable." It begins:

The student demonstrations at Columbia University in the spring of 1968 caused a very serious institutional crisis—involving the disruption of the university for two months, the arrest of more than 800 students, the injuring of more than 250 students and faculty, and the prospect of continued conflict. To explain why, one must first understand how the institutional weakness of the university and the politicalization of students in recent years led to confrontations between students and the administration.

Starting in 1966, students resorted to direct action against the administration to protest against university policies toward the community and its cooperation with the military, the C.I.A., and the Selective Service. The administrators responded first with concessions, and later with repression, but they failed to re-examine their basic policies—or to make any reforms in the way the university's policies were determined. In fact, the public policies of the university (as opposed to its internal academic issues) were being decided by only a few administrators, after little or no consultation with the faculty let alone the students.

This combination of a remote and unaccountable administration, a politicalized and dissatisfied group of students, and a virtually powerless faculty was explosive. Add to it the unhappiness of the faculty and students over the declining educational quality and reputation of a great university, as well as the absence of effective ways to seek change, and you have a highly overdetermined "revolutionary" situation.

It becomes evident that while the students' grievances were real enough, student organizations were powerless, the administration habitually autocratic and inaccessible, and the faculty lacking in a governing body of its own.

"Last year," Miss Trimberger reports, "a member of the only standing committee of the university admitted in public that his committee had little power, and charged: 'The present system of government at Columbia is similar to that of Tsar Nicholas II.'"

At the peak of the trouble, the demonstrations had the support of 5000 students, with the "moderates" joining the "radicals" as they lost faith in both administration and faculty. While the faculty formed an *ad hoc* group which attempted to mediate, the students were unable to gain confidence in this body, and when the President called in the city police the faculty group "dissolved in chaos"—"completely alienated by the administration's resort to force." Miss Trimberger makes this general diagnosis:

It was ultimately the organizational weakness of Columbia that prevented any effective negotiations.

The administration, because of its isolation and lack of supporting structures, became fixated upon upholding its own authority. To negotiate would have accorded some legitimacy to students' grievances, and the administration found this too threatening.

The faculty, because of its weak organization and lack of experience in university government, could not counter the administration-student polarization.

The administration made every effort to discredit the demonstrators, but this served only to confirm the views of the most radical students and to strengthen their leadership. . . .

In this polarization the moderate positions were destroyed: Student moderates became radicalized, administration moderates became rigid and conservative, faculty moderates failed in both attempts to mediate and became alienated from both sides. The weakness of the moderates was a result of the institutional weaknesses of Columbia—the archaic and isolated nature of administrative authority, the lack of effective faculty and student governments, and the attenuation of faculty-student relations. These institutional weaknesses led to a general lack of administrative and faculty responsiveness to student grievances and to the

students' attempt to compel response by dramatic action.

One recalls the verdict of the Byrne Report, made at the request of a committee of the California Board of Regents, on the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley in the fall of 1964:

. . . *something* is seriously amiss in a system of government which induces a substantial fraction of the governed to violate the law and risk their careers in order to dramatize their dissatisfaction. The critics are right, too, in feeling that ultimate responsibility for this situation lies where ultimate power lies: with the Regents. . . .

The University, too, displayed a consistent tendency to disorder its own principles and values.

While dedicated to the maintenance of a house of ideas and thought, it proved selective in determining whose ideas would gain admittance. While upholding the value of a continuing discourse in the academic community, it refused to engage in simple conversation with the membership of that community.

If, as was sometimes charged, the Regents of the University of California ran that enormous, nine-campus institution like a "country store," discouraging imagination and initiative on the part of the staff, and rendering it inadequate in a crisis situation, Columbia suffered from a similar lack of strength in the intermediate structures of both administration and faculty. Both situations lend force to the suggestion of Richard Poirier:

In thinking about the so-called generation gap, . . . I suggest that people my age think not so much about the strangeness of the young but about their own strangeness. Why is it "they" rather than "we" who are unique?

One more comment seems pertinent. If, as Miss Trimberger concludes, the extremity of the outbreak at Columbia was due to the rigidity and cultural lag of the university itself, it seems obvious that measures which are genuinely corrective will have to be more fundamental than any of the concrete proposals which have been made. At issue is the moral responsiveness and cultural sensibility of large institutions. What is missing in these organizations is missing at the

"molecular" level—apparently there is no heightened moral awareness to leaven and humanize the mechanical decision-making of such institutions. There had not been enough independent exercise of moral intelligence, so that technical administrative necessity filled the vacuum. So the problems of the universities are not really "organizational" problems any more. This is a diagnosis made irrelevant by coming too late. The problem is now the slow evolution of an authentic moral community which, some day, will support the sort of university both students and faculty long for, but are powerless to create.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves WORDLESS KNOWLEDGE?

Is it legitimate to speak of knowing something before it is given a name?

Two years ago (in *MANAS* for Sept. 7, 1966), two college professors got at this question indirectly in a lead article, "Reflections on Experimental Teaching." Both authors—Frank Lindenfeld (sociology) and Peter Marin (English)—were at that time teachers at California State College in Los Angeles.. They talked about the need of students to experience meanings before they are named:

Perhaps a good example of this is the concept of "alienation." Students, as we all know, hear a good deal about this "condition" of modern man. But their understanding of the concept and the condition to which it refers is much richer if discussion of it has emerged *naturally*, as a result of their confrontation of their own experiences. They may or may not have a word at first to describe what they are talking about, and the teacher may then want to supply it, but we feel that he should supply the word and the abstract concept only *after* the students have provided the opportunity.

If the concept comes *first*, the students will apply it like a "title" to their experience without letting the experience itself emerge—and their knowledge will remain "abstract," without roots in their personal experience. But if the experience or condition comes first, the concept becomes personally meaningful; it becomes a tool of understanding. What is *most* important is that the students and teacher preserve the relationship between subjective experience and more objective descriptions of experience.

What this seems to say is that some kind of interiorizing thought must precede the use of language for definition. Does this mean that there can be thought without words? Or does it mean only that men ought to use words carefully and precisely?

An informing consideration of these questions appears in the Summer 1968 issue of the *Phi*

Kappa Phi Journal. Writing on "Thinking with Language and Beyond," Adolph O. Goldsmith, professor of Journalism at Louisiana State University (Baton Rouge), begins by asking:

How essential is language to human thought? Does language often become a substitute for thought? When we think are we really thinking about something or are we merely thinking about what to say? Do the restrictions and habits of language impede understanding between peoples?

Dr. Goldsmith's paper is devoted to showing that there can be and is thought without language, that this thought may be regarded as prior to language, and that recognition of the reality and importance of this kind of thinking may be a key to many of the problems of both education and communication. Language, he says in effect, is the differentiation of thought for purposes of communication—"the primary purpose of language is to communicate, not to think." The discipline of grammar, then, is a discipline of communication, not of thought itself, although thought may have its own corresponding but probably subtler discipline. Dr. Goldsmith writes:

A child begins to think before he learns to talk or to understand words spoken to him. He learns *about* things before he learns the names for those things. As Rousseau wrote, "The first inventors of speech could give names only to ideas they already had." Piaget said that "although language is an important factor in building logical structures, it is not the essential factor." Lewis wrote: "Independently of us, a child of his own accord must perceive similarities and differences in the world of his daily experiences." Thus logic suggests that thought, at least in our early life, necessarily preceded words. If this was once normal, there is no real reason why the same order cannot prevail again.

Well, there may be no "real" reason to prevent, but there are lots of obstacles to general admission of what Dr. Goldsmith is saying. In the first place, without language, thought must be understood as constellations or nuclei of meaning, rather than ideas made explicit by defining limits. In one part of the mind, a sense of security is obtained by precise definition. But the imprint of thought, in terms of language, as Dr. Goldsmith

points out, can be borrowed from others, with very little of the understanding which ought to lie behind the use of words. A distrust, and even fear, of authentic meanings can result from habitual reliance on the formal precisions of language:

When we are asked to consider an idea or a concept, we find ourselves instead considering what we have heard or read about the idea, rather than going at the task fresh and flexible in our thinking. When the track of acquired information veers in one direction, we are likely to go along instead of insisting on what would be our own different direction, for which there are no convenient guiding tracks.

Language, then, is a tool, but it is also a track made of confining grooves. This analysis brings into play the full spectrum of the Platonic criticism of the mimetic poets, who make familiar tracks so attractive by their art that their works become serious barriers to original or self-reliant thinking. Equally pertinent is the criticism of art educators, of observers like Herbert Read, who point out that the natural creative faculties of children begin to be stultified a little before they reach adolescence, when the heavily verbal side of the curriculum increasingly displaces the spontaneous psychological life of the young. Then the artificialities of language tend to take over:

Too many of us . . . find it difficult to think *about* something without our thinking being distorted to fit into words we intend to use to communicate that something to someone else. Ask a group of people to think about a word, such as "bravery" or "love." After a short time, ask each one of them what went on in his mind, and you will invariably discover that they were not thinking about the idea but were busily sorting through words and phrases which they might use to express to you what they had been thinking about. This habit is natural, for most of us think only in terms of communicating an idea, or carefully selecting words which will convey, not what we actually think, but what we assume the other person expects us to think.

But why *should* we value the expectations of others more than our own thinking? This question calls for some brooding, but one answer would be

that we have had so little experience of the excitement of preverbal thinking that we hardly know it is possible. Then there is the enormous social pressure to accept as authoritative the verbal codifications transmitted by "education"—a process which all true teachers must resist throughout their lives. Michael Polanyi's *The Tacit Dimension* (Anchor, 1967, 95 cents) discusses this reliance on *definable* knowledge under the heading of "unbridled lucidity," by which is meant the misleading certainty which comes from elaborate knowledge of externalities—of the "objective" aspects of things, which are so easily named. The axis of an experience is not its shape, yet the core meaning lies; there, in what it turns on. It is the axial realities of life which resist definition, which need, so to speak, thought without words.

The importance of thought without language may dawn on us only after experiencing the impoverishments of total reliance on language; And because of the compromises imposed by communication, we seem able to make only an oblique approach to the meaning of thought before it is cut up and locked in words. Yet one may find ascents to this level of awareness in the works of great writers. There is a flooding, three-dimensional splendor in their expressions, with meaning spilling out of conceptual frames, bursting logical confinements by a life stronger than words. For such men, words pour instead of contain. Their sentences are more like fountains than fences. Their concepts always come *after the fact*; they are borne aloft by floating meanings, and are not extension ladders up which the intellect climbs.

Dr. Goldsmith's paper is concerned with fundamental assumptions that should enlighten all the disciplines involving the pursuit of meaning.

FRONTIERS

Troubles of the Mass Media

OURS is a culture notoriously given to sacrificing its ends to the mechanisms of its means. This has not been a secret for a long time, but illustrations of the process have lately become so common that no one any longer tries to hide it, or even apologize for it. Take what happened recently to the *Saturday Evening Post*: It was forced to give up a big proportion of its readers—the "poor" ones.

One of the oldest magazines in the United States, the *Post* used to be a proud symbol of the common people, the "folks," of the United States. Wherever you went, you saw the *Post*. On the farm, you could be practically certain to find stacks of old *Posts* up in the attic; or maybe somewhere in the barn. The *Post* stories were on the whole well-written, and the articles, if not exactly avant-garde, were sometimes excellent. There was a noticeable earnestness in the editorials, and while you might not agree with them you felt that the magazine was gotten out by people with some self-respect, and respect for its readers, too. Growth in circulation was a good thing for a magazine in those days, and the fact that people of moderate income could afford the *Post* doubtless made the editors feel that without pretension they could speak for large sections of the country.

Those days, apparently, have gone forever. They are gone, at any rate, until the people of the country, or a sufficient portion of them, demand a new kind of publishing, more persistently devoted to good ends, and, one hopes, to even better ones than the *Post* has now given up. The *Post*, as noted in the September issue of *Trans-action* (sociology for the general reader), "has decided to lop off 3,800,000 of its subscribers who don't live in high spending areas." The *Post* can no longer afford to sell all those people its magazine. So, if you happen to live in an area inhabited by preponderantly low-income people, you may not

be getting the *Post*. (A contributor to the *Saturday Review* of [July 13] who happens to reside in one of these "undesirable" neighborhoods recently found himself condemned to read the second-class edition of *Look*—a magazine which has similar problems, and is attempting to solve them by sending to its million or so subscribers with incomes over \$14,000 "a *Look* different in content from the one mailed grubbier customers; *their* copies of *Look* contain book reviews.")

Well, the publishers of the *Post* probably aren't happy about what they've done, but Survival is a pretty important part of the American Way, and the *Post's* stockholders must have had something to say about the decision. Meanwhile the comment of *Trans-action* seems unavoidable:

Just what the *Saturday Evening Post* is, with its "decision based squarely on marketing considerations," has become quite clear. It is no longer concerned with giving as many Americans as possible information they may need to participate more intelligently in the democratic process. (Supposedly this is what magazines are for because that's why the government gives them second-class mailing privileges.) Instead, the *Post* is now a trysting-place for consumers and producers. This transformation may have been necessary for the *Post's* survival, but still it seems like a rather embarrassing thing to admit in public.

This is apropos *Trans-action's* shy pride in its own 48,000 subscribers—which does seem a good sign, considering the magazine's content—but we are interested, here, in the implications of the *Post's* rather desperate action. It means, for one thing, that the acquisitive style, habit, and goal of the most "advanced" of the modern technological societies can no longer be praised for giving a free ride to the democratic process. The law of diminishing returns has set in. The economics of the most prosperous country in the world has ruled that only the moneyed segment of the population is worthy of such higher cultural benefits as a subscription to the *Saturday Evening Post*.

Other contradictions are emerging, also in the magazine field. The *Saturday Review* for Aug. 10

reported an act of censorship which ought to have brought shame to the entire publishing industry, but was probably productive of only a few wry smiles. According to Richard L. Tobin, *SR* Communications Editor, The Reader's Digest Association, publishers of the *Reader's Digest*, earlier this year obliged its subsidiary, Funk & Wagnalls (acquired in 1965), to withdraw from publication a book strongly critical of the advertising business. This book, *The Permissible Lie*, by Samm Sinclair Baker, was almost ready to go out to the stores. (It was a curiously "principled" decision, since the publicity attending the withdrawal led to at least doubled sales of the book after it was taken over by another publisher.) Mr. Tobin made this comment:

The *New York Times* said of the event that it was the "first instance of such censorship in publishing history," and this may well be the case since nothing even approximating such an action comes to memory. The book was withdrawn because it had been found contrary to the best interests of *Reader's Digest*, which once took no advertising at all.

Mr. Baker's book is said to be fairly mild, repeating what is generally known about advertising claims, although the author is forthright enough in his conclusion:

The overwhelming aim of advertising is to make a profit; to serve the public becomes a secondary consideration. A lie that helps build profits is considered a permissible lie.

The reason given by Hobart Lewis, president and executive editor of *Reader's Digest*, for stopping Funk & Wagnalls from issuing the book was that—

". . . advertising is good for business and business is good for the country. *Reader's Digest* has a point of view and, it seems to me, has a right to its point of view. Funk & Wagnalls is not an independent publishing house but our subsidiary."

Well, there is hardly any point in going on about this curious tolerance of lying, so long as it serves "business." But it is some kind of end-of-the-line achievement in *Reader's Digest* piety and patriotism. This is the sort of thing that the

younger generation is walking away from, and the wonder is that *anybody* should suppose they can be turned back.