

THE LOSS OF THE FUTURE

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II

FOR some time now the government has been carrying on what it calls a "War on Poverty." The government people speak of this program in tones which imply that it is the effort of a highly moral people. I do not believe it. Like some other current federal projects, it is a matter that the government talks about a great deal more than the people do. It does not contemplate any revision of our assumptions or our aims. It does not involve any change of heart or mind among the people of the country or the government. Uncritical of the powers and attitudes among us that have caused poverty, it can only cynically claim to hope to cure it.

There are a number of characteristics of the poverty war that seem to me typical of governmental high purpose. The government people have been congratulating themselves on it *from the beginning*; it may be that they reveal some doubt about it by being so unwilling to wait for results. The program has vastly elaborated and empowered the institutional presence of the government all over the country, and has vastly increased the number of people dependent on the government. It is an inspiration to free-loaders and grafters and chiselers. The program goes about its business with such fanfare, drawing so much attention to its own workings, that its specific effects are hardly noticed.

The worst is that the War on Poverty is a great steamrolling generalization, giving suck to, and pregnant with, a great company of little steamrolling generalizations. It has been made the occasion, for instance, of much squabbling among the social planners as to whose generalization about "the poor" is the most humane. What one hopes for is a beginning in the minds of those people of some suspicion that their generalizing may itself be inhumane. It is not just or merciful or decent to treat people as abstractions. It is not tolerable to be treated as one. *Who*, and by what divine authority, determined that *all* who make under \$3000 a year are "poor"? Who except a robot would have the impudence to confront another man—a small farmer, say, with a garden, a milk cow, meat hogs, and an income of \$2600 a year, who farms because he likes to—with the news that, by a decree of his government, he is to be considered a pauper? Is there no sociologist or bureaucrat who can imagine how this sort of thing would sound to a man who is looking another man in the eye?

So there are a number of developments in our society that have radically narrowed and darkened the moral space which surrounds the individual life. That being true, and growth and change being now so nearly overpowering in themselves, it is perhaps not surprising that we have so little resistance to the temptation to think in terms of the expedient rather than the desirable, the temporary rather than the permanent, cures rather than preventions, painkillers rather than cures. Each problem or act tends to be isolated from all others, seen in terms of its own immediate conditions, related neither to principle nor to history, preyed upon by anxiety and by haste. To some extent this may be a necessary weakness of the institutional mentality, but this kind of thinking is apt to receive the acquiescence of most citizens,

who accept "practicality" as the highest standard of public conduct. When the people have neither the incentive nor the moral means to resist and correct their institutions, they are poorly served by them. They become their servants' servants.

As more and more of the moral prerogatives of the individual are taken over by institutions and by agencies of the government, the individual does not become more secure and more happy. He becomes more confused, because moral standards in the hands of organizations will no longer answer the questions or illuminate the conditions of private persons. They become too generalized, too pumped up by righteous rhetoric, demanding too automatic and subservient an allegiance.

If the institutionalization of morals, as in the organized charities, involves a contradiction in terms, the same must surely be said of the legalization of morals, as in the civil rights laws and Medicare program and the issuance of government standards for business. The more explicit and detailed and comprehensive the law becomes the more limited is the moral initiative of the citizen. It might be debated whether the citizen loses his moral prerogatives because they are "grabbed" by the government, or only assumed by the government after they have been abdicated by the citizen. In my opinion the latter is more likely: if the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments had been responsibly received by the people and the states the recent civil rights legislation would not have been necessary; if doctors had been more interested in service than in earnings there might have been no need for Medicare; if the automobile makers had had either pride in their work or respect for their customers perhaps they would not have needed to come to Washington, pleading their right to discipline themselves.

A more important concern, once it is recognized that citizens do abdicate their responsibilities, is why they do it. And how is it that some of those most guilty of irresponsibility turn up among the loudest advocates of freedom,

and among the loudest objectors to "big government"? Freedom to do what? Instead of big government, what? It is certain, I think, that the best government is the one that governs least. But there is a much-neglected corollary: the best citizen is the one who least needs governing. The answer to big government is not private freedom, but private responsibility. If it is too late, as some think, for that answer to be given now, that is the fault of those who might have given it from the beginning, but refused to.

The most obvious reason for the abdication of personal responsibility in this country, I think, is the great difficulty of the ideals of Christianity and democracy which are most native to us. These ideals place an extraordinary moral burden on the individual as the result—and the reward—of their extraordinarily high estimate of the individual's worth. The follower of these beliefs finds himself in anxiety and trouble. If he loves his neighbor as himself, he has no reason to expect that he will not be hated in return. If he holds out for the political liberty of his neighbor, he has no assurance that his neighbor will not vote against him, or his principles, or even against political liberty. His convictions threaten him with the likelihood that he will have to act purely on principle—without certainty that the result of his act will be of practical benefit to him, without even the assurance that it will not be painful or costly to him—and that he will have to measure his life by standards so demanding that he must accept failure as a condition of effort. There is a sense, in other words, in which Christianity and democracy are moral predicaments. They propose an intellectual and emotional hardship, for which they do not provide either an easy solution or a handy comfort.

The typical reaction to this hardship is to take refuge in institutional formulas and regulations, to substitute reverential lip-service and dues-paying for the labor implied by the demands of the ideal upon the real. One imagines that there exists no greater potential of torment than in the minds of

racist-democrats or Christian militarists. That such as these are not noticeably prone to moral anguish is in my opinion owing almost wholly to the sanctified doubletalk characteristic of institutions. The same mentality that produced the notion of "Christian soldiers, marching as to war" now produces the notion of a "peace offensive." And in most of our talk about liberty and dignity our political institutions have permitted us to imply, with perfect consistency and propriety, the adjective "white."

Another reason why we hold ourselves less and less accountable to our ideals is the habitual misrepresentation of these ideals to the young. Christianity and democracy are by definition problematic. Since it may reasonably be doubted that either has been fully and fairly tried, they may even be considered experimental. They have so far produced more questions than answers. But they are commonly presented to the young *as solutions*—the packages in which all the problems of the human condition are neatly and finally tied up. Most Americans no doubt remember from their childhood the voices telling them: *All you have to do is vote. All you have to do is believe.* The problems of behavior and character and intelligence are all right, in their place. But what will lead the whole gang finally to the Promised Land, Heaven on earth, or earth in Heaven, is that pair of acts of brute faith. All that is needed is a consensus. The result is that the necessary stamina is not developed. The result is precocious disillusionment, weariness, cynicism, self-interest.

A third reason is that, in the minds of increasing numbers in the businesses and professions, the ideals of service and excellence have been replaced by the ethic of success, which holds that the highest aims are wealth and victory. To an alarming extent our schools and colleges are geared for the production of that kind of success, and are turning out graduates who not only do not desire any other kind but cannot recognize any other kind. Here is an ethic that can be clarified in a column of figures. It can be

dealt with adequately by computers. It is made to order for everybody, except poor people and losers.

It is a bogus ethic because it is so specialized and exclusive. It is of use only to dominant groups. To the majority of the world's people it can seem neither an aspiration nor a justification. The wealth of some is always accompanied by the poverty of others. And it ought to be clear that where there are victors there must be losers. That we find these things so easy to ignore suggests how far our conscience has strayed into that middle ground where intelligence is impossible.

We have—as we were once eager to boast, but now reasonably fear—made a significant change in the human condition. Such power has grown into our hands that we must now look on ourselves not just as the progenitors but as the grantors of such life as may continue on this planet. And in that a great deal is changed.

One might make a sort of formula: the growth of power increases the capability (and apparently the likelihood) of destruction, which must involve a proportionate increase of responsibility, which defines a need for a developing morality. That does not necessarily mean the continuous development of new moral principles. It does mean the continuous renewal of principles in the light of new circumstances, the continuous renewal and enlivening of the language of morality—to clarify, among other things, the identity of private and public responsibility.

Since 1945 it has been generally acknowledged that the world is our dependent. It has been acknowledged, that is, that it is the dependent of those governments capable of atomic holocaust. But it is becoming more and more apparent, as we continue to contaminate the soil and water and air and to waste and misuse the natural wealth, that the world is also the dependent of private organizations and individuals: corporations, developers, mining companies, farmers with modern chemicals and machines. Because of the enormous increase in

the economic and technological power of individuals, what once were private acts become public: the consequences are inevitably public. A man who uses a bulldozer can scarcely make a move that does not affect either his neighbors or his heirs. All his acts, so empowered, involve a tampering with the birthright of his race.

The recognition of that amazing and terrifying dependence, and of the great difficulty of the obligation it implies, ought to make the beginning of a new moral vision, a renewal of the sense of community.

For too long the ideal role of the individual in our society—the role the talented young have aspired to almost by convention—has been that of the specialist. It has surely become as plain as it needs to be that what we need most now are not the specialists with their narrowed vision and short-range justifications, but men of sympathy and imagination and free intelligence who can recognize and hold themselves answerable to the complex responsibilities of a man's life in our world.

I think it is time we begin to look on the artificial, overcrowded, compartmentalized life of our cities as a problem instead of an achievement. So far we have permitted ourselves a little suspicion of this life on the ground that it produces slums and suburban eyesores and traffic problems and organized crime. But it also produces in its inhabitants a chronic dependence, isolation, indifference. It disintegrates family life. It reduces the home to about the status of a motel. One's neighbors are, no doubt by necessity, but also by policy, not known.

We must realize that a community is not merely a condition of physical proximity, no matter how admirable the layout of the shopping center and the streets, no matter if we demolish the horizontal slums and replace them with vertical ones. A community is the mental and spiritual condition of knowing that the place is shared, and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each other's

lives. It is the knowledge that people have of each other, their concern for each other, their trust in each other, the freedom with which they come and go among themselves.

Now it has become urgent that the sense of community should include the world, that it should come to be a realization that all men ultimately share the same place, the same nature, and the same destiny. But this most necessary feeling that the world is a neighborhood cannot, I think, be expected to grow among the crowds of strangers that fill the cities. If it is to be hoped for at all, it is to be hoped for among the people who have had the experience of being involved responsibly and knowingly, and at some expense of their feelings and means, in the lives of their neighbors.

Against a long-standing fashion of antipathy, I will venture to suggest that the best model we have of a community is still the small country town of our agricultural past. I do not mean that this was ever a perfect community, or that it did not have serious faults, or that it can be reasonably thought of as a possibility that is still before us. But with its balance of variety and coherence, it is still more suggestive of the possibility of community, of neighborhood, than anything else we have experienced. Whatever may be said against it, it did bring into the condition and the possibility of neighborliness a number of people who varied a good deal in occupation, income, education, and often in opinion. Different sorts of people, different kinds of experience and levels of education were in constant touch with each other, and were taught and disciplined by each other. Knowledge of neighbors was encouraged and cultivated, by the natural curiosity that produced either gossip or understanding, but also by the caution and interest of business dealings. A merchant or banker in one of those towns, dealing constantly with the problem of whom to credit, would in a lifetime gather up an authoritative knowledge of literally thousands of people. He gained from his business,

in addition to his living, a profound and various experience of other men.

Though it was not inevitable, it was certainly possible in such a community for the life of a merchant or lawyer or teacher or doctor to be inspired and disciplined and even ennobled by a precise sense of its relation to other lives, its place among them, its usefulness and duty to them. Those places did not have the dead look of modern suburban towns in which the people live but do not work. The population was reasonably stable. People expected to remain in the same place all their lives, and often they did.

In those communities it was always at least possible that charity could be personal, and that possibility enforced the likelihood that it would be. A man whose neighbor was hungry would give him something to eat because it was the natural thing to do. He knew who his neighbor was. And he felt, without needing to be told by a sociologist, that the condition of his neighbor was a reflection on him. Because he knew his neighbor it was possible for him to care about him, or be his friend, or love him.

But the ideal community would include not just the living; it would include the unborn. It would be aware, with a clarity and concern which the best of us have hardly imagined, that the living cannot think or speak or act without changing the lives of those who will live after them. There would be a language, not yet spoken in any of our public places, to manifest and convey that awareness—a language that would live upon the realization that no man can act purely on his own behalf, not only because it is not desirable that he should do so, but because it is in reality not possible.

And it would include the place, the land, itself. For man is not merely "in" the world. He is, he must realize and learn to say or be doomed, part of it. The earth he is made of he bears in trust.

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REVIEW

HUSSLERL AND PHENOMENOLOGY

WHATEVER human beings know, become aware of, feel or think, this knowing, thinking, etc., happens in consciousness. Consciousness is the absolute ground of all reality for human beings, and this is the case whether we know it or not, or think of it or not. But that we must think of it, if we are to philosophize—to take serious account of what and how we know—is the contention of Phenomenology. The modern development of the phenomenological outlook is embodied in the lifework of Edmund Husserl, a German thinker who was born in 1859 and died in 1938, and we have for review a new edition of a book devoted to Husserl's "quest for a rigorous science of philosophy"—*The Foundation of Phenomenology* by Marvin Farber. This work was first issued by the Harvard University Press in 1943, and is now published in a revised third edition by the State University of New York Press (\$10.00), distributed by Antioch Press (Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387).

Once the fundamental idea of phenomenology is clear, it becomes the touchstone of all philosophical thinking. For while thought may develop elaborate structures without reference to its roots in consciousness, such thought is lacking in a fundamental means of self-correction. For example, the old scientific ideal of a totally "objective" account of the external world, built up laboriously by the slow accumulation of tested facts and confirmed theories, is, phenomenologically speaking, a philosophical absurdity. The observations of science may have their validity, but the observer cannot be removed from the picture, since *everything* we find out is found out in our consciousness, and would not exist as science without our consciousness. To note this fact is not equivalent to declaring that the external world is "illusory"; the assertion is simply that, illusory or "real," the phenomenon of the world is a phenomenon in consciousness. This is a conclusion that cannot be eliminated by either

the rigors of "objective" science or the "explanations" of psychology. Consciousness is the prior reality in which all these transactions take place. We may be able, in time, to say a lot more than this about our knowledge, but we can never say less.

It follows, then, that phenomenological thought is both critical and affirmative. It is critical by reason of the fact that all disciplines of cognition need examination and probably correction in the light of the phenomenological outlook. This is an enormous task, one for which Husserl laid the foundation, and to which Dr. Farber devotes his book. Yet the positive issue of phenomenology interested Husserl most. He believed that a special sort of "transcendental idealism" could result from phenomenological thinking which rejects dilution by any view of man or nature not derived, so to speak, from the stuff or "laws" of consciousness itself. This aspiration to a pure philosophy has seemed impracticable to some of Husserl's critics, including Dr. Farber, yet it has energized a new spirit in modern thought. A more confined hope might not have done so.

Once you go beyond the primary idea of phenomenology, this mode of thought and analysis usually becomes very difficult to follow. The rule of exhaustive subjective examination of every perception, every conception, by the phenomenological philosopher tends to result in a new personal language developed by each one. The subtleties seem endlessly differentiated. Phenomenological thinkers may borrow from one another—as, it seems clear, Sartre has borrowed at least a certain style from Husserl (or Heidegger)—but every phenomenological conclusion must be "interiorized" to some sort of second-degree objectivity by each man for himself. So a book about phenomenology becomes a kind of palimpsest of thought upon thought upon thought. The question arises: How much of this sort of study can a man *afford* to pursue? How much assimilation of other men's thinking is essential to the practice of phenomenology? How

much subtle digestion of one another is necessary in this enterprise? And to what extent must the student learn to distinguish similarities and differences among various phenomenologists? In short, what check is there on the scholastic tendencies of phenomenological philosophy, considered as a "school"? No one can read in this field without such wonderings.

A section in Dr. Farber's book, "A Presuppositionless Philosophy," provides this summary of the essentials of Husserl's thought:

There is, then, on the one hand, the universe of pure ego-experiences which are really given through phenomenological perception, remembrance, etc.; and, on the other hand, the universe of possibilities of pure ego-experiences. This is the field of investigation which is determined by phenomenology as the science of *transcendental phenomena*. . . .

Beginning with a generous expression of indebtedness to Descartes, Husserl portrays phenomenology as the historical completion of the subjective movement inaugurated by Descartes' *Meditations*. The central idea of Descartes, judged from Husserl's point of view, was the return to the self, or to the stream of experiences, by means of the method of doubt. The reform of the sciences and the establishment of their essential unity on a philosophical basis are themes which are prominent in both thinkers. That Husserl sees more in Descartes in some respects than is warranted is due to his own interest in exploiting the method of doubt for purposes of transcendental phenomenology. That explains his painstaking elaboration of Descartes' "beginning." That which has historical significance for Descartes as a reaction against a tradition harboring obscurity, dogma, and authoritarianism is appropriated by Husserl as an essential part of the technique for developing a philosophy out of pure consciousness.

Voicing his discontent with the state of philosophy, Husserl proposes to begin with Descartes' starting-point, the pure *ego cogito*, and to lead the way from there to transcendental phenomenology, which is submitted as the proper basis for unity in philosophy. Like Descartes, Husserl holds that the evidence of the existence of the world is not apodictic, for it is capable of being doubted without contradiction. The *ego cogito* indicates the province of transcendental subjectivity which is the domain of certain and first being. But Descartes failed to make

any philosophical capital out of his discovery of certainty. This error is rectified by Husserl, who proceeds to sketch the field of transcendental experience and its general structures.

Obviously, a great deal of the meaning of Husserl's thought is hidden in the special uses of words. The meanings intended have to be filled in before you can know what the philosopher is talking about. And this must be done, not with a dictionary on your lap—although that is needed—but by intense reflection. The meanings are not merely to be "looked up"—they must *dawn*. The verification of a subjective philosophy has to be pursued by subjective exercises.

What, then, is the broad significance of Phenomenology? Well, it is a historic restoration of "man thinking" to Western philosophy. It is a radical return to *the subject*, as the beginning, middle, and end of both knowledge and wisdom, and an express determination never to desert the subject again. The implications of this general movement—of which Husserl's thought is only one example—are now before us, all over the world.

Men are beginning to think in a different way—from, that is, unborrowed premises. There is a sense in which spontaneous feeling plays a large part in the change. It is genuine feeling about oneself and for others. For the coming and some of the present generation, the idea that virtue is knowledge is more immediately acceptable, an attitude which washes away the posturings developed from the claim that "objectivity" is the measure of truth. Men are more consciously subjective in all departments of their lives, and Husserl, you could say, was a pioneer in giving this vast tendency a rational ground.

But what ought one to do about the endlessly proliferating specialties which combine old methods with the new inspiration? Who has time for keeping up with all this? Well, one could say that the most important books to read are those by men who speak to the non-specialized intelligent

reader. In philosophy, this means, for one, Ortega, rather than Husserl. Ortega also goes back to Descartes, and, like Husserl, makes a new beginning for Western thought.

Unlike Ortega, Husserl is a "technical" philosopher. Yet he is nonetheless a pioneer, and for one hungering to understand the broad intellectual tendencies of the age, acquaintance with Husserl's radical reform and high intentions is of manifest importance. Then, for an independently rewarding illustration of the phenomenological way of thinking, one might turn to Abraham Heschel's book, *Who Is Man?* (Stanford University Press, 1965). Here is no matter of "influence." To have learned from Husserl is to have learned to be more intensively oneself. And the wonderful thing about this learning is the resonances it produces, calling up similar discoveries in the works of other men.

This is the sense, then, in which the complexities of phenomenological thought can be dispelled. Its obscurities may be mainly in the bad habits—and the presumptions—of Western thought, which phenomenology must entertain in order to correct. A further source of obscurity, however, may lie in the fact that the struggle for clarity undertaken by such men as Husserl is carried on in areas of intellectual confusion hardly ever entered at all by the common man. How can the non-specializing reader profit from an iconoclasm which attacks images that he never knew existed?

So the investigation of phenomenology may be taken as a permissive thing, although its first principle ought to be understood by all, and *can* be understood by all. How far you go in following these meticulous critics of Western thought will then depend upon the importance you attach to Western thought itself.

COMMENTARY **WHEN IDEALISM FAILS**

IT was Ezra Pound's resolve in *The Cantos* (see *Frontiers*) to expunge from poetry the betraying language of "idealism"—the generalizing conceptions by which men justify their neglect of concrete obligation—and to give new life to thought by a rhetoric filled with poignant and intense sensations. He would use "no ideas but in things," cleansing literature of "bad abstractions that bully and stupefy mankind." Pound, in short, was an embattled nominalist. He thought it a sin to speak of "good" in general. Harold Watts observes:

It is the power of evil he attacks that gives Pound's poem focus. The "goods" that concern him are pluralistically conceived; it is a rank idealistic sin, in Pound's eyes, to try to relate one good to another. Thus, in his presentation of the good, the human objects and deeds, Pound suffers the fate that has dogged other pluralists; expression of widely scattered affections can never suggest a devotion that is either directed or intense.

But the abandonment of idealism cannot protect a writer—or his readers—from bad abstractions, since generalizing is fundamental to all thought. Ruling out abstractions only results in sneaky, unidentified ones that collect emotion. This happened in Pound's work. What was said last week by Wendell Berry (in "The Loss of the Future") applies here:

. . . one of the most damaging results of the loss of idealism is the loss of reality. Neither the ideal nor the real is perceivable alone. The ideal is apparent and meaningful only in relation to the real, the real only in relation to the ideal. Each is the measure and corrective of the other. Where there is no accurate sense of the real world, idealism evaporates in the rhetoric of self-righteousness and self-justification. Where there is no disciplined idealism the sense of the real is invaded by sentimentality or morbidity and by fraudulent discriminations.

Pound belonged, Mr. Watts shows, to an anti-idealistic age, and fell victim to its Nemesis—the passion for destruction, itself a dark abstraction on the march.

One might turn to Eric Havelock's *Preface to Plato* to see how well Plato, himself a poet, understood such misuses of poetry. What, then, are the "good" generalizations? That is no easy thing to decide. Plato's view, which Ezra Pound rejected, is that men must try.

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

HE DID WHAT HE DREAMED

THE question, What ought the university to be? doubtless needs answering, but it cannot be answered in any particularity until the obsessive details of what it now is are cleared away. Meanwhile, it is more to the point to illustrate by example the ideal role of higher education.

In 1946, Swarthmore College published a volume of essays honoring Harold C. Goddard, who that year retired from his professorship after a lifetime of teaching English there. Dr. Goddard, readers may remember, was the author of *The Meaning of Shakespeare* (University of Chicago Press), and of a Pendle Hill pamphlet, *Blake's Fourfold Vision*, as well as other books. Readers who have investigated Dr. Goddard's writings will not regard as extravagant what one of his students wrote about him:

It is a rare gift for a teacher to be able to set his imprint on another life. The magic is not accomplished by a professor who teaches a fact in which he may or may not be interested, a fact which academicians consider "important" but which has no genuine meaning for him. Dr. Goddard's secret is that he teaches what he loves; he gives himself, his dreams, his imagination. When you remember that he has been thus *giving himself* for thirty-seven years, you marvel at the inexhaustibly rich life that is his. . .

Some years ago Dr. Goddard said, "Humanity at last is divided into just three classes: those who *Dream*, those who *Do*, and those who *Do What They Dream*. And in the end it is only these last that count." Dr. Goddard is one of those who *Do What They Dream*.

These letters from former students are a wonderful vindication of Dr. Goddard's immeasurable confidence in the power of imagination. They show how the faith of a teacher can have a multiplier-effect on the mental capacities of the young, since they all bear something of the imaginative resources he stirred

in the writers. There is impressive spontaneous agreement in what the contributors say—that Dr. Goddard made them come alive in their minds—yet the essays are all distinctively original in how this is expressed.

Two years after graduation, one student said:

My (he might say *impudent*) proclivity to place this English professor from a small American college on a par with the immortal Greats of world literature is rooted in the fact that it was really *he*, not they, who most concretely and inspiredly gave meaning to the beautiful ideas, the great and subtle truths which they endeavored to transmit. He translated them to me; and in the process he so brilliantly exemplified the best that was in them that, ever since, he has been one with that best. He was obviously afire with faith in what he was doing. Great books *live* in Dr. Goddard as surely as they lived in their authors. This faith and life is contagious, his students come away afire themselves. Small wonder then, that I, for one, have devised as a means of expressing this contagion, an almost unconscious habit of using his name as a sort of shorthand for whatever goodness, truth or beauty I may come across in my reading. Dr. Goddard is my symbol of the symbols.

Another, a graduate of 1928, wrote:

You did not create anything new but you made it possible for me to see more readily and with delight what was always there. I never look out-of-doors, open a book, or see a person that the picture doesn't take on a deeper glow due to your teaching. To have added such wealth to another's existence is truly the greatest reward to a professor. I am only one of many hundreds to whom you have given this precious gift. For this my heart will always sing a melody of thanks and gratitude to you.

Still another said after twenty-two years:

It is more than love of fine literature and great writing that my four years with Dr. Goddard mean to me. It is a way of life that association with him instilled into my innermost being that means the most. This way of life is the gracious way, the kindly way, and the understanding way, as well as the scholarly way. Unfortunately, it seems to be a way of life that is fast disappearing from this earth; but those of us who were fortunate enough to share some of Dr. Goddard's philosophy have that experience to remember.

A member of the class of 1913 wrote:

Too many professors in that day taught for the self-satisfaction of showing off before a helpless audience, paid in credits to sit before them. That was not so in Dr. Goddard's classes. He might point out something to shoot at, but he always let the student pull the trigger. Years passed before I realized what a smooth executive he had been. It came to me all of a sudden when I got my own first executive job. Dr. Goddard never gave orders. He gave ideas and we gave ourselves the orders. I know of no higher achievement for a teacher.

Students remembered fondly even Dr. Goddard's examinations (realization of such possibilities would dissolve a great deal of current argument):

We liked the fact that he was unpredictable—*"Prove by the theory of William James' Will to Believe that the moon is made of green cheese."* Who would expect a question like that on an English final!

Another said, ten years after the experience:

Dr. Goddard's peculiar genius lay in the fact that, whatever the book he laid before us, it presently became apparent that we were in fact studying and expanding all our range of possible understanding. . . . Through the medium of literature he taught philosophy, psychology, and always the pursuit of meaning and the zest for life that great art is.

The whole Goddard family joined in this. It is correct to refer to a seminar with "the Goddards." The family had an exciting symphonic quality which brought alive the search for meaning and beauty which we were learning to impose upon ourselves. The same art spirit ran through Eleanor's music Margaret's painting and Mrs. Goddard's blue delphinium.

Just before final examinations, Dr. Goddard sent us each a small card. On mine he had written a quotation from K. Mansfield: "Oh, my Lord! I am happy. When I shut my eyes I cannot help smiling.—You know what joy it is to give your heart—freely—freely. Everything that happens is an adventure." "This examination is an adventure," he had added.

For general characterization we put together passages from three contributions:

Dr. Goddard might have been a great scholar. He chose instead to be a great teacher. When he was called to Swarthmore [in 1909], he had already

earned a reputation for sound scholarship. In a situation where there was not enough time for all phases of his profession—scholarship, administration, and teaching—he could have placed that reputation above the needs of his understaffed department with its overcrowded sections. A less conscientious man would have used his time in research and made Swarthmore a stepping stone to one of the great universities and to national scholarly distinction. But self-seeking was not in his make-up. He could neglect his own ambitions but not the varied needs of all his students. . . . In Dr. Goddard's informal and delightful classes, the shyest students find themselves speaking and getting into the spirit of the discussion, whether a humorous or a serious one. Dr. Goddard's kindly and friendly attitude encourages them to reach out further than they would if left to their own devices, and they find themselves not only thinking more creatively, but writing that way,—in other words, letting themselves go. . . . These are the things that I like to remember about Dr. Goddard. First he had a true perception of student ability. One might try to bluff for a time but sooner or later those little blue books would appear and a pertinent question exposed your unpreparedness. Does Drew Pearson remember this as well as I do? On the other hand, conscientious work was always appreciated according to its merit. I can still hear the approving and respectful murmur which followed a commendation of Nora Waln's English poetry note book, held up to us as a model of thoughtful and beautifully worded comments. Also Dr. Goddard always made me feel that an English teacher must be able to interpret life. . . . We really studied human nature as we read Shakespeare with Dr. Goddard.

Harold C. Goddard died in 1951, five years after his retirement and shortly after his Shakespeare book was accepted for publication. He never knew how popular it would become and could not have dreamed that, more than a dozen years later, demand would require a paperback edition of this two-volume work. Soaking up the thought of this man and reading these letters from students makes it plain that the thing to do about education is to *do* it, and to stop arguing about institutional matters. It may not be possible to plan or invent teachers like Dr. Goddard—which is our most obvious need—but then you don't really plan a good education, either. But one can follow his example.

FRONTIERS

The Age of Ezra Pound

THE failures of men to make the best use of their freedom are eventually defined as problems of *control*. Concentration on control brings politicalization of thought and increasing reliance on "systems," until it seems quite natural that classical Humanism should be reduced to expressions of forlorn hope, with the preservation of even elementary civil liberties hardly more than a rear-guard action. It follows that the crucial "givers" of politics as we know it are made of the breakdowns in the life beyond politics—in, that is, the disciplines of self-rule.

Yet there is much evidence, today, of a final exhaustion of political solutions for social problems. This view appears in the anarchist mood of the young radicals of our time—as both Paul Goodman and George Woodcock have noted. Meanwhile political solutions nonetheless continue to be over-dismissed to the point where political language loses meaning. Expressions like "law and order" now have little rational content, having become code-words for power-objectives. And the pillorying of "liberals" for their merely verbal solutions of deep and continuing injustice is another result of stretching political language to a ridiculously thin coverage of troubles that are non-political in origin. Without other resources, men finally turn to angry barbarism to resolve such intolerable contradictions. This is one of the lessons of Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

The task of culture, then—culture as the sum of the best thoughts of the best men—is to explore and make known the disciplines of a free and uncoercible life for mankind. Politics studies the uses of coercion, not the uses of freedom. When, in the name of freedom, men of culture devote their talents to the uses of coercion, they—except for a rare breed of specialists—invite the collapse of culture. Evidence of this is found in the fact that creative people, when they enter the political realm, often do so with adolescent arrogance and a pitiful naïveté. There are dozens of illustrations of this. One that comes easily to mind (see also *The God that Failed*,

Harper, 1949) is the case of Ezra Pound, who was visited last year by Allen Ginsberg at Pound's winter home in Venice (*June Evergreen Review*). Pound, it seems, is now a humbled and almost pathologically silent man. Ginsberg spoke appreciatively of what the 82-year-old writer had done for modern poets:

"Any good I've done has been spoiled by bad intentions—the preoccupation with irrelevant and stupid things," Pound replied. And then very slowly, with emphasis, surely conscious of Ginsberg's being Jewish: "But the worst mistake I made was that stupid, suburban prejudice of anti-Semitism."

When Italy entered World War II, Pound broadcast for the fascist powers, continuing his attack on usurious "capitalist-democracy" and endorsing Nazi anti-Semitism. Still an American, citizen, he was brought to the United States after the war to be tried as a traitor, but was adjudged insane and confined in St. Elizabeth's Hospital for thirteen years. Then, following his release, he returned to Italy.

But what were those "preoccupations with irrelevant and stupid things" which led Pound to see in Mussolini's Corporative State a proper solution for the sins of Western capitalism? A book published by Regnery in 1952, *Ezra Pound and the Cantos*, by Harold H. Watts, searches out an answer to this question. In his opening chapter Mr. Watts says:

Pound's "case" is . . . made up of an intellectual journey that ends in an act, a profession of faith. Even if Pound did receive payment for his services, his broadcasts had little in common with the Nazi-supervised air-talks of "Lord Haw-Haw" and others. These latter betrayals were reduced by Rebecca West to simple psychoses of which the component parts were family wrangles and emotional deficiencies; such traitors can be handled with condescending pity. There is little to pity in Pound; there is a good deal to comprehend. The experts have tried to tell us what Pound's psychoses are; according to one, Pound is now "in a paranoid state of psychotic proportions which render him unfit for trial," and another observer remarks that he cannot reason coherently. But to lean heavily on these reports is a kind of evasion; we escape asking what, for us, is the total import of *The Cantos*, the speculation in prose, and (of course) the treason. What Pound has done is much more than the expression of a psychosis; it is

more than a malformation of personality that can have only clinical interest. . . . Pound's act was the fruition of a series of choices and judgments made over a period of years: choices and judgments that we cannot be indifferent to unless we are indifferent to choices and judgments that we must ourselves make.

"Pound's war-time gestures," Mr. Watts adds, "are intelligible only to the person who has studied *The Cantos* and Pound's essays on the art of reading and culture." But, someone will ask, is Pound worth making "intelligible"? Obviously, Mr. Watts thinks he is, or he would not have written his book. And Kenneth Patchen, back in 1945, at the height of the Pound controversy in literary journals in this country, wrote for the newspaper *PM* a statement which began (*PM* did not publish it, for obvious reasons):

Ezra Pound chose one authority and most of you chose another. The authority he chose turned Europe into a hell of concentration camps and human misery; the authority chosen by most of you has left Europe and the whole world in a hell of concentration camps and human misery.

Not to mince words, Pound chose one head of that grisly bloodsmeared serpent called war, and most of you chose another; both were evil, both preyed on the warm, living bodies of human beings—both were fascist. . . . I condemn Pound for having chosen an evil authority; here he is guilty—and so are the rest of you.

Let us not confuse issues. I am writing in defense of poetry and in defense of that high view of human beings which is poetry's; I am defending the poet Pound against that other Pound who defiled and rejected the spirit—even as most of you have defiled and rejected it. . . . For myself, I do not believe that any man has the right to deprive another man of his freedom; and I certainly do not believe that any man who has deprived anyone of life or freedom is fit to sit in judgment over his fellows. What a monstrous farce!—these trials of those accused of "war guilt"—and tried by whom?

This is the powerful, unsentimental ground for trying to understand why Pound did what he did. For Pound stood for something among modern writers. He was for many of them an important contributor to "culture." What made this talented man suppose that anything so superficial as a war could wipe out money-grubbing abuses and make

society "new"? What was so abysmally lacking in his *culture*, that he could submit, almost like a small boy with a pocketful of stones, to the juvenile delusion Mr. Watts describes: "The problem of the immediate future is to undermine and destroy the economic order that supports usury, to set up an order which—like Italian Fascism as Pound saw it—will inhibit full expressions of emotions and talents as little as possible."

It is easy to try Pound and find him guilty. Far too easy, Patchen shows. Pound was also a victim of the very times that condemned him—times which have substituted the condemnation of evil for the construction of the good. Nothing in the culture of these times warned the ingenuous Pound against his political preoccupations and his misplaced "activism." His passionate alliance with "things," his suspicion of "idealism," his acceptance of a purely personal measure of good and evil—all these are themes of mere reaction to historic corruptions. They do not repair, they do not heal, nor can they inspire. And Pound's skill as a poet gave pretentious form to a wrath that could have no issue in anything fine or ennobling. Mr. Watts says:

What the poem [*The Cantos*] presents us is a sharp perception of hate or the hateful balanced by no more than an omnibus, cultivated, eclectic perception of good. This good, upon acquaintance, becomes (for all the specificity with which it is revealed) as vague and unsatisfying as "The Good" in some nineteenth-century systems. It may occur to us that Pound is expecting a great miracle indeed from his poem, for nowhere, to date, do we find a society that resisted evil, tramped it to earth, on the basis of an omnibus, indiscriminating perception of good.

It is unimportant that Pound should have been brought to judgment. That he is now filled with shame may not be unimportant, but who can tell about such things, or draw conclusions from them, beyond a general compassion? Not Pound but his age is under judgment.