

PLANNING AND GROWTH

THE inventors of social systems are like playwrights, except that the playwright presents an imaginative analogue of life while the maker of Utopias tells you how life itself is to be lived. Hurrying past libraries filled with reports of the failures of similar attempts, the utopian captures followers by the same methods the dramatist uses, which for him are quite legitimate. The dramatist makes sure "our eyes are not focused on the sufferings of the defeated but on the deportment of the hero."

Attention to the deportment of the hero is a necessity of the playwright. Without a hero he would have no drama, nothing to engage his audience. And while a spectator may at odd moments wonder about the private lives of the spear-carriers—have they no other destiny than to dimension and structure the field of someone else's fulfillment?—the symbolism of the dramatic performance is an acceptable explanation for the neglect of walk-ons and supernumeraries. Their day will come.

It is only when typical "heroes" grow contemptible, their triumphs irrelevant, their power a disgrace to the human species, that both dramatists and social planners find themselves driven to investigate "the sufferings of the defeated." It is then that the Theatre of the Absurd turns on its vacuum-cleaner of conventional pretense, that a Camus finds his Everyman in an anti-hero who does not act, but is only acted upon, and paralysis instead of catharsis is the Message of the play. And then in society, which is no longer society but pseudo-society, the bland usurpers of the classical tradition explain that the Second Coming is already upon us, and they point to the wonderful Machine that is putting an end to evil by remembering all the mistakes that anyone has ever made.

Obviously, such arrangements will not work and cannot last. There will be either instructed or uninstructed revolt against all this dehumanization, and eventually there will be a return of the Hero. Nothing really ever happens in human life without the hero, just as the dramas which lack a hero are actionless—the intermission pieces, so to speak, which fill the dead places of history. The question we must now ask is: Can there be heroic action without the sufferings of the defeated? Could there be a society in which, like the ideal play for children, "all the roles are leading ones"?

The difficulty with this idea is that it cannot be taken literally, even though it satisfies the universalizing (democratizing) tendency in all modern thought. There does not seem to be any workable model for the behavior of all men, save in terms of high abstractions, and the social planner has to begin working on the ground floor. W. Macneile Dixon asks in *The Human Situation* for help in determining what is prescribed by the Kantian Categorical Imperative:

"So act that your action can be universalized, can apply to all men in a similar situation." Very exalted, yes, and very useless. How many men throughout the whole history of humanity ever employed such a formula? And, unfortunately in this vexing world situations are invariably unique, never exactly repeat themselves in respect of place, time, circumstances and the persons affected by them. Nor can any rule be framed applicable to a course of conduct in any and all circumstances, times and places. The touchstone of values is not everywhere among men the same. When Mrs. Rosita Forbes visited the penitentiary at San Paulo, she asked if there were many thieves among the inmates. The warden was shocked. "Oh no," he replied, "Brazilians are very honest. Nearly all these men are murderers."

In wishing to make men good, the social planner seldom sees any course open except the attempt to make them all the same. Because he is

a planner, he believes that good will come from properly symmetrical arrangements. But there is not room in his head for all the arrangements needed to suit the needs of all men. Diverse arrangements get in the way of each other, and eventually the planner settles for dull, statistical averages, on the tough-minded theory that if men cannot have what they like, they had better learn to like what they can have. Dixon speaks for the grain of uniqueness in human beings:

To me it sometimes seems that our moralists would do well to cease their upbraidings and apply themselves to the interesting problem—"How is goodness to be made the object of passionate desire, as attractive as fame, success or even adventure?" If they could excite in men an enthusiasm for virtue as the poets, musicians and artists excite in them enthusiasm for beauty, and the men of science for truth; if they could devise a morality that had the power to charm, they would win all hearts. "To be virtuous," said Aristotle, "is to take pleasure in noble actions." A poet does not tell you how happiness is to be secured, he gives you happiness. And our reformers might do a great service to humanity if they could explain to us why a diet of milk and water does not appear to suit the human race, why the milksop has never been the hero of the romances, why the biographers of the peacemakers lack readers, why the lives of dare-devils, of buccaneers and smugglers and all manner of wild men captivate the youthful souls, the young folk so recently—if we are to believe Plato and Wordsworth—arrived from heaven, trailing clouds of glory from their celestial home. There is a mystery for them, upon which to exercise their wits. Why should courage and daring, even the adroitness and cunning of Ulysses, not conspicuously moral qualities, so entertain and delight us? Why, as Luther enquired, should the devil have all the best tunes? If the moralists made these obscure matters clear to us, they would earn our thanks. "He hath too much spirit to be a scholar," said Aubrey. Must we add another to the commandments, "Thou shalt not have high spirits"? Are we to put a premium upon low vitality? Something seems to have gone amiss in our moral code. . . . If you desire to serve rather than to desert the world, you must avoid the attempt to quench the flame of life, to destroy the energies nature has implanted in the race. You take the wrong path. You should make use of them, divert or deflect them to nobler ends, harness them to the chariot of your ideal. And not till we have rid ourselves of the monstrous

notion that the sole human motive is self-interest need we hope to lay the foundations of a sane moral philosophy.

But from the planner this appeal can win only petulance or anger. He has his statistics and he knows how to make arrangements. He does not know how to make goodness "the object of passionate desire"—an achievement which, if its past occurrence is any guide, does not depend upon arrangements at all.

This is a way of saying that we know how to dream vaguely of a perfect society which can be inhabited only by perfect men; or that we know how to plan for mediocre men, and how to reassure them, to make them content with their mediocrity; but that we do not know how to plan for the growth of mediocre men into good or much better men. Our "arrangement" theories about this all break down in practice. So we learn to admire mediocrity.

We have, in short, command over only theories of static relationships. The principles of individual growth and change, if they exist, are a mystery to us. Our plans are either sentimental or cynical—they either expect change on emotionally optimistic grounds or deny its possibility on "realistic" grounds. The idealistic planner is a convinced Apollonian, an admirer of world coordination and universal cooperation. *If only*, he says, men could *see* how happy they would be! And from frustrated idealist utopian to impatient totalitarian is often but a small step for him to take.

Since the micro-secret of human motivation is too hard a nut for him to crack, the planner devotes himself to macro-problems. Not knowing how to change man, he resolves to change the world. He becomes a "shallow universalist." If mild in temperament, he may turn into only a hand-wringer; but if his propensity to manage is strong, he will concentrate on a new theory of external arrangements, expecting people to conform because of all the good things that will

happen to them if they do, and he arranges for bad things to happen to them if they don't.

What has been evaded? Specifically, the enormously difficult task of deciding what to do in manifestly imperfect situations. It is easy enough to say what would be right under ideal circumstances. It is a simple matter to make up rules for good people and then to ask conformity to those rules as a matter of common sense. But when the "good" people fail to be reliably good, it is found that rules designed to order goodness work in reverse, and there comes a time when truly good men see that the rules have to be broken in full awareness of the cost to the abstract ideal. Civil disobedience, for example, violates the principles of an ideal Apollonian order, but it *may* be existentially *right*. The point is that human growth is never programmatic. It is unpredictable. It cannot be guaranteed. And it succeeds only when it has the option to fail.

A basic principle is involved here. A man lives in a society which is the work of a past generation of arrangers. But even though the original makers of the arrangements understood the built-in imperfections of their work, its inheritors are usually blind to them. It is a common blindness, not a Machiavellian crime. So this man, as he grows up, is confronted by the need to recognize the defects of his times, which turn out to be the most desperately kept secrets of the managers. He then has the problem of trying to live an ideal life under imperfect arrangements which are lied about and called "good." If the times are very bad, his best attempts may take the external form of a systematic rejection of many of the existing arrangements. And if he has the instincts of an educator, he will find ways to do this without rejecting the people who are partly the victims and partly the makers of those bad arrangements. He will ask himself, from time to time, what is the best educational arrangement for all these people, and to find an answer will give attention to those small, metabolic changes in attitude which very few planners can understand.

Such a man develops a loose-jointed, subjective conception of educational arrangements. His primary concern is with the awakening of the individual. His thinking is seldom of a sort that can be politicalized. As a teacher, he avoids all conventional ideas of "arrangements."

And yet, because there are in fact "times," and because a great many people are psychologically united in them, it becomes both reasonable and necessary to recognize that there are common lessons to be learned from particular periods of history. So a certain sort of "arrangements" becomes educationally desirable the kind of arrangements Gandhi tried to provide for the regeneration and liberation of the Indian people. This movement, as Gandhi conceived it, was to arise out of the self-education of men working together in community. Yet these arrangements were to be a consequence, not the cause, of the regeneration. The Constructive Work program in the villages, where the people were, was the matrix of both the regeneration and the new education that Gandhi had in mind.

Actually, very few men have the capacity to generalize ideas for the education of large numbers of people. Ordinary intellectual attainments—based on the ability to manipulate abstractions—are a very small part of the educator's responsibility. What he needs above all is the desire and ability to identify with all those people, to feel their higher longings, to suffer the inconsistencies in their lives, and to become able, little by little, to recognize the common forms of activity which for them are most likely to provide avenues of growth. Such a man usually discovers that the conventional norms of educational achievement are either irrelevant or actual barriers to human development. They represent some planner's notion of a schematic ideal—an ideal which can work only if all the assumptions behind the plan grow out of the realities of human life. In many cases, the existential reality of the learning process is in striking contradiction to this

schematic ideal. An experience of Jonathan Kozol while teaching in a ghetto school in Boston will illustrate. To introduce his sixth-graders—most of them Negroes—to poetry, he read to them from John Crowe Ransom, Robert Frost, W. B. Yeats, and Langston Hughes. Of Hughes' work, the poem the children liked best was "Ballad of the Landlord." Mr. Kozol felt he understood why:

The reason, I think, that this piece of writing had so much meaning for them was not only that it seemed moving in an obvious and immediate human way, but also that it *found* its emotion in something ordinary. It is a poem which allows both heroism and pathos to poor people, sees strength in awkwardness, and attributes to a poor person standing on the stoop of his slum house every bit as much significance as Willian Wordsworth saw in daffodils, waterfalls, and clouds.

The children asked him to mimeograph the poem and several of them learned it on their own. Some of them wanted to recite it before the class, and eventually nearly all of them did. A week later Mr. Kozol was summoned to the principal's office. Mr. Kozol, it was found, had taken intolerable liberties with the prescribed curriculum. He was summarily fired. A school official explained the values of the pattern he had violated:

No literature, she said, which is not in the course of study could *ever* be read by a Boston teacher without permission of someone higher up. She said further that no poem by any Negro author could be considered permissible if it involved suffering. I asked her whether there would be many poems left to read by such a standard. Wouldn't it rule out almost all great Negro literature? Her answer evaded the issue. No poetry that described suffering was felt to be suitable. The only Negro poetry that could be read in the Boston schools, she indicated, must fit a certain kind of standard. The kind of poem she meant, she said by way of example, might be a poem that "accentuates the positive" or "describes nature" or "tells of something hopeful."

The final word on Mr. Kozol's discharge came from a School Committee member who justified the action of the school officials. "Mr. Kozol," he said, "or anyone else who lacks the

personal discipline to abide by rules and regulations, as we all must in our civilized society, is obviously unsuited for the highly responsible profession of teaching."

Displayed here is not only the manifestly unjust and educationally devastating policy of these Boston school officials, but also the pitiful struggle of upset and fearful people to conform to a "plan" in which they had been taught to place all their faith. The instinct of the planner is to provide a "better" plan, whereas the teacher who has come to understand the endlessly varying needs of children knows that the "ideal" toward which he aims becomes an antihuman confinement the minute it is embodied in a concrete program which ignores the abyss between the existential present and the far-off goal as conceived by someone else.

The fact is that typical planners are always too willing to adjust to the wrong "realities." In a case of this sort, for example, they would be quick to explain that model curricula *must* be provided for the public schools; that teachers are just not up to self-reliant improvisation, and that without the direction which most of them need, and many of them would be lost without, the educational system would simply collapse into disorderly chaos. But the practical consequence of this view is that the problem is settled by adjusting to the inadequacy of the teachers instead of the growth-needs of the children. The sterilizing faith in *arrangements* remains undisturbed.

The fundamental obligation of the teacher is to ask himself, in each upside-down situation: How is the educational ideal served in *this* particular brand of human confusion? An ideal reflected in external arrangements, or in a scheme of curricular arrangements defined by "constructive" attitudes, is of no help in answering this question. The teacher must literally *feel* his way through a maze of subjective interrelationships. Method has to become the utterly pliant tool of a versatility which can have

no objective definition since it must attempt to match the variety of life itself.

Another kind of variability enters here—the unpredictable variability of the options of human beings. A simple story will illustrate. Years ago, on a large construction job in the West, twenty-odd men were working to clear and grade uneven ground for the foundation of an industrial structure. The men were common laborers whose efforts were coordinated by a foreman who understood the project and divided up the work according to the capacities of the men. The foreman was liked, but his straw-boss assistant earned only suspicion and animosity. He treated the men indifferently and gave orders arbitrarily. Then, in the middle of the project, the foreman was transferred and the straw-boss given his job. The men decided that they had all better quit. But they waited a day or two, to see what would happen. On the first morning that the straw-boss was in charge, it was obvious that the supervision involved was beyond his comprehension. He told the men to go on doing what they had worked at the day before. Then, during the day, he talked to each workman, one after the other. He didn't exactly say he didn't know what he was doing, but he talked to each man like an equal, discussing what had to be done. The fact is that he had to figure out a way to complete the project properly or quit himself. Reduced to this necessity, he decided to enlist the help of the men. By the end of the day, instead of one intelligence thinking about coordination and completion, there were twenty intelligences involved. Talking to one another, the men felt that a minor miracle had occurred. For one of them, at least, it was an "unforgettable" experience.

This happened in a situation about as unplanned and primary as it could be—men working at the crudest sort of labor. Yet such situations are duplicated all the time, everywhere, in psychological terms. Perhaps they almost never work out the way they did in this case. The point is, they seldom get a chance to. Plans, rules,

expectations are all against it. And when they do, they are recorded as rare anecdotes—things that happen outside the rational order of things.

The fact is that the most important events in human life are practically ineffable to the planner. The prime ingredients of human growth are so subtle and at the same time so omnipresent that you can't really put them into any well-conceived scheme of external arrangements for human beings. Yet by treating them as unreal or unimportant, you can easily shut them out. In this neglect of the indefinable we see the genesis of all forms of righteous tyranny.

It is clear that the void in our understanding of the growing-tip side of life needs to be filled, until, at long last, the common idea of what is "real" moves from "arrangements" to the living processes of growth. The design of practical arrangements will of course go on—since these make the scene of life and are the instruments of experience. But they will become less and less the pattern and measure of human achievement. Eventually, they will be regarded as mere improvisations—necessary enough, but never the embodiments of meaning.

REVIEW

REFLECTIVE DISTANCE

IN a passage quoted in MANAS two weeks ago, Hans F. Hofman speaks of the competition among values which precedes human choice. He then says:

Meaning, on the contrary, is discovered when we dare to cease actively selecting. With a reflective distance from immediate involvement we begin to ask ourselves why we are so eagerly seeking to better our life. The tension between values and meaning represents the stark difference between an attitude of reflective meditation and active pursuit without reflection. . . . Man must keep in fragile balance the suggestiveness of values and the over-all sense of direction that expresses meaning.

It should be worth while to risk the "ivory tower" implications of this suggestion, since there is probably something seriously wrong with a period of history in which one has a tendency to apologize for a forthright interest in *thinking*. Nathaniel Hawthorne made a somewhat parallel suggestion after he had spent some time at Brook Farm—the utopian community of the Transcendentalists. "I was beginning," he said, "to lose the sense of what kind of a world it was, among innumerable schemes of what it might be, or ought to be." Later, he added:

No sagacious man will long retain his sagacity if he lives exclusively among reformers without periodically returning into the settled system of things to correct himself by a new observation from that old standpoint.

This hardly constitutes approval of "the settled system of things," but is rather a pointing to the necessity, at another level, of the reflection of which Mr. Hofman speaks. In *Man and Crisis* Ortega writes in a similar vein from the historical point of view. In a time when the mode of life is characterized by "instability, extremism, controversy," he says, there tend to be "sudden and complete shifts which are called conversion." Conversion he defines as man's change "from one definite point of view to its exact opposite: life suddenly seems to us turned upside down and

inside out." "That which yesterday we were burning at the stake we adore today." But Ortega also has a deeper meaning for "conversion":

St. Paul used the term again and again—*oikodome*—construction, building up from the ruins of man; out of his ashes there must be raised a new edifice. But first he must abandon the false positions he occupied and come to himself, return to his own intimate truth, which is the only firm base: this is conversion. In it the man who is lost from himself encounters the self he has found, the self with which he is in agreement the self which is completely one with his own truth. *Metanoia*, or conversion and repentance, is therefore none other than what I call *ensimismamiento*—withdrawal into one's self, return to oneself.

Now comes the passage which seems to continue or expand on the one by Hans Hofman:

It is this *metanoia*—to become converted, or, as I prefer to say, to go back to yourself, withdraw within yourself, seek your true self—that I would urge on men today, particularly the young. (There are too many probabilities that the generation now reading me may let themselves be led violently astray, as were the earlier generations of this and other countries, by the empty wind of some form of extremism, that is to say, by something which is substantially false. Those generations, and I fear the present generation, too, asked to be deceived—they were not disposed to surrender themselves except to something false. And to tell you a secret, I may say that my own paralysis in sectors of life other than the scientific or the academic was due to the same fear. It has not been hidden from me that I could have had almost all the youth of Spain behind me, as one man; I would have had only to pronounce a single word. But that word would have been false, and I was not disposed to invite you to falsify your lives. I know, and you will know before many more years, that all the movements which are characteristic of this moment are historically false and headed for terrible failure. There was a time when the refusal of any form of extremism carried with it the inevitable assumption that one was a conservative. But now it is becoming obvious that this is not so, because people have seen that extremism may be either radical or reactionary. My own refusal of extremism was not due to the fact that I am a conservative, which I am not; but to the fact that in it I discovered a vital and substantive fraud. . . .)

All extremism inevitably fails because it consists in excluding, in denying all but a single point of the

entire vital reality. But the rest of it, not ceasing to be real merely because we deny it, always comes back and back, and imposes itself on us whether we like it or not. The history of all forms of extremism has about it a monotony which is truly sad; it consists in having to go on making pacts with everything which the particular form of extremism under discussion had pretended to eliminate.

What Ortega is arguing for, here, is not inaction, but response to genuine moral imperatives. He is speaking parapolitically, describing the condition he had dealt with years before in *The Revolt of the Masses*, in which he found that the modern nations were largely engaged in making "historical camouflage," as distinct from having a mission to accomplish.

Why was he not more specific concerning the frauds of "extremism"? Conceivably, because he was pursuing the task of the philosopher—illustrating the importance of the "reflective distance," preserving "in fragile balance the suggestiveness of values and over-all sense of direction that expresses meaning." There are levels of perception which cannot possibly be reached by polemical thrusts, and the man who would communicate at those levels—if only to preserve human awareness that they exist—finds it well at times to remain obscure or abstract.

In his *Biographia Literaria*, Coleridge notes this as a practical necessity of Immanuel Kant, if he was to continue his work:

He [Kant] had been in imminent danger of persecution during the reign of the late king of Prussia, that strange compound of lawless debauchery and priest-ridden superstition; and it is probable that he had little inclination, in his old age to act over again the fortunes and hair-breath escapes of Wolf. The expulsion of the first among Kant's disciples, who attempted to complete his system, from the University of Jena, with the confiscation and prohibition of the obnoxious work by the joint efforts of the courts of Saxony and Hanover, supplied experimental proof, that the venerable old man's caution was not groundless.

There were those, in short, who found in Kant heretical tendencies. Coleridge continues:

Questions which cannot be fully answered without exposing the respondent to personal danger, are not entitled to a fair answer; and yet to say this openly would in many cases furnish the very advantage which the adversary is insidiously seeking after. Veracity does not consist in saying, but in the intention of communicating, truth; and the philosopher who cannot utter the whole truth without conveying falsehood, and at the same time, perhaps, exciting the most malignant passions, is constrained to express himself either mythically or equivocally. When Kant therefore was importuned to settle the disputes of his commentators himself, by declaring what he meant, how could he decline the honors of martyrdom with less offence, than by simply replying, "I meant what I said, and at the age of near fourscore, I have something else, and more important to do, than to write a commentary on my own works."

Ortega, of course, was not here concerned with "personal danger." He had already been a political fugitive, and in the passage quoted was occupied in establishing basic principles of thought in relation to action. He doubtless wanted to avoid the short-circuits of unproductive controversy.

You could say that Gandhi, who sought rather than evaded confrontation, recognized this principle as a necessity for bringing the universal spirit of his mission into the actual arena of action. An absolute rule of all Gandhi's action programs was the prohibition of attacks on the character of his opponents. For him, mutual trust was an essential of conflict resolution. One might consider the lifetime of reflection that lay behind Gandhi's career as the source of his extraordinary sense of direction, which made him the greatest exemplar of action in our time.

COMMENTARY

"IN MATTERS OF IMPORTANCE"

IN an article in *Teachers College Record* in 1961 (pp. 211-19), Gordon W. Allport reported on a comparative study of the values expressed by the college students of ten nations. He didn't say much about the differing educational "arrangements" that might have played a part in shaping the opinions of these students, but he did try to account for the values of the American students by speaking of prevailing attitudes of mind in the United States.

Our current social pattern [he wrote, summarizing the views of many critics] is almost completely geared to one objective alone, namely a profitable, expanding production. To insure expanding production, there must be more and more consumption. Hence comes the expensive glamor of our advertising and its control of our mass media. The sole objective seems to be to stimulate the accretion of goods. Self-respect and status, as well as comfort, are acquired in this way. Someone has called our national disease "galloping consumption." Half a century ago, William James saw the peril and was much worried about what he called "the American terror of poverty."

What the young Americans said seemed to fit pretty well with this critique. The students of the ten nations were asked to write autobiographies of the future—"My life from now until the year 2000." There was also an extensive questionnaire. The American students, the replies showed, "were the most self-centered, the most 'privatistic' in values." Dr. Allport continued:

They desired above all a rich, full life for themselves, and showed little concern for national welfare or for the fate of mankind at large. The context of their outlook was private rather than public, passive rather than pioneer.

To illustrate, Dr. Allport quoted from the future "autobiography" of a Radcliffe girl of eighteen:

Our summers will be spent lobster-fishing on the Cape. Later we'll take a look at the rest of the country—California the Southwest, and the Chicago stockyards. I want the children, when they get past the age of ten, to spend part of the summer away from home, either at camp or as apprentices to whatever profession they may show an interest in. Finally, I

hope we will all be able to take a trip to Europe, especially to Russia, to see what can be done about Communism.

A Mexican girl of the same age wrote:

Since I like psychology very much, I wish, on leaving this school, to study it, specializing in it and exercising it as a profession. I shouldn't like to get married right away, although like any woman I am desirous of getting married before realizing all my aspirations. In addition, I should like to do something for my country—as a teacher, as a psychologist, or as a mother. As a teacher, to guide my pupils in the best path, for at the present time they need solid bases in childhood in order in their future lives not to have so many frustrations as the youth of the present. As a psychologist, to make studies which in some way will serve humanity and my beloved country. As a mother, to make my children creatures who are useful to both their country and all humanity.

Now the interesting thing about this comparison, so far as the American students are concerned, is that it was made before the wave of turbulent support of the Civil Rights movement swept the campuses of the United States. Dr. Allport's study, you could say, picked up the overlay of attitudes young Americans were *supposed* to have regarding the free enterprise system and the "land of opportunity," but it didn't get at the enduring qualities of the human beings involved, in spite of the "cultural influences" they had been exposed to.

A point worth noting is that educational arrangements seem to have had no specific effect at all. They certainly weren't planned to make American students "self-centered," and while the autobiographical essays were "frank and open," the writing had "little literary quality." Nor were the arrangements as conceived by university administrators designed to stir up a "Free Speech" movement or any of the other unexpected demonstrations of independent thinking of the past three or four years. All this probably bears out Dr. Allport's last sentence: "For in matters of importance, where values lie, the growing individual alone can educate himself."

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

THE BASIC QUESTIONS

ON an afternoon after classes, five or six youngsters of high-school age gathered in the backyard of a small private school in the Los Angeles area. The head of the school, who also does most of the teaching, joined them in some informal talk. At one point she said:

"There's something I wish you would try to help me with. All my life I've wondered about three questions, and I haven't found the answers. They are: What is man? What is man for? How do you educate him?"

One of the good things about this school is that these young people knew that the teacher meant the questions seriously. Asking them was no pedagogic device. At least one of the youngsters went home with an excited mind, since she had never before been confronted by these questions in terms that were so direct. It should be added that the teacher explained that she hardly expected "worked-out" answers; the questions were things to think about. A boy in the group had a guitar, and she said he might play something as his response.

For a great many people, the wrong kind of sophistication is a barrier to asking such questions, so that they don't ever come up. As Ortega says in one of his books:

. . . the man who does not create an idea but inherits it finds between things and his own person a preconceived idea which facilitates his relationship with things as would a ready-made recipe. He then will be inclined *not to ask himself* questions about things, not to feel genuine needs, since he has in hand a repertory of solutions. So that the man who is already heir to a cultural system accustoms himself progressively, generation after generation, to having no contact with basic problems, to feeling none of the needs which make up his life; and on the other hand, to using mental processes—concepts, evaluations, enthusiasms—for which he has no evidence because they were not born out of the depths of himself.

Probably most of the confusion in thought about education occurs because of the vast accumulation of "ready-made recipes" standing in the way of the essential simplicities of teaching. From time to time, someone cuts through all this talk, and then people who have been bewildered by learned discussion of the current fashion in recipes stand in awe of this "revolutionary," and, too often, submit to the temptation to try to make a recipe out of *him*. A. S. Neill is a good example of this.

Authentic human life—or education—cannot occur for anyone until he begins to use and live by "concepts, evaluations, enthusiasms" which have been "born out of the depths of himself." To move people in this direction is the purpose of Socratic dialogue.

The capacity to go back to the basic questions, no matter what the prevailing "tradition" has to say about them, requires a certain intensity of being. You have to want to know, to admit that you don't know, and then, despite the humiliations of admitted ignorance, decide how to deal as an autonomous intelligence with the problem of authority. You can't be contemptuous toward all the "recipes" until you know something about why they don't work, and for this you need at least a little personal experience in what does work, in both life and education. Nobody can be successful in "rejecting" society except in ways in which he is doing something better than society does it.

There is bound to be some good in tradition, if only because tradition is made by human beings, but it is hard to tell the good from the bad—the genuine thinking from the recipes—unless you use the touchstone of basic questions. Occasionally, a learned tradition shows signs of improving itself from within. An article about some recent books on education, in the *London Times Literary Supplement* (Sept. 28), helps to illustrate this by putting both sides of the case:

One recurring problem of modern society is that knowledge is perpetually academicized and made

remote from the thing that it purports to study. Yet any balanced examination of what goes on in schools of education must surely find that this kind of academicizing occurs at present and may well be preferable to its alternative—a vulgar Philistinism. Surely one of the major facts about contemporary institutions for training teachers is that they have succeeded in changing the atmosphere of the primary schools, but that despite this important achievement their standing, both in relation to other university departments and to sixth form teachers, is relatively low, for the good reason that their intellectual work is not adequate and that it is "academic" in the pejorative sense.

At some point, in other words, the instinct to find safety in recipes takes over.

There is obvious justification for the suspicion felt by people who really teach in regard to elaborate recipes for teaching. And the fact that salary-scales of teachers are in some measure dependent on taking additional "education" courses may compound the conspiracy against asking basic questions. For example, people who let these questions pervade their lives would probably find it emotionally difficult to substitute expressions like "positive reinforcement" for the spontaneous acts of *encouragement* which characterize their relationships with the learning young. If you have a feeling about what "man" is, you don't submit to a manipulative vocabulary so easily. Manipulation is "vulgar Philistinism" from any point of view, and letting behaviorist language supply description of the most subjective relation that can exist between human beings—*teaching*—is as bad as supposing that commercial language can give new life to intellectual communications. A man who "buys" ideas and "sells" objectives implies that commodities are the really superior item.

Summarizing the findings of *The Graduate Study of Education* (Report of the Harvard Committee), the *Times Literary Supplement* writer notes that President Lowell of Harvard established the study of Education at the Graduate level and "sought to raise its scholarly tone." By this means—

The fight between academic standing and the need to train teachers came into the open. It was resolved by a mish-mash: "education" was invented as a discipline, and its academic status immediately sank very low. . . . The elevation of "vocationalism" to the level of a cult emphasized not good creative teaching but a body of pseudo-scientific dogma about "education."

It is now admitted that this was a mistake. The following is quoted by the reviewer from the Harvard Committee Report:

We are, in effect, rejecting the notion of a special science of education as a basis for integration. Such a notion has, on occasion, been looked to as the basis for an independent status for schools of education, or, at least, as providing the common core of the work of such schools. Such hopes for a science of education seem to us to rest on quicksand. . . . A science is counted by its peculiar ideas, instruments, and procedures, but, most importantly, by its distinctive laws and theories. Education has no such distinctive laws and theories. To be sure, educational phenomena may be studied in a scientific manner, but the current attempts to study education scientifically proceed from a wide variety of questions, and utilize a multiplicity of concepts, procedures, and research styles. It is unlikely in the extreme that they will all coalesce into, or be superseded by, a unified educational science.

This is a nicely phrased obituary for a great many of the "ready-made recipes" concerning education. R.I.P.

FRONTIERS Fact and Opinion

THE very linchpin of the modern theory of knowledge, and of the popular belief in progress, is the idea of the "fact"—the independent, ascertainable, definable fact which is the object of scientific inquiry. "Get the facts" has been the slogan of progressivism for at least two or three generations. "Don't think, find out," is the tough-minded counsel of the enemies of "obscurantism." Yet along with this development, although somewhat behind the scenes, has come questioning of the actual "identity" of what we call facts, and a deepening suspicion of the only thing that makes a fact a fact—its beautiful objectivity.

Among scientists, the most impressive contributor to this questioning has been Michael Polanyi, who shows (in *Personal Knowledge*) that there are controlling factors of human subjectivity behind all scientific formulations—and, indeed, that an imaginatively created *morale* is indispensable to the cultural environment in which scientific progress takes place. A further challenge to the myth of objectivity arises out of the disciplined studies of perception by Adelbert Ames, who found that there could be very little knowledge of even such primary data as sense perceptions without a corresponding knowledge of the people who have them. As he put it (in *Morning Notes of Adelbert Ames* [Rutgers University Press]):

It is apparent that no understanding of the nature of perceptions is possible without some understanding of why what a person is perceptually aware of is of importance to him. It seems apparent that what a person is perceptually aware of is of importance to him in that it provides him with awareness of how to act and behave effectively, in the particular environment in which he finds himself. . . .

In another place Ames observed:

Further, it would seem that nothing that can be pointed at exists as a reality in its own right but only in transactional relationship to everything else that can be pointed at.

These judgments have far-reaching effect for anyone engaged in the assemblage of facts in expectation of achieving, in time, an objective portrait of the natural world. Yet they cause embarrassment only for those who look to facts for philosophic as well as practical certainty. A useful exploration of this general problem is contributed to *Etc.* for September by Ralph Slovenko, professor of law at the Menninger Foundation and the University of Kansas. Prof. Slovenko points out that the distinction between opinion and fact, for the purposes of court testimony, is both useful and necessary, but that a *rigid* view of this distinction is disastrous. What people call facts, he shows, are really no more than opinions which have been hardened into supposed facts by common consent. You could say this about popular conceptions of many things—ranging from medieval conceptions like "Divine Grace" to present notions of the "atom." Toward the end of his discussion, Prof. Slovenko observes:

The terms "fact" and "opinion" denote merely a difference of degree of description or a difference in nearness or remoteness of inference. The difference between the statement: "he was driving an automobile on the left-hand side of the street," which would be classed as "fact" under the rule, and "he was driving an automobile carelessly," which would be called "opinion," is merely a difference between a more specific form of descriptive statement and a less specific form. The opinion rule operates to prefer the more primitive inferential statement; that is, to prefer the more descriptive statement to the less descriptive or evaluative statement. . . . Legal reformers are now becoming conscious of the theoretical unmeaningfulness of the opinion rule. The American Law Institute's *Model Code of Evidence* condemns the development of the opinion rule. The rule now increasingly accepted is that the opinion of a witness will be permitted if it is the kind which persons form constantly and if the witness cannot with reasonable facility describe more primitively the facts upon which the opinion is based. The opinion rule should be used to facilitate procedure and to reach a fair result, and to this end it should be applied flexibly. It should neither be related to an inadequate epistemology, which may tend to invest it with a sense of inviolability, nor be expressed in such a

manner as to force its users to accept, at least implicitly, an inadequate epistemology or an ontology of discrete fact.

To support these conclusions Prof. Slovenko pursues an investigation which uses Wittgenstein's *Tractatus LogicoPhilosophicus* as a foil, and which draws on philosophers in the Hegelian tradition for the theory behind criticism of the opinion rule. The following analysis reveals the arbitrary character of familiar and widely accepted views of "objectivity":

The most precisely localized experience is called a "thing"; an unlocalized experience is called a state of the self. Disagreement arises because men experience different parts of reality or the same parts differently grouped. . . . The reason that we have different experiences is not that each of us has a private and subjective picture, but that each of us picks out and attends to only a part of the immensely rich and complex world in which we find ourselves: one man's part is not the same as another man's part. Which scheme of selecting and grouping is the correct one?

To illuminate the way in which men decide upon the answer to this question, Prof. Slovenko quotes W. Angus Sinclair:

In knowledge we are "selecting" and "grouping" some small scraps of the vast mass of influences that surround us being driven on to do so by our emotions, feelings, impulses, and interests. . . . on the whole we tend to "select" and "group" in ways which fall between two extremes, on the one hand the most simple and coherent, and on the other the most comfortable. Just how far they fall towards the one extreme or towards the other depends on what sort of persons we are, and on what sort of persons we wish to be.

Is there a fearfully undermining relativism in this view? Does it say that there is no rock of certain knowledge on which men can hope to stand? Actually, all this statement does is replace objective with subjective reality. There is considerable historical justification for this. It is the claim that truth can be converted into an objective system of knowledge which produces, in time, those strait-jacket societies based on infallible authority, whether of Church or State.

In respect to the decisions of daily life as well as the issues which come before the courts, Prof. Slovenko has this suggestive passage:

We must remember that theoretical accuracy and efficiency are very different things. In spite of continuum theory, the opinion rule may be justified on one or perhaps two pragmatic grounds. As Bishop Berkeley put it, "we should speak with the vulgar but think with the learned." By this, Berkeley means to say that we should use the kind of language which our listeners can understand, for language is for the purpose of communication, but that we should know the meaning of our language even if our listeners do not.

In short, the practical value of the opinion rule is to prevent a witness from "mere gratuitous imagination and conjecture." It is really directed to motivation. But the rule itself, as formulated, is theoretically unsound, and those who use expressions like fact versus opinion are not saying anything of philosophical importance:

"Hard facts" upon examination turn out to be "soft." Every statement resolves itself into a matter of opinion. The contention that opinion is inference and that fact is original perception cannot be sustained, since the process of knowledge is the same for both. There is no statement, however specific and detailed, that is not in some measure the product of inference and reflection as well as observation and memory. A human being cannot behave as a mere "dataphone." It is impossible to confine witnesses to some fancied realm of "fact" and to forbid them to enter the domain of "opinion."

So, in the final analysis, there are no "brute facts," independent of theories about them. For even the choice of a "fact" as important enough to be collected for study is itself evidence of preliminary assumptions about it. It was precisely this sort of analysis which led Plato to give primary attention to theory, and to make ethical inquiry the root of his epistemology. "Virtue is knowledge" is beginning to acquire a contemporary ring.