

## "OUR DUTY ABOVE ALL"

THE hope of finding simple solutions for complicated problems is one that human beings will never give up. For, despite all our disappointments and failures, we cannot erase the feeling—which seems to come from the roots of our being—that this hope is grounded in fact. If we cast it away as a technical expectation, it comes back as fantasy or poetic irony. We somehow *know* that the right simplicities exist, and that we must continue to look for them. The trouble is mainly that one solution gets in the way of another; then together they breed many new problems, and in all this confusion we have left only the plaintive conviction that things ought to go better than they do.

But sooner or later we start making new generalizations, because we must. They are the intellectual forms of the simplicity we seek, and there would be no human life without them.

There is this episode in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's story, *The Little Prince*:

"Good morning," said the little prince.

"Good morning," said the merchant.

This was a merchant who sold pills that had been invented to quench thirst. You need only swallow one pill a week, and you would feel no need of anything to drink.

"Why are you selling those?" asked the little prince.

"Because they save a tremendous amount of time," said the merchant.

"Computations have been made by experts. With these pills, you save fifty-three minutes in every week."

"And what do I do with those fifty-three minutes?"

"Anything you like . . ."

"As for me," said the little prince to himself, "if I had fifty-three minutes to spend as I liked, I should walk at my leisure toward a spring of fresh water."

How many of the issues in the present argument about "technology" have a kind of resolution in this fragment?

Well, we know the merchant would give many excellent reasons for continuing in business. He would tell you of the numerous people who have employment in making the pills, and of the pleasant community life which surrounds the pill factory. He would speak of gaining the freedom to drink or not to drink, and of the countless new "options" which enterprising manufacturers like himself are providing to mankind. He would, in short, find very impressive generalizations to show that the little prince was, after all, only a little boy without awareness of the present beneficence and immeasurable possibilities of future progress. Even the national defense, he might argue, could be weakened by the ingenuous sentiments of the little prince.

Obviously, this debate can go on forever. Yet people who have come to respect the fruits of the imagination will insist that the little prince knows something that the rationalizers of technology do not or will not understand—something which no one can be *compelled* to understand. That is why the compellers always lose out.

A surprising approach to such problems was made by William James in his essay, "On a Certain Sense of Blindness in Human Beings." James tells of a journey by train which took him through the mountains of North Carolina. Looking out of the window, he saw little clearings on the hillsides. The settlers had made room for fields by girdling large trees to kill them. They had cut out the smaller trees, leaving the stumps, and had

surrounded the fields with rail fences to keep out pigs and cattle. Then, in among the dead trees and stumps, they planted Indian corn. These "pioneer" activities seemed to James a desecration:

The forest has been destroyed; and what had "improved" it out of existence was hideous, a sort of ulcer, without a single element of artificial grace to make up for the loss of Nature's beauty. . . . Talk about going back to Nature! I said to myself, oppressed by the dreariness. . . . No modern person ought to be willing to live a day in such a state of rudimentariness and denudation.

But James, later having opportunity to meet some of the folk who lived in those mountains, was forced to make new generalizations. A settler said to him: "Why, we ain't happy here unless we are getting one of these coves under cultivation." James reacted:

I instantly felt that I had been losing the whole inward significance of the situation. . . . To me the clearings spoke of naught but denudation. . . . But when *they* looked on the hideous stumps, what they thought of was personal victory. The chips, the girdled trees, and the vile split rails spoke of honest sweat, persistent toil and final reward. . . . In short, the clearing, which to me was a mere ugly picture on the retina, was to them redolent with moral memories and sang a very pæan of duty, struggle and success.

So, there is a sense in which we should all stop arguing about which are the "right" generalizations and start becoming psychologists like William James. Sooner or later, arguments about the right generalizations get down to fundamentals like God and Country, or Liberty and Security, these being matters concerning which mere reason has no authority at all. It is true enough that there are values it is really indecent to argue about. When some clever debater succeeds in getting you to "reason" about certain things you believe in, you begin to feel vaguely disloyal to everything important in life. For, as E. F. Schumacher said recently in one of his lectures, "No one can prove that it is right to love anybody or to care for anything." To wish to

prove one's love reveals an ignorance of what love is.

Yet the foundation of all our reasoning lies in what we care for and whom we love. It follows that reason is a far better tool for recognizing our failures, which are finite, than for defining our ultimate convictions, which are not.

Another order of generalization concerning the uses and applications of technology comes from a Japanese writer, Junichiro Tanizaki; who is famous among his own people but virtually unknown in the West. In a passage written in the early 1930's, he said:

There are those who hold that as long as a house keeps out cold and as long as food keeps off starvation, it matters little what they look like. And indeed for even the sternest ascetic the fact remains that a snowy day is cold, and there is no denying the impulse to accept the services of a heater if it happens to be there in front of one, no matter how cruelly its inelegance may shatter the spell of the day. But it is on occasions like this that I always think how different everything would be if we in the Orient had developed our own science. Suppose for instance we had developed our own physics and chemistry: would not the techniques and industries based on them have taken a different form, would not our myriads of everyday gadgets, our medicines, the products of our industrial art—would they not have suited our national temper better than they do? . . .

One begins to have long thoughts about Commodore Perry's "opening up" of Japan. That may be an event long past, but is there ever *any* justification for imposing the values and generalizations developed by one culture upon people who themselves have quite different, and perhaps "Little Prince" simplicities natural to their lives? Something of what Tanizaki is attempting to convey is suggested by his remarks on paper:

Western paper is to us no more than something to be used but the texture of Chinese paper and Japanese paper gives us a certain feeling of warmth, of calm and repose. Even the same white could as well be one color for Western paper and another for our own. Western paper turns away the light, while our paper seems to take it in, to envelop it gently, like the soft surface of a first snowfall. It gives off no

sound when it is crumpled or folded, it is quiet and pliant to the touch as the leaf of a tree.

Here, in James's words, is awareness of the "inward significance of the situation."

It is even possible to make an "inward" reading of the generalizations often used to sum up the spirit of American life. In his paper, "What Then Is the American, This New Man?" Arthur M. Schlesinger wrote:

When President Coolidge made his famous remark, "The Business of America is business," he quite properly added, "The chief ideal of the American people is idealism. I cannot repeat too often that America is a nation of idealists." This dualism puzzled foreign commentators, who found it difficult, for example, to reconcile worship of the Almighty Dollar with the equally universal tendency to spend freely and give money away. In contrast to Europe, America has practically no misers, and one consequence of the winning of Independence was the abolition of primogeniture and entail. Harriet Martineau was among those who concluded that "the eager pursuit of wealth does not necessarily indicate a love of wealth for its own sake." The fact is that, for a people who recalled how hungry and ill-clad their ancestors had been through the centuries in the Old World, the chance to make money was like the sunlight at the end of a tunnel. It was the means of living a life of human dignity. In other words, for the great majority of Americans it was a symbol of idealism rather than materialism. Hence "this new man" had an instinctive sympathy for the underdog, and even persons of moderate wealth gratefully shared it with the less fortunate, helping to endow charities, schools, hospitals and art galleries and providing the wherewithal to nourish movements for humanitarian reform which might otherwise have died aborning.

Mr. Schlesinger makes other, less kind generalizations about his countrymen, accurate enough at the time (1942), and many Americans now find reason for far more forceful criticism of themselves. But the point to be stressed, before it gets lost in a shuffle of quotations, is that *no* generalization can ever be made to cover more than a small portion of the realities we need to keep ourselves open to as human beings.

This is of course a very old truth, yet its familiarity breeds neglect. The human tendency is to elevate our "practical" solutions to absolutes—to let emotional immediacy, our fears or a sense of human outrage, rule our minds. And then, in order to marshal support, to create the organization of power—and to persuade, cajole, or even to frighten people into assent—we let these generalizations acquire the authority of indisputable dogma. The inevitable result is that when they no longer apply—when other moral urgencies have arisen, or when the abstractions of science alter in emphasis, generating new regions of thought—we find ourselves captives of the hardening residual forms of our old moral emotions.

So the art of inquiry, of finding principles to live by, ought to be devoted to examining the motives for the formation of generalizations, and not given almost entirely to "testing" their validity. It is motive which blinds and shuts out—or opens our eyes and gives us pause. *All* generalizations worth proposing are capable of at least some demonstration. There is always *some* limited way of looking at life that will make them seem true.

In 1944, R. V. C. Bodley published the story of his seven years of living with the Arabs who pasture their flocks in the portion of the Sahara which stretches away to the south of Algiers, in North Africa. The tribe he joined was practically untouched—one could say "unspoiled"—by Western civilization. They had been living as they lived when he joined them for more than a thousand years. They were, as Bodley did not hesitate to say, an extremely ignorant people. Yet this English soldier—or ex-soldier—who had been totally disillusioned with Western society by witnessing the Paris Peace Conference, found a renewal of his life among them. He went there after T. E. Lawrence, an even more disillusioned man, had said to him: "Go and live with the Arabs."

What were the Arabs like?

The average nomad knows nothing about anything which does not immediately concern him. If you start talking about something he cannot picture, you have no way of making him see it. If you are new to desert life, you may try to explain that you come from a country beyond the sea where there are rivers and forests and miles of grassy meadowland. The nomad will listen politely, but as he has never seen the sea or meadows or rivers, he will treat your story as one of his Arabian Nights favorites. Your words will throw no light on his boundless ignorance.

Boundless ignorance! Incredible, but true. The nomads have no education and do not want any. They are blissfully content with what they have. They expect nothing of the world but enough to eat and a few clothes to cover their bodies. I often envied them. They seemed to have proved that the less you know, the happier you are.

Storybooks and motion pictures have created a legend about the inscrutable faces and meditative silences of the desert Arabs, supposed to conceal wells of wisdom. They conceal nothing but minds as arid as the Sahara. Even with the educated Arab this Oriental inscrutability is a fantasy. The Oriental is no more inscrutable than a Texan or a Scotsman. The unemotional expression, the meditative silence conceals, for the most part, an ability to make the mind a blank. That, in itself, is a feat; probably more of one than generating complicated thoughts. But that is all there is to it. Whenever an Asiatic does not wish to meet a controversial issue, he becomes "inscrutable" and remains so until the argument is over.

In flight from hypocrisy on a national and international scale, Bodley sought refuge in the simple, timeless ways of the desert Arabs. But he found that they lived entirely by their religion, and he could hardly unite with them in that. Then, quite suddenly, a solution came to him:

With a sensation akin to ecstasy, I discovered that it was less difficult to be sincere here than at home. I found I could not be a complete agnostic in the desert. I felt obliged to put my faith in something more reliable than man. In Europe or America there were telephones, radios, something alive within reach which could be summoned. But in the Sahara there was nothing like that.

So, by a tropism that he could not resist, he joined them in their religion:

I do not know what the Arabs thought of my turning toward Islam, or whether they thought anything. It was never mentioned, and I was never initiated. I initiated myself. I bought a translation of the Koran and read it with delight. . . . Soon I learned the prayers myself and repeated them with companions. They were not really prayers such as Christians employ, asking of God benefits for themselves and their kind. They were rather psalms of praise. . . .

One night, after the evening prayer, Madani gave me his rosary. I slipped it over my turban and felt the wooden beads against my neck. . . . "And M'slim!" I whispered. "I am a Moslem!" . . . That is as near as I got to public profession of faith. Whether I was a Moslem, I never asked. I don't know to this day.

Mr. Bodley's book, *Wind in the Sahara* (Coward-McCann, 1944), is not a "plea" for anything. Least of all is it an effort to convert the reader to Islam. It is a simple report of the wholeness Bodley found in the half-truths lived so wholeheartedly by the desert Arabs. Sickened by the times, he discovered a way out of time. But his European friends thought he was touched in the head.

There is a parallel between what Bodley found among the Arabs and what Tolstoy learned from his contact with the Russian peasants. Tolstoy did more with what he learned, you could say, but measurements serve little purpose in such comparisons. What is illustrated in both cases is the ordeal of awakening from the blinding effect of old generalizations.

What we need, so plainly that it hurts, is a theory of truth that encompasses the wonder in the lives of people who know very little, but use to the limit everything they know. Mr. Bodley has a section on what simple belief in inexorable Fate can do for a man. It sounds a lot better than what belief in propaganda for progress can do to entire civilizations.

The lucidity in the lives of men who live by simple truths cannot be gained by deliberate blindness, nor by calculated reaction, but it is nonetheless the reality which all men long for and

seek. It is a harmony, a proportion, virtually an identity, between knowing and being. The Arabs proved the wisdom of the Little Prince. But this wisdom is not something that can be taken from anyone else.

Why is it that people who find their way to some kind of "enlightenment" must first experience the depths of personal despair? What happens when a man loses his sense of stake in *everything*?

Aldo Leopold may have happened on one version of the rule for this discovery when he wrote:

To the laborer in the sweat of his labor, the raw stuff on his anvil is an adversary to be conquered. So was wilderness an adversary to the pioneer.

But to the laborer in repose, that same raw stuff is something to be loved and cherished, because it gives definition and meaning to his life.

Or, as A. H. Maslow put it in *Toward a Psychology of Being*:

For cognition to be complete, I have shown that it must be detached, disinterested, desireless, unmotivated. Only thus are we able to perceive the object in its own nature with its own objective, intrinsic characteristics rather than abstracting it down to "what is useful," "what is threatening," etc. . . . The Taoists and Zen Buddhists taking this path were able to see a thousand years ago what we psychologists are only beginning to be aware of.

The question that is forming—must inevitably form—in the mind from reading such conclusions, goes something like this: Well, supposing that all that these people say is true, what can one do about it? How can you take and use this truth in a history that, day after day, is being made by aggressive action on the basis of confident generalizations—ideas of progress and good that people *feel* to be completely true? Are you going to tell them that what they believe is an "illusion"? Who will accept that?

This is *the* problem of education. It has no programmatic solution. Socrates called it the problem of double ignorance—which we easily

recognize in others, less easily in ourselves. Seeing this problem made Ortega say that the only man with clear ideas is the man who has been shipwrecked, the man whose confident generalizations have been *smashed*.

Yet there is a way of going after this problem in education—a way which every real teacher comes to know, in one form or another. Robert Jay Wolff gave a modest example of it when he suggested how an instructor in art might try to lift the sights of a talented youth who wants to become a famous cartoonist:

It is obvious that there is no way on earth by which you could possibly change this boy's mind. Actually, there is no need to destroy his conviction. It would not even be desirable for he may very well turn out to be an excellent cartoonist. But it is possible to divert his efforts into a wider range of sensory and aesthetic experience by accepting and using the very fixation you are trying to free him from. Show him Alexander Calder's masterful and witty wire images. Tell the boy that is cartooning, too.

Then, after several more such "lifting" suggestions, Mr. Wolff concludes:

This would be a beginning, and a pretty rough beginning it is on the teacher. It's hard work and it takes sensitive thinking and insight. There's only one alternative: let him develop in the image that the world of Super Suds and words spelled backwards sets up in him. True, he will be living in this world and he will be earning his livelihood there. It is also true that we should do all in our power to prepare him for this task. However, in carrying out this obligation we should never lose sight of the fact that if we prepare him for a job, and nothing else, it is always possible that he will end his days with a job—and nothing else. It is our duty above all to see that this does not happen.

## *REVIEW*

### SOME MOTIVATIONAL RESEARCH

SINCE Noam Chomsky's just-published *American Power and the New Mandarins* (Pantheon, \$7.95) is bound to receive much attention from reviewers as an essentially fairminded tract for the times—as an intellectually brilliant and morally illuminating criticism of the involvement of the United States in Vietnam—we should like to consider it from another point of view. This book, for example, bears interesting comparison with either Eric Havelock's *Preface to Plato* or Dwight Macdonald's *The Root Is Man*. Since in one of his essays, "The Responsibility of Intellectuals," Mr. Chomsky quotes from Macdonald to illustrate what is to be his underlying theme, those who know Macdonald's work can easily identify *American Power* as an expression of basic, uncompromising humanism. An added indication of the moral foundation of the work is the keynoting use made of Randolph Bourne. The book is tough-minded, but not angry; and it will seem "extreme" only in the sense that balance, in these evil days, cannot help but seem extreme to those who find their norms in the status quo.

A comparison of *American Power and the New Mandarins* with the classical scholarship of Eric Havelock removes Mr. Chomsky's work from the category of a tract for the times and turns it into a systematic investigation of the distortions of mind which develop in otherwise intelligent men because of emotional biases which they have never questioned and, in some cases, are simply *unable* to question. Here, the integrity of individuals is not so much at issue as the integrity of a civilization.

Conventional opinion, Mr. Chomsky shows, recognizes two sorts of critics of American policy. One sort, the "responsible" critics, oppose continuing the war because we can't seem to win it. The war is not wrong, but impractical. This position makes for good manners in debate. It is technician arguing with technician, both sides

sharing a common moral ground. The "irresponsible" critics find our motives in this war intolerable and do not disguise their horror at its continuance. They challenge the assumption of world police power by the American State. They insist on judging the behavior of the United States according to the same criteria that they apply to other powers.

Mr. Chomsky discusses one of the men who are unable to look critically at the motives lying behind the present policies of this nation:

As a final example of this failure of skepticism, consider the remarks of Henry Kissinger in concluding his presentation in a Harvard-Oxford debate on American Vietnam policies. He observed, rather sadly, that what disturbs him most is that others question not our judgment but our motives—a remarkable comment on the part of one whose professional concern is political analysis, that is, analysis of the actions of governments in terms of motives that are unexpressed in official propaganda and perhaps only dimly perceived by those whose acts they govern. No one would be disturbed by an analysis of the political behavior of Russians, French, or Tanzanians, questioning their motives and interpreting their actions in terms of long-range interests, perhaps well concealed behind official rhetoric. But it is an article of faith that American motives are pure and not subject to analysis. Although it is nothing new in American intellectual history—or, for that matter, in the general history of imperialist apologia—this innocence becomes increasingly distasteful as the power it serves grows more dominant in world affairs and more capable, therefore, of the unconstrained viciousness that the mass media present to us each day. We are hardly the first power in history to combine material interests, great technological capacity, and an utter disregard for the suffering and misery of the lower orders. The long tradition of naïveté and self-righteousness that disfigures our intellectual history, however, must serve as a warning to the Third World, if such a warning is needed, as to how our protestations of sincerity and benign intent are to be interpreted.

It is here, in this insistence on the examination of motives—our own, along with those of other peoples—that Mr. Chomsky makes common cause with Socrates. Socrates looked to the day when there would be many more Athenians who

would have the habit of inspecting their own motives, and therefore be capable of understanding justice. Mr. Chomsky's book is made up of variations on the theme of this responsibility, and the impact of his work comes from lucid exposure of instance after instance of its neglect. Havelock's *Preface to Plato* (Harvard University Press) is a pertinent comparison for the reason that it is entirely devoted to explaining Plato's educational psychology, conceived as a means of overcoming self-righteousness. Plato wanted the Greeks to learn how to look at themselves independent of the pattern of their acts. He wanted them to achieve a conception of authentic selfhood and *then* regard their own behavior in its light, instead of defining themselves by glorying in their habitual actions, as the Greeks were accustomed to do. For if they could not separate their identity from their existing moral habits, there was not the slightest possibility that these habits could be changed for the better.

So with the spokesmen who are "saddened"—or, as is much commoner, angered—by any imputation of unworthy motives behind the Vietnam war. The questioners of American motives are "irresponsible" critics of their country. They are guilty of indecencies, of "corrupting the youth," and ways are found for punishing them severely. As with Dr. Spock, their blameless personal lives and usefulness to society protect them no more than such considerations protected Socrates.

Who were the "responsible" authorities in Plato's time? Dr. Havelock shows that they were the poets—those among them, that is, who sang of what it meant to be a "good Greek." Havelock calls them the tribal encyclopedists, arbiters of all the forms of conventional behavior. Since the culture had recently been only oral, the recitations of the poets transmitted the ideas of selfhood, virtue, and correct behavior from one generation to the next, and memory of the epics embodied the controlling cultural tradition.. The devices of the arts thus combined to perpetuate conventional

self-images, and Socrates' searching questions about justice and virtue could not get through to the independent moral awareness of the young Athenians until the barriers raised by the emotional "reinforcement" of poetic imagery and martial rhythms had been reduced.

Who are the "tribal encyclopedists" of today? They are the expositors of conventional expertise in respect to national policy, and Mr. Chomsky calls them the New Mandarins. They are intellectual authorities who enjoy the same sort of respect that the poets enjoyed among the ancient Greeks. Instead of being the mouthpieces of "the gods," they expound the authority of "science," making the common egotisms to which all the human race is heir sound new, different, and good. In his Introduction, Mr. Chomsky details the scope of what is to be overcome:

Twenty years of intensive cold-war indoctrination and seventy years of myth regarding our international role make it difficult to face these issues in a serious way. There is a great deal of intellectual debris to be cleared away. Ideological pressures so overpowering that even their existence was denied must be examined and understood. The search for alternatives, for individuals, for American society, for the international order as a whole, has barely begun, and no one can guess where it will lead. Quite possibly it will lead nowhere, cut off by domestic repression or its "functional equivalent," to use a favorite term of the present administration: the dominance of a liberal technocracy who will serve the existing social order in the belief that they represent justice and humanity, fighting limited wars at home and overseas to preserve stability, promising that the future will be better if only the dispossessed will wait patiently, and supported by an apathetic, obedient majority, its mind and conscience dulled by a surfeit of commodities and by some new version of the old system of beliefs and ideas. Perhaps the worst excesses may be eliminated. Perhaps a way may be found to bring about a fundamental change in American society of a sort that can hardly be envisioned today. A great many people have been aroused by the Vietnam tragedy and the domestic crisis. There is a new mood of questioning and rebellion among the youth of the country, a very healthy and hopeful development, by and large, that few would have predicted a decade ago. The

passionate involvement of students involved in the civil rights movement, in the movement to end war, in resistance, in community organizing, already has changed the moral climate of the universities at least. These stirrings of concern and commitment give some reason to hope that we will not repeat the crimes of the recent past. One thing is certain: we must never forget these crimes.

This book is made up of eight essays, some of which have appeared in the *New York Review of Books* and in *Ramparts*. Mr. Chomsky writes as a scholar and intellectual, not upon his specialty, which is linguistics, but on the responsibility of scholars and intellectuals, and he uses the methods of scholarship to expose the self-deceptions and betrayals of which morally biased intellectuality becomes capable. The book is written with deep personal feeling, but from a stance of balance and with much common sense. For example, after rejecting the defeatism of mere "guilt-feelings," he says:

No less insidious is the cry for "revolution," at a time when not even the germs of new institutions exist let alone the moral and political consciousness that would lead to a basic modification of social life. If there will be a "revolution" in America today, it will no doubt be a move toward some variety of fascism. We must guard against the kind of revolutionary rhetoric that would have had Karl Marx burn down the British Museum because it was merely part of a repressive society. It would be criminal to overlook the serious flaws and inadequacies in our institutions, or to fail to utilize the substantial degree of freedom that most of us enjoy, within the framework of these flawed institutions, to modify them or even replace them by a better social order. One who pays some attention to history will not be surprised if those who cry most loudly that we must smash and destroy are later found among the administrators of some new system of repression.

This book, in short, is mature, not incendiary, criticism. It is intended to inform the moral consciousness of Americans with a supporting rational ground. It is heartening evidence that the "substantial degree of freedom" of which the author speaks does indeed exist. Mr. Chomsky has written a tract for the times which reaches far beyond the times, addressing himself to principles

on which any future worth realizing will have to be based.



## *COMMENTARY*

### ORIGINS OF THE NEW "NIHILISM"

THE self-examination to which Noam Chomsky calls the complacent advocates of American management of other peoples' morality (see Review) is equally in order for enthusiasts of "revolution." As Prof. Chomsky says:

If there will be a "revolution" in America today, it will no doubt be a move toward some variety of fascism. We must guard against the kind of revolutionary rhetoric that would have had Karl Marx burn down the British Museum because it was merely part of a repressive society.

Where, then, does this zest for indiscriminate destruction come from? A startlingly clear answer to this question is found in Michael Polanyi's book, *The Tacit Dimension*. The undermining of traditional morality by scientific rationalism, he says, is not a sufficient explanation. As he puts it:

It is true that the Enlightenment weakened ecclesiastical authority and that modern positivism has denied justification to all transcendent values. But I do not think that the discredit which the ideal of exact scientific knowledge had cast on the grounds of moral convictions would by itself have much damaged these convictions. The self-destructive tendencies of the modern mind arose only when the influence of scientific skepticism was combined with a fervor that swept modern man in the very opposite direction. Only when a new passion for moral progress was fused with modern scientific skepticism did the typical state of the modern mind emerge.

At first, skepticism released progressive energies, as in the eighteenth century. But in time the rejection of individual morality fused with political moral perfectionism, licensing a total disregard of individuals as responsible units. Only the specifications of the utopian ideal had moral reality and persons who did not share the vision could now be written off. Polanyi says:

Scientific skepticism and moral perfectionism join forces then in a movement denouncing any appeal to moral ideals as futile and dishonest. Its perfectionism demands a total transformation of society; but this utopian project is not allowed to declare itself. It conceals its moral motives by

embodying them in a struggle for power, believed to bring about automatically the aims of utopia. It blindly accepts for this belief the scientific testimony of Marxism. Marxism embodies moral aspirations of modern man in a theory which protects his ideals from skeptical doubt by denying the reality of moral motives in public life. The power of Marxism lies in uniting the two contradictory forces of the modern mind into a single political doctrine. Thus originated a world-embracing idea, in which moral doubt is frenzied by moral fury and moral fury is armed by scientific nihilism.

So it is that no good can be recognized by such revolutionaries in individuals who distrust the revolutionary struggle for power—these people are either class enemies, dupes, or useless innocents. Nor can there be any value in institutions erected and staffed by such people. Without complete skepticism of them, the moral fervor for revolution would collapse into nerveless relativism. Some of the old Bolsheviks who were condemned in the Stalinist purges saw this quite clearly, and, like Koestler's Rubashov in *Darkness at Noon*, confessed their guilt as revisionist "humanitarians" before they were executed. Likewise, a main plank of Mao's "Cultural Revolution" is the suppression of any counter-revolutionary "love for all people," which is seen as insidious bourgeois compromise on the class struggle, illustrated by Russia's growing friendliness with the United States!

Quite evidently, the renewal of respect for moral individuality must be a world-wide undertaking, and the chief obstacle to this restoration lies in rigid ideological thinking of every political coloring. But it is equally evident that ideological moral absolutism will not fall of its own weight and inner contradiction. A strong philosophy of individual strength and proliferating moral responsibility is needed to displace it, and to supply social structures which do not repress.

## CHILDREN ... and Ourselves THE CHILD IN THE MAN

ONE reason why books about teaching children are often equally valuable for general enlightenment is that they are seldom written for commercial reasons. These books grow out of simple affection for the young, from a desire to protect children from betrayal by adults. The writers, moreover, are able to ignore "political" pressures. It is silly to argue about the claims of "the state" on a small child. Further, the crime of regarding children as merely "unfinished" adults is now fairly obvious, whether we take for horrible example the practice of the Puritans, who taught children to read merely in order to indoctrinate them with "true belief," or use the disclosures of Virginia Axline's *Dibs* or Hannah Green's *I Never Promised You a Rose Garden* to show what happens when adults use children to enhance their own self-images.

The passage of a child to maturity becomes a revealing study of the nature of man—a dramatic story of how the intuitive and the rational are finally joined; of the difficult balance achieved when this synthesis is successful, and of the casualties which result when anxious and repressive tendencies in the culture prevent it from taking place.

There is one vastly encouraging sign in the present literature of child education: the cocksure specialists are becoming fewer and fewer. The best teachers are filled with awe at the promise and possibilities of the being emerging in the child. The chief idea, now, is not to mutilate this being in its most vulnerable stages of development.

For example in the contribution of Victor D'Amico to *Child Art—The Beginnings of Self-Affirmation* (Berkeley, Calif.; Diablo Press, 1966), there is a discussion of how the idea of art may be presented to children. The writer stresses the need of the child to recognize that "there is no one way, that perhaps there is a way that is as good

for him as the artist's was for him." This, Mr. D'Amico says, expands the child's vision on "how a thing is expressed." To the question, "Can't we show a child how to make a house?" he gives this answer:

When we ask that I think we are revealing that we want to get rid of the problem instead of solving it . . . by showing how it is done. By doing that we have closed the issue. There is no artist big or great enough to show how something can be done for everybody. His greatness is in the attitude, this is the way I do it, you have your way.

Individual expression is a personal thing. The teacher's responsibility is to extend personal interest, offering the child the opportunity to see what other things are being done and have been done. He is enriched by knowing that the thing he is doing has been done by others and in many different ways. We used to call that Art Appreciation and although we threw the term out for about 20 or 30 years, we never found a better one. . . . This makes the child a part of the great family of creators that have started with the beginning of man. It is a very comforting thing, especially for the child who may not be understood at home, to know that there are and have been men that express themselves and have in them a kind of creativity that is independent and worth defending.

A quotation from Berthold Lowenfeld, one of the ten contributors to *Child Art*, used as a foreword, brings special insight to the subject of children's art:

A point that distinguishes Child Art from Art is that in Art it is the product only that counts. When people look at Van Gogh paintings, they do not consider the difficulties under which he suffered when he painted them. When we enjoy a symphony by Beethoven, we do not have to know the torture of his mind. In Child Art, on the other hand, it is the process that is important, the feelings and thoughts that moved the child to express himself as he did. The products are and should be of little consequence, though we may later find them expressive and appealing for what they are. I have a feeling that most children's creations appeal to adults not because they are products of art, but because they are products of children.

This simple, common-sense statement enables us to grasp the meaning of certain dramatic happenings in the world of modern art. The

"action painters," for example, of whom Jackson Pollock was the most famous, rebelled against having their work regarded as simply "products." For them, it was "the process that is important." You could say they were trying to restore *subjectivity* to art, to make it into a secular epiphany. It is as though the artist declared, "My work is an act of my being; don't call it a 'thing'!" Don't in short, turn art into a commodity. Whether these painters chose the best means to make this point may be open to question, but it is important to know how they felt and what they meant.

Much of the "mystery" of modern art might be dispelled by seeing it as either the successful or unsuccessful attempts of artists to break out of the prisons of conventional classification, to escape from omnipresent *cultural* pollutions.

Readers who remember Frank Barron's perceptive comparison of the "prelogical" feelings of primitive peoples with the holistic attitudes of children (in *The Study of Lives*, a symposium honoring Henry Murray) will welcome his contribution to *Child Art*. He shows that children and the wise drink at opposite sides of the same Pierian spring—the child in a wonderful innocence, the sage with deliberation. Dr. Barron writes:

As for visionary wisdom, I am thinking here of that form of wisdom so deeply intuitive that it seems to pass beyond words, concepts, and practical judgment into an area of empathic understanding that is completely non-verbal. The wisdom of the Zen master or the Yogi is said to be of this kind, and perhaps as a goal of development it is more typically Eastern than Western. If prelogical experience is said to consist of the not yet conceptualizable, or the relatively unverbalizable then postlogical experience might be said to be fully conscious and attentive inner silence. What this silence implies is that all the words in the world won't do. As P. W. Bridgman has argued in his monograph, *The Nature of Physical Reality*, it is highly probable that there are large stretches of individual experience for which there has been no need as yet to develop words and concepts, and still other stretches of experience which are inexpressible conceptually. . . . One of the most

ancient and persistent of religious ideas is that through constant and honest attention to all the acts of one's life one can escape the cycle of birth and death; the Buddha at his death is said to have had present in his consciousness the totality not only of his final incarnation but of all the incarnations through which he had passed. The great act of attention is all-inclusive the more of life that is experienced and remembered and brought to bear upon the present moment in living expression, the higher is the grade of wisdom.

## *FRONTIERS*

### There Will Be Black Studies

IN the *Progressive* for March, William L. Abbott describes his experience in attempting to organize native Hawaiians for self-help in Honolulu. Just before the Hawaiians walked out of a meeting, one of them said: "Bruddah, we're tired of you *haoles* [Caucasians] shooting off your mouths. We're going out to caucus, and when we get back we're going to run things *our* way." Abbott remarks:

It was just a training session, I reminded myself. I smiled weakly and thought about the Peace Corpsman who told me, "When the natives get organized enough to kick us out of a village, then we know we've done our job." I was still some distance from grasping the full impact of his remark.

The rest of the article is devoted to showing how right the Peace Corpsman was. This is Abbott's last paragraph:

At the Windward Oahu retreat I joined the Hawaiians one night in drinking Primo beer and singing *haole* songs. Suddenly the group burst into Hawaiian. "I feel left out," I protested. The ukulele player looked me square in the eye: "Now you know how we have felt ever since the day we were born."

So, sooner or later, they're going to run things *their* way. In Hawaii this may not be so difficult to achieve. Hawaii is a brown man's country.

Here, in the colleges and universities, the psychology of the black students has much in common with the feelings of the ukulele player. So there will be black studies; obviously, there *ought* to be black studies. But we should also say that if education in the United States had been free of ethnocentrism, nobody would even think of asking for "black studies." Since we don't have that kind of education, black studies are inevitable and right. What kind?

No doubt the most intelligent black men should decide, if they have a chance to. Questions of this sort are very much under discussion, now,

in the magazines. If our institutions weren't such complicated affairs, involved in so many protective mechanisms for control, good things would probably happen right away. But since the modern university, as Hastings Rashdall pointed out, is an inheritance not from the Greeks but from the Middle Ages, and heavily structured by hierarchy and status considerations, any kind of innovative action is a very difficult undertaking. "Adjustments" are required all around. Then there are curious and delicate questions of the sort implied by Staughton Lynd after a season of teaching in a Negro women's college in Atlanta:

For my Negro students it was almost as important to know the true character of their collective past as to be at ease with their personal histories. One brilliant girl described to me the moment when, looking at the photographs in a collection of slave narratives, she realized, "These were my forefathers." After I conventionally began a survey course in American history with the Pilgrims, another excellent student, who had the courage to expose her personal past by inviting my family to her sharecropper father's home at Christmas, was also brave enough to ask me, "Why do you teach me about your ancestors and not mine?" Next year I began the course with the slave ships, only to hear from a third student, "You are teaching me a special history rather than treating me like everybody else."

Well, these are not serious problems. With students like that, things will work out. The courses, as Staughton Lynd says, will be used as "a medium for the discovery of personal identity," which is what history and cultural studies are for. But decisions will have to be made, and the black students understandably want to make them. One could argue that if they are old enough to go to college, they are old enough to decide what they should study. Then the question comes: Have they the *right* to determine what they will study? There is a wide variety of answers to this question. A thoughtful article by Carl Cohen, who teaches philosophy at the University of Michigan, reaches this conclusion:

. . . students are surely no more qualified than alumni in these affairs, or than graduates of other institutions who happen to hold political power. If

the principle be now accepted that simply being affected by a decision gives one a right to help make it, the American university will suffer a series of major defeats. The result will not only be the wrongful subjection of the university to political pressure, and the weakening of its intellectual stance; it will tend, as well, to work directly against such wholesome progress as our student critics now seek. (*Nation*, March 17.)

This seems sound enough, from the viewpoint of preserving the function of complex institutions. Yet one recalls, nostalgically, the cathedral schools of the twelfth century. Learned doctors lectured. If the students liked them, they came; if they didn't they stayed away, going to hear doctors with something more interesting or valuable to say. Before education was "organized," the question of curriculum control didn't come up. But we have big institutions now. We have to plan.

Already the planning, in response to various pressures, and to honest good intentions, has resulted in a "Black Brain Drain" from the South. Victor Harding, who teaches history at Spelman College in Atlanta, is quoted in the *Progressive* for March as saying:

Every black Ph.D. who has had his name mentioned twice in the slightest review is besieged by Northern, as well as Southern, white institutions—most often in response to the militant, urgent, and often threatening demands of their black students. . . . Many of the faculty persons who appear most attractive to the white schools are the very ones whose strengths are most urgently needed here at "home" in the Southern black institutions. . . .

The northern schools are also recruiting bright black students:

In essence, this means that the [white institutions] enter the heartland of the black schools' potential resources, and are able to offer excellent students more money, more prestige of a certain kind, and promises of better graduate school and placement opportunities. So the process of cultural deracination continues apace, and its cloak is "integration."

The *Progressive* comments: "To drain the Negro colleges of their best teachers and students is to condemn Southern blacks to decade after

decade of even poorer education than they receive now."

All of which goes to show that education pursued "under pressure" is likely to be a poor sort of education, just as the freedom won by violence is likely to be a problematic sort of freedom, and as a war on poverty which is more of a political gesture than an authentic human response to need, only moves the poverty around.

But black studies will result not only as response to pressure. It is also an idea whose time has come. And the shake-ups of our big institutions in accommodation to this idea may make openings for constructive changes in education generally.