Purposes

We are pleased to present a new monthly department, "Purposes." Robert Oliver is a scholar in the history of ideas and will present an essay on some aspect of culture and education in each issue of THE RECORD *throughout 1968-69.*

Robert Oliver was a pen name I used for these essays.

Towards The Separation Of School and State

At times the future is best foreseen by projecting present trends and expecting their opposite, for great changes become imminent when they seem least likely. Thus, the separation of church and state began after their merger had reached its zenith. Men had learned to exploit for mundane, human purposes what had seemed to be part of a transcendent order. Only then could men consciously separate what had previously appeared naturally joined. The logic of principles always prepares surprises for those who represent established patterns of power. Hence, the principle that the religion of the prince will be the religion of the people, which was thought to ensure the concordance of church and state, opened the way for shrewd rulers to decree toleration as a means for maximizing the reach of their rule. Therefore we should not be awed by the apparent dominance of the school by the state. The seeds of a new system have been sown. Seemingly doomed to stasis, we actually face changes as profound as those that ushered in the medieval or the modern era.

Jacob Burckhardt once contended that the driving forces of history were three—religion, culture, and the state. In different epochs these forces were harnessed in different ways with primacy given to one of the three. Since the renaissance, history records how leadership by religion has been eclipsed by that of the state. In the recent past, the state has been the dynamic, productive power; and as it developed economically and politically, it separated itself from the church, which had lost its internal cohesion and historic sway. But the saga of the state has ended. Future history will record how the leadership of the state was eclipsed by that of culture as it is embodied in the school, the university, and the media of communication. Throughout the industrialized world the state has nearly fulfilled its function, rationalizing the political, economic, and social environment of its citizens. Now, innumerable persons perceive that culture, conservation, and education are the dynamic side of life, and they look to intellectual institutions for solutions to the palpable problems that they experience. Great changes are therefore underway.

In the *Crito* Socrates explained the inner workings of such shifts in expectation and commitment. Recall that the issue was whether Socrates should desert his city in order to save his life or submit to the Athenians' death sentence in order to uphold his chosen way of living. In deciding for the latter alternative, Socrates made a commitment exemplifying man's responsibility towards his laws. Socrates found that the laws could justly demand the ultimate sacrifice from a man because they had been his educators. A man who, in good times,

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had let his innermost character be molded by the established ways of the city, had no right to reject those ways in the face of deadly demands. Note, however: the whole force of this argument depends on the recognition by each person that certain principles have been his educators, that by means of these he has defined the very essence of his being. The Socratic argument does not justify slavish acquiescence to the powers that be, no questions asked; previously Socrates had risked his life in refusing to execute a command by the thirty tyrants that he considered illegal. The Socratic argument is more profound; it explains why at certain times certain principles merit unswerving allegiance and why at other times other principles deserve the deepest scorn. One can be a Platonist and still believe in the right to rebel, namely to rebel against those principles that fail to educate. Herein lies the growing debility of the state.

In various epochs, either religion, culture, or the state have been the dominant historical force because men perceived one of the three as their true educator and became willing to make the supreme sacrifice for it and it alone. Men were willing to die for religion when they saw in it their reason for being and expected salvation to come by the grace of God. Men would sacrifice themselves for the sake of the state when they saw that it was essential to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The state was sovereign insofar as men were convinced that it could mold a better man. For Hegel and many others the state was perfection personified, and men educated themselves by seeking to be virtuous citizens.

Ineluctably, the face of the future will be different because a revolution of declining expectations is emasculating the industrialized nation-states. More and more youths simply are not finding economic wellbeing, political stability, and social security to be significant goals for personal aspiration. They do not find the principles that promise to provide for these objectives to be educative; without more ado they are transferring their drive to other matters; and hence the scions of the established order find that this turn towards allegiance to other principles is a manifestation of mere anarchy. In truth, it is something far more significant. Youths are moved by intimate problems; they are concerned with the quality of their human relationships, with the difficulty of reconciling their deeds with their beliefs. Candide symbolizes the outlook of many; they have seen the folly of man's efforts to reform the world; and, as each seeks out "his thing," they echo Voltaire's conviction that a man had best cultivate his own garden.

In a post-industrial world, men will find that the political, economic, and social principles of the state have less and less to do with their personal education and that the cultural principles of the school are increasingly crucial to their pursuit of a good life. In the face of this situation, there is a silly complacency in high places. The restlessness of youth, which is present throughout the West, is not a passing fad; and it will not be placated by citing the material boons that industrialism offered previous generations, it will not be suppressed by the police, and it will not be superseded by a less "nihilistic," more "respectable" movement. Even

the restless young are not really yet aware of how great an historic cause they represent.

Everywhere the restlessness centers significantly on the university. In Italy, France, Germany, Japan, Czechoslovakia, Russia, Spain, Latin America, Canada, and the United States diverse movements of students and intellectuals share one common conviction: *educational and cultural policy should cease to be made to suit the political and economic priorities of the state.* Increasingly, people believe that culture, not politics, commands their allegiance, and that intellectual institutions possess an independent sovereignty that has priority over the state. University presidents and trustees, chosen for their economic and political achievements, do not understand or even perceive the cultural premises shared by students and teachers. On the campuses throughout the world the politicians who elicit the most fervent responses are those who propose to hold the nation-state in check, to forego foreign adventures, and to restrict the state to carrying through its traditional mission of advancing civil and economic equality within its borders. The first step in separating the school from the state will be to establish the fact that, in the name of higher principles, there is a moral rein on *raison d'etat.*

One can foresee the future only in its broadest outlines. The way that the cultural institutions will win their independence from the state is still tomorrow's secret. But the fact that such independence will be won seems unavoidable, barring catastrophe, for the problems that men face are ones that will prompt them to look more and more to the school, not the state, for assistance. And brief reflection shows that on achieving independence, the school will easily encompass and master the state.

Sovereignty, like beauty, is in the eyes of the beholder. For many, the nation-state has become a provincial, dowdy trull; it is sanguine to say she is sovereign. The young and the not-so-young live in a supra-national culture, and the nation-state has been unable to stay in style. The inherent impossiblity of a significant internationalism signifies that the state cannot adapt to a cosmopolitan world. Despite many efforts, the state has not been able to transcend the nation. Internationalism is the unavoidable source of this incapacity, for internationalism will never lead to a supranational state, one that coincides in scope with the contemporary cultural community. Like any institution, the state derives its authority and power from the direct relations between its officials and the people. International institutions will never generate such authority and power, for as long as they are *inter*-national, there will always be a separate authority interposed between their officials and the people. This situation is as it should be; national diversity at once precludes a world-state and enlarges human potentiality. Nevertheless, some kind of world system of order seems desirable, perhaps necessary in view of nuclear proliferation and the increasingly violent efforts "to win the peace," as the warriors say.

In light of this desirability, certain features of the school after it has separated from the state should be noted. The school, the university, and the media of communication are universal institutions whose officials

enjoy direct relations with the people of the world. The aesthetic, intellectual, and moral principles that inform the relations between teachers and students are universal principles that do not vary according to the whims of political, religious, or economic orthodoxy. It does not, therefore, seem impossible that should the school manage to separate itself from the state, the cultural institutions will then become the basis of a world community. Here, perhaps, is the seed of our future.

ROBERT OLIVER

A Message on the Media

Power is fickle. We are witnessing one of its slow, historic shifts; yet the grandiose scale of contemporary institutions blinds us to these events, and we advance without foresight. Our imagination balks before the difficulty of conceiving alternatives to the given, so great does it seem. Dazzled by the immediate, we forget to meditate on how the Delphic Oracle was once the most powerful institution in Greece, and we fail to wonder at the way that enthusiasts of an other-worldly, subversive religion slipped between the legions and by the frail power of conversion took command of the Roman Empire. History is a hidden continuity embedded in continuous change; in it, particular patterns of power always prove temporary. The continuity of our history does not stem from the perpetuation of established institutions; it arises instead from the protean recurrence of living intelligence, of reasoned action. Wherever intellect in operation is present, men preserve their past by shaping their future.

Beneath the current competition for command, changes are underway that may transfer the very power to command from the established offices to novel ones. In the recent past power has been possessed by the recognized representatives of significant political and economic interests. Representation has been the fundamental principle of the established system. Whether the system is communist or capitalist, totalitarian or democratic, it is a system of representation by which a few can make decisions that the many will have an interest in implementing. Since our forefathers shouted that there would be "no taxation without representation," political progress has been primarily a matter of dispossessed groups winning adequate representation. The form of the representative nation-state has almost reached its optimum development throughout the industrialized world; and hence the quest for representation is beginning to give way to a new demand, a call for participation. Should this demand prove capable of sustained development, it will lead to fundamental changes, not to mere adaptations of an established form.

A shift in political organization from representation to participation would involve the basic transformation of the means by which group decisions are made and support for them is mobilized. Such a shift has been made possible by widespread education and pervasive systems of communication. The state may well be forced to wither. The rationale for a representative government has been that intelligence and information were scarce qualities and that a means of concentrating these was necessary for the sake of the common good. In recent years, however, this rationale has been challenged. A worldwide network of journalists, commentators, writers, artists, and educators has been making

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it less and less likely that the functionaries of the state will be significantly more intelligent or better informed than many of its subjects. A sign of the times is the frequency with which prominent personages first learn of important events from the radio, television, and press that are open to all. The suspicion grows that the reason for state secrets in a "free society" is not so much national security as it is professional security for the officials who are hard pressed to preserve their claim to superior wisdom in matters of policy. In short, the ubiquity of intellect dissolves the authority of the state. Hence, other forms of social power are becoming possible.

A perfect polis, men have usually thought, would need no government; it would be a harmonious anarchy, a spontaneous order in which external government and law had been made unnecessary by the internalization of principle: politics should merge with ethics. Whether one interprets one's gospel according to Plato, Augustine, Voltaire, or Marx, one holds that the state should wither away. The sin of our politicians—a sin born of desperation—is their belief that their mastery of statecraft and the uses of force in the service of policy is a sign of their political competence. In truth, their practices signify an incapacity to govern, for governing is the art of making recourse to force, physical or psychic, unnecessary in human affairs. Long ago, Plato somewhat stodgily explained in the *Republic* that the prescriptive regulation of conduct was an undesirable way to rule a community. Legislation was at best a stopgap: "the bent given by education will determine the quality of later life, by that sort of attraction which like things always have for one another, till they finally mount up to one imposing result, whether for good or ill." Where men were well educated, there would be no need for prescriptive regulation, for such men would "soon find out for themselves what regulations were needed."

Men have recurrently hoped that a politics of principle can make unnecessary a politics of force. To date, men have at best merely approximated this hope, for their education has never been sufficient to make legislation superfluous. Thus, even Plato had to turn from his utopia to the world of flesh and blood, and in the *Laws* he reluctantly proposed multifarious regulations over the conduct of life. But note how even the enthusiastic exponents of the state thought that it was a surrogate for the yet impossible politics of principle. At most, the state was an orthopedic aid that would help men strengthen their minds and learn to live freely in harmony. Thus, Matthew Arnold wrote not about culture *or* anarchy, but about culture *and* anarchy. In the ideal community, men would live together without the crutch of external restraints; but unless men fully realized their cultural capacities, they would be unable to live harmoniously in anarchy. Certainly, as Arnold saw it, nineteenth-century Englishmen were unable to do so, and to bring themselves closer to a level of culture at which they could, they should give allegiance to the state, to the representative structure that symbolized the best self of each citizen. But now for many, the established state no longer symbolizes their best selves.

So be it; there is nothing sacro-

sanct about the state. Developed under particular historical conditions, the state was an effective system for concentrating scarce talent and knowledge and for bringing these to bear on the community's practical concerns. The value of the state to human life was not in its formal structures, but in the fact that for a time it helped intellect operate in human affairs; the state permitted men of reason to act on significant problems of importance to all. If in the future, other systems can perform this function more effectively, so much the better; historic continuity depends not on the structure of the system but on the performance of the function.

In any community and in every community, the problem of judgment is inescapable. If there is a common life, public decisions must somehow be made, for life consists in making decisions about vital problems; and these decisions must be sufficiently wise not to lead the community to destruction. In the last century, the conditions under which community decisions are made have changed profoundly. The combination of widespread education, high literary sophistication, growing leisure, and instantaneous global communications greatly enhances the individual's claim not merely to be represented in community deliberations, but to participate actively. Only time will tell whether this enhanced claim will prove sufficiently strong to prevail against the state and to win the allegiance of men to a new system. But notwithstanding Hegel's hopes, the performance of the state has not been so consistently rational to make us shun putting potential alternatives to the test. This test will be possible only if we do our best to make both the principle of representation and that of participation function as well as they can; and here we arrive at the message on the media.

In times of disorientation, mistakes are often made by those who try to go beyond outworn assumptions to divine the new dynamics of power. A dangerous mistake of this sort is the myth of hot and cool media, the myth that pits electronic media against those of print. Neither moving images nor static ciphers necessarily conduce to either spontaneous emotion or abstract rationality. Emotion and reason are qualities of human activities, not human artifacts; it is a pathetic fallacy for a rhetorician here to commit the pathetic fallacy. Certain minds, not certain media, are perhaps hot or cool, depending on the thinker's character, mood, and intention. The touchstone for all communication is the problem of judgment, the continuous need of man to choose, consciously or unconsciously, to act this or that way in this or that situation. No matter how much man extends himself through mechanical and electronic artefacts, there is no way to discover the qualities of his prospective actions by studying the characteristics of his artefacts, for the qualities of his actions reside not in the artefacts but in his performance with respect to the situation. The original critic of pop culture, Heraclitus, is as acute today as he was 2500 years ago, for he observed that "of all those whose discourse I have heard, none arrives at the realization that that which is wise is set apart from all things."

Technological determinism in the realm of mind is pernicious, and the particular determinism that suggests that print conduces to an indi-

vidualistic rationalism and that electronics induce a tribal emotionalism is a serious threat to political progress. By so misunderstanding media, one simply serves the old order, the representative state, by giving it a wedge by which it can divide and rule. For too long, men of good will have feared mass communications, seeing in them only powerful agencies for manipulating the thoughts and inclinations of uncritical multitudes. The myth that particular human qualities are the inherent result of the media themselves, not the way in which men choose to use them, encourages some to use the media mindlessly, and it confirms in others their original fear of these media. These reactions will feed one another, and appearance will seem to validate the myth. Hence, such a self-fulfilling prophecy helps to isolate the media from individualistic rationalism; and so isolated, the media may merely be a terrible tool of tyranny. To the degree that the media are used mindlessly, they will simply help perpetuate the state. But the media need not and should not be used in isolation from intellect.

Participatory politics cannot escape the imperative of intelligence; unless a participatory system proves in practice to be wiser than the representative, the state will not wither. The electronic media are an integral feature of the conditions that may make a new form of human organization possible. But in historic matters, conditions are merely the material cause of events; the efficient, formal, and final causes depend on how men act on the conditions. Despite claims to the contrary, the myth of the media is a reactionary bulwark of the status quo, for it discourages men from seeking to act on the media so as to serve intellect. If mass communications can manipulate the mindless, they can equally stimulate critical awareness. Those truly seeking an alternative to the power state should resist every effort to pit print against the picture; both forms should be brought into an ever more varied effort to provoke men, all men, to sharpen their intelligence, discipline their faculties, and furnish their minds. We have at our command great new tools of communication; and when we learn to use these intelligently, we can perhaps realize man's recurrent dream of culture *and* anarchy.

ROBERT OLIVER

In Praise of Humble Heroes

The growing good of the world is partly dependent on unhistoric acts; and that things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been, is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life, and rest in unvisited tombs.

George Eliot, *Middlemarch*

Over time, the strength and quality of a community depend on an intricate web of reciprocal influences between all its various members. The vitality of the common life springs from the unique inspiration that each person can draw from his daily contact with men who incarnate diverse competencies. The true engine of history is the inspiration that each man, for better or for worse, continually gives his peers. In view of this fact, one of the serious threats to democracy is the way it occasions in the common man a self-effacing elitism in which he comes to rely uncritically and happily on the leadership of the prominent few whom he would not presume to second guess. Rationalizing his inability to approach the top of an "open society," he accepts himself as an ordinary Joe and decides to take things as they come, leaving it to those with brains or brawn—or better yet "connections" —to exert themselves in a struggle to excel. This quiescent elitism in the many simply feeds an arrogant elitism in the few. The ordinary Joe has an interest in depicting the few as larger than life; for then their omnipotence further justifies his quiescence, and, ominously, the extraordinary few then begin to believe the popular tales of their prowess. Such relations beget mediocrity in the many and arrogance in their leaders —a dangerous combination likely, as Thucydides showed, to lead to an embarrassing demonstration that the loud talker's stick was small.

It is important that we resist this cycle of influence, for it is the surest cause of democratic destruction. The antidote to it is a truly democratic elitism, which is nurtured by reiterating at every occasion that all does not depend on those in charge. Great leaders cannot make a people great; only a great people can make their leaders great. This matter is fundamental to the educator, to the educator that each of us is as we go about our daily deeds. Excellence is a quality that is not confined to the few, for excellence is always *in a particular capacity*, and it is open to each and every man to excel in doing what he, in particular, has to do: he excels by surpassing himself in the pursuit of his possibilities. Such excellence, by creating a full repertory of exemplary characters who inspire in us an appreciation of assorted abilities, is the bond that holds the community together and the fount from which its vigor flows.

Human excellence is subtle and complex; it is not nurtured well in the hothouse of stereotyped virtuosities. Each youth forms his character by observing thousands and thousands of examples. To be sure, for any particular person only a few from the myriad serve as real models; but the capacity of a person to see another as his model results largely because the youth has less intimately examined many other exemplary figures and because, both with and against them, he has formed nascent standards by which he can identify his personal prototypes. In this sense, the butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker are the world's most important teachers, for it is in daily contact with mundane, local competencies that the children of all, of even the exalted, form their elementary standards. Hence, a community should most prize a healthy complement of humble heroes.

A hero is a man who takes the effort to be himself. It is surprising that one should speak about "the effort to be himself," for in a very literal sense the only thing that a man can be without effort, thanks to the law of identity, is himself. But on examination such literalness proves deceptive. A man is not one of those static substances to which the law of identity was designed to apply; a man is a perpetual becoming, and to be himself, a man must continually exert effort to become something very special, his self. The self denotes for a man his potential accomplishments by which he can add to the world his unique, personal contribution. The self is always invested with a sense of opportunity, creativeness, and particularity; one sees here something that one can and should do, and one is fired by the excitement of having a function and a chance to show one's excellence in its performance, perhaps to no one but one's self! At the same time, the self is always dangerous, for the pursuit of it carries with it the threat of failure; with respect to it, one is on one's own. Ortega y Gasset put it well in his *Meditations on Quixote:* "to be a hero means to be one out of many, to be oneself. If we refuse to have our actions determined by heredity or environment it is because we seek to base the origin of our actions on ourselves and only on ourselves. The hero's will is not that of his ancestors nor of his society, but his own. This will to be oneself is heroism."

It takes effort, however, to be oneself in this sense, for each of us is surrounded by ready-made images that are tendered to us by our ancestors and society, two powerful authorities, and these images beckon us to give them flesh and blood. By so inserting ourselves into the available stereotypes we add nothing to the world, nothing vital that is, but merely help it be one of those dull substances that are what they are. Like Odysseus, every hero must tie himself to his ship in order to resist the siren song; and this resistance is not easy, for at any moment the images of success will always seem much more sure and substantial than the hopes of the hero. Such resistance is particularly difficult for the humble hero because he is not a man of exalted pretentions; he must be ready not only to take real risks of failure, but to incur the derision of his fellows. The aristocrat easily plays at independence; the little man finds it hard to assert his heartfelt aspirations against the advice of those content to

follow conventional wisdom and smart money. What courage, in its fullest, Socratic sense, must a shopkeeper have to risk his hard-won savings to start a local store in a time when supermarkets are the thing! But he is a man who knows that the only thing to fear is the weakness that seduces one into renouncing one's chosen way of life. Perhaps his store will fail, it may endure, it might even flourish—such uncertainties are the stuff of keeping shop; and it is not his improbable success, but his having lived in sincere fidelity to his intentions, that truly makes the man a hero.

Excellence, however, entails esteem; and here our contemporary democracy displays its weakness. True esteem requires proximity so that a person can be valued for what he is; and it is essential that diverse persons be in proximity with one another if a web of mutual esteem is to hold the community together. This esteem is the appreciation of one another as exemplary types, as persons from whom the others can learn; and it is the recognition each receives that makes his heroic effort seem worthwhile. Like the star, the craftsman needs his audience, and he thrives on knowing that those around him appreciate his art. Unfortunately, the scale of our society often prevents such proximity; except for friends, the people around us pass from our sphere of interest before we can slowly learn to appreciate their inner strengths and weaknesses. In the place of personal esteem we substitute publicity: a pallid poster celebrating the courtesy of bus drivers who work routes we've never travelled.

It is against this backdrop that we should judge contemporary movements towards localism. From the point of view of the aggregate, these movements may seem, in the short-run, to slow our cherished progress: black separatism may slow integration or even the growth of family income for both black and white; block associations may impede grand plans for urban renewal; and local control of city schools may upset teaching conditions and lower performance on various standardized tests. But it is not only the short-run that counts in the life of a community. Over the long-run, a community must maintain a pervasive variety of virtues to which we are all in proximity and from which we each can form significant standards. Without such a variety of virtues, publicity will induce blind arrogance in the leaders and spineless mediocrity in their followers. We have gone far in this direction, especially far in public education. The formation of policy is far removed from the locus of its effects. The average teacher seems to have renounced his self; rather than seeking esteem for his personal competence as it is judged by those who are in proximity to him, he seems content to partake in the impersonal power that can be wielded by massed publicity. By these means the teachers' leaders can provide their faceless following with higher wages and ever more rigid conditions of work. But in the long run wealth and security are merely the sweetening on insentience; the real challenge before each teacher is to realize those unique, personal qualities by which he can become a humble hero to the boy on the block.

ROBERT OLIVER

On Pedagogy and Student Power: A Proposal

To comprehend student discontent and thus to revitalize the university, we might note with Heraclitus that "people do not understand how that which is at variance with itself agrees with itself: harmony consists of opposing tension, like that of the bow and the lyre."

Preeminently, the university is the institution whose harmony consists of opposing tension; the school properly pits the young against the old, the learned against the ignorant: through their struggle, in which the students and the teachers are two opposing, equal forces, the university causes the free, open distribution of accumulated knowledge to the community. When either the students or the teachers can effectively dominate the opposite group, there is no spontaneity or liberality in the allocation of learning; there is instead an imposition of the dominant group's judgments upon its opposite and upon the community at large. But with a balance between its two essential parts, the university occasions an open, cooperative competition, as the result of which the body of knowledge at hand in the community is continually reshaped. This reshaping accords not with the plans proclaimed by the knowing few on high, but with the general will implicit in the diverse, clashing wills of all who teach and study. Here, as John Stuart Mill showed from a different perspective, is the sense and safeguard of liberty.

But only when its parts are balanced is the community of scholars free and effective. Both the student and the teacher have a will of their own; the one selects what he will try to teach, the other what he will try to learn; and as each independently seeks to assert his will and to make his choice prevail, the educational accomplishment of the university unfolds. It is a liberal accomplishment, for no part directs the whole; the balanced, harmonious opposition of the learner and the learned causes more than a mechanical transmission of culture; it elicits a continuous transformation and rebirth of culture as both the experienced and the hopeful have their chance to select among the manifold possibilities. The greatest service the university can render society is to occasion such a continuous renaissance.

The opposing tension between student and teacher, which is the true harmony of the university, differs fundamentally from the divergent tensions that are presently dissipating the university. The difference is symbolized by the sites at which wills clash: recently conflicts have occurred in the administrative offices, places that are incidental to academe, whereas properly the opposition of intention should take place quietly but seriously within the classroom.

In the past, productive discord between the learned and the learner was created on the one hand by maintaining a marked difference of authority between the two groups and

on the other by having an approximate balance of power between them. Thus, the teacher was the classroom autocrat who could motivate youths by driving home to them, with the rod all too frequently, that they were still immature; yet this autocrat was rarely a match for the concerted wit of his wards. In addition, the official curriculum was then sufficiently circumscribed that each student could learn, with leisure to spare for self-set tasks, all that his masters proposed to teach. Academic paternalism was not yet dominant. The teacher's task was not to educate the whole man so that he even makes love by the book; it was to ensure that the student acquired certain rudimentary tools and standards, which would hopefully facilitate and elevate the man's independent tutelage in the school of life. With the natural nobility of youth, the student could tolerate, and even appreciate, his temporary masters, for he knew that in the debating societies he could learn what he would while needing to please only his peers, and he was further aware that soon, after *commencement*, he would have plenty of time to go it alone. Consequently, in the classroom both the teacher and the student were in a productive balance in which neither could ignore or dominate the other.

But every balance is struck temporarily. We have had a century and a half of incessant instructional reform; this reform has fabulously enhanced the teacher's power while the student has remained in his primitive innocence. At every level, the curriculum has burgeoned; schooling has been extended so that it spans from infancy to senility. Throughout, the student meets mainly trained teachers who match him in ability and have the advantage in knowledge and experience; youths can no longer build their egos by besting an Ichabod Crane. Furthermore, although teachers still have to manage with rather large classes, each student has to deal daily with a succession of teachers and he does not spend enough time with any one of these to take the true measure of the man. On the higher levels, the elective system and the purported explosion of knowledge have loosed a barrage of course fragments, each taught by an able specialist; to the beleaguered student such massed intellect, which completely overwhelms his power of absorption, amounts to an insolent sneer from the faculty—"young man, you shall always be ignorant." To this insult, add the injury of asking the student to choose among the proffered plethora without even initiating him into the principles that might inform his choice and enable him to make it his own. Hence, he puts together a program—a major, a minor, and assorted irrelevancies. Then, instead of looking forward adventurously to the school of life, the student must beg admittance to graduate or professional school, which will be followed by special courses in the army, in business, and in the adult education program sponsored ironically by the local "Y". Thus, today's students are no match for their masters, and we are beginning to witness the resultant resentment.

Student restiveness in the present-day university signifies, among other things, that the harmony of opposing tension between the learned and the learner has disappeared. The teachers have overwhelmed the students, and the balance of power has been upset.

Contemporary academic deficiencies have arisen not from the sacrifice of teaching to research, but from the encompassing, monolithic scale of the university's teaching function. The craze for research results ultimately from the frantic effort to find sufficient new fodder to feed the didactic dinosaur. Those who wish to pursue the effects of this scale on the quality of college teaching will find them well analyzed by Jacques Barzun in *The American University.* Here the effects upon the student are more germane.

On the side of the learner, the present imbalance makes many students eschew their office; instead of independent inquiry, they are content with one of three responses—collaboration, apathy, or resistance. It is rare that one now meets a serious student, a person bent on pursuing the problems that he personally finds meaningful wherever they lead him. Rather, one finds first, and in numbers, the collaborator who has been overwhelmed by his masters and who hopes to join them through servile emulation. Second, there is the drifter who finds himself at the university for reasons beyond his ken and who slides through program after program by being quick to feign what seems to be expected. Third, there is the rebel who, at least, has perceived that there is scant place in the present university for the student *qua* student and who desperately, resentfully strikes out against the instructional monolith. These rebels, not all of whom can be dismissed as unkempt, have sensed that the imbalance of power in favor of the teachers has made it possible for extra-university groups to gain control of the teaching apparatus and to harness it to the service of expediencies that have little in common with the free pursuit of knowledge. They have a point in demanding a change, but granting that, we need not agree to the changes they demand.

Significant change will not come by mere tampering with the formal governance of the university. In the great din about relevance, the least relevant thing is the widespread expectation that students can attain salvation by having representatives on every university committee from those of the trustees to those of the custodians. The university does not really need restructuring; it needs revitalization, a revitalization of its substantive activity, the transformation of culture. To revitalize this activity, we need to find a way to restore the balance between the teachers and the students, to redevelop the harmony that consists of their opposing tension. There can be, of course, no going back to the simplicities of the old-time college; after all, we have not dwelt above on *its* insufficiencies. Encompassing, specialized, omnipresent, professional instruction is here to stay; there is nothing to gain by trying to cut back the teacher's present power. Instead, let us seek ways by which students can reform the art of studying in order to offset, without diminishing, the extensive reforms that teachers have made in the art of teaching; it has been these reforms that have brought about the unbalanced aggrandizement of the teacher in our time.

It is easy to call for a reform of the art of learning; it is not so easy to propose what this reform should be. The efficient acquisition of knowledge depends on certain age-old

abilities—intelligence and concentration, imagination and diligence—these are hard enough to find, let alone reform. Moreover, most so-called study aids are pernicious, for they further increase the student's dependence on his teachers. Thus, speed reading works if one merely wishes to acquaint oneself with things one is supposed to be familiar with; it allows a student to skim adequately the distended texts his teachers present to him. But the true student takes nothing important on authority, for he must consider all to the point at which he understands and is ready to defend with reasons his decision to accept or reject the point in question. Woe to him who makes such considerations on the basis of a subliminal glance at every other word. *Sitzfleisch* is a far better study aid than reading dynamics.

But if reform in the art of learning is not to come by trying to increase its efficiency, what else can be done? Before answering, let us look again at the problem. The classroom should be the place where a teacher with a definite conception of what it is that he should teach meets a student with an equally resolute idea of what it is that he should learn. It is not essential that both teacher and student have the same aim, but it is essential that both have coherent goals: the vitality of education arises as those aims clash and coincide, as they reinforce and qualify each other. In the present university, the teachers' goals have become so diverse and complicated that they overawe most students. Today, students do not bring into the classroom a set of personal, independent intentions that can serve as a framework by which they can organize the instructional fragments they encounter; instead, they come into each classroom ready merely to respond either by adopting the teacher's intentions in varying degrees of sincerity or by rejecting them in varying degrees of outspokenness. Hence, in short, the problem in reforming the art of learning is not one of increasing the amount the student can learn, it is one of strengthening the student's capacity to choose, intelligently and independently, what it is he seeks to learn. What will strengthen this capacity?

Unnoticed possibilities often become apparent when we ask the question "Why?" Why is it that only putative teachers study pedagogy? The best answer is simple: because life is full of absurdities. To be sure, an historical tome might be written explaining how it happened that the study of pedagogy became confined to the schools of education and how the schools of education came to be set apart from the rest of the university, but that tome would record a series of historical accidents. To be sure also, many a critical essay has been written explaining that, given the state of the subject, the study of pedagogy is not worth anyone's time, certainly not the time of our best students; but the cogency of such critiques would immediately disappear with an improvement in the state of the subject. The facts can be rationalized in many ways, but there are no good reasons why only teachers should study pedagogy; and as soon as we look into the nature of the subject, we will find that pedagogy may be the key to that reform of learning through which the student can regain his proper power.

Americans have inveterately con-

fused pedagogy, the science or theory of education, with didactics, the theory of teaching; we have thus mistaken the whole for one of its parts. This mistake explains why it seems strange to us that pedagogy might be a subject useful to students. Moreover, that the theory of education should be generally equated with the theory of teaching signifies the degree to which the balance between teachers and students has been upset. But if we look at the real concerns of pedagogy, we will find that the student, not the teacher, is the essential figure in any sound conception of education. The German philosopher and historian, Wilhelm Dilthey, once put the matter well: "the blossom and goal of philosophy is pedagogy in its widest sense—the formative theory of man." Acquaintance with this theory may enable the student to formulate his intentions sufficiently to become again an independent power within the classroom.

Students are demanding that their studies be made more relevant. It is no accident that this demand has arisen at a time when the student's power in comparison to his teachers' is nil; the demand that studies *be made* more relevant signifies the student's total surrender: all is left up to the teacher. No faculty should permit itself to be so deified; at most it should help the students find meaning for themselves in their studies. Thus, the question of relevance should be left up to the student; and with respect to it, his first task is to make what he chooses to study relevant to himself, to the self he seeks to be. To articulate to himself the value of various subjects for his self-development, he needs a formative theory of man, a nascent conception of what he as a man can and should become; hence, he needs to address himself to pedagogy.

This rationale for the student's interest in pedagogy, derived from reflection on the current academic situation, accords perfectly with the function of the subject defined in the seminal treatise, Plato's *Protagoras*. Plato suggested that, above all, pedagogy was the topic on which the student should meditate. The student could learn many things without knowing anything about pedagogy; and because of this fact, he should seek first to learn about pedagogy, for only then could he choose intelligently what other things to learn. By ignoring pedagogy, the student risked harming himself, for he would learn many things without having any inkling of what sort of person these things would make him become. Such reflections led to the dialogue recorded in *Protagoras*. Recall how the young man, Hippocrates, was going to study with Protagoras without having considered what effects on himself such learning would have. Socrates pointed out the foolishness of such an action, and the two together decided instead to ask Protagoras to explain what sort of persons his students would become by accepting his teachings. With that, all three were launched on an inquiry into whether excellence could be taught, and the resultant discussion is still relevant to anyone who wishes to find a formative theory of man that he can use to help guide his own pursuit of excellence. Present-day youth might follow Socrates and Hippocrates in asking its would-be teachers to explain how the various matters taught will form the man who studies them. Such

a request would lead to general courses on pedagogy.

Already, however, the curriculum is over-crowded. But the difficulty of finding room in the curriculum for the study of pedagogy should not be as great as it would at first seem. The subject matter dealt with in the study of pedagogy is much the same as that touched on in so-called general education. If pedagogy began with Plato's *Protagoras,* it has followed steadily through the important books of our tradition; these works have proved to be great because they have contributed significantly to our formative theory of man. Thus, we find in pedagogy not a new subject that must be squeezed into the curriculum, but a solution to a problem manifest in an established subject, namely general education. The problem has been pointed out well by Daniel Bell in *The Reforming of General Education:* there seems to be little way to put into practice what is learned in the survey of our civilization. There is however, a far simpler solution to this difficulty than that which Professor Bell proposed. We need to change not the program of study, but our conception of practice. To put our knowledge to work, we do not always need to turn to the world outside the university. Certain principles become practical as we use them as a guide directing our attention to other principles. If we encourage students to put general education into practice in this manner, we will have, in effect, made room for the study of pedagogy in the contemporary curriculum, and we will have further encouraged the particular form of student power the exercise of which is essential to the future of our educational institutions.

Consequently, let us reform general education by making it the study of pedagogy, the formative theory of man. Such a reform would be the fundamental step towards the revitalization of the university, for with it, students would have a better opportunity to become once again an independent, countervailing power to their teachers. To institute this reform we do not primarily need new programs; we need rather a new type of practice, one suitable to the student *qua* student.

ROBERT OLIVER

Purposes

Pedagogical Praxis

Inevitably, some will find these reflections to be a retreat from reality. So be it; let them err. Their error will be in not adding time to space in conceiving of reality. Men must deal not only with the problems around them; they must deal with a succession of problems as these stretch over time. Life is a matter of endurance; this fact does not let us off the hook of a single immediate issue, but it does add another dimension to our efforts to cope with the world. In an historical sweep, a temporal specter rises before the practical life—the specter of ignorance. A people can surmount great issues one after another as it rises to heights in a series of extraordinary efforts to perform the tasks at hand, and then this people can destroy itself by being unable to solve a minor matter, having previously expended its powers without cultivating adequate replacements. This deficiency of disciplined ability is ignorance, and its absurdities are the very stuff of history. The threat of ignorance should make us cautious of proposals to enlist educational institutions in all-out efforts to solve issues here and now. The educator, whether teacher or student, is responsible not only to the present, but to the future as well.

We have passed through the industrial and scientific revolutions, which have together been created by technical praxis, by the systematic application of quantifiable knowledge about man and the world to the manipulation of the things around us. Technical praxis will preserve and probably expand its usefulness; but it has already attained an established place in our lives, and although it will continue to cause changes, it has ceased to initiate revolutionary transformations in human organization, automation notwithstanding. Those who look at technology as the shaping force of our future will be surprised by tomorrow's history. Despite contrary signs, another fnndamental transformation of the West is underway; this educational revolution, which may prove as significant as the industrial, will be based on pedagogical praxis, on the autonomous use of qualitative judgments about our personal possibilities in order to cultivate the best man within each of us.

Pedagogical praxis is only incidentally the didactic disbursement of universal literacy and sophisticated skills. In a fuller sense, it is the systematic effort that each man can make to form his personal character, to cultivate his intellect and emotions, to choose personally and freely to stand for particular values in the course of a life mysteriously given to him. We are in the midst of an educational revolution in which the education traditionally open only to the gentleman is being demanded as the prerogative of all. To remind ourselves of precisely what this education is, let us turn to the words of

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a great gentleman, Montaigne. "Bees pillage the flowers here and there, but they make honey of them which is all their own; it is no longer thyme and majoram; so the fragments borrowed from others the student will transform and blend together to make a work that shall be absolutely his own; that is to say, his judgment. His education, labor, and study aim only at forming that."

Efforts to encourage all men to transform the fragments they encounter into independent, personal patterns of judgment have merely begun. Most schooling entails only training, and popularization usually aims to preclude rather than provoke personal judgment. Be that as it may, contrary forces have been set in motion. Where skills are present, men will experiment with their uses out of exuberant curiosity. Information, literature, whole new forms of art are omnipresent, challenging us all to create and appreciate; and anyone with a keen ear and eye will be endlessly snrprised at how frequently one encounters interesting, cultivated capacities dispersed through a seemingly banal populace. For better or for worse, men are seeking to live in the Athenian manner. In result, much of the extreme, the radical, the bizarre in youth stems from the general rush to live by one's own judgment, regardless of whether it is good judgment or poor. As long as the young take the lead in this way, their elders cannot help but take up the challenge and offer the young the closest to a gentleman's education they can. This response is simply a function of the truth in Jefferson's quip that a people who expect to be ignorant and free expect what never was and never will be. Thus, spontaneous initiatives have committed us to trying to carry the development of popular education through to completion, whether to success or chaotic destruction or to muddled endurance we cannot know.

Such uncertainties often elicit exertion, however; and rather than here forecast the facade of the future, let us concentrate on understanding the processes at work, for each of us has the option, even the responsibility, to decide whether the processes are such that we should work to facilitate or impede their operation. Fichte best envisaged the educational revolution that is upon us. The idea of training the skills of the populace and indoctrinating the citizenry in patriotic virtue had recently taken hold in France, and the ideal of the on-going cultural development of an excellent person had been inherited from the upper classes of Europe. In his *Addresses to the German People*, Fichte combined these and proposed a national educational effort aimed not at spreading skills and patriotism, but at maturing the philosophic and literary independence of each person. As Fichte saw it, Germany's greatness would be cultural, not political; and in contrast to the French armies of conscripted citizens, the German schools and ethos would inspire the world by educating each person in the community to full cultural autonomy.

Fichte's thought had many foibles, for instance, Froebel; more seriously, his theory of language and the relation of a national ethos to personal development were at once difficult and dangerous when misunderstood. But in the goal that Fichte set, he was centuries ahead of his time. In the short-run, he erred. Might overpowered right; empirical science, not spec-

ulative philosophy, moved events and won the popular imagination; and the military state, which Fichte abhorred, nevertheless found strange, terrible uses for his fine hopes. Yet all the while, beneath these events that technical praxis made possible, various visionaries slowly strengthened the more speculative, human sciences, and they looked forward to the day when these might be rhe basis of an alternative praxis. Thus, in the exchanges between two men whose importance we have yet to appreciate, Count Paul Yorck exclaimed to Wilhelm Dilthey: "The reproach is entered against us that we do not make good use of natural science! To be sure, presently the sole justification of all science is certainly that it makes practice possible. But mathematical praxis is not the only one. From our standpoint, the practical aim is pedogogical in its widest and deepest sense. Pedagogical praxis is the soul of all real philosophy and the truth of Plato and Aristotle."

It is time for this alternative to flourish. When we learn to make full use of pedogogical praxis, our educational institutions and agencies will assume an unprecedented place in human experience and become perhaps the basis of a cosmopolitan life and culture.

Yet in the present chaos, how sanguine it seems to speak of the spread of culture and to dream of the day when schools and universities will be the institutional framework of a world community! Many doubt and a few deny that intellect should even maintain its present place in the world. Initiative seems to lie with those content to question and negate. The prestige of mind appears to be deflating as puffed-up reputations are pierced by incompetent performances. On many campuses, quiet scholars find themselves the objects of vocal scorn. The will weighs reason down, and the urge to act possesses the humble thinker. The temper of the time shows itself as Goethe's dictum —"to act is easy, to think is hard"— appears frequenrly transposed in student essays—"to think is easy, to act is hard." Thus we instinctively denigrate fine intellection and rush, not to judgment, but to commitment, for we feel that the way to mastery lies in the triumph of the will.

As discontent dominates the campuses, one can see a glow of satisfaction spread through the hurried hordes, the sated consumers who find that happiness is to rely on common sense and to suspect subtlety. Having felt threatened by the critics' barbs, they find proof in the turmoil that when the chips are down the presumptuous professors cannot even run their own shop, let alone counsel the workaday world. And further, the sad fact simply is that the prosaic here have reason, as the French would say; the present situation *is* a serious portent for both the pretensions and the destiny of intellect. Force of mind seems unlikely to shape the future if one judges by present trends.

Real abuses exist. Academics are easily rebuked for fiddling on the Heights while Harlem burns; intellectuals expose themselves rushing to advertise opinions they have not yet formed; scientists progressively loose the power to direct the uses of their knowledge as the worldly-wise-man has realized that, verily, their knowledge is power. These and numerous other abuses cause righteous outrage in sensitive spirits; yet the house of intellect does not yield to instant re-

form. Hence, frustration has built up, and the tension may well tear the fabric of mind. In such circumstances, the cautious course would he to meditate on the gloom. But of this we can be sure: things will get worse unless we *make* them better; and to make things better we need to dwell not only on our problems, but on our possibilities as well. Rather than despair of improvement, let us balance Hegel's sad irony—"the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only with the falling of the dusk"—with a more hopeful one—"the satyres of Dionysus dance mainly at the coming of the dawn."

In anticipating the dawn, we accomplish little by noting the dark; it is all around us. In the same way, abuses are irrelevant; what matters are the uses of culture, for a new day will rise only as a significant number find these positive possibilities and develop them. In truth, then, we have but one mission: to find what should be done and to do it well. This mission brings us back to pedagogical praxis; the rest is self-gratifying indulgence.

What we should do seems clear enough: the function of educational institutions is teaching and learning. Our mission is to devote ourselves to pedagogical praxis. This task involves more than disseminating accumulated knowledge and taking in ready-made skills. Real teaching and learning involves the inner man; one must put one's self into the matter: to teach is to take a public stand exemplifying convictions, judgments, and values; to learn is to internalize and make part of one's self those convictions, judgments, and values that one meets and that stand up in the face of critical evaluation. In this sense, teaching and learning cannot be isolated from each other, for to learn something is to recognize that it is worth trying to teach, and to teach something is to put what one has learned to public test. Consequently, professors and students are not divergent groups; as has been said elsewhere, they should stand against one another in a respectful, balanced tension. Both professors and students need simultaneously to teach and to learn; the capacity of the former to continue learning through the free pursuit of curiosity constitutes the growing edge of the cultural system, whereas the ability of the latter to teach by reinforcing among their peers certain lines of development and to discourage others is the subtle source of orientation that keeps the system pointed towards the light.

These remarks describing the educational mission are unlikely to be controversial. Each person has a rather clear, intuitive grasp of pedagogical praxis; after all, it is an integral part of our inner lives. The controversial point will be in taking this private, albeit general, phenomenon, and making an active, public mission of it. There is in the foregoing a claim that the effort to develop human character—our own and that of others—is a significant form of practical action, an important mode of *doing* something in the world.

Resistance to saying that what we should *do* is teach and learn stems mainly from the conviction that to do these things is to do something selfishly personal and not to do anything productive in the world. Beneath all the compromises and evasions there is among both professors and students a clear comprehension of their pedagogical mission; what

is lacking is the will to perform it, and this failure of will is supported and rendered tolerable by the rationalization that what we ought to do is not a real form of doing in the contemporary world. As long as we let this rationalization seem persuasive, pedagogical praxis will not come into its own and the incipient educational revolution will die aborning as the industrial revolution would have died if medieval ideas about usury had not changed.

From every quarter, one hears that ours is a time of crisis and that we must devote all our energies to solving our palpable difficulties *now* or else they will destroy us. This reasoning puts such a premium on perfecting technical praxis that concern for pedogogical praxis seems to be an improper luxury. Little hope can at first be found for solving immediate issues with a set of indirect means for shaping the community through the aggregate of our individual efforts to form our own characters. Hence, our pedagogical mission seems frivolous, and we turn away from it to one of the many perils impinging on us. But the very diversity of these finalities should make us pause. Each different doomsdayer is driven to frenzy by a different problem, ranging from the conservationists' paradoxical outcries against the pollution of streams and the purification of swamps to the familiar standbyes of race, war, population, and nuclear armageddon. Without forgetting for a moment the seriousness and merit of these causes, let us be equally sure not to forget the temporal specter: ignorance is always ready to ravage the exhausted victors.

ROBERT OLIVER

Purposes

Of Privacy and Public Schooling

One cannot subscribe to a magazine without contracting for a steady stream of unwanted offers, offers for pornography, for "free gifts," and for all with which junk mail abounds; man's ears, ever open, lose their alertness as they are deadened by the ubiquitous noises produced in the fruitful worship of the great god mammon. More portentiously, federal and state agencies, credit bureaus, employers, insurers, schools, and many others constantly collect detailed data about us all; and the safeguards ensuring that access to this data will be withheld from those who should not be privy to it are weak. In response, public opposition to the abuse of privacy is increasing; and fortunately, jurists are looking for ways to prevent interested organizations from misusing the power to preserve and retrieve information about our private lives. To abet those trying to prevent the abuse of privacy, let us reaffirm the proper use of privacy.

Privacy should not be defined in simple opposition to the state of being public. Etymologically, "private" comes from the Latin for bereavement and the seclusion that comes with it. Thus, retirement from the public and withdrawal into one's inner world is an intrinsic part of privacy; and hence privacy is a certain kind of public act. Without asserting his privacy, the unobtrusive, hidden, unnoticed person will entirely lack privacy although his deeds attract no public interest. For instance, there is little privacy in the life of the typical consumer, for although he may spend all his time on private premises, he never turns inward to his own devices and his life transparently follows the patterns laid down for him by the anonymous producers of the goods and services he consumes. To gain privacy, one publicly shuts oneself off from the public, and such withdrawals are a necessary ingredient of a healthy public life. Public and private are not antitheses, but a harmonious tension in which each is an integral aspect of the other.

We can learn much about the inherent unity of the public and the private from the Romans, who for centuries shared an amazingly strong sense of public concord and who at the same time maintained a powerful tradition of family unity, autonomy, and intimacy. Their god of doorways, of gates to both public spaces and private homes, was the two-faced Janus; and the Roman practice was to keep the doors to city and home open when the inhabitants were out and closed when they were in. Janus presided over the point at which the inward turns outward and the outward inward—the door—, and by extension, he was further the god of initiative, of commencements, and of new enterprises; thus we still celebrate him as the patron of beginnings

by naming the year's first month after him. In Janus the Romans understood something profound about human initiative; they sensed the productive unity of outward solidarity and inner autonomy: Janus showed that public and private were not opposites, but directions in which a single person alternatingly faced. Repeatedly we go in and we go out through the same door.

In Plato's depiction of Socrates we meet another great exemplar of privacy, a man strong enough to maintain his privacy in public. Socrates frequently admitted to "fearing the crowd," yet his capacity for withdrawal into himself fittingly manifested itself in public places, for he taught one thing: that the public would flourish only through the full and proper use of private judgment. In the *Symposium,* Plato twice noted Socrates' power of private meditation. First, Socrates stopped in a busy street on his way to a dinner party and stood for several hours while he pondered a point; and second, his friends recalled how, years before while in the army, Socrates had stood stark still from dawn to dawn engrossed in meditation while his comrades sprawled around him, wagering on how long his absorbtion would last. Socrates was condemned not only for corrupting youths, but for introducing new, private deities into Athens, deities that we might now call intuition and conscience. And in his *Apology,* Socrates insisted that it would be in the public interest of Athens to support his effort to make people think through their private opinions and confront their inner selves.

Socrates shows why the private should not be defined in contradistinction to the public: the preeminent use of privacy is in public affairs. This fact will be resisted by those who believe that the conduct of public affairs consists merely in the manipulation of the public. Woe to those men of action who need to engineer, direct, organize, and command whatever deeds they do; these men will be overwhelmed by the deep obstinacy of mankind, by the profundity of the human response, by the insignificance of the human surface as compared to its substance. The pathos of power becomes visible in men like Lyndon Johnson: his *Atē* was his competence, for it led him blindly into believing that he could rule, not merely reign, that with his capacity for detail he could command the intricate execution of his will. But public power does not operate on the visible surface, for the true determinant of what happens in history is in the private decisions that each person inwardly makes; here, when each man draws within his self and forms his own intentions, he tests his commitment to the common weal and decides which leaders, laws, and customs he will follow and which he will scorn. Public professions of allegiance are meaningless in the long run unless they are founded on a real private allegiance. No system of public enforcements can be sufficiently omnipresent and omnipowerful to shore up a law and an order that we do not recognize in the privacy of our hearts.

For this reason, the wise have long upheld that the apparent power to manipulate the crowd is likely to end by producing harm to the shrewd few and to their docile followers; instead, despite appearances, the important ability of the statesman is to in-

spire men in the privacy of their hearts with more just, humane aspirations. Power exercised in this indirect manner will prove substantial; it will persist without continual surveillance and reenforcement, it will not evaporate at trying moments, and its greatest accomplishments will seem to be achieved spontaneously.

The conflicting claims of manipulation and inspiration to political significance have been best memorialized in Plato's *Gorgias*. Against three persuasive opponents Socrates doggedly upheld first that what mattered was not what "everyone thinks," but what each person thinks when he examines a question carefully, and second that what mattered for public affairs was that each person see to the rightness of his own conduct. This insistance that the only politics we can take part in is the politics of our own heart, as Plato put it in the *Republic*, most offends those with inclinations to manipulate their peers; they will ask heatedly about this question or that question and insist that it is so important that a solution must be found even if it degrades the people's humanity. In one or another matter, we are all susceptible to these inclinations; thus it helps to remind ourselves periodically that the essence of leadership is the recognition that no matter what office we hold the only conduct over which we have any real power is our own.

This discussion, so heavily indebted to the Greeks and Romans, might be ignored as ancient history if it were not for two facts: the uses of oratory in classical Athens and contemporary America are ominously parallel, and the importance of private judgment as understood by the ancients is integral to the political theories on which our institutions are based. Our founding fathers on both sides of the Atlantic shared a schooling in the classics, and they absorbed the lesson these works taught. In retrospect we have a tendency to fasten our attention on the differences between the great political theorists of the Enlightenment; and in doing so we fail to note their common point of departure: an effective political system should ensure that particular, personal judgments concerning concrete situations would have precedence over the fictitious universals that swayed factions and crowds and that coddled outworn systems of rule.

Out of this concern, the theory of checks and balances arose. The idea was to prevent power from being concentrated in such a way that it would be exercised impersonally, without the finitude of a particular, private man standing as a public guarantee to the humanity of the deed. The ultimate aim of the theory was not only to ensure that definite responsibility for every official act could be located, but further to ensure that for every public deed there would be a man who, in the privacy of his person, felt responsible for its consequences. In practice, existing checks and balances have been greatly weakened by rhetorical persuasiveness, for orators provide public servants with ready-made convictions by which they can depersonalize their official conduct: men of diverse offices and constituencies become impersonal delegates of a party point of view. Further, even where responsibility is still located with a single person, its humane implications are glossed over with euphemisms: the actor is therefore rarely confronted

directly by the actual consequences to others of his deeds. One way to strengthen the use of privacy in public affairs would be to reexamine the theory of checks and balances in order to bring these up to date.

Likewise, the Bill of Rights embodied, in a slightly different way, a similar concern for the private man and his place in public affairs. The comfortably complacent have always distrusted these amendments to the Constitution as hindrances to efforts to protect public tranquillity. The placid here err; to preserve the peace, to maintain law and order with any efficiency and humanity, the freedom and responsibility of every citizen must be *convincingly* guaranteed. The danger to law and order is not in the coddling of criminals or in permissiveness towards the provocative; it is in the growing conviction among intelligent and well-intentioned men that under contemporary circumstances the Bill of Rights and other safeguards are no longer adequate to guarantee to each person the right of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness should these, in all sincerity, lead one out of the monolithic middle.

As Martin S. Dworkin profoundly points out, the great danger in contemporary radicalism is in the widespread belief that American society, the entire "free" world, has become totalitarian. Men who no longer believe that they are free no longer recognize that they are responsible; in fighting against oppression, it is most easy to convince oneself that all is permitted. Now the dilemma we face is that the urge to force responsible behavior on disruptive minorities simply helps confirm the conviction that gives rise to their underlying sense of irresponsibility. Permissiveness and authority are, after all, merely different ways by which public officials can exercise paternal responsibility for other persons' conduct; the alternative to both, the alternative on which this country was founded, is to publicly guarantee private autonomy. To do this in present circumstances we should be seeking ways to strengthen, not weaken, our Bill of Rights.

Unfortunately, the best theoretical analysis of privacy and public affairs resides in a flawed work, namely Rousseau's *Social Contract.* Like Nietzsche, Rousseau is a dangerous writer when he is read quickly with the illusion of comprehension; unless his principles are slowly absorbed, he easily seems to stand for the opposite of what he truly teaches. Thus, he propounded neither a naturalistic anti-intellectualism nor a tyranny in the name of the common good; on the contrary, he unfailingly upheld that inner, authentic, "natural," thoughtful, private responses were the only foundation suitable for a community of men. By itself, official legislation was powerless to promote the good life, for "the laws . . . constrain men without changing them . . ." Properly understood, the social contract stipulated that the only legitimate public power was in the acts that arose spontaneously from the aggregate of separate decisions that each member of the community made as he meditated privately on the matters about which he was personally, fully informed. In this manner, privacy is the basis of community.

Important pedagogical consequences follow from this proposition; and despite their significance and relevance to current issues, these conse-

quences should be merely suggested here as appetizers, perhaps, for private meditation.

There is a serious ambiguity in the idea of universal education: its proponents are not clear whether mass schooling should suppress or cultivate the inner man. This ambiguity stems from the nineteenth-century school reformers: they knew that by "common school" they did not mean an ordinary, undistinguished school; but they were not clear whether they meant a school that would teach a common, a shared body of knowledge and values *to all*, or a school that would offer a common, an equal initiation to the art of self-culture *to each*. When confronted with pressing public issues, the easy course is to look to the schools as a means of paternally imposing a solution to the problem on our progeny: if only all get adequate driver education, vocational training, contact with those of other races and creeds, indoctrination to the American way of life, or what have you, it would seem as if many problems would happily disappear. With Horace Mann if not before, it became customary to see the public schools as a powerful agent of social engineering; the schools could constrain the disruptive, improve the safety of street and home, increase productivity, and spread a sense of patriotic service.

All might be well if schooling for these public ends coincided with the education of each inner man; but in fact, it does not. Consequently, to the degree that the reigning powers manage to harness the schools to the direct pursuit of their public policies, they divert teachers and students from their true public service, the cultivation of the private, inner response. In this way, in the name of the public we jeopardize the future foundation of the public. The fruits of this practice are visible in the way a resentful anomie is spreading among youths, and the most promising antidote to it is the movement towards what has been misnamed as "local control," but what is in truth the client control that has long characterized the practice of medicine and law. This movement may be the harbinger of a renewed appreciation of privacy and its public uses.

At any rate, the prospects for privacy will always seem bleaker than they probably are, for the prospects are—as prospects—presently private and hidden from our prying view. Let us hope with Nietzsche that inwardly people realize that "to let oneself be determined by one's environment is decadent."

ROBERT OLIVER

Purposes

Competence

In recent years enough has been said about excellence and education. By now, many recognize that in one sense excellence is too easy a goal: given any range of accomplishment with a particular skill, there always are those who excel by their proximity to the higher extreme of the range. What matters for all who are spread out along the curve of distribution is not so much the placement of the extremes, but the placement of the curve itself; and the pursuit of excellence is less likely to raise the general level of the curve as is the pursuit of competence. With a high level of competence, the laggards are continually pulled along and the geniuses are continually pushed to better performances. There are sufficient examples of excellence among professional educators; what we lack as a group is thorough competence. This competence should be our goal, for it is the most demanding goal we can set ourselves.

Be assured that in commending competence as our goal I am not in the least advising that we lessen what we expect of ourselves. Competence is a hard, tough matter, especially when one looks honestly at the accumulated deficiencies. The difficulties posed by the pursuit of competence would be cause for despair, if it were not for the fact that competence is a pre-eminently open quality; a community can build up its competence rather quickly because it is open to every man to assert his better self in favor of his lesser, to sharpen his powers, to perfect his competence in his chosen sphere of endeavor. Because competence is open to those who assert their will for it, the blacks can wisely taunt complacent whitey. But here, as in all other areas, the images of quick success, of visible excellence, are a danger to substantial progress.

There is a snare and delusion in the pursuit of excellence: too often excellence is measured by applause, acclaim, and notoriety; excellence becomes the equivalent of success in the eyes of the mediocre. True excellence in contrast is a matter of excelling oneself; it is an inward, hidden quality that surprises, and even outrages, the spectators with unexpected accomplishments. This honest excellence is never a public goal; certain men properly present it gratuitously to their peers as a *fait accompli*. But the ubiquitous cant about excellence serves as an unction by means of which we avoid facing up to our serious tasks. The rhetoricians of the marketplace have decisively degraded our idea of excellence, for every good and service sold excels all others in its class; and hence, until our deeds can give renewed meaning to the word, we had best cease mouthing it.

Consequently, in our time the heroic quest is not of the oft-spoken unspeakable; it is the quest of competence. To develop competence one must embark on a true odyssey: over years of journeying one must resist

and rebound from many dangers. On one side there is Charybdis, that terrible vortex of ever-narrowing concentration at the center of which is nothingness; to avoid this monster, the earnest voyager steers too far to the other side where he meets Scylla, the rock of silliness upon which heady ambitions are grounded and broken. And on the way to these twin dangers are the Sirens, "and about them is a great heap of bones and mouldering men, and round the bones the skin is shrivelling." Thus, publicity hungers to taunt every pretense, and the quiet shaping of one's powers depends on having sufficient fortitude to hold one's course while lesser men are hailed as Homeric heroes; Ulysses had learned of this matter from experience, for he had driven Ajax to frenzied despair by besting the latter's competence with rhetorical cunning. But rhetoric alone will always end by out-witting itself; and instead, it is time to sing the praises of the man whose powers are in proportion with his pretense, for he has become a truly uncommon character.

With the tension between pretense and competence, we encounter one of the more hopeful aspects in the surly mood of youth: in the long-run, immature iconoclasm may put a premium on competence over pretense. So far we have simply a pretentious rebellion against pretense, but we can expect more than that from the matter. Prior to the advent of affluence, wealth was the most common mark of attainment. Parents of middling class and age still believe in the significance of this mark; and finding themselves seemingly wealthy, they put on airs and congratulate themselves for their attainments. Their children, however, get around more; they travel about the country and the world, and they soon realize that at once the well-to-do are legion and out-standing problems are manifold. As a result, these youths find that the possession of wealth in-and-of itself signifies nothing; they conclude consequently that pretenses based on wealth alone indicate an estrangement from the realities of the time, a mark of incompetence, not mastery; and they suggest idealistically that in place of the wealth itself, more discriminating measures should be recognized, measures that take into account the way the wealth was produced and the quality of the lives it helps support. Now although we have seen so far on the horizon of history only the ephemeral *avant garde* of this development; we are likely to witness, once the current game of denial becomes dull, a great demand by critical youths for elementary competence.

This demand is the one that will truly test the mettle of our educational institutions; and as the young begin to assert higher and higher standards of competence—not standards of mere efficiency, but standards of full, humane competence—they will put tremendous pressure on the reigning dogma of pedagogical presentism, a dogma that has done more than anything else in past decades to diminish our sense of competence. Of course, if one is satisfied merely to project present trends mechanically into the future, it will seem nonsense to foresee the demise of presentism in the name of competence. But in history, reason does not always follow the law of inertia.

What we see so far in the rebellions of the young is the reduction of the presentist doctrine to an absurdity. But one can already sense a shift

in certain activists who began in the name of involvement in the holy Now: slowly they are ceasing to question the desirability of educational institutions in the absolute; having discovered the importance of the institution, they are starting to examine critically the competence of its parts. Judging by decible count, these constructive critics are in a minority; but as Heraclitus said, it is a foolish man who is aflutter with every word. Historically, in situations of social ferment, the moderate wing of radical movements by no means always, or even usually, becomes dominant. In this case, however, there are certain practical and doctrinal realities that make constructive reform towards greater competence the likely long-term result of campus upheavals.

Once established ways have been disrupted, power—both material and spiritual—gravitates towards those who have both a clear intuition of a possible, new stability and the mastery of the means needed to bring this vision into actuality. In the Russian revolution, such vision and competence were developed by Lenin and his followers, who were rather far out on the revolutionary extreme. In the French revolution, these qualities were manifested, less completely to be sure, by Napoleon, who appealed to the desire for stability. Thus, in unstable situations, the assignation of power does not follow the dictates of doctrine or inheritance, but of competence; then careers are truly open to talent. To estimate what will happen when ingrained habits are upset, one should dispassionately weigh the ideas and abilities of different groups in an effort to perceive which one has the qualities that will best enable it to formulate and carry through a vision of a viable future. Such an estimate will show that the exponents of pedagogical presentism are noisy, but inherently weak, for whether they *favor* the extreme of destruction or stasis, the bias of their beliefs ill-equips them to create a significant future.

Pedagogical presentists hold that educational effort should be measured neither by models from the past nor by hopes for the future; on the contrary, the standards controlling aims and activities should be immanent in the immediate pedagogical situation, they should emanate from the present aims and abilities of the child, and they should never involve a tyrannical imposition of abstract models on the sacred mystery of flesh and blood. There is much of merit in this doctrine. Its greatness came early in this century when educational reformers used it to call their peers away from the pursuit of sterile practices. But that which serves as a refreshing tonic does not always work as a daily drink; and despite the reiterations of those who long ago ceased to listen critically while they themselves were speaking, pedagogical presentism is now established doctrine throughout academe. It, too, shows signs of sterility.

Pedagogical disagreements have been resulting in polarized positions because both sides give lip-service to the same principles, those of the ruling presentism, making it impossible for the rational discussion of divergent principles to serve as an indirect basis for resolving the conflict. Thus the proponent of the multiversity holds that the university has no integral mission; it is instead an ever-changing conglomeration of competing interests that *hic et nunc* represent the immediate intellectual consensus.

So be it: the presentist multiversity engenders an equally presentist "antiversity" composed of those who are convinced that the multiversity does not represent the present consensus and who are going to prove it by destroying *hic et nunc* what seems to them to be a mere vestige of vested interests. Likewise, in the urban school crises, there is a similar synthesis of polar opposites in pure presentism. Proponents of both teacher power and parent power have given up crusading for grand ideals; they are equally convinced that pedagogical policy should not follow intrinsic principles, but should instead respond to the interests of the dominant group, and with this conviction there arises the urge to make one's own group dominant. In these ways presentism has helped to bring about the recent polarizations; but it is ill-designed to point towards any further possibilities beyond the confrontations.

Pedagogical presentism received its fullest statement at the time of its highest vitality in the work of John Dewey. In his presentation of what has come to be dogma, we find the flaw that makes the doctrine unsuitable for leading us beyond destructive oppositions. Dewey had a lively sympathy for the fact that we live always in an immediate present; and he used this fact effectively against those who tried to force living reality to conform to the image of a dead past or of an impossible future. Thus, he argued powerfully that education ought to be neither a continual reincarnation of classical norms nor a preparation for a distant future. Most of us would probably agree in opposing the tendencies that Dewey described and condemned as obnoxious; but the eventual weakness of Dewey's presentism was rooted in his careless attitude towards the authentic past and future, in his willingness to make straw men of his opponents, and in his resulting failure to incorporate the best portion of their positions into his own.

Dewey held himself to an inadequate standard of competence. His positive position was well thought out and basically sound; but like his prose, his negations were slack and did not serve to brace his assertions. This self-indulgence is endemic to the presentists of all sorts; it is the spiritual source of their historic weakness. An emblem of the situation can be found in *Democracy and Education* where Dewey tried to set off the presentist position from the futurist's sense of preparation and the classicist's conception of recapitulation. Only dumb doctrinaires would hold the positions that Dewey described under these heads, and he failed to grapple with the pedagogies of preparation and recapitulation at their best. What is important in these conceptions is not, as Dewey had it, preparation for an abstract future, nor the recapitulation of an abstract past. Both past and future exist in the present; it is precisely the two together that give form to the present. Dewey erred in seeking to dissociate his doctrine from those of preparation and recapitulation, for to develop any substantial force in the real world, he should have sought to incorporate both into his theory.

Men truly develop their possibilities when they develop in their living present an authentic vision of the future. Moved by this aspiration, they begin to prepare for fulfilling it; they recognize that they cannot bring it to actuality if they are content with their present abilities and accomplishments. Having become discontent

with the given, they begin to cast around for other possibilities, at which point the past, the authentic past that comes to life in our consciousness, begins to grow and become more meaningful. Thus, men who are now working towards tomorrow find inspiration in past accomplishments that, they realize, differ from present actualities; and these men use the standards of the past as a lever by means of which they can raise their performance out of the rut of the present's inertia. Hence, it is by an alliance in the present of the future and the past that men develop for themselves standards of competence by which they can change their overall level of performance.

But by asserting presentist doctrine in the continual present of life, one puts before oneself ideas that are not the most conducive to human development. The great theorem of human growth is "Future plus Past equals Present," that is, the quality of the present that one is living is a function of the future from which one is drawing one's aspirations and of the past from which one receives one's inspirations. By insisting overzealously, exclusively on the obvious—that we live in the present tense—Dewey and other presentists cut the heart and the head, the living hope and the living remembrance, from the vital process. This heartlessness, or lack of vision, and this mindlessness, or deficiency of carefully cultivated abilities, are together the historic realities that will make the presentists exponents of either the multiversity or the antiversity ineffective against the reformist proponents of a university composed of more competent persons.

ROBERT OLIVER

The Ides of March, 1969

I write in the sullen realization that we have again chosen as our president a man of no character. For another four years we seem stuck in controversial matters with government by indecision. The formula has become familiar: when faced with a confrontation, opt for neither this nor that, but for a cosmetic blend of both, carefully mixed to placate the powerful interests and to scotch the critics. This formula elevates weakness into the operative principle of government; it belies the real lack of authority in our so-called permissive society: authority has evaporated as men of high office have followed Machiavelli and confused the tricks of getting and keeping power with the duties of having and using power. Make no mistake: the tricks work by and large, at least so long as the moral capital of the community has not been completely consumed. Until then, there is strength in weakness; through perpetual indecision, small men can keep atop tremendous forces, and by systematic eclecticism, uninspired persons can win the consent of most of the nation.

Nevertheless, these practices suggest to a growing remnant that the nation cannot be governed. Public office is not a mere patriotic preferment, an honor that the people condescend to bestow on certain figures, as a schoolmarm gives out gold stars to reward docile comportment. No: public office is the receipt of the delegated authority to allocate and expend vast common resources; and the reception of this authority is incompatible with the principle of weakness, for once any allocation and expenditure has been made, it is final and irrevocable. The one-trillion five-hundred-billion dollars spent since the end of World War II for national defense have been consumed; other real opportunities and stirring possibilities have been passed by forever; and the money and intellect expended for arms cannot now be resurrected and devoted to upgrading our schools and universities or to conserving our countryside and humanizing our cities. Thus, in public affairs, time is implacable; and in history, indecision is decisive: it is—decidedly—a costly, wasteful drift.

Many wonder whether the men who receive the authority of public office can actually use it to direct the allocation and expenditure of resources. A nearly fixed, substantial proportion of our gross national product seems to be allocated automatically to arms production. Other concerns inevitably take the hindmost, for the military and their epigones in business, space, diplomacy, and government wield sufficient money and influence to prevent any other public function from receiving a priority higher than national defense. Many find it incredible that at this juncture sane governors could consider the expenditure of six to seven billion dollars on a doubtfully

effective device to protect a few intercontinental missiles to be preferable to an equivalent expenditure to lessen racial tension, environmental pollution, or overpopulation. No matter how slick a form the decision may be given, its substance engenders disbelief and incredulity in many.

Here is the reality behind that unfortunate phrase, the credibility gap. It is nothing so simple and remediable as ineffective public information policies or transparent efforts to manipulate opinion on important matters. The suspension of all belief occurs in those who have thought seriously about over-all national priorities, for they find that, in view of the problems and possibilities of the era, the allocation and expenditure of resources effected under the principle of weakness is irrational. The formula of neither this nor that councils politicians against facing the hard choices between incompatible possibilities in a manly manner. A credible decision on the ABM would have involved a comparison of the probable returns to the nation from spending six to seven billion dollars over the next four years on defensive missiles with the potential national benefits from equal investments in education, housing, health, transportation, foreign aid, food production, birth control, or conservation. Instead, like the Senate Armed Services Committee, Nixon docilely permitted the Pentagon to define his alternatives; and without looking at other national concerns, he chose the politically most palatable of the warriors' offerings. No matter how expedient, such procedures are irrational; and as long as high office holders use such procedures to escape the responsibility for making hard choices between competing possibilities, rational men will not hold credible the policies of their irrational governors.

Hence, among the costs of costly non-decisions such as that on the ABM, we should reckon the fact that many are learning from the repetition of such absurdities to look on national government with complete cynicism and derision. The growing disgust includes, but is not characterized by, the voiced obscenities of the radical left; the disgust is more profound than surface show and the disengagement is more far reaching than paraded protest. For each vocal recantation, there are numerous silent abjurations in which sensitive, hard working men turn away from national affairs, withholding their talents, respect, and consent while they fulfill the outward forms. That this silent disengagement is becoming practically significant was shown in the difficulty Nixon had in recruiting his cabinet. More and more people believe the national government is functioning irrationally, and they consequently seek to avoid it as they would, when walking on a city street, pass by a drunken panhandler with a stiff stare.

This situation is not healthy, but like any disease, it will not be cured merely with anguished regrets. As long as indecision remains the stock decision of government, disgusted disenchantment will become more and more common. Honest error can always be constructively opposed; disengagement does not develop because people are left cold by erroneous decisions, but by the sense that no real decisions are being made, that perhaps with the muscle-bound condition of the nation significant decisions cannot be made. If the powers

that be can manage to become decisive, to begin again to exercise leadership towards some definite, demanding, distant goal without thereby committing political suicide, they may forestall the spreading disengagement. But that seems unlikely; the signs suggest that Nixon's imagination is not commensurate with the tasks of his office and that his character is no more in keeping with his duties than was that of his predecessor.

If this inadequacy is real, then the critics of public affairs have before them a difficult, important choice to make: namely, whether nevertheless to seek primarily to enlighten the performance of the powers that be, or whether to try to lead the disenchanted towards some constructive alternative. To me, the latter course now seems the most important, promising, and responsible. Let those who find that America is no longer a dream set out to create a new one, and in doing so, let us draw inspiration from an observation that Emerson made when he reflected on "Politics":

> We think our civilization near its meridian, but we are yet only at the cock-crowing and the morning star. In our barbarous society the influence of character is only in its infancy.

ROBERT OLIVER

One nation, divisible, with liberty and justice for some?

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