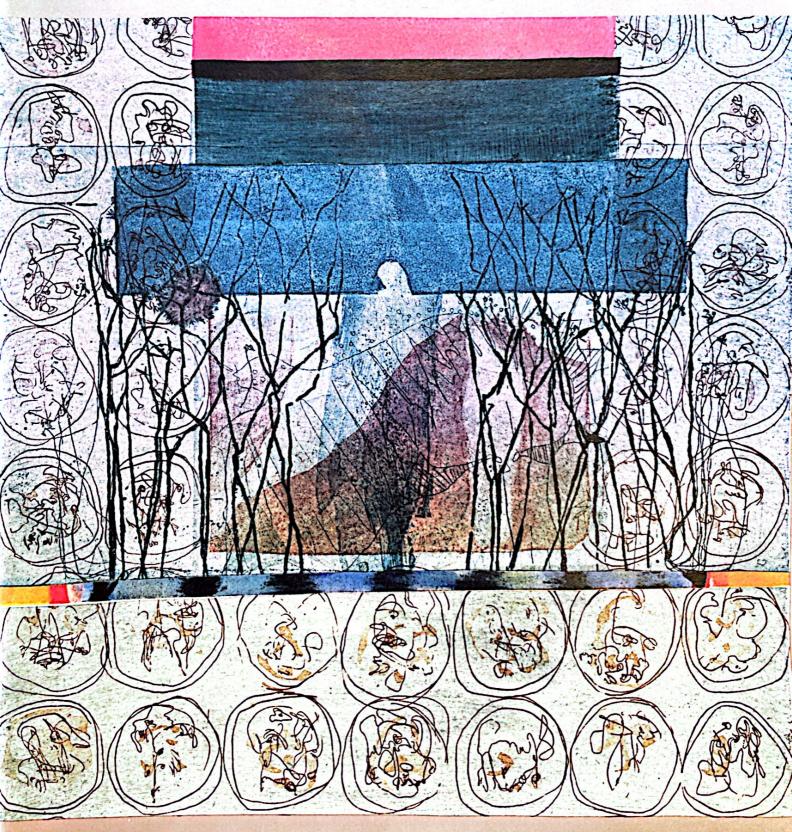
THE CENTER MAGAZINE



Camp David Diplomacy by Steven L. Spiegel

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THE CENTER MAGAZINE

A Publication of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions

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Both the writing of the article, "Camp David Diplomacy" (page 12, this issue), and the discussion of it took place some weeks before President Jimmy Carter's journey to Cairo and Jerusalem which resulted in the signing of the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel on March 26th in Washington. Steven L. Spiegel (the author of the article) and the participants in the Center's dialogue raise some fundamental questions which have neither been answered nor overtaken by the historic and welcome turn of events in the Middle East.

Mr. Spiegel raised one such question when he referred to Mr. Carter's earlier reluctance to promise as much U.S. financial assistance to Egypt and Israel as some of his foreign-policy advisers had been recommending. We now know that Mr. Carter has promised about five billion dollars in aid — three billion to Israel and two billion to Egypt — over the next three years. Democratic Representative Stephen J. Solarz of New York, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, believes that peace between Egypt and Israel is worth the cost. But he predicted last summer that this kind of financial diplomacy in American foreign policy means that "Israel and Egypt will have the functional equivalent of a blank check on the American treasury."

A U.S. State Department memorandum, reported by Ann Crittenden in *The New York Times* on the day of the treaty signing, noted that since 1975 the United States has, in her words, "pumped more than fifteen billion dollars into the region in an effort to convince Israel and the so-called confrontation states — Egypt, Jordan, and Syria — that an end to hostilities would be worth their while." More than two-thirds of this aid has gone to Israel, much of it in outright grants, the remainder going to the confrontation states. Most of the latter aid — \$3.4 billion — has gone to Egypt.

And now Egypt may require much more than the two billion dollars in American aid assured by her signing of the March 26th peace treaty. The Arab League, some of whose members are oil-rich nations, has decided to punish Egypt with an economic boycott. The United States will apparently have no other choice but to continue, and most likely increase, its assistance to Egypt.

In the absence of an effective United Nations — or any other international negotiating institution — President Carter's personal, financial, and unilateral diplomacy averted what could have been a catastrophic alternative in the Middle East. But as Mr. Spiegel's article and the discussion suggest, such diplomacy is gravely limited with respect to permanent and long-term objectives. The March 26th peace treaty may indeed turn out to be the first step to a comprehensive Middle East settlement. But if it does, the Center discussants seem agreed that the negotiating forum will have to be enlarged and incentives will have to be provided not solely by a nervously oil-dependent United States, but also by other nations whose energy vulnerabilities and moral credentials must be assumed to be at least as impressive as those of this country. — D. McD.

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The Center Magazine is published bimonthly by the Fund for the Republic, Inc., 2056 Eucalyptus Hill Road, Santa Barbara, California 93108, an educational non-profit organization. Center Magazine subscribers are members of the Fund for the Republic/The Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Associate Membership annual dues are \$15.00, of which \$5.00 is set aside for the publication costs of six bimonthly issues of The Center Magazine. Printing by Interweb, Los Angeles, California. Second-class postage paid at Santa Barbara, California and at additional mailing offices. ©1979 The Fund for the Republic, Inc. All rights, including translation into other languages, reserved by the publisher in the United States, Great Britain, Mexico and all other countries participating in the International Copyright Conference and the Pan American Copyright Convention. (USPS 557-340)

THE CRITICAL TEMPER

Sometimes it happens that an insight, thought, or idea is prompted by the combination of ingredients that a day, a circumstance, or the items assembled on a reading table bring together. In this instance an idea has been encouraged by a constellation of three components all of which pertain to the way in which intelligence can be directed in our time.

For anyone concerned about recent shifts in intellectual consensus in the United States there are some arresting thoughts in a new book by Gerald Grant and David Riesman, The Perpetual Dream: Reform and Experiment in the American College. The book provides a provocative analysis of selected recent experiments in American higher education. Of special interest is the chapter, "The Neoclassical Revival," directed toward recovering the network of ideas (the ideological perspective) that inspired the founding of St. John's College. The authors pay tribute to the vision of Robert M. Hutchins, Scott Buchanan, and Stringfellow Barr as it was (and is) reflected in a variety of related educational and intellectual achievements. One thinks of the University of Chicago (especially during Hutchins' presidency), the Encyclopædia Britannica, the Great Books enterprise, and the myriad examples of creative thought, outstanding scholarship, and disciplined cultural sensitivity that have been evoked by this strong and living heritage.

This distinctiveness of vision — and it is the vision of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, which Hutchins founded — is compelling and abiding. It is a refined form of Ernest Gellner's

more comprehensive, but fundamental concern, as he put it in *Crisis in the Humanities* (edited by J. H. Plumb):

"The real and deeper problem concerns just what, if anything, it is that the humanities have to communicate. The language of the humanities is incomparably closer to what we are, to the life we live, than is the language of science; but on the other hand, it is not obvious that the humanities contain, in any serious sense, genuine *knowledge*. It is the chasm, perhaps intolerable, between real knowledge and identity which is the fundamental issue."

It is important to know the answer to this query. Admittedly, some doubts and questions have arisen. For, as I read through the chapters in Grant's and Riesman's book, I am aware of some disturbing analogies to the history of the Warburg Institute (an institution in which I logged some postdoctoral research time) at the University of London. Like the Center, the Warburg Institute was founded to serve a specific set of convictions or a compelling network of ideas. The Warburg's occasion, like the Center's, was based on anticipations of some perilous tendencies within the society. And the Warburg Institute, like the Center, found eloquent reasons (particularly in a time, also following a war of world proportions and an extensive cultural shift) to perpetuate the classical traditions of knowledge, insight, and virtue. It also attempted to capture and portray, in an inte-

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grated manner, what it means to be a human being. Both centers of intellectual inquiry are deeply committed to classical and humanistic ideals.

Yet, despite the fact that the Warburg Institute was founded on a tutored understanding of cultural history, I could find few persons there ten years ago (except those who were relatives or personal acquaintances of relatives or personal acquaintances of the founder) who remained convinced of its intellectual soundness. Or, while they may have remained convinced, they were no longer talking about it. Everyone agreed that the institute had become a very fabulous library in art, history, symbology, and related fields. All recognized that this wealth of valuable materials can be put to a wide range of useful purposes. And some acknowledged that it was necessary that the institute be founded in the way it was.

But the time of origin of an institution does not involve the same strategy as the time of sustained vitality. There is something to be learned from the fact that, for the institute, the period of most impressive growth was after the initial formative but strongly ideological period was superseded. The institute came into its own when the convictions of its founders were approached with less resolute devotion and more sophisticated discernment.



I have also been ruminating — and this is the second of the three components that converged for me - on a statement I encountered in the writings of Pierre Francastel, French art theorist-historian, aesthetician, and cultural analyst. Francastel observes that Western history has been told in a variety of forms, but not yet as "history of intuition." We have had history of ideas, history of institutions, history of religion, economic history, art history, social history, and the like. But there has been no comprehensive and systematic tracking of the metaphors, images, pictorial designs, patterns of visual perception, configurational arrangements, representational systems - and, most especially, the phenomena of interest, attention, temperament, and the transpositions between them - by which the history of cultures could also be told. That is a provocative thought. One wonders what would be changed were it put into practice.

In trying to understand clearly what it might mean and what such a history would include, one thinks immediately of the changes caused by Leonardo Da Vinci during the Renaissance. One can cite the birth of perspective, through the creative work of Brunelleschi, Masaccio, Donatello, Alberti, and others.

The history of intuition would also include the intrinsic dynamics of proportion, the logic of structural arrangement, the function of space and time (which Immanuel Kant identified as forms of intuition), perceptual knowledge, et al. For resources, one can cite the works of Erwin Panofsky, E. H. Gombrich, Karl Popper, Jean Seznec; and William Ivins' book On the Rationalization of Sight, Leonard Meyer's Emotion and Meaning in Music, Arnold Hauser's Social History of Art, Aaron Copland's work on music, Leonard Bernstein's television lectures on the use of Noam Chomsky's insights in tracing musical composition, as well as the anthropological theories of Benjamin Whorf, made popular by Edward Hall, and reviewed in a book I edited a few years ago, Seeing With a Native Eye. The general subject is what Lionel Trilling referred to in The Liberal Imagination as "the aesthetic effect of intellectural cogency," or perhaps even the intellectual power of aesthetic cogency.

Alternatively, one can approach the matter through some of the suggestions of C. S. Lewis on the disposition of the medieval mind. Lewis noted that a particular theme or idea comes to dominate a particular era or period, for example, the function of image in the Middle Ages. Through the power of image, attention was focused on the nature of luminosity, distinctions were made between visible and invisible. interest was directed toward the nature and function of mirrors (as in St. Bonaventura's essay, "Itinerarium Mentis in Deum"). (St. Bernard of Clairvaux said, for example, that when God looks into the souls of his saints, "it is his own face that he sees.") All of this can be correlated with distinctions between light and darkness as well as with the preoccupation with the nature of illumination — the acquisition of knowledge being construed as being under illumination's authority. When referring to the power of the image in medieval culture in the Encyclopædia of World Art, Francastel places it in that basic "fund of knowledge to which the very structure of medieval existence gave a lifelong familiarity."

One can't help but ask — especially if one thinks about the possibilities of a history of intuition — if there are outstanding themes, ideas, or metaphors that serve our time with the same force that is apparent in analyses of earlier times. It is very probable that the current intense preoccupation with "problem" (forming the basis of the proposal, project, and program syndrome) is similar in nature and intensity to the medieval concern with imagery. In fact, the

distinguished Yale historian, George W. Pierson, believes the problem-solving approach is overdone in contemporary society. In the book, *Small Comforts for Hard Times* (edited by Michael Mooney and Florian Stuber), Pierson writes:

"We Americans have a problem with problems and issues. We overdo them. We're addicted to 'problems': they've become a cultural habit. Anything and everything that bothers us we try to formulate into a problem, then we go to work on it and solve it. All 'problems' in the American definition . . . are solvable. So we keep hoping that even the greatest 'issues' can be resolved if only they can be stated and studied."

Image and problem today seem to carry a sine qua non status. They are that without which one cannot very easily explain or understand the reasons and/or motivation of intellectual activity. According to Francastel, they own a central place in the basic fund of knowledge presumed by the way in which life is lived.

But the larger question is intriguing. What would a history of intuition look like? What would its ingredients be? How would such an approach affect our reading of current events?

It may very well be that we should be looking for structural innovations, dramatic shifts in style, new techniques of design, and altered patterns of configurational arrangement, rather than, say, for potentially explosive political situations, when we think of ways by which the future will be formed. A history of intuition is full of possibility. It has place for both past- and present-tense modes, and can even be employed in anticipatory ways.



The third component in my recent constellation comes out of Henry J. Aaron's stimulating book, Politics and the Professor: The Great Society in Perspective, the sixteenth volume in the series of Studies in Social Economics by the Brookings Institution. Aaron's intention is to analyze the outcome of the most pressing social problems of the nineteen-sixties—poverty, racial discrimination, unemployment, and inequality of educational opportunity—to gain a perspective on the aspirations, goals, and accomplishments of the Great Society, Through a superbly sophisticated inquiry, Aaron demonstrates that the attitudinal and theoretical bases for social and political actions shifted significantly during the nineteen-six-

ties. The shift was so great that it undermined support for Great Society programs. And those who were most responsible, says Aaron, were the professors, that is, the analysts, those involved in research and experimentation, "whose modes of thinking were shaped by academic customs and habits."

This, too, is an arresting thought. It implies that academic analysis — the form of intellectual activity which academics find most natural, congenial, and habitual — can and does have a paralyzing effect upon social and political actions. Yet there is an inevitability about this outcome: Aaron observes that the faith by which the goals of the Great Society were supported turn out, upon rigorous analytical reflection, to be manifestly oversimplified. In brief, the process can be traced as follows:

"... oversimplified views that served well as the foundations for political actions have been replaced by more complicated analysis that, despite increased accuracy, is likely to generate political confusion."

Aaron expanded this observation:

"The role that research and experimentation [R. & E.] played in the demise of the simple faiths of the early nineteen-sixties was not accidental. The process by which R. & E. is created corrodes the kind of simple faiths on which political movements are built; this effect is particularly strong when, as in the late nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies, the actions of political leaders tend to destroy those faiths, and events make them implausible. . . . This corrosive role of R. & E. was obscured for a while because nearly all of it was produced by analysts who themselves held the simple faiths that underlay the goals of . . . the Great Society."

Before long, however, according to Aaron, "the imperative of the analytical process won out."

The conclusion is that the goals of the Great Society were frustrated partly by external events, partly because of mixed results, and partly by the correspondence between "popular uncertainty" and "scholarly disagreement." The analysts became adept at pointing out discrepancies between supporting theories and intended political outcomes. In the process, they unmasked the oversimplicity of "the faiths" upon which social and political aspirations rested. The frustrations and paralysis persisted because no new theories were formulated — no effective faiths or ideologies were forthcoming — to remove the dis-

crepancies and anomalies. In the end, critical analysis (research and experimentation) is shown to be "an intellectually conservative force" within the society, for it plays an anti-progressive role. The issue, however, is much more than a clash between liberal and conservative intellectual dispositions. Aaron's provocative and disturbing analysis provides clues as to how it happened, in the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies, that the intellectual consensus simply collapsed.

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What do my three considerations add up to? What follows?

The over-all suggestion is both compound and complex. In general terms, it has become apparent for some time that the social, political, and cultural revolution(s) of the nineteen-sixties and early nineteen-seventies has had a disorienting effect upon intelligence. There seems to be a growing awareness that it has made the function of intelligence unclear and uncertain. The McCarthyism episode, the existentialist aftermath of World War II, the pervasive shock to human awareness created by Hiroshima and the Jewish Holocaust, the fusing of these latter two cataclysmic events in the minds and spirits of Westerners made it altogether fitting that considered steps be taken to call things into question in the sharpest, most rigorous and critical fashion. It was entirely appropriate that the critical temper be invoked, and that it be put to work with all the power at its disposal. It was through the exercising of the critical temper that the society expressed "its indispensable indignation," to use Pierson's phrase, against Hitlerism, Hiroshima, Vietnam, and Watergate.

Calling things into question — and the Center was a leader in this regard — was an abrupt change. Only in retrospect can we appreciate the force and extent of the transformation. In the immediately preceding period, a "constructive" intelligence was riding high, confident of its ability to create and to expand frontiers. Stephen R. Graubard, writing in the Summer, 1977, issue of *Daedalus*, says that before the onrush of the critical temper, this was the prevailing mood:

"Americans, in the late nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties, were not disinclined to boast of their scholarly achievements. . . . The country's aptitude for spectacular invention had in no way diminished; the explorations in space and the flight to the moon

gave evidence of that. For those who valued more theoretical scientific capabilities, America's record seemed no less spectacular."

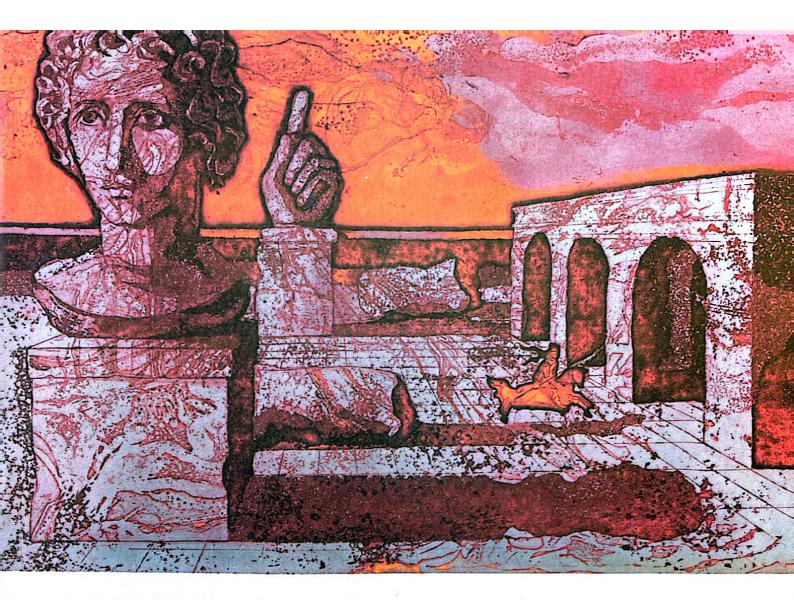
Then something happened:

"It is difficult to know when the first shocks to this excessive pride were recorded. Some will argue for Berkeley in 1965, where the dubiety of students about the exaggerated claims of professors was first registered. Others will see the development of criticism in more global terms. . . . Institutions that had not previously been subjected to persistent public scrutiny — at least not to hostile scrutiny — discovered that claiming a worthy purpose was no longer a sufficient defense. A larger vindication of past conduct was demanded. Some were frightened that certain of these institutions might not be able to survive the attacks; others, more sanguine, imagined that the tumult and the disorder might in the end have a cleansing effect."

In the aftermath, the exercising of the critical temper was extended to every corner and on every level of the society. Virtually every institution has been subjected to analysis, criticism, and redefinition. The courts, the schools (at all educational levels), religious institutions, the business community, industry, government - indeed, the entire social fabric have been submitted to the most comprehensive critical assessment that any society has yet undergone. And while life continues, the democratic state now finds itself in a situation of vast confusion and disarray, unsure of its direction, able only very sporadically to state (if not find) its defining values, persisting in a void created by the dissolution and abolition of a vital, shared sense of life. Henry Steele Commager is not alone in asking, "What has become of the American dream?" Morris Dickstein, in Gates of Eden, says that "the 'idea' of America, the cherished myth of America," is the victim of a "shattering blow."



The conclusion that follows can be put in two ways. First, a point about theory: the history of intuition is dynamic, not static. Hence, no single moment in the formation of intelligence can comprehend all that needs to be said or thought. All intellectual schemata, without exception, are subject to the powers of obsolescence and self-destruction. Second, during the course of the chronicle I have been tracing, the power



of the critical temper grew very large and all-pervasive. As a result, paradoxically, its workings have become shallow, bereft, and manifestly mindless. I suggest that the very success of the critical attitude has been its undoing.

Pierson refers to this critical attitude as a "drug habit" and an "addiction to problem-solving."

"What I am trying to suggest," he writes, "is that not all evils or controversies or public discomforts can be shaped into problems; not all novelties are excellent and not all 'issues' are real. They may be superficial or narrowly selfish or obsessional or disguises for self-serving schemers. Thus, nine-tenths of the party issues in American politics have perhaps never been issues at all, but strategic ploys to appeal to the emotional fears or prejudices of particular blocs of voters. Certainly we should recognize that not all difficulties are 'problems'; not all 'problems' are solvable; and not all 'issues' are urgent, or even issues at all."

As a result, we must now deal with excess. The

critical temper is dominating. It has become an obsession. William Theodore de Bary, vice-president and provost of Columbia University, says in the Mooney and Stuber book that this form of critical intelligence will "eat itself alive."

Characteristically, the critical temper must exercise its powers against something else. In calling all things into question, it has the ability to challenge institutional patterns, networks of ideas, and all forms of coherence and integration presumed to be secure. In its nature it plays an adversarial role. It is no stranger to combat and violence. Those in its allegiance argue, contend, state claims, stake out positions, take sides, score points.

The playwright cannot be the critic of the play too, not in the same act and at the same time. Performance is not the same as critical assessment of the performance. Certainly, movement from the one to the other can and does occur, but the two dispositions are distinctive. They involve different sorts of intellectual activity. They depend upon unique pos-

tures or modes of address and association. To state it oversimply, only as something other than critic can the critic function as creator or designer. Criticism is not the primary source through which the power of construction is carried out. When the creative or the constructive impulse lags, criticism becomes its own reward, but its products lack connectedness. Aaron's analysis can also be read this way.

Steven Marcus' conclusions in the Mooney and Stuber book may be stated too dramatically, but they are cogent and consistent:

"When a phase of culture comes to an end or to a kind of end, it does not simply disappear and leave not a wrack behind. What it usually does is go into a state of decomposition. It is that state that we are passing through now."

Adding specification (and a not very covert Marxist allusion) to his judgment, Marcus continues:

"We are, I believe, in the midst of the beginning of the decomposition of bourgeois culture, or high culture, or whatever it is that we want to call that phase of culture that accompanied the development of capitalism — industrial and then advanced capitalism — in the West until 1950 or thereabouts. Since then, as the modernist phase of culture began to decompose, what we have been witness to is the increasingly rapid diffusion of the decomposed elements of modernism through the larger culture and society."

The contention is that most recent intelligence has been formed so extensively by the critical temper that it has not been able to be anything else. It has become adept at criticizing, sounding warnings, bringing alarms, expressing indignation, and calling things into question. But it has also become woefully inadequate in taking responsibility for the fundamental design of things.

The viewpoint expressed in the foregoing paragraphs can also be used to gain insight into the meaning of the Vietnam experience. I suggest that that experience is linked to the ineluctable workings of the critical temper.

It is generally acknowledged that criticism — particularly in the form of protest, and this principally by young people — brought the Vietnam war to a close, or, at least, accelerated the stopping of it. What may not be as evident, but may be powerfully true, is that the war came into being through criticism.

That is a difficult thought to reach. Yet, if one views an external event as a manifestation of a corporate mental or spiritual state, one can come close. For Vietnam was not solely the military combat; it was the total agonizing experience. The conflict itself is a visible symbol of a society at odds with itself, and corresponds with the situation that exists when the community is in such a state of anguish that it becomes totally turned in upon itself. Under such conditions, the critical temper has nothing but itself to work upon.

It would be oversimplifying the causal nexus to contend that the critical temper caused the war. Yet, without that sustaining temper, the war would not have had the character it did, nor would it have been the occasion for such intensive corporate soul-searching. It is in keeping with that same temper that there were no heroes, except, perhaps, those who were persistent in exercising the "calling into question."

This would suggest that the way beyond Vietnam requires a profound intellectual and spiritual modal shift. One can perceive early signs of this recognition in the recent pleas of persons like John Gardner.



There are many ways to explain why the critical temper in general has failed in any kind of constructive achievement. Marcus sees a fundamental "decomposition" in that temper. Morris Dickstein blames the collapse on reactions to previous "foolhardy acts of overreaching." Aaron cites the corrosion of the intellectual consensus. These assorted analyses form a consensus of their own.

At the same time, one cannot help but ask if the time has not come for a transformation of the human intelligence's dominant way. Perhaps it is time for intelligence to shift — if it can — to constructive and reconstitutive tasks. Perhaps it can find ways to attach itself to the process of rebuilding, to the search for a new coherence, to the discovery and/or creation of some unified portrayal of the human situation, and to bring the new forms of consciousness into rapport with long-established ways of doing, conceiving, and intuiting things. Such needs seem to be fundamental, and are beginning to find expression within the society.

John Gardner, founder of Common Cause a decade or so ago, has written a new book, *Morale*, in which he deplores the loss of a compelling corporate vision. "When a society disintegrates," writes Gardner, "you may be sure that its animating ideas and

ideals died first in the minds of men and women." He finds it essential that there be a new vision, a sense of shared values, a "dream of greatness to come." Acknowledging the shift in the direction of his enthusiasms, Gardner writes autobiographically:

"My life for the past dozen years has been wholly devoted to action and conflict in the political and social arena, and to practical work on concrete issues — from the improvement of education to the reform of election campaign financing. I have been wholly preoccupied with specific solutions to specific problems.

"Now I want to step back and look at the motives that underlie social and political action. . . . From an active life in the public arena, I know all too well the case for cynicism and surrender. But there are things to be said. . . . It is especially important now for us to realize that just as shared beliefs and values are susceptible to decay, so are they capable of regeneration. The processes of decay are always at work, but so are the regenerative processes."

William de Bary, discovering the same aspiration in today's students, observes that "young people . . . feel a powerful urge to affirm and not just to criticize."



Thus, I return to the first prompter of these remarks and observations, namely, to the analysis by Grant and Riesman of the neoclassical model. While a rigid retention of neoclassical revivalism would frustrate intellectual vitality, there is much to be said for keeping those convictions.

S. N. Eisenstadt anticipated, in the Spring, 1972, issue of *Daedalus*, that the crucial issue is that there be comprehension of the necessary interdependence "between the various forms of criticism, protest, and general cultural and social innovation" of which intelligence is capable. Edward Shils, in that same periodical, has emphasized that intellectual innovation and cultural creativity can occur dependably only within the framework of tradition (defined as "the most enduring element in the collective social and cultural construction of reality").

The Center's founders believed in the power of tradition. Their devotion to the classics, the great books, the great teachers — Robert Hutchins said, "the greatest teachers through the greatest books" — and the necessity of an intellectual community are evidence of this. But they also recognized that a so-

ciety must be open to innovation. They were deeply committed to the principle that it is necessary to call things — all things — into question. Indeed, their attachment to the classical vision lay, in large part, in being responsible for a scheme of things within which the simultaneous expression of all of these intellectual temperaments was possible. Socrates' dictum that "the unexamined life is not worth living" was a call to the contemplative life. But it also served as an indispensable formative ingredient in what we recognize today as the beginnings of Western civilization. It is an ideal that can be read in both critical and constructive terms.

The trouble recently is that the critical temper has had to function in a context of its own creation. It has not reached out for more compelling, sustaining, and nurturing environments. It has become isolated, as George Steiner has said, from other necessary "grammars of perception." J. H. Plumb's analysis that "the humanities are at the crossroads, at a crisis in their existence" is accurate. But his recommendation that "they must either change the image that they present, adapt themselves to the needs of a society dominated by science and technology, or retreat into social triviality" is oversimple and confused.

The problem is not that there is science and there are the humanities, and that these two have formed two distinct, discontinuous, or competing worlds. The problem is that the Enlightenment's great strength is also its great weakness. Its strength is to have discovered critical reflexivity (the turning of thought back upon itself so that it becomes aware of its powers). "The dialogue of the mind with itself," to use Matthew Arnold's phrase, has become the fundamental fact of consciousness. Its weakness is to have assumed that a viable life-world can be formed this way. As a consequence, to the extent intellectuals become adept at doing what they know best, they become, in Leo Tolstoy's words, "visitors in their own lives." And the discrepancies, incongruities, and utter loneliness show up in the very need to put humanities and public policy back together again.

With William de Bary, I believe that intelligence must come to terms with "those traditional values and institutions which have provided the basis for the self-critical attitude itself."

Walter Capps is a Center Associate, a Professor of Religious Studies, and Director of the Institute of Religious Studies at the University of California at Santa Barbara.