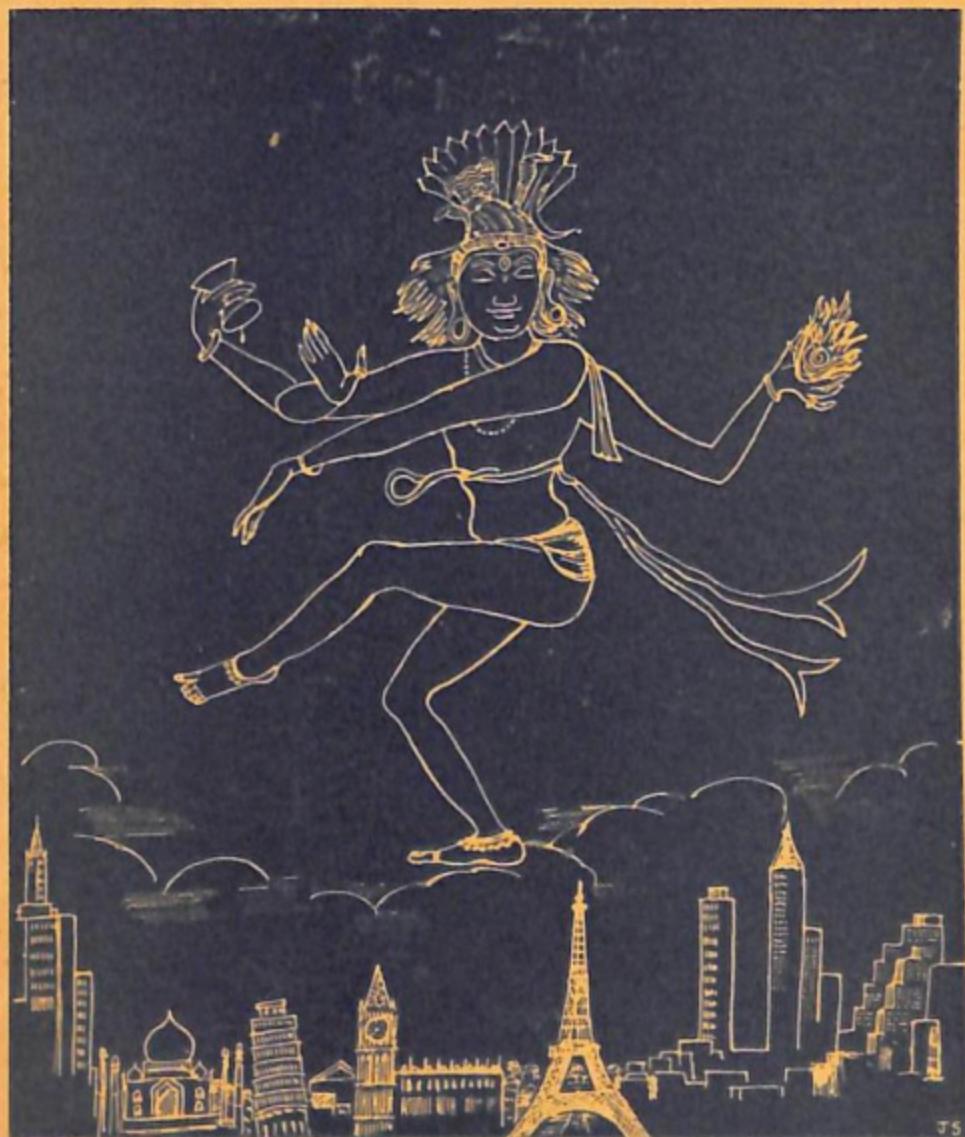


March 1958

Vol. III, No. 6

# VALUES



THE ABSOLUTIST DANCER (NATARAJA)  
Sports over the Cities

THE ABSOLUTE AND THE RELATIVE

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VALUES is devoted to integrating human understanding unitively, impartially and globally in the interests of the general good.

NEXT MONTH  
THE ABSOLUTE AS THE  
ADORABLE

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## Editorial

WE hear we are charged with advocating "oriental mysticism." If by this is meant a rival cult full of mystifying occult credulity and trickery, we honestly protest. On the other hand, if by this is meant the presentation of contemplative philosophy from the Eleatics to Bergson and inclusive of oriental doctrines such as Christianity, which has thousands of mystics to its credit, then we plead guilty. We cannot surrender the right of freedom of expression to the theologians of any special religion.

But it is probably their counterparts, the pragmatists, led by the followers of John Dewey, who are resorting to this sneer. Dewey was head of philosophy at Columbia University, where he taught that pure contemplation should be abandoned in favour of an attitude based on "things accomplished" and, that instead of the pursuit of wisdom, "the prime function of philosophy is that of rationalizing the possibilities of experience . . . ."<sup>\*</sup>

**Philosophical Bankruptcy** : There is a curious poetic justice in the admission from his very University (now made under the compulsive circumstances of the Roy Jacobsen case) of its philosophical bankruptcy. By discarding the love of wisdom for the love of power, Deweyism has succeeded in achieving the suicide of philosophy itself.

Columbia's philosophical death-rattle may seem a storm in a tea-pot. So it is, taken by itself. But as American journalists have been alert enough to see, the issues involved are pan-American. They apply wherever Dewey's philosophy is held (in India too), wherever the quest for wisdom for power-ends prevails, whether for the extension of the money empire of businessmen, or for the mechanical development of basically agricultural lands outside Europe and America.

That is why we are giving it as much space as possible, to the bewilderment of many of our readers, who, like ourselves, care little about a particular university situation as such. But when we see that this only spotlights the

\*Page 106. *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, John Dewey, Mentor, New York, 1951.

bankruptcy of that philosophy which officially or privately stands behind "the American way of life" the episode takes on a much greater significance. Deweyism, involving belief in a materialist theory of evolutionary progress, has resulted in — the Russian Sputnik victory — an unexpected fact hardly consoling to the nationalist pragmatic experimentalist or instrumentalist American ego. For the Russians in following what they conceive to be Marxism, have come close to being better followers of Dewey.

**Where we come in :** Basically, the problem is dualistic, i.e., relativistic. People can profess an attitude of Christian church-going devotion and at the same time hold a pragmatic attitude where power is ruthlessly pursued. This means a clash of values. If either of the values were absolutist it would triumph over the other. But the case is not so, and therefore the collapse of one is not to the advantage of the other. The relativity of the other is also exposed.

The whole situation is therefore cleared for a new philosophical statement. To be satisfactory, this must be of a non-dualistic character.

It is here that we come in. Not for a moment do we confuse the people of America with the officially or academically held doctrines either of Church or University. We believe the American people's interests to be basically identical with those of humans anywhere. It is on this absolutist basis that our inquiry and discussion begins.

Since to be without dualistic weaknesses it has to be absolutist, it is necessary to know what is meant primarily by the Absolute and what constitutes the danger called Relativism which has resulted in the present philosophical disaster which is affecting even hardened blase journalists.

If the going seems hard for both reader and writer, we should not on that account balk at the task. We are not monopolists, but only trying to restore true values which will also bring happiness and peace of mind to humanity.

[ END ]

### THE NATURAL

STOOP, and there it is;  
Seek it not right or left.  
All roads lead thither, —  
One touch and you have spring !  
As though coming upon opening flowers,  
As though gazing upon the new year,  
Verily I will not snatch it,  
Forced, it will dwindle away.  
I will be like the hermit on the hill,  
Like duckweed gathered on the stream,  
And when emotions crowd upon me,  
I will leave them to the harmonies of heaven.

— Ssu-K'UNG T'U (834-908)

# The Absolute and the Relative

By NATARAJA GURU

*I N* determining the meaning of the terms which give the title to this contribution, and basing it on lines familiar to the world of science, it is hoped this article will help towards that integration of human understanding so greatly needed today.

THE ABSOLUTE and the Relative are terms variable and indefinite in their connotation. They depend much on each other for whatever overtly precise meaning they might each have as distinct expressions taken individually. Usual realistic objectivity is alien to them. They are thought of better with the eyes shut than with any particular concept or object in the workaday sense.

Even when one of these terms is allowed to lend meaning to the other by contradiction, contrast, or reciprocal correlation, the resultant certainty about any one of them suffers to the extent that the meaning depends on or is derived from, the other. The Relative with the capital letter is meant in contemplative language to be absolutely relative, and the Absolute likewise to be so without any trace of the relative adhering to it even as a vestige of import.

They are in reality a dialectical pair of related terms or counterparts which have to be placed in the epistemology and methodology of the Absolutist way of thinking, which is dialectical rather than rational. In other words they are dialectical counterparts which, by their very nature, have to be thought of both at once or as nearly together as possible, so that the mind can take in the neutral meaning between them, at one stroke or effort.

**The Crowning Gift of Wisdom :** A trained dialectician could contemplate both these terms together as belonging to a common context of inward experience. Then there is a vague sense given to the "inward eye" to use the expression of Wordsworth (when he wrote about the after-imagery of the daffodils in his "vacant" and "pensive mood" after he had seen a group of those flowers dancing before his vision). The pale gleam of a vague meaning which might float across the consciousness of a

sensitive person when thinking of the meaning of these terms together, is in fact the result of a contemplative operation of the human mind or spirit. To have such a contemplative intuition is the privilege of the human mind, and the true dignity and distinction of man depends on this gift of intuition.

This crowning gift of wisdom is what makes human life dignified and superior to the rest of vegetative or animal life, especially when such a gift or higher faculty could be consciously and purposefully employed in regulating human affairs both in the individual and collective sense.

The Absolute as a substantive and with the definite article prefixed to it has assumed in language, especially in recent years, a definitely recognized and respectable status.

In ancient Greece it referred to the cosmic matrix of the Ionians, the One of the Eleatics, the Being or the Good of Plato, the World of Reason of Stoicism, and the One of Neo-Platonism. In patristic and scholastic Christianity it referred to God, and the God of the mystics of Europe such as Erigena, Hugo de St. Victor, Nicolas of Cusa, and Boehme was also the Absolute, as a singular and unique entity.

**Present Status of Notion of the Absolute :** The recognition of the Absolute as an entity, notion or value factor, both in its cosmological and psychological setting and, generically, in various sciences like logic, ethics, aesthetics, etc., is therefore neither ancient nor modern. Mystics, seers and sages both in the East and in the West have relied and made use of the terms from the most ancient times to the present day. After the dawn of the age of enlightenment in Europe however, these terms went into disuse and disrepute with the spectacular progress of sciences such as mechanics. In recent years, after Hegel and Bergson, philosophy is again paying attention to these important concepts, without however attaining to any exactitude in regard to them.

In order to indicate roughly where modern knowledge stands in respect of these notions we quote the following from the *Columbia Encyclopedia* (II ed., 1951):

"**ABSOLUTE:** in philosophy the opposite of relative. The term has acquired various widely variant connotations in different philosophical systems. It means unlimited, unconditioned, or free of any relation; perfect, complete or total; permanent, inherent or ultimate; independent or valid without reference to a perceiving subject. In logic absolute means certain or indubitable as opposed to probable or hypothetical. As a substantive the absolute is the ultimate basis of reality, the principle underlying the universe. Theologically it is synonymous with, or characteristic of God. Philosophically it may be considered as the unknowable, the thing-in-itself; as that ultimate non-relative which is the basin of all relation; as that ultimate all-comprehensive principle in which all differences and distinctions are merged. The concept of the absolute was present in Greek philosophy. In modern days both realists and

idealists have used the term, but it is perhaps most intimately connected with Hegel's absolute idealism. For Hegel and his followers the absolute is the all-comprehensive mind."

**Paradox Explained :** It is to be doubted if anyone would be the wiser for reading such a description of the Absolute. The paradox implied in one of the clauses above must be striking even to the casual reader, for it is also said to be "that ultimate non-relative which is the basis of all relation" Whether paradoxes of this form are even permissible in modern definitions is also a pertinent question here. Since we find paradox being relied on by even the best of modern writers, it must be taken for granted that it is so, and the only sense in which we can justify it is when we admit that the dialectical way of thinking of two propositions, predication or logical terms at once, which is at the bottom of the dialectical method, is tacitly employed in all thought where pure reason is concerned.

We shall try to justify this in some of the sections that follow. Meanwhile, let us agree that both these vague terms refer to realities of a *contemplative order* and that they have to do with *purposeful living*. Further, they belong to the domain of the *unitive* and the *universal* contexts of inner life. The Relative is a given starting point which is natural to man. The Absolute is a target to be reached or a state of plenitude in Wisdom. In the latter case the Absolute is neutral between the extreme poles of the Relative and the Absolute unitively conceived, as both belonging to an axis of reference, dialectically understood. The implied paradox above can only then be justified.

**Double Negation and Double Affirmation :** Contemplative, mystical or spiritual progress may be said to consist of the transition from the merely relative first to the *Relative* of the absolutist context, and then to the ultimate Absolute of the same context. There is an ascent and a descent involved here which have to be figured out clearly. The first part of the ascent is when the unreality of the multiple values in which life is caught, is consciously denied by the subject. This is double negation. Simultaneous with this, the positive pole of the Absolute, which gets lost in its own specific attributes, descends reflexively into oneself by a process of double affirmation. Even in grammar we know that two negations make a positive, and in algebra two pluses give again an affirmation. Neutral plenitude of Absolute consciousness is the term of spiritual progress, where progress itself is as it were, countered by double assertion.

**To What Purpose :** When we realize that the term Absolute has no definite content at all, especially when it is placed between the two poles of the axis comprised by the Relative and the Absolute, we should legitimately ask ourselves why such a term came into vogue at all. What purpose does it serve in human life? We all know that private or relative truth is the most dangerous element in life. It is by virtue of unitive, universal or absolute truth that we can understand the interests of a neighbour who might want the same thing as one does oneself at the same time.

To avoid human conflict, as across frontiers, actual or ideological, the absolutist outlook is the only remedy. For this reason it has been said that the truth shall make one free, etc. This is the practical purpose

of the Absolute in everyday human life.

We know also that human beings, fortunately or unfortunately, are not mere animals. They crave for what are called contemplative or higher satisfactions and do suffer from spiritual loneliness or from intellectual cravings. Purposeless living leads to frustrations, keener than hunger from want of bread. There are many individuals we can see in common life who are misfits or dissatisfied persons and who would continue so, even when the possibility of a plain life would be open to them. The gambler and the cheat, the dictator and the demagogue, the passionate and the ambitious, the prodigal and the profligate, the fanatic and the martyr, are human beings who behave peculiarly because they are seekers of the Absolute in their own ways.

The Evil represented by the Devil and the Good represented by the Deity both mark the range and amplitude of an axis within which human nature seeks self-expression. All are caught necessarily in a process of creative becoming called life. In each case the relative pole within seeks compensation by means of a positive pole which might be "objective" but yet within consciousness. Inner and outer values cancel out into satisfactions at every stage of human life. After establishing oneself in a unitive attitude on the plane of relative interests, the personality attains to the positive Absolute, and then again by introspection there is a descent into the neutral plenitude of the Absolute when, as Plotinus would put it, the "flight of the alone to the Alone" would be completed. When double assertion in the context of absolutist contemplation succeeds more and more, the tail end of negation dwindles automatically by double negation, simultaneously, into nothingness. Then the full Absolute with a capital "A" fills the whole of consciousness with its light of Wisdom.

**Initiation into the Way of the Absolute :** All religions are recommendations to attain the Absolute value in life. Some are theistic, others are not. Some stress one aspect of absolutism at the expense of others. Sometimes history accentuates some special absolutist trait which gives them a certain necessary coloration or character which is not of their essence. All religions tend to become static, although intended to be dynamic. There is also a closing tendency which invades them all, depending on the balance religions are able to keep between orthodoxy and heterodoxy of a certain spiritual expression, at a given time or place. When these forces are neutralized in the pure dynamism of the Absolute, which is the central value implied in all religions, and when they are stated in unitive, universal or open terms, the essential content of all religions tends to be the same. It is in this sense that the *Bhagavad Gita* declares that "all paths lead to Me." Here the personal pronoun is meant to refer to the Absolute as understood systematically in the various chapters of this contemplative text-book of dialectics. In the same sense the statement, "I am the light of the world" by Jesus is also to be understood.

Religious initiation into the fold of no matter what religion, when scientifically understood, means only affiliation to the unique way of life as conceived by any particular religious growth, as helping to attain the Absolute.

All religions thus come to have the narrow path of the needle's eye through which only those who are chosen can pass. Those who are lost

in the multiple interests of relativist life, not within the context of the Absolute, are excluded from the Kingdom of the Absolute. A unitive and universal, open and dynamic attitude, balanced between orthodox and heterodox tendencies, and equipoised between the poles of Relativism and Absolutism, according to necessities or contingencies of life as it unfolds, is the way that one who is affiliated to the Absolute has consciously and scientifically to follow. All spiritual effort or aspiration could thus be conceived as the same, under the aegis of the notion of the Absolute. It would thus be possible by a science of the Absolute to pave the way for human solidarity even on the basis of *One Religion* for Man.

**Einstein and Newton:** Modern science is a measurement of objective phenomena, of which motion is a typical instance. Motion takes place in space and time and, when great distances are not involved in any measurement of an event of short duration, Euclidean space and Newtonian ideas of motion tend to hold good one hundred per cent. Thus it is that space and time happened to be treated as absolute factors by classical science, and Gravitation with a capital letter was also naturally raised by the classical scientists to the status of an absolute entity.

In cosmological or astronomical measurements which involved a longer time-span and a larger space-extent, this rigidity had to be relaxed. For one hundred per cent correctness of the measurements of the phenomena involved, a norm based on the velocity of light had perforce to be adopted. The Special Theory of Relativity put forward by Einstein in 1905, which served this purpose, was only meant to be a supplementary theory and not a law. It was not intended to displace Newtonian physical notions altogether. On this point we read in the *Columbia Encyclopedia* (p. 1657, II Ed., 1951) the following sentence :

"In most phenomena of ordinary experience, the results from the application of the special theory approximate those based on Newtonian dynamics, but deviate greatly for phenomena occurring at velocities approximating the speed of light."

Without entering into the intricacies of the higher mathematics involved here, it would not be difficult even for a layman with some intuition, to see that Einstein was not abolishing the absolutist standpoint of Newton, but only taking away the emphasis Newton puts on measured Euclidean Space and mechanistic Time units, in favour of giving the same absolutist status to the Velocity of Light. The velocity of light is given the central position as a *norm* in the measurements Einstein was interested in making. In the Unified Theory of Relativity that Einstein put forward in 1950, sub-atomic and electromagnetic phenomena are studied from a relativistic standpoint. To suit his purpose he gave primacy to the *Velocity of Light* as an *absolute* norm of measurement, without expressly stating it to be so.\*

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\*Alonzo Church, (article contributed under "Relativism" in *Dictionary of Philosophy*, D. Runes, New York, Indian Ed. 1957) is seen to corroborate this view when he writes: "But on the other hand, the relativity theory represents as absolute certain things which are relative in the classical theory, e.g. the velocity of light in empty space."

**Need for an Integral Science:** The evaluation of the Unified Theory of Relativity is still to be made by scientists. Relativity and Absolutism are the two rival standpoints involved here. A correct methodology for any science based on an epistemology that would give to all branches of science their proper place, is here to be envisaged, if the rival claims of scientists are to be fitted into one body of higher human knowledge.

The integration of the sciences that we dealt with in the last issue of **VALUES** is what is again involved here. When properly formulated, such a science could be called a Science of sciences. Correct notions of the Absolute and the Relative would have to be first outlined before the foundations for such a science could properly be laid. The notion of the Absolute will necessarily occupy the central place in such a science, as a normative principle of all thought.

It is encouraging to note that in recent years the interest in the Absolute and the Relative is on the increase. Human unity and solidarity demand more and more that all knowledge be integrated and restated, and the evils of specialization and over-departmentalization be effectively counteracted. In our own days the pet theories of individual religious teachers, mystics, philosophers and theoretical scientists cannot be expected to remain in particular pockets or preserves, but must tend to be shared on a world scale.

Printing, reading and listening-in to the words of others are becoming more and more common throughout the world. Isolated norms of thought have to banish their barriers and world-wide unity of knowledge has to be made an accomplished fact. Whether in polities, religion, education, economics, sociology, domestic or family life, unitive norms belonging to a Science of the Absolute have to be formulated and fixed.

Each science must have its central absolute notion or normative principle and its proper frame of reference. The age of the earth according to geology is at present different from that arrived at by calculations based on thermodynamics. The layman does not know whom to believe. Many scientists take upon themselves the role of philosophers, accepting no normative regulating principle between themselves, and much pseudo-scientific literature is being put out to mislead the common man.

**Recent Appraisals:** A proper notion of the Absolute, with a methodology and epistemology that would properly belong to it, would help us to put the whole house of Wisdom in order. The desirability of such a preliminary step cannot be over-emphasized at the present stage when the whole world needs at least to be mentally integrated even as a mere measure of safety or precaution. Meagre and hesitant as it still remains, the following information, brought together in respect of the Absolute, summarizes recent trends in formulating more clearly than hitherto, this all-important notion, on which the future of humanity depends so much for its solidarity. Continuing from where Hegel and his followers left off, Wilbur Long, a contributor to the *Dictionary of Philosophy* (D. Runes, New York, Indian ed. 1957) writes:

“Until recently, however, it (the Absolute) was commonly incorporated by the Absolute Idealists to connote with Hegel the complete, the whole, the perfect, i.e. the real conceived as

an all-embracing unity that complements, fulfils or transmutes into a higher synthesis the partial, the fragmentary and the self-contradictory experiences, thoughts, purposes, values and achievements of finite existence. The specific emphasis given to this all-inclusive perfection varies considerably, i.e. logical wholeness or concreteness (Hamilton), mystical feeling (Bradley), aesthetic completeness (Bosanquet), moral perfection (Royce). The Absolute is also variously conceived, by this school as an all inclusive Person, a Society of Persons and as an impersonal whole of experience."

After being thus amplified in its scope and content by post Hegelians, the notion has broadened out still further and grown out of the limits of the particular philosophy of the Absolute Idealists. It is interesting to note for the first time that the contributor referred to in this case, does not omit to allude to Eastern contributions to the meaning of the Absolute. Under the same article he continues :

"More recently the term has been extended to mean also (a) the All or totality of the real, however understood, and (b) the World Ground, whether conceived idealistically or materially. It thus stands for a variety of metaphysical conceptions that have appeared widely and under various names in the history of philosophy. In China: the *Wu Chi* (Non-Being), *T'ai Chi* (Being) and, on occasion, *Tao*. In India: the Vedantic *Atman* (Self) and *Brahman* (the Real), the Buddhist *Bhutatathata* (indeterminate Thatness), *Vijnaptimatra* (the One, pure, changeless, eternal consciousness grounding all appearances), and the Void of Nagarjuna."

**The Scope of Wisdom:** While writing these concluding paragraphs on the importance of understanding correctly and more completely the content of these intriguing terms, the Absolute and the Relative, the present writer has before him some press reports about the Roy Jacobsen controversy with Columbia University in which Dean Lawrence Chamberlain, speaking for Columbia, states categorically that wisdom is only a "hoped-for end product of education" and that neither Columbia nor any other institution could teach it. (see *VALUES*, Feb. 1958, p. 159).

This statement is a pointer that comes to us at this very moment, which is enough to indicate that what Max Lerner, writing in the *New York Post* commented was quite correct and to the point\*. He wrote : "That solitary and glittering word 'wisdom' is a word that has almost dropped out of the current turmoil which rages round science and power and the weapons race." (italics ours). He further complains that the present policy in educational budgetting is "Billions for research but not one cent for wisdom". It would seem that humanity should give up seeking wisdom and instead console itself with dangerous toys which might bring about the extinction of the race. No, the heritage of wisdom is of the highest value for even the common man, and human beings have a natural birthright to it. The ends and means confusion in the Dean's

(continued on page 172.)

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\* Max Lerner's article is given on page 176 — Editor.

## WORLD GOVERNMENT NEWS

### POPE BLESSES GARRY DAVIS AND WORLD PASSPORT

WORLD Government Co-Ordinator Garry Davis reached Rome in January. He has sent the following message to His Holiness Pope Pius XII:

Naples, Italy, 23 Jan. 1958

YOUR EMINENCE:

*It gives me pleasure to be able to thank you for the audience last Sunday, January 19, at which you graciously blessed both my humble self and my world passport, the absolutist document representing the right of freedom of travel on our common earth.*

*I may say I felt a renewed sense of dedication to the principles of world unity, peace and understanding taught by our Master, Jesus Christ, as I received with my fellow world citizens your holy benediction at St. Peter's Cathedral.*

*May the wisdom of He who is all-wisdom ever guide you in the exercise of your holy trust. I remain,*

*Your humble servant in one world,*

GARRY DAVIS,  
World Citizen.

**The Chicago Daily News** of Dec. 28, '57 featured Garry's story under the caption "Rough, Lonely Road for World Citizen". The article took a favourable view on the whole, stressing his idealism in these words: "It is plainly a matter of idealism and individualism versus national administrations. Davis is the sole pioneer in the fight and so far its only victim." Two pictures showed Garry in Indian dress at the Birla Mandir in Delhi, and the beginning of his momentous decision, in Paris in 1948.

Italy will be the thirteenth major country in the world that Garry has entered with only his "idealism" and World Passport. His idealism however, unlike most, has behind it both the full weight of the Absolute and the full legal support of those forgotten clauses of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights which "national administrations" forget and ignore.

[END]

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### WISDOM OF HUMANITY

THERE is a certain wisdom of humanity which is common to the greatest men with the lowest, and which our ordinary education often labors to silence and obstruct.

— EMERSON (*The Oversoul*)

# Why Inquire about the Absolute?

By SHANKARACHARYA

*This incomparable Indian philosopher whose towering comprehension and intellectual ability as both Guru and master of polemics, revalued the philosophy and spirituality of his time (7th and 8th centuries) in his massive commentaries of the trio of philosophic texts known as the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahma-Sutras, from the last of which this introductory extract is given. In addition, he composed many important works, some like the Viveka Chudamani being textbooks on the Science of the Self, and others in the form of hymns or songs, all interfused with profound wisdom.*

But, it may be asked, is the Absolute known (prior to an inquiry into its nature)? If it is known we do not need to inquire; if it is not known, we cannot enter on such an inquiry!

We say the Absolute is known. The Absolute, which is all-knowing and endowed with all powers, whose essential nature is eternal purity, intelligence and freedom, exists. We understand it from the etymology of the word (*Brahman*, the Absolute, from the root *brih* "to be great").

Moreover, the existence of the Absolute is known on the ground of its being the Self of everyone. For everyone is conscious of the existence of the Self, and never thinks "I am not." If the existence of the Self were not known, everyone would think "I am not." And this Self—of whose existence all are conscious—is the Absolute.

But, you may say, if the Absolute is generally known as the Self, there is no room for an inquiry into it!

Not at all, we reply. For there is a conflict of opinions as to its special nature. Unlearned people and the Hedonists (*Lokayatikas*) are of opinion that the mere body endowed with the quality of intelligence is the Self. Other materialists hold that the sense-organs endowed with intelligence are the Self. Others say that the mind is the Self. Some (Buddhists) say that the Self is a mere momentary idea. Other Buddhists again, maintain that the Self is the Void. Then there are those—the Nyaya school—who maintain that there is a reincarnating being different from the body, and so on, which is both agent and enjoyer of the result of action (*karma*). Then there are those (the Sankhya school) who teach that that being is enjoying only and not acting. Others of the Patanjali Yoga school believe that in addition to the individual souls, there is an all-knowing and all-powerful Lord. Finally, there are those (the Vedantins) who maintain that the Lord is the Self of the enjoyer, whose individualization is an appearance only, the result of ignorance.

So there are many various opinions, partly based on sound arguments, partly on fallacious arguments and on misinterpretations of authoritative texts.

Now if a man accepts some of these opinions without any previous consideration, he will be barring himself from the highest happiness and will be incurring grievous loss thereby.

It is for this reason that the very first verse of the Aphorisms on the Absolute (*Brahma-Sutras*) proposes, under the designation of an inquiry into the Absolute, a disquisition of the Vedanta texts, to be carried on with the help of conformable arguments, and having for its aim this highest happiness.

— From the *Introduction to the Brahma-Sutras*.

( Translation by Thibault, *Sacred Books of the East* )

[ END ]

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### The Absolute and the Relative.

( continued from page 169 )

statement given above is what keeps us from reaching out boldly for what is naturally ours. Let us first decide, like Roy, that we want wisdom, and it will be seen that it is already within reach. Wisdom is not a commodity in the market or to be manufactured in any "mind-plant" like Columbia, but it is to be sought first within oneself. Teachers have to be found who can establish the correct personal relations in education. Relativistic knowledge is what may be seen in the form of shadows by men who turn away from the bright light of the Absolute. Even to want to know the Absolute takes much wisdom. In discovering what we even want, the distinction between the Relative and the Absolute is important as the merest starting point. It is hoped therefore, that this article needs no apology.

[ END ]

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BLESSEDNESS is not the reward of virtue, but virtue itself, nor should we rejoice in it because we restrain our lusts, but, on the contrary, because we rejoice therein we can restrain our lusts..... If the road I have shown to lead to this is very difficult, it can yet be discovered. And clearly it must be very hard when it is so seldom found. For how could it be that it is neglected practically by all, if salvation were close at hand and could be found without difficulty? But all excellent things are as difficult as they are rare.

— SPINOZA, *Ethics*, v, xlvi

# An Absolutist Harangue

By THE ZEN PATRIARCH LIN-CHI

*Here is a good example of the explosive method of an absolutist Guru. It is a talk to disciples by a 9th century abbot, as translated by Prof. D. T. Suzuki. The Zen Buddhists have as their founder, Bodhidharma. He was the son of a king of Kanchi (Conjeevaram) in South India who, in the fifth century, went to China, in disgust with the decay of Buddhism in India.*

Oh you followers of Truth, if you wish to obtain an orthodox understanding of Zen, do not be deceived by others. Inwardly or outwardly, if you encounter any obstacles, lay them low right away. If you encounter the Buddha, slay him! If you encounter the Patriarch, slay him! If you encounter the Arhat, or the parent, or the relative, slay them all without hesitation, for this is the only way to deliverance!

Do not get yourselves entangled with any object, but stand above passion and be free. As I see those so-called followers of Truth all over the country, there are none who come to me free and independent of objects. In dealing with them I strike them down any way they come. If they rely on the strength of their arms, I cut them right off. If they rely on their eloquence, I make them shut up. If they rely on the sharpness of their eyes, I shall hit them blind. There are indeed so far none who have presented themselves before me all alone, all free, all unique. They are invariably found caught by the idle tricks of the old masters. I have really nothing to give you. All that I can do is to cure you of the diseases and deliver you from bondage.

Oh you followers of Truth, show yourselves here independent of all objects; I want to weigh the matter with you. For the last five or ten years I have waited in vain for such, and there are none yet! They are all ghostly existences, ignominious gnomes haunting the woods or bamboo groves, they are selfish spirits of the wilderness. They are madly biting into all heaps of filth.

Oh you mole-eyed, why are you wasting all the pious donations of the devout? Do you think you deserve the name of a monk, when you are still entertaining such a mistaken idea of Zen? I tell you, no Buddhas, no holy teachings, no holy disciplining, no testifying! What do you seek in a neighbour's house?

Oh you mole-eyed, you are putting another head over your own! What do you lack in yourselves? Oh you followers of Truth, what you are making use of at this very moment is none other than what makes a Patriarch or a Buddha. But you do not believe me, and seek it outwardly. Do not commit yourselves to an error. There are no realities outside, nor is there anything inside you may lay your hands on. You stick to the literal meaning of what I speak to you, but how far better it is to have all your hankerings stopped and be doing nothing whatever!

[ END ]

# The Absolutist is the True Brahmin

(a passage from the Narada - parivrajaka Upanishad)

WRITTEN in Sanskrit during a historical period when caste Brahminism and Vedism prevailed, the Upanishads (most of them anonymous) contain as strong a note of protest as a wise person dedicated to wisdom and not to action, is likely to make. The following piece is an example. Narada asks a question of Brahma. Narada is something like the Greek Mercury, a messenger of the gods. Brahma (not to be confused with *Brahman*, neuter Absolute) is the male chief of gods, the Creator-Deity. There is much play with words. *Sikha*, the holy tuft of hair also means a pointed flame-crest. *Sutra* the sacred thread, worn over the shoulder and reaching to the waist, also means a wisdom-aphorism, i.e. one of a string of utterances. The string or thread is the invisible Absolute which holds all wisdom-sayings together, as an unseen string holds all the pearls of a necklace together (the classical analogy given). Very delicately however, there is a meeting-ground here for both the orthodox and the heterodox. What is actually given is a revaluation of the Brahmin (the English word *Brahmin* is the equivalent of *Brahmana*. We give it for convenience). The Brahmin as a mere priest is admitted also, as a relativistic functionary, equated completely with the other appurtenances of ritual, the wood and butter and other ingredients of the fire sacrifice or burnt offering. Here wisdom (in the true Brahmana or Absolutist) and action (as in the priest-Brahmana or Relativist) are clearly contrasted, the former extolled, the latter dismissed as irrelevant to the context of wisdom.

**NARADA:** How can one, without the holy thread (*sutra*) be a Brahmana?

**BRAHMA:** The wise should, after shaving the head, including the shaving of the holy tuft of hair (*sikha*), cast off the holy thread. He should wear, as his thread, the indestructible and supreme Absolute (*Brahman*). The thread is only called a thread (*sutra*) because it is an indication. The thread (*sutra*) is the supreme seat (*paramapada*). He who knows that Threaded utterance (*sutra*) is the Absolutist (*Brahmana*). That thread of the Absolute (*Brahma-Sutra*—this is also the title of a collection of wisdom aphorisms) on which the whole universe is strung like beads on a string (*sutra*) should be worn by the man of unitive understanding (*yogin*) who knows dialectics (*yoga*) and first principles (*tattva*).

[Here there is a reference as in Chapt. II of the Bhagavad Gita, to the fact that there is no difference between Yoga and Sankhya, between Unitive Understanding and Pure Reason.]

The wise man who is in a state of supreme unitiveness (*yoga*) should abandon the outer thread (*sutra*). He who wears within this thread of true absoluteness is alone an Absolutist (*Brahmana*). Such a one is not a rejected one by wearing this higher thread; such a one is not impure. Only those whose thread is internal, who have the holy thread as wisdom, are the real knowers of the threaded utterance (*sutra*). They are said to possess sacrificial purity (*yajnopavita*).

To those whose holy tuft of hair (*sikha*) is wisdom (*jnana*) whose holy thread is wisdom, and whose meditation is upon wisdom, wisdom alone is supreme. It is said that wisdom alone is able to purify. That wise man alone who possesses the wisdom-tuft of hair (*jnana-sikha*) like the pointed flame-crest (*sikha*) of the spirit of fire (*Agni*) is said to possess the crest-tuft (*sikha*). Those who have a mere tuft of hair (*sikha*) are no tuftees (*sikhis*)! The Brahmanas and others who are entitled to perform Vedic ritual are allowed to wear the external thread only as an auxiliary to the ritual. It is only Vedic. The knowers of the Absolute know that Absoluteness (*Brahmanya*) accrues to him only who has the wisdom-tuft of hair (*jnanamaya-sikha*) and the investiture with the sacred thread of Thatness (*Tanmaya upavita*).

[This is a final pointed reference to the ritual investiture with the sacred thread whereby the Vedic pupil becomes a "twice-born". The author is saying that handing a youth a diploma is no real evidence of character, learning or wisdom. "It is only Vedic." The question that arises in Indian thought after this is, "What else?" and it is precisely here that the wisdom literature of the *Upanishads*, the *Brahma-Sutras* and the *Bhagavad Gita* begin to provide an answer. The very first words of the *Brahma-Sutras*, for instance, are "Then, therefore . . ." followed by "the inquiry into the Absolute". Shankara, in his commentary, elaborates these two words at great length, showing how important they are.]

[END]

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SOME say that Happiness is not good for mortals, and they ought to be answered that Sorrow is not fit for immortals and is utterly useless to anyone; a blight never does good to a tree, and if a blight kill not a tree but it still bears fruit, let none say that the fruit was in consequence of the blight.

— WILLIAM BLAKE.

# The Boy who wanted Wisdom

By MAX LERNER

*This appeared in the New York Post on December 16, 1957, in the column the author contributes regularly. It reflects the general feeling of disillusionment with the educational system felt by the intelligentsia of America. Our comment is appended.*

THERE are reams and reams of newspaper stories these days about teaching, learning and research. Almost overnight the American educational system has become a more urgent target of our hopes and fears than American moral codes, sexual behavior, juvenile delinquents or civil rights. "Basic research," "talent hunt" and methods of teaching in mathematics and the sciences have become the common currency not only of the school professions but of commentators and politicians.

Even Vice President Nixon has just delivered a major speech on the theme — and remember that Nixon has a better nose for smelling out what is in the wind than any other figure in public life.

Amidst this spate of words there was a minor, almost trifling story the other day that has stuck in my mind. A student who was dropped from Columbia has sued the university on the curious ground that it failed to teach him wisdom.

**The word "Wisdom":** Now the interesting fact here is not that the student should sue; like everyone else, the young people get caught up in our litigation neurosis. What strikes me is that solitary glittering word, "wisdom."

It is a word that has almost been dropped out of the current turmoil which rages around science and power and the weapons race, always asking whether the Russians are ahead of us or we ahead of them. It took a flunked-out student, by his own confession still devoid of the quality of wisdom that he sought, to bring the debate back to first principles.

I want to make it clear that I am not writing about the legal merits of the case between the student and Columbia, on which my ignorance is total. My interest is only in what the episode suggests about the major concern of our culture with education. We value it because it fits us for a vocation or profession, because it leads to a career, because it increases our earning power and because it makes the nation stronger in war or fashions a better electorate in peace.

These are all perfectly good reasons, and I don't laugh at them. But neither do I laugh at the student who is suing for failure to deliver an item called "wisdom." I don't think he is crazy.

**Wanted a Foundation:** I agree, to be sure, with the Columbia dean who filed an answer saying that wisdom can't be contracted for when a student signs up at a university. It can't be "taught" in the sense of being wrapped up in a package and handed to you, even if the package is a fancy diploma or a degree. It is, says the dean, a by-product,

and can't be guaranteed. Some get it, some don't, and whether they do or don't depends on themselves and their own qualities and efforts."

All of this is very true, and probably just right for the legal issue. Yet it leaves me cold.

A big university, I know, is a big bureaucracy, and it can't bother with an eccentric and troublesome student, especially if he doesn't pay his tuition. But the touching thing to me is that somewhere in a student body there is someone with a hunger for wisdom—not for vocation, or success, or career, or diploma and degree, but quite simply for wisdom.

If I were a university president I should take such a boy and build a shrine around him—or, at the very least, a foundation. I should set the other students to doing basic research on him, to discover how he got that way.

**Delving within:** There is a good deal of money being made available now, in a sudden desperate effort to cure our educational ills. For the first time in our history the poor underpaid researcher must feel like Danae in the Greek myth, being embraced by Jupiter in the shape of a shower of gold. If we don't watch out our slogan may become "Billions for research, but not one cent for wisdom."

Maybe the trouble lies with the word the student has used. We think of wisdom as associated with greybeards, like Socrates disputing with his disciples, or Lucretius writing on the gods, or the great Chasidic rabbis of the old Jewish culture of Poland. We smile when a youngster makes a claim to it, or even a bid for it.

Suppose we change the overtones of the word. Suppose we say that wisdom can be for the young as well as for the old, that it lies in growing more mature—more perceptive of the world outside, more probing of the world within.

I can't help feeling that something somewhere goes wrong with many of our students, and that it isn't just their failure to spell correctly or write clearly or organize their material in an orderly fashion. Sure, many of them are illiterate in these respects. But a worse sin is that so few of them—and, for that matter, so few of their teachers—have any hunger for learning or any passion for their medium, as painters or dancers or actors or scientists do.

The problem of education can't be separated from the larger problem of living and of growing up. It isn't summed up by "research," useful and even fascinating as that is. I should say that it has two facets, which are part of each other. One is to stretch yourself and your possibilities as far as they will go, and thus stretch the frontiers of the human condition.

The other is to make what I call the "journey into the interior"—to delve or dip deeper and ever deeper into yourself, to explore yourself as Livingstone explored the Congo, and—in learning to know yourself—to become a person with a life to live.

If teachers don't make at least the effort to teach this, then their teaching will never stretch the student to his full potentials, and therefore never stretch the nation either.

## No Stretching !

[IN fairness, some correction is needed. Reading the Columbia case from this comment, one might suppose that it was Roy Jacobsen who started the court case. That is not so. Since the Columbia authorities have dismissed the question of wisdom as something that cannot be taught, and since they took the initial step of instigating a court action for recovery of money, one assumes that it is money in which they are primarily interested, and therefore if there is any litigation neurosis, it is not Roy who has it, but Columbia on whom the onus for going to court rests. That Roy should then, *after* this, make a counterclaim also involving money, is to make sure that Columbia does not again evade the fundamental issue.

There is already too much expansion of the ego and the power potentiality of almost any nation such as America, is endangering the whole of humanity. Hence the notion that wisdom is to be acquired for stretching the individual or the nation to its full potentials is basically wrong. Max Lerner here is only saying what many "spiritually" inclined people accept as a belief, that acquiring wisdom is the same as "an expansion of consciousness" which is part of an evolutionary theory of material success. A proper approach to wisdom is necessary to know the fundamental error of this belief.

That Columbia have been compelled to humble themselves by a persistent young man into admitting their ignorance is at least something achieved, whatever the result of this case may be. One wishes they could have done this gracefully. Humility is lacking, and therefore the essential qualification for acquiring wisdom is lacking. "I do not know" followed by "I am troubled in spirit" followed by "please teach me" is the classical formula in the Indian wisdom tradition. The Western attitude is: "I'm willing to invest my money if you are prepared to give me my money's worth of know-how." Education becomes a form of shop-keeping.

All the same we must be grateful to Max Lerner for doing as much as a New York journalist with a public to think about and a job to hold down, can do. It is a springboard for the next step.]

## THE EDUCATION "BUSINESS" !

WE should not forget that education is big business. Of the 1.8-billion-dollar 1955-56 California State budget, 38 per cent, or 784 million dollars, is for education. This is big business, and we, as taxpayers, have a right to expect that our public-education business will be operated as efficiently as other businesses.

— DR. ARNOLD O. BECKMAN,  
*Industrialist and President of Los Angeles  
 Chamber of Commerce.*

# The Columbia Controversy

By ROY JACOBSEN

We continue the actual documentation of a young student's persistent demand for proof that Columbia's claim to "develop the whole man" is valid. It was only in the December 1957, however, when the case came to court, that the press took an interest. The whole subject of teaching of character and wisdom has now entered the forum of public debate.

*Getting no answers to letters, sent to the University, Roy decided to inform the press. This was one year ago.*

The third letter, which follows, was for the news agencies.

January 7, 1957

(To the Editor-in-Chief, or Director)

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter now being sent to Dr. Grayson Kirk, President of Columbia University. [This letter was published in *VALUES* last month—Editor.]

As you will see from that letter, the education at Columbia will have to be evaluated in public, in order to settle a dispute as to whether it is basically honest or dishonest.

It will be apparent, however, that the issue of this dispute involves not only Columbia but the entire educational system of the civilized world, since most of the schools, colleges and universities now in existence are founded on the same assumptions, make similar claims, and have certain deficiencies in common which can, with honesty, be corrected.

The organized educational system cannot be expected to work miracles, but certainly it ought not to be a source of confusion to the student. And yet an underlying confusion must result from a system in which all the emphasis is placed on facts and skills, while character building is completely neglected except as verbiage in the competitive advertising campaign to lure new students.

By this neglect, organized education contributes to personal conflict and world disorder.

Columbia University has threatened to take me to court, and evidently does not wish to hear what I have to say. I request that this

case be publicized so that the watchfulness of the people will prevent any further attempts by Columbia to bulldoze and silence me; I stand alone in this uneven fight. I request that my statements be publicized because they concern everyone and are sure to agree with the unexpressed opinions of many. I also request, however, that Columbia's arguments be equally publicized, when they are formulated, because to be fair it is necessary that the people hear both sides of the controversy.

Perhaps the time has come for a thorough public airing of the question of whether our education today is guiding or misguiding the people.

Yours truly,  
ROY JACOBSEN

I sent copies of the second and third letters to the editor-in-chief of each of the following newspapers: *Christian Science Monitor*, *Daily Mirror*, *Daily Worker*, *New York Daily News*, *New York Herald Tribune*, *New York Journal-American*, *New York Post*, *New York Times*, *New York World-Telegram & Sun*.

I also sent a set to the directors of each of the following news agencies, at their New York offices: Associated Press, General News Agency, International News Service, International Press Associates, Reuters Ltd. of London, Tass Agency, United Press Associations, Worldwide Press Service;

A set to the editors-in-chief of *Time Magazine* and *Newsweek Magazine*;

And a set to the editors-in-chief of the two newspapers at the University, the *Columbia Daily Spectator* and the *Barnard Bulletin*.

I scanned the New York newspapers for the next few days, and as far as I know, not a single word about the case was printed. My letter did not even appear in any of the letters-to-the-editor columns, which often extended much space to sheer nonsense letters.

The *Columbia Daily Spectator*, however, printed this article on its front page, January 9th:

#### ALUMNUS CHALLENGES UNIVERSITY'S HONESTY By Joel Simons

In a letter to University President Grayson Kirk, Roy Jacobsen '54 stated that he will not repay \$1100 in student loans advanced to him while a College undergraduate, on the grounds that the University fraudulently claimed to develop his character.

Jacobsen had previously written to Dean of the College Lawrence Chamberlain. Receiving no encouragement, Mr. Jacobsen wrote Dr. Kirk:

"I know it is right to pay all debts which are justly incurred, but it is not right to pay any debt which is incurred on false premises."

"Up till now Columbia has evaded the issue and withdrawn from the discussion... Do you think it is right for an educated man like yourself to become so petrified by fright that you cannot answer my letters, and must instead resort to legal intimidation? (The University has threatened to take legal action.)

"I am sending copies of this letter simultaneously to all the leading New York newspapers and to several other national and international news agencies, in hopes that it may come to the attention of all individuals and organizations concerned with the general welfare of mankind."

Mr. William M. Leary, Assistant University Controller, stated that Columbia is trying to arrange some workable terms for repayment. The Controller's Office had been in touch with Jacobsen's parents, who told them that "Roy is healthy and working and should repay the debt."

Mr. Leary concluded, "apparently the man is unreasonable."

As of now, a court suit appears to be imminent. Both parties are adamant on their basic points, and a legal impasse seems to have been reached.

Notice how the reporter implied that it was only *my* character that Columbia failed to develop. Also notice how Mr. Leary misquoted my father's letter to Miss Levers, dated December 1st. There was not a single person at Columbia who had been honest with me.

Some acquaintances of mine at Columbia told me that student and faculty sentiment was indignantly against me, as a result of the *Spectator* article, and that just about everyone who had read it agreed with Mr. Leary that I was "unreasonable."

A few days after all my letters to the newspapers went out, I received this message from Mr. B. O. McAnney, Vice-President of the Editorial Department of the New York *World-Telegram & Sun*:

January 9, 1957

Dear Mr. Jacobsen:

Please let this acknowledge your letter of January 7th and the copy of your letter to President Grayson Kirk of Columbia University. I have read both with interest and will pass along the information to other members of the Editorial Department.

It does not seem to me that there is any area in which this newspaper can function in regard to the argument between you and Columbia. An education that is satisfactory to one man might not be satisfactory to another. These are things that should be ironed out

between the university and the student. I feel sure that you will be able to arrive at some satisfactory adjustment.

Sincerely yours,  
B. O. MCANNEY

That he answered at all was more than any other newspaper did; but that he felt content with his own education and then chose not to print my letter to the editor, concerning my own views, shows a bias in his character which is evidence of the charge I was making against college education, specifically Columbia.

About three weeks later I received another response, a letter from *Newsweek Magazine*:

February 4, 1957

Dear Mr. Jacobsen:

We have received your letter and the copy of the letter sent to President Kirk of Columbia University concerning your dispute over tuition.

Your letter has been routed to our editors who are always interested in hearing from our readers.

We appreciate the interest that prompted you to get in touch with us.

Sincerely,  
DWIGHT W. NORRIS  
*For the Editors*

This letter was so far beside the point that the editors might just as well have enclosed some advertisements and a subscription form.

From the twenty-one news agencies to which I wrote, one gave the public a distorted impression of the controversy, two gave me a distorted form of acknowledgment, and the others gave the public nothing and also gave me nothing by way of reply, even though I took the trouble of sending each letter by special delivery so that it would not be overlooked by busy editors.

At this point it is appropriate to quote the opening passage on page 3 of the catalog issued by the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, for prospective students. The quotation is from a speech in 1956 by Joseph Pulitzer, Jr.:

"Affected with the public interest, and having its freedom protected by the First Amendment, the press performs a solemn duty when it undertakes to inform a free people. Without full access to all pertinent information about its government, its public servants, and the surrounding activities that give rise to public issues, this free people could not remain free. So the function of a good newspaper is to print the news of the day, with special devotion to completeness and accuracy, to interpret the news with responsibility and objectivity, and to comment on the news with fairness, persuasiveness, and honesty."

In view of the manner in which the press handled this case, there is reason to wonder how much else goes on behind the scenes without ever reaching the public, during the very moments when journalists are so busy proclaiming their solemn duties.

The New York editors had the power to bring about a much-needed and speedy reform in education, without any delays by legal procedure; instead they chose to protect some pretenders, and failed to see the value of investigating the matter, while at the same time they continued to complain that faulty education was leading to national disaster.

Many of the newsmen in New York were trained at Columbia. However, I could find no evidence that any of these men were educated.

As for the Administration of Columbia, it knew it was at fault, and yet deliberately continued its efforts to collect on a debt contracted under false claims.

I received this letter from Miss Levers:

January 22, 1957

Dear Mr. Jacobsen:

President Kirk has referred to me for reply your letter of January 7.

We are glad to know that you wish to settle your loan account out of court. If you will look over the letters sent to you by the Bursar's Office in the years since you borrowed funds, you will realize that we have never pressed you for payment. We have encouraged you to pay as convenient, and you have in the past been most cooperative in sending payments.

We have not now asked you to pay in full. We are asking you for a payment plan, to be based on your present earnings and capacity to pay. Surely there can be no fairer offer than that. Our experience with other students has showed us that postponing payment of a student loan more than two or three years after leaving the University generally ends in financial hardship to the student. By that time, other financial responsibilities may become more urgent.

We hope that you will now decide to let us know at your first opportunity what payment plan you can meet and maintain.

Very truly yours,  
ELIZABETH D. LEVERS  
*Bursar.*

The above letter confirmed my understanding that it was President Kirk who was responsible for sending these demands for payment, without regard for the justice of the matter.

February 10, 1957

Dear Miss Levers:

Thank you for your reply of January 22, 1957.

The financial aspect of this case cannot be settled before the issue itself has been resolved. I have never said that I would not pay for my tuition; I discontinued payments when Dean Chamberlain and President Kirk, by their silence, admitted that I was right. If Columbia can now show me that it develops character, and lives up to all its other lofty claims as well, I will gladly pay the debt and reenter the College according to the offer Dean Chamberlain made in May, 1956. However, if Columbia cannot justify its claims, it is clear that the debt is not valid.

I appreciate the generous gesture you have made in your letter, and it agrees with my desire to settle this matter thoroughly and fairly, with no unnecessary publicity. I wish to point out that your letter infers that it is only *now* that I am willing to settle out of court. That is not so; from the beginning I have constantly made attempts to arrive at an agreement, and it was Columbia that did not wish to settle out of court.

You have again been called upon to work out an arrangement with me, but although I do not object to a discussion of the issue between ourselves, I think that in this case the official statements concerning Columbia's education ought to be made by President Kirk, who is in charge of that department. Therefore I am going to send him another letter with the hope that this important and long-evaded subject can at last be dealt with properly.

Yours truly,  
ROY JACOBSEN

Having done much research by this time, I sent the following letter to President Kirk:

February 16, 1957

(To President Kirk)

Dear Sir:

I again request a cancellation of my tuition debt, or an answer to my claims, and I wish to add some points that you should know before making any decision.

I did not go to college for a degree; I went for wisdom. I had been led to believe that the "firsthand contact" with great books and famous intellectuals at Columbia would lead me to wisdom. Now I am prepared to show, if necessary, that Columbia's education does *not* lead to wisdom.

I am well aware that almost all other colleges and universities are in the same predicament; I realize that the competitive atmosphere among these institutions drives them to make claims which they might not otherwise sanction. To understand a cause of the pretense, however, does not excuse the pretense itself; and a university that leads people into thinking that it teaches wisdom, when it does not, is committing the worst of all possible pretenses.

However, I also realize that most students are not seeking wisdom any more than their faculties are teaching it. Even though they claim to be wholeheartedly dedicated to Truth, Understanding, Justice, and all the other noble qualities, their actions and omissions reveal them to be more interested in money and prestige, etc. Most students go to Columbia primarily for a degree and the social advancement it implies, and they get what they want. In that sense they have not been cheated. One evidence of this is that no one has ever seriously questioned the University's claims before, even though the falsity of some of them is obvious to everyone.

And it is not likely that there will ever be many students who may care to challenge the University again. Indeed, if Columbia removes its false claims, the chances of a reoccurrence are very slight. Even if you grant me the cancellation I request and it becomes known publicly, there would still be very few students or alumni who would want to do anything similar. Those who are only vaguely familiar with my arguments wouldn't know how to follow them through, and those who are sufficiently familiar would see that I'm doing this primarily for the purpose of forcing Columbia to examine itself. They would see that, from a practical standpoint, there is no benefit to society if Columbia loses money without gaining in education; and this could be used as the basic argument when exposing any claimant who is only trying to capitalize on an idea. Most students and alumni would feel a loyalty to the University, and would not take away from its income. To the few sincere wisdom-seekers who may ask for some kind of compensation, Columbia owes something anyway. As for myself, if there is to be any question of loyalty, it would be disloyal of me to see major weaknesses at Columbia and not point them out when I have the opportunity. But many others have pointed out weaknesses, and, more often than not, nothing has been done about them. Therefore, if I do not press my request for cancellation, Columbia will probably not be stimulated enough to take any measures to improve its education, but will only continue in its pretense until it deteriorates completely.

If you will read my application for admission to Columbia, and my letter to Dean McKnight, dated April 6, 1954—when I was a senior in the College—you will see that I was looking for a true education, and not just a background of knowledge or a preparation for some professional occupation. But I was so misled by the University that I eventually lost sight of the College's primary claim: "It develops the whole man." The fact is that after four years of college I had not become a "whole man" as I might have if the educational program had been well balanced. I felt a

great lack within me, even though I had studied conscientiously and had participated in many activities. I was lacking the stability that comes from being trained in self-understanding, self-discipline, and proper relationship to others. College studies hadn't provided me with any of this. And yet Columbia College claims to offer "all studies that contribute to the art of living."

I do not have a degree, nor do I have the kind of job that most people value; I'm providing for myself as a stockroom worker in a warehouse. I have purposely avoided professional and business commitments in order to devote as much spare time and energy as I can to my philosophic interests. Because I don't have much income, a debt of \$1100 is a great burden on me, and I ask you to consider this in making your decision. Of course our dispute must ultimately be settled not according to my ability to pay but according to the validity of Columbia's claims. Before I can resume payments, therefore, the University will have to give reasonable evidence to show that all of its basic claims are true. If you cannot support your claims, then surely you cannot expect me to pay

Dean Chamberlain, in his letter of May 31, 1956, admitted to me that Columbia does not teach pure reason. Since the science of reasoning clearly is necessary for self-understanding and "the art of living," Columbia, by admitting the absence of pure reason from the curriculum, has admitted to at least one false claim. But perhaps the Administration now wishes to revise that confession, or justify it somehow. Incidentally, the original "Advertisement" of the College, which was made public by President Samuel Johnson on May 31, 1754, claims that the curriculum at that time would include "the Art of Reasoning exactly."

Dean Barzun, on page 202 of his book, *Teacher in America*, says bluntly that the American university system is built on false premises. He regrets that the faculties give more importance to research and climbing the ranks than they do to teaching the students. How do you explain the contradiction between this confession and the following claim, which appears on page 17 of the *Bulletin of Information About Columbia College*? "The faculty who will teach you at Columbia College represents the finest resources of Columbia University. To its members, nothing is more important or vital than the education of the undergraduate."

Another weakness I wish to point out at this time is that in spite of all the talk about character and an attitude of honor and integrity, there seems to be no evidence of any teaching in that direction. If you say such qualities cannot be taught, let me remind you of something you said at the end of your commencement address on June 2, 1953:

"Finally, I hope that we have helped you to realize that character is more important than wealth and power. Even though you have the latter and do not have the former, you will be no credit to this institution."

You have not only said character can be taught, you have announced that Columbia teaches it. Now then, please tell me if there is even a single course at the University in which a student can truly be helped to realize the importance of character. Or, if you say Columbia develops character outside the classroom, please give me the name of just one faculty member who can explain what is meant by character, and who can develop it in a

willing student. Such a man, if there is one at Columbia, should be able to answer a few questions I have in mind.

By all the evidence I have, I say Columbia's claims are false; however, I am open to any new arguments or information that the University can supply. If Columbia's claims are valid, don't you think I ought to be told of it, so that I will not forever carry with me a wrong impression of the University? On the other hand, if Columbia's claims are false, don't you think it would be best to admit it and make whatever adjustments are necessary?

Please remember that Dean Chamberlain declared publicly—and later backed out on his promise—that he would make good for two years' tuition to any alumnus who felt he had been shortchanged on a minor issue concerning program requirements. In view of this promise, do you think it is right to demand full payment from someone who can give evidence that he was shortchanged not only on that minor issue, but on several major ones?

I am comparatively helpless in this dispute; although my claim is a reasonable one, I realize you have the power to defeat me if you wish. Columbia's reputation alone may be enough to squelch every effort I make to arrive at a settlement, if you decide to refuse. But it hurts me to see the attitude of all those people who have ignored me in this very serious matter. At a time when there are so few people in the world who understand what it means to be fair and kind to one's fellow man, won't you be so good as to give me due consideration?

Yours truly,  
ROY JACOBSEN

The letter was sent registered, return receipt requested, and "deliver to addressee only;" but about two weeks later it was returned to me, unopened, with post office notations indicating that two attempts had been made to deliver the letter and that each time the President was unavailable; there was no reply to the subsequent notice sent by the post office.

About two weeks after this I received a letter from Miss Levers:

March 12, 1957

Dear Mr. Jacobsen:

In reply to your letter of February 10 I can only say that further discussion will be fruitless. I must ask you to send me a payment on your loan account, together with a schedule of future payments.

If you do not pay voluntarily, I must use legal means for collecting the account.

Very truly yours,  
ELIZABETH D. LEVERS  
*Bursar*

This time Miss Levers seemed to be writing without assignment from President Kirk, and her attitude was no different from that of the others who had dealt with me.

Once again it was clearly revealed that Columbia could find no argument to use against me, and that the Administration tacitly agreed with me but clung desperately to its position.

March 31, 1957

Dear Miss Levers :

I am sending you the letter which was originally intended for President Kirk, since you seem to be more in charge of the University now than he is.

In a different kind of situation the Administration would have made certain that an important registered letter to the President was delivered to him, no matter where he was; but in this particular case Columbia conveniently permitted the letter to be returned, and you have followed with another demand for payment. The more frequently Columbia evades the issue like this, the more evidence it is against the University.

You say further discussion will be fruitless but I hope that the enclosed letter will help you to understand my side of it.

Yours truly,  
ROY JACOBSEN

On the same day that I mailed this letter, my parents received notice from Columbia's lawyer:

March 29, 1957

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Jacobsen :

The Columbia University student loan account of your son, of which you are co-obligors, has been turned over to me for collection because of his refusal to pay same.

This would normally involve my forwarding this matter to an associate in your State for institution of suit against all three of you. However, in view of your recently expressed willingness to make good this obligation in accordance with the terms of the notes you signed, I am writing to give you the opportunity to remit payment to me without the necessity of legal action. I am sure you realize that if suit is instituted, you will be obliged to pay all court costs and disbursements in addition to the amount of the indebtedness. Such expense, to say nothing of the considerable loss of valuable time, is absolutely needless and senseless.

Although the reasons advanced by your son for his refusal to pay have no validity in a court of law and leave him, in effect, completely defenseless, I do not deem it appropriate to engage in any legal struggles with him in this efforts to resist collection, when this indebtedness can be paid by you, his co-makers, on a voluntary and friendly basis.

The total amount due, including interest to April 1, 1957, is \$1,095.50.

Accordingly, I must urge you most strenuously to send me your immediate remittance in that amount. Failing this, I regret to inform you that legal action is my only alternative.

I shall expect to hear from you at once.

Yours very truly,

LESTER E. ROTHSTEIN

With the above letter the University involved itself even more deeply than before: it employed a lawyer of questionable character. Mr. Rothstein the same lawyer who in December threatened to "resort" to legal action against me, now made several false statements which the Administration permitted to be made official. In the first place, there was no "recently expressed willingness" on my father's part; in his letter of December 1st he made it quite clear that we would be willing to pay only after I was proven wrong in court, if Columbia could not get me to pay otherwise. Mr. Rothstein was only trying to trick my father into believing that he had already committed himself to pay—in accordance with Columbia's irrational terms.

Mr. Rothstein also said that if suit is instituted, my parents would be obliged to pay all court costs and disbursements in addition to the amount of the indebtedness. Apparently he thought my parents were unfamiliar with legal procedure, and that he could take advantage of them on that account. He was hoping that no one would notice how he distorted the truth when he said that the mere fact of instituting suit would oblige my parents to pay the costs. Mr. Rothstein knew very well what the truth was: he knew very well that it is the losing party that pays the costs, and he also knew that Columbia would lose the case if it could not support its claims.

Mr. Rothstein went so far as to say my reasons have no validity in a court of law; if fraud were no longer a valid charge in court, then of course Columbia might well gain a "victory." Regardless of what he thought he intended, Mr. Rothstein's statement revealed that he would have liked to find the kind of court he referred to, a court where my reasons would have "no validity."

Of course Mr. Rothstein resorted to this kind of deceit because he hoped it would weaken my parents'

resistance and would trick them into paying before Columbia would have to defend its irrational stand in a court of law. He wanted them to feel it was useless to oppose Columbia University; he thought that all he had to do was to urge them "most strenuously" to pay. My father, however, easily saw through the deceit and the other absurdities in the letter.

Incidentally, I made a little investigation and found out that Mr. Rothstein was a graduate of the Columbia Law School.

April 6, 1957

Dear Mr. Rothstein:

I have contacted my son, Roy, who says he has written another letter to Columbia. When he receives an answer to his questions, I will contact you.

You sent your letter to my son's mailing address. Our address is the one above.

Yours truly,

ROLF. B. JACOBSEN

Here is Mr. Rothstein's "answer":

April 17, 1957

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Jacobsen:

The content of your son's most recent letter is most extraordinary. It was read both by the Bursar and by me and is not deemed worthy of any reply.

Under these circumstances, I must refer you to my letter under date of March 29, 1957, addressed to you, affording you every opportunity to arrange for payment of this account in full.

Yours very truly,  
LESTER E. ROTHSTEIN

cc: Mr. Roy Jacobsen

By this time my father was fed up with Columbia's evasiveness:

April 28, 1957

Dear Mr. Rothstein:

I was away on vacation when your letter of April 17th arrived, and have only now had the chance to answer it.

I am very much surprised that you should ask us for payment without bothering to answer my son's letter. Even if he were completely mistaken, it would be the proper business procedure to show him where

he is mistaken. You say his letter is not deemed worthy of any reply, which means it should not be difficult for you to handle.

Yours truly,  
ROLF B. JACOBSEN

[ This documentation will be continued in VALUES next month. You can read how the Columbia authorities retreated behind legalities and eventually took the case to court. It is a fascinating exposure of academicians at bay. ]

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## BEWARE !

A report from New York mentions a new and terrible danger called the "invisible sell." A film studio demonstration showed how a brief advertiser's message could be projected "invisibly" on a screen while a regular picture was playing.

In the demonstration, the name of a soft drink (was it Coca Cola we wonder?) was flashed on the screen once every five seconds for a fraction of a second. It was claimed that viewers who were thirsty, consciously or subconsciously, saw the commercial. Those who were not thirsty did not notice it. Thus the "invisible commercial."

Most of the reporters watching the demonstration saw the words.

The new process, developed by Subliminal Projection Co., Inc., involves an overlay of light which flashes a brand name on the screen at a speed of one-three-thousandth of a second.

James M. Vicary, motivation researcher and inventor of the "Invisible Sell" said the process cannot create a desire to buy the product but can serve as a "reminder" and accelerate an existing desire.

He said the process had been tested for six weeks in a New Jersey motion picture theatre, with popcorn and soft drink messages flashed on the screen. He reported the invisible ad increased popcorn sales on the average of 57.5 per cent. and soft drink sales on the average 18.1 per cent.

The technique involves subliminal thought, defined as "below the threshold of sensation of awareness."

Mr. Vicary said the process promises fewer interruptions for television commercials, less annoying commercials and added entertainment for the viewer.

What ARE we to make of this! A secret invasion of the human mind by the Powers That Be! "Subliminal Thought" of which you are unaware is a nice fancy name for plain brainwashing! The only answer must be to boycott movies and T-V, wherever there is the very least suspicion of this new horror. Boosting ads is one thing, but how easy to boost wars and to fan hatred of neighbouring peoples! Russia was credited with doing this to individuals, but this is a mass degradation of the privacy of humanity. How wonderful is science—and how loathesome! How near we are to the Big Brother of Orwell's 1984. Be warned, every one who goes to the movies. Beware of that T-V set.

SCIENCE and technology cannot fulfil their responsibilities if our scientists and engineers lack the humanistic quality which has been ascribed to the Athenians — the art of making gentle the life of mankind.

DR. JAMES R. KILLIAN JR., President Eisenhower's new Aid, in an address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Nov. 1957.

### Let Us Be Men

FOR God's sake, let us be men  
not monkeys minding machines  
or sitting with our tails curled  
while the machine amuses us, the radio or film or gramophone.  
Monkeys with a bland grin on our faces.—

— D. H. LAWRENCE

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- ★ SINGAPORE : (\$6) The Manager, VALUES, 16, Smith Road, Singapore 27.
- ★ SWITZERLAND : (12 f.) Institut Monnier, Versoix, near Geneva.
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