

# THE Key REPORTER

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## PAUL STURTEVANT 1877-1957

Paul Sturtevant, treasurer of the United Chapters since 1947 and chairman of the Committee on Investments of the Phi Beta Kappa Foundation since 1949, died suddenly on November 28. At its recent meeting the Senate adopted a resolution in his memory, which reads in part:

"In the eight years of his chairmanship the holdings of the Foundation were more than doubled, a remarkable achievement which testifies to his shrewd judgment and sedulous attention. We are grateful for this service, but still more grateful for the opportunity we have had to know the simple friendliness and joy which marked him as a man."

## Walter E. Houghton Receives Gauss Award

At the annual dinner of the Phi Beta Kappa Senate, Professor Harold March of Swarthmore College handed a check for \$1,000 to Professor Walter E. Houghton of Wellesley College. This was the 1957 Christian Gauss Award, given each year for the best book of literary scholarship or criticism published by a university press. Mr. Houghton received the prize for *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, which was published by the Yale University Press, and is an examination of the ideas and attitudes of the period and their interrelationships. One member of the award committee called it "reasonable, balanced, fully sustained, pleasantly written, and often . . . masterly." Another said of it, "I cannot conceive of anyone studying the Victorian period who would not find this required reading."

Mr. Houghton graduated in 1924 from Yale University, where he received the Ph. D. degree in 1931. He has taught at Harvard and is now Sophie Hart Professor of English Literature at Wellesley.

*The Victorian Frame of Mind* was selected for the award by a committee of six, under the chairmanship of Mr. March.

## Phi Beta Kappa Senate Holds Annual Meeting

### *Acts on Charter Recommendations and Terms of Gauss Award*

The Senate of the United Chapters met on December 7 for the last time before next August, when the twenty-fifth triennial Council will convene at New York University. The Committee on Qualifications accordingly presented its report on the institutions recommended for a charter, which was unanimously approved by the Senate and will be submitted to the Council for action in August.

Among the other reports heard by the Senate was one from the Committee on the Visiting Scholar Program, which sponsors visits by eminent scholars to Phi Beta Kappa institutions for two to four days. Kirtley F. Mather, chairman of the committee, told the senators that interest in the program has been very great and that by the end of this college year the scholars

will have visited sixty-two campuses. The six scholars serving the program this year are Louise Bogan, poet and critic, Katharine Koller, professor of English at the University of Rochester, Henry Margenau, professor of physics and natural philosophy at Yale University, May Sarton, poet and novelist, Harlow Shapley, professor emeritus of astronomy at Harvard University, and Frank Percy Wilson, professor of English at Merton College, Oxford University.

The Senate also approved a change in the conditions of the Christian Gauss Award. Ever since the prize was established in 1950, eligibility has been limited to books published by a university press, a restriction that reflected Phi Beta Kappa's concern for the continued publication of books that make a noteworthy contribution to learning even though they may not make money for the publisher.

That restriction has now been lifted. This action was not taken because the entries have been undistinguished—the senators and members of the award committee who favored the change emphasized their complete satisfaction with the books that have won the award since its inception. It was prompted by the suggestion that the most distinguished book of literary scholarship or criticism might one year go unrecognized by Phi Beta Kappa because it had not come from a university press.

The Senate's decision was made only after careful deliberation, and had, moreover, the support of many university-press directors, who several months ago were asked for their opinions on the restriction. Of the forty directors who replied, twenty-seven were in favor of dropping it. "I do not feel that the university presses should ever want to discourage the commercial presses from accepting and publishing the very same kinds of works that we issue. . . . Our purpose is not to promote university presses, but to make available the results of scholarship," said one. "As long as quality is going to be your criterion," another director commented, "let it be your only criterion."



Walter E. Houghton

The other judges were Louis B. Wright, director of the Folger Shakespeare Library, R. M. Lumiansky, dean of the graduate school at Tulane University, and professors Kathrine Koller of the University of Rochester, Hallett D. Smith of the California Institute of Technology, and Wylie Sypher of Simmons College.



# The Guide of Life

By C. J. Ducasse

**I**N *The History of Phi Beta Kappa* by Oscar M. Voorhees we read that *Philosophia Biou Kubernetes*, the Greek phrase that gives the Society its name, was "formed and adopted" by John Heath, a student of Greek classics at the College of William and Mary, on whose initiative the Phi Beta Kappa Society was founded in 1776. This phrase—philosophy, or love of wisdom, the guide of life—and the Latin phrase *Societas Philosophiae*, the initials of which appear on the reverse of the Phi Beta Kappa key, express the five founders' conviction about the right role of philosophy in life.

But although taking philosophy as one's guide through life seemed to John Heath and his fellow-students an eminently wise resolve, today the perspective in which educated people view human life is different from that of 1776; and members of Phi Beta Kappa may find themselves challenged to give reasons for adopting philosophy as the guide of life in preference to religion or to science, either of which today enjoys far more general prestige than does philosophy. I propose to consider those reasons here.

## Why not science as guide?

At the time of the founding of Phi Beta Kappa any suggestion that man should take science rather than philosophy as his guide in the conduct of his life would have been hardly intelligible. The investigation of puzzling natural phenomena was not commonly thought to be a potential source of counsels for living. The justification, if any, for studying the mysteries of nature was held to lie only in such gratification of idle curiosity as it might yield to the few impractical persons who engaged in that study. The attitude then prevalent towards their research is well exemplified by the reaction that greeted the first observations of electric current, made about 1786 by Luigi Galvani, then professor of physiology at the University of Bologna.

The story is that his wife was ill with tuberculosis; and her physician having prescribed a broth made with frogs' legs to give her strength, Galvani was getting some ready for cooking one day, sitting on his balcony. As he proceeded he suspended each pair of legs from the balcony's railing by a copper hook; and he noticed that whenever any of the legs so suspended happened to touch the iron uprights, the leg muscles contracted sharply.

C. J. Ducasse, professor of philosophy at Brown University, is a past president of the American Philosophical Association. This article is based on an address to initiates of the Trinity College chapter.

This curious little fact, however, had no discernible utility, nor did it fit in with the scientific knowledge possessed in his day. Hence nobody took seriously what he reported. "I am attacked," he complained in 1792, "by two quite opposite sects—the learned and the ignorant. The ones and the others laugh at me and call me the frogs' dauncing master. Yet I know that I have discovered one of the forces of nature."

Other reports of facts or theories belying what W. F. G. Swann has called "the common sense of a given epoch" have encountered a similar attitude, which has been a persistent feature of the history of science. Nevertheless science developed rapidly during the nineteenth century and has continued to do so at an even faster pace in the twentieth. The result of this has been, in the words of Sir William Dampier, that "the whole conception of the natural Universe has been changed by the recognition that man, subject to the same physical laws and processes as the world around him, cannot be considered separately from that world, and that scientific methods of observation, induction, deduction and experiment are applicable, not only to the original subject matter of pure science, but to nearly all the many and varied fields of human thought and activity."<sup>1</sup>

Furthermore, the fruits of pure scientific research have in many cases turned out to be applicable to the solution of concrete practical problems; and in civilized countries these practical applications have immeasurably improved the material conditions of human life. That science has put into the hands of man power undreamed of before over the processes of nature, and enabled him to utilize her forces for attainment of his purposes, is today evident to everybody, and accounts for the enormous prestige science now enjoys.

On the other hand, the fact is now becoming all too evident that the ledger of scientific progress has a debit as well as a credit side. The power that scientific knowledge brings has indeed made possible the cure or prevention of many diseases; it has provided new and highly efficient means of production, communication, and transportation; and it has given man all the convenient gadgets on which he is today so dependent. But at the same time it has complicated his life, robbed it in large measure of the joy of craftsmanship, multiplied its needs, and brought it new diseases and ghastly perils. The natural sciences and the might they have brought to man are in themselves wholly neutral as regards values; they lend

themselves equally to the efficient implementation of good and of evil purposes.

But whereas in the last hundred years the natural sciences have made more progress than in the preceding thousands, the soul of man, on the contrary, has during that time undergone no great change. Some customs and institutions have altered, but the passions that are the main-springs of human conduct have remained much the same. Men are better informed today but probably not much more intelligent than before; their economic standard of living has risen; but when occasion offers, they exhibit a nature hardly less selfish or brutal or greedy than of old. They are not fundamentally much more self-disciplined, honest, kindly, or wise than in earlier ages. Measured in terms of spiritual maturity, the average man today is still a child. And it is in the hands of that child that the natural sciences, almost overnight, have placed powers that in their magnitude and possibilities of evil, no less than of good, are to those man had earlier as dynamite is to the strength of bare hands. Great nations have risen in the past only to fall victim to destructive forces within them. But today it is the whole of life on earth, or even the very earth itself, the continued existence of which is in danger.

Obviously, then, if man is to be saved, what he now needs is not more of the power the natural sciences bring, but more wisdom wherewith to direct the use he makes of the powers he already has.

## Why not religion as guide?

For such direction, and for the serenity that obedience to it brings, men have traditionally turned to religion. But to many people nowadays religion no longer carries the authority it did in earlier times.

A number of factors are responsible for this. As a result of efficient means of communication and transportation, men—and especially educated men—are better acquainted than in earlier times with the religions of mankind other than their own. A person with the wider perspective of such acquaintance sees that the dogmas of the other religions are different from, and sometimes irreconcilable with, those of his own; and yet that the needs that turn men to religion are on the whole satisfied by the other religions for their devotees as effectively as they are satisfied for him by his own.

Furthermore, he realizes that if he had been born and brought up in a different part of the world, his religion would almost automatically have been the one that happened to prevail in that particular region. And this thrusts upon him the question whether the location of a man's birthplace determines not merely which religion he *will believe*, but also its *truth or falsity*. And of course merely to ask this question is virtually to answer it, es-

pecially in an epoch when so many of the traditional religious teachings about the place of the earth in the universe, the age and history of the earth, and the origin of life and of man, have been conclusively disproved by the knowledge that science has produced in lieu of mere creeds, pious opinions, and crude cosmological or biological fancies handed down by the religious traditions.

In the light of these and similar considerations, the articles of faith of the various religions—of one's own as well as of the others—are seen to be not statements known to be true or false, but essentially *psychological tools*: instruments mankind has automatically devised for performance of certain important social and personal functions. For religious dogmas to influence the conduct, the feelings, and the attitudes of men, they need not be true but need only be firmly *believed*.

Like other tools, moreover, they can be used otherwise than in the beneficent manner that gives them worth. As we know only too well, bigoted men who were ignorant, stupid, arrogant, sadistic or perverse, and who happened to have power over their fellows, have too often interpreted the dogmas of their religion as warranting the wars, persecutions, and senseless cruelties that stain the histories of even the monotheistic, self-styled higher religions. This forces on modern man's attention the fact that the religions, like the sciences, are ambivalent and have a dark side; and hence that the teachings contained in their various sacred books or promulgated by their officials cannot be uncritically assumed to supply ready-made the wise guidance that man so direly needs. Rather, those teachings have to be carefully sifted and the wisdom or folly of each intelligently appraised.

### How about philosophy?

And this brings us back to philosophy. Does it offer a better prospect than either science or religion of furnishing man with the wisdom he needs?

In the popular opinion at least, hardly so. For philosophy is commonly reputed to be nearly the most nebulous and impractical thing there is. Yet if philosophy were really so remote from practical affairs, it would be hard to understand either the execration or the veneration in which various philosophers have at times been held. Why, for instance, should Socrates, Hypatia, and Giordano Bruno have been put to death, Plato sold into slavery, and Campanella imprisoned, for voicing the philosophical opinions they held? On the other side of the picture, why should the same Plato have sometimes been referred to as "the divine Plato," and Kant as "the immortal Kant"? Why have their writings and those of other great philosophers continued to be read and prized through the centuries?

The answer, I believe, lies in the fact that philosophy, despite the seeming idleness of some of its technicalities, really has practical import and indeed in this respect may ultimately outrank most things of more obvious utility.

The nature of the practical value peculiar to philosophy will become evident if we try to gain a clearer conception than is common of what philosophy and philosophical reflection in fact are.

Philosophical reflection is not an activity indulged in only by specialists called philosophers who allegedly live in architectural monstrosities known as ivory towers. Just as each of us at times engages casually in horticulture or medicine or carpentry without special training, so practically all of us on certain occasions spontaneously occupy ourselves with philosophical questions.

We may, for example, read in the newspapers of a child born hopelessly malformed and defective, but who, if operated upon at once, might nonetheless be kept alive. And we may read further that the physician in charge, realizing that the child's life could not be other than a grievous burden to himself, to his parents, and to society, refrained from operating and allowed the child to die. Then, in letters from readers to the editors of newspapers all over the country, controversy

## Φιλοσοφία Βίου Κυβερνήτης

rages about whether the physician's action was morally right or morally wrong. And even if we do not ourselves take active part in them, we too form opinions on the question.

In such a controversy the participants do not merely state their moral appraisal of the physician's course. They also give reasons of one kind or another to support the validity of their judgment. And if these reasons are in turn challenged, each participant brings forth considerations he believes adequate to vindicate the validity of his reasons.

The reasons, and the reasons for the reasons, that are thus appealed to as grounds for endorsing or condemning the physician's action, constitute a moral philosophy, or at least a fragment of one. And the mental activity of searching for those reasons, and of then so editing them as to purge them of the inconsistencies or exaggerations or errors that opponents were able to point out, constitute philosophizing, or philosophical reflection.

In this example the issue is a moral one, and the philosophy constructed on the spur of the occasion by a participant is therefore, as far as it goes, a moral philosophy: that is, a theory of the nature of

the difference between moral right and wrong, and of the nature of the situations to which appraisal in terms of morality and immorality is congruous. But similar controversies, or indeed doubts within one person's mind, arise about issues of other kinds: about the merits of certain works of art, for example, or about educational issues, or about the sufficiency of the evidence offered as basis for a given assertion, and so on. The fragmentary philosophies similarly improvised on such occasions are then a philosophy of art, a philosophy of education or a philosophy of knowledge. And there can be no doubt that on the occasions impelling us to engage in such reflection, a judgment shaped by the conclusions reached in that reflective manner is likely to be wiser than would be one made without it.

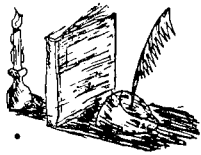
**P**RACTICAL problems of the type illustrated induce philosophical reflection automatically and cannot be solved without it if the solution is to be rational, not arbitrary. Let us call them *practical problems of appraisal*. They do not arise from ignorance or misinformation about the objective circumstances of the action or thing appraised. The disagreement concerning the moral rightness or wrongness of the physician's inaction did not arise from a difference of opinion about the possibility of the child's being cured eventually if he had lived. If this was the issue, it was then medical, not philosophical.

A divergence of appraisals is philosophical only if the conflicting judgments are of strictly the same action or thing in the same circumstances. When this is the case, the divergence of appraisals has one of two sources. One is inadequate understanding of the criterion of moral rightness or wrongness, or, as the case may be, of truth or falsity, of justice or injustice, of beauty or ugliness, of wisdom or folly, and so forth. The ordinary ingenuous understanding we all have of the meaning of such predicates is good enough to enable us to apply them without doubt or dispute in stereotyped cases. Hence in such cases problems of the type in view do not arise. If one does arise, it is because the case concerned is not a stereotyped one and therefore requires a more precise, analytical understanding of the meaning of the value-predicate employed, in order to reach a responsible, not arbitrary, appraisal. One needs to know, for example, precisely what constitutes the moral rightness or wrongness of an action.

The other possible source of divergence of appraisals is uncertainty about the congruity of appraising the action in terms of the proposed value-predicate. For ex-

(Continued on page 6)

# The Book Committee Recommends . . .



Guy A. Cardwell

**THE FINE HAMMERED STEEL OF HERMAN MELVILLE.** By Milton R. Stern. Illinois. \$5.75.

From the welter of recent Melville scholarship comes a study to be highly valued. Diction and syntax sometimes grate; but Mr. Stern shows power in handling ideas and presents a brilliant portrait of Melville as empiricist, rationalist, and anti-Transcendental foe of the absolute. The contents are matched by a beautiful piece of book-making.

**THE MAKING OF THE AUDEN CANON.** By Joseph Warren Beach. Minnesota. \$1.75.

The late, distinguished Professor Beach examines omissions from and revisions in Auden's *Collected Poetry* (1945) and *Collected Shorter Poems* (1950), then speculates shrewdly and profitably on the poet's editorial motives. The result is an indispensable aid in tracing shifts in Auden's religious, political, and social thought.

**HENRY JAMES: Parisian Sketches. Letters to the New York Tribune, 1875-1876.** Edited by Leon Edel and Ilse Dusoior Lind. New York University. \$5.

James had difficulty in discovering matter and hitting on a tone satisfactory to both himself and the *Tribune* when he made his only serious effort at journalism. In his note severing the connection, he complained: "If my letters have been 'too good' I am honestly afraid that they are the poorest I can do, especially for the money!" In truth, these excellently edited sketches are hardly James at his best; but his admirers and those of France will enjoy the sensitive, gossipy reports on art, opera, books, architecture, food—on the things that interested James, if they did not capture a numerically satisfactory audience at the time. On his side, James judged the *Tribune* and the generality of its readers to be irredeemably vulgar. What he would have thought of the present press and its clientele is a horrid conjecture, not to be pursued.

**NOVELS INTO FILM.** By George Bluestone. Johns Hopkins. \$5.

Perhaps half of the films made in the United States are taken from short stories, novels, and plays rather than from original screenplays. Mr. Bluestone makes an interesting effort to identify major problems encountered in translating from one art form to another, and he supports general observations on differences between fiction and film with comparative studies of six novels and their film adaptations.

**AFTER WALDEN: Thoreau's Changing Views of Economic Man.** By Leo Stoller. Stanford. \$4.

Walden certifies Thoreau as a radically nonconformist idealist, standing in unqualified opposition to industrial society and social action. Mr. Stoller's careful review of essays, journals, and manuscripts after *Walden* persuades us that Thoreau moved a bit in response to time and experience. He explored the possibility of reconciling the ideal and the actual by investigating scientific tree culture and subsistence farming; he favored curbing certain commerce-created abuses through social legislation; and caught up by abolitionism, the all-embracing passion of the times, he expressed views not unlike those of the great activist, John Brown.

**POE: A Critical Study.** By Edward H. Davidson. Harvard. \$1.75.

Studies of Poe's life are numerous, and some of them are good; but serious studies of his works, especially of his poetry, are few and uninspired. This analysis of mind and art, though marred at times by unclear, highflown prose, makes a useful attempt to place Poe as a romantic artist and romantic theorist.

**JUBILEE: One Hundred Years of the Atlantic.** Selected and edited by Edward Weeks and Emily Flint. Atlantic-Little, Brown. \$7.50.

A century of American literary taste and achievement is reflected in these selections. To highbrow readers it may seem clear that the span of years includes a transition period from one age, in which Emerson, Thoreau, and Holmes wrote as well as they could (not just "as funny as") to another age in which the *Atlantic* has become a middlebrow periodical playing intellectual second fiddle to select quarterlies. But interspersed with brightly superficial essays, formula stories, and magazine verse appear such fine recent items as a poem by Auden, a chapter from Ethel Waters' *His Eye Is on the Sparrow*, and Alfred North Whitehead's "An Appeal to Sanity." It may be pointed out, moreover, that although no *avant garde* quarterly exists for long without some form of subsidy, the *Atlantic* continues to maintain itself. Perhaps it is as good as it can afford to be.

**THE POETRY OF STEPHEN CRANE.** By Daniel G. Hoffman. Columbia. \$5.

The purchase in 1952 by the Columbia University Libraries of the extant Stephen Crane papers makes possible much fuller and more accurate biographical and critical writing about Crane than was possible earlier. Mr. Hoffman has used the papers to good purpose in tracing out diverse influences on the poetry. His comments on the themes of isolation and sacrifice are especially interesting.

**THE TRAGEDY OF MANNERS: Moral Drama in the Later Novels of Henry James.** By Frederick C. Crews. Yale. \$3.

Yale is to be congratulated on the quality of its top undergraduates and on the series of prize essays that they have published. In this latest, Mr. Crews does not have a novel or striking reading of the late novels to suggest, but he works his way through them very skillfully. His thesis is that James sees desirable values in each of the opposing forces that lend dramatic tension to the novels.

Robert K. Carr

**DESEGREGATION AND THE LAW.** By Albert P. Blaustein and Clarence Clyde Ferguson, Jr. Rutgers. \$5.

This careful, accurate study traces the steps leading to the recent desegregation rulings of the Supreme Court and discusses the subsequent impact of the rulings. The clarity of the analysis and the straightforward style make the volume particularly useful to non-specialists.

**WITH ALL DELIBERATE SPEED.** Edited by Don Shoemaker. Harper. \$3.50.

Twelve experts, most of them newspapermen, provide detailed, uncolored accounts of the way in which the Supreme Court's desegregation rulings have been received in the South. The reader will find little basis for encouragement in this dispassionate account of the South's massive resistance to the law of the land.

**FREEDOM, VIRTUE, AND THE FIRST AMENDMENT.** By Walter Berns. Louisiana State. \$4.

This is an excellent example of the deep conservatism that characterizes a growing number of young scholars in the social sciences. Its author vigorously attacks the First Amendment "freedom" defined and safeguarded by the Supreme Court in the last three decades. Asserting that "justice" is more important than "freedom," he argues that only "good speech" and "those we can trust not to misuse the privilege" should enjoy protection under the First Amendment. Many a liberal will resist the author's argument that "Government is obliged to promote right action," but he will be forced by this challenging book to assess anew his own belief in minimal political interference with the individual's thought and speech.

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**DEMOCRACY IN ENGLAND.** By Diana Spearman. Macmillan. \$6.

Miss Spearman shares Mr. Berns' distrust of the emphasis on "freedom" and "equality" that is characteristic of the contemporary democracies of the West. Her particular fear is that majoritarian democracy in England will sooner or later produce a socialist society under Labour Party auspices. Her panacea is to substitute a representation of interests for a counting of heads and thereby to achieve a stable society through a balancing of opposing forces.

**RACIAL DISCRIMINATION AND PRIVATE EDUCATION.** By Arthur S. Miller. North Carolina. \$3.50.

This little book raises the intriguing question of the extent to which private schools at all levels may soon feel the effects of the recent Supreme Court decisions outlawing racial segregation in public schools. The author does not anticipate an early extension of the decisions but he describes a number of legal means by which private schools may ultimately be compelled to ignore race in the selection of students.

**THE POLITICS OF INDUSTRY.** By Walton Hamilton. Knopf. \$3.50.

This wise and disrespectful book describes the interaction of private and public enterprise in the American economy in such bold, witty, and irresistible terms as to place it in the same class with Thurman Arnold's masterpiece, *The Folklore of Capitalism*.

**Louis C. Hunter**

**THE MERCHANT OF PRATO:** *Francesco di Marco Datini, 1335-1410.* By Iris Origo. Knopf. \$7.50.

This biography combines an illuminating account of the conduct of commercial enterprise in fourteenth-century Europe with an intimate picture of family and social life in Italy drawn from correspondence between Datini and his wife.

**U. S. A. IN NEW DIMENSIONS.** *The Measure and Promise of America's Resources.* By Thomas R. Carskadon and George Soule. Graphics by Rudolf Modley. Macmillan. \$1.50.

A very useful condensation of the Twentieth Century Fund's *America's Needs and Resources: A New Survey* (1955) in which five pounds and 1,148 pages are given the new dimensions of eleven and one-half ounces and 124 graphic-studded pages. Nowhere else is it possible in an evening's leisurely reading to obtain so clear and comprehensive a picture of our manifold resources and resource trends. The latter range from population and productivity to the displacement of mules by tractors and the number of houses with private flush toilets. Like most tabloids, this one is no substitute for the original.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: Theory, History, Policy.** By Gerald M. Meier and Robert E. Baldwin. Wiley. \$8.50.

A survey of theories of economic development, from Adam Smith to John Maynard Keynes and his successors, and a review of western economic development occupy the first half of this meaty volume. Two-thirds of the second half is devoted to "accelerating development in poor countries"; the remaining third to "maintaining development in rich countries."

**THE WEALTH AND POVERTY OF NATIONS.** By Geoffrey Crowther. Claremont College. \$2.75.

On a busman's holiday, the managing director and former editor of one of the world's leading journals of political and economic opinion, *The Economist*, lets his hair down before a West Coast audience, expressing doubts quite out of keeping with the traditional certitudes of the editorial page. The range of his dubiety extends from growth rate of the British economy and the vigor of the associated capitalist mentality, more given these days to gardening than to ulcers, to the adequacy of the resources of economics either to the prevention of depressions in rich nations or to the assistance of poor nations in coping with their problems of population and poverty. The decisive issues in the economic arena, he concludes, are not economic but those of mass psychology, of which we know very little.

**THE BRAZILIAN COTTON MANUFACTURE.** *Textile Enterprise in an Underdeveloped Area, 1850-1950.* By Stanley J. Stein. Harvard. \$5.

Traditionally the entering wedge of industrialization, the cotton industry failed in Brazil to initiate economic revolution. Unlike their fellows in Western Europe and North America, the textile magnates of Brazil remained immune to the infectious dynamism of modern capitalism. Instead of changing their cultural milieu, they succumbed to it, taking their place beside the planter class as a companion oligarchy dedicated to the comfortable life and the maintenance of the status quo. This is a revealing case study in the problems of economic growth.

## The Key Reporter

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**THE GREAT FAMINE.** *Studies in Irish History, 1845-52.* Edited by R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams. New York University. \$6.

The causes and course of the potato blight that struck Ireland in 1846 and lasted five years; its grim medical history; the tragically deficient relief programs, hamstrung by ruling class politico-economic interests and supporting theory; the far-reaching social and political consequences; and the enduring impact upon Irish tradition, folklore and culture generally: each are considered in detail by the specialists contributing to this book.

**Kirtley F. Mather**

**THE INNER METAGALAXY.** By Harlow Shapley. Yale. \$6.75.

A comprehensive summary of the results to date of the exploration of galaxies "in the neighborhood" of our own, which reveals much fascinating information about the measurable material universe.

**ON NUCLEAR ENERGY: Its Potential for Peacetime Uses.** By Donald J. Hughes. Harvard. \$4.75.

Sets forth authoritatively, yet simply and clearly, the fundamental facts of atomic structure, nuclear fission, the chain reaction and nuclear fusion, and discusses wisely the potential peacetime uses of "atomic energy."

**SCIENTIFIC AMERICAN BOOKS: Lives in Science, The Universe, The New Chemistry, The Planet Earth, Plant Life.** Simon and Schuster. \$1.45 each.

This second set of paperbacks maintains the high standard of lucid writing, expert authorship and significant subject matter established by its predecessor two years ago. Each book brings together numerous articles originally published in *Scientific American* in recent years. Each presents a well-integrated and thoroughly comprehensive account of a major area of current research.

**A HUNDRED YEARS OF EVOLUTION.** By G. S. Carter. Macmillan. \$3.75.

A concise review of the development of the theory of organic evolution since 1858, competently written by a well-known British zoologist, in which the neo-Darwinian concepts of the present time are made intelligible to the "non-biological layman."

**THE NORTH AMERICAN DESERTS.** By Edmund C. Jaeger. Stanford. \$5.95.

A highly informative and truly fascinating survey of the natural history of the five great deserts extending from central Mexico to eastern Oregon, with descriptions and drawings of the animals and plants that will enable the interested traveler to identify them.

## The Guide of Life

(Continued from page 3)

ample, could the act of rubbing one's chin in ordinary circumstances be, without incongruity, judged either morally right or morally wrong? What characteristics must something have in order that it may appropriately be appraised in moral terms, rather than in, perhaps, aesthetic terms?

Philosophical reflection is the only process by which divergence of appraisal arising from either of these two sources can be responsibly removed. If one engages in philosophical reflection under pressure of immediate need to solve a particular practical problem of appraisal, such reflection will inevitably be hasty and relatively uncritical. But the persons called philosophers make it their life work to reflect on the meaning of the various value-predicates and on the kind of subject that is alone congruously appraisable in terms of each. They attempt to purge such reflection of the narrowness and imprecision that are the unavoidable defects of the extempore philosophical reflection we all undertake as occasion compels. Not only does the philosopher strive to carry on his reflections in a thoroughly methodical manner; he also strives to make them comprehensive rather than particularistic. That is, his business as a philosopher is not to solve himself the many practical problems of appraisal. It is on the one hand to clarify, in the two directions described, the various value-concepts that enter into the formulation of the problems; and on the other, to specify the kinds of empirical knowledge that must be obtained in order to discern whether or not a given appraisal is valid in a given case. Actually to obtain that empirical knowledge is not the business of the philosopher; it is the business of the particular person who is confronted with a particular practical problem of appraisal.

**C**LARIFICATION of the meaning of terms, however, whether in general or in the particular case of terms of appraisal, is a semantic task. Consequently the question immediately suggests itself whether philosophical reflection, in undertaking it, is not concerning itself with mere words, and therefore, presumably, with something of no great importance.

The answer is that to speak of "mere words" is much like speaking of "mere dynamic." For although words do not in themselves control the processes of inanimate nature, they do control the thoughts, the feelings, and the acts of men—initiating and shaping them, or inhibiting them. In men's dealings with one another and in the individual's dealings with himself words are analogous in function and in importance to the insignificant-looking switches that govern the operations of giant machines in industry.

Hence it is of the greatest moment for man to know just where the psychological wires lead from the verbal switches: for the terrible thing about words is that to a great extent they cause and shape the acts of men, whether or not they really fit the things to which men apply them, and whether or not men understand their meaning correctly. Common sayings such as "Give a dog a bad name, and you can hang him," or "Slander on, some of it always sticks," testify to this fact. Among us today, for example, to call a man a Communist is to damage his reputation even if it is not true that he is a Communist, and even if the persons who hear him so called have but the vaguest idea of what communism is. And, similarly, the most potent of the weapons Communists have employed is perversion of the meaning of words: calling "liberation" what is in fact enslavement, for example.

Thus when the words we use do not fit or are ill-understood, the feelings, the beliefs, and the courses of action they nonetheless generate cheat our aims and stultify us. This is especially true when the words concerned are value-predicates, for a man's course is shaped at innumerable points by evaluative statements. Whether he formulates these for himself or accepts them from others ready-made, they determine the basic policies, the tactics, and the strategic decisions of his life. This vast power of language is what gives outstanding practical importance to clear, analytical knowledge of just which things our substantives denote and just what characters our adjectives predicate of the things to which we apply them.

### Love of wisdom as the guide of life

In conclusion let us consider briefly the term "wisdom" and note the light that philosophical analysis of its meaning throws on Phi Beta Kappa's counsel to take philosophy—that is, love of wisdom—as the guide of life.

What exactly, then, is wisdom? It consists in *knowledge of what in given circumstances would on the whole be the best thing for a person with given equipment to do.*

Thus the counsel to make love of wisdom the guide of one's life packs together four distinct recommendations, which may be separately stated.

One is that when a person attempts to reach a wise decision about a difficult practical problem, he should inform himself as accurately and completely as is practicable about its *objective circumstances.*

Another is that with similar care he should take stock of *the powers at his disposal*: on the one hand, of the diverse means he happens to have, any one of which would enable him to achieve a particular end he might decide on; and on the other, of the diverse ends, any one of

## Address Changes

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which he could achieve with the particular stock of means he commands.

The third recommendation is that he should then consider *the various kinds of value*—positive and negative, intrinsic and instrumental—which, for the persons who would be affected, would follow from each of the courses of action open to him in the circumstances of the case with only the particular powers he has.

And the fourth recommendation is that when he has thus considered as well as he can all the values at stake, he should then choose the course of action that *on the whole is best, or least bad*: the course that *everything considered*, will probably yield the maximum total positive value, or the minimum total negative value.

Needless to say, this choice will in many cases be anything but easy or confident. And the person who makes it may well come eventually to judge it to have been mistaken. But this will be the judgment of the wiser person he will then have become by learning from his mistakes. At the time a decision has to be made, however, no way exists for any man to make a wiser one than by the procedure just described. For "wisdom"—so much of it as in practice happens to be obtainable by a given person at a given time—*means* what emerges out of that procedure.

Finally, under the shelter of the preceding elucidations I shall venture to state as a sharp choice what I take to be the gist of Phi Beta Kappa's advice to its initiates. And to formulate it I shall borrow the sharp words of the title of a book on a somewhat similar theme written by an Australian journalist.

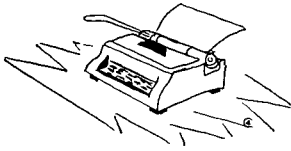
That sharp choice so sharply worded is *Think—or be damned!*<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Sir William Dampier, *A History of Science* (New York, Macmillan, 1936) p. 217.

<sup>2</sup> Brian Penton, *Think—or be damned* (Sydney, Angus and Robertson, 1944).

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# To the Editor



## Phi Beta Kappa Memorial Hall

As an architect and a member of Phi Beta Kappa, I am distressed that this distinguished society should lend its name to so dull and pedestrian an attempt at building as the new Memorial Hall.

It is an illustration of the low, almost nonexistent, place of visual values in our education that this vacuous and moribund substitute for architecture can be accepted as "a monument . . . to the ideals of . . . liberal education."

RICHARD P. ROSENTHAL  
New York, New York

## Effective Use of Faculty Resources

In the October issue of *THE KEY REPORTER*, there appeared an interesting letter in answer to an article which evidently had to do with some suggestions for improving our colleges. I have not seen the article, the earlier issue having somewhere gone astray; but in his letter, Mr. Preston Pumphrey introduces a point of view which cries for rebuttal, as much for its inconsistencies as, I fear, for its current prevalence in this country.

Mr. Pumphrey takes a dim view of what he appears to consider "the European idea of the university." By this

I gather that he means independent study by undergraduates under the guidance of faculty advisers. To my knowledge this sort of program has been applied chiefly in the liberal arts, where students are given some sort of project, encouraged to construct their own bibliographies, select their own fields of emphasis and points of view, and, after conference with their advisers, required either to submit to examination or to write an essay of moderate length exposing the results of their work. The chief virtue of such programs has been cited as not so much the information the student has supposedly acquired as the value to him of starting from the beginning, establishing for himself the aims and methods of his research, and synthesizing his material into a useful body of thought.

Mr. Pumphrey informs us that this sort of approach has, for most students, "only limited usefulness"; and that, with more and more entering the world of business, military service (all of them career men, no doubt), government, etc., and fewer returning to the ivy halls—"where," he concedes, "education as a scholar is a very valuable asset"—college administrators should be encouraged to meet the needs of the majority "who are not interested in the scholar's approach to knowledge."

Mr. Pumphrey goes on to enlighten us as to what the college administrators *should* encourage. His first point concerns the ability to "organize and skillfully present our ideas orally while we are under

pressure." The pressure of interviews, speaking in committees, or daily answering the questions of our superiors, says Mr. Pumphrey, largely affects "our success in any organization." Hand in hand with the need for improved speech skills goes the necessity for "creative thought." The individual, it seems, will not be able to take refuge in memorized knowledge, nor in the resources of the library in order "to be an expert on the situations and problems he faces." Here, the situations in question seem to be those of solving problems and initiating improvements.

In short, Mr. Pumphrey is viewing undergraduate education in its strict relevance to the worlds of business, government, agriculture, and so on. He takes, it would seem, the practical approach: do our colleges enable us to meet the demands of our careers; and in so doing prepare us to be successful, to make a nice middle-class pile? The answer, I think, is No; and my point is that they should not.

Undergraduate education, it seems to me, should indeed concern itself with creative thought, and with the ability to organize thought and speech under pressure, but in a rather wider sense than Mr. Pumphrey seems to intend. Nor should this creative thought have much to fear from collecting and repeating "the ideas of others," if it can do so in a valuable way. But the values for which it should strive, I believe, are humane values rather than business values, aesthetic rather than

## Winter Features:

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a penetrating reappraisal

**Life Looks at Literature —**  
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economic, spiritual rather than practical. At the risk of whipping a dog long dead, I should like to affirm once again the concept of education for leisure, of education in taste, in discrimination of thought, of an education which will make of the student a somewhat broader being than an efficiently functioning business machine.

In seeking to discourage us from undergraduate independent study, Mr. Pumphrey cites the lack of interest and ability of the "typical American student" in and for such programs; and mentions one student (we all, I feel, hope that this young savant is not in residence at Mr. Pumphrey's *alma mater*) who cleverly managed to put off work on such a project until 48 hours before the due date—and passed. (We note Mr. Pumphrey's concern with results.) It seems to me debatable whether the "typical" student has or has not these abilities—whatever wondrous ones they must be—but it is certainly my experience that he *has* considerable interest in and appreciation for study on his own. I have the impression that most undergraduates enjoy thinking and working on their own; and I have the definite impression that the "creative thought" which some of them can show in their work has considerable merit.

Finally, Mr. Pumphrey reassures us with an inspiring tribute to the soundness of "courses with assigned weights and set rules." "Without the analysis of the realm of knowledge and its reduction to manageable units the curriculum would be an incomprehensible confusion," he affirms in ringing tones. It would seem that Mr. Pumphrey's scheme of things is a little oversimplified in a world of fewer and fewer manageable units; and I doubt the value of training our undergraduates to expect something of the world, with which they will probably become increasingly disappointed. There is, I feel, a certain value in expecting the student to find his own way to the essentials, not necessarily because he finds the ones we want him to,

but because he finds himself along the way. But Mr. Pumphrey has an ulterior motive, and well-defined courses, he tells us, "help employers and other interested people make a reasonably fair evaluation of an individual's education." Mr. Pumphrey is again the practical man of results; and perhaps, in a world of other-directed men, he is on the side of the angels. It would seem, however, that the main values of a liberal education lie not so much with letting others judge the degree in which we successfully cope with our jobs and our employers, but rather with what sort of men thinking we can become.

DAVID R. L. SIMPSON  
*Amherst, 1954*

Winfield, Kansas

In the October issue of **THE KEY REPORTER** the caption of the photograph on page 2 incorrectly identified a member of the Wake County Association in North Carolina. The man shown on the extreme right is not C. Christopher Crittenden, but Charles A. Poe.

### Report of President's Committee

In your issue of October, 1957, you quote from the Second Report of the President's Committee on Education Beyond the High School as follows: "If an unwelcome choice were required between preserving quality and expanding enrollments, then quality should be preferred. . . . But the choice between quality and quantity is not mandatory. The Nation needs more of both, and it can have more of both if it decides to do so."

Now I submit that whatever may be the practical desirability of making the combination of quantity and quality a goal for the future, the patent fact remains that *at the present moment* in numerous colleges throughout the country, the latter is often being grossly sacrificed to the former. In the capacity of instructor in

required freshman and sophomore English courses, I have had an excellent opportunity to see a sizable cross-section of the student bodies of two reputable state universities. From this sobering experience I can conclude only one thing: if what I have seen and heard is at all representative of what is going on elsewhere outside the sheltering walls of the Ivy League—and I have ample reason to believe that it is—then the simple fact remains that our state colleges and universities are being overcrowded today by students who are absolutely unfit to be there, and whose presence constitutes an absurd and intolerable situation, frustrating and futile to them and their teachers alike, and one which bids well to make our higher education a laughing stock in the eyes of foreign nations. No increase of teachers' salaries, no better utilization of buildings and faculty, no plans for remedying the shortage of good teachers, etc.,—necessary though all these measures may be on other grounds—will solve this problem. The path of duty and expediency for all of these schools is unmistakable: putting aside the cant of "democracy in education," to stem this frightening deluge of mediocrity by finding means of tightening their admissions requirements without delay. I do not pretend to decide what the new criteria for admissions should be; no doubt to be completely adequate, they would have to be grounded on a radical re-examination of our whole philosophy of higher education—a total re-evaluation of its purposes and their relation to our society at large. Such a goal is, of course, only an ideal one; the most that can be hoped for is an approximation to it. At any rate, in failing to recommend this most obvious solution of all (though of course not the easiest one), the Committee convicts itself, at the very least, of gross disingenuousness.

JOHN HAGAN  
*Fulbright Scholar, University of London  
London, England*



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