

circles. That unanimity, only possible among intellectuals where clubbiness, self-interest, and conformism enter the picture, converts professors into just another pressure group bent on freedom for the sake of power instead of freedom for the sake of truth. If professors made better use of their own opportunities to promote effective debate on all important questions—within the individual department and college, where all contestants can confront one another—the public might find it easier to stomach Communists, confident that their conspiratorial techniques will not work.

The objective circumstances which nourish conformity, discussed earlier in this article, are formidable indeed. But they can be conquered if enough professors decide, as David Riesman would say, that henceforth they are going to be inner-directed. The traditions of individual freedom and responsibility still exist around which they can integrate themselves. In fact, they pay lip service to them—a not entirely useless kind of service—all the time. They need only prevent their devotion to them from becoming so incandescent that the light blinds them to the reality it is supposed to illuminate.

II. "The Devil It Is!"

by IRVING HOWE

MR. CRONIN's main point seems to be something like this: Liberals, just because they are committed to democratic values and occupy so prominent a place in the American universities, are most in need of moral self-scrutiny. They should beware of the smugness of their virtue; they must guard against the "repressive impulse" (as Lionel Trilling calls it) that may be lurking behind their militant claims to enlightenment.

Now it is hard to disagree with a warning against the possible righteousness of one's rightness. It is also hard to know what to do with one's agreement. Warnings against righteousness are like sermons against sin. Though I enjoy my modest share of sin, I hope, when the final roll is called, to be counted among its opponents. But if I can't quite tell what is happening in the preacher's mind, I want at least to know in which direction his finger is pointing. And I want to listen carefully, to hear whether warnings against pride are being spoken in accents of pride. Mr. Cronin does not strike me as a St. Francis.

Mr. Cronin presents his indictment of liberal professors in the rhetoric of liberal self-chastisement; but when one looks a bit closely at the specifications of his argument, it becomes clear that he is really a neo-conservative guerrilla in academic robes. For if half of what he says is true, then we liberals and radicals (I propose a temporary united front against Mr. Cronin) had better close shop and admit that the *National Review* is right. Liberalism is open to deep criticism and I, for one, have tried to make some of it; but things are not quite so bad as Mr. Cronin would have you suppose. Not even half of what he says is true.

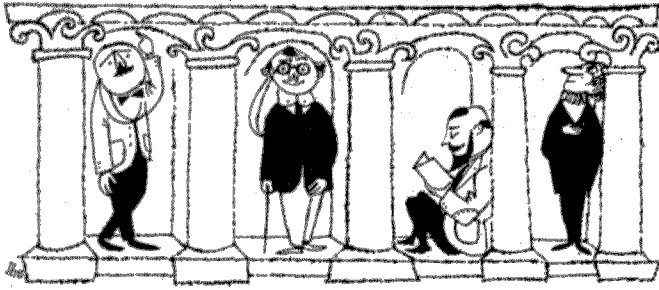
That academic life can be petty, mean, anxious, competitive; that some professors, like many other people, feel uneasy in the company of brilliant colleagues; that

there is a drift in the universities, as in all institutions, toward the psychology of self-approval—none of these quite comes to a remarkable discovery, especially when advanced in the free-floating generalities that Mr. Cronin favors.

But, let us grant it, there is *something* to what he says. The question then arises: what is the necessary connection between such faults of academic life and the faults of liberalism? Skating from phrase to phrase, Mr. Cronin never so much as asks himself this question. Instead, he presents a string of assertions as if the mere fact of their sequence were evidence of causality. For even if academic life were what Mr. Cronin says it is and liberals were a dominant force in the large American universities, it would still constitute an elementary error in logic to assume that the one is due to the other. Had Mr. Cronin been seriously concerned with investigating a problem rather than throwing spitballs at liberals, he would have had to note that:

1. All institutional life, if only in order to perpetuate itself, tends to generate inner patterns of conformity and complacency. This is true regardless of the ideological bias—liberal, conservative, radical—that may dominate a given institution. To show that liberalism in any significant way helps to speed or intensify such a trend would require analysis of the *specific* nature of American liberalism today. Such evidence might well be available; but Mr. Cronin is too concerned with large blinding thrusts (or large blinding phrases) to be able to find it.

2. Professors may not earn as much money as they think they should, and they may not be as consciously motivated to live by the dollar as are other people; but most of them remain subject to the mores and imbued with the values of a commercial society. It is therefore at least possible that much of what Mr. Cronin finds disagreeable in the academic world needs to be related



not to liberalism or any other political opinion but to the encompassing pressures of the commercial ethos. While not in any strict sense a liberal myself, I think it only fair to add whatever resistance the commercial ethos meets in the American universities today comes mainly from scholars still faithful to the tradition of liberalism.

3. During the past few decades there has grown up a severe crisis in American education, among the symptoms of which are the difficulty of providing competent faculties for expanding colleges, the virtual impossibility of teaching ill-prepared and indifferent students, and a general lowering of intellectual standards. Much of the complacency and mediocrity that Mr. Cronin finds in the universities, particularly in those large universities supposedly cursed with liberal faculties, is actually due to this problem of mass education. To hold liberals or any other political group responsible for the manifestations of this crisis is sheer intellectual blindness.

Given the pressures of mass education, the truth about most universities seems to me quite different from what Mr. Cronin suggests. Far from driving potential T. S. Eliots away from their doors, most English departments that I happen to know are competing fiercely if politely for the distinguished men in the field. For one quickly discovers that to stay intellectually alive in the academic world requires stimulating colleagues, even if, heaven forbid, they happen to be New Critics or critics of John Dewey. And then, you know, there *are* at least a few disinterested scholars, some of them even liberals, who feel that getting a new and gifted colleague, even one who may outshine them, constitutes good news. I know how naïve this will seem by comparison with Mr. Cronin's worldliness; but I take the risk.

4. Most university teachers, far from being rabid liberals who intimidate heretics and keep them away from the good jobs, are usually indifferent to politics. Whatever interest they do show in it tends to be casual and intermittent. (They don't even love Adlai very madly.) For that matter, a large number of university teachers are not intellectuals at all: they are specialists, mental technicians, who do a job well or poorly but are seldom infused with the liberal fervor (or think it useful from opportunist motives to simulate the liberal fervor) which Mr. Cronin, in order to have any case at all, must assume to exist. In most universities there just isn't the

political intensity that would make plausible the political favoritism that Mr. Cronin insinuates.

"The adoption of a liberal orientation," he writes, "is an important method for getting on in the academic world." The devil it is! If you really want to get ahead, forget about liberalism and grind out those articles for *PMLA*.

Besides, there are still some honest men left in this world, and a number of them are even chairmen of university departments. The head of an English department in a Midwestern university—one of those supposedly crawling with liberals—will seldom know about the politics of the young instructors, first because he is likely to be making every effort to play fair, second because he doesn't really care, and third because with so many young instructors cluttering up the place his initial problem is to remember their names.

5. Perhaps most crucial to this discussion is the fact that American liberalism, just because it seems fair to have become "not only the dominant but even the sole intellectual tradition," can no longer command a compact body of ideas or even attitudes. What kind of liberals will you find in the average large university? A handful of ADA people, most of them far from firebrands; *perhaps* one liberal of the sort who feels a nostalgic attachment to Popular Frontism; a group for whom liberalism has become a vague commitment to decency, social legislation and the Democratic ticket (though recently a good number of these have found it possible to switch to Ike); and another group for whom liberalism is little more than a euphemism for American citizenship. To speak about that single Popular Front relic as if he were typical of American liberalism today is absurd; to speak about American liberalism as if it were a homogeneous political tendency is absurd; to say that any significant number of American liberals, in or out of the universities, remains "soft" on Communism is absurd. That makes three kinds of absurdity, all together.

As a reporter of academic life Mr. Cronin also manages to be comic. His picture of a professor suffering from "a decided coolness in the atmosphere" because he had been critical of trade unions is enough to wring John Chamberlain's heart; but it ain't so, it doesn't happen. For most academic liberals now go out of their way to disclaim any identification with the workers or their unions; they all too easily (almost as if they were candidates for the Presidency!) equate "big business" with "big unionism," regarding both as a menace and trying to find themselves a political-moral stance above the sordid clash of pressure groups.

Where, one wonders, did Mr. Cronin get his weird picture of the American universities in 1956? Surely not from direct observation; no one, merely by looking, could brew such a fantasy as his academic liberal "flirting with eventual revolution"; mistakes of this magnitude

require guidance. I think I know the answer: he has been reading too many satiric novels by Mary McCarthy and taking them for fact.

That Mr. Cronin is as malicious a critic of liberalism as he is untrustworthy a reporter of academic life seems to me so obvious as to require only a few remarks:

Liberals, he tells us, "may make mistakes, but . . . never sin—for sinning involves personal guilt and responsibility which . . . they do not acknowledge." Now the term "sin," if used seriously, must immediately bring us to a theological context. Whether or not Mr. Cronin knows what he is saying, his sentence means that only persons with religious faith are capable of assuming personal guilt and responsibility. But this is an opinion so arrogant and impudent as to stagger belief: it dismisses a whole class of human beings ("liberals") from the realm of serious moral life. It is also sheer cant. For while a sense of sin certainly can involve personal guilt and responsibility, it is also true that men can feel personal guilt and responsibility without a sense of sin.

The liberals, Mr. Cronin goes on to say, "largely succeed in relegating an important Socratic dialogue, this one with Communism, to the least intellectual segments of the population. They themselves are chiefly responsible for McCarthyism." What simplicity of mind! Mr. Cronin is only a baby step (as he would put it) from a crude conspiracy theory of history. Yes, yes: the liberals are chiefly responsible for McCarthyism; McCarthy is chiefly responsible for the Communists; the Communists are chiefly responsible for the liberals; the liberals are chiefly

responsible for the Communists. Mr. Cronin should be in institutional advertising.

Now that I have almost finished, I ask myself whether it has been worth the trouble. Certainly not for the arguments advanced by Mr. Cronin, which are neither original nor interesting. It's the style, I tell myself, that frisky souped-up jaunty assured style—it's the style that holds one's attention and makes one feel more desperate than the argument.

Consider, for example, the sentence about the education professors who won't hire a new man "unless his heart is twisted into a pretzel that spells John Dewey." Vivid! But why, one asks oneself, why a pretzel? Why not a banana or a bagel that spells John Dewey? Or the sentence claiming that the "convention that it is not in good taste to be a vigorous or outspoken critic of Communism" proceeded to develop "momentum in the thirties and forties and now roars through the academic world largely out of sheer inertia." I pass by the problem of how a convention (at least of this kind) can roar; I put aside the equally interesting problem of how it can roar "out of sheer inertia." (Try it, though, as a muscular exercise.) I prefer to leave it with the academic people who read *The New Republic*: do you think it truthful or accurate to say that the opinion that it is in bad taste to criticize Communism is today roaring through the American universities?

Well, American liberalism needs severe and sustained criticism; so does academic life; and so do the academic liberals. But Mr. Cronin isn't the man for the job. Not even if he were to twist himself into a pretzel.

Pronouncements Are Not Policies

A Reply to Readers' Comments on "American Foreign Policy"

by HANS J. MORGENTHAU

THE COMMENTS on my articles on American foreign policy, published in *The New Republic* of December 10 and 17, have raised three fundamental issues: the likelihood of atomic war, the usefulness of the United Nations, and the chances for the United States to exchange the support of Great Britain and France for that of the Asian-African bloc.

I never shared the belief, widespread after the Geneva Conference of 1955, that atomic war had become impossible. In an article "Has Atomic War Really Become Impossible?" published in the *Bulletin of the Atomic*

Scientists of January, 1956, I tried to show that neither the United States nor the Soviet Union would deliberately start such a war, but that either might stumble into one through miscalculation. "If one side were to push the other into defeat, in reliance upon the latter's resolution not to start an all-out atomic war, it might provoke that very war. If one side were to declare that under no circumstances would it resort to all-out atomic war, it would condemn itself to a policy of appeasement, inviting defeat after defeat and issuing either in impotence or an all-out atomic war fought in desperation under the

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