THE ST. JOHN'S

COLLEGIAN

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THE POLITY AND THE RESIGNATIONS

Among the issues raised by the recent resignations from the Executive Committee, the most urgent is to clarify the position of the Polity, and to do that in the light of the resignations.

> "The duties of the Executive Committee shall be...to maintain relations between the Administration and the polity." (Art.V, Sect 5, Para. f; Polity Constitution)

Whatever the relations between the Administration and the Polity had been before, they suffered a severe strain by the recent action of the Administration in resuming the formulation and enforcement of the Rules of Residence. The fact that they were thus tried made it incumbent, almost by definition, upon the Executive Committee to "maintain relations". Five members chose not to.

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When these former members of the Executive Committee joined that body, they did so with certain preconceived notions about what the Polity was, what the Administration was, and what their duties would be. They were presumably elected to office because the electors respected these notions and possibly shared them. And so the responsibility for the latest eventuality is not solely theirs; the electorate shares it.

What then was the polity and how did the fact of what the Polity was conform to the notion of the electorate and the elected? Comparing , from personal experience and oral history, what the Polity is now and what it was in the past, the differences appear to be of degree and not of kind. The Polity has always derived it s authority from the Administration --- it still does. The Polity has at various times been faced with crises --- as startling as this one or less. The Polity has always been plagued with apathy. But throughout despondency and crises and apathy the Polity has survived, and inthe view of many matured.

This is what the Polity is and was. What was it supposed to be? The Preamble to the Polity Constitution pronounces:

> 'St. John's College is a community united by common aims and common problems. Such problems presuppose no absolute division of responsibility. Therefore Administration, faculty and students can work together only so long as each deals with the other in a spirit of reason and good will. The Polity is the instrument whereby the student body assumes the proper share of responsibility for the welfare of the community.'

And this is, perforce, in conformity with the purposes outlined by the Administration in the Catalogue; the most significant article in that outline being the first:

> 'The Student Polity ... was instituted for the purpose (I) to promote a consciousness in the student body of political and communal responsibilities. to both the College and the civic communities,...

There is a significant small difference in the views presen ted by each of the quotations. The first looks upon the Polity as a going concern, the Administration and the Polity being equal partners in an idealistic enterprise. The second quotation bears overtones of a pedagogical character...that the Polity is a device to promote social consciousness. It does not seem to assume, as does the first, that the consciousness is already in a matured state of being. It seeks to promote it. The tutorials do not assume that students are mathematicians...they seek to promote it.

If the Polity is indeed a pedagogical device, many of the recent events fall into a meaningful pattern. Questions concerning the existence of the College must be solved by those most directly responsible for the college's existence; and since that existence is a necessary condition for all pedagogy (as far as St. John's is concerned), it itself must not be made a pedagogical device. Hence women are admitted after the Board and the Administration have considered the problem. And they are admitted without reference to the tutorials or the Polity. The Rules of Residence are taken back by the Administration because it is too dangerous an issue to remain a pedagogical device. But it is significant that in revoking the Rules the Administration expressed the hope that they would again be given into the hands of the Polity-presumably when the question is no longer the explosive thing it is now. So that even the act of revokation appears as a pedagogical device. The announcement of revocation was planned to have the greatest possible dramatic impact. Why else than that the drama would serve to drive home the lesson? And why a lesson if not to teach? The onerous hour of the curfew is admittedly unreason-

able. But these are reasonable men...why unreasonable in this? Again, as a pedagogical device, and, in conformity with the plan to dramatize the action, something necessary in kind but unreasonable in degree was introduced.

But back to the resignations. If the Polity is a pedagogical device, that is, an organ intended to teach, it must be presupposed that those who are being taught do not yet know that which they will know after being taught. It must be assumed that that which is to promote a consciousness is to promote it in those who only have it imperfectly. But if they have it imperfectly, they do not now comprise a smoothly-running organ - they are not a going concern. But what is it which keeps any political group from success?There are many possible things but surely among them are immaturity and apathy ; and chief among these is apathy. The Polity then becomes a means of teaching those who are to become citizens of the Republic the responsibilities of citizenship and the dangers of apathy.

Now it appears that I have painfully made what is, after all a perfectly obvious point. But I do that in order to supply myself a reference point by which I might evaluate and understand the resignation of five members of the community from their responsibilities.

By the above reasoning, the Polity appears to be an organization whose chief value lies in the fact that it is in a position where it must fight against immaturity and apathy. To do that it must be plagued with immaturity and apathy, for how can a body fight a disease it hasn't got? The leaders of an organization are supposed, a fortiori, to fight these things.

Now it may very well be that they thought they could best fight these things by resigning, in which case they are only guilty of poor judgement, because one doesn't fight indifference with further indifference. One fights indifference by arousing interest, by persuasion. These things are easier prescribed than effected. But forty members, one third of the Polity, were present at the last meeting. Of these at least twenty-five were sufficiently interested to remain throughout the sometimes embarrassing proceedings. These twenty-five to whom the resigned members should have remained loyal represent a nucleus of re-vivification. Beyond that, and to reach the rest of the Polity, open letters and COLLEGIAN articles could be used to arouse interest. But whatever devices are thought of, cutting off the head of a sick man is not the way to cure him.

If the members of the Polity are sometimes, or even usually, slothful, this should not be interpreted by the officers as a repudiation and disillusion; but as an indication of the magnitude of their task and as a challenge to their constancy and ability.

If the Polity is not the peer of the Administration, it can at least be the embodiment of the most enlightened aspirations of the student body.

None of this is intended to excuse the members of the Polity from their share of the blame in what culminated in a bad decision by the five resigned committeemen. They were still a direct cause of the resignations. If a solution to the present dilemma is to be found in a better understanding by the officers of the Polity of their duties and responsibilities, certainly the same applies to the members of the Polity. It is for them to distinguish be-

tween aspirations and rights, between hopes and facts. Polity self-rule is not a right - it is an aspiration. Sufficient ability to cope with the problems of administering the social life of the community is a hope - not a fact. The ultimate realization of hopes and aspirations does not lie in the extremes of resignation or apathy, and indignation or petulance. The way is through an enlightened and realistic attitude of willingness and cooperation and firmness, so that disappointments are not shattering nor setbacks demoralizing.

It is not below the dignity of tyros in government to administer janitorial functions. But be that as it may, the granting of charters and allotments of funds may be unglamorou s, but they are not altogether janitorial. Nor can responsibility for administering the unrevoked Rule IV of the Rules be considered menial. Rule IV is the General Welfare clause: it places responsibility for the general welfare in the hands of the Polity. It was the corpus of moral authority which the Polity enjoyed before the advent of women when there were no other rules of residence, and so the Polity, in this regard, is substantially as it was up to two years ago.

The Polity can still form itself into an effective body and one eventually capable of administering the Rules of Residence. But again, this cannot be done through acts of petulance or be apathy. If so much of the unique quality of St. John's consists in a greater equality between Polity and Administration, those who despair that the school is in ominous transition might better serve their convictions and fight their fears by preparing the way to greater equality. The way is through awareness of communal responsibility and concerted politic effort. The organ is the Polity. -SANDEK

MR. BUCHANNAN AND THE PARAMETERS

I

"Possibility is the regulative idea for the analysis of wholes into parts." A formal, unattached principle of possibility that allowed for an indefinite number of ways in which something could be understood, would seem not to be a regulative idea. The essence of such a principle is the indefiniteness of what a given whole could be understood to be, and therefore the apparent lack of any regulation. In order to make possibility a regulative idea it must regulate on a different level than that of direct analysis or synthesis, i.e. it must embody a definite pattern or method, by virtue of which a particular analysis or synthesis can be understood to be formally identical, but specifically different. The setting up of such a mathod is the attempt to give unity and relationship to the widely differing products of the free play of the intellectual imagination.

If one is restricted in the number of ways in which one can analyze or synthesize a given whole, the intellectual imagination is governed by the regulative idea of potentiality. Potentiality is possibility with restrictions. It is difficult if not impossible to impose restriction restriction on the intellectual imagination. How then is one to understand and regulate the activity of that imagination?

Mr. Buchannan has offered an answer to this question by setting up a supra-general pattern (which structurally may be identical with intellectual imagination) the use of which will allow us to organize and clarify imaginative thinking, and the beauty of which is the freedom under law that it will give to the bastard faculty, intellectual imagination, that prior to this had only license.

It could be said that the system itself is nothing more than a complicated exercise in intellectual imagination, and that Mr. Buchannan is just being ironic with the academic mind. For anyone who has spent time trying to understand "Possibility" and the other works, which deal with the same subject, this is hard to refute. Mr. Buchannan never attempts to demonstrate the necessity for postulating the system. He appeals to man's inner experience of rebirth, the passage from one possible world into another. In so far as his appeal is confirmed by one's inner experience of a complete qualitative change, and insofar as this system makes that change intelligible, I think Mr. Buchannan is deadly serious. He represents himself as a confused individual seeking an intellectual way of life and using a new methodology to achieve clarification. Let us hope that it is only paradoxical that his clarification is itself bewildering.

Even, however, if his clarification does succeed, there still remains the problem that the formal principle of possibility is a dangerous one. Although it uses the intellectual imagination and forces a development upon it, the principle is easily misused. Symbols as symbols, distant or otherwise, have no meaning in themselves. Mr. Buchannan saw that the older criteria of correspondence of sign to thing signified was in intellectual disrepute, but he also realized the necessity for intellectual responsibility. I understand his book as an attempt to find meaning on another level.

II

The parameter is the unit of possibility as a regulative idea. It is a relationship and nothing more, which allows one to differentiate a given whole in a certain way. The choices of parameters

to analyze a given whole is unlimited but not arbitrary. It is unlimited because the number of relationships that can be set up is infinite, but it is not arbitrary because the number of relationships that can be set up to analyze a given whole in a desired way is perfectly definite. Given what you wish to accomplish in analyzing a given whole, the use of different parameters to accomplish this end is the use of possibility as a regulative idea.

The use of parameters requires a matrix. A matrix is a form, or background, or heirarchy on which the parameters must be imposed. The choice of a matrix is not strictly speaking a problem of possibility since each given whole has a matrix of elements that are actual, not possible. A matrix is not a parameter. In some cases it may be possible to find more than one matrix for a given whole, but ultimately the freedom of movement here is very restricted. There is hardly enough freedom to justify saying that a matrix is only a possibility.

For example, a matrix that allows us to interpret a book is one that comes from grammar itself. Words have impositions and intentions. These impositions and intentions form a frame of reference in which a great many possible relationships subsist. The success of the interpretation does not depend on the correspondence of the relationships set up with the author 's intentions. It depends rather on the ingenuity and facility of the intellectual imagination of the one making the interpretation. This is not interpretation in the ordinary sense. It is the kind of analysis that allows the prosaic to become poetic. By allowing the free reign of possible relationships, which are only restricted

by the interpreter's intention, it places only one burden on that interpreter. It requires him to come out of the array of fragments with a whole possibe meaning. The possible meaning need only have a wholeness and self-sufficiency of which the text is merely the material cause.

Used this way, possibility seems to be the logical excuse to make a book say anything ycu want. This is precisely what it does, but in doing so it does not make the result any less subject to a different kind of criticism, namely of how much worth is the possible meaning? The possible meaning can only have worth if it is beautiful, useful, or true. The beauty of a possible meaning requires a criterion of aesthetics that Mr. Buchannan too adequately. The usefulness of a possible meaning is the usefulness of any of the physical sciences, where hypothesis plays a major role. The truth of a possible meaning is a much more difficult matter. A possible meaning can only be said to be true when it occupies a position in a possible world that occupies a position in a system of Total, Ideal, or Universal possibility. I think the discovery of the latter is what Mr. Buchannan is trying to set the groundwork for, but until it is achieved, a possible meaning must remain merely a possible truth.

The analogy with Euclid is unavoidable. A given geometrical whole can be analyzed in a number of ways. Each way to analyze it is the imposing of a relation between the whole and different kinds of parts. Having chosen a kind of part, one is bound by reason to analyze only in a very limited number of ways. The kind of parts that one can choose, however, is unlimited.

Each kind of part bears to the whole a different kind of relation. Each kind of relation is a parameter. The relations of relations in a given whole is a parametric series. The aggregate of parametric series is a possible meaning. The aesthetic appreciation, the practical application, or the inclusion by use of a super-parameter into a possible world make it Euclids geometry.

The System is not, however, this simple. A parameter, itself, can be understood to imply an aggregate of sub-parameters, and also to be a sub-parameter of a super-parameter. Further within the system there are cer tain rules. Deductive inference is the basis for discovery of sub-parameters, and inductive inference is the basis for discovery of super-parameters. Inference in any case must be carefully restricted. The basis for any implication must be the law of substitution. To substitute one must have the law of contradiction. In "Possibility" the acceptance of this law is an absolute necessity. It is the primary condition of possibility for a system of possibility. There is no possible world which can exclude it.

The system can also be made flexible by introducing the notion of variability. By use of this notion it can extend its range of application from ideas to physical objects. All that is necessary to unify both under its breadth is the use of constant and variable parameters.

A system of possibility that is as elastic, applicable, and highly formalized as this one presents a very strong temptation to the liberal artist. Continually searching for, and not finding, unity within the specific subject matter, this jump to abstract formality becomes very seductive. Succumbing to method-

ology exclusively, however, requires him to abandon dialectic and turn to the building of pattern upon pattern. Where such is the case, as it is in "Possibility", some caution is in order.

- HAZO -

TWICE-INJURED QUEEN

What delightful parts of a play there are in THE WINTER'S TALE ! Shakespeare alone could have so peopled Sicilia and Bohemia under the Greek pantheon with ladies and gentlemen of the English Renaissance and thrown in the best of all country scenes bar Master Shallow's, the sheep-shearing festival right out of Warwickshire - gold, all gold. But, alas, a few magic episodes do not make a play, and even if we extend every reasonable courtesy of faith to the fairy gold, and the fool's gold too,their pieced fabric comes far short of concealing the unprepossessing bones of an action that no Greek (indeed no careful gentleman) would have stooped to. If only Shakespeare could have written THE WINTER'S TALE, only Shakespeare among the great dramatists would have. It is an illumination of things as they are that the most gifted dramatic poet wrote this little item soon after ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA, and just before THE TEMPEST,. Compared with such plays it inevitably reminds us of Antony's comment on the Megarian senate-house: small (I translate for seniors) but rotten.

As there is no use at this point getting exersised about this matter, and particularly as I wish to make this comment factual, thus non-controversial, I quickly add a note of affirmation and a note of interrogation. I.THE WINTER'S TALE was not meant to be any more than it is,a working piece for a stock company whose public had tired of heavy tragedy and were taken with the romantic unrealities of Beaumont and Fletcher. 2. Maybe people should take it as it is and not make us torture it into a noble document of the liberal arts? Romantic unrealities can be charming and much more (see THE TEMPEST), or beautiful though absurd (see CYMBELINE). They can also be demented. THE WINTER'S TALE is demented , and it is not demented in a nice way but in a demented way. It is true, as they say, that Shakespeare touched nothing without adorning it; but enough fatal defects in a dramatic skeleton can make even the adornments of so prodigious a magician unillusory, and so much the more cer-

tainly as the magician has less real interest in what he is doing.

There is an element of a play called the action. As Buchanan is the great master of the impositions and intentions, so Aristotle is the great master of the action. Thus, in addition to our knowledge of the impositions and intentions (alone among american students), we fortunately by our nature possess the apodeictic knowledge thatnif the action of a play is no good neither is the play. ..That this is true (mutatis mutandtis) even with romantic unrealities, we are helped to see by CYMBELINE,the action of which is preposterous but not demented. In THE WINTER'S TALE Shakespeare wrested into'comedy' an action that when he got it was properly tragic, and to the ensuing teratism applied an old stale nostrom, the living statue, which, to say the truth, even in its best days had never amounted to much. An expedient of despair and effrontery in an ordinary writer, that trick in Shakespeare was merely one more expression of the serene indifference to artistic scruplousness, the golden carelessness about assured integration , integrity and harmony, that is only too likely to show up anytime in him as an opportunist satisfaction of the immediate need.

It cannot have escaped anyone's notice that in that final scene of 'reconciliation', Hermione says not one word to the man with whom she is'reconciled.' This is for cause. As no grown normal woman would wish to be reconciled with that fearful bounder or for one instant entertain the idea, the problem of having this queenly automaton say anything at all without appearing to gibber was a difficult one. Was it not insoluble? In other words, what could she say? Are we not on solid ground in asking (no answer needed), if Shakespeare could not think of anything, who could? Having established that, I will, though diffidently, suggest something myself, probably on a different level. Hermione should have said: 'The renewal of my atrocious mis-

treatment now proposed by that officious goddess Paulina is somewhat more than I plan to bear.' She would not say 'goddess' probably. 'I have been tormented plenty. I know that I am only a poor plot-ridden woman, but really, my years as a secret statue were the happiest of my life, and if it's all the same to everybody, I am continuing on with them and good-day to you.'

That certain practical difficulties thereby brought into the action may possibly be beyond my powers I grant (though Shakespeare would not turn a hair). As a matter of fact, however, they are not I think very great. Indeed, it is obvious that Hermione and Autolycus flee the mad scene together, seeking, as they set out arm in arm, singing and dancing, some place where men and women act like sane persons (though it may not be obvious that naturally they take with them the little prince, who has been these long years a concealed statue too); and I do not think that too much credit is due for the common-sense suggestion that Paulina be eaten by that useful Bohemian bear. - FORD K. BROWN

TWO POEMS

I think I'll go home through the
Woods today. Trees look so nice,
Majestic, alone, respected.
Kindly sheltering.
Solidity.
You say the tallest blow down in
Storms and scrub oak survive?
Sadist!
Majestic, alone, respected.
Look at those wild berries, see
How they grow under the spreading
Limbs of that
Mighty tree.
Majestic.
Blackberries. I'm hungry.
Muddy here. Oooo
Berries are sour.
Damn mud.

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Maybe someone will come along
And help me. As
Long as I don't move I'll be
Safe. Sun's going down. Slobs
From the factory going home will
Help me. They don't go by the wodds.
The sun sets early in December.
Is that a voice? Flapping wings. Red
Neck. Smells awful.
Limb of that big tree hangs
Grab it. Hand of providence.
It crumbles in my hands.
The sun is setting,
Majestic, alone, respected.

'Whatdo you do?'
'I work on the railroad as my father did. We work on the eighty
Mile stretch between the mountains of Nevada.'
'What's your job?'
'I, as did my father, pick the termites out of the railroad ties.'
'How do you like it ?'
'It's fine but pretty soon there will be no more job. My son will be
The last. They put cresote on the ties and the tremites can't get in.'
'Tell me about it.'
'Not much to tell. It's slow work and pretty routine. Like any other
Job I guess. Takes time and patience, and is rewarding.'
'Trains bother you?'
'They used to .Every seven hours they used to pass. They were good
in some ways. They made the termites active and we could find
Them quicker. Bad sometimes. People used to flush the toilets and it
Was sloppy.'

'What about the trains now?'
'They don't use these rails anymore. No bother now.'
'Where are you going now?'
'To bury my father.'

PETER MCGHEE

POEM

High ceilings and stone hearths-
Paneled doors with brass knobs-
Faded lamps with close, friendly circles of light-
Bookshelves' ancient leather and crackling parchment-
Good wine.

Sunlight singing through the windows,
A nimble breeze that gently prods my brow,
And for a moment bids me turn my head from paper.
Sidewalks, gnarled and twisted out of shape
By the soft persistance of an old oak-
Cluttered, orderless shop windows,
Fascinating in their confusion—
Warm rain.

Fresh snow, clinging to every branch of every tree,
And to all else that offers a resting place,
Creating a white illusion I dare not disdain.
Music.

Mozart's lace and linen
And the unfaltering stride of Beethoven...
And Autumn, and love,
And each mystery that seems to beckon
with shadowy finger, and say,
"Here is a secret good!"

CHARLES LERNER

THE FAMILIAR RHYTHM

An apt lecture, and even a pleasant lecture, deserves some sort of record for the purpose of more and better tald later on. Mr. Barber's lecture deserves record for reasons of pleasure and aptness and for at least one other; that he appeared to be one of the most earnest of our Friday night guests to have visited us recently - having looded over the catalog and introduced himself to the community before talking with us as lecturer.

Some parts of his lecture were much underlined and later even repeated : it is worth while to set them down again. From the beginning it was made clear that the study of literary forms and species is an investigation of some importance to the reader and the thinker. In making order out of the jumble of experience, the limiting and relating power of words is supplemented by the ordering and judgement-precipitating power of literary form. On one hand individual words are largely limited to providing symbols by which the mysterious things we sall external objects and internal feelings can be prepared for ordering, but that thing called the form of discourse performs the more intimate, more sophisticated function of preparing us for certain judgements.

It was at about this point in the lecture that Mr. Barber set up a thesis which he hoped we, the listeners, would set our minds to work on as a test of whether the thesis could be maintained - a straw horse of sorts. Mr. Barber claimed that tragedy and comedy are forms which mould some of our attempts to think about our disorderly experiences, and he claimed that these two forms have one imprtant thing in common, namely a single theme

which can be found by a careful look at the examples we have of tragedies and comedies. For an hour we looked through Shakespeare, Swift, Sophocles and a ballad or two. One result of this search was the formulation of an hypothesis that both dramatic forms are the result of an interplay between convention and raw action: comedy being the use of convention to show up the inhumaneness of nature; tragedy being the use of the unfriendly aspects of man's surroundings to show up his unsuccessful attempts to make order.

This thesis did not appear too startling in the lecture, in fact we showed every sign of having swallowed rather than questioned the challenge; but the amplifications Mr. Barber made in the library, and the illustrations he chose, gave his position a more provocative nature. For instance, the question period soon settled down to the old OEdipus story. The lecturer claimed that the fraternity theme best illustrated the conflict of convention and individual action - in this instance the theme of patricide and incest in OEdipus. The theme of fraternity he translated as the family theme, or as Aristotle's POLITICS would expand it, the theme of man and society, since the family is the paradigm of all greater societies. But the point where this one theme of fraternity - more commonly recognized as the sex and society theme of present day psychology and criticism - took over the discussion was the point at which the question period split up into the many who tired of hearign the same old (20th century) argument, and the few who accepted the uncloaking of the lecturer as a challenge to our current collective mistrust of "uni-

versal themes" and the reduction of the arts to psychology.

Barber proceeded to support his choice of an ordering form by gathering examples that fitted it. Most had been mentioned in the lecture but they were more pointed in his newly-broached thesis. As You Like It became an exercise in the confusion and destruction of certain inhibiting social forms which eventually result in the freeing of the individual. Additional examples ran through Medea, Electra, Lear, Barleycorn and others. Oedipus was included, of course, since that play, when investigated in this way, is the problem of family ties and incest, which is really the fraternal theme, again magnified to say: Man vs Society.

By the time this stage of the discussion was underway, not many in the community had chosen to stick around to hear the end. True, this particular line of argument had been heard before, and some members of the faculty have the reputation of being able to argue well against it, but this does not seem to justify the action of most of the juniors and seniors who left the room as if to say, "This fellow is only pretending to ask us a question about themes in poetry--he already knows what his answer is and I know mine. Therefore, what reason can we have for talking any more?" This left only the less sophisticated and perhaps more combative underclass listeners to be baffled by the position of Mr Barber. Was his position one of a man trying to find some unity to tragedy and comedy? Or was it one of sneaking the social

sciences into St John's?

I do not think that Mr Barber was carried away by his own argument at this point. Clearly he set up the thesis in the beginning as a structure for us to argue against. His familiarity with the sociological theme does not necessarily mean that he is happy with it. If we take his words at face value, he came to St John's to be saved from this view! Of course, we have no direct way of knowing if this is true...it almost sounds too decent to believe. Will a man who is confused by his ideas--some of them ideas by which he makes his living--allow them to be chopped up and rearranged and corrected by a group of students who may be equally confused? Even if he was not confused, a pretended naivite regarding a big subject like Barber's does not seem the best rhetoric, no matter how well it might have worked for Socrates in short investigations lasting ten minutes or so. But poor rhetoric aside, it is not impossible that Barber was genuinely looking for an alternative to Freud and Frazer and that he was intent on defending that company only until a formidable counter was offered.

Alternatives were forthcoming. Since Oedipus was being used, Mr Bart recalled the struggle of Oedipus with his fate, which could be expanded to form a Man & Nature theme. This Man & Nature theme can be just as good a "universal theme" for poetry as the Man & Society problem, he said. Plato explained the manufacture of the world

as the combining of intelligence with necessity; and at another time he explained its genesis in terms of a father-mother-child analogy. Mr Klein added to Mr Barts example with a recollection of the curiosity of Oedipus. This suggested still another theme, that of man himself, or Man & His Self-knowledge. Can other terms be suggested from Oedipus or from some other drama? How about Man& God? State & God?--good old theological themes; or State & Fate?--an Historical one.

It may be that Mr Barber's thesis cannot be destroyed, at least not by merely offering alternative themes, though few of us would admit to that so easily. But even if it cannot be destroyed, have hot several other equally important themes been suggested? And could not these themes be traced through Sophocles, Shakespeare, Swift and some ballads? There remains then the need for some method of testing themes to see which one may be read most often into poetry with the idea of some benefir to the reader.

I seem to recall a conversation I had the pleasure of listening in on once. The conversation covered roughly the same area as the problem Mr. Barber talked to us about. In addition it was a problem of method and form. But the differences were most important, for while Mr. Barber was trying to find a single form to comprehend a multitude of examples of human thinking, the people I remember were more concerned with seeing the various ways a single principle could be imagined to exist in a lot of particular cases. The attempt ran something like this:

'Now let us have a more definite understanding and establish the principles on which the argument rests.'

'What principle?'

'A principle about which men are always in difficulty and some men sometimes against their will.'

'Speak plainer.'

'The principle which has just turned up which is a marvel of nature. For that one should be many, or many one, are wonderful propositions, and he who affirms either is very open to attack when the one does not belong to the cause of things which are born and perish, as, for instance, when I say that man is one, or beauty one, or the good one. The interest which attaches to these and similar unities and the attempt which is made to divide them gives birth to a controversy.

'Of what nature?'

'In the first place, as whether these unities have a real existence, and then, how each individual unity, being always the same and incapable of either generation or or destruction, but retaining a permanent individuality, can be conceived either as dispersed and multiplied, or as still entire and yet divided from itself. These are real difficulties and this is the one and many to which they relate. They are the sources of great perplexity if ill-decided.

'There neither is nor ever will be a better method than my own favorite way.'

'Tell me what that is.'

'One which may easily be pointed out, but is by no means easy of application. It is the parent of all discoveries in the arts.'

'Tell me what it is, will you?'

'A gift of heaven, by which, whenever we investigate things that are said to be composed of one and many, and which have the finite and the infinite implanted in them, we ought in each inquiry

to begin by laying down one idea of the thing which is the subject of inquiry. Having found this unity we then proceed to look for two, or, if not, then for three or some other number, subdividing each of these units until at last the unity with which we begin is seen to be not only one and many and infinite, but also a definite number. But the wise men of our time are either too quick or too slow in concealing plurality in unity. Having no method, they make their one and many anyhow, and from unity pass at once to infinity. The intermediate steps never occus to them. And this is what makes the difference between the mere art of disputation and true dialectic as carried on at St. John's.'

Perhaps mere directionless multiplication of possible forms for the ordering of experience is not the method to be followed.With some plan in mind an answer to the formal problem af any human activity - say the making of a play - Might be got at by proceeding from some principle which cannot be escaped in talking about man or nature. An example of such a principle might be any analytic proposition about man or nature: perhaps, 'Man is a social animal', or 'Nature is the work of God', if indeed these predicates are actually so essential to the subjects that they may be considered as contained in them. Such an inquiry, proceeding 'downward' from a priori principles to the level of Mr. Barber's thesis, might prove more satisfactory than the attempt to choose one theme as essential from the multitude of possible themes in a multitude of possible attempts at play-making. Any attempt to abstract a theme by a sort os undisciplined induction is bound to give birth to numberless ill-conceived monsters- certainly not the legitimate offspring of mature wielders of the liberal - and

therefore to some degree mathematical - arts. It appears that Mr. Barber and St. John's are starting at opposite ends of that subterranean connection that is supposed to exist between Amherst and Annapolis.

- TOM HEINEMAN

Collegium

Peter McGhee