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**KENNETH B. CLARK, Ph.D.**  
DISTINGUISHED PROFESSOR OF PSYCHOLOGY EMERITUS  
CITY COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK  
AND  
PRESIDENT  
CLARK, PHIPPS, CLARK & HARRIS, INC.

*on*

**“PRESENT COMPLEXITIES IN AMERICAN RACE RELATIONS”**

Thursday, November 20, 1980  
8:00 PM  
Memorial Hall  
Carolina Campus

Reception following lecture  
UNC Ballroom  
Carolina Inn

KENNETH B. CLARK was born on July 24, 1914 in the Panama Canal Zone and came to New York City as a child of five. He began his education in Harlem at Public School 5, attended P.S. 139 and graduated from George Washington High School. Clark received his B.A. (1935) and M.A. (1936) degrees from Howard University, and his Ph.D. in Social Psychology (1940) from Columbia University. He joined the faculty of the City College of New York in 1942 and spent his entire academic career there, retiring as a Distinguished University Professor in 1975.

He is author of several books and many articles, including *Prejudice and Your Child* (1955), the prize-winning *Dark Ghetto* (1965), and *Pathos of Power* (1974). He is co-author with Jeanette Hopkins of *A Relevant War Against Poverty* (1968) and co-editor with Talcott Parsons of *The Negro American* (1966). The results of his work on the effects of segregation on children were utilized by the United States Supreme Court in the historic decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954).

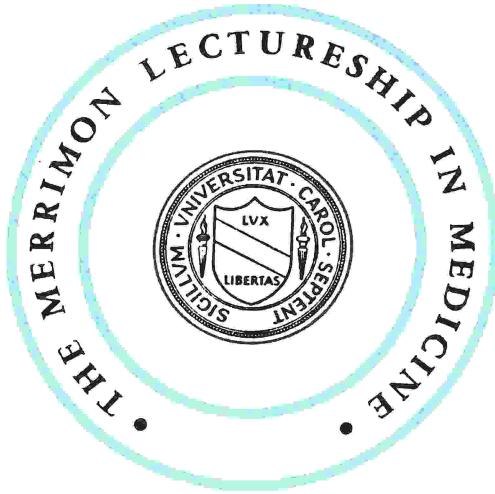
Former president of the American Psychological Association, the Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues, and the Metropolitan Applied Research Center, Dr. Clark now serves as a member of the Board of Regents of the State of New York, and is a member of the boards of directors of Harper & Row, the Lincoln Savings Bank, the Presidential Life Insurance Company

and the United States National Commission for UNESCO.

Dr. Clark has received honorary degrees from Princeton, Columbia, Johns Hopkins, North Carolina (Chapel Hill), George Washington, Carnegie-Mellon, and Yeshiva Universities, and from Amherst, Oberlin, and Haverford Colleges. He is also the recipient of the Springarn Medal (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, 1961), the Kurt Lewin Memorial Award (Society for Psychological Studies of Social Issues, 1966), and the first Award for Distinguished Contributions to Psychology in the Public Interest (American Psychological Association, 1978).

Since retirement, Dr. Clark has started a new career in the private sector as president of Clark, Phipps, Clark & Harris, Inc., a consulting firm based in New York. The firm was established in June, 1975, to provide professional consultation to private corporations and government agencies on personnel matters with particular emphasis on human relations, race relations and affirmative action programs, both within and outside the United States. The firm has provided counsel to a number of foundations, private corporations and educational institutions including the NAACP, the United States Department of State, Princeton University, American Telephone & Telegraph, Chemical Bank Corporation, Consolidated Edison, and the United States Department of Labor.

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MERRIMON LECTURE

*by*

KENNETH B. CLARK, PhD.

*November Twentieth, Nineteen Hundred and Eighty*

## THE MERRIMON LECTURE

### **Present Complexities in American Race Relations: Symptoms of Conflict and the Sickness-Success Syndrome**

**KENNETH B. CLARK, Ph.D**

*Distinguished Professor of Psychology Emeritus  
City College of The City University of New York  
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1980



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## **Present Complexities in American Race Relations: Symptoms of Conflict and the Sickness-Success Syndrome**

There is probably no better example of the present complexities, inconsistencies and ambiguities of contemporary American race relations than the pattern, style and results of the recent presidential campaign. During the primary campaigns the candidates of both major parties made their appeals to the voters as if civil rights and problems of race were no longer relevant issues. After receiving the nominations of their respective parties, President Carter and Governor Reagan sought to attract the majority of American voters by emphasizing such problems as the economy, inflation, unemployment, effective military defense, foreign policy, and the American hostages in Iran. When discussed at all, racial problems were mentioned obliquely and apologetically, as if they were peripheral to more important issues. Governor Reagan made some remark concerning the fact that President Carter was speaking in the birthplace of the Klan; he was required to correct himself, admitting that every town in Alabama was not responsible for the birth of the Klan. President Carter made a few comments concerning the racial implications of some of the code words or phrases used by his opponent; he was required to apologize for suggesting that Reagan was making racist appeals. The role of the Federal government in implementing the Affirmative Action commitments of the 1964 civil rights act, in coping with the massive unemployment of black youth, in ameliorating the continued racial discrimination in employment, and in developing realistic methods for promoting the adjudicated constitutional rights for equal protection of black children in segregated schools throughout our nation nearly thirty years after the historic *Brown* decision—all of these were obscured even in the “great debate.” Governor Reagan’s statement that he was not aware of any racial problems in the United States when he was a young man went unchallenged.

Since the election, commentators and analysts employed by the press and the electronic media have presented many and varied explanations of the Reagan victory. A common denominator of these explanations is that the majority of the American people who registered and voted in this presidential election demonstrated by their vote their disillusionment with liberal and progressive Federal government policies. They suggested the voters were now giving a “mandate” for more conservative approaches to our problems. Other analysts stated that President Carter’s defeat was an expression of the voters’ reaction against his economic and fiscal policies, high inflation and interest rates; his foreign policy; his inability to free the hostages in Iran; to prevent the Russians from invading Afghanistan; and his failure to bring peace in the Middle East. Some pundits proposed that President Carter was doomed to defeat by his inability to free himself of the family albatross of the many domestic and foreign peccadilloes of his brother, Billy.



It is significant that none of the public analyses of the unquestioned movement toward the conservative right in the last presidential election have sought to explore the present complex and seething racial turbulence in America as a critical factor. No one has yet publicly stated that President Carter's unprecedented appointments of black and Hispanic Federal judges in the southern states could have been one of the factors which resulted in the fact that the solid South went almost solidly Republican. Could it be that President Carter's quiet assumption that the major problems of racial justice in America have been resolved exploded in the presidential elections? Could the recent presidential election be indicative of the fact that white backlash has metastasized? Was the latent anger with the judicial, executive and legislative departments of the United States government for their assistance to the progress of blacks now being directed against the party in power? Did the specific forms of northern racial conservatism, inherent in the *Bakke* and *Weber* cases and in the resistance to desegregation of northern public schools reflected in the anti-busing controversy, spill over into the society as a whole to become a generalized systemic political conservatism?

The fact that these and related questions have not yet been discussed publicly may be symptomatic of the complexity of contemporary American race relations. The syndrome consists of the insistence that disturbing social and racial issues have either been resolved or can be dealt with by simplistic programs and semantic inversions; or by diversionary emphases on other issues, problems and programs which are given priority and can be made more dramatic and appealing.

In seeking to understand the present complexities in American race relations and its manifestation in the most recent presidential election, one must understand the history and dynamics of the American social, political and ideological system. The periods of progression and retrogression of the racial problems in America can only be understood within the context of the strengths and weaknesses of the American democratic system. The state of race relations, the status of blacks and other minorities in America, is an infallible indicator of the degree of stability or instability—equilibrium or disequilibrium—of the system as a whole. Throughout American history, the forces of pragmatic liberalism and conservatism and the periods of reactionism have been in turbulent conflict and have competed to determine which one, or combination, would influence or retard the movement toward social and racial justice.

Race relations has been a critical and unavoidable index of the stability and health of American democracy. It has been a central fact of its history. From the period of slavery through the abolitionist movement to emancipation; from the promises of the Populist movement for economic-social equity to the regression into racial segregation with the more sophisticated form of economic slavery and rejection of blacks; from the post World War II successful civil rights struggle against racial segregation to the present, America

has fluctuated in moral health and democratic stability. The course of this turbulent struggle for democratic health and survival can be charted in terms of the judicial decisions in the movement from *Dred Scott*, through *Plessy* to the historic *Brown* decision. Within this context, the *Brown* decision may be viewed as the necessary mid-20th century racial restatement of the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation. These documents are the assertions of the basic health and potential vitality of the American democratic system. They may be viewed as the prescribed remedies for the moral pathologies which threaten the effectiveness, if not the very survival, of the American system of government.

American history since World War II provides another perspective from which to view the present complexities of American race relations and to diagnose the health of the nation. During this period the three major branches of the Federal government began to play an increasingly positive role in the struggle for racial justice and democratic stability. The role of the United States Supreme Court from the *Sweatt* and *McLaurin* cases in the early 1940s to the *Brown* decision has been well documented. What is not as clearly understood has been the role of the Presidents in this ongoing struggle.

History will record that Harry S. Truman, more specifically than did Franklin D. Roosevelt, initiated the modern phase of the civil rights struggle by two important executive actions. By desegregating the Armed Forces, President Truman made a most concrete contribution to American racial justice. He also appointed a commission of inquiry into American race relations which produced a classic, The President's Committee Report on Civil Rights, "To insure These Rights." This important but curiously under-publicized report became a blueprint for the role of the Federal government for future racial progress.

President Dwight Eisenhower was by no means a civil rights activist, but he made a major positive, even if inadvertent, contribution to racial justice in America when he appointed Earl Warren as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court. It should be noted also that President Eisenhower, in spite of his own personal opinions, did block the tragic-comic opera rebellion of Governor Orville Faubus when the Governor tried to defy the Federal government in the desegregation of Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas. To preserve law and order and to ensure respect for the Constitution and authority of the Federal government, President Eisenhower sent in the Federal troops.

President John Kennedy had only started to move toward the implementation of racial justice when he was tragically assassinated. It was left to his successor, Lyndon B. Johnson, to accelerate the movement toward unqualified racial justice in America by using the full power of his Presidency. It was under the Johnson Administration that the Congress of the United States passed two major pieces of civil rights legislation: the Civil Rights Act

of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. President Johnson also appointed the first black to the United States Supreme Court and to a president's cabinet. These were important symbols of his personal dedication to the goals of racial justice.

The administration of Richard Nixon was marked by a period of racial conservatism, if not repression and "benign neglect." In his public statements more than in the actions of some of his executive staff, Mr. Nixon clearly pandered to the primitive racial prejudices and fears of a large segment of middle America. These were the early localized racial symptoms of the systematic disease which erupted in the nationwide tragedy of Watergate. President Gerald Ford's tenure was too short to have any observable impact on American race relations.

President Carter was elected to office in 1976 through the over-whelming vote of black Americans. His defeat in 1980 can be attributed to the significant defection from the Democratic Party of white southerners, rank and file workers, and white northern ethnics, such as the Irish, Italians and Jews. He held on to a high percentage of black voters, in spite of the fact that the Carter Administration took racial progress for granted. Aside from the appointment of Andrew Young as Ambassador to the United Nations, there were few major symbolic breakthroughs toward racial justice. Yet, many white voters turned away from Carter and voted for Reagan.

Within the nearly three decades since the *Brown* decision, race relations in America have been marked by continuing and conflicting positive and negative symptoms. Among the positive signs of social and racial health are the removal of the more flagrant and dehumanizing signs of racial segregation from the southern states; the elimination of segregation in public transportation and public accommodations; the marked increase in the participation of blacks in the political system; the number of blacks elected to political office in southern states and northern cities; and increase in number of black students and faculty in traditionally white institutions of higher education. These racial gains should not be underestimated. It is an encouraging fact that in 1980 not all black and white children in southern states are being damaged by attending racially segregated schools. The fact that an increasing number of blacks are now able to attend state supported colleges and universities in the southern states is also a significant step toward the goal of unqualified racial justice.

These gains, however, are countered by the persistence of the superstition of racial differences which remains a critical and mocking central aspect of American institutions—and most disturbingly an uncritically accepted aspect of the educational system of the United States. In the latter part of the 20th century, many educators and public officials in the United States still support policies and practices in which white and black children and youth attend "traditionally black" or "traditionally white" schools and colleges. By

these policies and practices, these young people continue to be afflicted by the contagious disease of racism. The refusal to disestablish racially separate educational institutions is failing to prepare American children with the strengths and social and moral skills required to play an effective role in the realities of the present and future world. Two-thirds of the peoples of the world are nonwhite. American and European colonialism no longer determine or dominate the relationship and interactions between the nonwhite and white peoples. The perpetuation of racially segregated schools in the United States is an anachronism which educates American children for the past and cripples them for an effective role in the future. This remains a serious threat to the future health and vitality of the total American social, political, and economic system.

The present political conservatism reflects the problems, the conflicts and the total pattern of symptoms indicative of the health or pathology of the nation as a whole. This turbulence between equilibrium and disequilibrium in the present pattern of American race relations can be seen in terms of the medical model of social sickness and the struggle for health. In seeking to understand the conflict between American democratic ideals and the persistent manifestations of American racism, Gunnar Myrdal, the distinguished economist and social philosopher, called this phenomenon "The American Dilemma." I have often used the medical and psychiatric concept of "moral schizophrenia."

A persuasive argument could be made in support of the contention that when the term "sickness" is used to describe qualities and characteristics of large social groups, it runs the danger of being essentially a rhetorical, if not meaningless, term. The concept of health or sickness has traditionally been used in describing the physical state of individuals. This concept is essentially a medical term when used with precision. When the term "sickness" is used in describing the state of effectiveness of groups of individuals, and when used as a social psychological concept, its meaning has generally been metaphorical rather than precise.

When used to describe the medical condition of an individual, the term "sickness" means that the individual is showing symptoms of impairment of bodily function; that one or more of the individual's organs and physiological functions are not functioning adequately; and that in order to function effectively the individual requires some form of remedy, medication or intervention. The "sick" individual must either be cured by some form of therapy or he deteriorates and, in extreme cases, dies.

The concept of "sickness" has been gradually expanded from this more strictly medical usage to describe psychiatric and psychological conditions of individuals. In the psychological and psychiatric use of the term "sickness," the term generally means that the individual is emotionally or mentally deranged and consistently manifests inappropriate or non-adaptive behavior.



With the development of the psychological and psychiatric sciences, the term "sickness" has been used not only to describe individuals with psychotic symptoms such as those associated with schizophrenia or manic depressive psychosis; the term has gradually come to be used generally to characterize those individuals who show neurotic anxieties, obsessions and non-adaptive compulsive behavior of various kinds. The common denominator in the use of the term "sickness" to define or to characterize the behavior of psychotic or neurotic individuals is the observation and belief that individuals showing such symptoms are, like those who are medically ill, subject to impairment of functioning and are in need of general and specific forms of therapy if they are to be helped to function more adaptively and effectively.

As one examines the general acceptance of the use of the term "sickness" in the areas of psychiatric and psychological malfunctioning, it becomes clearer that this term has been expanded from the medical through the psychological and eventually included moral and ethical maladaptive behavior and impairment of function. It is now not uncommon to describe morally and ethically corrupt individuals—individuals who seem incapable of controlling exaggerated, disruptive and inappropriate hostility and destructiveness or compulsive liars and cheats—as "sick." This description of such individuals seems reinforced not only when such individuals are incorrigible in their moral and ethical disturbances, but also when they are unable to modify their behavior, are incapable of guilt and shame, and when they lack even the vestiges of a functional conscience. The bridge between the medical and organic definition of sickness and the psychological use of the term was most clear when individuals who manifested these symptoms were designated in the early 20th century psychiatric literature as suffering from "constitutional psychopathic inferiority."

The extension of the use of the term "sickness" to include persistent moral and ethical maladaptive behavior—compulsive hostility, destructiveness, sadistic behavior, cruel and irrational use of power—can with some justification apply to families, communities and nations when these groups of individuals consistently demonstrate in their relationships among themselves and with other groups the inability to control inappropriate, ineffective, barbaric, animalistic, aggressive, and destructive patterns of behavior. There must, however, be persistent evidence that these characteristics are accurate descriptions of the behavior of the group over a period of time; that they are strengthened and reinforced by the institutional and political leaders of the society; and that they reflect either by overt support or by silence a consensus of acceptable behavior of the group.

In describing a group by the degree of moral and ethical "sickness," and degree of adaptive or non-adaptive behavior patterns, it is important to determine the extent to which the majority of the group members accept these characteristics by their silence and passivity. It is generally accepted

that dissent from even the most flagrant symptoms of group "sickness" will be punished. Since dissenters are in the minority, they are generally powerless and without prestige or status. They can easily be victimized by those who control power in a social system. It is those who control power, therefore, who determine which of the beliefs and patterns of behavior of the groups will be rewarded and which will be punished, as this is consistent with the leader's perception of what is compatible with their interest.

One must seek the criteria by which the term "sickness" can be applied to social groups and nations without increasing the risks that this concept would be meaningless. In seeking to avoid the more subtle and obvious forms of bias and rhetoric, one cannot hope to obtain absolute precision in the use of the term "sickness" as a social diagnostic concept. It is important to be as precise and as objective as possible in determining whether the behavioral patterns and characteristics of the group are, in fact, more non-adaptive than adaptive, more destructive than constructive, more irrational and randomly aggressive rather than rational and thoughtful. It is important to determine whether the group seems more preoccupied with power as an end in itself rather than as a means toward the attainment of the constructive goals of justice, social sensitivity and empathy. As in medicine, one must seek empirical criteria rather than depend upon total moral philosophy.

Even after examining the behavior of a group or a nation in terms of these observable criteria, it is essential to be alert to those individuals who in even the "sickest" of societies will not share all of the symptoms of that society in which they have been socialized and of which they are a part. Ironically, in even the most "sick" societies and nations there are found individuals who for presently unknown reasons are compelled to react against the more flagrant destructive symptoms of their group. An even smaller number of individuals in such societies will assume the risky roles of overt dissenters and react against the more flagrant and inhuman symptoms prevalent in the society of which they are a part.

It may not be easy to understand the motivation and determinants of these overt dissenters. These individuals are particularly difficult to understand since they, like others who conform to the sickness of the larger society, were socialized in the very society which they react against. They were subject to the same educational, institutional and coercive family and community pressures which generally determine the attitudes, values and behavior patterns of normal human beings. Nonetheless, they manage to reject the socialized conformity behavior accepted by the majority of their fellow human beings. They rebel against what they believe to be a pattern of sickness of the society of which they are a part. In this regard it is interesting to recall and note that even in the period of the worst plagues of the prescientific middle ages, there were some individuals who seemed somehow immune to the raging virulence—and survived with minimum impairment.



In attempting to comprehend the illness of America within the conceptual framework stated above, it is necessary to understand the uniqueness of the American social, political and economic system. America was the first western nation which sought to justify its founding, its existence and its reason for growth on moral, philosophical and religious grounds.

Thomas Jefferson's rationale for the independence of America as stated in the Declaration of Independence clearly shows that the usual issues of power in the conflict between nations and as a justification for revolution are subordinated to a philosophical articulation of the rights and the equality of men. He insisted that it was the obligation of thoughtful human beings to develop a political system which protected these values. Jeffersonian moral philosophy and egalitarianism clearly went beyond the earlier British and western European attempts to counteract feudalism and aristocratic tyrannies by increasing the rights of the rising middle classes. Jeffersonianism leaned heavily on the 17th century British rationalistic revolutionary thought of John Locke for its philosophical egalitarian premises.

In this initial stage of an independent American nation, Jefferson, and some of his more privileged contemporaries, had a difficult struggle to get the Bill of Rights included in the United States Constitution—albeit as the first ten amendments rather than as an organic part of the original Constitution. This fact highlights a pattern of ironies dominating the early American struggle to make ethical, moral and human concerns a prime obligation of governmental power. A related irony is the fact that the architects who insisted that governmental power be used to support and strengthen human rights rather than to threaten them were themselves privileged, upper class, landed, slave-holding gentry.

An even more disturbing irony is that at the very time these gentlemen were engaged in these important dialogues concerning the importance of human justice and equality as a prime governmental obligation, the existence of human slavery in their new nation mocked their moral words and threatened to reduce these precepts to empty platitudes. The existence and the sanction of human slavery in a society which was self-consciously articulating the profound importance of democracy and human equality was and remains the fundamental moral conflict which continues to dominate the American social system today—and is probably the source of the unique pattern of sickness of the American nation. This conflict between American ideals and American pragmatic realism form the inherent dynamics of American moral schizophrenia.

From this historical perspective, the American sickness must be seen as a systemic moral affliction. This ongoing conflict has drained much of the energy of the American people in the various attempts at resolving or remedying it. Paradoxically, this illness is inherent in the moralizing of the founding fathers. They insisted upon Judaic-Christian ideals based upon moral

philosophy, rather than merely justifying their new nation on sheer political, economic and military power. This fundamental moral conflict persists and has manifested itself in a variety of complex symptoms. It has manifested itself in the total pattern of positives and negatives which characterize the peculiar complex dynamics of the American nation.

The complexities and the contradictions inherent in the American system must be understood in terms of the reality and the validity of the American ideals. It is too easy to reject the Jeffersonian articulation of equality and justice as being merely words. The importance of these values is found in the power and persistence of their role in determining political controversies, social conflicts and continued demands for social change and racial justice which have characterized the dynamics of the American nation.

Yet, the existence of slavery while upholding equality and the continued pattern of racial discrimination and segregation in the one hundred years since the Emancipation Proclamation are also a fundamental American reality. The Jeffersonian ideals came in conflict with another persistent American reality, namely, that in order to grow and expand, it was necessary for the white European Americans to control, to cheat and to rob the land from the native American Indians. And in spite of claims to the contrary, a reality of American society is the existence of marked economic and class inequalities among its white citizens.

The dynamics of American moral schizophrenia propel one toward seeking explanations through speculations which verge over into the area of broad generalizations—and which are offered here as diagnostic hypotheses.

This fascinating combination of ruthless competitiveness within the framework of moral, ethical, democratic verbalizations is American, and appears to be consistent with American philosophical pragmatism. Within the rubric of American pragmatism, success and status are self-validating. The means justify the ends. The ultimate disgrace is failure or the threat of failure. Americans cannot afford to permit ideals to really interfere with the attainment of material, psychological or rationalized indications of success. From this perspective, therefore, one can now better understand that the only significant contribution that American intellectuals have made to western philosophical thought is the philosophy of pragmatism. The basic premise of this philosophy is that thought and values are valid only if they work; only if they are effective; only if they lead to demonstrated functional success. This is practicality. This is realism. This is Americanism. This is the pervasive and integrative theme of American culture. It is manifested at all levels and forms of American society: in American education, in American politics, in American art and architecture, in American literature, in American drama, and, above all, in Americans' obsession with the many symbols of American material affluence.



Americans have had little time for abstract, philosophical thought. America has had no time to develop an affirmative philosophical social or political ideology which consistently affirms its founding ideals. As one reviews American history it is clear that in the implementation of Jeffersonian ideals the functional, political, ideology of Americans was *against* monarchy, and more recently, *against* Marxism, but not consistently for anything other than the pragmatic utilization of the ideals as they could be framed within the supports for capitalism. From the perspective of Americans, capitalism is a manifestation of the American "work ethic." American individualism, mobility, competitiveness, production and pragmatism are the virtues which fuel the American compulsive, insatiable pursuit of success and status.

The paradoxes of the American sickness are best understood in terms of the apparent success of the American system. In spite of its moral schizophrenia, America has been "successful." Americans eventually abolished human slavery, after the tremendous shock therapy and bloodletting of the Civil War. Within the past four or five decades Americans have moved slowly, if not reluctantly, toward extending to blacks, Indians and other dark skinned minorities some of the promises and realities of democracy. America has reduced the more overt symptoms of antagonism, hostility and competition among its white ethnic groups, even if it has done so while struggling to maintain the basic inferiority of blacks as a standard for measuring the mobility of whites.

America has been successful in extending the promise of education, including higher education, to larger numbers of its population. However, its very success in the area of mass education must now be seen as part of its total pattern of systemic illness. America has extended mass education pragmatically. It has insisted upon training technicians. In the pursuit of mass educational success it has been forced to sacrifice such important educational ingredients as critical and reflective thought and moral and ethical sensitivity. It literally has had no time to train any significant percentage of its population to be seriously concerned about values and the more subtle and important qualities of life.

America has extended the promises of participatory democracy to its masses. In the past it has been possible for an individual of humble social or economic origin to reach high national office in the American political system. But this success is contaminated by a persistent, disturbing symptom of the American illness. The American people bring to their involvement in the political system the seemingly inescapable deficiencies of American pragmatism. They bring the consequences of their constricted, pragmatic, "successful" mass produced education; they bring their prejudices, their lack of social sensitivity, their lack of insight and reflective thoughtfulness. In bringing these general social and specific educational deficiencies, the American people make it possible for those in quest of political office to

pander to and exploit the primitive prejudices, the superstitions and the limitations of the majority of the American people. Those in pursuit of political office within the pragmatic, democratic American system cannot hope to be successful if they project to the American people an image of intellectual and moral superiority too far above the level of the American masses. Candidates who present that image will be rejected by the majority of voters as either "unreal" or "unrealistic."

Examples of this curious "sickness-success" syndrome of the American system can be found in each of the major institutions of American society—in the American church, in American educational institutions, in American organized labor, and in American business and industry.

Despite these pervasive symptoms of sickness, the American social, political and economic system has survived and seems to have been growing in strength. The American ideals were never totally repudiated. The "sickness-success" dynamics could be tolerated by a functioning social, political and economic system only if there were some antidotes—or gyroscope—operating to maintain the balance essential for continued functioning. During the last twenty years it appears that one of the most powerful antidotes protecting the American system from a clear terminal course of its illness has been the seemingly independent role of the United States Supreme Court. Since the 1940s, and particularly from the 1950s, the United States Supreme Court has insisted upon a more literal interpretation of the Bill of Rights. The decisions of this Court have sought to reinforce and implement the protection of citizens in the areas of civil liberties, and civil rights. Of all the institutions within the American political system, the federal courts seem to have played a larger role in controlling the symptoms, if not the determinants, of the American illness than any other institution, including educational and religious.

Another antidote which cannot be ignored in understanding the positive restraint on the American illness is the role of protesting minorities, particularly the blacks, in America. By using the courts, minorities and their white allies sought to influence the legislative and executive branches of the state and federal governments. They developed appropriately effective direct confrontation techniques in seeking to obtain justice and equality. Although these minority groups have not been totally successful, so far they have controlled the more disturbing symptoms of the American "sickness-success" syndrome. In doing so, they strengthened the foundations of American democracy for all citizens, including their adversaries, and reduced the intensity and rate of the more malignant symptoms of the American illness.

Still another antidote to the more disturbing symptoms of the "sickness-success" syndrome is found in the American press and in the electronic media. The free press has always been an important product of American democratic ideals. At the same time it has manifested many, if not all, of the



symptoms of conflict between pragmatic amorality and ideals. While the American press has been ambivalent, it has remained an important guardian of the fundamental democratic principles. In seeking to preserve its own rights of freedom, the American press has had to remain sensitive to and protective of the fundamental democratic rights of all Americans. It is reasonable to believe that if a free press were to be seriously restricted, the sickness of a conflicted American society would be terminal.

American history has been regularly marked by dissenters—a minority of intellectuals, priests, lawyers, young people and concerned citizens—who have insisted upon a more literal interpretation and implementation of the American Bill of Rights. They have played a major role in balancing the more pragmatic, realistic, negative symptoms of the American illness. Unlike the majority of their fellow citizens, the dissenters have not lost the capacity for outrage. They have not been easily intimidated. They have not been silenced or destroyed. Their contribution to the functional stabilization of the American democratic society has made continued progress toward health possible.

Perhaps the most difficult task for a medical diagnostician confronted with the symptoms which indicate a critical illness of his patient is to make a positive prognosis with complete confidence. This task is even more difficult for the social diagnostician. As a member of the given society which he seeks to understand, the social philosophers and the social scientists naturally seek to emphasize the most positive signs as the basis for optimism and hope. This identification of a social diagnostician with the society which he seeks to understand tends to protect him from the "diagnostic fallacy" of emphasizing the weaknesses and ignoring the strengths of the organism. While social philosophers and social scientists do not themselves have the power to control the social phenomena which they seek to understand—and the more cautious of them exercise their right to predict sparingly and with protective qualifications—they generally hope their insights and analyses will be used constructively by those who have the power of decision affecting the destiny of the society of which they are a part.

Identified as I am with the destiny of America, and with an unqualified acceptance of the healing force of the American democratic ideals, I want to believe that American pragmatism and an expanded perspective of self interest will become the basic positive antidotes for the more dangerous, maladaptive, and self destructive symptoms of the American social illness. The medical model of using antitoxins to combat the more virulent toxins should be explored and be used in seeking remedies for the moral schizophrenia which threatens the survival of our nation in this, the nuclear age.

It is the responsibility, indeed the obligation, of thoughtful Americans to help our fellow citizens understand that our national health is essential to their survival. At the threshold of the 21st century, it is in the nation's self

interest to control the excess of American racism and other forms of social and economic injustice. The complexity of the American social, economic and political system and the inter-relatedness of all of the peoples of the world make clear the basic human reality: no group of Americans can be safe at the expense of the dignity and humanity of any other group of human beings.

The common fact of contemporary American race relations is that the destiny of American minorities will determine directly the destiny of all Americans. The acceptance of and political operation upon this fact will determine whether this nation will survive. The continued rejection of this fact, even by democratic voters, will determine that the American illness is terminal.