In 1953 William O. Stanley wrote the prominent social reconstructionist treatise, *Education and Social Integration.* Fifteen years later he concluded that because of insufficient popular committment, reconstruction had not occurred. Nevertheless, Stanley closed his 1968 address by reaffirming the fundamental commitment of the Western people to democracy. The article which follows argues that Stanley even in 1968 is too sanguine: democratic reconstruction can take place only if establishment of the very commitment he assumes already to exist is made a primary goal of political education.

Jon Fennell*

"Education and Social Integration" — Twenty-Five Years Later

Nearly twenty-five years have passed since William o. Stanley wrote *Education and Social Integration.* Throughout this period, Stanley's volume has continued to be read, and has become a well established representative of the movement known as social reconstructionism.[1] The popularity of *Education and Social Integration* has not, however, been accompanied by the changes it envisioned for educational and social practice. Stanley himself acknowledged this when in 1968 he presented an address entitled *Education an Social Integration - Fifteen Years Later.*[2] This sober piece challenged the optimism of the original volume by referring to recent history as grounds for doubting the power of reason and the commitment of the American people to the democratic tradition which together constituted the basis for that optimism. Even with these doubts, however, Stanley concluded his 1968 address with an air of hope and open possibilities. But events since the time of this affirmation have lent no more support to such hope than earlier events did to the optimism of the 1953 volume. Stanley's program has never been adopted. Its failure to be implemented is attributable to its inability to persuade educational policy makers that it is an appropriate and viable response to the problems of the day. Below we shall see that this inability to command a constituency is very likely the result of a fundamental omission in the program. This omission, moreover, shall prove to be so crucial that, even if Stanley's program had been implemented, it could not as it stands successfully cope with the problems it set out to solve.

The thesis of *Education and Social Integration* should be familiar to most students of American educational theory. This era is a transitional one "in which fundamental social change has destroyed the essential balance upon which a stable society necessarily rests."[3] Rapid and widespread change has given rise to a crisis which has two foci. First, because persons have been unable to cope successfully with the profound technological and social developments of an age in which the principle of automatic adjustment in social and economic life has become bankrupt, we now have a "serious maladjustment between. . .the material conditions of life, basic intellectual and moral postulates, and institutional forms and relationships."[4] Complicating the problem, and a direct consequence of the demise of traditional authorities and standards that followed upon the triumph of the

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scientific spirit, is the second (and, for Stanley, the basic) difficulty: "the deep-seated disintegration in the intellectual and moral premises of the Western world."[5] A crisis exists and it will persist until a suitable social order, founded on a new consensus in the intellectual and moral sphere, is established.

Construction of the consensus upon which this new order is to be built is for the most part made the responsibility of the schools. But, says Stanley, the effort to use the educational establishment faces two serious problems. To begin with, the schools themselves constitute another dimension of the crisis. Predictably, institutionalized education reflects the conflict and confusion characteristic of the culture as a whole. But, while "at bottom the crisis in education is simply an aspect or phase of the crisis in society. . . .it possesses considerable importance in its own right."[6] Specifically, if education is confused and lacks order, the persons shaped by it are likely to manifest similar undesirable qualities. Thus, the schools are responsible not only for a lack of personal integration with a resulting loss of efficiency and happiness, but in addition they produce persons who are "poor social risks" in a society as unstable and in need of order and direction as is ours. By perpetuating a type of personality which can contribute only to a worsening of the situation, the schools have "deepened and aggravated the social crisis," thus becoming "a third focus" of that crisis.[7]

But even if the schools should free themselves from the undesirable effects of the surrounding conflict and confusion, we would be faced with the "dilemma of education." Stanley derives this dilemma from a consideration of the dual responsibility of the school. On the one hand, all agree that a major function of public education is to transmit the surrounding culture. On the other hand, however, it is felt that schools shoudl produce an integrated personality in each of its charges. The problem, then, is apparent. Because we reside in a transitional era marked by conflict and confusion in the realm of ends and values, should the school observe its first function, it will probably violate the second. And if it should exercise its second responsibility alone, it would fail to honor the first. In Stanley's own words, "the educational profession cannot ignore the confusion and conflict in the contemporary culture nor can it arbitrarily impose either a common set of values or a unified way of life on the society which it serves."[8]

II

Stanley's solution to the dilemma of eduction and the larger social crisis is brilliant and basically simple. The first step is to show that the dilemma of education can be resolved. Stanley reiterates his conviction that the schools have no business producing integrated personalities and cannot cease being a dimension of the social crisis unless they receive a clear mandate from the society which they are designed to serve. But, declares Stanley, despite the undeniable presence of that intellectual and moral confusion so ably described in the early sections of his treatise, *we can nevertheless determine a locus of consensus in the American people.* The locus is *the American democratic tradition,* and it is the methods and principles of the past which will solve the dilemma of education and provide the intellectual and moral basis for a reconstruction of Western civilization.[9]

Stanley quickly admits that the democratic tradition is often held merely implicitly, that it frequently does not extend to practise, and, when it is expressed, that it may assume a variety of conflicting forms. But this does not deter Stanley. Rather, it defines the reconstruction function that is to be assumed by the schools. That is, the people are committed to the democratic tradition but usually do not

understand its meaning. The crucial task, therefore, is to clarify the meaning of the tradition, especially as it applies to the contemporary world, and this is done through "the persistent application, in the schools and in public discussion, of a disciplined method of study and persuasion" now available in the methodology provided by Raup, Benne, Smith, and Axtelle in *Improvement of Practical Intelligence.*[10] Through such a program persons develop "faith in reason and in free discussion and consent as the final arbiters of truth in human affairs."[11] The consensus necessary for social reconstruction and ardently sought after by Stanley thus comes in the form of a method. And because the democratic tradition from which it is derived is already extant, not only does it serve as a means to overcome disintegration, but it also allows the schools to assume an active role in reconstruction without exceeding their rightful office as the servant of the people.

III

A central point of Stanley's review of Education and Social Integration was that events since 1953 had sustained his thesis that the United States is in the grips of a crisis. To admit the continuation of social disintegrtion, however, is to confess that reconstructive programs such as outlined by Stanley have either failed or not been implemented. Stanley acknowledges that the reconstruction he envisioned had not materialized and with some distress admits that his disappointment is attributable to an overestimation of the American people's commitment to reason and the democratic tradition. *Education and Social Integration* was "optimistic because it reflected the belief that in the last analysis, the American people were sincere in their commitment to the democratic creed and reason would be. . . .the primary instrument of social reconstruction." This faith is questioned and, by the close of the address, Stanley is no longer optimistic and his confidence is shaken although he is nevertheless able to conclude, "I would still place my money on the premise that the American people are committed to the democratic creed and our democratic process will continue to prevail as we face the challenges and changes of the future."[12]

What about the years since 1968? Do they lend any more support to the wager of the 1968 address than the previous years did to the optimism of the 1953 volume? Unhappily, one must answer in the negative. Such primary symptoms of crisis as the flight from reason and personal disorganization persist. (One need only consider the continued growth of spiritualistic cults and mental illness to verify this.) Further, drift and indecision in the face of problems of the first magnitude is common. There is, for example, no responsible provision for the energy needs of the future so that while the conflict continues over nuclear power and the "ecology-growth" calculus, the demand for fuel increases, the nation becomes increasingly dependent upon foreign sources, and reserves everywhere are thoughtlessly devoured. Problems in many areas are predictable but there is little concern. And where there is concern, there is no agreement on the exact nature of the problem and what should be done to correct it. Consensus on the ends and purposes of social efforts is as absent today as ever before. But the gravity of the problems to be solved is unprecedented. Moreover, complicating the resolution of serious issues, and a problem in its own right, is the growing tendency to consider any comprehensive effort to cope with impending difficulty as an offense to personal liberty. Failing to confront problems means only that they will continue to grow, and if the violence and disruption of recent years has abated, it may be more a sign of temporary exhaustion and the paralysis of anxiety than of sound and enduring responses to social sores which have continued to fester.

It would seem, therefore, that attempts at reconstruction have yet to succeed. We cannot here examine all the reasons for this failure but it will prove worthwhile to investigate at least one reason why a program such as Stanley's is destined to fall short of its goal. Our analysis earlier showed how crucial commitment to the democratic tradition is to Stanley's reconstructionist model. In reflecting upon events since 1953, the author expressed doubts about the presence of such commitment but, in the end, reaffirms its essential role and his belief that it indeed exists. Now while it is not difficult to acknowledge the importance of such commitment to peaceful resolution of social crisis, one is troubled about Stanley's insistence that it actually exists. Even he agrees that events since 1953 do little to reveal its existence. On what basis, the, can we confirm the existence of a commitment to the American democratic tradition?

To answer this question we must look at Chapter 7 of *Education and Social Integration* for it is here that Stanley purports to show that there is a democratic tradition and that it is "a common faith shared, to a considerable degree, by the vast majority of the American people."[13] Stanley provides four reasons in support of this conclusion. The first line of reasoning begins by admitting that at times the cause of democracy has been seriously threatened but that in every instance a great leader has risen to reinstate its primacy and preserve the tradition. Stanley intends this to demonstrate that the democratic ethnic reflects the aspirations of the American people. But this is a peculiar conclusion to draw from the record presented. Citation of the frequent weakening of the democratic creed and its salvation by a series of great leaders would seen to argue more the absence of a popular commitment to democracy (and the need of a great figure regularly to inspire such a commitment) than it does the presence of a widely shared faith in democracy. It might, however, bew argued that this reply to Stanley misses his point. On this view, Stanley's reference to the existence of leaders who support democracy indicates a popular commitment to democratic principles because only if such were implicit in the people could a leader standing for those principles arise in the first place. Leaders, in other words, arise only because they vocalize and symbolize the hopes and ambitions of the people. In an important sense, leaders "follow." But even this interpretation of Stanley does not prove the existence of a *distinctive* popular commitment to democracy. It indicates the presence of democratic leanings in the people but on its own grounds, given the periodic rise of non-democratic leaders, it ust acknowledge the presence of opposite popular inclinations as well. Leaders may indeed rise solely upon the strength of the people's commitment to certain ideals. But the ideals of a people are a confused and conflicting assembly, the ascendancy of any portion of which seems as much the work of the leader as any other agency.

The second support of Stanley's conclusion is the "fact" that the opponents of democracy have always been forced to express their views in terms of a defense of "true democracy." This may be true, but there are two quite different conclusions to be drawn from it which are at least as likely as that of Stanley. The first is that the "democratic tradition" is a fiction, i.e., that, when analyzed into its constituent elements, it is seen to be a region of conflict and confusion that is far from the locus of consensus it is claimed to be by Stanley. In effect, this second strategy presupposes what it is meant to support, viz., the (widespread) commitment to something we recognize as *the* democratic view. Granted, all pay lip service to democracy, but this does not mean that it possesses a distinct meaning. And this suggests the second alternative conclusion: there is no fixed meaning of democracy and hence the people cannot be committed to such. The meaning of

democracy (and hence the tradition) is in the making. Stanley's "opponents" to democracy may not be opponents at all. In any event, their call for "true democracy" is not clear support for the existence of any well defined democratic tradition.

In his third and fourth reasons for asserting the existence of a commitment to the democratic ideal, Stanley directs the reader to the testimony of scholars and historians and the studies of social scientists. Here again, however, all that is demonstrated is that there is widespread commitment to a word ("democracy"). But there is no persuasive evidence that when examined and applied to practice "democracy" will manifest anywhere near the degree of agreement sought from it. In general, Stanley assumes what perhaps ought to be questioned, viz., that an ideal necessarily implies consensus. Summoning a number of figures to testify that a people possess an abiding belief in the tenets of democracy does not help much. What *would* reveal the existence of commitment and consensus would be reference to acutal instances of cooperative activity involving individual sacrifice. The ideals admitted or discovered to be at the root of such activity would be a more accurate measure of the people's faith. Of course, there is no assurance that anything we would classify as the tenets of democracy would thereby be uncovered, though we should expect numerous references to the terminology of democracy.

In conclusion, Stanley has much more clearly shown the need of a commitment to the democratic ideal than he has the existence of such. Now, Stanley's reconstructionist program is a much needed one, and it is nobly inspired. In years past, at least, this would provide sufficient reason to allow us to assume a commitment to democracy and proceed on our way. But the author himself in 1968 began to question this important assumption and today, nearly twenty-five years after the appearance of the program, we have even more reason to question its ability to effect reconstruction. Let us, then, *not* assume the existence of a popular commitment to a way of thinking and acting and speculate whether the Stanley program is thereby improved. This cannot be a substitute for his comprehensive proposal, but it will perhaps serve as a fragment of such.

IV

We have not questioned the crucial importance of a popular commitment to democratic principles for the survival of a free polity. What is being called into question are the validity and advisability of assuming such commitment as the first step in a reconstructionist program. Let us look to perhaps the greatest of American reconstructionists to see how Stanley might have proceeded differently.

Early in 1838 Abraham Lincoln addressed the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois on a subject strikingly similar to that of Stanley: the perpetuation of our political institutions.[14] Lincoln mentions a number of possible threats to the American experiment but concludes that the one and only real menace is this undertaking is lawlessness. Now it is not lawlessness itself which is the source of trouble but rather the "natural consequence" of it, viz., the increasing alienation of the feelings of the American people from their government. In short, for Lincoln the gravest threat to the survival of democratic life is the crumbling of the people's attachment to democratic principles that follows upon the spread of lawlessness and insecurity. Thus, the problem for Lincoln is to insure the very commitment that Stanley assumes (albeit, often in a confused and conflicting form) already to exist. Where the latter is primarily concerned with clarifying the meaning of democracy for the contemporary world, the former is occupied with the

more fundamental problem of insuring that the people will care to be democratic in the first place.

Lying behind Lincoln's analysis is the view that persons will neither think nor act democratically unless they have an affective motivation for doing so. With such a sentimental foundation the nation is strong enough to meet any challenge; without it, events far less profound than those mentioned by Stanley can bring the edifice down. Accordingly, Lincoln's solution to the problem of democratic survival is to establish a *reverence* for the Constitution and the laws and to make their defense and violation a matter of *honor* and *dishonor* respectively. What must be established is a "political religion" that operates to perpetuate a connection between a person's sense of material and moral well-being and the survival of democratic institutions. In practice Lincoln's remedy would be manifested in a commitment to democratic procedures in any number of forms ranging from the careful scrutiny of pretenders to political power to sacrifice for the common good and the desire to work together to solve the problem facing the community.

The fundamental difference between Stanley and Lincoln's reconstructionist procedures is that the latter believes he must establish the commitment that the former assumes already to exist. The defender of Stanley would perhaps claim that it is precisely because the Lincolnesque strategy has succeeded that Stanley can begin where he does. This view, however, overlooks another of Lincoln's principles which holds that the affective foundations of a viable democratic community must be reestablished in every generation. Indeed, it was because the supportive pillars of the founding period were crumbling that Lincoln was forced to speak in 1838. The work of the political educator is never done; the perpetuation of free institutions depends upon ceaseless care.

The lesson of Lincoln is that a commitment to the principles and methods of democracy must be established rather than assumed. Such becomes the primary political and moral function of education. But commitment is at most only partially a function of the intellect. It has truly been said that "Men will die for a dogma but not even stir for a conclusion," for the power of reason lies not nearly so much in intellectual clarity as it does in the *inclination* to obey its dictum. The role of education in establishing the commitment to democratic procedures which all agree is necessary if we are to cope peacefully and fairly with the issues of our age therefore largely becomes that of insuring that the people develop an emotional investment in the use and preservation of those procedures. Ideally, persons will take offense at their violation and experience pride and show approval when they are observed.

But what exactly are the principles and procedures that are to be so highly regarded? Any decision on this matter will to a great extent be a selection. This is because "democracy" represents a host of often conflicting ideas. The meaning of equality (probably the fundamental postulate of democracy) is continually debated and reference to such issues as the conflict between a free press and a fair trail make it clear that the idea of democracy may be as confused and fragmented as the social crisis it is to resolve. So, if democratic tenets are to be imparted in the schools in a fashion which tends to lessen conflict and confusion rather than aggravate it, either we will have to pre-select (define) the integration which will be taught or we will have to locate something all will agree is democratic and then make that the fundamental if not the sole teaching.

The latter course is much more palatable to current tastes and, although unanimity is probably impossible, a promising candidate for the democratic teach-

ing of the schools is none other than the decision-making process endorsed by Stanley. The desirability of widespread adherence to this peaceful method of conflict resolution has not been questioned in this essay. What must be recalled, however, is that adherence to this method is fundamentally a matter of emotion and habit. If the Stanley reconstructionist program is to operate effectively (and this is not a pipe dream if the proposed additions are made), we must develop and utilize means to achieve an effective tie to the use of reason, etc. while striving to deepen this bond through the repeated practice of democratic methods in the schools and other organizations. Insofar as this proposal recommends that the commitment to reason and peaceful resolution of conflict be made a focus of educational endeavor, it has proceeded one step beyond Stanley.[15] In fact, however, the recommendation is not novel at all for it merely echoes the response to two questions addressed by Lincoln and the Founders of the American nation: What must a people like for a democracy to persevere and how is this character to be established and preserved?

Notes

[1] The book is now in its eighth printing.

[2] The unpublished address was given at the University of Illinois.

[3] William O. Stanley, *Education and Social Integration* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1953), p. 137.

[4] Stanley, pp. 98, 137.

[5] Stanley, p. 137.

[6] Stanley.

[7] Stanley, p. 138.

[8] Stanley, p. 129. The school's problem is both practical and moral. Without a public consensus regarding the ends and purposes of education, it has no direction toward which to aim. And should it intelligently move forward without such a mandate, it violates its rightful role. See pp. 128, 134.

[9] It is not always clear whether Stanley's analysis is meant to apply to the entire world or only to the West. Even less evident is the domain of the solution we are now discussing. Who, after all, can be said to hold a commitment to the (American) democratic tradition?

[10] Stanley, *Education and Social Integration - Fifteen Years Later,* p. 3. See Chapters 10 and 11 of *Education and Social Integration.*

[11] Stanley, *Education and Social Integration,* p. 257.

[12] Stanley, *Fifteen Years Later,* pp. 9, 12.

[13] p. 160.

[14] The speech in *Collected Works* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), I:108-115.

[15] We will not in this writing develop the details of how this commitment is to be achieved but when the question is addressed it will be fruitful to consider the writings of Rousseau and Dewey for whom the manipulation of the environment was the key to educational success. In this connection, let us reiterate that the above discussion proposes teaching the democratic decision-making process *after* an initial commitment to democracy has been established.