

white education may limit the population from which bright ideas will in the long run be derived. Elsewhere than in South Africa, experience has now shown that a diversity of universities is a blessing, not a curse, at least so long as there is intercourse between them. The policy for higher education in South Africa seems paradoxically to be seeking opposing objectives—supposedly identical universities but with hardly any communication between them. Most probably the system is unworkable; otherwise, it is unwise.

The other side of this coin is the extent to which science can especially illuminate the problems with which South Africa is confronted (and which nobody should ignore). First, it is by now apparent that many of the steps in the arguments which demonstrate the virtue of separate developments are fallacious. There is no objective basis for the assertion that native Africans seek a national identity in a community with people of closely similar geographical origins, but, rather, every sign that they will embrace urbanization as willingly as other people have done if only given half a chance. (The question whether economic development for native populations may not permanently rob them of the chance to reach some quite different social organization is an unreal fear—that should be for the natives to decide.) Equally, there is no evidence that they differ in ways that are significant from those parts of the South African population now registered to vote, even though they may differ in ways that are culturally important and valuable. Moreover, there is no weight of experience to support the rigorous puritanism of the belief that self-improvement is the only improvement that is worthwhile—rather the opposite. This is why one component in the long-term solution of South Africa's problems is an academic and scientific community vigorous enough to do battle for these simple truths.

What other conditions must be met? It would be absurd for anyone to hope that a political solution to the internal problems of South Africa could be engineered overnight. Decades must go by before everything can be settled. In the meantime, the best hope is that there will be no violent breakdown of the social fabric, externally or, more dangerously, internally. The immediate goal—and distant it must seem to many people—is that the two communities in South Africa should be brought so closely into articulation with each other that there is a chance for the natural processes of social evolution to do their work. Luckily, there are now signs that pressures in the right direction are beginning to work. The white population of South Africa seems increasingly aware of what is going on. There is growing recognition that the policy of separate development is an economic nonsense.

In circumstances like these, the universities and the scientific community which they embody are essential bridgeheads to the outside world and to the future. Whatever people may do about cricket matches, the present circumstance requires that links between South Africa and the outside world in science and academic life should be strengthened, not weakened. The universities, even those commonly supposed to be

reactionary, are enlightened and even sometimes liberal. Nobody expects that they will ever lead a social revolution, and with the weight of prejudice in the voting population there is little that they can do to lead voters by the hand. Yet politics in South Africa are so explicit that there is much that the universities can do (and should have been doing all these years) to argue the detailed as well as the general case against the present arrangements. This does not imply endless declarations by university senates but, rather, more vigorous argument by individuals who will need as much time as they can be given to change the present climate. The greatest danger is that time is running out.

100 Years Ago



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MUSHROOMS and their congeners seem never to have been in good repute since Agrippina employed one of the tribe to poison her husband, and Nero with villainous pleasantries called it the "food of the gods." With proverbial tenacity the bad name thus incurred has clung to the whole family of agarics, and what within certain limits might be called a wholesome dread has become a deep-rooted and irrational prejudice, excluding from popular use a really valuable class of vegetable esculents. We cannot altogether go along with those enthusiastic mycophagists who recognise a substitute for meat in every edible fungus, and dilate on the ozmazome and other nutritious properties of the tribe; but we readily acknowledge that their merits as secondary sources of food-supply have hitherto been unduly neglected. The great difficulty always felt in advocating the claims of the class to more extensive use has arisen from the want of some definite rules, some formula at once simple in expression and universal in application, by which to distinguish the noxious from the innocent members. Pliny, in his Natural History, goes so far as to say that the first place amongst those things which are eaten with peril must be assigned to agarics, and he expresses his surprise at the pleasure which men take "in so doubtful and dangerous a meat." But his observations show that fungi of all sorts, including even such growths as the *Fistulina hepatica*, were known to his countrymen and eaten by them without scruple. Indeed, in one particular the wisdom of the ancient Romans seems to have been superior to that of their descendants, for, while Horace lays down the rule—

Pratensibus optima fungi
Natura est; aliis male creditur—

the modern *Ædiles* of the Roman market condemn to instant destruction every specimen of the meadow mushroom (*A. campestris*) which comes within their reach. Although, however, it is not always easy to distinguish the wholesome from the unwholesome fungus, and the organs of sight and smell require some training before they can be wholly trusted in the matter, yet the dangers have been greatly exaggerated, and, as a matter of fact, hogweed is more often mistaken for parsnip and aconite for horse-radish than are *Boletus satanas* and *Amanita verna* for their innocent brethren.

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