

JOHN WILLIAM GARDNER

How men think and feel about their country and its destiny reflect and in a measure determine what that country is and may become. Some responses to the complex and tangled realities of our time are unfortunate: complacency, passionate oversimplification of issues, alienation, cynical opportunism, shallow pessimism or optimism, paralyzing despair, even loss of faith in basic structures of our society. John William Gardner is one who has looked unblinkingly at the profound difficulties inherent in the ideals and aspirations of America. He has thought and written illuminatingly about clashing dilemmas and paradoxes: equalitarianism and freedom for individual achievement; status and excellence of many valid kinds; environment and innate abilities; intellect and right affections; individualism, society, and value commitments; stability and innovation; deterioration and renewal. But for him courageous purpose and hopeful affirmation have not yielded to intellectual ironies and the wasting inertia of dismay. He has dared to assert that intellect, important as it is, is not everything; and uses without apology freshened words like character, conscience, and spirit.

The offices entrusted to John Gardner eloquently testify to the deep and widespread confidence in his insights, drives, and administrative skills--not least the high office he now holds in the Cabinet of the President of the United States. The many-faceted responsibilities and opportunities of the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare have critical significance for our nation. He has received many honors. The University of North Carolina delights to honor him, conferring upon him the degree of Doctor of Laws.