

THE GREAT SHAKEDOWN

THESE are times which try more than men's souls; the deep human questioning of the present is virtually a way of asking whether men have souls to be tried. Other words are used, of course; or if not words, then formless longings confront speechless anxieties. Not much that is serious is said of "souls," these days, but the stark wondering that goes on might use this term with profit.

Yet, departing from any remembered past, the questions of our time are not addressed to some familiar myth of meaning about being and destiny. Today's questioners are without Job's resolute faith, and their questions, as layer after layer of identity is stripped away, have to do with whether, when the last carapace of self is gone, there will be anything left.

The stripping process is largely involuntary. It seems to come, for many, in the terrible contradictions of the times. The issue of our ideas of truth and goodness threatens to dissolve in *reductio ad absurdum*. The bloom is off the peach, its meat a tasteless pulp. For some it is a question of how long and how fixedly they dare to stare into the abyss of their own being. What, indeed, is the root of human life? Is it better to remain content with the outer rings of existence? If we do not know what *man* is, there are published accounts of what a *white man*, or an *American*, is. We can read them and restore our spirits. Enough of morbid imaginings. We have many popular ideals we can be loyal to, and time-honored altars to choose among.

There is a part of the human being, however, that can never learn to respond to slogans. This incapacity to be faithful to what no longer inspires faith is a deep Promethean ill. To the man who wants peace, contentment, and cast-iron security, it is a fatal Medusa's Head; but to the alter ego in

him, it is an outer precinct of the temple of the Holy Grail. He may say to himself, Why should I wander in those empty corridors of abstract egoity? *Nobody* really lives there. But then comes the brooding reply, I cannot really live anywhere else! Meanwhile these external shells of being crack and crumble away. I am again a defenseless babe, but parentless, and left in the dark!

How can a man tell if he is entirely alone in such thoughts? He need have no fear. These thoughts, when put into words, are always understood. It is as Carl Rogers says in one of his papers:

Wading along a coral reef in the Caribbean this morning, I saw a large blue fish—I think. If you, quite independently, saw it too, then I feel more confident in my own observation. This is what is known as intersubjective verification, and it plays an important part in our understanding of science.

This means, of course, settling for a new kind of certainty; or learning to live with a vital uncertainty; and the condition—call it spiritual daring—may not appeal to people who want cobblestones to kick, confirming the painful reality of the world out there. But one tires of a world of cobblestones, even of a world of palaces and coaches and spaceships. There is a part of us that never seems to get into that world at all—not all the way in. This part of us is capable of endless protean escapes. It is a kind of *daemon* who bides his time, and then, when we are overtaken by satiety, or feeling as homeless as Siddhartha felt in the pleasure-house built for him by his father, the *daemon* laughs and says, "I told you so."

The analogues of this dual existence are endless in both life and literature. A classic example is Plato's allegory of the Cave. The philosopher who is no longer at home in the dark is the opposite number of the King who didn't

know he had no clothes. If we lacked the teaching of "bare subjectivity" as the substratum of final reality, for men and all else, we should surely have to invent it. This endless wrestling match between the weak-but-every-day-stronger feeling of inner reality, and the strong-but-every-day-less-satisfactory outer reality, in which we are forced to contest by a fears-longings polarity—this dialogue which began with time, and will probably last as long as time does—we can no more put an end to it than we can blot out the sun. We slide along the scale between the finite and the infinite—feeling sometimes as strong as Thor with his Hammer, and at other times like doomed Sisyphus, eternally rolling his rock—and wonder if there is indeed some secret, motionless center, some peak outside all orbits, some silent, breathless orifice beyond measurable destiny where we can simply be and know.

It is doubtless more than coincidence that while the familiar sources of identity are toppling, being uprooted and swept away by the hurricane of transforming events, a similar erosion of old ideas of what is "real" has been taking place in the sciences. As long ago as 1897, with the discovery of electrons, matter lost its discrete character, being transformed into what later on Einstein spoke of as a "concentration of energy"—"Matter is where the concentration of energy is great, field where the concentration of energy is small." Within a field, matter has no precise definition, only a neighborhood. "We cannot imagine a definite surface separating distinctly field and matter." The confident report of the World Machine has become an unlikely story. Further, as Frank T. Severin says (in *Viewpoints in Humanistic Psychology*), while classical physics requires the experimenter to study nature without reference to himself, quantum mechanics "necessitates a different assumption":

The very act of observation introduces change in the object under investigation. In situations where this interference is not too minute to be neglected, the experimenter deals, not with concrete events, but with a whole population of possible events involving a

probability function. . . . One vivid impression emerging from recent advances in physics is that science does not give a completely objective description of reality. Regardless of the method used, what is observed is not nature as such but nature interacting with our way of questioning it.

Even the original models of "fixed identities" in physical science have dissolved. Atoms are not atoms (uncuttable units) but tiny constellations, and their parts are never seen, only the track they leave in a cloud chamber. The natural world is a great neo-Pythagorean flux and the student of physics is not directly concerned with the things in that world, but only with the general statements he is able to make about them:

The scientist is characteristically concerned with his postulated entities more than with the phenomena they were inferred from (the chemist is interested in atomic weights rather than weights of actual materials, the physicist interested in neutrons and mesons rather than photographs of cloud chambers or even bombs). Science itself is characteristically an elaborate structure of imagined entities and events. (From a paper by D. O. Hebb, McGill University, reprinted in *Viewpoints in Humanistic Psychology*.)

Where, then, can a man turn for authoritative confirmation of his common-sense view of the world, and incidentally of himself ("incidentally" is not inaccurate, for the old kind of science had only incidental things to say about the nature of man)? Actually, nowhere at all. For unshaken testimony about himself, he may find it necessary to look at the contents of consciousness, and then, if he is able, *behind* the contents of his consciousness, for these, after all, as David Hume noticed nearly three hundred years ago, and as Patanjali observed much earlier, are also in flux. There is none the less another kind of common sense to which a man may refer. Even if he finds the colorless ground of his inner being an uncommunicative source, there are all the immediate, intuitive perceptions of daily existence, which in many cases he has been ignoring for most of his life. These have at least as much *tentative* validity as the theories he once believed in as fact.

All men have undeliberated feelings about the circumstances and events of their lives. There is a natural, two-way flow of acting and being acted upon, in our consciousness. We have a *naïve*, spontaneous recognition of purposiveness in ourselves and in all nature, before we have an artificial, abstracted, consciously generalized description of the "order" of physical happenings. If you think about these contrasted ways of regarding the world, you may decide, at first, that they constitute a choice between being intuitive *and* vulnerable to endless deceptions and anthropomorphisms, and being scientific *and* non-human in one's relationships with life. But if you think some more you may also decide that nobody really goes the limit in these antithetical directions. Such depressing dichotomies are themselves a function of the abstracting faculty, not the verdict of a lived life. There is a self-correcting mechanism in balanced awareness of both worlds, just as the scientists say about their Method, and it sometimes works and sometimes not; being *sure* that it works is a matter of great subtlety, requiring a kind of concert pitch in both the deliveries of intuition and the use of the scientific method. And this may be one of the meanings of Maugham's Razor's Edge.

Finding and being with a person who has this balance must be a little like hearing a few bars of the Music of the Spheres. You feel you know someone who, in his own unique center, is a Craftsman of Life. Such centers are to be found all up and down the "objective" scale of being, but they are quite invisible to those who believe that knowledge must have a fixed frame of reference, that the quality of being human can have a non-sacral definition.

What are the cues? A woman brushes her hair, and with the rhythmic stroking comes a quiet mantic feeling. She muses upon hair and all the other women in the world with hair like hers. *Is it "hers"?* Are the hills with their tresses of green any more hers, or any less? What of women a million years ago who touched their faces in a

loving wonder? Where are they now? What is the meaning of all this flow of living womanhood? To be, it seems, is also not to be—and yet. . . .

A man looks at his son. He sees the rounded, muscled back, the blond curls, the shapely, powerful legs, his smiling Apollo's face, burgeoning with health. The boy is a son of sons, all the magnificence of man in him, yet all the promise of human agony to come. . . . Can a father defeat the universe in behalf of his child? What shall he tell him about this mystery, and will the boy, alas, even listen when he is so full of life?

What of grandmothers, and ancient, sickly, twisted frames of forgotten old people? We know about love and caring, but is this really a private thing? Some men move like radiant constellations of friendly light, others become dark foci of despair. What cosmological law governs here? Has the spiral nebula a lining of the heart? What angular momentum sets going the current of compassion? What fabric of nature are we weaving these days, what page inspecting in the book of life?

We have to get to the *core*. Not just events, although these are darkly persuasive enough, but an inward mutation of the human spirit's own necessity is driving us on. Everyone has the project of squaring some kind of circle, these days. "To hope, till hope creates, from its own wreck the thing it contemplates." The idea is to get out of one's skin, to defy all constraints with a consciousness whose business it is to make constraints, not to submit to them. Kurt Schwitters sounded a tocsin for a lonely band of innovators in the arts when he wrote, in 1931, "Now developments have shown that one can create a work of art which does not REPRESENT, but which is." No second-hand "objectivity" for him. Meanwhile History, like an ugly, composite Frankenstein, pushes on from behind, undermining empires and sacking private lives with a vast indifference to the hopes of both the leaders and the led. In his *Revolt of the Masses*, Ortega, one of the few balanced men of

our time, wrote with extraordinary insight of the confusions of history. Remarking that in the ancient world, only one or two politicians seemed to have "really clear heads" in what they were about, he went on:

There were, no doubt, other men who had clear ideas on many matters—philosophers, mathematicians, naturalists. But their clarity was of a scientific order; that is to say, concerned with abstract things. All the matters about which science speaks, whatever the science be, are abstract, and abstract things are always clear. So that the clarity of science is not so much in the heads of scientists as in the matters of which they speak. What is really confused, intricate, is the concrete vital reality, always a unique thing. The man who is capable of steering a clear course through it, who can perceive under the chaos presented by every vital situation the hidden anatomy of the movement, the man, in a word, who does not lose himself in life, that is the man with the really clear head. Take stock of those around you and you will see them wandering about lost through life, like sleep-walkers in the midst of their good or evil fortune, without the slightest suspicion of what is happening to them. You will hear them talk in precise terms about themselves and their surroundings, which would seem to point to them having ideas on the matter. But start to analyze those ideas and you will find that they hardly reflect in any way the reality to which they appear to refer, and if you go deeper you will discover that there is not even an attempt to adjust the ideas to this reality. Quite the contrary: through these notions the individual is trying to cut off any personal vision of reality, of his own very life. For life is at the start a chaos in which one is lost. The individual suspects this, but he is frightened at finding himself face to face with this terrible reality, and tries to cover it with a curtain of fantasy, where everything is clear. It does not worry him that his "ideas" are not true, he uses them as trenches for the defence of his existence, as scarecrows to frighten away reality.

The man with a clear head is the man who frees himself from those fantastic "ideas" and looks life in the face, realizes that everything in it is problematic, and feels himself lost. As this is the simple truth—that to live is to feel oneself lost—he who accepts it has already begun to find himself, to be on firm ground. Instinctively, as do the shipwrecked, he will look around for something to which to cling, and that tragic, ruthless glance, absolutely sincere, because it is a question of his salvation, will cause him to bring

order into the chaos of his life. These are the only genuine ideas; the ideas of the shipwrecked. All the rest is rhetoric, posturing, farce.

How could this fail to be true? We, who thought we knew so much, stand shamed by a silent, unmeaning present. All that is true in history is the historically irrelevant "poetry," the timeless generalizations of the spirit which are no use to us, *in* history, at all. Yet we cannot, it seems, help our history except by getting out of it.

What is it, then, to be on firm ground? It is to accept the feeling of being "lost" as the only condition of health for a human being. For then the wings we have clipped for all these centuries may have a chance to grow. The image changes⁷ but this is no disaster, since the "firm ground" of a consciousness capable of flight is in the sky, not on earth.

It is a question, again, of consulting ourselves. The disconsolate, and, be it said, quite natural, response of, "Who, me? I don't know *anything!*" is exactly right, since it is the only place to begin, the difficulty being not in the fact, but in reconciliation with it.

Well, then, how does one begin?

It may be escapism to resort again to quotation for an answer, but since this question has either no or endless answers, some device would have to serve, anyway. We quote Henry Miller on the education of children, what he says having equal application to ourselves:

I have noticed repeatedly how frightening to parents is the thought of educating a child according to their own private notions. As I write I recall a momentous scene connected with this subject which passed between the mother of my first child and myself. It was in the kitchen of our home, and it followed upon some heated words of mine about the futility of sending the child to school. Thoroughly engrossed, I had gotten up from the table and was pacing back and forth in the little room. Suddenly I heard her ask, almost frantically—"But *where would you begin? How?*" So deep in thought was I that the full import of her words came to me *bien en retard*. Pacing back and forth, head down, I found myself up

against the hall door just as her words penetrated my consciousness. And at that very moment my eyes came to rest on a small knot in the panel of the door. How would I begin? Where? "*Why there! Anywhere!*" I bellowed. And pointing to the knot in the wood I launched into a brilliant, devastating monologue that literally swept her off her feet. I must have carried on for a full half hour, hardly knowing what I was saying, but swept along by a torrent of ideas long pent up. What gave it paprika, so to speak, was the exasperation and disgust which welled up with the recollection of my experiences in school. I began with that little knot of wood, how it came about, what it meant, and thence found myself treading, or rushing, through a veritable labyrinth of knowledge, instinct, wisdom, intuition and experience. Everything is so divinely connected, so beautifully interrelated—how could one possibly be at a loss to undertake the education of a child? Whatever we touch, see, smell or hear, from whatever point we begin, we are on velvet. It is like pushing buttons that open up magical doors. It works by itself, creates its own traction and momentum. There is no need to "prepare" the child for his lesson: the lesson is itself a kind of enchantment. The child longs to know; he literally hungers and thirsts. And so does the adult, if we could but dissipate the hypnotic thrall which subjugates him.

The chief thing, it seems, is to be willing to admit the "hypnotic thrall" and to learn how to make oneself ready for the "enchantment." It isn't that easy, of course. It is probably the most difficult thing in the world, and a person seldom attempts it until, by some inner change, he knows that there is nothing else to do.

A Zen anecdote may help. In his *Introduction to Zen Buddhism*, Suzuki relates that a distinguished teacher replied to the question, "Do you ever make any effort to get disciplined in the truth?" by saying:

"Yes, I do."

"How do you exercise yourself?"

"When I am hungry I eat; when tired I sleep."

"This is what everybody does, can they be said to be exercising themselves in the same way you do?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because when they eat they do not eat, but are thinking of various other things, thereby allowing themselves to be disturbed; when they sleep they do not sleep, but dream of a thousand and one things. This is why they are not like myself."

The Zen teacher, of course, "left something out." But teachers are natural beings, and, like nature, always—because they have to—leave something out. The missing term is what uniquely appears when "nature is interacting with our way of questioning it."

Since we are human, there is still the anxious question, "Isn't there *anything* I ought to do?" And of course there is. A man can ask himself why, in middle age, he still frets with adolescent impatience. He can wonder why—and get an answer or two—he still feels the same insecurities which haunted him at sixteen. He can face the fact that he has been unwilling to "grow up," to learn the self-control he knows is central to an ordered and constructive life. He can stop accepting from others, from theorists and apologists of various sorts, excuses for the intuitive guilts he feels, just as he has been all too eager to accept from others a rule of life which he knows is not the best. But how will he know which is best? Well, maybe he won't, for a while. The point is that he will *never* know if he only argues about such matters. And he will never free himself of haunting questions of guilt and innocence until he finds a proper work to do. We are *all* guilty, and all innocent, too. The world of reality, with which we should like to become acquainted, cares nothing about that.

REVIEW
"COUNCIL FOR THE STUDY OF
MANKIND"

THIS enterprise in synthesis obtains lucid explanation in a volume edited by Robert Ulich—*Education and the Idea of Mankind* (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1964), outcome of an effort by Dr. Ulich and others to gather and assemble fresh statements of the "great ideas" approach to the human situation.

The Council as a working unit, emerged gradually as a result of queries put to eminent scholars by Gerhard Hirschfeld concerning the meanings behind the habitual use of the term "mankind." In his foreword Dr. Hirschfeld relates how he arrived at the framing conception of the book:

Year after year I had been trying to do something to help create an orderly mankind, one in which armed conflict among nations would no longer be possible. But what did I mean by "mankind"? I put the question to eminent scholars. They were not agreed on the meaning of "mankind," but they were interested in exploring the question.

Like many others throughout the world, we were concerned with finding answers to such questions as: What specifically are our problems? What can we do about them? What kind of knowledge do we need and what kind of education? Obviously, there was need for inquiry. But before we started on a program of inquiry, we wanted to find out what scholars at other institutions here and abroad, who no doubt were similarly concerned, were doing about these questions. Perhaps they knew some of the answers.

On an extended tour through the United States and Western Europe, I discussed the problem of mankind at academic institutions. I found studies in progress that had some relation to our question. But the idea of mankind was usually relegated to and submerged in whatever other subject was under consideration—usually DEMOCRACY and mankind, FREEDOM and mankind, or CHRISTIANITY and mankind. Mankind was considered the secondary rather than the primary concern. In contrast, our group of scholars thought it indispensable to the understanding of mankind that we see mankind as the primary concept. It would rather put the inquiry the

other way: MANKIND and democracy, MANKIND and freedom, MANKIND and Christianity.

The authors represented do not speak as professional educators, sociologists, historians or theologians, but as individuals seeking release from the provincialisms of their specialties. Dr. Ulich chooses the word "self-transcendence" to stand for a capacity unique to the human being, enabling man to "constantly reach out beyond his given physical and mental situation toward wider areas of life and mind." The transcending power "creates in us the sense of humanity; it follows not only the flight of the poetic genius, but takes into its scope the ventures of empirical research that open our eyes to hitherto-unknown secrets of the universe." Dr. Ulich continues:

An essential element of the process of self-transcendence—of such importance that it is worthy of special mention in this essay on mankind—is man's capacity for vision. He is able to hold before his inner eyes images of the desirable, the whole and the truth, which establish the "ought" over and above that which "is." Without this kind of vision there would be no ethics, no progress, no urge to form concepts that unify and direct our single ideas and actions toward even higher syntheses. Certainly, there are illusions and, perhaps, delusions of grandeur in many of our visions, but all the impelling and propelling ideas of humanity are somewhat of that kind. Every milestone in the history of our civilization, perhaps of all civilizations, had an unfulfilled prophecy as its inscription. Pericles' famous "funeral oration" praised the polis of free and educated men, for which we are still waiting, Jesus spoke of the spiritual unity of mankind; the Renaissance developed the literary style of the utopia; the liberal-humanist movement trusted that man would use his freedom for peace and cooperation; Marx and Engels dreamed of the classless society and, for the second time in the twentieth century, we now put our trust in a league of nations. None of these hopes has been fully realized. Yet where would we be without them? However important the awareness of the attainable is in politics as well as in education—for without some sense of achievement man runs into frustration and rebellion—we must realize that even the attainable would not be attained if there were not behind it the vision of the greater.

Professor Horace Kallen (New School for Social Research) points out that continual transformation of values must be the goal of education, as opposed to indoctrinating systems imposed by the authority of either organized religion or the totalitarian state. Everyone is engaged in a "struggle," but there is a crucial difference between the attempt to find "final peace" in heaven or nirvana (or perfect "adjustment" in the social community), and the resolve to consider the "struggle" endless and open-ended. As Prof. Kallen writes: "Everybody's struggle for survival is a struggle to go on struggling. Should any stop struggling, he stops going on; his identity as this-person-and-no-other contracts, lapses, and he dies."

Dr. Ulich's concluding chapter, "The Humanist," utilizes a passage from an essay written by Albert Camus in 1958:

Great ideas, it has been said, come into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps, then, if we live attentively, we shall hear, amid the uproar of empires and nations, a faint flutter of wings, the gentle stirring of life and hope. Some will say that this hope lies in a nation; others, in a man. I believe, rather, it is awakened, revived, nourished by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and works every day negate frontiers of the crudest implications of history. . . . Each and every man on the foundation of his own sufferings and joys, builds for all.

Ulich then says: "Very few sentences could be added to Camus' words. Certainly, a sensitive and creative person is solitary exactly in his most creative hours. Yet there are turning points in human history when individuals and their ideas can no longer stand their loneliness but burst forth in movements and actions when the time is ripe." Dr. Ulich concludes:

The "millions of solitary individuals" of whom Camus speaks all support each other by the mere feeling of their presence. But many more of these who "live attentively" are needed.

This is the conviction that has brought the writers of this book together. We know there is much in these essays (as there was much groping when our ancestors conceived the ideas of democracy and

freedom). And there are here no fanfares and global programs. But we also know that our highly intellectual, perhaps overintellectualized, civilization can hardly advance beyond the present state of dividedness toward a state of mutual understanding unless the schools, from the early stages up to the universities, prepare our youth for a new form of thinking and existing.

COMMENTARY
"MILLIONS OF SOLITARY
INDIVIDUALS"

WHAT Camus says (see Review) about the power of millions of solitary individuals" to rebuild the course of life for all is no poet's reverie but the fundamental law of historical change. It needs only to be believed to be put into effect, yet such are the delusions of political manipulation that even well-intentioned statesmen ignore its possibilities, and then, moving anxiously from breakdown to breakdown of the matrices of social life, they have to deal inadequately and futilely with the disintegrating effects of the operation of this law in *reverse*.

Manipulation, psychological conditioning, sloganizing and propagandizing are the means for destruction of the solitariness, the resourcefulness and self-reliance of individuals. These are the precise ways to unfit the people for responsibility in self-government, for coping intelligently with personal, national, and international problems. A phase of their operation, in practice, is described in some detail by Henry Winthrop in this week's *Frontiers*.

Where, it may be asked, do these delusions about the nature of man and the means to progress come from? They come, it must be answered, from the root processes by which men weaken their fellows in order, as they claim, to "save their souls." The betrayal of the nascent, as yet only slightly developed powers of human individuality begins with the indoctrination of religious orthodoxy, and the betrayal is extended, in secularized forms, by the devices of political ideology. Finally, at the level of personal life, it is continued in endlessly portrayed images of Acquisitive Man as the "hero" who has reached the heights.

They are lies, all lies, from beginning to end. Yet the men who tell the lies believe them. They are honorable men. Rogues and scoundrels are really very few in number.

It is this factor of self-deception in us which makes acts of revolution so faulty and their achievements so filled with contradiction. And it is the deep, hidden insecurity of habitual or unconscious liars which makes them seek the comfort of partisan numbers and the righteousness of taking sides.

So, for all these reasons, Camus is right. Only the deeds and works of solitary individuals, growing together and producing social unity almost by happenstance and spiritual compatibility, will change the human situation, making it finally good. Yet to know this, through and through, as an instinct of the fully human consciousness, seems to be the work of ages. The only heroes of the present, the only saviors worthy of our allegiance, are men who have begun this work.

CHILDREN

. . . and Ourselves

EDUCATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON CONTROVERSY

TWO and a half months ago (June 30) we presented here quotations from a booklet prepared by a local school district for the purpose of instructing teachers in "Americanism." The major emphasis was on the "red Menace," inviting the teacher to compare the evils of atheistic communism with the godly graces of democracy. Similar material being used for indoctrination of the young in Communist China—admittedly the most totalitarian regime, under any label, of the present—reveals an almost identical approach. Extreme self-righteousness, in other words, has the same psychological effects on both sides of ideological curtain. We now have at hand a statement of quite different policy adopted by another local California school administration. Issued as an attractive brochure by the El Segundo Unified School District for circulation among teachers and parents, this "policy statement" begins:

We believe that citizens in a democracy must be able to reason clearly and logically about what they hear and read. The skill to reason logically must be developed. The last thing a democracy can afford is fear of an idea. One of the best means of perpetuating the tenets of democracy is through the classroom teacher. The heritage of American ideas and ideals should be developed upon a positive and constructive basis rather than in a negative or indifferent manner.

We must strive to develop the ability to think creatively imaginatively, and critically. Today's students must be able to recognize and analyze problem situations, to locate, to collect, to evaluate, and to organize relevant information. Sound habits of critical thinking, based upon careful analysis, are necessary to academic excellence at all grade levels. Only educated men can be truly free.

Human liberty is best guaranteed through representative government and democratic processes. An enlightened people can wisely exercise and pursue happiness.

We must help students to discover the basic values that are appropriate to the ideals and aspirations of free men, and to develop an understanding, appreciation, and devotion to the common dignity of man.

Never before has it been so imperative to train young people to think critically, analytically and objectively. . . .

Factual materials relating to both sides of controversial issues of local, state, national, and international importance should be presented in classrooms.

For some strange reason there are people who seem to fear controversy. Controversy is not bad, it has made America great. If everyone in a democracy thinks alike, no one is doing much thinking.

This clarity is the result of thoughtful discussions based on the concerns of a district community. The community became convinced that the schools are responsible for providing the means for students to analyze critically the opinions and ideas of individuals and groups. Only in this way can the schools fulfill their implicit obligation of assisting young people to discover the intent of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the United States. Particularly important is the effort "to provide guide lines to help discriminate between responsible and irresponsible criticism and attacks." Since any impartial consideration of the socio-economic and philosophical factors involved in the development of Communism is apt to create consternation in some homes, the committee invited questions and gave opportunity for meetings with parents. A notice distributed to all the homes in the area indicated that both the committee and the teachers would welcome discussions; and it urged that the policy adopted could be and should be under continual scrutiny as a community undertaking. In full justification of the program, it was pointed out that "controversy under orderly rules is the process by which Americans have historically attempted to unify and codify American thought." Following is a general statement:

It shall be the policy of this district to provide for an objective and scientific study of controversial

issues in a classroom atmosphere conducive to the freedom of individual expression and exchange of ideas and opinions.

An issue becomes controversial when the subject, methods or materials are debatable and when some of the proposed solutions conflict with the intellectual or emotional commitments of a significant group or number of citizens' cherished interests, beliefs or group loyalties.

The study of an issue should provide opportunities for students to develop techniques for examining controversial issues and should strengthen their individual commitment to viewpoints reached through independent, systematic research.

Investigation of significant issues should strengthen the student's ability and will to study complex life situations. It should enable him to recognize the necessity for and value of differing viewpoints and to appreciate the role of controversy as an instrument of progress.

This statement offers such well-thought-out guide-lines for projects of a similar nature that readers may wish to procure a copy from the Director of Instructional Services and Curriculum, El Segundo Unified School District, 203 Richmond St., El Segundo, California. (Price \$1.00.)

Apart from its support to American tradition of valuing and defending constructive controversy, this program is in obvious harmony with the goals of humanistic psychology—individual "autonomy" and "self-actualization." A. H. Maslow's definitions of the "self-actualizing person," first formulated in 1954, are pertinent here:

The S.A. person is not fearful in the psychological sense; he does not devote time protecting himself from non-existent dangers.

The S.A. person is characterized, too, by a lack of defensiveness. He is not concerned with "what other people will say" about him.

These people are frequently, but not consistently, unconventional. They observe the rituals and traditions of society with a fair degree of good grace primarily because they prefer not to hurt the feelings of other people. However, they do not permit convention to prevent them from doing

something they feel is important. When they do act according to tradition it is voluntary and deliberate but not because they feel any kind of compulsion. . .

The character structure of the S.A. person is democratic. He is unaware of differences of social class, race or color. He is willing and eager to learn from anyone who can teach him. He is aware of how little he knows compared to how much there is to know and how much he feels he should know. When seeking out people, he tends to select the elite of character, of capability, of talent, rather than with regard of social class, financial status, etc. He attempts to show a measure of respect to all human beings, regardless of their station in life, simply because they are human beings. No matter how despicable the other person may be, there is a minimum point below which the S.A. person will not go in his attitude toward that person. He is cautious not to destroy the dignity and self-respect of others.

FRONTIERS

The Leisure-Time Dilemma

[This article is a portion of a paper by Dr. Henry Winthrop of the University of South Florida—"Leisure and Mass Culture in the Cybernating Society." Copies of the complete paper may be obtained from Dr. Winthrop, for as long as they last.]

AMERICANS are familiar with the leisure-time use of rest (recuperation), relaxation and recreation. Renewal or *developmental leisure*, however, is a relatively alien concept to many Americans. Anyone can see the value of recuperation, relaxation and recreation, but Renewal, concerned basically with ideas, with enriched æsthetic perception and social feeling, with personal growth and community responsibility, is another matter entirely. The results of self-development in these senses of the term "renewal" are difficult to understand; as a result, developmental leisure, to the unimaginative, the unfeeling, the thoughtless, does not seem to have a visible pay-off, and abetting indifference to developmental leisure is our deep-rooted anti-intellectualism.

One very important reason for our indifference to developmental leisure is the fact that *mass culture* provides substitutes demanding less of the hard work which would be involved if we seriously pursued the ideals of *paideia*.^{*} We cannot devote all our leisure to rest, relaxation and recreation. We regard it as imperative, however, to provide ourselves with pursuits which furnish the form but not the substance of developmental activity. This aim is guaranteed by the entire gamut of activities of "mass culture," two aspects of which are emphasized here, aspects which seem to diminish the prospect that Americans will use their free time for developmental leisure: *homogenization* and *kitsch*.

^{*} *Paideia*, according to the definition made elsewhere by Dr. Winthrop (see page 8 of last week's MANAS), sums up chiefly the content of the English words "civilization" and "education." A major study of Greek culture and civilization, by Werner Jaeger, has this word for its title.—Eds.

Homogenization refers to the failure to discriminate among the values of the different materials brought to the reader's or listener's attention. Thus a popular magazine will devote an equal number of pages to the following features: famous stars of the stage and screen who have made a comeback from alcoholism, courtship customs in the islands of the Pacific, recent discoveries in nuclear physics which promise to revolutionize our understanding of matter, the political views of retirees who live in Bellyache, North Dakota, and the latest hobbies of teenagers in Harlem. The significant is lumped with the sensational, the lasting is coupled with the transient, the noble is married to the debased. The presentation and style tend to imply that everything is just about as important as anything else.

A similar phenomenon occurs during news broadcasts. With no change of tone the announcer will slip from comments on an earthquake and tidal wave which destroyed 20,000 lives in northern Japan to the observation that Stan Musial sprained his leg in the ball park in today's game and may be unable to play for several days. In the same flat, deadpan voice he will remark that during the first six months of this year one billion children died of starvation in underdeveloped nations and that a waitress in Hollywood accuses Rock Hudson of being the father of her child. About the same amount of time will be given to all news items. It matters not that one news item seems to carry the threat of an uprising and civil war in Bolivia while another suggests only that women's skirts will be an inch shorter this year. Everything has the same momentous significance or the same boring unimportance.

Dwight Macdonald has furnished us with an excellent illustration from *Life* magazine of what homogenized reading fare looks like. He says:

Life is a typical homogenized magazine, appearing on the mahogany library tables of the rich, the glass cocktail tables of the middle class, and the oilcloth kitchen tables of the poor. Its contents are as

thoroughly homogenized as its circulation. The same issue will present a serious exposition of atomic energy followed by a disquisition on Rita Hayworth's love life; photos of starving children picking garbage in Calcutta and of sleek models wearing adhesive brassieres; an editorial hailing Bertrand Russell's eightieth birthday (A GREAT MIND IS STILL ANNOYING AND ADORNING OUR AGE) across from a full-page photo of a matron arguing with a baseball umpire (MOM GETS THUMB); nine color pages of Renoir paintings followed by a picture of a roller-skating horse; a cover announcing in the same size type two features: A NEW FOREIGN POLICY, BY JOHN FOSTER DULLES and KERIMA: HER MARATHON KISS IS A MOVIE SENSATION. Somehow these scramblings together seem to work all one way, degrading the serious rather than elevating the frivolous. Defenders of our Masscult society like Professor Edward Shils of the University of Chicago—he is, of course a sociologist—see phenomena like *Life* as inspiriting attempts at popular education—just think, nine pages of Renoirs! But that roller-skating horse comes along, and the final impression is that both Renoir and the horse were talented.

Kitsch is the term applied to those products of mass culture in which the æsthetic and intellectual work is done for the recipient. The message is built into, rather than drawn out of, the product. For example, the writer of a novel or play has thought and felt deeply about some problem or condition. He has so organized his material, and chosen his words and phrases to distinguish what he takes to be relevant, that usually the distinct message and mood which he wishes to convey are achieved. The reader or spectator, however, will not experience what is intended unless in some substantial measure he works through the material presented, as the author or playwright has done, and unless he keenly senses the dilemmas as these have been felt by author or playwright. When, however, one views a movie—a canned version, say, of a novel—the spectator is, in effect, told what to feel or think, by the clichés put into the mouths of the actors, by the tricks and montage of the camera work, by the splicing and reorganization of the cutting room. Often the effects upon a main character of some of the ongoing action and

circumstances are produced for the movie-goer by telling him what he ought to be thinking and feeling, and this is done through the remarks of the actors.

Likewise, a radio or television drama may take a sensitively done play and denature it to suit the tastes of a mass audience—usually by eliminating words and action involving complexities of message and feeling. To make up for the excised material, a commentator will tell the audience between the acts and scenes not only what the characters are supposed to think and feel, but also what the audience is supposed to think and feel. Thus, in the case of the cinema, the sweep of symbol and allegory of the original novel is replaced by visually concrete imagery. Intellectual depth in radio or television drama is eliminated for an artificial simplicity of treatment and falsification of plot, locale and character, which bear little resemblance to the events they are supposed to mirror. The consumer of mass culture is never emotionally taxed or swept up in nuances of mood and conflicts of personality which are not a familiar part of his own life. The objectives and techniques of mass culture must flatten intellectual and moral complexity, so that dilemmas are seen in terms of moral blacks and whites. If a classic is brought to the attention of a mass audience, its meaning is either explained in a corrupted and distorted fashion or explained away entirely. This, then, is *Kitsch*.

Just as there is a "*kitsch*" of high culture and high art, so there is a "*kitsch*" for the life of the mind and the spirit. Efforts of education which hope to create understanding without intellectual strain in the student, without developing habits of intellectual organization and analysis, are "*kitsch*" in this sense. Likewise, all efforts to play at culture by providing students with rapid surveys of literature and the arts are "*kitsch*" of the spirit, hoping to convey the existentialist content of frustration, suffering, disappointment, human struggle and shattered and renovated ideals, through abstractions rather than through personal

experience. None of the passion and power of great art, none of its capacity to probe into the motivational grounds of personal striving and to convey the gap between our real and our alleged motives, can become part of the spiritual warp and woof of any individual who has not experienced and worked through significant tensions. Such growth tensions cannot be provided by what we now call "gracious living."

It is this lack of experience that makes it utter folly to expect a boy who has thus far been interested only in baseball batting averages to analyze *avant-garde* literature or be sensitive to its intentions, content or purpose. It is absurdity to the nth degree to try to teach economics, science, mathematics or philosophy to youngsters who have no comprehension of the four fundamental operations of arithmetic. The analysis of *avant-garde* literature, now a meaningless chore, and the bored submission to literary content which is not even minimally grasped, are both guaranteed to make the development of seriousness impossible. Yet without such seriousness the use of free time for developmental leisure, that is, for renewal, is out of the question.

The one time in the average American's life when he *may escape "kitsch"* of the spirit and move toward the Greek ideal of *paideia* is when he is an undergraduate, exposed to undergraduate ideals of radicalism, evangelism and Bohemianism, although these ideals rub off soon enough when undergraduates who hold them "go secular." Actually, "kitsch" of the spirit is built into the *intellectual goulash* which we now call the liberal arts tradition.

Other American institutions contribute to the intellectual and spiritual superficiality of the times. Book Clubs and amateur theatricals in which the playwright is never understood and the emotions with which he is so deeply concerned are run through by stage-struck lasses with neuromuscular gifts but little empathy, will also provide the possibility for playing at culture without being

serious. The playing at culture by "listening to good music" and "looking at great paintings" while never becoming involved with the materials, theme, mood and message, as did the composer or the artist, are further cases in point. Popular books on science which pretend to help the reader to understand very difficult matters without any effort greater than that required to discriminate between two diagrams or pictures, also help to provide the shadow for the substance, leaving the reader unable to see the intellectual forest of science for the factual trees. The spirit of the intellectually disciplinary methods of science is never caught at all.

I am aware that we have exceptional educational institutions which have not betrayed the pursuit of excellence and which inculcate the necessary respect for intellectual and spiritual discipline without which our culture cannot be transmitted. One result of institutions not like these, however, is that our population is becoming bimodal with respect both to seriousness and cultural depth. Those who receive exceptional training, or manage to provide it for themselves, form one mode or group, and a very small one at that. Most of the remainder who pride themselves on "having been educated" and who are the great consumers of non-serious, middlebrow culture, continue to deceive themselves with a variety of cultural and intellectual shadows and continue to wade into a host of literary and artistic shallows. We do not have to worry about the minority, but the intellectual and cultural inertia of this middle brow majority augurs ill for the democratic future of the West. If we wish to stop this march of middlebrowism, education must revamp both its philosophy and its objectives. I mean by education all forms of it, though chiefly, of course, the institutional forms. Such a revamping will not only have to include the pursuit of excellence in ways which require effort but also the inculcation of seriousness which both the themes of our culture and modern social, economic and political problems, demand.

I have taken pains to emphasize the roles played by homogenization and kitsch in mass culture because they are both phenomena which reduce the possibility of using leisure time for renewal. They reflect the kind of stimulation which mass man has come to expect from mass culture and they determine the nature of the activities which he is likely to pursue in his free time. The leisure-time dilemma of American culture and civilization lies in the fact that, under the impact of science and technology, we are rapidly moving towards a civilization in which leisure may increase rather rapidly and substantially. The question which will naturally arise is whether this substantial increment of time is to be devoted to more mass culture which promotes homogenization and kitsch or more free time for developmental leisure in the sense of renewal. The former would give us an air-conditioned nightmare. The latter would give us a civilization which moved rapidly towards the fulfillment of the Greek ideals of *paideia* with the promise of fulfillment of all the millennial dreams which have moved men in their quest for the good life.

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