

WEALTH VERSUS MONEY

OPINION BY ALAN WATTS

when we learn to stop confusing symbols with the realities they stand for, then, and only then, will we be freed from illusory problems that now seem overwhelming





IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD Jesus Christ 2000, the United States of America will no longer exist. This is not an inspired prophecy based on supernatural authority but a reasonably certain guess. "The United States of America" can mean two quite different things. The first is a certain physical territory, largely on the North American continent, including all such geographical and biological features as lakes, mountains and rivers, skies and clouds, plants, animals and people. The second is a sovereign political state, existing in competition with many other sovereign states jostling one another around the surface of this planet. The first sense is concrete and material; the second, abstract and conceptual.

If the United States continues for very much longer to exist in this second sense, it will cease to exist in the first. For the land and its life can now so easily be destroyed—by the sudden and catastrophic methods of nuclear or biological warfare, or by any combination of such creeping and insidious means as overpopulation, pollution of the atmosphere, contamination of the water and erosion of our natural resources by maniacal misapplications of technology. For good measure, add the possibilities of civil and racial war, self-strangulation of the great cities and breakdown of all major transportation and communication networks. And that will be the end of the United States of America, in both senses.

There is, perhaps, the slight possibility that we may continue our political and abstract existence in heaven, there to enjoy being "better dead than Red" and, with the full authority of the Lord God, to be able to say to our enemies squirming in hell, "We told you so!" On the grounds of such hopes and values, someone may well push the Big Red Button, to demonstrate that belief in spiritual immortality can be inconsistent with physical survival. Luckily for us, our Marxist enemies do not believe in any such hereafter.

When I make predictions from a realistic and hard-boiled point of view, I tend to the gloomy view of things. The candidates of (continued on page 214)

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my choice have never yet won in any election in which I have voted. I am thus inclined to feel that practical politics must assume that most people are either contentious and malevolent or stupid, that their decisions will usually be shortsighted and self-destructive and that, in all probability, the human race will fail as a biological experiment and take the easy downhill road to death, like the Gadarene swine. If I were betting on it—and had somewhere to place my bet—that's where I would put my money.

But there is nowhere to lay a bet on the fate of mankind. Likewise, there is no way of standing outside the situation and looking at it as an impartial, coldly calculating, objective observer. I'm involved in the situation and therefore concerned; and because I am concerned, I'll be damned if I'll let things come out as they would if I were just betting on them.

There is, however, another possibility for the year A.D. 2000. This will require putting our minds on physical facts and being relatively unconcerned with the United States of America as an abstract political entity. By overlooking the nation, we can turn full attention to the territory, to the actual earth, with its waters and forests, flowers and crops, animals and human beings—and so create, with less cost and suffering than we are bearing in 1968, a viable and thoroughly enjoyable biological experiment.

The chances may be slim. Only six months ago, Congress voted, with much patriotic rhetoric, for the imposition of severe penalties upon anyone presuming to burn the flag of the United States. Yet the very Congressmen who passed this law are responsible, by acts of commission or omission, for burning, polluting and plundering the territory that the flag is supposed to represent. Therein, they exemplified the peculiar and perhaps fatal fallacy of civilization: the confusion of symbol with reality.

Civilization, comprising all the achievements of art and science, technology and industry, is the result of man's invention and manipulation of symbols—of words, letters, numbers, formulas and concepts, and of such social institutions as universally accepted clocks and rulers, scales and timetables, schedules and laws. By these means, we measure, predict and control the behavior of the human and natural worlds—and with such startling apparent success that the trick goes to our heads. All too easily, we confuse the world as we symbolize it with the world as it is. As semanticist Alfred Korzybski used to say, it is an urgent necessity to distinguish between the map and the territory and, he might have added, between the flag and the country.

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Let me illustrate this point and, at the same time, explain the major obstacle to sane technological progress, by dwelling on the fundamental confusion between money and wealth. Remember the Great Depression of the Thirties? One day there was a flourishing consumer economy, with everyone on the up-and-up; and the next, unemployment, poverty and bread lines. What happened? The physical resources of the country—the brain, brawn and raw materials—were in no way depleted, but there was a sudden absence of money, a so-called financial slump. Complex reasons for this kind of disaster can be elaborated at length by experts on banking and high finance who cannot see the forest for the trees. But it was just as if someone had come to work on building a house and, on the morning of the Depression, the boss had said, "Sorry, baby, but we can't build today. No inches." "Wha-d'ya mean, no inches? We got wood. We got metal. We even got tape measures." "Yeah, but you don't understand business. We been using too many inches and there's just no more to go around."

A few years later, people were saying that Germany couldn't possibly equip a vast army and wage a war, because it didn't have enough gold.

What wasn't understood then, and still isn't really understood today, is that the reality of money is of the same type as the reality of centimeters, grams, hours or lines of longitude. Money is a way of measuring wealth but is not wealth in itself. A chest of gold coins or a fat wallet of bills is of no use whatsoever to a wrecked sailor alone on a raft. He needs *real* wealth, in the form of a fishing rod, a compass, an outboard motor with gas and a female companion.

But this ingrained and archaic confusion of money with wealth is now the main reason we are not going ahead full tilt with the development of our technological genius for the production of more than adequate food, clothing, housing and utilities for every person on earth. It can be done, for electronics, computers, automation techniques and other mechanical methods of mass production have, potentially, lifted us into an age of abundance in which the political and economic ideologies of the past, whether left, middle or right, are simply obsolete. There is no question anymore of the old socialist or Communist schemes of robbing the rich to pay the poor, or of financing a proper distribution of wealth by the ritualistic and tiresome mumbo jumbo of taxation. If, *if* we get our heads straight about money, I predict that by A.D. 2000, or sooner, no one will pay taxes, no one will carry cash, utilities will be free and everyone will carry a general credit card. This

card will be valid up to each individual's share in a guaranteed basic income or national dividend, issued free, beyond which he may still earn anything more that he desires by any art or craft, profession or trade that has not been displaced by automation. (For detailed information on the mechanics of such an economy, the reader should refer to Robert Theobald's *Challenge of Abundance* and *Free Men and Free Markets* and also to a series of essays that he has edited, *The Guaranteed Income*. Theobald is an avant-garde economist on the faculty of Columbia University.)

Naturally, such outrageous proposals will raise the old cries, "But where's the money going to come from?" or "Who pays the bills?" But the point is that money doesn't and never did *come* from anywhere, as if it were something like lumber or iron or hydroelectric power. Again: Money is a measure of wealth, and we *invent* money as we invent the Fahrenheit scale of temperature or the avoirdupois measure of weight. When you discover and mine a load of iron ore, you don't have to borrow or ask someone for "a thousand tons" before you can do anything with it.

By contrast with money, true wealth is the sum of energy, technical intelligence and raw materials. Gold itself is wealth only when used for such practical purposes as filling teeth. As soon as it is used for money, kept locked in vaults or fortresses, it becomes useless for anything else and thus goes out of circulation as a form of raw material; i.e., real wealth. If money must be gold or silver or nickel, the expansion and distribution of vast wealth in the form of wheat, poultry, cotton, vegetables, butter, wine, fish or coffee must wait upon the discovery of new gold mines before it can proceed. This obviously ludicrous predicament has, heretofore, been circumvented by increasing the national debt—a roundabout piece of semantic obscurantism—by which a nation issues itself credit or purchasing power based not on holdings in precious metals but on real wealth in the form of products and materials and mechanical energy. Because national debts far exceed anyone's reserves of gold or silver, it is generally supposed that a country with a large national debt is spending beyond its income and is well on the road to poverty and ruin—no matter how enormous its supplies of energy and material resources. This is the basic confusion between symbol and reality, here involving the bad magic of the word "debt," which is understood as in the phrase "going into debt." But national debt should properly be called national *credit*. By issuing national (or general) credit, a given population gives itself purchasing power, a method of distribution for its actual goods and services,

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which are far more valuable than any amount of precious metal.

Mind you, I write of these things as a simple philosopher and not as a financial or economic expert bristling with facts and figures. But the role of the philosopher is to look at such matters from the standpoint of the child in Hans Andersen's tale of *The Emperor's New Clothes*. The philosopher tries to get down to the most basic, simple principles. He sees people wasting material wealth, or just letting it rot, or hoarding it uselessly for lack of purely abstract counters called dollars or pounds or francs.

From this very basic or, if you will, childish point of view, I see that we have created a marvelous technology for the supply of goods and services with a minimum of human drudgery. Isn't it obvious that the whole purpose of machines is to get rid of work? When you get rid of the work required for producing basic necessities, you have leisure—time for fun or for new and creative explorations and adventures. But with the characteristic blindness of those who cannot distinguish symbol from reality, we allow our machinery to put people out of work—not in the sense of being at leisure but in the sense of having no money and of having shamefacedly to accept the miserable charity of public welfare. Thus—as the rationalization or automation of industry extends—we increasingly abolish human slavery; but in penalizing the displaced slaves, in depriving them of purchasing power, the manufacturers in turn deprive themselves of outlets and markets for their products. The machines produce more and more, humans produce less and less, but the products pile up undistributed and unconsumed, because too few can earn enough money and because even the hungriest, greediest and most ruthless capitalist cannot consume ten pounds of butter per day.

Any child should understand that money is a convenience for eliminating barter, so that you don't have to go to market with baskets of eggs or firkins of beer to swap them for meat and vegetables. But if all you had to barter with was your physical or mental energy in work that is now done by machines, the problem would then be: What will you do for a living and how will the manufacturer find customers for his tons of butter and sausages?

The sole rational solution would be for the community as a whole to issue itself credit—money—for the work done by the machines. This would enable their products to be fairly distributed and their owners and managers to be fairly paid, so that they could invest in bigger and better machines. And all the

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while, the increasing wealth would be coming from the energy of the machines and not from ritualistic manipulations with gold.

In some ways, we are doing this already, but by the self-destructive expedient of issuing ourselves credit (now called debt) for engines of war. What the nations of the world have spent on war since 1914 could, with our technology, have supplied every person on earth with a comfortable independent income. But because we confuse wealth with money, we confuse issuing ourselves credit with going into debt. No one goes into debt except in emergency; and therefore, prosperity depends on maintaining the perpetual emergency of war. We are reduced, then, to the suicidal expedient of inventing wars when, instead, we could simply have invented money—provided that the amount invented was always proportionate to the real wealth being produced. We should replace the gold standard by the wealth standard.

The difficulty is that, with our present superstitions about money, the issue of a guaranteed basic income of, say, \$10,000 per annum per person would result in wild inflation. Prices would go sky high to "catch" the vast amounts of new money in circulation and, in short order, everyone would be a pauper on \$10,000 a year. The hapless, dollar-hypnotized sellers do not realize that whenever they raise prices, the money so gained has less and less purchasing power, which is the reason that as material wealth grows and grows, the value of the monetary unit (dollar or pound) goes down and down—so that you have to run faster and faster to stay where you are, instead of letting the machines run for you. If we shift from the gold standard to the wealth standard, prices must stay more or less where they are at the time of the shift and—miraculously—everyone will discover that he has enough or more than enough to wear, eat, drink and otherwise survive with affluence and merriment.

It is not going to be at all easy to explain this to the world at large, because mankind has existed for perhaps 1,000,000 years with relative material scarcity, and it is now roughly a mere 100 years since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution. As it was once very difficult to persuade people that the earth is round and that it is in orbit around the sun, or to make it clear that the universe exists in a curved space-time continuum, it may be just as hard to get it through to "common sense" that the virtues of making and saving money are obsolete. It may have to be put across by the most skillfully prepared and simply presented TV programs, given by scientific-looking gentlemen in spectacles and

white coats, and through millions of specially designed comic books.

It will always be possible, of course, for anyone so inclined to earn more than the guaranteed basic income; but as it becomes clearer and clearer that money is not wealth, people will realize that there are limits to the real wealth that any individual can consume. We may have to adopt some form of German economist Silvio Gessell's suggestion that money not in circulation be made progressively perishable, declining in value from the date of issue. But the temptation to hoard either money or wealth will dwindle as it becomes obvious that technology will keep the supplies coming and that you cannot drive four cars at once, live simultaneously in six homes, take three tours at the same time or devour 12 roasts of beef at one meal.

All this will involve a curious reversal of the Protestant ethic, which, at least in the United States, is one of the big obstacles to a future of wealth and leisure for all. The Devil, it is said, finds work for idle hands to do, and human energy cannot be trusted unless most of it is absorbed in hard, productive work—so that, on coming home, we are too tired to get into mischief. It is feared that affluence plus leisure will, as in times past, lead to routs and orgies and all the perversities that flow therefrom, and then on to satiation, debilitation and decay—as in Hogarth's depiction of *A Rake's Progress*.

Indeed, there are reasonable grounds for such fears, and it may well be that our New England consciences, our chronic self-disapproval, will have to be maintained by an altogether new kind of sermonizing designed to inculcate a fully up-to-date sense of guilt. Preachers of the late 20th Century will have to insist that enjoyment of total luxury is a sacred and solemn duty. Penitents will be required to confess such sins as failing to give adequate satisfaction to one's third concubine or lack of attention to some fine detail in serving a banquet to friends—such as forgetting to put enough marijuana in the turkey stuffing. Sure, I am talking with about one half of my tongue in my cheek, but I am trying to make the deadly serious point that, as of today, an economic utopia is not wishful thinking but, in some substantial degree, the necessary alternative to self-destruction.

The moral challenge and the grim problem that we face is that the life of affluence and pleasure requires exact discipline and high imagination. Somewhat as metals deteriorate from "fatigue," every constant stimulation of consciousness, however pleasant, tends to become boring and thus to be ignored. When physical comfort is permanent, it ceases to be noticed. If you have worried for years about lack of money

and then become rich, the new sense of ease and security is short-lived, for you soon begin to worry as much as ever—about cancer or heart disease. Nature abhors a vacuum. For this reason, the life of pleasure cannot be maintained without a certain asceticism, as in the time and effort required for a woman to keep her hair and face in fine condition, for the weaving of exquisite textiles or for the preparation of superior food. Thus, the French distinguish between a gourmand and a gourmet, the former being a mere glutton, a trencherman who throws anything and everything down the hatch; and the latter, a fussy, subtle and sophisticated devotee of the culinary arts.

Affluent people in the United States have seldom shown much imagination in cultivating the arts of pleasure. The business-suited executive looks more like a minister or an undertaker than a man of wealth and is, furthermore, wearing one of the most uncomfortable forms of clothing ever invented for the male, as compared, say, with the kimono or the caftan. Did you ever try the food in a private restaurant for top brass in the offices of a big corporation? Strictly institutional. Even the most expensive night clubs and country clubs pass off indifferent fare; and at \$100-a-plate charity dinners, one gets the ubiquitous synthetic chicken, machine raised in misery and tasting of just that.

If the behavior of increasing numbers of young people is any real portent of what may happen by A.D. 2000, much of this will change. Quite aside from cavalierish styles of long hair, men are beginning to wear jewelry and vivid colors, imitating the styles of medieval and Oriental affluence that began to disappear when power shifted from the landed gentry to miserly merchants of the cities—the burghers or *bourgeoisie*. Beneath such outward appearances, there is a clear change of values: Rich experiences are more to be desired than property and bank accounts, and plans for the future are of use only to those who can live fully in the present.

This may sound feckless and undisciplined, as if young people (especially hippies) had become incapable of postponing gratification. Thus, it might seem that the world-wide rebellions of students are a sign that the adolescent is no longer willing to work through the period of training that it takes to become an adult. "Elders and betters" do not understand that today's students do not want to become their *kind* of adult, which is what the available training is intended to produce.

Artists have always been important prophets of social change, and the increasingly favored "psychedelic" style is anything but undisciplined. Using intense color and highly articulate detail of line and form, the exponents of this

style are restoring a sheer glory to Western art that has not been seen since the days of French and Celtic illuminated manuscripts, the stained glass of Chartres and the luminous enamelwork of Limoges. It calls to mind the jeweled gardens of Persian miniatures, the rhythmic intricacy of Moorish arabesques and the golden filigree of Hindu textiles. Among the hippies, I know makers of musical instruments—lutes and guitars—that, for delicate ivory inlays and excellence of grain and texture, are as lovely as any works of the Italian Renaissance. Furthermore, musicians are beginning to realize that the Beatles (to take an obvious example) display a serious musical genius that puts them in line with the great Western masters, from Bach to Stravinsky, and that some of the songs of Dylan and Donovan are quite as interesting as the best lieder.

At best, then, a leisure economy will provide opportunity to develop the frustrated craftsman, painter, sculptor, poet, composer, yachtsman, explorer or potter that is in us all—if only we could earn a living that way. Certainly, there will be a plethora of bad and indifferent productions from so many unleashed amateurs, but the general long-term effect should be a tremendous enrichment of the quality and variety of fine art, music, food, furniture, clothing, gardens and even homes—created largely on a do-it-yourself basis. Mechanical mass production will provide utilities, raw materials, tools and certain foodstuffs, yet will at the same time release us from the necessity for much of the mass-produced trash that we must now buy for lack of time to make anything better—clothes, dishes and other articles of everyday use that were made so much more exquisitely by "primitives" that they now adorn our museums.

Historically, luxuries of this kind could be afforded only by shameless aristocrats exploiting slave labor. Though still exploiters, the *bourgeoisie* were timid newcomers, often had Protestant guilty consciences and, therefore, hid their wealth in banks and did their very best to pretend that successful business is an ascetic and self-sacrificing way of life. But by A.D. 2000, there need be no slaves but machines, and it will then be our urgent duty to live in that kind of luxurious splendor that depends upon leisurely devotion to every form of art, craft and science. (Certainly, we have long forgotten that a schola, or school, is a place of leisure, where those who do not have to grub for a living can apply themselves to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge and art.) Under such circumstances, what exuberant styles of life will be cultivated, for example, by affluent Negroes under no further pressure to imitate the white *bourgeoisie*?

The style of life will be colorful and elegant, but it will not, I feel, exhibit

the sheer gluttony and greed of certain notorious aristocracies of the past. Speaking perhaps only half seriously, by A.D. 2000, most of Asia will have followed the lead of Japan and be laced with superhighways and cluttered with hot-dog stands, neon signs, factories, high-rise apartment buildings, huge airports and swarms of Toyotas, with every fellahin and coolie running around in a Western business suit. On the other hand, America, having had all this and being fed up with it, will abound with lamaseries and ashrams (but coeducational), expert players of the sitar and the koto, masters of Japanese tea ceremony, schools for Chinese calligraphy and Zen-style gardening—while people stroll around in saris, dhotis, sarongs, kimonos and other forms of comfortable and colorful clothing. Just as now the French are buying sourdough bread flown by jet from San Francisco, spiritually starved Tibetans and Japanese will be studying Buddhism in Chicago.

That this is not quite a joke might be inferred from the amazing increase of interest among American college students in Oriental mysticism and other "non-Western" studies, as courses in Afro-Asian cultures are now often classified. Obviously, this interest is not unconnected with the widespread use of psychedelic drugs. This is not, as is often suggested, a substitute for alcohol: It is much more an adventure, an exploration of new dimensions of experience, all the more attractive for being esoteric and in defiance of authority. To repeat, students tend to be much more interested in experiences than in possessions, feeling that their parents' way of experiencing both themselves and the world is in some way sick, impoverished and even delusive. Certainly—and precisely because their parents have for generations confused symbol with reality, money with wealth and personality (or ego) with the actual human organism.

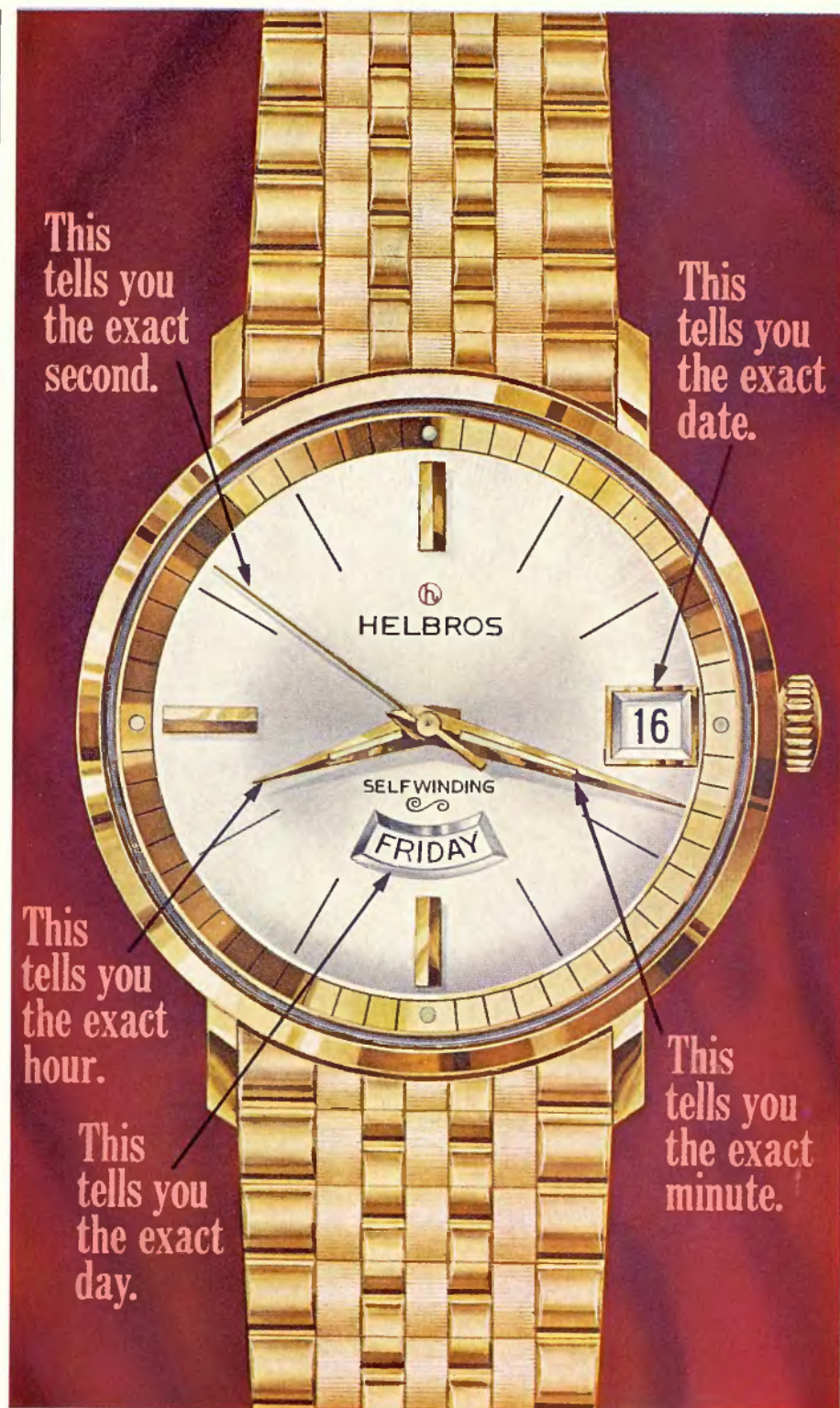
And here's the nub of the problem. We cannot proceed with a fully productive technology if it must inevitably Los Angelesize the whole earth, poison the elements, destroy all wildlife and sicken the blood stream with the promiscuous use of antibiotics and insecticides. Yet this will be the certain result of the technological enterprise conducted in the hostile spirit of a conquest of nature with the main object of making money. Despite growing public alarm over the problems of soil erosion, pollution of the air and water and the deterioration of crops and livestock raised by certain methods of industrial farming, little is as yet being done to develop an ecological technology—that is, a technology in which man has as much respect for his environment as for himself.

In this regard, many corporations—and even more so their shareholders—are

unbelievably blind to their own material interests; for the ill effects of irresponsible technology are appearing so rapidly that this is no longer a problem wherein we can simply pass the buck to our children. Recent investigations, both here and in England, show that the actual operators of chicken factories avoid eating their own produce; it may be as well for the appetites of their absentee shareholders that they do not know too much about raising hens in batteries. Does anyone care what happened to the taste of fruits and vegetables, or mind particularly if apples and tomatoes are often sprayed with wax to improve their looks? (I just scraped an apple, very gently, to prove it.) Is it either good business or good living to buy an \$80,000 home in Beverly Hills and inhabit a miasma of exhaust fumes? (In Paris, last May, we didn't mind the tear gas much; just used to L.A.) Is it even sane to own a Ferrari and, twice daily, jangle one's nerves and risk one's life by commuting from Norwalk, Connecticut, to Madison Avenue, New York? And what about the view from the plane between San Francisco and Seattle—acres and acres of brown Oregon hills dotted with nothing but tree stumps?

It is an oversimplification to say that this is the result of business valuing profit rather than product, for no one should be expected to do business without the incentive of profit. The actual trouble is that profit is identified entirely with money, as distinct from the real profit of living with dignity and elegance in beautiful surroundings. But investors take no long-term responsibility for the use of their capital: They clip coupons and watch market statistics with regard only for monetary results. They see little or nothing of the physical operations that they have financed, and sometimes do not even know that their own funds are invested in the pithy potatoes they get for dinner. Their actual experience of business is restricted to an abstract, arithmetical translation of material fact—a translation that automatically ignores textures, tastes, sights, sounds and smells.

To try to correct this irresponsibility by passing laws (e.g., against absentee ownership) would be wide of the point, for most of the law has as little relation to life as money to wealth. On the contrary, problems of this kind are aggravated rather than solved by the paperwork of politics and law. What is necessary is at once simpler and more difficult: only that financiers, bankers and stockholders must turn themselves into real people and ask themselves exactly what they want out of life—in the realization that this strictly practical and hard-nosed question might lead to far more delightful styles of living than those they now pursue. Quite



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simply and literally, they must come to their senses—for their own personal profit and pleasure.

The difficulty is that most of our very high-ranking business executives live in a closed world. They are wafted from their expensive but unimaginative homes and clubs to offices of dreary luxury, wherein they are protected and encapsulated by secretarial staffs. They read only what is filtered through by underlings and consort only with others in the same Bigelow-lined traps. It is almost impossible for people outside their caste to communicate with them directly; for they are victims of a system (also a ritual) so habitual, so complex and so geared in to the whole corporate operation that the idea of changing it seems as preposterous as rewiring the human brain. Actually, this life is a form of role playing with the reward of status; its material rewards are meager—for one reason, because it is tiring and time consuming. But to suggest that one should change an established role is to be understood by the player as suggesting that he become someone else, and this affront to his imaginary ego is such that he will cling passionately to a role of high status, however much it may be frustrating his natural and material inclinations. This would, perhaps, be commendable, if the role being played fulfilled important responsibilities to society; and many businessmen do, indeed, feel themselves to be doing just that. But their closed world prevents the realization that in the vast, long-range world of material events, they are highly irresponsible—both to their children and to themselves. This is precisely why so many of their own children drift off to the dubious adventures of Haight-Ashbury or the East Village: They find the high life of Scarsdale or Atherton, Lake Forest or Beverly Hills inconceivably dull.

Hopefully, there are signs that some of these very children are getting through to their parents, since it's tough to put a secretary between yourself and your son. Is there any historical precedent for the revolt of a younger generation against the older on the present scale? So widespread? So radical—in politics, morals, religion, dress, art and music? So vociferous—with such powerful techniques of communication as are now available? I do not believe that the elders will ultimately reject the children; it's against nature. But to make peace, the elders will have to move a long, long way from their present position.

Less hopeful are the prospects of a change of attitude in the ranks of successful blue-collar workers, who, as now organized in the once very necessary but now highly reactionary labor unions, constitute the real and dangerous potential for American fascism. For the un-

ions operate under the same confusion of symbol and reality as the investors: The wage is more important than the work and, because all must conform to union hours and (mediocre) union standards, any real enthusiasm for a craft is effectively discouraged. But a work force so robotized is all the more inviting its replacement by machinery, since a contrivance that won't work must inevitably be replaced by one that will. The basic assumption of unionism was not the dignity but the drudgery of labor, and the strategy was, therefore, to do as little as possible for as much pay as possible. Thus, as automation eliminates drudgery, it eliminates the necessity for the unions, a truth that is already extending up to such "high-class" unions as the musicians'. The piper who hates to play is replaced by a tape, which does not object when the payer calls the tune. If, then, the unions are to have any further usefulness, they must use their political pressure, not for a greater share of profits (based on rising prices to pay for rising wages) but for total revision of the concept and function of money.

The fear that adequate production and affluence will take away all restraint on the growth of population is simply against the facts, for overpopulation is a symptom of poverty, not wealth. Japan, thus far the one fully industrialized nation of Asia, is also the one Asian country with an effective program of population control. The birth rate is also falling in Sweden, West Germany, Switzerland and the United States. On the other hand, the poorer nations of Asia and Africa resent and resist the advice that their populations be pruned, in the feeling that this is just another of the white man's tricks for cutting down their political power. Thus, the one absolutely urgent and humane method of population control is to do everything possible to increase the world's food supply and to divert to this end the wealth and energy now being squandered on military technology.

For, from the most realistic, hard-headed, self-interested and tactically expert point of view, the United States has put its Armed Forces in the control of utterly incompetent strategists—a bunch of essential "bad shots" who do not know the difference between military skill and mere firepower, who shoot at mosquitoes with machine guns, who liberate countries by destroying their territories, whose principal weapon is no weapon at all but an instrument of mutual suicide and whose political motivations, based on the puerile division of the world into "good guys" and "bad guys," cannot allow that enemies are also people, as distinct from demonic henchmen of a satanic ideology. If we were fighting in Vietnam with the honest and materialistic intention of captur-

ing the wealth and the women of the land, we would be very careful to leave it intact. But in fighting for abstract principles, as distinct from material gain, we become the ruthless and implacable instruments of the delusion that things can be all white, without the contrast of black.

Timothy Leary was not so wide of the mark when he said that we must go out of our minds (abstract values) to come to our senses (concrete values). For coming to our senses must, above all, be the experience of our own existence as living organisms rather than "personalities," like characters in a play or a novel—acting out some artificial plot in which the persons are simply masks for a conflict of abstract ideas or principles. Man as an organism is to the world outside like a whirlpool is to a river: Man and world are a single natural process, but we are behaving as if we were invaders and plunderers in foreign territory. For when the individual is defined and felt as the separate personality or ego, he remains unaware that his actual body is a dancing pattern of energy that simply does not happen by itself. It happens only in concert with myriads of other patterns—called animals, plants, insects, bacteria, minerals, liquids and gases. The definition of a person and the normal feeling of "I" do not effectively include these relationships. You say, "I came into this world." You didn't; you came *out* of it, as a branch from a tree.

So long as we do not effectively feel this to be so, there is no motivation for forms of politics that recognize the interdependence of all peoples, nor for forms of technology that realize man's inseparability from the entire network of natural patterns. How, then, is the sense of self to be changed? By scientific education? It convinces the intellect but not the emotions. By religion? The record is not hopeful. By psychotherapy? Much too slow. If anything is to be *done* about it, and done in time, I must agree with Aldous Huxley (and with the sober and scholarly Arthur Koestler in his *Ghost in the Machine*) that our only resort may be psychopharmacology—a chemical, a pill, that brings the mind to its senses.

Although I have experimented very sympathetically with such methods (LSD, etc.), I would be as reluctant to try to change the world by psychedelics as to dose everyone indiscriminately with antibiotics. We do not yet know what ecological damage the latter may have done, how profoundly they may have upset certain balances of nature. I have, therefore, another and perhaps equally unacceptable suggestion.

This is simply that nothing be *done* about it. Shortly before his death, Robert Oppenheimer is said to have remarked that the whole world is, quite obviously, going to hell—adding, however,

that the one slim chance of its *not* going to hell is that we do absolutely nothing to stop it. For the greatest illusion of the abstract ego is that it can do anything to bring about radical improvement either in itself or in the world. This is as impossible, physically, as trying to lift yourself off the floor by your own bootstraps. Furthermore, the ego is (like money) a concept, a symbol, even a delusion—not a biological process or physical reality.

Practically, this means that we stop *crusading*—that is, acting for such abstract causes as the good, righteousness, peace, universal love, freedom and social justice, and stop fighting against such equally abstract bogeys as communism, fascism, racism and the imaginary powers of darkness and evil. For most of the hell now being raised in the world is well intentioned. We justify our wars and revolutions as unfortunate means for good ends, as a general recently explained that he had destroyed a village in Vietnam for its own safety. This is also why we can reach no genuine agreement—only the most transitory and

unsatisfactory compromises—at the conference tables, for each side believes itself to be acting for the best motives and for the ultimate benefit of the world. To be human, one must recognize and accept a certain element of irreducible rascality both in oneself and in one's enemies. It is, therefore, an enormous relief to realize that these abstract ambitions are total nonsense and to see that we have been wasting untold psychic and physical energy in a fatuous enterprise. For when it is understood that trying to have good without evil is as absurd as trying to have white without black, all that energy is released for things that *can* be done. It can be diverted from abstract causes to specific, material undertakings—to farming and cooking, mining and engineering, making clothes and buildings, traveling and learning, art, music, dancing and making love. Surely, these are excellent things to do for their own sake and not, please *not*, for one's own or anyone else's improvement.



"Just what is it that you people want, anyway?"

A MIDLING TYPE

(continued from page 195)

flowers. Then she came out and composedly, with three movements, lowered the roller blind. I saw her cross the street and then disappear as she entered the main door.

Feeling excited, I took up my position in the entrance hall, behind the door. I noticed with satisfaction that a large plant of the Ficus family, which I had bought the day before, made a very fine effect in the corner between the two doors. Moreover, I had had the same thought a little earlier as I cast an eye round the sitting room, which was all in the modern, Swedish style. The flat was elegant and original, and I was sure it would make a good impression upon the girl.

At last I heard the lift as it stopped with a jerk at the landing, and then there was the sound of the lift doors being opened and closed and, finally, that of heels on the floor outside. A brief silence and then the ring of the bell. In order not to give the impression that I was waiting behind the door, I went on tiptoe into the sitting room and then came back, making as much noise as possible, and opened the door.

I was a little disappointed. From a distance, she had seemed to me beautiful; close to, one could see that she was merely young and pleasing. She was dark, with a face that was slightly plump in the lower part, a big mouth, an aquiline nose and eyes that were large and black and bovine in expression. As she came in, she said, in a good-natured voice with a regional accent: "I ought not to have come. I've come just to welcome you, you see. We're neighbors; it was just to make your acquaintance."

"You must excuse me," I said, "but if I hadn't had the idea of the mirror, I don't really know how I could have got to know you."

I noticed that she shrugged her shoulders slightly. "At first," she said, "I thought it was the engineer. Then I realized it was you."

"What engineer?"

"The engineer who lived here before you came. He began in that way, too, by dazzling me with a mirror. But perhaps it was he who suggested to you that you might play this trick on me to attract my attention?"

"No, really, I don't know him."

"Sorry, but very often, you know, things do happen like that."

She walked in front of me, familiar and talkative; but in the doorway, she stopped. "Why, everything here is just as it was. You took the flat furnished, did you?"

This time, I thought for a moment before answering. It seemed to me that something had suddenly come between