

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE "GREAT SOCIETY"

By Herbert Marcuse

Part I: Rhetoric and Reality

Prior to exploring the presumed function of the "individual" in the "great society," a brief definition (or rather redefinition) of these terms is required. For I propose to proceed by placing the official and semi-official ideas and speeches about the great society in the context of their prospective realization, and in the context of the prevailing conditions (political, economic, intellectual) which determine the possibility of their realization. Unless this factor is brought to bear on the idea, it remains mere speech, publicity or propaganda - at best a statement of intentions. It is the responsibility of the scholar to take them seriously, that is to say, to go beyond the words or rather to stay this side of the words, in the given universe of powers, capabilities, tendencies which defines their content.

I start with the notion of the Great Society as presented by President Johnson. I think its essentials can be summed up as follows: it is a society

- of "unbridled growth", resting on "abundance and liberty for all", demanding an "end to poverty and racial injustice";
- where progress is the "servant of our needs";
- in which leisure is a "welcome chance to build and reflect", serving "not only the needs of the body and demands of commerce, but the desire for beauty and the hunger for community".

This picture is preceded by the statement that our society can be a place where "we will raise our families, free from the dark shadow of war and suspicion among nations". And it is followed by an enumeration of the areas where the construction of the Great Society can begin, namely:

- (1) The rebuilding of our cities, and of the transportation between them, in accord with the needs of the constantly growing population,
- (2) The reconstruction of the polluted and destroyed countryside, in order to regain "contact with nature" and to protect "America the beautiful",
- (3) The improvement and enlargement of education and educational facilities.

And when all this is done, we will not have reached the end of the struggle, for "most of all, the Great Society is not a safe harbor, a resting place, a final objective, a finished work. It is a challenge constantly renewed, beckoning us toward a destiny where the meaning of our lives matches the marvelous products of our labor".

Let me pause here and register my first dissent. I begin intentionally with the most speculative, most "utopian" aspect because it is here where the basic direction of the program and its innermost limitations are best visible. First a slight matter of style: the meaning of our lives should "match" the "products of our labor" - shouldn't it be the other way around? In a free society, the meaning of life is determined by the free individuals, who determine the products of their labor accordingly. By itself, the phrasing may not preclude this interpretation, but in the context of the whole section it assumes special significance.

Why should the Great and Free Society not be a resting place, a safe harbor? Why should it be a challenge constantly renewed? The dynamic of endlessly propelled productivity is not that of a peaceful,

humane society in which the individuals have come into their own and develop their own humanity; the challenge they meet may be precisely that of protecting and preserving a "safe harbor," a "resting place" where life is no longer spent in the struggle for existence. And such a society may well reject the notion and practice of "unbridled growth"; it may well restrict its technical capabilities where they threaten to increase the dependence of man on his instruments and products.

Even today, long before the start on the road to a free society, the war on poverty might be waged far more effectively by a redirection rather than increase of production, by the elimination of productivity from the areas of socially necessary waste, planned obsolescence, armament, publicity, manipulation. A society which couples abundance and liberty in the dynamic of unbridled growth and perpetual challenge is the ideal of a system based on the perpetuation of scarcity. It requires more and more artificially created scarcity, namely, the need for ever more and ever new goods of abundance. In such a system, the individuals must spend their life in the competitive struggle for existence in order to satisfy the need for the increasing products of labor, and the products of labor must be increased because they must be sold at a profit, and the rate of profit depends on the growing productivity of labor.

In a less ideological language, this was called the law of the enlarged accumulation of capital. Under this aspect, the Great Society appears as the streamlined and improved continuation of the existing not so great society - after the latter has succeeded in cleansing itself from its sore spots and blemishes. Its ability to do so is assumed. But the scholar cannot grant the assumption without examination: we leave the speculation on the Great Society and return to the program for its construction, or rather for its preparation within the existing society.

Foremost is the war on poverty. The critical literature on it already is so large that I can be brief in my references. This war is supposed to be waged by the "affluent society" against poverty in the "affluent society"; thus it may turn out to be a war of this society against itself. The real conquest of poverty would mean either full employment as the normal, long range condition of the system, or, unemployment and a dole sufficiently large to live the good life - also as the normal, long range condition of the system. Both achievements are within the technical capabilities of advanced industrial civilization.

The concept "advanced industrial society" has to be broken down into its actual main forms: capitalist and socialist. Here, we are concerned with the former only. In it, the real conquest of poverty is counteracted, and "contained" by the prevailing social institutions. Full employment, as constant condition, implies a constantly high (and, with rising productivity, a constantly rising) level of real wages, not cancelled by rising prices. This would be equivalent to a decline in the rate of profit below the limit tolerable to private enterprise. It is perhaps conceivable that something like full employment can be attained by an expanding war or defense economy, plus an expanding production of waste, status symbols, planned obsolescence, and parasitarian services.

But even disregarding the clear and present danger of an international explosion, such a system would produce and reproduce human beings who could by no

stretch of the imagination be expected to build a free humane society. For the construction of a Great Society depends on a "human factor" which hardly appears in the program, namely, the existence of individuals who, in their attitudes, goals, and needs, are qualitatively different from those who are educated, trained, and rewarded today: the aggression mobilized and repressed in the maintenance of a society geared to permanent defense militates against progress toward higher forms of freedom and rationality. To be sure, non-destructive full employment remains a real possibility: it requires nothing more, and nothing less than the actual reconstruction outlined in the President's program, that is, the rebuilding of the cities, of the countryside, and of education. But this very program requires elimination of the particular interests which stand in the way of its fulfillment. Today, they include capital and labor, city and countryside politics, Republicans and Democrats, and they are the powerful interests on which this Administration largely relies.

The truism must be repeated: not only the magnitude but the economic basis of the program is incompatible with these interests. The transformation of the cities into a human universe involves far more than slum clearings. It involves the literal dissolution of the cities and rebuilding according to rigidly enforced architectural plans. If undertaken for the population as a whole rather than for those who can pay, the reconstruction would be plainly unprofitable, and its public financing would mean the abrogation of some of the most powerful lobbies in the country. It would, for example, imply the establishment of a wide and efficient network of public transportation, replacing the private automobile as the main vehicle of business and leisure - the end of the motor industry as now organized. The "beautification" of the countryside would imply the rigidly enforced elimination of all billboards, neon signs, the reduction of the innumerable service stations, roadside stands, noise makers, etc., which have rendered impossible the desired "contact with nature." Generally, and perhaps most important, reconstruction would require the elimination of all planned obsolescence, which has become an essential prop for the system inasmuch as it insures the necessary turnover and the competitive rat race.

In all these aspects, the realization of the program seems irreconcilable with the spirit of capitalist enterprise, and this contradiction becomes perhaps most strikingly apparent in the program's insistence on beauty. Here, the words assume a false ring, the language becomes that of commercial poetry, and it conies almost as a relief when Mrs. Johnson, dropping the ideological language, goes out to proclaim beauty as an economic asset: according to the Los Angeles Times (September 8, 1965): "Preserving the attractiveness of a city is a primary economic asset, a way to get payrolls. The city that is beautiful brings a high return on the dollar."

I now come to the "human factor" and I shall take up education, the third area of reconstruction. Who are the human beings, the individuals who are supposed to build the Great Society?

They live in a society where they are (for good or bad) subjected to an apparatus which, comprising production, distribution, and consumption, material and intellectual, work and leisure, politics and fun, determines their daily existence, their needs and aspirations. And this life, private, social, rational, is

enclosed in a very specific historical universe. The individuals who make up the bulk of the population in the "affluent societies" live in a universe of permanent defense and aggression. It manifests itself in the war against the Vietcong and in the struggle against the Negroes, in the huge network of industries and services which work for the military establishments and its accessories. It also manifests itself in the violence released and made productive by science and technology, in the entertainment of terror and fun inflicted on captive audiences.

Against the age-old argument that violence and aggression have always been a normal factor in all societies, I must insist on qualitative differences. It is not only the magnitude of the destructive potential and the scope of its realization which distinguishes a chariot race from an automobile race, a cannon from a missile, hydraulic from nuclear energy. Similarly, it is not only the speed and range which distinguishes the means of mass communication from their predecessors. The new quality is introduced by the progressive transfer of power from the human individual to the technical or bureaucratic apparatus, from living to dead labor, from personal to remote control, from a machine or group of machines to a whole mechanized system. I should like to reiterate that I do not yet evaluate this development: it may be progressive or regressive, humanizing or dehumanizing. But what actually occurs in this transfer of power is also a transfer of guilt feeling responsibility. It releases the individual from being an autonomous person in work and in leisure, in his needs and satisfactions, in his thought and emotions.

At the same time, however, the release is not liberation from alienated labor: the individuals must go on spending physical and mental energy in the struggle for existence, status, advantage. They must suffer, service, and enjoy the apparatus which imposes on them this necessity. The new slavery in the work world is not compensated by a new autonomy over the work world. Alienation is intensified as it becomes transparently irrational; it becomes unproductive as it sustains repressive productivity. And where the established society delivers the goods that raise the standard of living, alienation reaches the point at which even the consciousness of alienation is largely repressed: individuals identify themselves with their being-for-others, their image.

Under such circumstances, society calls for an Enemy against whom the aggressive energy can be released which cannot be channeled into the normal, daily struggle for existence. The individuals who are called upon to develop the Great Society live in a society which wages war or is prepared to wage war all over the world. Any discussion which does not place the program of the Great Society into the international framework must remain ideological, propaganda. The Enemy is not one factor among others, not a contingency which the evaluation of the chances of the Great Society can ignore or to which it can refer to in passing. The Enemy is a determining factor at home and abroad, in business and education, in science and relaxation.

We are here concerned only with the Enemy in relation to the program of the Great Society, more specifically, with the way in which the Enemy (or rather the presentation of the Enemy and the struggle against him) affects the individuals, the people who are

supposed to change the "affluent society" into a Great Society. Thus the question is not to what degree the armament industry and its "multipliers" have become an indispensable part of the "affluent society," nor whether the present dominance and policy of the military establishment are in the "national interest." Rather the question I want to raise is: does the existence of the Enemy prejudice - and prejudice negatively - the capability and capacity to build the Great Society? Before I enter into the brief discussion of the question, I must define "the Enemy." And I shall do so by submitting a precarious hypothesis.

Is the Enemy still Communism *per se*? I think not. First, Communism today exists in many forms, some of which are in conflict with the others. And this country does not combat all of them, and not only for tactical reasons. Secondly, capitalist business and trade with communist countries is constantly increasing, and precisely with those countries where Communism seems to be most stable. Moreover, Communism is most firmly and solidly constituted in the Soviet Union, but for quite some time, the USA and USSR have not really treated each other as Enemies (capitalized!). In fact, one even hears talk of cooperation and collusion, while the Enemy against whom the system is mobilized is presented as precluding cooperation and collusion. Lastly, it is difficult to consider Communism threatening in this country - even on the campuses and among the Negroes. Looking at the facts, geographical and otherwise, I would say that war is actually waged against semi-colonial and formerly colonial peoples, backward peoples, have-nots, whether Communist or not.

This is not the old colonialism and imperialism (although in some aspects, the contrast has been overdrawn: there is little essential difference between a direct government by the metropolitan power, and a native government which functions only by grace of a metropolitan power). The objective rationale for the global struggle is not the need for immediate capital export, resources, surplus exploitation. It is rather the danger of a subversion of the established hierarchy of Master and Servant, Top and Bottom, a hierarchy which has created and sustained the have-nations, Capitalist and Communist. This is a very primitive threat of subversion - a slave revolt rather than a revolution, and precisely for this reason more dangerous to societies which are capable of containing or defeating revolutions. For the slaves are everywhere and countless, and they indeed have nothing to lose but their chains.

To be sure, the established societies have faced the subversion of their hierarchy before: from within, by one of their own classes. This time, the threat comes from without - and precisely for this reason it threatens the system as a whole. The threat appears as a total one and those who represent it have not even a potential vested interest in the established societies. They may have no blueprint for positive reconstruction, or they may have one which would not work, but they simply do not want to be slaves any longer, and they are driven by the vital need to change intolerable conditions - and to do it differently from the old powers. This primitive rebellion, this revolt indeed implies a social program, namely, the awareness that their society cannot be constructed along the line of the have-nations which perpetuate servitude and domination. Their struggle for liberation is *objectively* anti-

capitalist even if they reject socialism and want the benefits of capitalism, and their struggle is *objectively* anti-Communist even if they are Communists, for it aims beyond the established Communist systems. I used the term "objectively" in order to emphasize that I do not imply that the factors or tendencies just outlined are those intentionally pursued by the policy makers. I rather suggest that they are operative "behind the back" of the policy makers, even asserted against their will - as historical tendencies which can be extrapolated from the prevailing social and political conditions.

In this country there is a far more obvious surface rationale for permanent mobilization and defense, that which is expressed in the Domino Theory and the notion of the Communist drive for world revolution. The notion as presented by the makers of policy and information does not correspond to the facts. However, there is a kernel of truth in the Domino Theory. Any spectacular victory of the rebellious have-nots in any one place would activate their consciousness and their rebellion in other places - at home as well. Moreover, for capitalism, such a victory would mean a further dangerous narrowing of the world market - a rather remote danger, which would materialize only if and when the backward countries have reached real independence, but a danger serious enough, for example, with respect to Latin America. For the Soviet Union, the economic danger does not prevail, but the threat to the established regime seems real enough. One can safely say that the attitude of the Soviet leaders toward revolution and rebellion is at best ambivalent if not hostile - as is clear from the conflict with China.

It is the most advanced industrial society which feels most directly threatened by the rebellion, because it is here that the social necessity of repression and alienation, of servitude and heteronomy is most transparently unnecessary, and unproductive in terms of human progress. Therefore the cruelty and violence mobilized in the struggle against the threat, therefore the monotonous regularity with which the people are made familiar with, and accustomed to inhuman attitudes and behavior - to wholesale killing as patriotic act. What the free press achieves in this respect will perhaps once be remembered as one of the most shameful acts of civilization. Hardly a day passes when the headlines do not celebrate a victory by announcing "136 Vietcong Killed," "Marines Kill at least 156 Vietcong," "More than 240 Reds Slain." I have lived through two World Wars, but I cannot recall any such brazen advertisement of slaughter. Nor can I remember - even in the Nazi press - a headline such as that which announces: "U.S. Pleased Over Lack of Protests on Tear Gas" (L.A. Times, September 9, 1965). This sort of reporting, consumed daily by millions, appeals to killers and the need for killers. And a New York judge has epitomized the situation when, in paroling two youths "who were arraigned on a charge of murdering an East Side derelict and then re-arrested on a charge of killing one of their companions," he remarked, according to the N.Y. Times (Sept. 8, 1965): "They should go to Vietnam, where we need soldiers to kill Vietcong."

I have suggested that the international situation of the affluent society is in a very specific sense an expression of its internal contradiction: on the one hand,

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legislators understand that we are in the twentieth century, not the thirteenth?

The report on "Tenancy Reform in Ethiopia" points out (and we agree) that the problems of land reform and landlord-tenant relationships can only be solved in conjunction with progress in other areas, including literacy and the activity of the market. All of these problems are entirely within the sphere of government. But the government cannot act in the public interest if it does not represent the public: a landlord-government can only produce, after fifty years of unhampered squandering, such things as the judicial abomination of 1960 (known as the Civil Code). The nature of the government affects the activity of its functionaries, too. The hoarding of millions of dollars by government officials - from top to bottom - in foreign banks is partially responsible for the economic stagnation of Ethiopia.

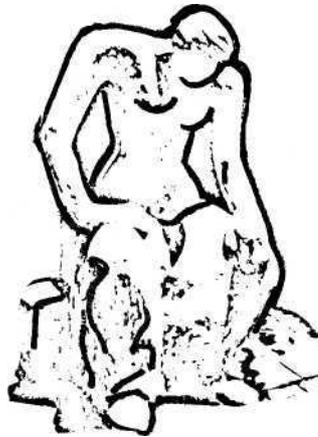
Land reform must be preceded by reform of the government. Putting the cart before the horse is as illogical in politics as it is in transportation.

THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE GREAT SOCIETY

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its social and political need to preserve the established power structure within the nation and abroad, and on the other, the historical obsolescence of this need as dramatized in the rebellion of the backward people. In this conflict, society mobilizes the individuals' aggressive energy to such an extent that they seem hardly capable of becoming the builders of a *peaceful* and free society. It seems that such an undertaking, which would aim at a qualitatively different society, would mean a break, a rupture with the established one, and thus would require the emergence of "new" individuals, with qualitatively different needs and aspirations.

(Part II will appear in the next issue of Alternatives.)



The Individual in the Great Society: Part II

by HERBERT MARCUSE

I now propose to go one step further and to raise the question whether the advanced industrial society has not negated the traditional notion and possibility of the individual in reality, while at the same time perpetuating and extolling it ideologically. In other words, does the individual still have a progressive and productive social function, or is individualism being surpassed by new forms of productivity and their organization? Have individuality, personal autonomy, individual enterprise become obsolete, brakes rather than vehicles of technical progress? Again, I emphasize that I propose to discuss this question without prejudice in favor of transmitted "values": it may well be that the passing of the individual can be called "positive" in terms of human as well as technical progress. I begin with a brief re-examination of individualism as it has become representative of the modern period. Only a rough sketch will be attempted.

In its new historical function, the notion of the individual originates in the Protestant Reformation. The religious and the secular, the internal and external manifestations develop simultaneously. In this dual function, the individual becomes the unit of the new society: in spirit, as the responsible

subject of faith, thought, and conscience; and in the spirit of capitalism, as the responsible subject of free enterprise. The two manifestations remain inter-related, but two trends may be distinguished which increasingly conflict with each other as the new society advances. On the one hand there is the development of the free moral and intellectual subject, on the other hand the development of the subject of free enterprise in free competition. We may also say: the individual in the struggle for himself, for moral and intellectual autonomy, and the individual in the struggle for existence are separated. They are still at harmony in Descartes' ego cogito: the individual is the subject of science which comprehends and conquers nature in the service of the new society, and he is the subject of methodical doubt, of critical reason against all established prejudices.

But the harmony is fallacious: the unity of the two spheres is dissolved. The individual as subject of the capitalist struggle for existence, economic competition, and politics takes shape in the philosophy of Hobbes, Locke, Adam Smith, Bentham, while the subject of individual autonomy, moral and intellectual, is epitomized in the Enlightenment, in Leibnitz and

Kant. The conflict between the philosophical traditions reflects the unfolding conflict in the social reality. Individualistic freedom was supposed to be the essential quality of the inner and the outer man, in theory and practice, thought and action. In this sense, the individual was the corollary of private enterprise: moral responsibility and the autonomous personality were to have their actual basis in economic and political freedom. The individual is proprietor not merely in the sense of possessing material resources, goods, and services necessary for the realization of his freedom in his society, but in the sense of having acquired these things by virtue of his own labor or control over another's labor (already in Locke I) and having made them his own - material expression of his productive, creative personality.

The notion of the individual as proprietor, which dominates philosophical theory from Hobbes to Hegel, was hardly applicable, in any general sense, to the acquisitive society, in which the majority of the population remained deprived of such autonomy. But there was one class, and for a long time the ruling class, that of the agrarian and industrial entrepreneurs, of whom it could be said that they were the masters of their own enterprise; individually responsible for their decisions, choices, risks, they were rewarded if their decision was a good one, punished if it was bad, according to the verdict of the free, competitive market. Through the freedom of private enterprise, this class (roughly: "the bourgeoisie") developed the productive forces on an individualistic foundation under the conditions of free capitalism which prevailed in the industrial countries until the end of the nineteenth century. And the same economic masters were autonomous

Editor's Note:

The following is the second part of an address delivered by Professor Herbert Marcuse on 12 November 1965 at the Arthur F. Bentley Seminar on the Great Society, held at Syracuse University under the auspices of the Maxwell Graduate School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. We are grateful to Professor Bertram Gross of Syracuse University for permission to print the text of this paper.

In the first part of his article Professor Marcuse dealt with the realities behind the rhetoric of the Great Society. In Part II he continues his analysis by discussing the implications for the individual of the programs for the construction of the Great Society.

individuals in their own house. Determining the education of the children, the level of the household, the pattern of behavior, they enforced the Reality Principle in a rather authoritarian manner. "Masters in their house," in their business and in their home, they could do without the government, without "public relations," without standardized mass media; thus they could be considered the living representatives of individualistic culture.

Today, no long discussion is necessary to show that the conditions under which this form of individual enterprise could flourish have disappeared. Contemporary American society has surpassed the state whereby individual units of production engage in free competition with each other. With the transformation of liberalistic into organized capitalism, "individuality" in the economic sphere has become obsolete, dwarfed by the rapid and overwhelming growth in the productivity of labor, and by the growth of the means and instruments for utilizing this productivity. In view of this historical development, the question arises where and how, in the advancing industrial society of our type, we can envisage the development and expression of creative individuality. But before entering into this discussion, I want to trace the vicissitudes of individuality in the dimension in which the individual is in the most authentic sense "creative": that of literature and the arts.

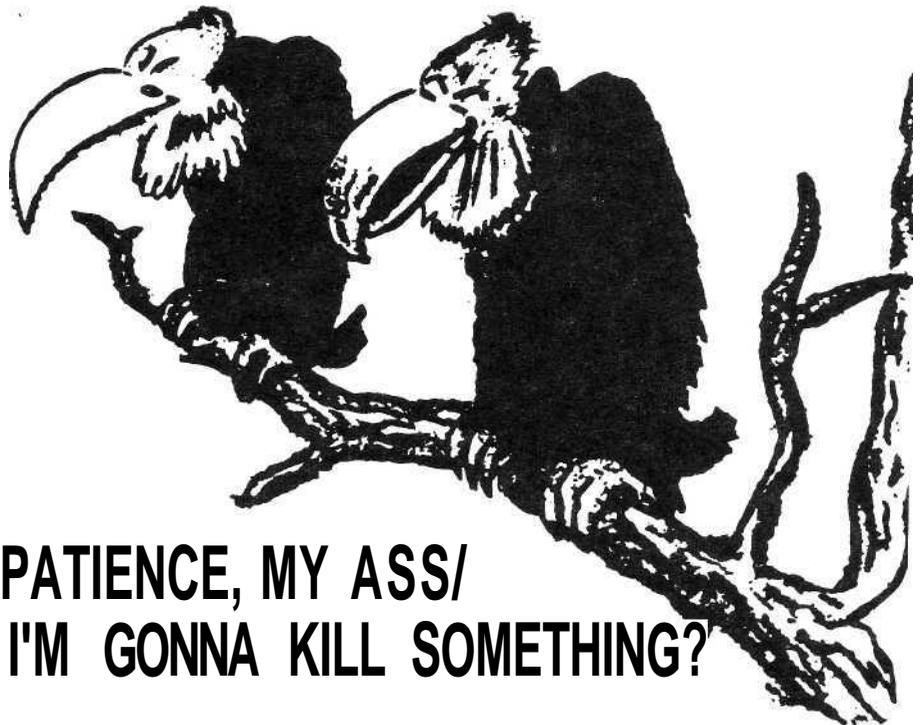
Indeed, the artistic dimension seems to have been the only place where man could be an individual in his material as well as intelligible existence - not only as inner but also as outer man. In contrast to the economic individual, the artist realizes his individuality in a form of creative work which modern culture has extolled as a manifestation of higher freedom and higher value. And unlike the inner moral and spiritual autonomy attributed to the individual "person" by the idealistic philosophy, the freedom of the artist is of more substantial stuff, expressing itself in his oeuvre and in his life. The great personalities of the Renaissance could combine artistic, political, and economic individualism: Burckhardt's phrase "the state as work of art" ex-

presses this unity. The phrase may convey a highly idealized picture, but it indicates the gap which separates the origins of individualism from its late states.

In the fully developed bourgeois society, market value supersedes the value of individual creativity; when the latter serves to increase the former, it is the market rather than the individual which asserts itself. The individual in the full "classical" sense, as a true Self, now appears possible only as against his society, in essential conflict with the established norms and values: he is an alien, outsider, or a member of the "inner emigration." In this society, the individual cannot fulfill himself, cannot come into his own: this is the message of the representative literature at least from the Sturm und Drang to Ibsen. In the inevitable struggle with society, the individual (always in the emphatic sense of the term) either perishes, or resigns - renounces that uncompromised freedom and happiness which was first the promise and goal of individualism. The creative individual starts as a non-conformist; in the established society, he cannot be a "realist" without betraying himself; his autonomy is that of his imagination, which has its own rationality and

truth (perhaps more valid, more rational than that of the Establishment). But as he sets out to live and to work in accordance with himself and his faculties, he recognizes that he must resign himself and find his autonomy in reason rather than imagination. In other words, the individual finds himself to the degree to which he learns to limit himself and to reconcile his happiness with being unhappy: autonomy means resignation. This is the story of the great development-novels: the Wilhelm Meister, the Education Sentimentale, the Grune Heinrich, the Recherche du Temps Perdu.

There is, however, another form in which the individual appears in bourgeois society and which perhaps most fully actualizes individuality, namely, the poet maudit. He indeed lives his own life: on the margin and against his society. The individual becomes authentic as outcast, drug addict, sick, genius. Some of this authenticity is still preserved in the "Bohemian," even in the Beatnik. They represent vaguely protected and permitted manifestations of individual freedom and happiness, not enjoyed by the ordinary citizen, who defines freedom and happiness in the terms of his government and society rather than his own.



**'PATIENCE, MY ASS/
I'M GONNA KILL SOMETHING?'**

This long digression from the "Great Society" seemed to me necessary in order to separate the ideology of the individual from his reality, and to point out how the creative individual has been largely localized in the "artistic dimension," that is, in the sphere which was until now far removed from the daily business of life - a sort of immaterial reality, more spiritual, etc. Something of this is still reflected in President Johnson's emphasis on beauty, imagination (which however, coupled with "innovation," has a technical-commercial ring!), and creativity. And some of the specific questions submitted to this symposium raise explicitly the problem of the place and function of the "creative" individual in the advanced industrial society. In fact, with technological progress, with the spread of automation, mass production, and standardization in the daily business of life, "individuality" is being increasingly reserved for whatever room may be left for "creative" activity - whatever "creative" may mean. In the context of the authoritative statements on the Great Society, "creative" seems to refer to the production of things, services, works, spaces which are not only useful but also beautiful, and which satisfy not

only material but also spiritual needs, enhancing the liberty, joy, and richness of human existence.

We must stress at the outset that this quest for the creative individual in advanced industrial society directly involves the social organization of labor. For if creativity is to be more than an individual privilege confined to an elite, then it must be a possible mode of existence for all members of the Great Society, without any discrimination other than that suggested by different individual capacities themselves. Moreover, the embodiments of creativity either have to be produced in the material process of production (such as houses, parks, furniture, objets d'art), or the material process of production must provide the material basis and environment for the creation and reception of such goods. How and where can individual creativity, on a social scale, develop in a society in which material production is being increasingly mechanized, automated, standardized? The following alternatives present themselves:

(a) either the material production itself changes its character fundamentally and is transformed from "alienated" to non-alienated work,

(b) or material production is completely divorced from creative individuality (except for the technological intelligence and imagination brought to bear on the productive apparatus), and the individuals are creative outside the process of material production.

With reference to the first alternative, it is obvious that further progress of industrial society is tantamount to progress in mechanization and mass production. The reduction of individual energy in the production of the necessities is also progress in human terms. Eliminating the necessity for individual labor power would be the greatest triumph of industry and science. Any attempt to reverse this trend on a social scale by a reintroduction of modes of work closer to handicraft and artisanship, or by reducing the mechanized apparatus while leaving intact the established social control of the productive and distributive process, would be regressive in terms of efficiency as well as human development.¹

Thus, the emergence of the autonomous and creative individual cannot be envisaged as a gradual transformation of existing alienated into non-alienated labor. In other words, the individual will not come to life as worker, technician, engineer, or scientist who expresses his creativity in producing or attending to the established apparatus of production. The latter is and remains a technical apparatus which, in its very structure, militates against autonomy in the work process. Autonomy rather presupposes a basic change in the relations of the producers and consumers to the apparatus itself. In its prevailing form, the latter controls the individuals whom it serves: it fosters and satisfies the aggressive and conformist needs which reproduce the controls. Nor would a mere transfer of controls mean qualitative change unless and until the

1. The situation is entirely different in the backward countries where the improvement and humanization of existing pre-industrial modes of work could conceivably counteract the trend toward exploitative control of industrialization by foreign or native capital - provided real national independence has been attained.

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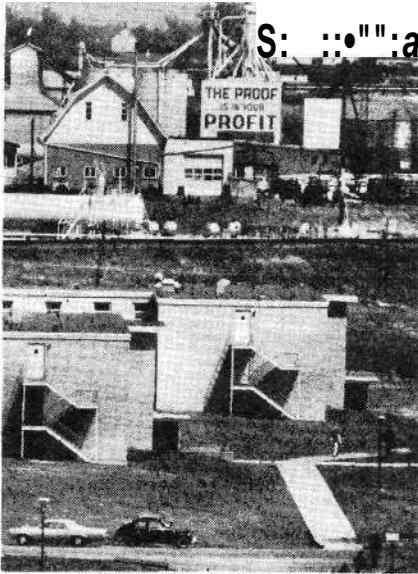
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new administrators (and the people at large) experience the vital need for changing the very direction of technical progress toward the pacification of the struggle for existence. Then, the "realm of freedom" may perhaps appear in the work process itself, in the performance of socially necessary labor. The technical apparatus could then serve to create a new social and natural environment: human beings could then have their own cities, their own houses, their own spaces of tranquility and joy: they could become free and learn how to live in freedom with the others. Only with the creation of such an entirely different environment (which is well within the capabilities of technology and well beyond the capabilities of the vested interests which control technology), would the words 'beauty,' 'creativity,' 'community'

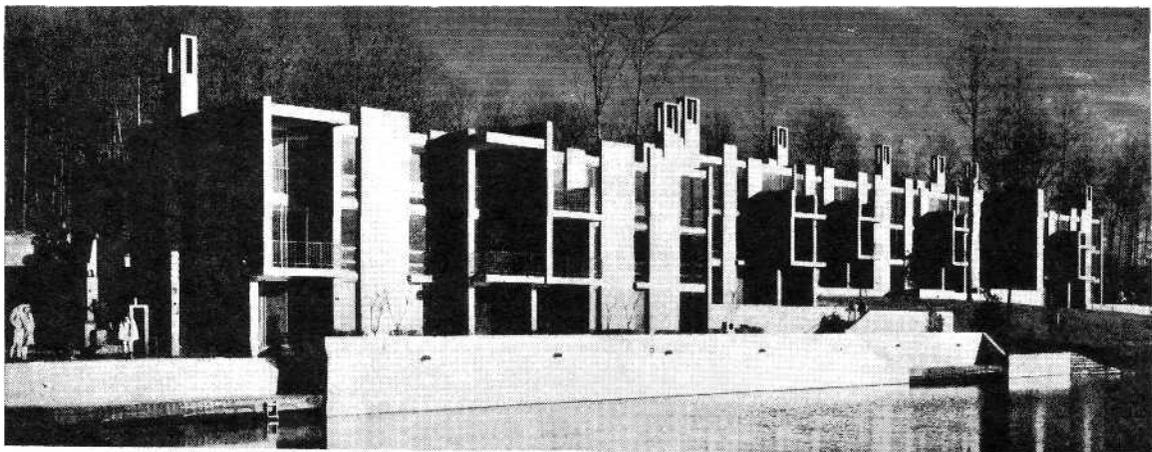
etc., designate meaningful goals; the creation of such an environment would indeed be non-alienated labor.

The other alternative for the emergence of the "individual" in the advancing industrial society is expressed in the notion that the individual, as autonomous and creative person, develops outside and beyond the material workprocess, outside and beyond the time and space required for "earning a living" or producing the socially necessary foods and services. Under this general notion are subsumed two very different and even contradicting concepts: the Marxian distinction between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity, and the modern idea of creative leisure.

Marx's "realm of freedom" presupposes a social organization of labor guided by the standards of utmost rationality in the satisfaction of individual needs for the society as a whole. Thus, it presupposes collective control of the production-process by the producers themselves. But for Marx, the production-process remains a "realm of necessity," imposed upon man by the continued struggle with nature, scarcity, and weakness. The time spent in this struggle would be greatly reduced, but it would still take up much of the individual's existence. The remaining time would be free time in the literal sense that it would be under the control of the individual: he would be free to satisfy his own needs, to develop his own faculties, his own pleasures. Now it seems to me that contemporary industrial society has all but closed this realm of freedom, and closed it not only by virtue of its ingress into all spheres of the

individual existence (thus preconditioning the free time), but also by virtue of technical progress and mass democracy. What is left to individual creativity outside the technical work process is in the way of hobbies, do-it-yourself stuff, games. There is, of course, the authentic creative expression in art, literature, music, philosophy, science - but it is hardly imaginable that this authentic creativity will, even in the best of all societies, become a general capability. The rest is sport, fun, fad. The conditions of advanced industrial society, then, seem to invalidate Marx's idea of free time. Freedom is also a matter of quantity, number, space: it demands solitude, distance, dissociation - the unoccupied, quiet space, nature not destroyed by commerce and brutality. Where these conditions do not prevail, the realm of freedom becomes a most expensive privilege. Not only the reduction of the working day and the restoration of nature, but also the reduction of the birthrate would be the prerequisite.

In contradistinction to the Marxian concept, the notion of "creative leisure" is realistic and conforms to contemporary conditions. Marx's "free time" is not "leisure time," for the realization of the all-round individual is not a matter of leisure. Free time pertains to a free Society, leisure time to a repressive society. In such a society, when the working day is greatly reduced, leisure time must be organized, even administered. The laborer, employee, executive enters into his leisure time equipped with the qualities, attitudes, values, behavior belonging to his station in his society; he has his being-for-



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others as his own. His leisure activity or passivity is simply a prolongation or recreation of his social performance; he is not an "individual." In the Marxian concept, man is free also in the realm of necessity to the extent to which he has organized it in accordance with his human needs, in transparent rationality. Freedom thus links the two realms: the subject of the working day is also the subject of free time. In the contemporary industrial society, man is not the subject of his working day; consequently if he is to become the subject of his free time, he has to be made into such. And until the repressive organization of the working day is abolished, he will be made into a subject of leisure by exactly the same powers which govern the working day. Creativity can be learned, culture can be learned, but as long as learning and teaching do not transcend the established conditions, the result will be the enrichment, beautification, adornment of an unfree society. Instead of invoking the image of human freedom, creative culture will contribute to the absorption of this image into the status quo, which it will make more palatable.

But does not the evolution of technological civilization in its own course promote and require the development of new mental energies, of new intellectual faculties which, in turn, may transcend the prevailing conditions and cre-

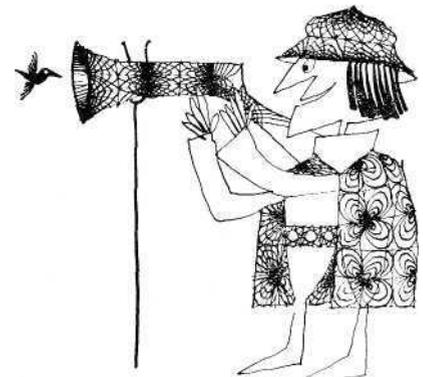
ate liberating needs and aspirations? There is an increasing need for scientific and technological intelligence in the process of material production which will have to be satisfied, and there is no doubt that this intelligence is creative. However, the mathematical character of modern science determines the range and direction of its creativity, and leaves the non-quantifiable qualities of humanitas outside of its domain. Mathematical propositions about nature are held to be the truth about nature, and the mathematical conception and project of science are held to be the only "scientific" ones. Thus universal validity is claimed for a specific historical theory and practice of science and other modes of knowledge appear as less scientific and therefore less true.

After having removed the non-quantifiable qualities of man and nature from scientific method, science feels the need for redemption by coming to terms with the "humanities." The dichotomy between science and humanities (a treacherous designation: as if science did no longer partake of humanity!) cannot be overcome by mutual recognition and respect; its resolution would involve theingression of humanistic goals into the formation of scientific concepts, and, vice versa, the development of humanistic goals under the guidance of such scientific concepts. Prior to this internal unification, both science and humanities will hardly be equipped to play a major role in the emergence of a free society. The humanities will be condemned to remain essentially abstract, academic, "cultural" - quite divorced from the daily work process. Science, on the other hand, will continue to shape the work process and, with it, the daily universe of work and leisure, but it will not bring about the new freedom. The scientist may well be moved by suprascientific goals, humane goals, but they will remain external to his science, and they will limit, even define his creativity from outside. Thus the scientist or technician occupied in the designing and construction of a bridge and road net, of facilities for work and leisure, in the planning of towns may (and indeed often does) calculate and construct something beautiful, peaceful, and

humane. However, his creation will be functional in terms of the functioning of his society, and his transcending goals and values will be defined by this society. In this sense, his creativity will remain heteronomous.

The individuals who are supposed to live in the Great Society must be the individuals who build it; they must be free for it before they can be free in it. No other power can impose a free society on them - not because a "despotism of freedom" per se contradicts liberation, but because no power, no government, no party exists which is free for such dictatorship. It must still be in the process of material production, of socially necessary labor and its division where the new society would have to take shape. And since individual autonomy is being eliminated from this process, the restoration of freedom and the redirection of production would require changing the control over productivity. Moreover, the construction of the Great Society as a free society would involve more than a change in the controlling powers: it would involve the emergence of new needs and aspirations in the individuals themselves - needs and aspirations essentially different from, and even contradictory to those sustained, satisfied, and reproduced by the established social process.

But is it not the very essence of a democratic society to allow the emergence of new needs and aspirations, even if their development threatens to demand new social institutions? This is where education, the third area of reconstruction designated in the program for the Great Society, becomes relevant. Johnson's pro-



ras: calls for an extension and **wwth** of education, "in quality i well as in size." Let us con- **lder** first the question of the ^aatitative growth. Not too long >. many voices spoke out against aeral education: it was consid- **ed** dangerous to law and order, culture, if the people (the lower riasses) would learn how to read ad write. Of course, it was the •"Stablished law and order, the established culture which was to e protected from more education. **Today**, the situation is very different, and education is considered as a desideratum by the established **law** and order, and by the estab- lished culture. No culture and -stelletual expression - no matter **how** subversive - is to be ex- cluded from the curriculum. Marx ;s taught alongside Hitler; drugs ire part of the equipment of ex- :stential psychology; and even the philosophy of the Marquis de Sade is sometimes respectfully treated r: the classroom.

Fortunately, I do not have to discuss here the question whether this achievement indicates progress in freedom and critical thought, or rather progress in the immunity and cohesion of the existing society and its values. In any case, this cultural affluence may still be better than further restriction and repression of knowledge, but it cannot per se be taken as progress toward a better society. Indeed this coordination of the negative and the positive, the subversive and the conservative, reduces the qualitative difference between them; it accomplishes the flattening out of opposites, of contradictions. A change in the prevailing pattern, that is to say, a liberation of free, critical, radical thought, and of new intellectual and instinctual needs would necessitate a break with the benevolent neutrality which embraces Marx and Hitler, Freud and Heidegger, Samuel Beckett and Mary McCarthy; it would necessitate partisanship as against a tolerance and objectivity which operate anyway only in the realm of ideology, and in areas which do not threaten the whole.

But, precisely this tolerance and objectivity are the shibboleth of the democratic process and its prevailing institutions. Progressive education which could create the intellectual climate for the emergence of new individual needs,

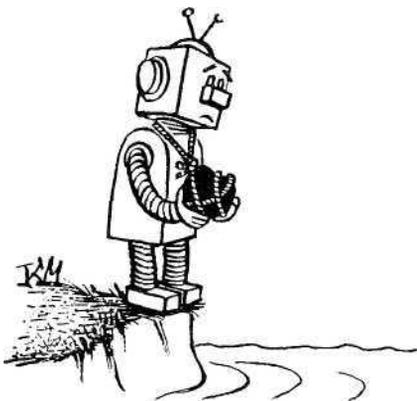
would come into conflict with many of the powers, private and public, which finance education today. Qualitative change in education is qualitative social change, and there is little chance that such a change could be organized and administered; education remains its pre- requisite. The contradiction is real: the existing society must offer the possibility of education for a better society, and such education may be a threat to the existing society. Thus we cannot expect popular demand for such education, nor endorsement and support from above. Kant stated as the goal of education, that children should be educated, not in accordance with the present but with that of a future, better condition of the human race, namely, in accordance with the idea of humanitas. This goal still implies the subversion of the present condition of man. I wonder whether the spokesmen for education toward the Great Society are aware of this implication.

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To the degree to which the technical, material, and scientific resources for the development of a free society are available, its realization depends on the human, social forces who would need such a society - need it not only objectively (an sich) but also subjectively, for themselves, consciously. Today, this need is present only among a minority of the population of the "have" societies, and among the fighting people in the "have-not" areas of the world. In the technically advanced areas of the world, education can indeed help to activate the need which is "objectively" universal - but it would be a strange, most unpopular and unprofitable education. For example, it would include immunization of children and adults against the mass media; unhampered access to information suppressed or distorted by these media; methodical distrust of politicians and leaders, organization of effective protest and refusal which does inevitably end with the

martyrdom of those who protest and refuse. Such education would also aim at a basic transvaluation of current values: it would require the debunking of all heroism in the service of inhumanity, of sport and fun in the service of brutality and stupidity, of faith in the necessity of the struggle for existence, and in the necessity of "business." To be sure, these educational aims are negative, but the negation is the work and appearance of the positive, which first has to create the physical and mental space where it can come to life - and this requires the removal of the devastating and suffocating equipment which now occupies this space. This destruction would be the first manifestation of the new autonomy and creativity - the appearance of the free individual in the new society.

I have tried to take up, in the course of my analysis, the questions submitted to this seminar inasmuch as I feel qualified to discuss them. I have excluded all questions dealing with specific administrative problems, such as the relation between federal and local authority, public and private agencies, etc. These questions presuppose existing institutions as implementing the program for the Great Society, whereas I assume that this program would lead beyond their framework and authority. The other questions are mainly concerned with the general problem of "organization," that is, whether the ubiquitous organization characteristic of, and indispensable for the functioning of advanced industrial society does not militate against the "individual," creativity, initiative. The opposition of organization to freedom is ideological: while it is true that freedom cannot be organized, the material, technical (and perhaps even the intellectual) preconditions of freedom require organization. Not the growth of organization is to blame, but the growth of bad, exploitative organization. Against it, counter-organization is called for. For example, if the civil rights movement would have an organization more powerful and more militant than the force of its opponents, it would be far more effective. Similarly, one could terminate the now endless debate as to the right balance between Federal and local government, jurisdiction, initiative, etc. If the



composition of the Federal government indicates progressive policies, its power and authority should be made to prevail rigorously, and vice versa; otherwise, the issue is simply one of power politics, local or national.

While some of the submitted questions point up the international, global content of the Great Society, most of the questions seem to accept the national framework of the program: the Great Society will be an American society. But if one thing is clear, it is that the Great Society, if it should ever come about, will not be an American society, although this country may conceivably and initially be the leading power. Not only are some of the values which have come to be associated with the American Way of Life incompatible with a free society (such as the commercialization of the soul, togetherness, the sanctity of business, the science of human relations), but the warlike co-existence of this affluent society with the have-not part of the world, conflicts with the very idea of a Great Society. Similarly, some of the values associated with Eastern civilization (especially its traditional aversion to "business"; its emphasis on contemplation) could be revived in the new society.

To sum up: the program of the Great Society is of a substantial ambiguity which reflects the alternative prospects of the affluent society whose program it is supposed to be.

(1) It can be read as a program for the extension and amelioration of the status quo: a higher standard of living for the underprivileged part of the population, abolition of discrimination and unemployment, beautification of cities and

countryside, improvement of transportation, better education for all, cultivation of leisure. Unless a policy to the contrary is proposed, it must be assumed that this development is to take place within the institutional, cultural and mental framework of the competitive struggle for economic existence. Such a program, translated into reality, would indeed mean a vast improvement in the prevailing conditions. However, even within the given framework, the realization of the Great Society would require a permanent and considerable reduction of the military establishment and its physical and mental manifestations throughout the society - and that is to say, it would require major political and economic changes, foremost of foreign policy. Short of such change, the Great Society would look like a welfare state prepared to turn into a warfare state.

(2) The program can be read as envisaging the essential transformation of the existing society which is suggested by its technological capabilities, namely, a transformation into a society where, not full employment but marginal (or even unemployment) in necessary alienated labor is the basis of growth. This would mean subversion of the prevailing organization of the economic process, and subversion of the prevailing goals of education - in short: it would mean a fundamental transvaluation of values, and the emergence of new individual and social needs. This would also mean a radical change in the relation between the "have" and "have-not" societies - the rise of an international society beyond Capitalism and Communism.

Under both aspects, the traditional concept of the individual, in its classic-liberal as well as Marxist form seems to be untenable - cancelled (aufgehoben) by the historical development of productivity. For the "person" as autonomous agent will find increasingly less place in the work-process. In the first alternative (extension and amelioration of the status quo), individuality could be and perhaps would have to be "artificially" maintained and fostered: some sort of organized, administered individuality expressed in external paraphernalia,

gadgets, fads, hobbies, in cultivated leisure, decoration, and decor. Authentic individuality would remain the distinction of the creative artist, writer, musician. The idea of making this creative potential general among the population at large militates against the very function and truth of the artistic creation as form of expression - not because it must necessarily remain the privilege of a creative few, but because it implies dissociation from, and negation of common sense and common values, ingression of a qualitatively different reality into the established one. In the case of the second alternative (fundamental transformation of the society), individuality would refer to an entirely new existential dimension: to a domain of play, experiment, and imagination which is outside the reaches of any policy and program today.

I wish to conclude on a less Utopian note. Perhaps my most serious doubt concerning the Great Society is caused by the fact that the American foreign policy all but invalidates the domestic program for the Great Society. The issues of coexistence, of the relations with the have-not countries, of neo-colonialism, the military establishment are not contingent external factors; rather they determine the prospects of growth, improvement, and even continued existence of society, great or not so great. Declarations as to the need for extending the American program to other nations are contradicted by the brutal and dirty war in Vietnam, by the direct or indirect intervention against social change wherever it threatens vested interests, by the flowering of military bases all over the globe. These conditions testify to the dominance of powers which are incompatible with the grand design for peace, freedom, and justice. It is the presence of these powers rather than the absence of capabilities and intentions which gives the program its ideological character. The Great Society will be a society that can exist and grow in peace, without the built-in need for defense and aggression - or it will not be at all.