

II

THE PRESSURES AGAINST INDIVIDUALITY

My subject in this lecture is again at once tiresomely familiar and remarkably strange. As I have pointed out, the pressures against individuality are in a sense a very old problem, which has been troubling thoughtful men for a long time now, and which is rooted in ageless tendencies, the universal power of culture and convention. Yet it is a quite new problem too, since it troubled hardly any thinkers in past societies. It remains distinctive of our own civilization, which has made more of the individual person than did any other, and distinctive especially of our revolutionary age, which has been generating ever more massive threats to his freedom and dignity. In the totalitarian countries he is subject to an obvious tyranny, an issue I shall put aside for the time being, though with the note that it is not just a repetition of an old story. In the free societies the individual has unprecedented opportunities to realize and express himself, and to enjoy the life abundant, but his bountiful society makes as unprecedented demands on him, and simply because of his freedom his life may in some ways be more difficult than it ever was before. Today, amidst extraordinary collective wealth and power, he may often feel more insignificant, insecure, helpless than ever.

This in turn involves all too familiar ideas, which I feel obliged to rehearse at length for his sake—our sake; so I shall first remark a strange aspect of our problem that is often overlooked. Primitive or peasant peoples—down to our own day always the great majority of mankind—always look ignorant to us. For basic living purposes, however, they knew their little world much better than we can ever hope to know ours. They knew their fellows, their tools, their

status, their duties, their gods, their magic—all the main conditions of their lives. By contrast, the ordinary person today knows very little about the forces determining his existence, producing all the wonders and the terrors of modern life. His daily routines are enveloped in ignorance. He pushes a button and lights go on—somehow caused by a mysterious something called electricity, provided by a remote something vaguely known as a corporation, regulated by another invisible body in the name of government, which may conjure up that spectre called “creeping socialism.” Since I have referred slightly to social scientists, I am pleased to quote an eloquent statement of our condition by one of the great ones, Max Weber:

Abraham, or some peasant of the past, died “old and satiated with life” because he stood in the organic cycle of life; because his life, in terms of its meaning and on the eve of his days, had given to him what life had to offer; because for him there remained no puzzles he might wish to solve; and therefore he could have had “enough” of life. Whereas civilized man, placed in the midst of the continuous enrichment of culture by ideas, knowledge, and problems, may become “tired of life” but not “satiated with life.” He catches only the most minute part of what the life of the spirit brings forth ever anew, and what he seizes is always something provisional and not definitive, and therefore death for him is a meaningless occurrence. And because death is meaningless, civilized life as such is meaningless.

Like most eloquent statements, this strikes me as something of an overstatement; but unquestionably many contemporaries do suffer from some feeling of hollowness, emptiness, or purposelessness in their lives. The signs are nowhere more apparent than in the United States, with its wealth of material advantages. Here is one reason why Americans are disposed to the groupism and togetherness that may comfort the individual, but is unlikely to promote individuality or personal independence. As I now proceed to review the familiar pressures to conformism (with some

hope that they may not be quite so familiar to Canadians), let me remind you again that the whole problem does not boil down to simple tyranny or simple folly.

The problem begins with the paradoxical consequences of democracy itself, noted by de Tocqueville. While democracy proclaimed the rights of the individual, it naturally tended to discourage individuality by the pressure of public opinion. As the opinion of the majority, this reflected the mind of the so-called common man, who might have little mind of his own. Americans are fond of saying "Be yourself," but they are notoriously hounded by the fear of being different from their fellows in any important respect, or of being thought queer. They tend to be suspicious of the uncommon type of man, especially the intellectual. The typically American word for this type is "highbrow" or "egghead"; just as the term for a person who has highly unconventional opinions is not independent thinker, but "crackpot."

From the beginning, moreover, the majority were naturally bent first and last on making a good living. This was a quite normal desire, and a credit to the United States; for ordinary men now had much more real opportunity to make a decent living than they had ever had in Europe. But here the notorious trouble was that they commonly defined the goal in terms of the popular expression "What is the man worth?"—with the undignified answer, He is worth so many dollars. Hence de Tocqueville complained that boastful Americans were not really proud enough. The ordinary person, he wrote, "has so contemptible an opinion of himself that he thinks he is born only to indulge in vulgar pleasures." De Tocqueville traced all these tendencies to the democratic principle of equality, which he considered the ruling passion of Americans, but in fact this passion was complicated by the common ambition to rise in the world, or to become unequal. Then the trouble was that as status-seekers they were still more likely to be conformists, more

fearful of being different from the people in the class they aspired to belong to. It has long been observed that the driving motive of Americans is to keep up with the Joneses, and the Joneses are scarcely independent types either.

Such tendencies were given much more drive by the Industrial Revolution. When de Tocqueville wrote, the United States was still a predominantly agricultural society, in which the great majority of people lived on farms or in villages, and were self-employed or independent. By now nearly 80% of them live in or about cities, only one out of seven is self-employed, and most work in business; for the first time in all history a great society had developed in which the majority made their living in and through business instead of agriculture. There is nothing wrong with business *per se*, of course; it has always been an indispensable means to civilization. In previous societies, however, economic activity had always been subordinated to non-economic ends, and now it became primary, virtually an end in itself. President Calvin Coolidge could say to applause that "the business of America is business"—a statement almost unthinkable for a national leader in any past society, or for Washington, Jefferson, or Lincoln either. And though people engrossed in business can still lead an independent life of their own outside working hours, the fact remains that other interests and values have suffered from the primacy of business. Over the last hundred years writers have incessantly complained, in England and France as well as America, about the materialism of their society, the rule of money values at the expense of spiritual or cultural values, the means to a richer inner life.

Another obvious consequence of the Industrial Revolution was the increasing abundance of material goods. Since it has become fashionable to be merely scornful of these goods, it seems necessary to observe that they include very real goods, that all the rest of the world now wants more of

them, or even that it is quite possible to lead the good life in a house with central heating and plumbing. Yet there is no doubt that this wealth of material means has distracted people from the all-important question of the ends of man's life. They naturally tended to grow more concerned over externals, intent on acquiring things rather than being or becoming real persons. In the United States especially they became somebody by owning a lot of expensive things; the status-seekers have to acquire the right kind of status symbols, the latest model or gadget; and now they cultivate the illusion of individuality by the possession of what are called "personalized" objects—things just like those the Joneses have, only with one's own initials on them. The upshot, I have remarked, is the highest standard of low living in all history. When an executive of *Time* magazine boasts that Americans spend three billion dollars a year on culture, it sounds quite impressive—except to those who know that this represents less than 1% of the national income, and that they spend many more billions on automobiles.

These automobiles, which incidentally are ruining the American city and the amenities of civic life, bring up the commonplace that in countless ways men have become the slaves of their machines. The slave-driver is modern technology, symbolized by the assembly line. This demands a great deal of routine mechanical work in both office and factory—uncreative, unsatisfying, humanly meaningless work. According to specialists in industrial research, workers suffer most from the feeling that they have little or no real social function, and are only going through the motions to make a living. (A famous example was the "Hawthorne experiment" a generation ago, to determine the effects of lighting conditions on the efficiency of workers, in which an experimental group was treated to various conditions while a control group went on working under the old

conditions. The result was that the efficiency of the experimental group rose steadily, but under all kinds of lighting—and so did that of the control group with the old poor lighting: they all worked better simply because they felt they were being given more attention.) In general, our technology has meant impersonal organization for the sovereign sake of efficiency, or of saving time and money, not men. It has meant an idolization of mechanical “function” and “process”—key words of the modern era. As the function of nature is to be exploited, with an immense wastefulness, so the function of men is to serve as interchangeable parts, maintain the efficiency and the autonomy of the work process. Modern technology has accordingly created “the masses” in a literal sense: not the wild rabble or mob that frightened conservatives in the past, but dense bodies of people, massed in cities and factories, who outside of working hours may tend to be as mechanical and standardized in their ways.

In our own century technology has led to another extraordinary development—the so-called “organizational revolution.” When the United States was formed, it had no corporations or any organization of any size except the government, which employed fewer than 5,000 men. Today the government employs about 2½ million people, not counting another million or so under arms. It is in line with the immense organizations throughout our society—corporations, networks, labor unions, now even universities. Everything in the United States has steadily been growing bigger—except all the little persons in or under the organizations.

Now, Americans are inclined to worry most about the dangers of big government, or “creeping socialism.” They have plain reasons for their fears even apart from businessmen’s complaints of interference, in view of the possibilities of oppression, conceivably a drift to totalitarianism. People

have grown ever more dependent on the government, seemingly more concerned with security than with liberty; and they cannot be simply blamed, since they have more real need of security in our kind of society, in which the individual is much less self-sufficient than he once was. Americans have still better reasons for fear, indeed, than most realize, especially in the giant defense organization that they take for granted is necessary. While submitting willingly enough to such restrictions on personal freedom as the draft and security regulations, most seem little concerned about the fact that decisions meaning life or death for all of us are made by a very few men at the top, on the basis of secret information not available to the rest of us.¹

Yet the government does not seem to me the chief menace to the freedom and dignity of the individual in the United States. It is less inclined to demand conformity than are most of its conservative critics, who typically show much less concern over either civil liberties or the common need of social security. These include the many professional patriots or 101% Americans, in such organizations as the American Legion and the Daughters of the American Revolution, whose one thought is that there must never, never be any more revolutions. The chief worriers over government, however, are the champions of business, who have succeeded in identifying capitalism with democracy; and here again they confuse the issues of individuality because the freedom they are concerned about is only economic, not intellectual freedom. Although this seems to me a valuable kind of freedom, and private enterprise clearly preferable to a communistic system, businessmen have not typically distinguished themselves by staunch

¹To my mind this fact alone makes nonsense of any deterministic view of history, any Marxist or other pretence that the future can be predicted with assurance; but I take no comfort in this evidence of man's freedom to make history.

defense of civil liberties, by a comparable concern for the freedom and dignity of workers, or by breadth or independence of thought outside the office. Moreover, their champions have obscured the profound changes in business itself. The last generation, the era of "creeping socialism," has seen the growth of giant corporations in all the major industries, or what Adolf Berle has called "galloping capitalism"; and on the face of it these giants have been managing to take good enough care of their interests. In government such extensive organization is given the bad name of bureaucracy and feared as regimentation, but it is just as much bureaucracy or regimentation in big business. Underlings working for General Motors are cogs in the same kind of social machinery, no freer than underlings working in government bureaus. They may be less free, in fact; for there is little idea that the business organization exists to serve the individual, as the state does in democratic theory, and big business in particular has been developing the type made familiar by William Whyte as the "organization man."

This is not a rugged, independent type, such as has come down in the folklore of capitalism, but a smooth, pliable man, good at committee work, or what is now called "group thinking." C. P. Snow observed that in his years as a high-grade official he at length began to realize that he was hiding behind the institution, losing the power to say No; and he added, "The man who has lost the power to say No has lost as much as any man can lose." The organization man, like all the little men under him, is not adept at saying No—he is much better at saying Yes. No more does he take for a motto Emerson's saying that "Whoso would be a man must be a non-conformist." Corporation manuals and personnel directors make it clear to college graduates heading for business that if they happen to have any unorthodox opinions they had better keep these to them-

selves, and that whoso would be a junior executive must be a conformist; with the help of personality tests the directors keep a sharp eye out for any serious symptoms of independence or non-conformity. And it appears that most of the young graduates do not at all resent these terms. Their high ambition is no longer to rise to the top or run a business of their own, but to land a good safe berth in a good big corporation. They want first of all security; though once in their safe berths they may worry, with other good Republican businessmen, because ordinary Americans also want security.

In any case, the organization man is symptomatic of the critical threats to individuality in the United States today. As I see it, these are social, not political pressures. They are unlegislated constraints on the individual, demands that he conforms to more or less willingly for the sake of respectability or popularity. They come down to a kind of creeping consensus. Thus questionnaires reveal that the primary aim of the great majority of high-school students headed for college is to become well-adjusted. The youngsters know that the way to become popular is to be like other people, not to think for oneself or even to think very much, have serious intellectual interests; for these might make them look queer, warp their little personalities. Similarly school-teachers indicate that the qualities they prize most highly in pupils are courtesy and consideration for others, which they rank far above courage and independence in judgment. In college, questionnaires reveal that students are much more inclined to answer Yes rather than No to *all* questions, regardless of their content. In short, most represent the dominant middle-class type in modern America, what David Riesman has called the "other-directed" type: the person who gets his aspirations or goals from his class, with little if any thought about the kind of people and life he is becoming adjusted to.

Now all through history, once more, most people were something like other-directed types, conforming unthinkingly to the traditional ways. Yet in the United States there remains a pertinent question. Here the traditional ways are supposedly individualistic; so who are these "others" who now direct aspiration, set the standards and goals? And the obvious answer is another dreary commonplace. They include all the diverse people who influence public opinion, even educators, I like to dream; but I must therefore repeat that the most conspicuous of them are scarcely men entitled to authority or leadership by wisdom, virtue, or any personal merit. They are the Madison Avenue men: the advertisers, the hucksters, the specialists in the arts of the soft sell and the hard sell, or in other words, of brainwashing and psychological assault.

With their commercial products they sell chiefly the values of conformity, or of wanting, thinking, feeling what everybody else does; their typical appeal is that one should buy something because everybody is buying it. They fortify their illogic by exploiting the common fears of being unpopular or different; or in so far as they urge Americans to be different, it is by snob appeal to the status-seekers—exploiting a more vulgar illusion of individuality. With these values they have sold the idea that the main end of freedom is the licence of self-indulgence, or in more technical terms, that the primary function of an American outside his working hours is to be a consumer. Needless to add, most people are quite willing to dedicate themselves to this function, to the end of their days (in an expensive casket); but as faithful consumers they are unlikely to have much time or inclination to cultivate individuality by the old-fashioned method of using their own head.

They are not helped much either by another singular development of this century—the mass media, ranging from syndicated newspapers and comics to Hollywood, radio,

and now above all TV, which is most plainly dominated by the standards of Madison Avenue. The entertainment industries always insist that they are merely catering to popular taste, giving the people what they want, but as high-powered industries they surely have considerable influence in molding public opinion, taste, and desire; and their most apparent effect is to reduce the public to a literal mass of receptors, essentially passive, just live enough to keep advertisers alert to what is called their "reactions"—a popular word that itself suggests a mechanical reflex rather than a mental activity. Sponsors of radio and TV programs are naturally fearful of controversial issues, the kind that may stimulate thinking, but that may therefore stir up resentment in many of their customers. For most sponsors the ideal is what they call 100% acceptability—a program that won't offend any sizable group. In other words, the ideal is mush. It is a program calculated to induce nothing but stock responses, which deserve to be called reactions. This is highlighted by TV celebrities flashing what is known as "personality"—a reaction marked by a flash of teeth. Once upon a time the word *personality* signified the qualities that made a real person, gave him his dignity. In popular American usage today it signifies a superficial manner, something one turns on in order to win friends and influence people; something one may acquire by sending for a booklet and taking six easy lessons, guaranteed or one's money back.

Familiar as all such vulgarity is, it may look more depressing in a historical view. As Richard Hoggart has pointed out in his studies of popular culture, ordinary men in the past of course did not have fine tastes, their culture reflected a narrow, more or less coarse understanding of life; but at least it had some quality of genuineness, reflecting the real if limited wisdom of simple people. Today popular culture is mass-produced, manufactured by slick or

cynical professionals; it is basically phoney; and it is more degrading because it tends to deprive simple folk of their dignity by making it harder for them to be honest and wise in their own fashion. One may accordingly doubt that it makes them happier either—the only rational justification of the very profitable business of the mass entertainment industries. Having grown dependent on machines for their entertainment, many Americans seem bored when left to their own devices; they may get drugged on their daily potion of sensationalism, meretricious glamor and romance; they may grow more discontent with their own prosy lives, or more incapable of dealing responsibly and maturely with their personal problems; or they may develop a feverish habit of trying to escape all the normal little anxieties, a habit that can end in a big neurotic anxiety. At any rate, a people who boast of enjoying the highest standard of living in all history are not clearly enjoying it very much. Millions of them appear to be seeking chiefly peace of mind, chiefly by means of tranquilizers; some 50,000,000 prescriptions have been written for one drug alone. And millions of Americans keep cracking up.

In fairness to the "lonely crowd" of other-directed people, I should repeat that they are by no means simply stupid or spoiled. A great many are not so well off that they can readily afford to say No, or go their own way at work; no matter how affluent, all have an ample share of personal problems; and all are up against the notorious complexity of our revolutionary society, which tends to make people feel helpless and disposed to huddle together. There remain the basic reasons why modern man everywhere is likely to suffer from a feeling of purposelessness in his life. Still, Americans suffer more plainly from the strains of their main driving purpose—to keep up with the Joneses, maintain their status. Even prosperous businessmen complain that their life is a "rat-race," which would seem to be a

confession that free private enterprise is not very free or enterprising for living purposes. Another give-away is the common saying "We're not in business for our health"; an outsider might wonder whether any consideration is more important than mental or spiritual health for a man engaged in his life work. As it is, the United States appears to have about the highest proportion of neurotics in the civilized world; and a neurotic, needless to add, is far from being a free person. Likewise our most affluent society has among the highest rates of alcoholism and suicide.

These statistics, I should add at once, call for considerable discount. We have nothing like reliable figures for the extent of mental illness all over the world; and in my concluding lecture I shall dwell at some length on the uncertainties about what is actually going on in the minds of people, and why. But here I should remark that one apparent key to the illness is affluence itself. Thus the countries competing with the United States for the highest rate of alcoholism and suicide include Sweden, Denmark, and Switzerland, whose people to my knowledge are not so hounded as Americans are by fears of the Joneses, but whose standard of living is about the highest in Europe. On the other hand, let us consider the Soviet. It carefully refrains from publishing statistics in these matters, since it officially regards mental illness as a bourgeois disease and its appearances among Russians as due to some physical, organic disturbance; but even so my impression is that proportionately fewer of them break down, despite the severe political and social pressures they have been subjected to, and the ample reason for anxiety. Although there has been a marked improvement in their standard of living, it is still much lower than that of the United States, Canada, or Western Europe (as I confirmed at first hand by traveling around the Soviet last spring). I should expect it to keep rising, however, and if so, I suppose champions of the American Way might

rejoice in the thought that give the Russians time and they'll end up as alcoholics and neurotics too.

Meanwhile they bring me to the quite different issues of totalitarianism, the most obvious threat to the freedom and dignity of the individual in the modern world. Despotism is of course a very old story; ever since the rise of civilization most of the rulers of mankind have been absolute monarchs, usually ruling by divine right, as they did in Europe too until recent centuries. But modern dictatorship is much more ominous. Given all the machinery created by the Industrial Revolution, dictators can exercise more power over both the minds and the bodies of men than despots ever could in the past. Similarly the totalitarian state as we know it is essentially new; no such tight control of the economy and the whole society was technically possible when transportation and communications were slow and uncertain. And most frightening is the thought that the dictators have been able not only to seize political power but to become popular, in a civilization distinguished by its ideals of freedom. We may be reminded of Dostoyevsky's parable of the Grand Inquisitor, who argued that for the masses of men the spiritual freedom offered by Christ, or any real freedom, was an intolerable burden: what they needed first and last was bread, and then "miracle, mystery, and authority." In just this spirit Hitler wrote: "Providence has ordained that I should be the greatest liberator of humanity. I am freeing men from the demands of a freedom and personal independence which only a few can sustain." Quite possibly he was sincere; but in any case millions of people in a highly civilized nation seemed pleased to sacrifice their freedom and personal independence to him. Hitler's rise to power was the clearest example of the modern impulse to escape from freedom, or from its responsibilities.

Let us face up to the worst possibilities, which to me were suggested by some experiments recently conducted at Yale

University. A mixed group of forty subjects, acting as "teachers," were seated at a console with a bank of thirty switches, which gave increasingly severe electric shocks. They were in touch with a group of "learners" in another room who had to take some memory tests, and every time the learner made a mistake, his teacher was instructed to give him a more painful shock, through a series with labels running from "intense" to "Danger: Severe Shock." Actually, the learners were not getting the shocks, but they kept crying out as if they were suffering intense pain, and kept dutifully calling for more. It was assumed that most of the teachers (who please remember were not real teachers) would soon refuse to obey their instructions and stop inflicting such pain. In fact, most of them flipped all thirty switches, past the danger signals, even though they were themselves much distressed. One, for example, was a mature businessman who came in "smiling and confident," and within twenty minutes was almost a nervous wreck; yet he too kept obeying orders to the end. The scientist who is conducting these gruesome experiments is trying to get at the roots of blind, slavish obedience. He points out the obvious moral: we may better understand the many Nazi underlings in the concentration camps who dutifully tortured and slaughtered millions of human beings.

Today, however, the reformed Soviet raises rather different issues. Communism did not triumph in Russia by exploiting an impulse to escape from freedom, for the Russian masses had never known any freedom to speak of. Rather, it promised the people "true" freedom, as it still does in all the so-called "people's democracies." It clearly does not provide government of and by the people, as we know it, but it has always insisted that it provides government *for* the people and is devoted solely to their interests. From the outset many Russians who lacked our political rights at least *felt* free, believing that they were helping to

build a new kind of classless society destined to win the world, emancipate working men everywhere. Presumably they felt somewhat differently under Stalin's reign of terror, which the Russians now deplore, or rather are trying to hush up. (The Lenin Museum in Moscow, for example, is full of photographs from the revolutionary days, and since Stalin had official history rewritten to prove that he, not Trotsky, was the No. 2 man to Lenin during the Russian Revolution, the museum must have been plastered with his picture only a few years ago; but now there is no picture showing either Trotsky or Stalin, not the least hint that they had anything whatever to do with Lenin or the Revolution.) This policy, which suggests a rather childish mentality, is a reminder that the Russian people still have no voice in their government, no control over their rulers, and at best enjoy a limited, uncertain personal freedom; so they may again have to put up with a dictatorship much less benevolent than that of Khrushchev. Meanwhile some awareness of the limitations of their "true" freedom is indicated by a popular story going the rounds in the Soviet. When a teacher told the class that most likely there is no life on Mars, little Ivan exclaimed, "What? Not there either?"

Nevertheless, it is significant that this story is told openly, as I imagine it would not have been during the tyranny of Stalin. My experience in the Soviet confirmed the impression I had gathered from various sources, that the Russian people are basically content with their system, mostly convinced of its superiority. They are unmistakably pleased with the considerable improvement in their standard of living in recent years, not to mention other benefits they enjoy, such as free medical and hospitalization service. I doubt that their rulers would dare to revert to the brutal policies of Stalin, or to renounce Khrushchev's effort to improve living conditions. As it is, at any rate, the more prosperous Russians are beginning to look and act more like

bourgeois, in a society that plainly does have classes. University students in particular seem complacent. My informants all agreed that there are few ardent Communists among them; the great majority are much like our own aspiring organization men, intent chiefly on securing their good safe berth; when they complain of anything they blame it on the bureaucrats, never the communistic system itself; and even so many of them are looking forward to becoming bureaucrats. Otherwise Russians are even more devoted to technology than Americans are. One proud name given their propaganda writers and artists is "engineers of the soul."

Hence one may now think that if we manage to escape the catastrophe of a world war, both Russia and the United States will lead the way toward something like Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Western civilization may culminate in a society completely mechanized and organized, in which almost everybody is perfectly conditioned, perfectly adjusted, happy and empty, and almost nobody except the head controllers will have any individuality to speak of; and in time, as Roderick Seidenberg predicts in *Post-Historic Man*, consciousness itself will virtually disappear. Lately we have begun to build the machinery for running such a society by automation—another rather depressing word, accentuating the mechanical, external, inhuman aspects of our society. Before long, I am told, a few million machine tenders will be able to do all the work now done by some 50,000,000 Americans; while the wonderful computing machines will take over much of the brain work, turn out all the necessary statistics for the controllers. People are beginning to worry about the terrific unemployment problem that lies ahead, and some about the millions who will be left with useless skills, without social function, only more leisure to stare at TV, seek escape from their poor selves; but automation is bound to come anyway—it is more

efficient. It illustrates the compulsive aspect of modern technology: like it or not, we *have* to do whatever becomes technically feasible. (Right now Americans have to put a man on the moon, even though it will cost more billions of dollars than they are willing to spend on education.) And likewise we are developing the means by which the controllers of Brave New World may control the minds of people: the mass media, with the further possibilities of subliminal suggestion; wonder drugs to make over personality, or to keep people passive and content; scientists or pseudo-scientists mastering the techniques for manipulating people. Today most social science research in the United States is attitude research, and most of its financial support comes from industry, which is interested only in practical applications, such as motivational research by the depth men, evaluation of advertising campaigns—ways of cashing in on the gullibility of the great American consumer. We also have professions with such forbidding names as “social engineering,” even “human engineering.”

So I could go on indefinitely, into the night, wearing your patience to a frazzle. I hope, however, that you have detected an academic note in these worries over the possibilities of a Brave New World. For the great majority of men in the world today such worries are utterly meaningless—their problem is simply to get enough to eat. Given the population explosion, the main problem of Asiatic, African, and Latin American countries for a long time to come will be to secure a minimum standard of living for their people. At home we still have much more reason to worry over the possibility of nuclear war. It might remind us of the horrors of modern war to which we have become inured, such as the mass bombing of cities, the wholesale slaughter of civilians—horrors that make it indecent to boast of our respect for the dignity of the person. Like many of our institutions, the person hardly seems sacred; or more

precisely, perhaps, he may be *merely* sacred. At the moment our chief hope appears to be that the destructive power at our command is so obviously frightful that we may be scared into simple sanity or simple decency.

Yet this might remind us as well of the plain paradoxes of our civilization, which from its beginnings has been more addicted to violence because of its very idealism—as in the Crusades, the religious wars, the French Revolution, then wars to make the world safe for democracy. Communism too has flourished on such idealism, which gives it a universal appeal that Hitler never had or could have. My review so far has been one-sided; almost everything I have said has been too easy. I still think that as we value the person we cannot afford to minimize the serious threats to his freedom and dignity that I have dwelt on, since they spring from the very nature of our kind of society. But by the same token we need to keep in mind that our free societies still are basically free, that they still extend more rights and opportunities to the individual than did any past societies, and that in spite of all the pressures and constraints people still do exercise a good deal of free play in their choices. Even in the United States (I hope you will believe me) a great many people find it possible to have a mind and a life of their own without feeling queer or becoming hopelessly maladjusted. The alarm over the signs of a flight from freedom, into the arms of dictators, may obscure the significant fact that dictatorship triumphed in such countries as Italy, Germany, Russia, and Spain, all of which lacked a democratic tradition, and that it has not won out in any of the established democracies.

We might therefore take a closer look at that “authoritarian personality” I mentioned at the outset, a subject now getting a great deal of attention. The authoritarian is commonly identified as a Fascist type, who in America shows up on the radical Right, and who despite his apparent

radicalism is basically a rigid conformist, incapable of independent thinking or self-reliance. He resembles the patients of psychoanalysts, who typically try to recreate their childhood in the present—a yearning that Hitler satisfied on a national scale. Yet the authoritarian may also be a Marxist, a Catholic, a Calvinist, a dogmatist of any kind; in Germany he was not only a follower of Hitler but a loyal German of the old school who conspired against Hitler; and at best he may be a person of firm, high principle. The principle of authority is clearly indispensable, all men perforce do rely on authorities; so the critical question is *which* authorities they settle for and why, whether it is a mature, reasoned reliance, and to what extent it leaves the person autonomous, able and willing to inquire and judge for himself. Applying such a test, one may worry over the many people who tend to the neurotic kind of authoritarian personality; but then one should recognize that in the free societies they still appear to be a rather small minority. In the United States the radical Right-wingers are a nasty nuisance, not yet a serious political threat, while the much-feared Communists in our midst are a ludicrously tiny minority.

Altogether, we are apt to forget the implications of such a gathering as this one, in an academic community: most of us people from the middling ranks of society, now met to worry over the problems of the individual person; for in the past very few people of our class had the chance to attend a university, or to become fully conscious of such problems. In general, these problems come down to the price we pay for real goods, real advantages. The price is to a large extent inescapable. I see no possible way of having an industrial society without mechanization and much regimentation, and there is not the faintest possibility either of scrapping all our machinery or the organizations that go with it. Still, the problems remain challenges, involving real

opportunities, which such once incredible possibilities as automation opens up: possibilities of freedom from drudgery, much toil that may now seem more wholesome to literary people than it did to most of the toilers; and possibilities of cultivating more creative interests in all the leisure that people might learn to enjoy. In the growing awareness of the problems it is at least possible for many people to cut the costs. In this somewhat more hopeful spirit, at any rate, I propose to survey the prospects of the individual in my concluding lecture. The motto of this one might be a line from Thomas Hardy: "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst."

III

THE PROSPECTS OF THE INDIVIDUAL

In my depressing review of the mighty forces in a mechanized, standardized mass society that have been dwarfing the person, regimenting his life, threatening his dignity, I implied at every point that people were being deeply affected by these forces. So I think one must assume, inasmuch as our whole way of life is so radically different from that of our forefathers. Now, however, I propose to begin by looking more closely into this assumption, raising the critical questions. To what extent have people *actually* been affected? Granted the powerful pressures against them, are they managing to resist, or to find compensations for their losses? Are they in fact less free than their fathers were? Are they losing their independence and integrity? Are they less willing than their fathers to assume the responsibilities of freedom? And the answers to these questions seem to me by no means so clear as many writers assume. At every point I am struck by apparent contradictions: that people may suffer from too much mechanical order, but also from basic disorder; that the frames of their behavior may be too rigid and repressive, but also too fluid and permissive; that they seem disposed to conformism, but also to indifference or irresponsibility; and so on. These dualities bring up the uncertainty I stressed at the outset: that we do not really know enough about what is going on in the minds of people to warrant all the confident generalizations we hear. I shall therefore leave you with more questions than answers, perhaps deepen or intensify the common confusion; but my hope remains that by complicating the issues, messing them up, we may finally come out with clearer, calmer ideas of our problems and our prospects.

Specifically, I begin with one of the conspicuous, alarming symptoms I have touched on, that millions of Americans keep cracking up, our most affluent society appears to have about the highest rate of mental illness in the world. I delved into this matter last fall when I served for a couple of weeks as visiting professor at the Menninger Foundation (which is characteristically American as the largest psychiatric establishment in the world); and what I learned from talks with the staff confirmed my suspicion that the whole problem is much more complicated than it appears on the surface. In the first place, statistics about mental illness, alcoholism, and the like are misleading. One reason why the United States has so high a rate is that proportionately many more cases are reported and treated than in less affluent countries, many more Americans are getting into the habit of seeking help before they are dangerously ill. One reason why the Russians, on the other hand, appear to have a much lower rate despite the severe pressures they have been subjected to is the very fact of these pressures; they cannot so readily afford the luxury of mental illness, are less able openly to indulge their anxieties. As for the causes of the many breakdowns in the United States, I assume that a primary one is the compulsions of American life—the strains of keeping up with the Joneses, all the needs conditioned by advertisers, etc. But another source is the resentment of such pressures, sometimes a blind rage, in people who still *want* to live their own lives; if or when cured, their mental illness may make possible more independence. And still another source is the exceptional freedom of most Americans, who not only expect more of life than do other people but have a wider range of actual choice. They are constantly called on to make up their minds: about which of the many goods to buy, what to wear, whether to get a new model, where to live, what job to try for, what avocations to pursue, what groups to join, what authorities to

believe on all the moral, social, and political issues that are forever being debated. In private life they are acquiring more sophisticated tastes in many matters, from food, wine, and house furnishings to painting and music, and so may suffer from the strains of self-consciousness, aspirations to culture, or the feeling that they or their children ought always to be improving their leisure.¹ In public life Americans illustrate the observation of Paul Valéry, that politics was once "the art of preventing people from minding their own business," and is now "the art of forcing people to decide things they do not understand." The Russians are still relieved of the burden of such decisions.

A further complication was suggested by a psychiatrist who expressed the rather startling opinion that the rate of mental illness is virtually uniform in all societies, and most likely has always been uniform. This struck me as sharply contrary to the evidence, in particular to what I know of people in the so-called backward countries, the peasant types; but then I was reminded of a book called *A Village in Anatolia*, written by a young Turkish school-teacher who had been brought up in such a village. It was hailed by social scientists as the first book to come out of the ageless village world, give an inside view of it, and of the outwardly stolid, patient, enduring type of the peasant; and it gives an appalling picture of not only poverty, disease, and brute suffering, but barbarous customs, stupid cruelties, superstitious prejudices and fears that intensify the suffering. Turkish peasants were accustomed to such anxieties, which for them might therefore be called "normal." In fact I was told of a foreign-born patient who had been dismissed because a psychiatrist happened to know the peasant region

¹One suburban town that has become famous for its superb school system, and the admirable cooperation by teachers, parents, and children, now appears to be a deeply disturbed community. Many parents worry so much over the progress of their children that they verge on neurosis, and the children have more than their share of allergies.

she came from, and explained that her apparent neuroticism was quite normal behavior for this region. It is accordingly a nice question whether we have a right to describe as unhealthy or abnormal behavior accepted as natural in cultures other than our own. The answer, I should say, is yes and no: no because we lack a definite scientific standard of normality, yes because we have much greater knowledge and wider experience than do peasants or people who know only their own culture. Of the many sufferers from superstitious anxieties I should at least assert that if they are not positively neurotic or abnormal, they are certainly not healthy. My main point, at any rate, is that it is not certain that Americans are more hounded by anxiety than are other peoples, or are psychologically less free, especially since we now know that there is no sharp line between mental health and illness, and all of us are at some times more or less sick or *un-sane*. The trouble with many Americans may be an unreasonable desire to be free from all anxiety, a certain amount of which is "normal" for any intelligent, sensitive person.

In this view, let us reconsider the fashionable theme of alienation, as a major symptom of the crisis of our society, and of the common fate of the individual, the loss of psychological freedom. One may make out something like alienation in past societies that were in deep trouble, notably the late Greco-Roman world. The peasant masses and city workers look disaffected, sullen, at best apathetic; they did not struggle valiantly against the oncoming barbarians, or go down fighting, if only because they lacked a vital stake in their society, a deep sense of community, having enjoyed a very meager share in the communal goods, material or cultural. Today ordinary Americans look rather different. They show signs of insecurity or anxiety, more signs of resentment of the complicated, difficult responsibilities thrust upon the United States—a resentment that explains the

popularity of Senator Goldwater, who makes all problems nice and simple. Yet they are obviously patriotic, very proud of their country; and otherwise most observers complain chiefly of their inclination to groupism and togetherness, their complacency about all their material goods, as they wallow in the American way of life. Public opinion polls indicate that most of them do not worry much over the state of either the world or the United States.

It is most conspicuously the intelligentsia who suffer from a sense of alienation. They have good reasons for their feeling, such as I have been dwelling on, beginning with the massive indifference to their interests and values, the popular suspicion of them as eggheads or pinkoes. They have as good reason for their common addiction to anxiety in view of all the radical divisions, confusions, and uncertainties of our time. They bring up another set of basic problems, signaled by the ubiquitous prefix *dis*—dissociation, disintegration, disruption, disorder, disharmony, discord. In the world of thought a prime example is the notorious split between the “two cultures,” science and the humanities, which makes it harder to live and think as whole men. Scientists, the wonder-workers of our age, generally seem confident as they go their own way, or when alarmed about the atom bomb, the population explosion, and other menaces they rarely despair; but their extraordinary advances carry them ever farther from the ken of the rest of us, and when they come back to us they are not typically distinguished for their wisdom in social and political affairs. As specialists they recall our horde of engineers, technicians, and experts, the assorted authorities whose judgment we must depend on, yet remain suspicious of—knowing, say, that economists are now generally agreed that almost all economists before the world depression were wrong about national policy, and then wondering what the next generation will think about the present crop, who

meanwhile disagree in their forecasts and recommendations.

Much less confident are most disciples of the humanities, especially literary men. Many are hostile to science, or at least unhappy about its greater prestige and public support. At the same time, all have been deeply affected by the knowledge science has given us about man, society, and the universe, including much disagreeable knowledge. Freud, for instance, has made them more aware of the terrible power of the irrational, and of their own tendencies to neurosis, while social scientists have spread the idea that reason or intelligence hardly governs social and political life. Intellectuals have much less faith than their forebears did in the power of reason and knowledge, which nevertheless remains their own stock in trade. Some have suffered as well from the loss of religious faith, or of belief in absolute standards of right and wrong; by now they are suspecting that psychiatry may not be an adequate substitute for religion. Others who still believe in the traditional absolutes worry over the decay of faith in their fellows, the presumed demoralization of our free society. And all are acutely aware of the atom bomb. The famous remark of Valéry after the shock of the first World War is now truer than ever: "We hope vaguely, but dread precisely; our fears are infinitely clearer than our hopes."

Altogether, the intelligentsia exemplify the most fundamental ambiguity or paradox of the modern world. They stand for the actual freedom and actual power of the human mind, which has so profoundly transformed our world, given us the immense material power that is no less due to intellect if ruling motives are described as economic. They above all are paying the costs of our exceptional freedom of thought and boldness in inquiry, our extraordinary intellectual progress (and let me add that in using this word *extraordinary* so freely I mean it quite literally). Of late the progress has involved a growing awareness of the inescapable

human element in all our knowledge, which necessarily limits our objectivity, undermines all pretensions to absolute truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. The human element is obvious in such studies as psychology, history, and the social sciences, but it has cropped up even in the most exact science of physics. Here Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy demonstrated that the observed reality is not independent of the human observer: we can never know precisely both the location and the speed of an electron if only because we cannot observe an electron without disturbing it, by the ray of light that hits it before reaching our eye. In short, none of our knowledge is purely objective; all of it, like our institutions, is man-made, man's own doing; and so the very mastery it has given man may give the knowing a keener sense of our possible undoing.

But for my present purposes the most striking paradox is the popularity of Kierkegaard and his doctrine of *Angst*, or more broadly of existentialism. This has exalted the individual or the self more than did any philosophy of the past, making subjectivity the key to essential truth for living purposes. It has also offered the most desperate view of the tragic, absurd aspects of the human condition neglected by past philosophers, often picturing the self as simply lonely, freedom as primarily a dreadful burden. And it illustrates what seems to me a morbid disposition in many of the intelligentsia.

In general, they tend to forget their exceptional advantages, and to exaggerate their plight in a society that does not properly esteem them. They are a very substantial class, after all, so large and diverse that it is hard to define as a fixed class; but however categorized, they are more numerous than ever before, and in the free societies more independent. In the United States they are getting more support, through the many universities and great foundations, than

their kind did in almost any past society, or than they do in Europe. By and large they are finding a substantial audience too, and are by no means social outcasts; even the popular hostility to them implies that they have some influence, which indeed appears to be considerably wider and more direct than ever; and at that it takes no courage to express unpopular critical opinions. Many have swung to extremes in their disillusionment with the once prevalent faith in progress and man; the idea of progress has become only a theme for derision, the fashionable theme is the degeneration or imminent collapse of our civilization, the passwords are now *Angst* and Original Sin. Some have made a cult of anxiety, which they appear to regard as a badge of intellectual integrity, almost of mental health. At a gathering in New York I heard other writers and thinkers dismissed with a single sentence— "He doesn't suffer from anxiety"; and though I accordingly felt like a pretty crude type, I got the impression that the critics were wearing their badge with some unseemly self-pity. Such self-pity has been intensified by the inveterate sentimental tendency to idealize the past, in particular the Middle Ages, the great "Age of Faith," and in general the traditional aristocratic kind of society, which writers are pleased to think esteemed them more than it actually did. In making so much (or so little) of our own "Age of Anxiety," they often give the impression that anxiety is a peculiarly modern phenomenon; whereas I find plenty of signs of it all over the Middle Ages, and plenty too in all the golden ages of culture, such as Periclean Athens, Renaissance Italy, and Elizabethan England, simply because exceptional creative energy is always likely to disrupt traditional faiths. No great age that I know of was conspicuous for peace of mind.

Anxiety is in any case not conducive to either sanity or simple good will, which remain among the crying needs of our time. It suggests other reasons why the woes and worries

of the intelligentsia need to be discounted somewhat. As intellectuals they are always prone to "the unmeasured anger against human stupidity" that can be, as John Morley observed, "one of the most provoking forms of that stupidity." Because of their common feeling of alienation they were long addicted to ideology, "the opium of the intellectuals," and though they are now growing disillusioned with this too, especially the Marxist opium, they are still prone to humorless, dogmatic attitudes, unsuited to a still free, open society, and to a revolutionary age that calls for flexibility and resourcefulness. They tend to present an oversimplified, one-sided account of modern life because they overlook the most obvious goods, the gains that might suggest that obscene idea of progress. Since it therefore seems necessary to rehearse some more commonplaces, let me sound sophisticated by repeating that they overlook the ambiguities.

Thus the complaints about our mechanized, standardized mass society have themselves become mechanical, standardized, stereotyped. The United States is at the same time an extraordinarily fluid, heterogeneous society, notable for a singular diversity of interest, occupation, and skill, because of which it has never before taken so many different kinds of people to make a world. Young people who are all for becoming well-adjusted still have to make choices, from a wide range of possibility in the kind of life and people they want to get adjusted to, and immediately have a choice of some 25,000 occupations listed in the U.S. census, as compared with the 431 occupations listed in the British census of 1841. Likewise the United States embraces a fantastic variety of schools, colleges, and institutes, religious sects, private associations, and cults, not to mention all the regional and racial differences, the many sub-cultures; it is still maintaining the tradition—and facing the problems—that from its beginnings made it a remarkable

experiment in uniting men of many different origins; and it is always astir with new movements, styles, fashions. Such heterogeneity might warn us against the sweeping indictments of the common man, or what Ortega y Gasset has labeled the mass-man. It is clearly important to maintain the general distinction Ortega makes, between the great majority who are content with mass opinions and tastes, or in the middle classes with the values of suburbia and the country club, and on the other hand the creative elite, the minority who set themselves high standards. It is also important to recognize that this sheep-or-goat classification does an injustice to a great many people who are hardly aristocrats, intellectuals, or highly cultivated types, yet who are making some earnest effort to raise their sights, improve their minds, and who now constitute a kind of semi-elite. The stereotype of the mass-man obscures the countless varieties and degrees of taste, thought, and aspiration, and the abiding democratic dream of self-improvement.

Similarly the legitimate complaints about the materialism of the modern world cloud the elementary values of material well-being, the decent living that most people can now hope for. The poverty and illiteracy that were the common fate of most in past societies were not conducive to either lofty spirituality or sturdy individuality; and down to this century respectable people typically took for granted that grinding poverty was not only natural but necessary, God's plan for man—that is, for other people. Those who wish they had lived in some previous age tacitly assume that they would not have been peasants or workmen, but among the few who were securely well off and educated, not to say healthy—they would not relish the medical treatment they would have got. Moreover, our superabundance of material goods includes a wealth of cultural goods—books, records, pictures, foreign imports, some civilized films and programs on the air, etc. And though I should not make too much of

the growing audience for this kind of thing, in view of all the much more popular trash or mush, there remains a deeper issue.

The wisdom of the ages includes the truism that a man's worth or dignity is properly an internal condition, what he is, not dependent on what he has—material possessions he may lose. At the same time, this wisdom reflected the prevalence of scarcity and insecurity; it was usually coupled with the teaching that the way to true contentment was by reducing desires, learning to do without. Now free men, above all in the United States, are encouraged not only to fulfil but to multiply their desires—most often by way of consuming or acquiring more possessions, but also by travel, the cultivation of new interests, the refinement of tastes, and the like. The traditional wisdom may well be the best wisdom, particularly for times of trouble, and it still crops up in many a sermon or homily. Yet it may be considered another example of cultural lag, a failure to appreciate fully the new possibilities of life opened up by a free, affluent society. Granted the undignified role as a mere consumer in which the ordinary American is usually cast, I think something can be said for the ideal of self-fulfillment by expansion of desire, aspiration to enjoyment of more, not less of the world's goods; and at least most critics of modern society manage to do with a good many creature comforts, very few seem disposed to put on a hair shirt or move to a hovel.

In this view I should likewise discount somewhat the heavy costs we pay for modern technology. The drudgery of tending the machine and keeping its books seems worse because of the historically novel idea that work *ought* to be creative and soul-satisfying; in the past men simply took for granted a great deal of routine toil. I think the joy of medieval craftsmen in their work has been somewhat exaggerated, since judging by the record they kept their

satisfaction to themselves—the record is full of complaints about how life was only toil and hardship. For many men, at least, the curse of the machine has been offset by the new arts of industrial design, the opportunities for skilled workers, the chance to seek a different life or to have a career—something quite unknown to most men in traditional societies, since they were automatically bound to the class and the occupation of their father. Today the chief problem for American young people especially seems to me not so much slavery to the machine as the kind of freedom it offers, the choices it forces in vocation, habitat, and possible status—at once the opportunity and the necessity of deciding the kind of life they are going to lead, which always means the possibility of feeling later on that one has made the wrong choice, or of getting unhappy over the greener grass on the other side of the fence.

No more is bureaucracy simply a curse. In business it has meant more attention to human relations, or the contentment of employees, than most employers used to give. In government it has served as well to check the abuses of economic power or too private enterprise. Everywhere the impersonality that tends to smother spontaneity and idiosyncrasy is also a means of equity; it explains why red tape has been called the mother of freedom, and why men complain when bureaucrats are *not* impersonal. Similarly the soulless corporations offer some possible advantages just because they are not real communities. Nobody would die for General Motors; few of its workers can feel any deep loyalty to it, regard their work as a calling; yet their limited commitment and their anonymity make it possible for them to feel freer to live their own lives. Hence some people now complain because corporations are beginning to acquire a soul, take a paternalistic interest in their workers and their junior executives. Some of the organization men are putting up at least a passive resistance; their outward conformity appears to be a means to the enjoyment of

personal freedom or cultivation of personal interests outside the office. Others may remind us of an ambiguous aspect even of the unthinking kind of conformity implied by the bad word *conformism*. The good words for this include loyalty, team spirit, fellowship, considerateness, and cooperativeness. Modern society is distinguished by an unprecedented amount of active cooperation, in all spheres of life.

This in turn brings up a more basic ambiguity in the tendencies of modern technology. Conceivably it makes possible the establishment of a totalitarian state of complete "stability, community, and identity"—the motto of Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World*. Its very dynamism may seem oddly rigid because it is so compulsive and automatic, as in the current drive to automation. Yet it remains a revolutionary force, profoundly disruptive. Together with modern science it may be counted on to prevent any real stability for a long time to come, by God knows what new wonders, or new terrors. The most apparent problems it creates spring from the extraordinary, ever increasing pace of change. Everything is fluid, nothing is fixed, the feeling of continuity may be as weak as the feeling of permanence, above all in the United States, where very few people live and die in an ancestral homestead. Through the ages men have said, "One never knows what's going to happen," but at bottom they did know: they always assumed that life would go on being essentially the same. Now we literally do not know and cannot know what is coming. At the beginning of our century no one anticipated the kind of world we live in, with electronic brains, television, nuclear power, intercontinental missiles, sputniks, and national programs to put men on the moon. Today no one can say what men will be up to or up against by the end of this century. Meanwhile the real problem is not the danger of too complete control, as pictured in *Brave New World*, but the question whether we *can* decently control our terrific technology.

Ultimately, however, the possibilities of either a brutal

or a benevolent totalitarian order force the fundamental issue of the nature of man. We may be pleased to believe that human nature simply would not stand for such a state. If so, we must remember that the historic record hardly supports the popular idea that man has an inextinguishable passion for freedom. Untold millions of persons accepted whatever way of life they were born into, which more often than not was a pretty slavish way, a wretched lot; neither in royal annals nor in popular legend do we hear an eternal cry for freedom. Nevertheless, the historic record does indicate that man has always had some capacity for freedom. It is a record of endless diversity, endless change, testifying to man's powers of creativity. The amazingly varied cultures he has developed not only have included some relatively free societies, but invariably have provided for some measure of personal freedom, some idea of rights. On the face of it, men have always had some self-respect, and have never liked to be caged, imprisoned, or enslaved. Today, when we hear that man's chief need is security and that he will sacrifice his freedom for it, none are seeking refuge in a haven that is quite available and that offers perfect security at no financial cost whatever—the haven of a jail.

But in particular the historic record suggests the need of drastically qualifying the proverbial generalizations about human nature. Human nature is always the same, goes the old refrain, you can't change human nature; and history indeed makes plain enough that man is always prone to folly and evil, you can't ever hope to make an angel of him. But it should make as plain that he has changed profoundly during his long career on earth, and also that at any given time he is a plastic creature, capable of assuming whatever nature is prescribed by the diverse cultures. In our society those who insist that you can't change human nature differ significantly in their descriptions of it. Some say that man is naturally a wolf, instinctively aggressive, always hungering

for power; others, like Dostoyevsky's Grand Inquisitor, say that he is naturally a sheep, governed by the herd instinct, always pitifully in need of security; still others may say that he is a born goat, or ass, or ape. The objection to all such supposed realists is that they are too simple, historically naive. They overlook not only the plain fact of cultural diversity but the significant changes in thought, feeling, and behavior that have come with the growth of our own tradition of freedom and individualism, and that have made a world of difference, say, between the timeless peasant and the American farmer, who has never been called a peasant. In the face of the further changes taking place in our century, this tradition raises what I think must be our best hope: that once having known or known of personal freedom, men by and large will not readily give it up.

Here I should first remark the stirrings in the Communist world, where people have been subjected to the most massive, incessant indoctrination. Although the Russians remained docile enough under Stalin, his terrorism obviously did not kill their desire for personal freedom; they are welcoming so eagerly the still uncertain freedom granted by Khrushchev that the old-line doctrinaires are alarmed. In the satellite countries, where almost all observers agree that the rulers have never succeeded in selling most of their people on communism, the current stirrings make it foolish to talk of an impulse to escape from freedom, or except for the rulers, any dread of a free, open society.

Once more, however, I think the United States provides the best test case, as the most modern of the democracies, and the one in which the pressures against the individual seem strongest. Today the temper of the nation is clearly conservative, and to me it looks frightening because it is not clearly due to a firm, high resolve to conserve the values of freedom or the rights of the person. Rather, it recalls one of de Tocqueville's most acute insights. Whereas critics of democracy, from Plato to Edmund Burke, had always

declared that it led naturally to revolution and anarchy, he predicted more truly that great revolutions would become more rare with the growth of democracy, but for reasons not simply flattering to America. Among the reasons he anticipated were a devotion to property, ease, and material well-being, a spreading complacency, and therefore an enervating fear of any new theory, any radical move, any serious innovation, any disagreeable responsibility—the reasons why a nation founded on a declared right to revolution now seems more fearful of revolutionaries than are any other of the leading democracies, in which there are no Committees on un-British, un-Dutch, or un-Scandinavian Activities. Short of such hysteria as McCarthyism, there remains a widespread indifference to the threats to civil liberties, as common an ignorance of what is in the Bill of Rights.

Yet for all its shortcomings America as clearly remains a free country, its shortcomings are constantly aired in public, and I see no serious danger of its extremists gaining control. It continues to illustrate the more agreeable reasons suggested by de Tocqueville why revolutions would become rare in the democracies, notably the greater measure of social justice, the reduction of arbitrary or irrational inequalities. He noted as well that the principle of equality promoted not only the tyranny of public opinion but a spirit of independence and self-respect, a disposition to stand up for one's rights. Among the reasons why Americans are hazy about specific rights is that they take for granted the basic idea of personal rights and of limits on government power; they are by no means inclined to worship their government, which always includes a lot of rascals they hope to kick out in the next election. As for the changes in this century, they have not made merely for conformism. Americans today are generally more tolerant than their fathers were, more disposed to live and let live, and in their

big cities they may enjoy more privacy and personal freedom; critics of the mass-men forget that rural America was no citadel of freedom or culture. Sometimes unconventionality is even rewarded—beatniks can thrive on it.

Especially pertinent for the cause of the individual is still another distinctive habit that all along has struck foreign observers—the rage for forming private associations. These include many associations like college fraternities, Rotary clubs, Masons, and Elks that may illustrate chiefly the national mania for organizing everything, even social life, and they also include many societies for the promotion or the prevention of something or other that too often are bent on restricting the freedom of other Americans, promoting censorship, prohibition, and the like. But among them too are such associations as the American Civil Liberties Union and the League of Women Voters, bent on protecting the rights of Americans and keeping them politically responsible. The many private associations—professional, vocational, cultural, ethnic, and what not—have become more valuable in a mass society, at a time when the individual is likely to feel helpless, as a voluntary kind of community through which he may assert himself, advance his personal interests; and today they are more numerous and more active than ever before, stimulated rather than discouraged by the more extensive operations of government.¹

¹As an incidental example, I am pleased to add that some time ago I had a fan letter, complimenting me in particular on a footnote in which I noted that the brilliant ancient Sumerians had discovered the virtues of the number twelve for calculation, since it can be divided by 2, 3, 4, and 6, and had made it the basis of their weights and measures, a system that spread all over the ancient world, incidentally giving us our dozen, until eventually it was superseded by our decimal system. The writer added, however, that unfortunately I was mistaken in believing that our decimal system is better, and he enclosed several pamphlets to prove his point. He was the Secretary of the Duodecimal Society of America: a society dedicated to promoting the cause of the number twelve, crusading to put it in place of our decimal system. This does not impress me as a weighty cause, or a shining demonstration of the independent American spirit; but it is worth noting as another example of the fantastic variety of our supposedly standardized society.

There remains the most conspicuous type that the United States was the first nation to exalt—the so-called common man. As Abraham Lincoln observed, God must approve of common men, since he created so many of them. Walt Whitman, their most eloquent champion, went so far as to say: "The average man of a land at last only is important." We might agree, I suppose, that the uncommon man is more important, above all in the role of leader; we might also agree, I hope, that these distinctions are somewhat embarrassing as well as very rough, since they imply that we are uncommon men; but in any case I take it that the hopes of the free societies must finally rest on the capacities of this more or less average man. He represents the public opinion that has become so powerful; as voter he chooses the leaders, as follower he will decide whether free institutions will survive the forces making for totalitarianism; and in social life too he will answer the question whether the great majority can stand up under all the pressures against the individual person. We may then be dismayed, for the complexity and the urgency of the issues of our day have made his limitations more glaring. Among other things, he does not read Walt Whitman—he much prefers Mickey Spillane. Writers have been dwelling chiefly on his gullibility, irrationality, and irresponsibility, which are exploited by politicians and advertisers—those who presumably know him best. Still, I believe that the common man is somewhat underrated by them all.

The many polls and studies of his attitudes, in which he usually looks pretty foolish and ignorant, have obscured his actual performance. He has generally been as reliable in emergencies as Whitman said he was, proving himself notably in the Battle of Britain during the last war, and everywhere in the resistance to Hitler. Otherwise he has proved responsible enough to keep the established democracies the stablest governments over the last century. In

the United States he has made a fairly decent record as a voter, except by the standards of those Americans convinced that Franklin D. Roosevelt was a national disaster; for if college graduates had their way we would have perpetual one-party rule—in every presidential election a solid majority of them have unfailingly voted Republican, for reasons that may have more to do with class interest than the national interest, or with the fact that most of them are hardly intellectuals. It was the common man who elected Kennedy, and the best as well as the worst in him appeared in the national tragedy of Kennedy's death. Even as a consumer, the role in which he looks most slavish and mindless, he displays some powers of resistance to the Madison Avenue men—enough to keep them worried, and now and then to fool them. I have remarked a possible portent in the spectacular failure of the Edsel automobile, to promote which Ford had hired whole teams of depth men.

In scientific studies, furthermore, the common man has suffered much as has the individual in general, from mere expediency. It is always much easier to study routine behavior, the determinants of such behavior, and the limits on personal freedom than it is to study spontaneous, independent, creative activity, or relatively free behavior. Sociologists have made little study of the conditions of such activity, the importance of exceptional individuals in setting models for group behavior, and the response of ordinary men to such influences. As David Riesman observed, "We are only beginning to understand the power of individuals to shape their own character by their selection among models or experiences." Similarly psychologists have concentrated on non-rational or irrational behavior. The "basic drives" listed in their textbooks are generally visceral—hunger, sex, etc.—while the basic needs feature security. They have had much less to say about the needs and the

natural sources of individuality and creativity, such as curiosity, the sense of beauty, craftsmanship—the craving to explore, understand, and revel in the natural world that is so apparent in children, at least before they go to school or take to TV. Psychologists are only beginning to explore man's creative potentialities. Gardner Murphy, one of the heralds, has offered an exciting vision of the resources man now has for consciously transforming himself, developing new aspirations, realizing what he calls "the one great reality" that "there is always more"; and he concludes that in so far as we can plan meanwhile, our business is to "plan ourselves out of existence."

This may remind us that we can also bomb ourselves out of existence. As for my immediate concern, I conclude that we cannot be sure whether our tradition of freedom and individualism is live enough, strong enough to withstand the growing pressures of an ever more mechanized, organized society. The only certainty I feel, to repeat, is that the future is highly uncertain; and I should emphasize again that just because of all our knowledge and power, our extraordinary material and intellectual resources, we have less reason than men have ever had before to be confident about what the future is going to be like. But at least this is to say that the question still is open, the future is strictly up to us. We have the advantage as well as the burden of an exceptionally acute awareness of our problem. Popular writers have made "mass-men" aware of it too; books attacking the "hidden persuaders" and the "organization man" became best-sellers. And having expressed some criticism of the intelligentsia, I should now express our great debt to them in particular.

In the free societies they have been a remarkably independent class, no longer bound by ecclesiastical or any other sovereign authority, criticizing no less freely because as writers in a free market they are more dependent on the

reading public. Although they feel remote from the centres of political and economic power, their ideas do spread, reach some men of power, and seep down to the man on the street; much of their social criticism has entered the commonplaces of thought. They might remember, if perhaps a little unhappily, that in the rest of the world it was the intelligentsia—not the proletariat—that made the revolutions of this century. And though they are prone to *Angst*, sometimes verging on despair, they are characteristically not at all resigned, and very seldom recommend the perennial wisdom of quietism, non-attachment, or holy indifference. They continue to pour out books on all the reasons for alarm, usually with some urgent message about what we must do, thereby implying that we can do it. They still have the live sense of immense potentialities—for better or worse—that distinguishes our temper from that of past societies in crisis. For at least we are not suffering from the common fate of stagnation. Both our problems and our opportunities spring from the unflagging energy and creativity that were promoted by our tradition of individualism.

At the end I should say that I am still pleased to be living in this extraordinary era. But since I may not suffer enough from anxiety, I shall conclude with a more sober statement by Robert Oppenheimer summing up the condition of the thoughtful person today. As a physicist, Oppenheimer spoke immediately on behalf of the lonely pioneers on the frontiers of science, all of them a long way from home, or from the common heritage of cultivated men. He bridged the gulf between the "two cultures," however, pointing as well to the loneliness of the serious artist in our mass society, who finds it hard to feel that he is addressing his fellowmen, and to the scholars working in all fields, the specialists finding out things that seem beautiful or exciting to them, and that will remain unknown to most other specialists, as to

most educated men. In his metaphor, we all cultivate our own little gardens, in little villages off the main social highways, represented by the mass media; and the ever harder problem is to keep some paths open between the villages—and let us add, to keep some hope of communication with the masses of our fellow-men in the big cities. He concluded:

This is a world in which each of us, knowing his limitations, knowing the evils of superficiality and the terrors of fatigue, will have to cling to what is close to him, to what he knows, to what he can do, to his friends and his tradition and his love, lest he be dissolved in a universal confusion and know nothing and love nothing This cannot be an easy life. We shall have a rugged time of it to keep our minds open, to keep them deep, to keep our sense of beauty and our ability to make it, and our occasional ability to see it in places remote and strange and unfamiliar; we shall have a rugged time of it, all of us, in keeping these gardens in our villages, in keeping open the manifold, intricate, casual paths, to keep these flourishing in a great, open, windy world; but this, as I see it, is the condition of man; and in this condition we can help, because we can love, one another."