

# THE SIGNIFICANCE OF BEING UNIQUE

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PEOPLE have a tendency to look askance at those who are different from most other people and especially at those who are so indiscreet as to let their differences show. We give lip-service to rugged individualism but bridle when an individual permits himself to be too individualistic. This is noted not only in politics, which is apt to come to mind first, but in clothing, manners, haircuts, tastes, opinions, and attitudes. It is my purpose here to attempt to show that the ways in which an individual is different from all others are not only his most priceless possession, but that these differences are at the very foundation of our society, that they are essential to a democratic society, and that they should be cherished rather than frowned upon.

That no two individuals are alike is too obvious to need elaboration. No two leaves in a forest, no two blades of grass in a pasture can be found to match exactly. Anyone can see that each human being differs from any other not only in physical appearance, but in habits, attitudes, prejudices, and all other attributes which motivate behavior. This holds true in all living things, although the simpler the organism, the less marked the differences appear to be. This principle can doubtless be extended into the inanimate world, but here we are concerned with living things, especially humans.

Nature must cherish uniqueness, because it has gone to great lengths to provide it. I use the word "nature" to identify the creative force in the universe which is known by many names by different people. This should satisfy everyone except those who hold to the mechanistic theory of creation. This creative force, for which I use the word "nature," is continuous; it is now going on, developing an evolving universe. The creative process is not something which was done at one time and finished.

If nature did not cherish uniqueness, not so much would have been done to achieve such infinite variety, for this variety was hard to bring about.

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First, nature has provided that no two organisms start life with the same physical equipment. This was accomplished primarily by the development of heterosexual reproduction. By this device, whereby each new individual is made up of parts of two parents, it became almost completely impossible for two individuals to start life with the same structure, with the rare exception of identical twins. The means by which it is assured that no two individuals will have the same cellular structure with which to start life is too complicated to include here, but it was hard come by in the evolution of living things. Considering that uniqueness is essential to the higher development of living forms, the development of heterosexual reproduction stands as perhaps nature's greatest invention since the formation of living protoplasm.

In addition to an unique physical structure, we now have much evidence to show that the cells also provide for unique purpose. In fact, it appears that all living tissue is uniquely purposive. The word "purpose" is used here, somewhat more broadly than is usual, to include all drives, both conscious and unconscious. It indicates the path down which an individual's energies can most easily be spent. The fact that we all have individualized conscious purposes is well known. What one likes to do, another may not. These can be consciously modified. I can *make* myself eat mashed squash, for example. But most of the individual's purposes are below the level of consciousness and cannot be changed. They are evidently carried in the cell structure, and they operate automatically. Perhaps they are what psychologists have called drives, but there appears to be no need of two words, one for the conscious and another for the unconscious, since the one is merely a continuation of the other.

Having endowed the individual with unique physical structure including its own special set of purposes, nature has further devised ways by which psychological man must be unique in his knowledge and his attitudes. Habits, attitudes, prejudices are as much a part of one's structure as hand, nose, or foot. We can see this when we understand that a structure *is* what it *does*. These psychological factors, not the physical ones, are what control behavior. One can be a demon or a saint with the same physical equipment. In speaking of the psychological self, there is no intention to create another duality. The psychological and the physical are not independent of one another, but the organism operates as a whole—a totality. Because the total organism is all one functioning unit is no reason why we cannot speak of hand, foot, or attitude separately.

**T**HE PSYCHOLOGICAL part of the functioning unit which we call a human being is built through the operation of the phenomenon called perception. Perception is what comes into consciousness when stimuli—light, sound, touch, taste and odors—impinge upon the body from the outside. It is not here intended to deny the existence of extra-sensory perception, about which little is known, but to confine this discussion to the "senses" which are obvious to all.

With this possible exception, sensory perception is the only means by which one knows anything about what is around him. Organisms can live without perception, but such a life would be like that of a tree, for example, unaware of surroundings and victim of unfavorable environment without being able to modify that environment in any way. So life, as we think of it, depends upon our ability to perceive.

Quite recently we have gained new understandings concerning the nature of perception through the work of the late Adelbert A. Ames, Jr., of Hanover, New Hampshire. Through his laboratory work and his brilliant interpretations of what his visual demonstrations show, we can understand the nature of perception much better than before. It has been thought by most people that perception was very simple; that one merely looked at an object, saw what it was, and that this settled the matter. The object from which the light rays came was the important part of the process, and the person receiving the rays was merely a receptor, took what came to him, and had no control over it. Ames has shown us that we, through our interpretation, make an object what we can, that we never see anything exactly as it is, and that no two people interpret any object exactly the same. Of course, in the case of common, inanimate objects, the difference may be slight, but in uncommon and in animate objects, such as other people, the difference may be very great.

**WE DO NOT** see everything in our surroundings. To do so would bring us such a mass of data, most of them unimportant, that we could not comprehend all of it or deal with it. We, therefore, select what we will see and what we will ignore. The much greater part of our surroundings we ignore.

We see what we select out of our environment, and we select on the basis of two factors. First, we see what we have experience to see. But experience is not enough to account for the selection, because in any scene there are many things with which we have had experience, but which we do not see. The second determining factor is that we see what we purpose to see. This brings into consciousness not only those objects for which we may be looking, but also the ones that are in keeping with our unconscious purposes.

When men are criticized by their wives because they do not notice the curtains in the living room of the hostess and are accused of being unobservant, they can take comfort in the fact that curtains do not fall within the scope of their purposes, and they may even imply that their purposes include only more important matters.

**SINCE** no two people can have the same experiences, it follows that each person is unique from all others in this regard. And since each person's purposes appear to be uniquely established when the individual starts life, it can be seen that no two individuals can perceive any object or other person in exactly the

same way. What we perceive is added to what we already have as experience and becomes part of the unique experiential background of each individual. It is built into the structure of the psychological self. And so, as we go about uniquely perceiving and adding this to an already unique background, we become more and more different from others as we go along.

This building process makes each person the center of his own universe. He looks out upon the world with "different eyes" from those of any other person. And no one can completely know any other person, because he has to view that person with his own particular equipment of experience and purpose. It also gives each person knowledge no one else has, and the ability to make a contribution to a common problem, if the opportunity comes, which no one else can make. This is a scientific basis for the oft-affirmed belief in the worth and dignity of every human being. The individual is the creator of his own universe, and thus we can see the fallacy of the older belief that the outside object is what is most important in the perceptive process.

The foregoing is intended to show, briefly, how unique each individual is from all others, and how nature has contrived that it be so, first, by furnishing each his own special physical start and then providing that in what he knows, he is continuously built in the direction of greater and greater difference.

### *Specialization and Democracy*

**T**HE VALUES which come to the individual from being different from all others are great. Perhaps that is why nature sets such great store by them and has gone to such length to provide them.

The fact that an individual is unique assures him a special place and special worth in his own society. It is precisely because he is different that makes it possible for him to make contributions to the welfare of others, and to develop anything that could be called a society. If people were really alike, as we often seem to wish they were; if everyone had the same experiential background, the same knowledge, and the same skills that everybody else had, there would be nothing that individuals could do together. This is true because no one would know anything that all others did not know and hence would not be able to add anything to a common objective. Hence there could be no society but simply a collection of individuals, each going his own way, accomplishing little, because no one can do very much just by himself.

Differences between individuals make specialization possible. All progress depends upon specialization. By progress I do not necessarily mean improvement, but change from the simpler to the more complex. It is specialization which has made it possible for living things to move from the stage of the single cell to the immensely complicated forms of life we now know, culminating in the human body and personality. The amoeba, for example, has probably not progressed for millions of years, and this is doubtless due to the fact that the individuals are so much alike that specialization has not been possible.

No organism can develop much without specialization of its cells so that some cells perform special functions for the whole, and others perform other functions. The human body, most complicated of all living forms, is made up of billions of cells with groups of cells specialized to perform special functions. These billions of cells co-operate in an amazing fashion to bring about the healthy individual. Sometimes, for some reason not well understood, some of these cells cease to co-operate, going off on their own, and this is what is called cancer. This lack of co-operation usually destroys the whole organism.

And so it is in society, which is a co-operating collection of individuals, just as a living organism is a co-operating collection of cells. Individuals perform special tasks for all so that one does not have to make his own watch or his own shoes. All social progress depends upon this specialization which is possible because of individual differences.

Our society, contrary to opinions commonly held, is the most co-operative one that has ever existed. While many cherish the thought that it is highly competitive and enjoy the thought that individuals are primarily bent on the defeat and perhaps the destruction of others, the fact is that most people are working co-operatively in such close relationships that if anyone fails to do his special part, the whole fails. It takes two hundred people, I am told, to produce a pair of nylon hose; thousands have to co-operate to produce one automobile.

It is in part because of this social co-operation that our fear of Communists has been so great. It is said that one Communist, rightly placed, could destroy the electric power of a whole city. It is probably true that he could do so. Loss of electric power would devastate any modern city, so dependent on others have we become. What we fear this one Communist might do is to cease to co-operate.

We can now see, since all progress is made possible by differences, specialization and co-operation, that co-operation is the basic method of progress for all living things. The law of the jungle is not an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, but mutual aid. Below the level of humans, living things rarely prey on their own kind—rarely take more than they need.

**T**HE "RUGGED INDIVIDUALIST" who fancies himself a self-made man would be utterly helpless without the co-operation of others made possible by their differences. Even the hermit miser has to have somebody to make that which he hoards. If he tries to make his own, he will be accused of failing to co-operate with the specialists in that field and will be thrown in jail.

The fact that every individual is unique and is uniquely purposive gives scientific support to the democratic ideal. This support from science will strengthen the position of people who believe in the democratic way of life. The democratic ideal, in one form or another, has been a powerful force in the affairs of men, but it is always helpful and strengthening to find that any idea is not just an opinion, but has backing in the very nature of the organism.

Basically, there are only two ways by which a person may be governed. Either he governs himself, within the social scene, or he is governed by someone else. Fascism, Nazism, Communism, are all alike in that they are based upon the submerging of the individual and the elevation of another individual or some abstraction, such as the state. The history of the human race has been a continual struggle by which certain individuals have sought to gain domination over others. This domination is a matter of degree, but it is all slavery in a degree. There is very little difference in the attitude toward the common people of Hitler, Mussolini, or Stalin and that of Simon Legree. All of these "masters" held the individual to be a means to an end—their end—and to be devoid of any value in themselves.

When I speak of the individual governing himself within the social scene, I mean that, of course, no individual is ever free to do just as he pleases but has always to consider the rights of others and take care not to invade those rights. If he does not control himself in regard to the rights of others, people will avoid him and deprive him of the benefits of social contact. Then it will not be possible for him to realize his unique potential, and take advantage of his special gifts, because these gifts have value only in relationship to other people. There is, however, a great latitude of freedom without impinging upon the rights of others and within the limits of the obligations of co-operation with others.

The notion of freedom within the bounds of one's responsibility to others does not seem to be comprehended by many people. I have known parents who said that their children were being brought up democratically but who appeared to have confused democracy with anarchy. Freedom without responsibility is anarchy. A family living together co-operatively puts obligations on every member automatically. There are no autocratic bonds half so strong as the feeling of co-operative responsibility. The autocrat cannot watch the individual he dominates all of the time, but no person can escape his own feeling of obligation. When the parent gives the child complete freedom without the responsibility implied in co-operation, the child becomes a tyrant. It is a sad fact of life that, in our present stage of development, someone is always trying to become a tyrant. Whenever anyone succeeds in becoming a tyrant, he automatically makes slaves.

**T**HE VERY FACT that the individual is uniquely purposive implies the requirement of freedom. There is no value in being purposive unless one is, in considerable degree, free to pursue his purposes. This freedom is also essential to creativeness which is the growing edge of progress. It is not possible to be creative, to devise and contrive new solutions to problems, if someone else is dominating the thoughts and actions of the contriver. Slavery is not a good climate for creativity.

The fact that all individuals are unique also implies and requires a democratic way of life. It is to the autocrat that differences are anathema. He needs to have individuals who are alike, lest their differences upset his plans for them. The person's unique value cannot be realized unless he is in a position of freedom to make use of it rather than to have it submerged.

The democratic ideal proclaims the worth of every human being, the dignity of the individual, and the right to freedom within the requirements of others. We now can see from biology and psychology that the individual has worth because he has something which nobody else has, and, if he is lost, something will be lost which can never be recaptured. Because of his unique purposes, he can do some things which nobody else can do so well. Freedom, only existent under democracy, is essential to the development of his unique qualities. Every person is entitled to live in dignity not only because it is decent, but because of his unique and irreplaceable values.

The struggle for freedom, which only democracy can furnish, has been going on since the beginning of human history. It has been and is a continuous struggle beginning long before democracy, biology, or psychology were ever heard of, and it will go on as long as there are those who would enslave. The ideal of freedom did not originate with Jefferson or with the barons at Runnymede. We can now come to see, from the very structure of the organism, why this is so. Tyranny has never triumphed in the long run, although the long run has been too long for millions of individuals. Nor can tyranny ever win, because it is opposed by such powerful natural forces. This is true of small tyrannies, such as occur in home and school, as well as the large tyrannies of governments. Tyrannies fail because they do not really attain the objectives which they seek.

### *Forces against Individualism*

CONSIDERING the biological basis for uniqueness and the obvious advantages of it to the individual, how can we account for the fact that our culture is so antagonistic to it and does so much to reduce and, if it were possible, to destroy it? How account for the great emphasis on similarity? When man lived in nature, before he became "civilized," everything in his surroundings was unique. This was true because nature never produces two objects or situations which are alike. Nothing was standardized. Every coincidence, every set of circumstances, which man met was new. This called for new responses, new contriving. Old answers did not suffice. And so, man was continuously called upon to invent new responses to new circumstances. This continuous contriving called for the use and exercise of intelligence.

Intelligence is one's ability to contrive new solutions to ever-emerging situations or problems, the capacity to find ways out of dilemmas, to come upon answers which have never been found before, to invent, and to create. Intelligence is developed and expanded through use. It can only grow when the

organism is confronted by new situations, where new solutions are called for. Intelligence gains great impetus in the natural world, where all is unique; it gets little chance to develop in a standardized world where answers are already provided and where one answer can be used again and again. When man allows himself to be standardized, he unwittingly robs himself of the opportunity for intellectual development. Through industrialization and its consequent urbanization, man has largely moved from an unique world to a standardized world and thus, in large degree, he has allowed himself to be removed from the need for and the opportunity to develop intelligence.

There are two powerful factors, one very old and one very new, which have worked away from differences in humans and toward an emphasis on similarity. The old one is authoritarianism; the new one is the effect of the machine. There are doubtless many other factors producing these results, but these two seem to be the most important.

Authoritarianism is the situation where one or many individuals is under the domination of another; where the dominator substitutes his own purposes for those of the dominated; where controls and purposes come to the dominated from the outside; where decisions are made and answers provided, not by one's own structure, purpose and experience, but by those of another.

**I**N SPITE OF our democratic form of government, which works well considering the number of people involved, our culture is almost completely authoritarian, if one considers the day to day lives of the people who live in it. Authoritarianism probably started when the first man naively sought to gain advantage over his fellows for his own benefit. The notion is naive because man cannot really profit, except in a narrow and superficial materialistic way, by gaining domination over his peers. By gaining advantage over his peers, he drives them away from him, and thus, deprives himself of their unique value. The qualities of being human can be secured only from other humans, and, when one deprives himself of others, he robs himself. Cut off from his human sources, he comes to have less of the attributes of a human being as time goes on.

Not seeing that this deprivation will occur, seeing only the nearby gains, it is perhaps to be expected that authoritarianism would develop. The notion that in the family, for example, somebody has to be the boss was easily come by, since better ways of living together had not been thought out. So father and mother waged a war to see who would "wear the pants," a language symbol implying that it ought to be the father, but that it often is not so. This struggle is joined by the child who, while still in the cradle, may become the autocrat.

Authoritarianism has been powerfully augmented by philosophical ideas and by the operation of institutions. The church has adopted it, seemingly feeling the need of authoritarianism to control its followers who find themselves cast in the role of petitioners for an agreeable immortality which they believe the church

has to dispense. Being a petitioner puts one in the position of being unworthy and calls for an admission of guilt. Fear of being denied the boons believed to be held or withheld by the church deepens the sense of guilt and unworthiness until it becomes an all-pervading concept of self which enters into every aspect of the individual's life. Fear of being denied the goods of the world to come, in a person already laden with an ever-present sense of guilt, calls for placating action, and so the supplicant offers repentance and atonement for his sins, further degrading his already low concept of self, causing him to become a person divided against himself.

**A**NOTHER powerful institution which has added greatly to the authoritarian nature of our culture is the school, both public and private. The school is, perhaps, even more influential than the church because it includes everybody, at least for a time. Not all schools, of course, are basically authoritarian in operation. There are principals of schools, just as there are ministers of churches, who take account of individual differences and operate with the development of each special human being as objective. But the basic pattern of schools in general is to ignore the individual and attempt to level out the differences between people.

Learners are ordinarily lined up in rows of seats, and many of them become anonymous, existing on the seating chart only as the one who sits in any particular place. They are required to do the same things and are expected to learn the same lessons. That which is to be learned comes either from the teacher or from a book—nothing from the self or other available selves. Everyone is evaluated by the same examinations, because each has been expected to learn the same things in the same way. In many schools, the examinations are the same not only for the individuals in a class, but between classes, nullifying the individuality of the teacher. The subject is the objective. In some localities, examinations are state-wide and are constructed by people who have never seen either the learners or the teachers. Area-wide examinations are no longer the general practice, but school-wide ones are still common.

There are many devices by which teachers and administrators attempt to reduce individuality among learners. It is frowned upon when a learner, through curiosity, knows something which is ahead of the lesson taught. Parents are often warned not to teach their young children to read, for then they will not be like the others and will not sit still while the others catch up. The standardized "lesson" requires that the learners be alike. School people try to negate or repeal the uniqueness that nature has established by sorting their students so that the teachers will have learners who are more alike than the random group would be. They can do this because the lesson, not the individual, is what matters. When they sort learners in this manner, they have to use some criterion, such as ability to read or IQ, but whatever criteria they use, the learners are all different except in this particular way. But then, if one does not care about social development,

this is of no consequence. Indeed, social development is not ignored; it is frowned upon. The most cherished learner is the solitary one who never communicates with the human beings in the adjoining seats.

In some schools, learners are even required to wear uniforms to further reduce their individuality. This would doubtless be more common if parents would buy the uniforms. When school authorities start to tell people what to wear, individuality usually asserts itself, and rebellion is in the air. Other schools even attempt to repeal sex by putting boys and girls in different schools, perhaps to keep the fact of the existence of the other sex a secret.

When we in America established universal education—mass education—the disciples of the "subject" ran into trouble. Many learners were enrolled in school who had not been there before. Many of these newcomers could not or would not learn the lessons set out to be learned. This did not bring about a turn toward teaching for individual differences as might have been expected. Teachers began instead to weaken and "water down" the subject, with the result that a process of levelling out and down took place. This had to be in the direction of mediocrity, so that even those who had previously profited from the "lesson" no longer did so.

**A**LL OF THIS striving for uniformity in our schools came from a false, authoritarian concept of the nature of knowledge. In the authoritarian scheme of things, that which lies outside the individual is that which is good. Knowledge was held to be apart from knowing, to lie outside the learner, mostly in books or the teacher's repetition of books. Knowledge could be had by acquisition, by reaching out and taking it. It seems plain now that knowledge and knowing are not separate. Knowledge is what we know after we have learned. It therefore comes after, not before, learning. Since all learning has to be done in the light of individual unique experience and purpose, knowledge is always subjectively held and is never the same as any other person's knowledge.

This authoritarian concept of the nature of knowledge is, indeed, deeply implanted, and it governs almost everything that goes on in our schools, thus adding greatly to the authoritarian nature of our culture. Every bit of learning which really takes place causes people to be more different rather than more alike.

Philosophers, down the ages, have supported and abetted authoritarian concepts for the most part, although, in recent times, there have been notable exceptions, the most important of which is John Dewey. Most philosophers have not been able to grasp the idea of a changing, evolving universe, with the creative force still in effect, with creation still going on. Therefore, they have sought to find something immutable and stationary on which to hang their arguments. This immutable has to be something outside any individual or any physical thing, because people die, and things rust and crumble. So they have had to invent

and cling to abstractions such as the good, the true, and the beautiful. These abstractions were far removed from the individual and were thought to be unassailable. The good again lay outside of the individual, reducing his own worth. The precise point, it seems to me, where the philosophers have failed us is that they have not been able to encompass the concept of universal change, have tried to find a static starting point, and have thus given us a static philosophy which is untenable in an evolving universe. Where all is change, a philosopher needs to find his security in change.

Mechanistic and materialistic scientists, so prevalent in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries, have had their influence in strengthening the authoritarianism of our culture. To them, science was a simple matter, and so, therefore, was life simple. Their immutables were what they called the laws of science, which were nearly all discovered, and soon would be all settled. These laws operated outside individuals and without regard to them. Scientists made up these laws out of what they thought was experimental evidence, but before all of the evidence was seen. Nearly every immutable on which they based their laws has been proven to be untrue. But these "scientific" pronouncements have had an enormous effect on the thinking of people. Relativity, the quantum theory, new light on the nature of energy, the destruction of the atom, the interchangeability of matter and energy, have played havoc with the immutable laws of mechanistic science, but they have not greatly altered the mind-sets brought about by the teaching of these laws.

In addition to the effect of authoritarianism on individual differences, we have also the powerful influence of the machine on our lives. I shall not dwell upon the levelling effect of the machine at length, because this has already been done better and more fully than I can do it here. The machine is a standardizer. It makes things all alike without regard for personal taste. We all buy the same things. We listen to the same music, see the same movies, hear the same news. We read the same boiler-plate in our newspapers. Like the teacher, the maker of radio and television programs thinks he has to cater to the lowest tastes, and again we are pushed toward standardization and mediocrity, or just a notch below mediocrity. Some even advocate the use of television to replace the teacher so that every child in the land, every period of the day, will look at and listen to the same program every day. So even the little variation introduced by the individuality of the teacher (and many teachers valiantly try to bring about some variation) will be done away with.

RECENTLY we tried to buy a toaster which was not of the "pop-up" variety. We happen to like an individual piece of toast, made by use of a thin piece of bread, personally supervised as to color, buttered, and eaten immediately. Our old toaster had been broken, and no one in any electrical shop would fix it, because parts that were no longer manufactured needed renewing.

These parts would have to be made by hand. In every store, the salesman tried to sell us a "pop-up" toaster. If we did not like to have our toast jump at us at dawn, we simply were not in tune with the modern world. Indeed, it has become increasingly difficult to buy a loaf of bread which has not already been sliced, so that the thin piece of bread which we want for toast is hard to come by. "Take a piece of bread which we have established as standard, and parch it in a machine you won't have to watch and can't watch if you want to." But we beat them, perhaps for the last time. We found an amateur who made the parts we needed by hand. He was hard to find, and may be the last one extant.

The authoritarian cannot operate if he has to deal with many differences. He needs standardization and uniformity so that he can reduce the number of factors he has to control. Individual differences are poison to him. Therefore, great effort is made to render people alike and to ignore what differences remain. In this effort, the authoritarian has been aided by the effect of the machine and its standardizing influence. The effect on individuals has been to cause them to accept what has come to them, not to try to solve problems but to accept ready-made answers. In the degree that people succumb, they have very little use for intelligence, and their intellectual powers become fallow from want of exercise. Not needing to contrive, they are not creative. They constitute a drab society, although many of them have been "educated."

### *Individuality and the Changing Universe*

A PERSON'S UNIQUENESS is his most priceless possession. It gives him his reason to be. Powerful forces in our culture seek to reduce or eliminate these differences between people. Now I shall attempt to indicate some ways by which uniqueness may be nourished and developed.

I shall not propose that we return to the good old days when man lived close to nature. Living close to nature was good for the development of uniqueness and for the exercise of man's intelligence, but in many ways such living was not good. For one thing, living in nature was too burdensome; it took too much human energy to produce enough material to support life. Nature was always trying to reclaim the space which had been cleared for raising food. The struggle was continuous and exhausting.

While the machine has had a great standardizing effect on man, its benefits have been enormous. Through its use of energy other than human energy to do work, it has lifted much of the load off the backs of men so that they are able to devote time and attention to better aspects of life. We could not, of course, do away with the machine even if we wanted to. Therefore, we have to learn to live with it, so that the machine is the servant, not the master, of man.

One time during the depths of the depression, I was riding with two others in a car past a place where a steam shovel was excavating a hole for a basement. One said, "Now that's the trouble with us. If that hole was being dug by men

with shovels, we wouldn't have all this unemployment and economic stagnation." "Yes," replied the other, "and if all those men had tea-spoons instead of shovels, we would all be even richer."

We need to modify our institutions so that they will value human differences. We need to learn how to live with the machine so that it will serve us, rather than control us.

The church could abandon fear as a device in controlling people. It could teach proper relations between people and the universe, including the creative force which many call God, without teaching disrespect of self. It is not necessary to indulge in self-defamation in order to be on good terms with other people, the universe, and the deity in whatever form the individual conceives it. Conformity and expiation are not really essentials for religion. The development of the whole social being is just as feasible through the church as it is in the home and the school. Religion need not rest upon mysticism. It is safer in a changing world when it is based upon the individual's relationship to the universe and all that is in it. This relationship is a continuously changing and emerging one. Self-defamation causes one to lose sight of his own special value.

**T**HE BEST HOPE of democratizing our culture seems to me to lie with the modification of the school. The home and the church have enormous influence, but they are less accessible. The public school is established, supported and controlled by the people, and any time that the people desire more democratic schools, they can have them. The best way to modify the home is through the school, because most of the students in any school, particularly any high school, will be parents in a few years. The difficulty with parent education as it is now conceived is that it is hard to get access to the parents, especially those needing the education most. The best time to inform a mother concerning parenthood is while she is available in high school, not after she has graduated and already has a baby to take care of. This is not to depreciate the work of those engaged in parent education, but only to point to the opportunities readily available in the school.

The public school, such as we have in America and some other countries, where free education through high school is available to all, is one of the truly great social inventions of all time. It is a readily available agent for social growth which, if we did not have it, would be almost impossible to create. It has many truly dedicated teachers and administrators. It is a giant, with more power for good than any giant ever dreamed of in fairy tales, where anything can happen. But it is a sleeping giant, busying itself in a dream-world of the past, not aware of its potentialities. Its attention is on "knowledge" of the past, not seeing the humans of the present, not realizing that there is no knowledge until someone has learned.

If this sleeping giant can be aroused and its attention drawn to its poten-

tialities in the building of adequate human beings equipped to live in a democracy, confident and courageous in the face of the problems which are constantly emerging for each new graduating class (I started to say "each new generation," but new problems emerge much too rapidly for that), then great changes for the better can be brought about in a reasonably short time.

**F**IRST, the teacher needs to direct his attention to the learner, rather than to the subject. Not that there is anything wrong or evil about subject matter. Subject matter is essential to all learning, since one cannot learn without learning something. But it makes a great deal of difference whether subject matter is an end, or the means to an end. If the end or goal of teaching is the subject, it cannot be the learner. The goal of education should be adequate people, and any subject matter which serves that goal is good.

Teachers need to recognize and nourish individual differences and realize that no item of subject matter is good for everybody or can be assimilated by everybody. There is no very good reason why everyone in a class has to work at the same thing at the same time. Since human beings are unique in interest and ability, it is not really possible for them to do so. The learners we often call gifted can work in areas which challenge them while others find enterprises suited to their special capabilities. Release from the tyranny of the subject can bring an end to the leveling out and watering down process which has been so harmful to learning.

The school is a miniature society with most of the problems of the large society. Through mutual consultation among students, teachers, and administrators, and through honest student participation in school government, individuals can become functioning parts in this society. Such consultation can give each person experience in the operation of a good society and respect for the opinions and peculiarities of others. Experience in good living and in the operation of a good society will serve the individual throughout his life as he brings his influence to bear upon the larger society. The way for youth to learn how to live well in the future is to live well now.

Consultation and involvement in the operation of the school will tend to improve the learner's concept of self. No one can be an effective citizen in a democratic society if he regards himself as inferior. When one does not like what he sees when he looks at himself, he tries to lose himself through identification with the mob, the mass. In a mass, his self can become anonymous. We have many people who identify themselves with "causes," the better to hide themselves. Authoritarian teachers, not so crudely as this, say to their charges in effect, "You don't know anything. I do. So I will tell you. You are to speak when you are called upon. You'd better not stick your neck out." The symbol of the turtle in its shell is an interesting one. A few years of being told one is unworthy is pretty convincing, and so self-haters are built.

To be consulted and to be treated as an individual allows self-respect to develop and grow.

Young people in schools need to have opportunities to do things of their own and on their own. This calls for much doing, rather than so much listening and reading. In this doing, the learner is faced with real contriving and has to use and exercise his intelligence in order to find solutions, in order to get answers. This drives him, not to his desk alone, but to the machine shop, the library, the community. Education is thus broadened and made to deal with the current scene. The contemporary world becomes the prime educator.

**E**MPHASIS on problem solving leads to creativity and to the arts. Creativity is not just a matter of making great pictures or composing great music. It encompasses all that is contrived that is new. Everyone who contrives new answers to problems, new ways to solve dilemmas, creates. Art, in this sense, comes naturally to all who have a chance to contrive. As for that which is now usually called art—painting, ceramics, music, and so on—the creative value of those activities can be greatly enhanced by giving freedom to the creative urge of the learner. There are many art classes in our schools today where creativity is eliminated by the demands of the teacher. The drawing teacher insists that pictures be made to look as she sees the subject, not as the student sees it. Art, then, becomes a matter of copying rather than creating. This applies to all artistic activities which could be so liberating. We have much discipline trouble in our music appreciation classes, because our learners are required to listen, not do, and to appreciate that which they have had little opportunity to understand. Appreciation comes after understanding, not before it. Many aspects of creative living will become possible when the sleeping giant awakes.

Living in nature had great benefits for man, but of course we cannot all return to nature. Industrialization has caused many of us to become city dwellers. City living has a standardizing effect on people, because the city environment repeats itself, whereas nature never does. Since urban living is an established fact, we need to do more to bring nature to the city dweller. This calls for more parks, larger parks where nature can be more closely simulated, more opportunities for recreation. Nature itself is re-creating in its effect on people. Much has, of course, already been done in this direction, but we need much more, so that the city will no longer be so confining in its effect. Slums are the worst places for people to live from the standpoint of uniqueness. Whenever a slum is cleared, space is provided, everyone gains not only in human terms, but in economic terms as well. The automobile has been a great boon to city dwellers because, through its use, people no longer need to live near the factories and offices where they work. They can live out where there is more space and more opportunity for individuality to be nourished. We are having a hard time, however, learning how to live with the automobile and not die in it.

Learning to live with the machine, gaining its benefits without losing our uniqueness, is one of the great problems of our present society. The use of television, for example, poses such a problem. Television should be a great boon to mankind, but, because we let it use us instead of our using it, it has become a standardizer with grave consequences. Although watching television will probably always lack a good deal from the standpoint of participation, programs could be built which would at least make people think and not call for a stock response with its resulting standardizing effect on people. Great music and great plays, for example, do not call for stock responses but bring forth individual, personal responses. That is one reason why they are great.

Television is a good example of a canned activity, a standardizing triumph of the machine. Living in a machine age, we need to educate our young away from canned activities which do not call for unique responses. Using television as a baby sitter to keep junior out of mother's hair educates toward mediocrity and establishes habits of retreat from life. We can own television sets without deliberately training the young to be indiscriminating and without developing habits of retreat. We hear parents complain of their children's passion for comic books, but you can go into almost any living room on Sunday and see daddy on the floor reading the "funny" paper to his two-year-old. The funny paper is not funny, and it is not written for children—chronological children, that is. But there daddy is, training his child to become a comic book addict, about which he will later complain.

Avoiding such actions as using television and the comic sheet to "amuse" little children, is an illustration of a way by which we can educate away from activities which call for canned responses and a way by which we can learn to live with the machine and its products without allowing it to reduce our individuality.

**P**ERHAPS the most all-inclusive thing we can do for individuality is to learn how to live in a changing universe. The fact of change, unless it is indeed a denial of "fact," seems to be one thing we can be sure of. Those who seek an unchanging base on which to stand will always be disappointed and will always be out of tune with the universe. The immutable, if it could be found, or if one thinks he has found it, calls for rigidity and similarity. To some degree, each individual who stands on the immutable blocks the on-going movement of the creative force which he needs, rather, to facilitate. The person who learns to accept change and looks forward to it has the only security available to humans. He does not know what tomorrow will be like, but he knows it will be different from today. He is glad that this is so, he looks forward to this new tomorrow, and in this, he feels secure. In accepting change, he understands that people are unique and learns to cherish their differences.