

Seed

The Delusion of Ownership

Recently, in an item entitled "Creeping Capitalism", the CTV public affairs program *W5* chronicled the growing popularity of "profit-sharing", the practice of making employees shareholders in the concerns by which they are employed. Those advocating this technique argue that if "workers" can be made part owners of the means of production, then the labour-management "dichotomy" will be largely obviated, industrial disputes minimized, and productivity increased. The argument sounds authentic; however, reflection reveals it to be specious. In fact, "profit-sharing" is potentially an instrument of monopoly.

This fact is scarcely surprising, since the root assumption of the technique is the Marxist notion that the poor are poor because the rich are rich or, that the workers are deprived because capitalists are confiscating the results of labour as "profits". The solution, it is thought, is to make workers part owners of industry, thereby distributing profits more extensively. However, as we have pointed out elsewhere in *Seed*, the cause of the workers' dispossession and the cause of the cost-price squeeze facing industry are not unrelated and are more fundamental than "inequitable distribution of incomes". That, for example, the Anti-Inflation Board permits price increases as a result of increasing costs is tantamount to an admission that "profits" are not excessive. One wonders what the effect of distribution of corporate profits among all Canadians would be--for the consumer, and for industry.

In fact, we already have extensive examples of "profit-sharing"--in the forms of taxation and nationalized industry. When a company's profits are being taxed at, say, a rate of 80%, a version of involuntary profit-sharing is in force. The consequences of this are, of course, higher prices, difficulty in maintaining investment capital, insolvency, and, often, "nationalization"--another type of compulsory joint ownership and, ostensibly, "profit-sharing"--largely intangible.

Industrial profit-sharing, it seems to me, similarly must carry all the liabilities of ownership and few of the advantages. For one thing, does the displacement of the wage by the share give the worker more real disposable income? Or is it a means of constraining the reinvestment of income in industry--a method of converting income to capital to support the unending capital expansion (and proliferation of costs) which is a feature of the present economic-financial system? Does this sort of shareholding in the ownership of the means of production give the individual increased access to the product?

In this regard, C.H. Douglas has noted that "property" is "decentralised sovereignty". Does worker ownership (or minimal, partial ownership) of industry increase the sovereignty (or autonomy) of the individual? Does he own anything that he can utilize except with the consent and cooperation of a majority of the other shareholders? If, for example, a man has one ten-thousandth ownership of a fractionating tower, can he do anything with it? Though he might be one of the "common owners" of the facility, it is the sort of thing that can operate only as a whole (or, from the point of view of the owners, as a collective). The shareholder will have a very small vote in how what is "his" will operate--a point that has been tersely summed up in Douglas's suggestion about what is likely to happen to one of the "common owners" of the Post Office should he endeavour to relieve the local postal station of "his" share of the stamps.

What individuals want is not a fraction of a fractionating tower, but access to the product of that installation--oil, or gasoline. It is as consumer that the individual wants the means of ownership--not as part of a productive collectivity. A consumer having effective demand (an untailed income) *has* sovereignty; moreover, he has the means to control production by subscribing his effective demand to any enterprise--not through a lonely vote at a shareholders' meeting. Any scheme which promises participation in the ownership of the means of production must be suspected of compromising access to the means of consumption.

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Our Policy

SEED aspires to fulfil a unique role transcending the functions of other magazines and journals.

Our purpose is neither to propagandize in the sense of promoting some fixed point of view or body of thought nor merely to comment on current events.

Our partisanship does not extend beyond two considerations. Firstly, we believe that reality does exist: it is not a matter of opinion and will assert its authority over all opinions that contradict it. All sanctions reside in reality; opinion has none. Secondly, we believe in the desirability of extending human freedom. Genuine freedom is contingent upon our comprehension of reality, since to the extent that men disregard reality, they court personal and social disaster.

In other words, far from conforming to the modern view that value judgments are to be avoided, SEED will intentionally consist of a succession of value judgments, which will constitute the principal criterion of its success. Man cannot approach truth without rigorous formation of value judgments and perfecting of definitions. Discovery and refinement of the correct principles for human action and association will be the focus of our attention within the field of reality. If we carry our investigation of the nature of reality far enough, we shall illuminate the way to the formulation of sound policy.

We have no delusions about the facility of the course on which we are embarking. It is possibly the most difficult course open to us. However, its value should be proportional to the efforts it requires. If the distractions to intelligence and will which characterize contemporary society are, as we believe them to be, fundamentally unsatisfying, we are confident that some seekers of truth will involve themselves in the experiment that SEED represents. Such persons are the only ones capable of responding to such an experiment.

We approach our undertaking in the spirit of making an offering that will call forth latent creative capacities. If the ideas that SEED disseminates have validity and settle in good soil, they will grow. Moreover, their growth will be progressive and cumulative. SEED will serve as a medium permitting the cross-fertilization of adventurous intellects, thereby diminishing the effects of the entropic phenomenon that paralyzes development by compelling men to struggle to find truths that they have lost sight of and had to rediscover repeatedly during the past.

If our project is conducted correctly, it will at the least generate a new conceptual vigour among a segment of the community — and perhaps even result in the formation of new men.



Survival and Social Utility

As a reasoning creature, man is disposed to reason why things should be. However, his reasoning is conditioned by his philosophy; and, if this presupposes that usefulness to him or to some system laid down by him is the criterion by which all else is to be evaluated, his logical constructions will issue in destruction. Taken by themselves, human deductions and motivations must be disproportionate and unbalanced—simply because of the limited ability of man to comprehend and coordinate himself with the complexities of the universe. To allow these motivations free play without any external check or guide is, therefore, to guarantee eventual disaster. Humility is not merely an admirable character trait: it is practical insurance against the more extreme forms of calamity that beset human society.

A recent display at the Museum of Natural Science in Ottawa demonstrates the disequilibrating effect of taking man, and man's value judgments, as the measure of all things. The display in question, entitled, "Man and Wildlife in East Africa"—consisted of a montage of photographs and mounted heads of animals. A few years ago, the taxidermic specimens themselves would have been regarded as a perfectly adequate justification for the show. Then, it was assumed that the chief interest of such an exhibit would comprise the beauty of the concordance of colours in a hide, the exotic spiral of a horn, the mystery of art in the flesh—or at least knowledge about the peculiarities of the animals' behaviour.

However, anyone supposing that these would be the foci of this particular display was in for a surprise. The captions of the various items contained virtually no reference to those attributes of the animals which make them unique. Instead, they conveyed the stark warning that, "If wildlife is to coexist with man in modern Africa, it may have to 'pay its own way'" by becoming "established as an important economic asset in the development of emerging nations." All that the spectator was invited to appreciate in the head of a waterbuck was the fact that the beast "is 83% protein" and "would provide Africans with a remarkably cholesterol free meal." Turning to the buffalo, he was informed that by becoming plentiful enough to allow har-

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Antilanguage, Jabbernink, and the Reverse Technique

In the following article, Dr. C. G. Dobbs examines how language--or, rather, distorted imitations of language--can be used as an instrument of control by those who wish to "capture" politics, and applies his observations to several notable developments in recent and current affairs. The essay is, in the author's words, a preliminary attempt to "dehypnotise" the victims of this perversion of language from its original and primary function as a means of communication to a vehicle of deception.

Government has always been exercised mainly through the medium of words and other symbols, but with the increasing centralisation of 'the media' and collectivisation of people, rulership and manipulation of the many by the few has now achieved a degree of verbalism and symbolism which bids fair to alienate the collective mind-- if there is such a thing-- from reality altogether. A collectivity cannot be said to have a mind in the same sense as a person, but it has something which has to be referred to by this analogy, though it is vastly cruder, simpler and shallower than the mind, even of a child. It is notorious that a crowd-- a mere assemblage of people with no common thought, feeling, or aim, may be transformed into a mob, with a single emotion and a common objective, by words alone; and that such a crowd is particularly susceptible to hypnosis. Indeed, crowd-hypnotism is often practiced as an entertainment, and those who have experienced it say that resistance by the individual to the emotional force generated requires an intense and prolonged effort which quite often leads to fainting, a contingency which is provided for at such shows. Moreover, the means used by the hypnotist is simply a vocal patter, reiterating the same suggestion until it achieves its aim.

Antilanguage and Paralanguage

What does not seem to have been fully enough investigated, is the extent to which the modern, centralised mass-media induce a similar hypnosis in the millions who are subjected to their perpetual stream of vocal and printed 'patter', much of it heavily loaded with suggestion. One thinks, particularly, of the broadcast News programmes which once used to consist of news, but nowadays, after providing maximum publicity for criminals and the politically vicious, bore the listeners at

enormous length with highly selected opinions, discussions, interviews and the like, most of them strongly 'slanted' and repetitive. Although the absence of physical contiguity may damp down the speed and the intensity of the mob-emotion aroused, the broadcaster has many advantages over the mob-orator; above all, his power to 'get at' his victims almost continually, in their homes, by their own firesides, and as a background patter as they go about their domestic chores. After which, when they mix together in factories and offices, streets and shops and eating places, the reiterated phrases and opinions continue to spread under their own power, until the mass-hypnosis has reached a level at which only the rare individual will be able to summon the courage, and the intensity of mental effort, necessary to resist it. Anybody who has attempted this will be aware that a very powerful psychic force has been brought to bear upon him, which can, indeed, especially if he is isolated, cause physical and mental damage. Hitherto, in so far as this force has been studied, it has been studied with a view to its use as a means of power over others. It is now high time that it was studied, consciously and systematically, from the opposite point of view, that of those who are daily subjected to it, and wish to retain their free will and power of resistance.

It has to be remembered that words can be used in two opposite ways: to communicate, and to deceive or confuse, which is the opposite of communication, although there are, of course, many mixtures and intermediates, and shades of intention between the two. The normal assumption of the ordinary person who encounters words of a familiar language, organised in the accepted way into sentences, etc., is that he or she is confronted by language, i.e., 'a set of symbols or gestures

used to express meaning' (*Wyld's Universal Dictionary*), and therefore the words are usually accepted as a communication conveying the customary meaning of the words and sentences used. But where the purpose is to deceive, something other than language, in this sense, is being used; and so important is the making of this distinction to an understanding of our current social predicament, that I suggest that the words '*antilanguage*' and '*antilinguistic*' might usefully be in circulation as a means of referring to this particular inverted use of 'language' (in the broader sense of the word); and not only because it inverts meaning, but also because it resembles a disease of the language, crippling it and ultimately destroying it. As for the almost meaningless jargon to which we are daily subjected, and the remarkable ability of many public men to say nothing at great length, possibly the words '*paralanguage*', '*paralinguistic*', might be appropriate here.

It has been said that, in War, Truth is the first casualty. Antilanguage is a normal and expected part of the weaponry used against the enemy; but it is also, though to a varying degree, an important part of the weaponry of control used by each belligerent government against its own people. At least, when there is open war or fighting, this is understood by each side. No one expects truth from the enemy. At Alamein, for instance, Montgomery threatened his 'left hook through the desert' with false radio messages, dummy tank and phoney troop movements, to deceive Rommel into weakening his centre, where the real push was coming. False dispatches, which the enemy is planned to capture, and false information through double agents are all part of the game, if game it is; and indeed, in all war games or sports, the feint is of the essence of the fun. Without it, boxing or fencing would be reduced to mere bashing matches. Its appeal is that it allows cunning as well as strength and agility to play its part; and since this has always been the chief weapon of mankind, a function of his enlarged brain, which has enabled him to dominate animals far stronger and swifter than himself, it has always given him a peculiar satisfaction to demonstrate its power.

This may go some way to explain why the exercise of power over people through cunning and deceit has always had such a special fascination and is regarded with more and more admiration as centralised power becomes increasingly the basis of our society. But when man uses

his language, the chief instrument of his humanity, the medium of communication between man and man and the essential cement of his societies, as a mere substitute for tooth and claw, he is sealing his own fate by destroying it for its proper purpose, just as a pen would be so destroyed if it were used as a dagger, or a typewriter, which indeed would make a most formidable club, would not be much use afterwards as a means of communication.

'The Open Conspiracy'

It is this breakdown in the means of communication, and hence of thinking, which is now occurring in our civilisation. Human associations are remarkably tough, and have always had to survive a large amount of antilanguage, not to mention paralanguage, but there are limits, and they are now being approached, if not exceeded. Antilanguage has ceased to be an occasional, even a frequent, weapon brought out from the armoury of our rulers, and has become a regular, taken-for-granted, routine. Its denial, of course, is a part of the routine, but since it is taken for granted it is an 'open' secret among those who practice its use. It was H.G. Wells who first coined the term 'The Open Conspiracy' in his book of that title (Gollancz, 1928). This was a naive, but important, book, since it cast a glow of idealism over the much older design of a self-appointed elite to control and rule the world, by exploiting the power of a 'modernised' world religion, once the idea of God had been first depersonalised, and then abolished. Apparently, according to Wells, this domination was to be achieved by methods of pure sweetness and light, but more realistic minds have made no bones about the double-think and double-talk which is an essential part of any such operation. Every blatant dictatorship is achieved by methods of this sort. Hitler's aims were fully declared at great length in his book *Mein Kampf*, but before they were partially achieved by the war, anyone who drew attention to them was denounced or ignored as a 'scaremonger'. The aims of World Communism have been published and bawled and reiterated, among the 'faithful' at enormous and boring length, but any serious attention which is paid to them by their openly proposed victims is countered by the slogan 'reds under the bed', or phrases such as 'agricultural reformers' (referring to Chinese communism) or 'about as socialist as the Labour Party' (in Britain). Nor are these methods re-

stricted to the extremes of communism and fascism.

Probably the most successful example to date of warfare, with the traditional aims of the aggressor in warfare, namely, territorial aggrandisement by conquest and subjugation, has been the conquest of the British nation and people resulting in the surrender of their sovereignty to the European Community, by the use, almost exclusively, of the weapon of antilanguage, backed by political and economic manipulation. That this was a part of a much wider and very long-term plan for world domination by a campaign of deliberate verbal deceit was made quite clear as long ago as 1931 by Mr. Arnold Toynbee in his much-quoted statement at an Internationalist's Conference in Copenhagen which was published in the November, 1931, issue of *International Affairs*. It was given at some length in *Seed*, Vol. I, No. 5, p. 5, so it will be sufficient here to quote some shorter extracts from it:

The surest sign, to my mind, that this fetish of local national sovereignty is our intended victim is the emphasis with which all our statesmen and our publicists protest with one accord, and over and over again, at every step forward which we take, that, whatever changes we may make in the international situation, the sacred principle of local sovereignty will be maintained inviolable. It is just because we are really attacking the principle of local sovereignty that we keep up protesting our loyalty to it so loudly. I will merely repeat that we are at present working, discreetly but with all our might, to wrest this mysterious political force called sovereignty out of the clutches of the local national states of our world. And all the time we are denying with our lips what we are doing with our hands.

Notice that it is *all* 'our' statesmen and 'our' publicists who are engaged in this verbal warfare upon 'our' intended victim; not perhaps quite all politicians or journalists and broadcasters, but all of sufficient influence to rank as 'statesmen' or 'publicists'. This is the secret of the 'open conspiracy' method. It has to be 'open' for recruiting purposes, so that the appeal of power over the common herd through 'our' superior cleverness shall cast its net over all who are likely to be caught in it. This is now implicit in nearly all higher education, especially at the universities, and above all, in the 'social' subjects. The lure of this appeal is very strong: to be an 'insider', to belong to this inner ring of power-men, and the 'net' has a very small mesh; but a few will always escape it. These will be fully aware of the nature of the 'open conspiracy' and will not be deceived by the reiterated

lip-denials; but they will also be aware of its power over their careers. Even so, some may have the courage to expose and attack the thing, and this may even be allowed some publicity, for, provided they are not too well known or influential, and provided this is clearly a minor occurrence which can easily be swamped by the massive 'consensus' among the 'top people', it presents very little danger to the 'conspiracy', but can be used to isolate and subtly denigrate its opponents as 'outsiders' or 'cranks', not in touch with contemporary opinion. (Nevertheless, who can say what unexpected courage and initiative can sometimes achieve?) As for 'the masses' who have not come within reach of the bribe of power, the 'open' acknowledgement and invitation of the 'conspirators' is not for them; for them are the endlessly repeated denials until the very idea of such a 'conspiracy' is instantly rejected as ridiculous and anyone who suggests it is instantly discredited. In a majority-democracy, one man's opinion, as expressed in a ballot, is precisely equal to every other man's, so that an opinion reflecting a politician's speech heard overnight is mathematically equal to one based upon forty years of study and experience of the matter in hand. Egalitarianism is thus an essential tool for the remote control of large masses of mankind. It removes the danger of exposure by those who know the facts, who are always in a small minority in any situation.

Jabbernink

But, to return to Britain and the Common Market—in so far as it is possible to admire the technique of a confidence trickster, one can scarcely help admiring the masterly way in which the people of Britain were 'conned' into the E.E.C. The methods followed closely the routine for cheating an elderly widow into buying shares in a mythical gold mine. First, in 1970-71, the blatant appeal to greed and the desire for security: Join the Great European Prosperity League, the World's Most Powerful Economic Growth Area; it's your Last Chance; Special Terms for you alone! Higher wages, Bigger pensions, a Higher Standard of Living for all! All you have to do is put your cross here on the dotted line. Don't miss this chance! You'll regret it if you do.

All this was coldly and scientifically organised and computerised, the verbal matter emitted being tested from time to time for its brainwash efficiency by opi-

nion polls, and adjusted for maximum feed-back at the required time, before the button was pressed and the opinion-machine was allowed to run at full speed ahead: press, radio, television—Common Market, Common Market, Common Market—plug, plug, plug, until everyone was bored, tired and confused, and to a large extent, reduced to an apathetic indifference in place of their former definite opposition. The effect of this mechanical brain-pressure was registered on the gauges much as speed is registered on a car's speedometer when the throttle is pressed: 4 to 1 against, 4 to 1, 3 to 1, 3 to 1, 2½ to 1, 2 to 1, 2 to 1, 60% to 40%, 55 to 40, 50 to 40, come on now, plug-plug-plug; higher wages, higher pension, lovely cheap wine, yes! No! No! Yes! it will! it won't! will! won't! 45 to 40, 43 to 40 against, 42 to 43!—a majority for joining—Democracy demands that Britain join the Common Market.

It would be too complimentary to refer to the verbal matter mechanically poured over the population as language, even as antilanguage; it was simply conditioning matter, an emission of vocalised jabber and print for which, perhaps, the term '*jabber'n ink*' would be appropriate, incorporating, as it does, that peculiarly nasty abbreviation, the 'n, which, however, it might be more pleasant to leave out. Jabbernink is, in fact, the lowest form of antilanguage, a bulk-produced verbal pattern intended to hypnotise and confuse and destroy the convictions and common sense of its victims, leaving their minds a confused blank, open to formerly unacceptable suggestion—an essential stage in the process known as brainwashing.

In the run-up to the General Election of June, 1970, which returned the Parliament which took Britain into the E.E.C., the jabbernink was switched off that subject, since public opinion was, at that time, still about 3 to 1 against entry, and switched to the perennial routine of 'attacking' inflation, as a preliminary to presiding over the raising of its rate to unprecedented heights. Very few election addresses mentioned the Common Market in 1970, although everyone knew that this was to be the major issue in the coming Parliament, but the question was frequently raised by the electors who, in many constituencies, made it very clear that a pro-Market candidate would start with a heavy handicap. Accordingly, they used the required antilanguage, in some cases giving a categorical promise, in writing, to oppose Britain's entry into the E.E.C. in Parliament,

since this was necessary in order to get returned so that they could support it. A good many of the members of the Parliament which voted in the Act of Accession to the E.E.C. by only 8 votes on the Second Reading, had been returned on the understanding that they would oppose it. No doubt, the vocal organs of these politicians would be emitting denial-verbiage probably before they were even aware of it, for the constant use of political antilanguage carries with it its own penalty, that of increasing inability to realise the difference between truth and falsehood, because they live in a world of words almost entirely detached from reality. As Colin Hurry put it in his 'premature epitaph' on Lloyd George:

Count not his broken pledges as a crime,
He meant them, HOW he meant them— at the time.

This might do, nowadays, as an epitaph on any politician.

Having been dragged into 'Europe' by these means, and the promised 'gold mine' having turned out to be a pit of economic, inflationary and recessionary misery, the British people then had to face a second, far worse and cleverer, bruising and battering from the Brainwash Machine, in the Referendum Campaign. Needless to say, when the popular vote might have gone the other way, a referendum was declared to be unconstitutional, un-British, and wholly contrary to our tradition of parliamentary democracy; but as soon as the nation had surrendered its sovereignty, and had been plunged into a social revolution brought about primarily by a hitherto unheard of rate of inflation, the more powerful weapon of fear could be substituted for greed, and a referendum suddenly became acceptable, and, indeed, necessary, to involve and commit a confused and sceptical people.

(To be concluded next month)

The ancients say that man is necessarily, and therefore always at the same time, both good and prudent. First he is prudent, and only then (on the basis of being prudent) he is good. What is meant here? Now I think it is in fact not far from our everyday thinking and speaking. What is meant here is that the realisation of the good presupposes knowledge of reality. He alone can do good who knows what things are like and what their situation is.

Josef Pieper, *The Timelessness and the Timeliness of the Cardinal Virtues*, 14

("Survival", continued from p. 2)

vesting it would "place a dollar value on wildlife." In other words, the only ground for preserving these species was their usefulness to the economic plans of men. That they are unique creatures, living works of art, was of no account in this matter — their fate was to turn solely on whether they could be brought into the 'black' of a profit-and-loss statement.

Ironically, the author(s) of the display texts possibly hoped by such arguments to prove a need to protect the animals; but, in building a defense upon their presumed dollar value, he(they) have done more to expose them to, rather than shield them from, danger. Economic considerations have already led to the extinction of several species: when the dollar is the only measure of worth, the carnage in nature by men has been most unbridled.

What this display at the Museum of Natural Science represents, of course, is an extension into the animal world of the principle that the furtherance of a man-made environment takes precedence over the rights of the individual. The only valid *raison-d'être* that can be invoked on behalf of the individual is his utility to the group or to the system. The flower exists for the field; the field does not exist as a setting for the glory of the flower. The perils such a concept holds for all forms of life, human life included, are limited only by the imagination of man. If he sees some living being as an obstacle to what he conceives to be the proper functioning of the economic or social organizations, nothing restrains him from obliterating it from the scene, because in his eyes it has no worth outside these organizations.

Moreover, the dangers have increased with the decline of the influence of religion. A man will likely think twice before doing injury to a man or animal which he has been taught to perceive as a creature of God; but, if he perceives the man or animal as nothing but a fortuitous concurrence of elements, he will not hesitate to attempt to rearrange the latter better to suit his own purposes—the latest mood, scientific theory, or findings of a government commission.

An instance of the extreme ramifications of this attitude is provided by the thinking of George Bernard Shaw. Writing to one J.S. Stuart (*circa* January 1900), Shaw made the following remarks about the "right to

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To Those Who Share Our Concern

The publication of SEED is an enterprise which we feel is of cardinal importance to the revitalization of our culture. This endeavour represents the concern of a few individuals sensible of their responsibility to reverse, where possible, what they perceive to be the deterioration of the ideological and practical bases of this culture, and prepared to make personal sacrifices in the accomplishment of this objective.

However, our success can only be in proportion to our resources, which — particularly in their financial aspect — are quite limited. We are determined to proceed, even within those limitations. But we would like to do more.

Therefore, if you respond to the challenge that SEED has set for itself and would like to contribute to our venture, we invite your donations.

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("Survival", continued from p. 7)
live":—

The right to live is a Natural Right: that is to say it must be dogmatically postulated before any political constitution is possible. All argument on the matter leads irresistibly to Nowana—to universal suicide; and this must be rejected as a reductio-ad-absurdum, and a purely dogmatic Will to Live accepted as the basis from which all social order must start. It need not, however, be accepted quite unconditionally. I should make each citizen appear before a Board once in seven years, and defend his claim to live. If he could not, then he should be put into a lethal chamber. He could, of course, be represented by counsel; and Death would be represented by an Attorney General.¹

Obviously, this is the sort of opportunity for a performance in which a person of Shaw's temperament and talents would delight. He was not concerned by the fact that 'justice' in the best judicial system in the world is uneven—that a man with some irritating feature or a lack of oratorical skill would be placed less favourably than himself before such a tribunal.

It may be felt that Shaw was simply trying to be provocative in expressing such a view, and it should not be taken too seriously. Yet, ludicrous as his proposal might appear at first sight, it has actual counterparts

in our world. Hence, we are almost continually before some board or employer or banker applying for the monetary stipends which, in our society as it is presently constituted, are equivalent to a license to live. And the criteria on which our applications are judged pertain always to our utility to this or that function—not to the fact of our being made, as individuals, to enjoy through the life given us the uttermost delights and variety of Creation.

The monstrosity of the idea of tying the right to life to social utility is that it makes everything of society and nothing of its members. But the true value relation is exactly the opposite. Society is an abstraction which has never done anything, felt anything, or thought anything. Every action attributed to it has in reality sprung from the initiative of its individual constituents.

Shaw wanted to institutionalize and universalize the practice of judging others. However, we have it on higher Authority that this is not a suitable province for our enterprise. Judging others involves two difficulties which have never been satisfactorily resolved: who are to be the judges and what will be their grounds for condemnation? Had such a court as he envisaged actually existed, Shaw himself would almost certainly have wound up denouncing its bench as nit-witted and incompetent; and he would have been non-plussed by any formulation of guidelines for guilt not conforming to his own. To go out of our way to bring judgments about such dubious matters as "worth to society" to bear on people is to inject into our lives a large measure of unnecessary friction and misery. Some form of judicial system may be unavoidable; but the less judging that has to be done, the better.

Obviously, a man can be measured against an arbitrary standard—such as a legal definition of "social utility". But who can possibly evaluate his worth in absolute terms? And what validity have the notions of men in comparison with the absolute? The worth of a man to my purposes might be slight. His worth to the plans of government might be negative. But his worth to his Creator might be immense. It is a matter about which no one, not even George Bernard Shaw, can presume to make a pronouncement.

R.E.K.

¹ Bernard Shaw: *Collected Letters, 1898-1910* (ed. D.H. Laurence), (London, 1972), pp. 128-9.

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