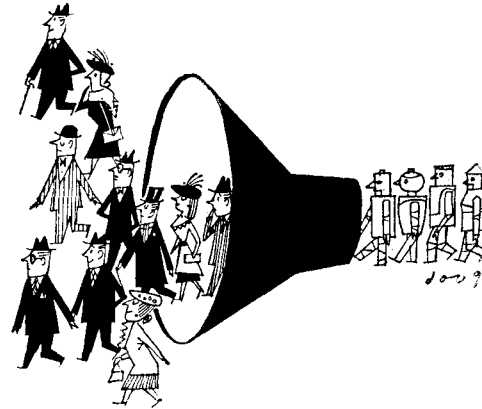


# RETURN TO INTEGRITY



By EDGAR ANSEL MOWRER

*A frequent contributor to SR, Edgar Ansel Mowrer studied philosophy at the University of Chicago and the Sorbonne before becoming a famous war correspondent, chief of bureau, broadcaster, and author. Unlike his most recent book, "Challenge and Decision" (1950), in this article he deals in detail with a relatively recent American development which—if unchecked—will prejudice our international status and capacity.*

IN GETTING rid of Hitler, the American people paid heavily. They seem ready, if necessary, to stake their all in resisting Malenkov.

Yet, in view of what is going on in the United States, one inevitably wonders *why*. Here freeborn Americans are letting themselves be half dragooned, half enticed, in the direction of the very regimes they oppose abroad.

I refer of course to the trend towards a *herd state* of which the essence is the denial of supreme value to the human individual. Such a denial was the kernel of the unlauded Nazi regime. It inspires both the cold inhumanity and the tyranny of the USSR. It is the most "un-American" of possible societies.

The United States was originally

dedicated to the preservation not only of national independence but of personal pre-eminence within the national state. If, however, the American can be further bullied or educated or bribed into renouncing his individuality, then it becomes hard to explain his hostility to governments based upon mass anonymity.

And—in my opinion—it is towards such a hateful renunciation, rather than towards any wonderful new "mass democracy," that we are moving.

To put it bluntly: to remain truly free, American (indeed, Occidental) society will have to reverse the "adjustment" trend. It will have to erect a wall against further encroachment on the personal field by the three monsters: Big Government, Big Business, and Big Labor. It will have

to "de-group" (individualize) its social life. It may have to pit against excessive standardization the maxim: "Never urge people to do together what the self-reliant among them can do better alone."

Such a reversal will seem as radical as making the old Chicago River run backwards away from Lake Michigan—and as necessary to the general health.

Most of the impersonal factors of our times seem to block any such reversal. Today's very real national peril urges us not to loosen but to close the ranks. Economic interdependence cries out for yet more standardization of product. Mass communications both require and promote uniformity of minds. So a generation ago did the need for "Americanizing" the foreigners in our midst. So increasingly do the monstrously swelling populations of our own and other countries.

So particularly does the perverse persistence of our educators and intellectuals in urging surrender to the forces making for depersonalization.

True, eighteenth-century American society, unquestionably the most civilized our country has ever known, pivoted on its outstanding individuals. But average Americans, long before the emergence of the mass-making factors, seem to have been

intolerant of individualism. Tocqueville noticed this over a century ago and warned against the tyranny of a majority.

By 1918 the NEA Report on the Cardinal Principles of Secondary Education stated the following:

"The purpose of democracy is so to organize society that each member may develop his personality primarily through activities designed for the *well-being of his fellow members and of society as a whole*" (my italics).

TODAY, little effort at developing the member's personality remains. No, the modern disciple of "Dynamic Functional Learning," according to John Haverstick [SR Sept. 11, 1954], even in teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic "stresses not proficiency in these elementary skills but instead the adjustment of the individual to the group in which he lives."

Joseph Wood Krutch found school consultants advising against giving a baby a hobby horse which "does not develop the group spirit." David Riesman—the invaluable reporter of the integration epidemic—tells of the mother who will not let John play the piano as much as he likes because she "wants to keep him a normal boy." Today's teacher—writes Riesman—conveys to the children that what matters is not their industry in

learning but "their adjustment to the group." Today—he concludes—"all little pigs go to market; none stay home; all have roast beef if any do and all say 'wee wee'" and (I might add) all emit the same grunts about the necessity of eliminating from the gang those "who stand up or stand out in any direction."

The social results are already alarming. No less an authority than the Administration has taken the lead in enforcing not only political but moral and social conformity upon its millions of employees. It may be—though many doubt—that the omnipresent Communist conspiracy in our midst requires the existence of an outspoken political police to cope with it. It may be that our safety requires every Government employe to bare his entire life and personality to official inquisitors under pain of dismissal. It may be that there is nothing funny in having a Secretary of State order himself to be "investigated" in order to justify a similar investigation of all those who work for him and for us. But no other democratic state has yet found it necessary to imitate the United States in this respect. Right or wrong, a society every member of which is encouraged to spy and report upon every other member has gone a long way towards the "one-outlook" (if not the

one-party") state. What more startling symptom of "total adjustment" could one find?

MOREOVER, the U.S. Government has succumbed to another, perhaps allied form of the "integration" mania.

It is called "collective thinking." Telephone any Government executive in business hours and you will probably be told that he is "at a meeting." For he spends most of his time in meetings. Most important Government decisions get taken—when they get taken—only after endless, most aimless discussion in the name of something like the "sense of the meeting"—if any! It is not only that the presumably responsible top man listens to his more competent assistants (obviously he should). It is that after listening he frequently shirks his responsibility and makes the "Department" responsible. What prevails is not the highest, wisest, boldest view, but the highest common bureaucratic denominator.

Some corporations are trying to "integrate" employees' private lives. Riesman states that "up-to-date personnel directors are weeding out commerce and industry the lone wolf who is not cooperative, no matter what his gifts."

A recent "etiquette column" confirms this. It quotes "several thousand employers" as stating that "the commonest reason for firing employees" is not—as sanity would infer— incompetence. No, it is the "inability to get along with people!"

The potential Fords and Edisons and Firestones—if they manage to pass the preposterous "personality testers" and are hired—soon get tight. The nonentities and yes-bos stay and are promoted. As a result we have a new class of big-business directors who are less outstanding than the corporations they boss.

Labor unions have more excuses. Perhaps in order to bring America to the point where they could be organized for their own good in disciplined unions they had to become "integration incarnate." Perhaps the organizers had to drive out any notion of competing with or exceeding one's fellows and hammer the "stiffs" into practically interchangeable units. The fact remains that certain plants conformity and the elimination of personal ambition have robbed the job of most of its interest—with results yet to appear.

Or look at our "mass media." Try to sell a manuscript to a radio chain, a motion-picture company, or a popular magazine. Who finally passes your work? The boss? No, your stuff is passed around among a dozen editors.

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## Your Literary I. Q.

FIVE BY FIVE

Conducted by John T. Winterich

There are, as every schoolgirl knows, ten syllables in an iambic pentameter line. But sometimes a poet is in a hurry and compresses five of those syllables into a single word. Below are ten lines so circumstanced. You are asked to identify the works from which the quotations are taken and the authors as well. If you get fewer than ten of the twenty pieces of information sought, regard the result as reprehensible; if from eleven through fifteen, as intermediate; if sixteen or better, as panegyric. Answers on page 37.

1. Procrastination is the thief of time.
2. Thy friends are exultations, agonies,  
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.
3. Sleepless with cold commemorative eyes.
4. As if predestination overruled  
Their will, disposed by absolute decree.
5. A man known in the councils of the nation,  
Cool, and quite English, imperturbable.
6. . . . and of . . .  
The Anthropophagi and men whose heads  
Do grow beneath their shoulders.
7. All in prefabricated ruin lies,  
And Ganymede gives notice in the skies.
8. Whose peaceful day benevolence endears,  
Whose night congratulating conscience cheers.
9. Then throng the busy shapes into his mind  
Of covered pits, unfathomably deep.
10. . . . his rough crest he rears  
And pricks up his predestinating ears.