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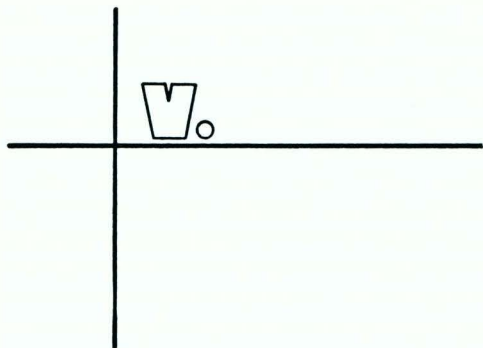
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How the Younger Generation Is Being Corrupted

By HENRY WINTHROP

I have just emerged from an extended reading bout with literature preoccupied with the characteristics of the younger generation and dealing with its conflict with the older generation. I have by now devoted countless hours to the reading of works done by, and about "The Hipsters," "The Beats" and "The New Left." At the same time I have not neglected to read some of the vast and growing literature on "The Youth Movement" as well as some of the work done by some of its members. In order to do justice to an effort to understand the dissatisfactions which have prompted extremist spokesmen of the younger generation to insist that we can have peace in our time, when the threat to our way of life is a clear and present danger from our Communist enemies, I have plowed through the literature of "The Peace Movement." In particular, I have plowed through the visionary and the unpatriotic varieties of peace literature, produced by its younger supporters and by some of the crackpot intellectuals who are affiliated with this movement. Nor have I neglected to acquaint myself with articles that deal with the many prominent enthusiasms of the younger generation—those enthusiasms which have made them different and brought them to public attention. I am referring to their twisted passion for marijuana, LSD and other so-called consciousness-expanding drugs. I have wasted innumerable hours plowing through the radical journals and publications edited by politically unbalanced students, by irresponsible, sex-crazed youngsters, by starry-eyed, young Californians seeking a new religion or a new form of emotional release and by so-called existentialists who seek a philosophical justification for their lack of social responsibility.

The number of hours I have sacrificed in reading the nauseating poetry and the pointless short stories of avant-garde writers who mistake obscenity for creativity is beyond belief.

I have finally come to the conclusion that all this effort has been a waste of time. But I have, nevertheless, derived one great satisfaction from all of my labors. I have finally discovered the intellectual, and the cultural, sources of folly which have led to the current degradation of the younger set. I am now aware of the kind of reading matter which has produced the twin evils of corruption and intellectual snobbery, currently so vigorously displayed by extremists of the younger generation. From all this reading there has emerged for me the clear recognition of the great value a handbook would possess, which could bring these corrupting influences to the attention of the still unaffected young and enable them to avoid influences of this type entirely. I do not have the time, of course, to write such a handbook though it could be a major intellectual contribution to the guidance-literature of our time. But I can do the next best thing. I can convey in this paper a brief synopsis of this cesspool of corruption; and so doing, I can serve in a small way to help the undergraduate to steer clear of the baneful intellectual and cultural influences to which he may be subjected during his four years at college.

By cleansing the educational and cultural atmosphere of those poisonous and pernicious intellectual influences which can rob the undergraduate of a sense of social stability—so vitally needed by us all—a contribution can be made to a task which is preeminently worthwhile. If done well it can assist the undergraduate in achieving a clear, social vision and a capacity for straight thinking. These are both genuine values of the greatest importance. Those who try to clear the Augean stables of modern learning of some of the cultural debris that is now to be found in them, are, I think, providing a service which, in its own way, may be just as important as the services provided by those who furnish positive, wholesome intellectual influences for the young. For these reasons, then, I propose to discuss below three of the most iniquitous intellectual and cultural influences of our time. These are influences which should be strictly avoided by our young men and young women, if they seek to achieve a genuine and responsible understanding of contemporary life and of their potential role in our society. These nefarious influences represent three pitfalls which, I feel, await the unwary undergraduate. I shall characterize them only briefly but, I think, say just enough to make it clear why it is so highly undesirable for the young to be exposed to them. Without further ado, then, I shall begin the task I have set for myself.

* * * *

I. *Existentialism*

The first consideration to be recommended to the young is to

warn them to avoid reading anything on *existentialism* and to shun existentialist plays and movies like the plague. All existentialist movies come from either Paris, London or Rome, or from Sweden where, as you would expect, they allow mixed bathing in the nude. Iron Curtain countries have a clearer grasp of what constitutes "existentialism" and they know only too well that existentialist thought represents merely the latest form of Western, moral decadence. All existentialists are intellectually undisciplined and ethically confused and, besides, they are usually near-sighted. This latter condition probably explains their jaundiced point of view. All of them think men are depraved—and women, too, for that matter—and that we deceive ourselves all the time. The sanctity of marriage and the home is constantly threatened by existentialist doctrines to which the young are exposed at great peril.

Most existentialists are lodged—or "trapped"—in English Departments. That is also where most Hipsters and Beats are to be found. It is no accident that sociologists have found a high correlation between Hipster and Beat behavior, on the one hand, and existentialist ideas and confusions, on the other. English Department offerings should therefore be examined very closely and, perhaps, only the course, *The Bible As Literature*, should be retained in the curriculum of that god-forsaken department.

But there are other areas, too, in the modern university, which are subject to the baneful influence of this modern form of corruption. The French Department is usually a classic case of infection, introducing—as it so often does—courses which deal with the works of perverts like Jean Genet and of atheists and communist fellow-travellers, like Jean Paul Sartre. In fact, Sartre is so accustomed to flagrantly flaunting public morality that he has been living with Simone de Beauvoir for years in sin. The Philosophy Department is, also, often a conspicuous sinner in this matter, exposing students, in so-called courses on existentialism, to the work of neurotics, like Kierkegaard, or ex-Nazis, like Heidegger.

In recent years we have also had to witness the corrupting entrance of existentialist doctrines into Departments of Religion; gloomy men—unduly influenced by existentialist doctrine—like Tillich, who are unreasonably discontent with the benefits of our society, develop criticisms and doctrines which are bound to destroy the moral fibre of the young. Vain men and disbelievers, like Altizer, preach that God is dead. How could they know? Were they present at the funeral? Atheism is the veritable dry-rot of the spiritual life, and a body of teachings like those of existentialism are bound to produce atheism and a moral breakdown.

The Department of the Theatre Arts is also a heavy sinner in this respect, introducing the innocent undergraduate to the corrupting in-

fluence of dramatists of morally questionable status—thieves, homosexuals, criminals and ex-Communists. It is in this Department that the grossest of moral deceptions and aesthetic pretensions are practised upon the young, under the disguise of what is called "*The Theatre Of The Absurd*."

All in all, one can do a great service for the undergraduate who seeks a wholesome life within the framework of good citizenship, if one warns him away from the baneful influence of existentialists and all their works. Existentialism is one of the worst moral cancers upon the social fabric of our age and within the cultural atmosphere of our time.

II. *The Youth Movement*

My advice to the young is to eschew reading any of the literature on "The Youth Movement" or any written by any of its followers. The very title, itself, is suggestive. Members of the various sectors of this movement live for nothing but pleasure. All they have in their minds—as well as in other latitudes—is Sex. On the excuse that they are trying to increase personal awareness and expand consciousness, they take to drugs—and, occasionally, marinated herring. They are splintering the moral fibre of our youth and usually against the grain. They are refusing to take their place in the American community and thus return something to society for all they have taken from it. And they are practising a primitive form of communism in which they share food and women—chiefly the latter.

Members of this movement prevent the innocent young from developing powers of concentration, by the kind of leisure-time activities they encourage and pursue. Among these activities we find the following: hopping around in Discothèques, playing Hindu guitars, screaming and clapping at poetry and jazz festivals, turning on Wagner (of all things!) full blast, and giving parties round-the-clock. I regret to have to report that they also wear buttons with obscene messages, in East Village, and the most bizarre clothing in the Haight-Ashbury section of San Francisco. Their clothing is usually dishevelled, their hair unkempt and their faces unwashed. But this is not surprising, since they have learned that cleanliness is next to godliness and—being atheists all—they cannot afford to believe in personal hygiene.

Furthermore, it is becoming increasingly difficult to tell the boys from the girls among most members of "The Youth Movement." The only tell-tale sign that is left is the amount of steatopygy which can be observed. If this sign is insufficient it may prove necessary to ask Bettina Aptheker to make the indentification. But the basic reason for discouraging our undergraduates from reading literature on "The Youth Movement" is that any enthusiasm for its activities may prevent

the young from reaching maturity; and people who fail to mature usually wind up as communists, criminals, beachcombers, poets or even disc jockeys. The risk is just too great.

It is members of "The Youth Movement" who are the chief supporters of what *Life* magazine has called "The Other Culture." This is the world of "Happenings"—a world of utter obscenity and moral depravity. The only way in which the enormity of the depravity involved in a "Happening" can be brought home forcefully to the reader, is to furnish him with some of the "ideas" and activities of people who produce "Happenings." There is a Japanese group devoted to this "new art form"—a group known as "The Zero Dimension Group." The leader of this group, named Kato, explains that the nature of things can be comprehended only by those who can concentrate for two or three years on all that is vulgar. The members of this group submit to a truly monastic regime of contemplation in which they make certain that each waking hour of consciousness is filled with forbidden thoughts or forbidden deeds. One way by which they faithfully express their philosophy is to carry around vulgar flash cards which are consulted on buses and trains.

Still other *specialists* in "Happenings" will assume the postures of love, while naked, on top of an office building, while they are flooded with spotlights from below. Some of these creative souls—in an effort "to stir the modern audience from its cozy emotional anesthetic"—will submit naked to masochistic whippings in public. There are still others who will walk or crawl naked in public with lighted candles protruding from their bottoms. Some of the more venturesome leaders in the art of the "Happening," specialize in *creative vandalism* by hacking pianos to pieces. One variety of these liberators of the human spirit engage in the *blutorgie*. This is a psychologically searing event in which a lamb will be tacked to a white canvas and disemboweled publicly, the blood splattering on the clothes of everyone present. One School-of-Happiness has revived the Nazi book-burning activity, in which, in the name of Art, books are piled high into "Skoob Towers" and burned in public.

If the reader is not as yet nauseated or outraged, let him ponder the following description of another "Happening," provided in an issue of *Life*. Muhl, an Austrian specialist in "Happenings," enacts the following "Happening," with major assistance from a young girl, a teacher.

"... when the girl comes into the arena of folding chairs, she is veiled in a gauze, and she also wears a graceful smile. She lies down on a bed of moss placed in the center of the room. Muhl shadow-boxes privately under the bright spotlights. Gunter Brus, Muhl's partner from Vienna and the ideological *sprecher* of the evening, circles the room screaming German

curses at the crowd. 'Wow! The real concentration camp thing!' says a spectator.

Then Muhl comforts the girl in vegetables. Her body is smeared with flour, tomatoes, beer, raw eggs. Melons are smashed inside a gunnysack and Muhl pours the runny results artfully down on the twisting figure. Then comes dry cereal, wheat paste, milk, half-chewed carrots. Volunteers rise from their seats to come forward and chew carrots. Muhl chants and pours in bright powered paints as he stamps and dances in the spreading salad. Finally he flings himself into the animal-vegetable marriage, embracing the girl, lapping up the milk and beer. An appealing mood of harvest-time merrymaking descends upon the room—the audience is spellbound, the girl is radiant at the bottom of the stew. It is her first Happening—an experience! "At first you're scared and embarrassed," she says, "but afterward it's just so *great*."

Now the point of all the preceding is this: any movement whose followers enjoy the types of activity which we have mentioned above and whose followers encourage more of the same, is definitely unfit to be a standard-bearer for the younger generation. Youth has simply become too dangerous for youth. In the light of the unmitigated corruption which has enveloped the youth movement, it can clearly be seen that the ideas and behavior of their elders will furnish the best influences for youth. Grown-up behavior furnishes them with the best models to emulate—with the exception, of course, of *Peyton Place*. But what can you expect from a small town?

III. *Criticism Of Modern Education*

Critiques of modern education are particularly dangerous intellectual fare. They tend to convince the student that there are forms of education which can furnish methods which would be a distinct improvement over the present ones and which could provide a curriculum, at all levels, that would furnish subject matter which is superior to that which we now offer. These notions are both disconcerting and absurd. If there were better types of education than those we are now offering, our educational leaders would long ago have been among the first to advocate their introduction into our school system. Only wild-eyed educational dreamers, *progressive educators* and impractical visionaries imagine that our traditional, educational system can be improved. In education we are getting the best there is today (or, at least, what is left of it, anyway) and no student's future is being neglected by our failing to provide the essentials of education, from accounting to zoology. Subjects, such as these, have proven to be the best training for citizenship.

In recent years, however, a number of cranks have turned up—critics of modern education, who have persuaded the more unsuspect-

ing members of the younger generation, particularly those interested in entering the teaching profession, to become dissatisfied with the splendid education they are getting now. These waspish critics demand the introduction of such silly and new-fangled notions as that which insists upon training students to think straight and to learn the art of dialectic. This is the kind of absurdity promulgated by such cloud-cuckoo-land educators as Robert Hutchins and Mortimer Adler. Or they may insist on learning by doing, a foolish idea that originated with the philosopher, John Dewey, who forgot that the proven way by which men have always learned, is to "hit the books."

Then, too, we have the drivel which comes from thinkers whom the Hippies and the Beats swear by. These are men like Erich Fromm who created a major disaster by making a household word out of *alienation*—knowing that *alienation* was a favorite theme of Karl Marx—and overlooked the fact that a preoccupation with *alienation* will almost invariably bring a student close to Communism. All those critics who introduced such fancy terms—like *alienation* and *anomie*—want learning to be not separated from life and insist that education should be made relevant to the life around us, particularly the life with which the student is familiar. But there is an ever-present danger here, which is almost always overlooked. If students of political science, for instance, were to be introduced to such gloomy novels as Edwin O'Connor's *The Last Hurrah*, or to such serious books as Frank Kent's *The Great Game Of Politics*, Felkner's *Dirty Politics*, Messick's *Silent Syndicate*, Moscow's *What Have You Done For Me Lately?*—or any one of dozens of other books in a similar vein—they might lose all faith in the basic truths of the political science curriculum.

This is certainly no way to conduct the process of education. Book learning is still the best way to open up young minds to the richness of this world. What was good enough for Thomas Jefferson should still be good enough for us. Every effort should be made to discourage the hiring of such critics of education as those we have been referring to here, no matter what their professional specialties.

We cannot afford the luxuries of education that a few snobs, like Robert Hutchins, have been pleading for, for years. We cannot afford the anarchy in education for which dreamers and malcontents, like Paul Goodman, have been calling for years. Members of the younger generation have to take their place in life as good citizens. They have to acquire those skills which will enable them to find economic niches for themselves in our scheme of things. They are right in demanding basic training and they are correct in being impatient with frills. But because of limited experience they are often taken in by educators who are "hung-up" on Plato or on Scientific Method or Social Research or Love and Brotherhood or even Culture. These things are

all very fine, but they are, essentially, luxuries. We must always remember that, in this practical world, a student must learn FIFO, if he is to be a good accountant, Titration if he is to be a good chemist, Mechanics if he is to be a good engineer, and English Prose if he hopes to help write a college catalogue. For these reasons, my advice to the young is to demand the elimination of frills and to insist upon an education in *basics*. This is the best way of ignoring the irrelevant criticisms of the cranks in education. Keep your faith in the contemporary curriculum and it will keep faith with you.

* * * *

Limitations of space make it impossible to mention all of the other intellectually and culturally baneful influences which await the unwary undergraduate. But, I should not like to end this article without, at least, mentioning some of those undesirable influences here. Among these undiscussed influences, then, I would include the following: "Studies Of The Future," made by social scientists; the content of liberal weeklies, such as *The Nation*, *The New Republic* and *The Commonweal*; the philosophy of Logical Positivism; the modern renaissance of Political Muckraking; the newer methods of Decision-Making, such as Operations Research; the little Literary Magazines and books by such outfits as New Directions; critical analyses of Communism and Capitalism; Pop Art, Progressive Jazz and what has come to be called The Expanded Arts: books written by intellectuals and journalists who are doves in squawks' clothing; studies by extremist pacifists of every sort; studies in Bohemianism, such as those by Lawrence Lipton or Seymour Krim or Allen Churchill; radical magazines edited by already corrupted members of the younger generation, such as *Our Generation* and *New University Thought*, *Zen Buddhism*, *The Evergreen Review*; smart-alecky satire, such as that in *Ramparts* or *Mad* magazine; films and "Happenings" such as those being developed in what has come to be know as "The Expanded Cinema;" and books by such unedifying writers as Jack Kerouac, Alexander King, Jerome Weidman and Norman Mailer, cartoons by Jules Feiffer, and poetry by Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

It is my feeling that if the warnings given above are taken seriously, education will be made safe for the younger generation. And if education is made safe for the younger generation, the house of democracy will be in order. Can one ask for more?

