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is clearly a long way from being fulfilled in the case of the human mind) it tends to disappear. The theory of survival simply indicates that those who possess the qualities necessary for survival will survive; there is no natural mechanism for eliminating unnecessary qualities unless they are actually detrimental to survival.

It might be considered that identifying the arts as play robs them of all dignity and significance. In my opinion, the exact opposite is the case. The forced attempt to make art into a species of useful work has only subordinated it to either church, the state, or business, unless it was prepared to live a hole-in-corner existence, despised by the majority — who instinctively recognize its playful character, but are prevented from accepting it for reasons of status. If the play impulse is recognized for what it is — one of the fundamental needs of mankind — art is not depreciated but truly liberated when it is understood as a manifestation of this impulse.

For those whose minds are sufficiently simple to be satisfied with sheer self-expression, obviously this principle is adequate; there are plenty of practising artists who could be cited as examples — artists to whom technique is of no importance, who approach art almost as small children do. But in most cases the human mind is too complex an organ to be content with such simple rules of the game — a fact which can be observed even in the art of children who have passed the age of five or six.

The human intellect is so constructed that it likes to solve problems, and when it is not confronted with enough problems in its daily experience, it tends to set up arbitrary ones and solve THEM. This tendency is not infrequently deplored as decadent and precious by those simple souls who are content with the raw outpourings of their psyches, but this seems to me an unwarranted assumption. Man, throughout the past several hundred thousand years, and his simian ancestors for countless millennia before that, have been constantly confronted by problems which they had to solve in order to survive. Therefore, it seems natural enough that the ability and desire to solve problems should have become part of the psychological heritage of humanity — a faculty which may ultimately be no longer particularly necessary for survival but which is still certainly of the greatest importance. Since this faculty exists, it is also natural that it should be used, and if the daily environment does not present enough difficulties to exercise it properly, as I passionately hope will someday be the case for everyone, it must be exercised in some arbitrary way, just as individuals who lead a sedentary existence require more or less arbitrary physical exercise in order to be healthy.

It is one of the primary errors of the nature-fetishers to assume that the mind and its faculties are not part of nature, but a peculiar excrescence grafted onto man by civilization, which will wither away once the Good Life has been achieved. Man is an animal, of course, but he differs from all other species primarily in the size and complexity of his brain, which is just as much a part of his natural endowment as the powerful legs of the horse or the sensitive nose of a dog are part of theirs. It is certainly a serious misunderstanding of the Darwinian hypothesis to assume that if and when a natural faculty is no longer absolutely necessary for survival (a condition which

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seems to me self-defeating, since if everyone were to devote his spare time to 'useful' work, so much stuff would be produced that it could no longer be considered useful. I can't imagine why an oversupply of clothes, food, houses and the like would provide greater satisfaction than if the surplus time was devoted to playful pursuits like art.

Moreover, there seems to be some factor in the makeup of humanity, to say nothing of other animals, which rebels against an excessive concentration of 'practical' activities, perhaps because these activities are, of necessity, too stereotyped to permit sufficient scope to individual ingenuity and caprice. The ways of performing practical tasks are rigidly limited by the end to be achieved, whereas in the arts it does not really matter what one does — the the work is an end in itself, and need meet no tests of durability, balance or form, unless its creator arbitrarily so decides. Each practising artist determines for himself the rules he intends to follow and the effects he wants to achieve, and the success or failure of his achievement is ultimately a matter for him alone to decide.

Individual contributions naturally vary considerably, depending on the amount of time, emotional intensity and energy each individual devotes to his particular art form. However, whether or not certain individuals possess a natural superiority in their special field it is impossible to determine, since the criteria that can be used to judge such superiority are invariably too vague and subjective. It is fairly simple to set up standards to grade the skill of individuals in practical work, since there is general agreement about the ends to be achieved in such work. But in the arts, everyone can legitimately claim that he is attempting something entirely unique, and therefore his work cannot be measured by existing standards. The advantage of this from the standpoint of ego security is enormous.

The rules of art can best be viewed as the rules of a game — a game that is played by each artist alone — which are capable of infinite variation. A group of artists in a particular field may agree among themselves to follow the same set of rules, but any one of them is always free to break with them if he wants to, and set up new rules for himself. Why then, should there be any rules at all? Why not adopt the simple principle that art is the free expression of the individual and disregard technical questions?

a few modest luxuries is a form of compensation for the frustration of the play impulse or some other instinct when it is not simply a product of the requirements of status achievement — higher status being frequently indicated by an increase in material possessions.

In a society where there is no status stratification and thus no pressure on the individual to attempt to rise in the social hierarchy, the sharp distinction between children and adults that exists in status societies — and consequently the deprecating of play in favor of 'useful' activity — is not drawn. There may be, especially in difficult economic conditions, such as prevail among the Eskimos, for example, a purely economic pressure on everyone to contribute as much as possible to the food supply but this does not make for condescension toward children or a rigid differentiation between the roles of children and adults. On the contrary, the two roles tend to merge imperceptibly into one another. Children are treated with respect, as responsible members of the community, as soon as they can walk; their wishes and opinions are considered as seriously as those of anyone else. Likewise, in such a society, play is regarded as natural for everyone, whenever the immediate pressure of the environment permits. In non-status societies, like the Pueblo Indians, where the demands of the food quest are somewhat less severe, the amount of time devoted to non-utilitarian pursuits — decorating pots, storytelling — is at least as great as that consumed by practical work; and since even very small children perform some kind of useful function, the distinction between children and adults can hardly be said to exist. Everyone works, according to his capacity, when there is work to do, and everyone plays the rest of the time.

It seems to me that any really free society would be like this. Children would be encouraged to enter the workshops and participate in whatever work was going on, according to their capacity. However, since the major emphasis of the society would not be on production for its own sake, everyone would be free to devote a considerable part of their time to playful pursuits.

It is argued by some that in a society where man is free to pick his occupation without compulsion and to determine his own hours and working conditions, useful work would be sufficiently satisfying and enjoyable to take care of all creative needs. This argument, however,

I.

Nearly all of the higher animals, especially when they are young, prefer to occupy themselves a good part of the time with activity that has no direct practical value. In all save man, this activity is of a purely physical nature — jumping, racing, frisking about, or pretending to fight with one another. Man, as a result of his more highly developed intellect, and the accumulated culture produced by it, has built up a complex range of play. In some of its forms, human play resembles that of the other animals to a large extent, but other forms have become so refined and altered that it is frequently difficult to recognize that they belong in the same category.

Probably the most widely misunderstood of the forms of human play are those fields of activity which are classified as the fine arts — music, poetry, painting and so forth. So much has been written attempting to prove that art possesses some 'higher' or at least functional significance, that it is only by observing the behavior of small children, who have not yet become fully conscious of their social role, and who spontaneously alternate singing, dancing and plastic art with the playful actions of other species, that one can see it in its proper perspective.

It is generally recognized that play is natural and necessary for small children, but it is widely held that it is somehow inappropriate and beneath the dignity of adults. In many societies, particularly those that are based on class or status stratification, adult play is actively discouraged. At a certain age, which varies somewhat depending on culture, class and historical period, but which roughly coincides with puberty, the individual's desire for play is rather abruptly subjected to a concerted campaign of ridicule and repression. He is now no longer a child and should cease to behave like one. The time has come when he must assume the responsibilities and dignity of adult status.

It is the purpose of this article to attempt to demonstrate that the repression of the play impulse in adults is an arbitrary and largely harmful process, which results from the compulsions imposed by class stratification. The play impulse should be recognized as an

important part of man's fundamental nature, and provided with adequate outlets, free from guilt and shame. Moreover, the separation between childhood and maturity is not imposed by nature as a sharp break. The process of human maturation is naturally smooth and gradual, and the naturally matured individual differs from a child only in the extent of his knowledge, the subtlety of his perceptions, and his greater physical strength, coordination and patience.

II.

In most societies that have developed beyond the level of simple hunting or agriculture, there exists a differentiation of the status of individuals in terms of social power, prestige, and consequently, in many instances, of economic privilege. The concept of status differentiation can arise in a society in a number of ways: from religion, as in Polynesia and certain African kingdoms; as a result of the conquest and subjugation of one group by another; or simply from the growth of distinctions between different occupational groups within a society. Even within a simple equalitarian society, like the Andaman Islanders or the Plains Indians, status differentiation, on the basis of age and achievement may occur. Once a system of status has been established, in whatever manner, it develops a life of its own, and persists with extraordinary tenacity from one generation to the next.

The ascription of higher status to adults than to children possesses a certain elementary logic especially within the framework of primitive economics, where success in the quest for food depends on a fairly high degree of coordination and experience. However, even this natural basis for differentiation tends to produce unfortunate psychological consequences. It gives rise to a continual pressure on the younger members of the community to grow out of their inferior status as quickly as possible and to regard everything associated with that status as contemptible and unworthy. Where the rise in status is directly linked with physical maturation, and the achievement of higher status is virtually automatic once one reaches a certain level of physical prowess, this emphasis is not entirely harmful, although

function in the realm of pure art. They pursue their medium with the same lack of concern for external pressure that is characteristic of small children. In short, before the arts can become free, they must first be liberated from the idea that they are 'useful' in the sense that, say, carpentry is useful, and be considered from the standpoint of psychological criteria that are appropriate to their function.

III.

It is necessary, before we can draw any conclusions about the relative value of play and useful work, to define precisely what we mean by useful work. Clearly the capitalistic definition is of no value to us, since it not only takes in far too much territory, but is based on a criterion that is only very remotely connected with genuine utility. The mere fact that something can be sold tells nothing of its actual value, as it is well known that there are plenty of people in existing society who can be induced to buy anything at all, or to part with their money for nothing.

Most concepts of utility that go beyond the simple capitalist definition still tend to be influenced by it to some extent. They usually define anything that goes to make up the standard of living of a middle-class family as useful — an entirely arbitrary procedure. From a strictly biological standpoint, the only work that can properly be considered useful is that which provides for actual bodily requirements — food, shelter. Since it is possible for man to remain healthy on a level not appreciably higher than the general living standard of other domestic animals, genuinely useful work clearly requires but a very small amount of time — even with quite primitive methods of production. All else, biologically speaking, is luxury — including privacy, more than a simple balanced diet, artificial light and practically everything else that is part of 'civilized living'.

The desire for more than a bare subsistence is virtually a universal phenomenon in human society, of course, but so is the desire for play. It is absurd to consider that luxury is any more important than play, or that the production of items of luxury is any more meaningful than playing. It is even highly probable that the desire for more than

years, and has become the official State doctrine in Russia. While it is as emphatic in its repudiation of commercial success as is the first category, it rejects it not from an elevated esthetic evaluation, but because it is counter-revolutionary; in fact, it tends to lump the artists of the first category with those who work for the market, since they are not particularly concerned about the fate of the masses.

Those artists whose rationalization falls in the first category are at least not necessarily prevented by it from following their own inclinations — although the very esoteric character of their approach tends to promote cliquism — and in some cases are able to create in almost complete freedom from pressure of an esthetic nature. The second category, however, naturally tends to dogmatism and rigidity — frequently exceeding the commercial standards in inflexibility and coerciveness.

The plight of the artist in capitalist society is thus far from enviable. If he is to practice his profession at all, he is faced by three almost equally unenticing alternatives: He can accept the values of the system and work with an eye to the market — which means that he must turn out the sort of work that is marketable, regardless of his personal taste or inclination. This kind of art is seldom more satisfying than any other job in a capitalist enterprise. Secondly, he can join the self-conscious esthetes, where he will at least be permitted a certain amount of freedom to follow his own bent, but at the price of being despised by the majority, economically insecure, and, to some extent subject to the dicta of cults. In the third place, he can put himself into the hands of the self-appointed art-commissars, and dedicate his art to the cause of the oppressed. This means, in practice, that he must conform to the judgments of the commissars and curb his impulses almost as if he were working for the market.

In none of these three categories is the artist really free. When he repudiates the socially accepted concept of his role, he is still influenced by it to the extent that he accepts the premise that his art is a form of useful work and as such must be measured by a more or less fixed standard of acceptability, and is tormented by the fear that his art will be found wanting by whatever critics whose judgment he respects. Only a relative handful of spontaneous artists, who give no thought to any standards but their own satisfaction, can be said to

the emphasis on status achievement frequently tends to speed up the process of social maturation until it is out of harmony with its physical basis, and rush the individual into adult status before he is really ready for it — thus giving rise to unnecessary anxieties and tensions. But when advancement in status is not directly a consequence of maturation, and where, as in most class societies, the achievement of adult status does not present the individual with a wider range of possible activity, but the reverse, its psychological consequences, are thoroughly deplorable.

For the lower levels of status in a class society, the amount of advancement possible is usually very little — practically speaking, the only certain way the unprivileged individual can advance himself in status is by growing up. In a class society, advancement in status is almost invariably one of the major preoccupations of the people, so the pressure on children, both internal and external, to relinquish their 'inferior' childlike ways and become adults is enormous, even when there is no immediate economic need for it.

Unfortunately, however, adult status in a class society permits greater scope for the individual's potentialities only in the realm of sexual adventures. In virtually every other respect, he is much more circumscribed than he was as a child, both by the pressure of economic necessity and that of social taboos. Especially on the lower levels of status, adulthood is defined in largely negative terms — the things one can no longer do without losing face are many, while the number of things he can now do that he was prevented from doing as a child is fairly negligible. He is free to take a job — in fact compelled to — but the possibility of exercising his faculties in his work is infinitesimal in comparison with the creative outlets that even a slum-child possesses, and he is strongly discouraged from doing anything creative when he is not working, by the fear of being considered childish.

The lower one goes in the social hierarchy, the earlier the age of social maturity manifests itself. On the bottom, where the ONLY social advance is from childhood to 'maturity', boys in their early teens are already scornful of childishness and arbitrarily limit their play to such 'adult' pastimes as smoking, drinking, gambling and fornicating.

In the higher levels of the hierarchy, the pressure on children to grow up is somewhat less intense. Childhood lasts somewhat longer, and the transition is more gradual, but the process is not remarkably different and the end-result is almost as limited and circumscribed.

The desire for play is considerably stronger than any efforts that can be made to destroy it by social pressure, but when it is prevented from manifesting itself naturally and spontaneously it tends to become furtive and twisted. Adult play, in a class society, except for the few fields which are denied to children — chiefly sex and the indulgence in strong drink — must disguise itself as useful work in order to be socially acceptable. In most pre-capitalist class societies, the arts are identified with religion; dancing, the plastic art, music and poetry all tend to become incorporated into the religious rituals of the society, and thus become worthy occupation for adults.

In capitalist society, since religion has declined in importance, other justifications must be found. For the majority of adults, virtually the only socially sanctioned form of play is attending spectacles. These are usually disguised as business transactions by charging admission; the performers, since they are paid for practising their art, are, according to the peculiar logic of capitalism, workers, and therefore responsible members of society — baseball players, band leaders and musicians, movie actors are all workers. Card-playing, which is one of the few other kinds of play that a 'responsible' adult may indulge in, must also be done for money, thus conveying the illusion that it is a form of business enterprise.

Under capitalism, work is broadly defined as any activity that can command a price on the market. It can be no more than time spent sitting around and doing nothing at all — not even watching or waiting for something to happen that requires attention. Thus, during the late war it was a not uncommon practice for factories working on government contracts to hire more men than they could use and pay the extra ones wages without giving them anything to do, since they were paid for their services to the government in proportion to the number of men they employed. These men, although conspicuously idle, were considered workers. They had to report for 'work' every day and remain on the premises until quitting time, just as if there was something for them to do. This is a rather

extreme example, but the same basic idea is present in all jobs under capitalism. The activity can be entirely meaningless, but it is work if it is paid for.

Under capitalism, therefore, art is considered work when it is saleable, either as a commodity — a painting, for instance — or as a skill. An artist who cannot sell his art is not considered a full adult, unless, as sometimes happens, he is retroactively converted into a worker by finding a market for his hitherto worthless products. This phenomenon is frequently to be observed in the fate of the paintings of a so-called primitive painter, who paints as a hobby, with no thought of the market — and is generally considered a crazy eccentric by his neighbors — then they chance to fall into the hands of a professional art dealer and are sold by him for fabulous prices.

Those artists whose art is not saleable, but who for one reason or another persist in it — refusing to acquiesce in the socially accepted definition of worker — are in a difficult position in the matter of status. They are, in the main, jeered at as childish, and since only a very strong person can withstand this kind of pressure without being affected by it in some way, most of them tend to work out various rationalizations for their art, which, while they rarely satisfy the more 'responsible' members of the community, at least afford the artists themselves a partial relief from feelings of guilt.

These rationalizations fall into two broad categories. Both of them are clearly derived from the association of art with religion in most pre-capitalist societies, but they have both been somewhat secularized, and they are bitterly antagonistic to each other.

The first category defines art in rather mystical terms, as an exalted profession, and considers the artist to be a sort of consecrated person, whose values and accomplishments are too refined to be appreciated by the vulgar, philistine majority. This group looks on commercial success as unworthy of the 'true' values of the artist, and to disparage those artists whose art is saleable — although they seldom refuse to sell their own, if and when an opportunity presents itself.

The other category considers the artist a sort of evangelist in the cause of the oppressed, whose function is to create propaganda for the revolution. Formerly confined to a handful of radical philosophers, this view has been coming into its own during the past twenty