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# UTOPIAN

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# The Utopian

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A Journal of Anti-Jacobin Opinion

October 1971

"Only those who lived before the revolution  
know how sweet life can be"

Talleyrand

## Notes Concerning Human Misunderstanding by Richard Harding

The semanticist and noted college administrator S. I. Hayakawa once devised an interesting concept, that of the identification response. He defined this as what happens when one hears a word, immediately associates it with something for or against which he has passionate feelings, and closes his mind to the possibility that it may mean something entirely different from what he ordinarily associates it with. One would encounter the archtypical identification response if he approached a member of the John Birch Society and described himself as a communist. It would never occur to the Birchite that he may be confronting a utopian communist of the Oneida Community type rather than a Stalinist or Maoist.

Now if someone at Bard were talking with a friend and described himself as a conservative he would experience similar difficulties. His friend would probably assume that he supports institutional racism, militarism and imperialism on the order of American policy in Vietnam, and the abrogation of existing civil liberties ostensibly in the name of law and order. After all, in America those who call themselves conservatives usually favor such policies. Therefore, one readily concludes, anyone who calls himself a conservative must favor these or similar policies.

Here one would be jumping to conclusions. Like the word communism, the

word conservatism has been applied to differing and sometimes overtly conflicting philosophies. In this and future issues of this journal readers will frequently encounter points of view that are readily classifiable as conservative. The point being stressed here is that one should not conclude that these viewpoints are at all favorable to the deplorable policies mentioned above.

Of course one might quite fairly ask why the term conservatism should be used at all, considering its usual negative connotations. The answer to this is quite simple and runs thusly: there are some people who respect and wish to see continued certain traditions of this culture. They see a continuity between past, present, and future in all political institutions, modes of thought and belief, social structures, and economic systems. And, most importantly, they perceive these phenomena as necessarily imperfect and timebound, that is, they arise, prosper for a while, decline, and then pass from the scene. With this point of view they are, of course, properly called conservatives according to the traditional usage of the term. One who is conservative in this sense could not fairly be called a liberal, for he does not believe that mankind is gradually progressing toward more and more perfect states of being. His reason for thinking thusly is that he regards the ideals envisioned by

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liberals as universal norms, such as representative democracy and the social service state, as ideas thought up by imperfect and limited minds and having a limited life in time. Neither could this type of conservative support Marxism, for he would deny that anyone could establish an eternal juste milieu by a heroic leap out of history.

Having thusly disposed of the left, he would have equally little time for the American right. He would oppose American policy in Vietnam because it consists of one country's imposing values and beliefs developed through its particular historical circumstances on another country with a vastly different way of looking at things. He would oppose the traditional American belief that business enterprise stands above the law and therefore has the right to deplete the environment as it sees fit, for he recognizes none of the eternal sanctity that private business often attributes to itself. He would see recent repressive measures enacted by Congress as infringing upon traditional civil liberties to serve the selfish ends of a few figures currently in power. Since he feels that no one ideology is eternally favored by God, history, or supposed natural law over all others, he would oppose the rigid anti-Communist foreign policy pursued by America, beginning with the Truman administration. And, since he sees racism as founded on the assumption that the customs and values of one race are eternally superior to those of another, he would be equally inhospitable to racism. In fact, he would question whether the American right can properly call itself conservative, for it is frequently willing to upset historical continuity and tradition on the basis of arbitrary prescriptions.

In contrast, the type of thinker expounded upon here, the classic conservative, believes in living and letting live within the familiar context of traditional usage. He feels that individuals and cultures develop along their own peculiar lines and that one must refrain from forcing them to conform

to abstract principles formulated out of the reverie of metaphysical passion. This is not to say that he excuses the failings of a given society at a given time. Rather, he seeks to accomplish the most possible with the traditions of the setting he finds himself in. This is the essence of classic conservatism. One finds its case eloquently stated by Edmund Burke in the western cultural tradition and Confucius in the eastern. It has, however, tragically few advocates today.

# # # # #

### Utopia

a modern fairy tale  
by Ira Toledo

Once upon a time there was a school named Drab College. It wasn't exactly enchanted or anything like that, but it was a pretty nice place just the same.

The teachers worked with genuine imagination and dedication, the students really concentrated on gaining knowledge and thinking about things beyond simplistic, narrow-minded levels. There was even free speech and freedom of the press, without fear of censorship or castigation. And everyone had respect and a little consideration for everyone else.

(cont.)

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But, as we all know, nothing lasts.  
Especially if it's good.

It wasn't a complete transition, but  
things did change.

The teachers still worked hard, but  
some of them became a little confused.  
They kind of forgot that they were teaching  
and decided that the students could learn  
just as much on their own. Why have  
teachers?

So all the students, or a lot of them  
anyway, started weaving baskets and plant-  
ing corn and building boats and all sorts  
of neat things for credit. They weren't  
interested in a load of academic bullshit,  
they wanted relevancy, man! Fuck Homer  
and Joyce, man, they're not relevant!

They spouted on and on about peace,  
pigs, pentagone and all that bullshit, and  
then went home to Westchester for the  
weekend. But they knew they were cool,  
'cause they spent most of their time telling  
each other how cool they were. They said,  
"Fuck capitalism!", but they sold dope and  
cigarettes and records, even if they didn't  
need the bread. But it was cool, 'cause  
they knew they were cool. And everybody  
stayed stoned, so everybody was happy.  
And nobody cared.

The only thing was, everybody talked  
like everybody else. And everyone thought  
like everyone else. Either you knew what  
was happening or you didn't. If anyone said  
anything different, everyone called him a  
pig or a racist or a male chauvinist pig.

Drab's alternate media project (news-  
paper) didn't censor anything, unless you  
used an obscene word like "chick."

And nobody gave a shit about anybody  
else, 'cause they were so worried about  
being relevant and valid and beautiful.

So in the end, they were as fucked  
up as everything they kept screaming they  
hated.

And everyone lived happily ever  
after.\*

\*Any resemblance between this story and  
persons or places living or dead, is  
purely coincidental.

MORAL: There are more horses asses,  
than there are horses.

# # # # #

Thoughts on a Non-Revolution  
or  
How to do Your Own Thing the Same  
Way Everyone Else is Doing It  
by Robert Morgen

A few years ago perceptive observers  
noticed a change in the styles of American  
mass culture. Short hair and crew cuts,  
popular for so long, started giving way to  
long hair. Beer parties were replaced by  
pot parties. Beards became popular again.  
This change of styles had occurred many  
times before and there was no reason to  
believe that the most recent example of  
this represented anything that was basic-  
ally new. Beards had previously been in  
favor and the Republic had not been  
threatened with ruin; without doubt the  
change in appearance could be assimilated  
this time around as well.

All of this, then, would seem to pre-  
sent very little of a problem. Yet for  
some time now we have been told that what  
is taking place is anything but superficial.  
On the contrary, it is supposed to be  
original and of profound consequence. It  
is wonderful to watch with what ease  
'culture' is being created. 'Youth culture,'  
'counter-culture,' 'alternative culture':  
certainly the terms flow copiously enough.  
Law professors turn up out of nowhere,  
and with rhetoric reminiscent of a Norman  
Vincent Peale declare that what young  
people are doing today is of greater moment  
than the French and Russian Revolutions.

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The view taken here is that these estimates are exaggerations to the point of absurdity. Nor is it being argued that the youth culture means that something bad is happening to America any more than it means that something good is happening; my point, indeed, is that it means nothing at all. The claims for this youth culture are familiar enough by now. It is asserted that young people are fed up by and have rejected the hypocrisy of their elders; that they, unlike the previous generation, not only preach great ideals but actually live up to them; that they are humanizing the dominant technology. Even those who make somewhat less sweeping claims in behalf of this movement argue, as if it has been conclusively proven, that members of the new culture have rejected materialism, the Establishment, and middle class values. It might thus be worthwhile to examine these things to see if dominant values really have been rejected.

No other claim is probably as widespread as the one about materialism. This immediately presents problems, since it is hard to define this term with any precision. Say a family with a yearly income of \$5000 would like to double that income. Perhaps this family is a large one and is not even being fed particularly well. Is this family materialistic for wanting to increase its financial resources? It would seem so, but nothing perjorative is implied. For is not one of the chief criticisms of the young the fact that we tolerate poverty? One of the salient points of contemporary American life, in fact, is that all material levels are excoriated. Affluence is damned as being materialistic while poverty is called demeaning. The argument can be raised that materialism comes into play when our hypothetical family is not satisfied with \$10,000 but wants to push it up to \$20,000 or \$30,000, in other words to the point where it can indulge in many unnecessary expenditures. This may be so, but it is nonetheless difficult to define what a reasonable material level is (the \$10,000

family probably thinks it is only getting by.) Somewhere in America there is a group of people that is cursed neither by poverty nor materialism, but nobody seems to know quite where to find it.

It is important, therefore, to note who it is that is condemning materialism and 'rebellling' against it. By general consent the youth culture is drawn from the ranks of the white middle class, and the upper middle class at that. Now if a millionaire's son, always used to luxury, did not possess the drive of his father, who was born in poverty, we would not see anything unusual in this. On a mass scale, however, this phenomenon has been hailed as a sign of a profound shift in values. Actually it is banal; children who never knew poverty or the slums do not possess a driving ambition to escape poverty and the slums. In other words, if poor working class children renounced material ambition it would signify a shift in values, whereas the renunciation of these ambitions by the affluent is virtually meaningless (unless, of course, these individuals were to renounce all advantages they possess in the process.) One is reminded of the pointed comment by the late Ogden Nash to the effect that people who say 'money isn't everything' are invariably those who have money, and who have no plans for relinquishing it, either.

While members of the youth culture do not possess the same quality of ambition as their fathers, namely the drive to get ahead, they do not reject the material advantages they do enjoy. The anti-Establishment stance of the youth culture is for the most part a patent fraud, as it represents a hypocrisy far greater than that which previously characterized the Establishment. It is not that behavior has become worse but rather that pretensions have grown by so much. At one time, students who attended expensive private schools made no attempt to pretend that they were not affluent. Their snobbery may have been intolerable, but they at

least did not try to play a false role. Today, on the contrary, it is commonplace to see students from privileged families attending the most expensive schools in the country and at the same time trying to pretend they are 'poor' through their manners and dress. The same posing, or moral posturing, as Robert Brustein has so aptly termed it, can be observed on the rock scene, surely a major exemplar of the youth culture. Whatever one may have thought of the huge material rewards that have usually gone to big-name stars, there at least was little pretension: aspiring stars were after success, including material success, and did not try to hide this fact. No attempt was made to be anti-Establishment. Today's 'anti-Establishment' rock stars will be found to be behaving in a manner that is Establishment indeed. Just as in the past, they are big names; they perform before large crowds; they play for huge fees. But they don't wear ties.

It is highly questionable if the youth culture has actually rejected middle class values. What has surely been discarded is middle class appearance, but this is a far cry from changing one's values. This confusion is helped along by much of the media, which is constantly mistaking superficial changes for basic ones. Seymour M. Lipset may clearly recognize that what we are going through has happened many times before, but Mr. Lipset is not on the bestseller lists. An example of our confusion is afforded by the inordinate attention that has been paid to hair length. It will be pointed out that a particular individual or group of individuals is now wearing their hair long; perhaps the spread of the hirsute appearance among 'conservative' kids is used to demonstrate how pervasive the counter-culture has become. What is vastly more important than the change in hair lengths, however, is the tenacity of conformity. The need to follow a particular image, as well as the desire to fall in with the dictates of the peer group, has in no way been lessened. Once again, we are dealing not with a change in ideas, but a change in styles.

Indeed, may we not say that the youth culture is simply a continuation of long term developments in middle class mass culture in America? There is the remarkable cult of youth, which has certainly been with us since the twenties; the decline in influence of parents and older relatives as figures to emulate and their replacement by the peer group; the continuing erosion of rootedness to a particular locality due to ever increasing mobility; the search for instant gratification (has not the youth culture, in fact, attempted at times to justify its own use of drugs by pointing to the previous generation's dependence on its drugs?). At other times, of course, the counter-culture has tried to show that it has introduced a new ethic in America that stresses immediate enjoyment, and that this is in contrast to the old 'Puritan' ethic. This 'Puritan' ethic, however, is a straw man. If a figure such as Calvin Coolidge occasionally came along who did exemplify these old virtues, it was almost immediately pointed out how he was in marked contrast to the dominant way of life.

The counter-culture, then, is seen to be materialistic, middle class, and conformist (of course materialism can attach itself to different things: stereo equipment, for instance, instead of kitchen appliances). As said previously, this writer does not mean to disparage current styles. Some rock music is very good music, and as a recent interview with Elton John demonstrated, one can enjoy making this kind of music without indulging in all kinds of political and ethical pretensions. Unfortunately, the new 'culture' has indulged in very great pretensions indeed; and these pretensions are fraudulent. Do I exaggerate this? Has not Mr. Reich, in an extraordinary mixture of naivete and arrogance, declared in effect that the goals that have eluded mankind for centuries are now suddenly being realized, in the late sixties and early seventies?

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Meanwhile, the change in styles goes on. It would not be surprising if the styles of the youth culture faded from the scene very quickly within the next few years, to be replaced by new tastes, fashions, and fads. The youth culture is unlikely to be the vanguard of a reorientation in American life. It has all the earmarks of what, a short generation hence, will be merely an interesting historical curiosity.

# # # # #

List of Proposed Courses  
Prepared by the  
Calvin Coolidge Society

Politics 487 - Revolutionary Consciousness of Rich Kids in Experimental Schools: Late 1971.

This course will be an in depth analysis of the alienation brought about by large spending allowances, instant gratification, and the thought of John Dewey. Emphasis will be on relevant historical readings as far back as 1969. Field trips to Darien, Scarsdale, and Shaker Heights will be highly encouraged. Prerequisite: A glassy eyed stare.

History 513 - History of Progress Since 1789

A comprehensive survey of advances in economics, politics, morals, and other fields. Material to be covered includes the rise of the Republic of Terror, Bonaparte and the beginning of 'modern' dictatorship, oppression of the laboring classes throughout Europe, the decline of craftsmanship and quality production, rise of democracy and lowering of standards, development of racism from Gobieneau to Hitler, economic depressions, social Darwinism and the robber barons, beginnings of secret police system, origin of conscription under liberal regimes, depredation of the environment, destructive total warfare, overkill, radiation and fallout, proliferation of demagogues and

mass movements, growth of urban slums, increasing 'uselessness' of the aged, anti-Semitism from the Dreyfus affair to the 'final solution', government surveillance from the Okhrana to Mitchell, decline of rural and small town life, aggressive imperialism from the late nineteenth century to the Truman Doctrine, emergence of bastions of freedom in Spain, Portugal, Greece, South Africa, Rhodesia, Thailand, South Vietnam, Taiwan, South Korea, growth of democracy in Latin American republics exemplified by Columbia's Rojas, Argentina's Peron and Ongania, Brazil's Vargas and Costa e Silva, Dominican Republic's Trujillo, Haiti's Duvalier, Venezuela's Perez Jimenez, Paraguay's Stroessner, Nicaragua's Somoza family, Cuba's Batista and Castro, Guatemala's United Fruit Company, Bolivia's Barrientos, rise of Jim Crow under Southern populism, gas and germ warfare, dropping of the atomic bomb and Truman's statement that he never lost a night of sleep over it, overpopulation, harmful chemicals and insecticides in food, slaughter of wildlife, growth in the number of displaced persons, manipulative mass media and advertising, alienation of artists and intellectuals and emergence of mindless intelligentsia, trench warfare and its cost in human lives, search and destroy operations as in My Lai, labor racketeering and syndicated crime, beginnings of yellow journalism, rising rate of mental illness, development of death camps under the Third Reich and Stalinist Russia, increasing ugliness of cities, rise of 'terrible simplifiers' and 'cheaper and cheaper absolutes' such as Marxism.

Metaphysics 808 - What is Truth?

An examination of the epistemological, ontological, and scatological elements encountered in the search for certainty. Readings will include the New Testament, Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, Calvin, Karl and Groucho Marx. Prerequisite: Permission of the Pope.



General Humanities 222 - Irrelevance

An intensive study of those topics that have little or no bearing on contemporary problems. Subjects covered are the existence of God, man and the state, the problem of good and evil, nature and purpose of law, the value of human life, the tragic view of man as expressed by the Greeks and Elizabethans, and the problem of free will and individual responsibility.

Passionate Intensity 415

A study in the process of forming rigid ideologies without sufficient prior knowledge. Areas to be covered include propaganda, third rate textbooks, ax grinding, shouting down opponents, adolescent gregarious mob instinct, and others. Students will be expected to put these tools to direct use.  
Prerequisite: Narrowmindedness.