

ISN'T EVERYTHING

BY EDWARD T. CHASE

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A REVOLUTIONARY shift from economic values to noneconomic values in our decision-making has been quietly taking place since the war. Most Americans still care mightily about money, to be sure, but a different perspective is observable. To an unprecedented degree, things are being decided on nonmonetary criteria, extending from the individual's choice of a career to such matters as the public's support of preserving open land.

Since economic theory proceeds on the premise that all except frivolous motivations are at bottom pecuniary, it is only natural that economists are mute on this point. Yet no discussion of the role of money in American life can ignore this very important development. Furthermore, the new appreciation of noneconomic values is the key to many of our political differences; to misunderstandings between the older generations and the new one; to the heightened tension between the businessman and the intellectual, including the contempt for Madison Avenue; and to the rise of the paperback, of the off-Broadway theater, of the art movie house.

An understanding of this revolution in values is of great consequence if we expect to comprehend not only the changing role of money in American life but also the strange new mixed economy that is replacing classical capitalism. Two underlying factors have created the possibilities of this revolution. The first factor is economic. A review of economic data on labor and productivity reveals

striking changes within the past century. For example, within the lifetime of some of us, the average work week in the United States was 69 hours. Today it is about 35 hours, and union electricians in New York City have just negotiated a new contract providing for a 25-hour week. The significance of these facts, which is not ordinarily discussed by professional economists, is that they are a prerequisite for the rising importance of noneconomic values.

No matter from what quarter you advance upon these statistics, they tell you the same thing: the imperative to toil for mere subsistence has suddenly lost steam. For the United States, at least, the battle has been largely won. In the jargon of professional economics, the shorter work week means a decline in the marginal urgency of goods.

A decline in the marginal urgency of goods, with its consequences of an abbreviated work week and labor force (our population of the nonproductive — that is, the retired elderly and the young in training — is the largest in history) means at the very least that a young man today need not, as in past ages, be limited to a struggle for survival, nor even that he must feel compelled to embrace some conventional moneymaking career if he wishes to enjoy standard creature comforts. He has more choices of how to occupy himself than man has ever enjoyed before. So much is plain.

However, it does not follow that his choices will

necessarily have a less economic character than heretofore. For this to be so, he must not only be free of excessive pressure to earn a buck; he must also be conditioned to make noneconomic choices (joining the Peace Corps, for example) by ideas, by his notions of what is worth doing. The second prerequisite for any general ascendancy of noneconomic values is mass education.

Social scientists refer to the educational changes in America in the last fifty years as one of the world's great social revolutions. In 1900 only one person in fifty stayed in school beyond the age of fifteen; now, thirty out of fifty finish high school. The percentage of the population aged eighteen to twenty-one enrolled in college nearly doubled between 1910 and 1920. The illiteracy rate in the population fell off about half between 1890 and 1910. The number of graduate students in U.S. colleges tripled between 1900 and 1920, tripled again in the 1930s, and more than doubled during each of the succeeding decades. We are now experiencing the combined impact of these two forces: the coming of age of a generation of the relatively well educated — the result of our unique mission of free public education for all; and our simultaneous liberation from toil through the triumph in economic productivity.

THE CULTURAL BOOM

The more obvious effects of this development are already dramatic. Take American post-war cultural and leisure-time pursuits, now for the first time within reach of a substantial majority of Americans. The cultural kick Americans have set off on since the war is astonishing, no matter how much you may like or dislike it. (It is *de rigueur* for intellectuals to dislike it, but since there is no corresponding diminution of high culture, they should not be so dismayed by mass culture.) The amount of money spent is all but incredible. A recent *Fortune* survey estimates that in 1961 Americans spent \$5 billion on culture, 70 percent more than they did only ten years ago, while the population increased only 18.5 percent. This cultural explosion engages the public across all geographical and economic lines and involves every form of cultural activity.

Because of the didactic, information-spreading nature of literature (as opposed to an art form like the dance), the book boom is an especially significant aspect of the cultural explosion, since, by itself, the immense increase in reading is transforming the general level of sophistication. Consider these facts. In 1961 Americans spent twice as much for books as they did in 1955, some \$1.2 billion, an extraordinary development no one predicted a decade ago. The American Library Asso-

ciation reports that book circulation nationally has increased 29 percent in the last five years, with the emphasis upon serious nonfiction. Sixty percent of the librarians surveyed attributed the reading boom to the "increased educational level" of the reader.

Significantly, many librarians reported that television, once considered the arch-villain, has been the prime spur to reading, with its promotion of new books and classics and its public-affairs programs. Book publishers, on the other hand, ungraciously claim that adults are increasingly abandoning television for reading, according to a *Wall Street Journal* survey, and ascribe the boom in book sales to the phenomenal rise in educational and cultural standards.

Attracted by the boom, more new book publishers are entering the field than ever before, with some twenty new firms having come into the paperback field alone since 1958. The sale of quality paperbacks totaled 13 million copies in 1960, eight times the number sold in 1952 and about a third more than in the preceding year. With college enrollments expected to rise more than 25 percent in the next three years, the incentives to publish are being intensified. Fat profits are predicted from textbooks and high-class paperbacks particularly. Thus, we are seeing magazine publishers like Time Inc., Macfadden Publications, Inc., and the McCall Corporation either already embarked on or about to embark on book publishing. At the same time, the distribution of books is being revolutionized, too. Supermarkets have become a recognized outlet.

The book and reading boom is matched by mass participation in the museums, which are making new records in attendance and winning greater financial support. In 1960 the number of art museums alone in the United States had grown to 630 (out of a grand total of 3900 of all types), and Americans spent just under \$300 million to run them. A recent study by the New York *Times* carried revealing quotations from museum leaders about the sudden interest in the museum world. The operating administrator of the great Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, James V. Noble, stated, "A cultural renaissance is occurring in this country, there is no question about it."

The fact that thirty years ago there were only twelve museums in the United States for each million of population, while today there are twenty-two for each million, strongly supports the renaissance thesis. Meantime, the sudden wave of building immense new cultural institutions, like Lincoln Center in New York, Los Angeles' \$24 million Music Center, Saint Paul's new arts and science museum, and the Wayne State University

cultural center in Detroit, is ensuring that new generations will not be culturally deprived.

The *Fortune* survey shows that in 1960 Americans spent \$200 million to buy pictures or the materials to create them; \$90 million for classical-music recordings, including 25 million long-playing discs, or a 78 percent increase over the figure of just three years ago; \$590 million for musical instruments; \$26 million to operate symphony orchestras; \$375 million for theater, opera, and concert seats.

Even more significant is the sudden advent of the off-Broadway serious and experimental theater, mushrooming in the post-war era from none to the present 32 houses; the similar flowering of art movie houses, from a handful in the 1940s to some 500 now, during a period when movie attendance overall dropped from 60 million weekly to 40 million. Note, as well, the sudden growth of FM radio, the sprouting of foundations in support of education and culture, and that new campus figure, the resident writer and composer.

The threatened cancellation of the Metropolitan Opera's season was a most instructive episode. The acclaim accorded Labor Secretary Arthur Goldberg for resolving the Met's labor problem last winter emboldened him to urge direct government subsidy of the arts. This notion, hitherto alien to Americans, has come to have widespread popular as well as Administration support. The interesting aspect of Goldberg's remarkable statement is his stress upon culture as so essential a part of democratic society as to justify large-scale federal aid. Referring to the performing arts, Goldberg said they are experiencing "a growth so rapid, so tumultuous, so eventful as to be universally described as an explosion. The specifics have no parallel in history. America today has some 5,000 community theatres — more theatres than radio and television stations. There are better than 500 opera-producing groups — seven times as many as fifteen years ago. Symphony orchestras now total 1,100 — twice as many as only ten years ago. . . . An area of unequaled achievement may well be upon us."

Though mass affected intellectuals are appalled at the mass character of this culture, judging it to be a vulgarization, which much of it unquestionably is, nevertheless, this spate of cultural pursuits is primary evidence of the diminishing dominance of moneymaking as the tyrannical absorber of our time and energy.

THE NEW IDIOM OF SUCCESS

There is more subtle evidence of the change in our sense of values than the cultural boom. Much more pertinent, for example, is how the style-

setting, opinion-making segment of the best-educated Americans is judging the ingredients of success. In the past, material success has traditionally been considered a sign of election in our dominant old Puritan Calvinist tradition. Today the sign of election is membership in the new elite, those who have intrinsically important work they enjoy, those for whom, in philosopher John Dewey's phrase, "earning one's living is at the same time living one's life." This is the newest idiom of success in America. In ever-increasing numbers, educated people are finding their primary concern and identification through their jobs, rather than through the incomes the jobs return.

All of us can cite supporting instances from personal experience: the man who takes a lower-paying job of four days so that on the fifth day he can pursue his personal research; the art connoisseur who takes a modestly paid job as assistant curator so as to be near paintings; the top graduates wooed en masse by commercial interests who instead choose obscure research fellowships, a stint as forest ranger, work in a settlement house, or the penury of being an assistant to the assistant editor on a serious periodical.

The Peace Corps is a phenomenon that deserves very close scrutiny. The volume of 16,000 applications to date is extraordinary in itself. But the public support for the project is even more significant. So impressive has been the response, in fact, that plans are afoot in Washington for a domestic counterpart, an Urban Peace Corps, to strengthen some of the essential public services so desperately undernourished in our asphalt jungles.

This rise in noneconomic values reflects a rejection of the traditional system of rewards and bears the clear implication that monetary rewards have been too often unsustaining and even corrupting. Involved here is a revolt against the market system of free enterprise itself. For the market system, whose very successes have created the possibilities of an indulgence in noneconomic values, has been tyrannical in confining its rewards to those most fully absorbed with moneymaking. But today, as money weakens as an index of status and prestige, we are witnessing a revolt in which there are new heroes and new villains.

Robert Brustein writes perceptively of the "Madison Avenue villain" as the new symbolic figure, the type most widely and venomously rejected in the flood of self-critical American literature. One is reminded of Montesquieu's observation, at the onset of the Industrial Revolution whose fruits are now liberating us, that "It is the nature of commerce to make the superfluous useful." The heart of the contempt for the Madison Avenue type is his superfluity. His life, as Brustein remarks, is selling something that he did

not create and that people do not need. In short, Madison Avenue symbolizes the exact opposite of the new hero, the person who solves the peculiarly American problem of making meaningful use of time and finds self-fulfillment in his work. The successful man today is the one whom the intelligentsia define as the unalienated man. In the words of Sidney Hook, "the unalienated man is the creative man, any man engaged in significant or meaningful work voluntarily assumed as a means toward self-realization." If this is the new ideal which our affluence has made a practical possibility, then it is inevitable that the drive to make money becomes secondary.

The extraordinarily widespread deprecation heaped upon Madison Avenue from every quarter can be seen as an expression of the newly ascendant status of noneconomic values in various ways. For example, since the role of advertising is to guide the individual as a consumer, a contempt for advertising carries with it the rejection of consumption as a worthy end in itself, a rejection of the primacy of materialistic values. It is my belief that in fact we in the United States are evolving beyond what J. K. Galbraith calls the "consumption society" — one that has mastered the problems of production — and are approaching a new order of society, the society of self-realization. This is a notch up the ladder from sheer consumption for its own sake or for the sake of maintaining full employment. In this higher society of self-realization whose outlines we are just perceiving, the effort to get meaningful work will be the paramount concern.

One of the dismaying developments of our time is the widespread incidence of juvenile delinquency. And a number of recent studies (*Growing Up Absurd* by Paul Goodman; *Delinquency and Opportunity* by Cloward and Ohlin; *Slums and Suburbs* by James B. Conant; *The Insecure Offenders* by T. R. Fyvel), by remarkable coincidence, all come out almost simultaneously with this finding: not lack of money but lack of jobs, of work with any meaning, is the bedeviling factor behind most of the delinquent behavior among adolescents. Affluence has not been enough, these studies show. The deprivation triggering delinquency has been a deprivation in noneconomic values, such as the sense of function and status, and the prestige that comes from having work of some significance. Hence, we see delinquency extend beyond the slum to the middle-class suburb, where money is not a problem.

Finally, we are increasingly encountering a shift to noneconomic values in our collective as well as our personal judgments. For example, there is a movement that has attracted wide public support across the nation to preserve open land. Rural and

wilderness land is being acquired both by outright state purchase or by an ingenious leasing arrangement with private owners strictly for the sake of leaving land as it is, undeveloped and unexploited by commerce. Also, our planners are appealing, with increasing success, for the public to give precedence to noneconomic criteria in planning the major determinants of our environment, like urban renewal, highways, and airports.

Money isn't everything, and we are finding society acting on this radical premise in any number of ways. Harvard economist Alvin H. Hansen proposes in fact that Congress create a Council of Social Values comparable to the Council of Economic Advisers. The President, with the council's assistance, would report annually on our cultural gains and losses. He would be required to set forth goals for the coming year, review the progress or lack of progress in the year past, and propose necessary programs and policies. It is, says Hansen, "high time that we devote in our State of the Union message some attention to the cultural needs of an advanced society."

A wonderful paradox enters into this. The degree to which a society turns away from the immediacy of moneymaking to the cultivation of the resources of the mind and spirit substantially determines its ultimate economic growth. This is a new concept in economics that has been proved statistically only in the past several years. It was originally the brainchild principally of Arthur Burns of the National Bureau of Economic Research and of Chicago University's Milton Friedman. Now it enjoys the support of nearly all the younger economists.

It means that investment in physical capital, like factories and machinery, is less important to economic growth than investment in brains — in education, invention, research, professional skills, culture, technology. Dr. Walter Heller, the chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, in his tour of the nation during the recent White House Regional Conferences emphasized at each conference that such investment in intangible human capital has accounted for over half of our economic growth in the twentieth century. The very subordination of moneymaking per se to concern about the quality of living in our emerging society of self-realization can beget wealth to an extent we have hardly contemplated.

Such a society, educated, self-aware, and free from overriding absorption with the pecuniary, is really the goal of democracy. Properly conceived, the end of democracy is the freedom and the capacity for self-fulfillment. This must be the commitment of all of us. In this light, the changing role of money in American life signifies a turning point in our history.