# THE PROBLEM OF CIVILIZATION

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WE SHALL examine in the following order: (1) the concept of civilization, (2) the generic problem of civilization, (3) a solution which becomes ever more clear and coercive as our knowledge about human societies increases, and (4) two root needs in man which suggest that this solution to the problem of civilization will satisfy man's deepest needs and go far to solve the problem that each individual is to himself.

## I

The term "civilization" has been used in a variety of ways, seldom with precision and rarely in ways that meet broad response, ever since it became current in the middle of the eighteenth century. It has been used rather loosely to refer to any social organization or to a growth of arts and sciences, or it has been counterposed to barbarism without further definition. It is used by Toynbee as a methodological device, each civilization being "the smallest unit of historical study at which one arrives when one tries to understand the history of one's own country: the United States, say, or the United Kingdom."[1]

Some definitions consist entirely of metaphor. For Spengler, civilizations are organic unities, not otherwise specified, passing through cycles of growth, maturity, and decay. They manifest, successively, the greening shoots of spring, the vigorous warmth of the creative summer, the maturity of autumnal wisdom, and the cold gloom of a disintegrative winter. Out of other specializations and preoccupations, philosophers have sometimes tried to establish the "essence" of civilization in man's mental life, Hegel going so far in this direction as to equate the unfolding of the Absolute Idea with the process of civilization. Some students, Rostovtzeff, for example, find the locus of civilization in the upper classes, as is clearly implied in the questions with which his study of Rome closes: "Is it possible to extend a higher civilization to the lower classes without debasing its standard and diluting its quality to the vanishing point? Is not every civilization bound to decay as soon as it begins to penetrate the masses?"[2] Nothing could display more vividly the wide variation of linguistic usage in the field than to compare Rostovtzeff's notion with that of C. E. Ayres, who, with the precision achieved by undue truncation, defines civilization as "the continuity of tools," the technological life-stream of mankind.[3] It is evident from this small sampling that the concept of civilization has still to be favored with those common and distinctive elements that circumscribe an empirical reality with care.

Our attempt here to define the concept will seek to reduce what is most essential in civilization to its clearest and simplest terms. Numerous sciences are presently contributing new insights and sharpening our understanding to a degree that invites the present effort. The following definition, we suggest, identifies the crucial phenomena involved, defines the concept in ways that clarify rather

than ignore current usage, and, consequently, should help to establish the study of civilization on a co-operative and fruitful basis.

We suggest that the concept of "civilization" means the progressive diversification and interweaving of relationships joining individual human beings with one another and with the rest of nature. Civilization is not something that *does* this to men; a series of such transformations *constitutes* the process of civilization. To the extent that these transformations are unobstructed by the conditions under which men live—under whatever sun, constitution, racial inheritance, cultural peculiarities, ethical codes, or class alignments—civilization flourishes. Wherever this process is faltering, there civilization is becoming static and commencing to decline and disintegrate.

The implications of our definition are easily elaborated. Analyzed in greater detail, the concept of civilization refers to the following events: (1) a growth in the sensitivities of the individual person; (2) exercising and maturing of new capabilities of the individual; (3) increasing self-awareness; (4) growing effectiveness of the individual as a source of social change; (5) broadening diffusion, interweaving, and communication of each individual's sensitivities and responses with the thought and action of others; (6) increasing interdependence between men; and (7) increasing assimilation of nonhuman nature into the expanding relation-manifold binding men together. These are the crucial characteristics of the process of civilization. That the seven happenings are not merely formal and arbitrary, but identify concrete events occurring all the time in every civilization, can be demonstrated by anyone possessing the requisite detailed information regarding any particular unit of historical study. The events gradually disappearing during a period of decline will be found to be the ones to which our concept refers; and, when civilizations are in a state of vigor, these events are occurring with noticeable frequency. This definition sharpens the distinction between higher and lower civilizations and between civilization and barbarism. As men singly and in social constellations are transformed in these respects, they extend the scope and enrich the content of their literature, their art, their science, ethical ideals, technologies, political techniques, and religion. They transmit to the oncoming generations the qualitative meaning, the power, the loyalties, and the forms that have accumulated, with whatever modification may be required to meet changing conditions.

## II

Civilization, from whatever point of view it is approached, presents men with problems for which their biological inheritance finds them unprepared. The definition suggested above, however, gives to the phenomena under discussion a certain structure that helps us to identify the basic problem of civilization and extricate our thought from relatively unimportant considerations. This is the problem of promoting the growth of individual men in mutually compatible rather than divisive and mutually destructive directions, as regards the impulses and attitudes of the individual, the relationships between men, and the relationships between men and the rest of nature. This problem is implicit in the very nature of the process of civilization. As soon as the first simple differentiations appear in neolithic societies, this problem commences to badger men thousands of years before they are prepared

to understand their problem. This can be inferred from the forms in which they have sought to encompass their growth.

Through the long centuries separating us from neolithic societies, history presents us with one important attempt after another to promote human growth in mutually compatible directions. All these attempts testify abundantly to the creativity of the human species and to the dispersion of creative responses in the broad masses of human beings. It would burden our analysis intolerably to mention more than a few of these efforts to restore equilibrium. Linguistic communication was in no small degree a response to felt dangers of differentiation and interpersonal conflict. But the ability of language to foster equilibrium and compatibility was hampered as long as people lived in primitive hunting bands which were forced to break up as soon as an increase in numbers threatened the balance between consumption and an available food supply. Under such conditions a common language was impossible, the natural growth of language generating numerous more or less distinct dialects. Several generations in the life of a group isolated by the precarious conditions of a hunting, fishing, or gathering culture were sufficient to place numerous disparate patterns of thought and action before the development of civilization. Each developing in an isolation that might be broken by occasional trade or war, these disparate lines of development help to explain why man lived on earth so many thousands of generations before the process of civilization showed any marked acceleration. The development of a permanent food supply through agriculture was probably even more important than language at this early stage for solving the problem under discussion.

The first instances of imbalance and disparity between various lines of human development were undoubtedly restored by resources ready to hand in the form of physical prowess and sexual potencies. The first institutionalized forms of thought and action, indeed, are unique just because they support very closely the basic biological strivings for food, shelter, and sex. The initial co-ordinating thought systems probably could not have survived if they had sought to discredit and penalize man's animal drives. Life was on a far too precarious level. Thousands of years had to pass before men could meet encroaching incompatibility and felt imbalance by submitting their lines of disparate growth into the keeping of patterns that ran counter to those primeval instinctive drives that nurtured man in the beginning. This fact is reinforced when we remember that none of the great world religions has yet survived as long as did the fertility cult.

The most dramatic later attempts that proved eminently successful in solving temporarily the generic problem of civilization were (1) the rise of great empires claiming governance over the entire known world, (2) the development of monotheism in very many forms (Taoism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity), and (3) universal concepts that sought to bring action under control of thought, and thought under control of some unitary, eternal Truth. The development of modern science and the world-wide response that it enjoys testify to the existence of a deep and pervasive feeling that these three innovations are unable to cope with change in its accelerated modern pace. But all four of these patterns are efforts men have made to solve the problem under discussion here while yet oblivious to its real nature. With respect to the three innovations of ancient civilizations mentioned above, Whyte ob-

serves that all three appeared very soon before or after 1000 B.C.

> The processes which organized human behavior had, it seems, been ready for a swift reorganization; the human pattern had become unstable and now settled rapidly into a new shape. . . . In the ancient civilizations thought and social organization had attained a degree of differentiation which had not yet been compensated by the development of correspondingly extensive co-ordinating ideas. Thus, wherever the traditions of these civilizations were called in question there arose the opportunity and the need for a co-ordination of the new complexity of life and thought within a single comprehensive system.[4]

Change is endemic in human living, and by far most of the change stems from man himself. Given a chance, man tends to explore his individuality and to exercise whatever potentialities he finds there. This endless seeking for new increments of value in experience, to use Hadley Cantril's phrase, has always operated to unsettle every equilibrium, rendering obsolete in the end every stabilizing form. This is why the only forms to which men have been able to acquiesce for long, in both their intellectual and social behavior, have been abstract and general forms resting loosely upon individual and group and permitting a large measure of deviation and development. This is also why every form, whether intellectual or social, must perish in the end under the impact of man's own historical change.

The generic problem of civilization may be illustrated in more detail with reference to the disintegration of the Roman Empire. The decline of the empire was brought about by failure to promote the growth of men in mutually compatible directions. Originally a creative effort to amalgamate dozens of aboriginal cultures into a unity facilitating creative interchange between men, the empire advertised its failure as a civilizing agency and reality when, as early as the last part of the first century A.D., different lines of social development manifested their inability to appreciate one another.

The army of the empire, at first an important instrument of intercommunication between various parts of the world, became alienated from the rest of the population. The peasant and small farmer, originally the source of Rome's great armies, disappeared from the land as great latifundia tilled by slaves became the typical form of landownership and control. Proletarians huddled together in cities, forced to depend upon either the charity of the emperor or wages kept at subsistence level through competition with slave labor, proved of rebellious spirit. As early as the end of the civil war of 69–70, Vespasian ceased recruiting the army from the youth of Italy, fearing this rebellious spirit. Formal rebellions in Sicily and Gaul showed this fear to be well founded. At any rate, by the end of the third century A.D. the army no longer represented the broad population of the empire but was a mercenary army drawn from the least civilized parts of the empire. The army as one line of social development had become increasingly sealed off from mutual interchange with the rest of this civilization.

Racial traditions, at first placed in juxtaposition with considerable success, grew increasingly intolerant of each other. Increasingly the racial stocks of the eastern Mediterranean followed their own line of development until, with the aid of the barbarian attack upon the West, they were able to capture political control of an abbreviated empire and become the heir to the Greco-Roman world. Christianity, a religion that had been given its initial form by Eastern races,

was probably the only important social pattern that succeeded in directing growth in mutually compatible lines. But even this success was qualified by Coptic, Nestorian, and other schisms and was damaged much more gravely when, partly because of the very racial hostilities here indicated, the Eastern races came forth with Islam as a final notice of the abiding alienation between the Eastern and the Western lines of biological inheritance.[5] The Greek Orthodox church, as well, was in large degree engendered by a continuing alienation between the races. The empire had failed as an instrument of civilization.

The failure of the Roman Empire in its efforts to solve the problem under discussion is illustrated in the progressive alienation of one social group from another, particularly from the closing years of the first century A.D. The imperial court and bureaucracy, with some exceptions such as in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, gradually adopted a line of development that alienated the government from the people. The political bureaucracy became isolated psychologically, socially, and economically, as well as politically, from the people they sought to govern. The emperor became the largest single landowner. His fear of revolt led him to plunder mercilessly the traditional Roman senatorial families, whose lands he frequently expropriated. His interests became progressively at variance with the interests and needs of the people. In the economic province, too, one social group became increasingly alienated from another, especially after the reign of Augustus. Agricultural and industrial property became rapidly concentrated in the hands of a few city bourgeoisie who used slave labor in both factory and farm. The small farmer, once filling the wide gulf between upper and lower classes, was driven out of a functional role, unless one wishes to call the largely unemployed city proletariat a functioning social group.

It is difficult to arrive at a conclusion more heavily documented in history than this: A breakdown of social interaction and communication between one individual or social group and another, instead of bringing the development of either group to a halt, usually only insures that the lines of growth will diverge progressively from one another to engender misunderstanding, hostility, and conflict. This is certainly evidenced by the class structure of the late empire. After several generations of this disparity in growth, no imperial edict was capable of making the lines converge in the direction of mutual understanding. Lines of development followed by one social group in disregard of others finally robbed the empire of its cohesion.

The barbarian invasion in Rome's days of power might have been met by all the people along one common emotional and ideological front. Rome's failure to meet the problem of barbarians at the border was but one major failure following on the heels of many others. The political problem had not been solved, as witnessed by the alienation between the ruling bureaucracy and the people. The racial problem had not been solved, as witnessed by the progressive hostility between East and West. The military problem had not been solved, as witnessed by the alienation of the army from the people it nominally represented. The economic problem had not been solved, as one can demonstrate by the gradual breakdown of economic unity and, finally, the passage from interdependence into self-sufficiency of relatively small units as the fourth century wore on. The increased production that might have en-

abled the empire to support its unproductive classes was a problem which, like all the rest, was viewed in different and even conflicting frames of reference. The progressive impoverishment of the soil is in large degree another result of the lack of understanding between social groups immediately connected with the soil. Irrigation, drainage systems, and fertilization were not matters on which expert knowledge was lacking, but action was not forthcoming. The labor-saving machinery which might have given the increased productivity Rome required lacked the stimulus that might have brought it into existence. The great army of unemployed, the slave operators, the bourgeoisie, and the ruling bureaucracy tended to view all these problems in mutually hostile frameworks, and lines of disparate development had matured too far to permit a modification of their contradictions. By the end of the fourth century there was no common ground. In the midst of internal disintegration, which evidenced its failure as a civilizing process, the Empire fell apart.

A detailed analysis of any other civilization will probably show with equal force that the "decline and fall" of a particular unit of civilization is but the saturation point as regards disparate lines of growth. Civilization flourishes only in proportion as individuals and social groups so live that they assimilate the viewpoints of one another and develop an appreciative understanding of each other's needs. Whenever a group separates itself from others and begins to develop a framework of preoccupations peculiar to its own separate way of life, the very foundation of civilization is under threat. Developing the tendencies implicit in its own particular way of life, the group's patterns of thought and action become progressively irrelevant to people engaged in other modes of life-activity. In so far as this group insists upon being effective in the culture as a whole, the need grows ever more coercive to persuade others to accept what presents itself to the latter as an irrelevant system of behavior. The monastic line of development in the Middle Ages illustrates this proposition very clearly. Since people outside the monastic orders display tendencies to reject the accumulating monastic doctrines, materials are sought with which to explain this rejection both to the clerical order and to the secular world as a whole. Rejection of the "revealed doctrine" is explained in terms of man's propensity for evil, of his incompleteness and corruption of thought, of the unsuitability of language to convey the Truth, of the crippled conditions of the human mind with respect to apprehending Truth, and of the propensity of man to rebel against the Truth. When these explanations fail to convince, opposition is taken as the indication that more stringent measures are needed. Theories of divine inspiration are brought into the struggle, and claims for an inerrant and divinely instituted clerical hierarchy bring up the rear guard. Over the whole effort resound the threats of excommunication and eternal damnation. Medieval monasticism, modern economic and political bureaucracies, and proletarians living in a completely tangential manner with reference to the wider scheme of things, all bear the earmarks of those disparate movements that witness a civilization's decline. The Protestant Reformation helped immeasurably to invigorate European civilization when it abolished the monastic order and placed every individual on an equal footing before God. This solved the problem of civilization only temporarily, however, since the disparities implicit in the in-

herited monastic ideology took root in every individual soul and posed the problem that modern civilization must face—the problem of an integrative organization of life that promotes the progressive release of every individual from his own inner disequilibrium.

The problem we are discussing becomes progressively more serious as civilization develops more complex forms of life. This is true for four very important reasons. In the first place, civilization generates power. In the hands of disparate social groups, this power becomes an ever more ominous issue. Power can be used for evil or for good, that is to say, either to support the specific ways of individual or group at the expense of other people or to promote growth along mutually compatible lines of growth. With the discovery of atomic fission, this power assumes the role of a gigantic neon sign spread across the heavens, warning men that traditional modes of solving civilization's generic problem must be supported by more creative solutions than men have yet discerned if the human experiment is not to prove a failure. Second, the more diversified the lines of interest and need-satisfying behavior, the greater the suffering attending personal and social disintegration. The possibilities for intense suffering, therefore, increase in something like geometric proportions as civilization proceeds. People whose patterned lives have grown accustomed to a many-sided manifold of meaningful activities experience far more personal upheaval during a period of social breakdown than people on less complex levels of life. The possibility for frustration and suffering is proportionate in magnitude to the number of diversified cultural activities in which people are actively engaged. Third, social change accelerates as civilization proceeds, since each individual becomes increasingly an effective source of change. This accelerating change proves to be an intolerable burden upon every instrumentality men have thus far employed in directing their civilization. Finally, the growing interdependence among men provides the context in which every dislocation sends a reverberating shock throughout the entire manifold of relationships. Every single occasion of contradictory modes of life becomes a threat to the equilibrium of the entire functioning system. For these reasons in particular, the problem we have been discussing becomes ever more coercive as a civilization passes successfully through other relatively minor barriers. At some point not yet discernible, every civilization must confront as an utter necessity the problem of directing the growth of individual men in mutually compatible, rather than divisive and mutually destructive, directions, as regards both the impulses and attitudes of the individual and the relationships between men.

It should be observed in this respect that, just as men become increasingly self-conscious with reference to the nature of their own individuality, so they become increasingly self-conscious with reference to the nature of civilization. This kind of self-awareness has increased vastly during the last fifty years. The rate of this increase, moreover, appears to accelerate each year. Like our self-awareness in relation to dread diseases and criminality, this appreciation and self-appraisal as a civilization appears to be growing by leaps and bounds. No earlier civilization ever became alert to the presence of decay so quickly as has our own. Rome slept on for two or three centuries after the initial steps toward her own decline had been taken, and she simply could not see until almost the

brink of her demise the oncoming avalanche of defeat. She considered herself eternal. Policies intended to stem the tide of Rome's disintegration present the sympathetic reader with a dramatic spectacle in which the best minds of the day were intensely applying patches in the dark. Our own civilization, on the other hand, despite the faster pace at which events now sweep forward, is all about us becoming alert to the danger in our predicament. This alertness is by no means traceable entirely to the ominous threat of the atom bomb, since studies in economic history or in the incidence of mental ailments trace back at least to the close of World War I the growing sense among a people that its major processes and premises of life were under serious threat. This growing self-awareness has been submerged only briefly and superficially ever since. It is entirely possible that ours may become the first civilization to make the discovery which enables the civilizing process to avoid the the precipice that has lain athwart the path of the great civilizations of the world. Ours may fan this self-awareness into a solution that need never become obsolete because it solves civilization's generic problem.

## III

No political institution, no constitution or ethical ideal, can cope with the problem described above. The most creative and historically appropriate generalizations of thought fail because concepts are notoriously static, perhaps intrinsically so, and they depend upon a concrete social process for both their interpretation and their concrete application. Social institutions seem likewise incapable of being stripped of their inveterate tendencies to resist the social change that is now accelerating. Both concepts and social institutions, unless they are continually transformed in ways that keep them historically relevant, become dangerously divisive, aggravating the problem that must be solved. Moreover, the question of what change will keep ideas and institutions "historically relevant" and which relevancies will prove mutually destructive are matters left completely unresolved. These are the basic points at issue.

When civilization and its generic problem are analyzed as suggested above, a solution appears to have been emerging ever more fully and convincingly in the human mind. Centuries of developing self-consciousness, in the sense of self-discovery and self-knowledge, have been pushing this solution into clarity. It is the location of a process operative within the very stream of civilization, with reference to which our patterns of thought and our social institutions might be given safe and creative direction. When diseases threaten our physical health, we are driven to learn about the progress of the disease in relation to the processes that maintain vital health. In the process of civilization, too, we must learn to identify, to feel, and to serve a process promoting growth in mutually compatible directions and protecting the civilizing process against its enemies of mutual annihilation and destruction. Obviously, this unitary direction of life must not penalize or attempt to obstruct the diversification of the individual's powers, and it must not attempt to combat either social change or the accumulation of social power, since these factors constitute a large part of the civilizing process itself.

The sort of process that we must learn to discriminate in the events transpiring daily about us is suggested by L. L. Whyte. "The organizing processes of a

healthy organism ensure that its behavior is such as to facilitate its own development. The fact that man has been able to civilize himself shows that some such self-regulating development has in the main dominated the history of the species."[6] This process, however, must be given clearer form and more specific concrete reference than the author of this passage provides. It is not sufficient to point to a universal formative tendency, "the tendency for patterns to extend their form,"[7] without specifying the form whose extension might now heal our dislocations. The same lack of specificity is found in Toynbee. The three elements and their characteristic functions in the rise and fall of civilizations, the ruling minority, the internal proletariat, and the barbarian proletariat, testify to the dangerous divisive tendencies of civilization without specifying either why the creative minority loses its potency or what might be done to generate mutuality. At this point Toynbee withdraws into metaphor and myth, sometimes offering an other-worldly religion.

How else can we learn to live in the powerful, volatile stream of civilization except by discovering the process with reference to which it can be given intelligent and creative direction? Shall we concede that this cannot be done and that there is no way for civilized men to avoid the personal disintegrations and social catastrophes that presently encroach upon us? Are we prepared to concede that civilization is this sort of curse to man, that while he cannot avoid it, neither can he endure it? Many people are tempted to resign themselves to this diagnosis in much the same temper that others resigned themselves to dread diseases that are now practically extinct. Shall our century take up again the cause of the noble savage? Will we use our atomic radiation to help the sun show forth a man whom civilization has not corrupted?

Were we able to identify a unitary process operating in the midst of civilization as we have described it, it might be possible to solve civilization's generic problem and keep human growth within wholly creative bounds. This is the task to which the remainder of this essay is devoted. We shall attempt to identify one process amid all others which, to the extent that it becomes a point of reference in our thought and the locus of our dominant loyalties, will enable us to make civilization truly one endless continuity of growth.

As it now presents itself, on the basis of what is known of the conditions controlling human growth, this unitary process is constituted by seven types of occurrences, functioning together to promote man's progressive growth, and therefore deserving to be given unitary structure in our thought. The fact becoming increasingly subject to empirical inquiry is that the first occurrence in any kind of individual growth whatsoever is the opening of the individual to a felt need, a sense of requiredness, a feeling of inadequacy. The individual is unique by reason of both his genetic inheritance and the social configuration in which he responds. But no matter how his sensitivities and responses grow and whatever direction and organization they assume, growth occurs only on the hot spots, only on those facets of felt requiredness to which the individual has been alerted from within. Once the psychosomatic processes within the human organism have been altered so as to produce what we call a felt requiredness, the individual is prepared for an adventure which, under conditions to be described below, will yield a new line of sensitivity

and response. It is only by following such lines that the individual becomes effective in new ways in a world whose significance for him is expanding. Because man grows from the inside out, rather than vice versa, the type of occurrence we identify here as the emergence of new need is an intrinsic part of the process of growth whose character man is powerless to alter but whose effectiveness human recalcitrance and ignorance serve to imperil.

Since we do not presently understand how to direct the process of civilization, very little attention is paid to the emergence of new needs. Heretofore, they have been born in the dark, so to speak, and many of them have been kept in the dark, refused, ignored, and both deliberately and unconsciously suppressed. To deal with the needs of the psychosomatic organism in this way is to guarantee that they will become even more active than before, sometimes conducting the individual into schizoid behavior but always continuing a line of development of which the individual may or may not become aware. If civilization is to be given intelligent and feelingful direction, the needs that emerge must become infused with the self-illumination that results when they are freely introduced into conscious awareness and joined with the conditions described below.

The second type of occurrence in the process whereby the individual expands his powers is the emergence of a new sensitivity within the psychosomatic organism. The individual feels something new. On facets where the world formerly was utterly blank, in places where the individual was unresponsive, feelingful interaction emerges to be taken account of. At this stage, the line of development under way lacks self-consciousness, since consciousness involves the appreciation of meaning, and meaning has not yet emerged. Hence, the individual does not know what he needs and feels, perhaps cannot even surmise. He does not think about the new feeling at all; he is being expanded in what he can appreciate and know by a transformation that captures him, so to speak, from the rear.

The potential talents and powers of man slumber on in a totally undeveloped state except as he is transformed organically in these two ways. He may both think and act, but his actions are those of an automaton carrying out the will of another, as though under some hypnotic spell. Except as his own needs and sensitivities lead him, the individual *as such* does not become involved. When new needs and sensitivities are suppressed and ignored, they become increasingly active, passing beyond control. In this state, they disguise themselves in symbolic form that keeps their true identity undisclosed. In this hyperactive and hidden state, they lead the individual to feel himself under threat, so that he is impelled to compensate by undue rigidity in his patterns of thought and action. He may become a bigot in his thought and recalcitrant in social interchange. He may feel it necessary to strive for "moral perfection" in order to relieve the suspicion within and to exaggerate the eminence of his social group. In any case, he is under compulsion, driven by forces which he cannot understand. Such an individual is a subversive element in any civilization, though he may have accustomed himself to using the slogans everyone admires and he may have attained a position of great influence in the economic, political, or religious life of the community. Civilization individuates. Until civilized men understand the nature of this individuating process and learn to direct its novel lines of growth,

destructiveness is as apt to result as creative and socialized behavior, with the possibility ever imminent that the increasing power of an undirected process may, like a proliferating cancerous growth, destroy the entire experiment that nature is making in man.

On the other hand, when new needs and sensitivities are deliberately related in thought and action to the events described below, they become an opening door through which both individual and community are introduced to a world of expanding quality, meaning, and mutuality.

The third type of occurrence constituting part of the process of human growth, operating yet beyond our conscious awareness in the process of civilization, is the emergence of some new insight, perspective, or qualitative meaning on the trail of emerging sensitivity and need. The organism has now been transformed with more than a feelingful urge. The sensitivity has been illuminated. It has found a relationship with other events in man's conscious awareness. It assumes significance. As sensitivities cross the threshold into conscious awareness, they are comprehended by the human mind; that is to say, they become part of a vast system of symbolic representation wherein events past, present, and still to come may be related in one simultaneous sensitivity. The qualities of the present event are enhanced by this system of relationships, and the mind is enabled to extend its reach far beyond the present experience. Qualitative meaning enables the mind to hold before us precious events and people that are gone. We can encompass in a fleeting moment qualities whose full sweep would overpower our sanity were they not presented in the form of symbols. In the form of such symbolic representation we can subject ourselves safely to experiences which in their raw qualitative concreteness might be full of evil. We communicate by means of these symbols, and, where evil must be encountered, one may die in order that millions may live. We learn to see what others have seen, and what others have discovered becomes a vast storehouse of meaning to help in the illumination of our own sensitized need.

> As these meanings form a network of interconnective events comprehending all that is happening in the world, this universe becomes spiritual. It becomes more deeply and pervasively meaningful. It becomes the house of the human spirit, responsive to human need, expressive throughout of hope and fear, joy and sorrow, triumph and failure, defiance and despair, love and fellowship. Events cease to be material things merely and become a language, a prophecy, and a song.[8]

When these events are related in such a a way that they enable us to predict the consequences that follow certain conditions, knowledge is born, and knowledge confers power.

It is important to emphasize the originality of these greening shoots of new qualitative meaning, since the emphasis may save us from the folly (in which civilizations have thus far sought to surpass one another) of leading the individual in ways thought best that he should go. No one can lead another; he can succeed only in misleading him. And a civilization operating blindly in this respect is apt to become a gigantic concentration camp in which no one may be sent to the ovens of Dachau but everyone suffers silently in the framework of thought and feeling imposed by other people, other social classes, or other generations. Western civilization has sought incessantly to bring concrete, spontaneous growth under the control of theoretical constructions, abstractions, generalizations, logical constructs

—possibly because its dynamic and changeful nature made it fearfully aware of the need for order. The civilizations of the Far East, on the other hand, have celebrated the individual's spontaneous strivings, somewhat heedless of the need for theoretical organization—possibly because social change in the East has proceeded at a more leisurely pace, with the need for order less urgent.[9] The problem of civilization, we are suggesting, will be found between these two extremes, through the discovery of a kind of unity, and an intellectual comprehension of that unity, which actually promotes spontaneity and individuality as the latter cannot do by themselves unaided by human thought.

Questioning, searching, reaching out for the implications of new sensitivity and need, leaning forward into his own future, the individual is thrown into a quest which, if given the favoring winds of love and respect, can end only in the growth of some new talent or individual power. An original propulsion, rising in a unique individual, reaps a harvest of meanings, insights, and perspectives to illumine the felt qualities of experience. Only in proportion as such windows broaden and vivify an individual's exposure upon the world does a person ever truly find *himself*. In this way, a growing self-consciousness finds a companion in its own integrity. Civilization destroys people and creates in them a terribly destructive social madness when it increases their self-consciousness without providing the conditions in which the growing self can be joined with others and thereby expanded and strengthened.

The fourth type of occurrence in the process under discussion is the exercise and maturation of a new capacity, talent, or power. All that an individual may potentially become and achieve will die unborn except as the events mentioned above open doors through which new talents may be exercised. Human capabilities are strengthened in essentially the same way that one develops stronger muscles—by exercise. An individual's powers are sometimes matured with little conscious attention, but they can never become all they might become until they are favored with deliberate thought and understood in the concrete context of other affairs amid which both resources and liabilities may lie in wait. Talents sentenced to exist *sub rosa*, because they have never been favored with the events mentioned above, frequently make both organic and social contact with strange companions, so that we are treated to the spectacle of creativity being diverted into criminality and genius into insanity.

None of the events mentioned thus far is able by itself to direct the creativity of the human organism so as to solve civilization's generic problem. They must all be taken together, in conjunction with the events mentioned below, as constituting one unitary process of growth, a unity that promotes individuality to an extent the latter cannot do by itself. They need particularly to be conceived and related in deliberate action to the social context in which they are always occurring.

What has been discovered must be shared. The meaning of what is new may be ambiguous; it may be in error; it is necessarily of microscopic proportions as compared to the amplifications made possible through sharing. The talent, moreover, that has come under conscious attention may portend such results in the individual's total experience as he would prefer to avoid. Only by sharing the new in social interchange can ambiguity be removed and meaning become clear. The

fifth type of event in the process whereby the individual expands his powers, therefore, is the sharing of each new qualitative meaning, perspective, or power with other people in the social manifold, so that it becomes the avenue of repeated interchange. Infused with felt quality, illumined with meaning, vivified and extended with personal power, a new need becomes an occasion for connective growth between people. Favored with a special kind of sharing, each novelty is forced to give an account of itself. Sharing that is overindulgent delivers an individual over into the control of his own unchecked imagination and into the reign of secondhand perspectives that overlay and stifle original growth. Such indulgence fails to provide the tension that strengthens and chastens an individual's powers. Where individuals display genuine care, respect, and love for one another, they *share* their *individuality* with each other, permissively and resiliently, instead of obliterating it. Such sharing provides the resistance of other attitudes and things wherein each impulsion is elaborated and its possibilities revealed either for increasing or destroying the "increments of value" all men seek. It is only when these impulsions are driven underground by harsh suppression, or treated with overindulgence, that they become the dark trails along which men are driven without knowing where they go. Among people whose offerings are never the occasion for penalty of threat, the trails of new growth become progressively transparent. *Among such people, evil and error are progressively retired from human history.* As the power of civilized man increases and social change accelerates, these become the only kind of people that can support a civilization.

The sixth type of occurrence in the process under discussion is the integration of each new meaning-illumined, effective sensitivity and need, when it has survived the test of sharing, with all the rest the individual can see, feel, know, anticipate, and do. Amid both an existing apperceptive mass and a system of effective talents and powers, a new pattern of behavior is structured to transform the total organism. These newly patterned powers, merging deep within our person, render us increasingly articulate as a person feeling, knowing, responding. No one is ever able to predict precisely what elements, out of all the trails in which an individual may seek to involve himself, will ultimately be integrated into the psychosomatic organism.

The seventh type of event in the process we are seeking to identify in the midst of civilization is the integrating of the newly illumined, need-driven power into existing avenues of interchange, man to man and man to the rest of nature. Unless the need of the innovator is shared within a social group, a new, reciprocal, and potentially creative relationship between men and the rest of nature will die stillborn as far as the transmission of a culture is concerned. Without this integration, nothing is rescued from the processes of death and decay that overtake each generation. With this integration, all the difference that an individual has made in his world could conceivably be assimilated into the next generation in microscopic detail to become the seed corn for the more meaningful future. Without this integration, nothing survives the creator. With this integration, all of man's strivings may become resources for tomorrow's living. This social manifold hereby becomes progressively deeper and more vivid with felt qualities, and, as these events transpire, each member of the community

comes increasingly to be joined to every other along lines of meaningful sensitivity and response that bring the talents of men into focus in a throbbing simultaneity.

These seven events, or types of occurrences, have nurtured the growth of man and society throughout the ages of evolving man. They have functioned together in the long stretch of human history to insure the emergence of the individual from the social group in which he was at first almost totally immersed. They have made this evolving individual increasingly the reservoir of knowledge and expanding capabilities, the exercise of which upon his environment has given man increasingly the power to vary his responses and appreciate himself as a unique individual capable of being effective in a unique way. Out of relatively unresponsive lower animal forms, they have brought forth a being moved less and less by innate responses and increasingly moved by a delicate system of sensitivities, each of which enriches experience by joining the individual in new ways along relationships wherein everything becomes infused with meaning, vivid aesthetic richness, and mutuality.

The process structured as described has facilitated man's emergence from lower animal forms in much the same way that metabolic processes have operated to maintain physiological equilibrium. If men had been oriented in thought, feeling, and action to the operation of this creative process in the past, no civilization should ever have passed into decline. Nothing should ever have been truly lost, and meaning should have been completely corrective and cumulative. No one can wonder that earlier units in the civilizing process passed into decline, however, since men were working in the dark in relation to the events that were of supreme importance for raising them further out of barbarism. Today, however, our knowledge of this process is growing rapidly, and its further elaboration and discovery become both possible and far more important than any of the problems presently commanding our rich resources for research. Civilization will never be freed of its tendencies for self-destruction until it masters this task of self-discovery. It must make this process the point of reference for its standards and scales of value. The process must be built into all our social institutions so that the entire cultural matrix shapes thought, feeling, and action in ways compatible with its operation. This is just what earlier civilizations were unable to do; it is this wherein ours must succeed, delicately balanced though it now is between further development and self-annihilation. This process, in other words, is the criterion for the continued development of civilization. According to the nature of this process, our cultural matrix must be deliberately shaped so that "the community tradition," as Whyte remarks, "facilitates the development of the individual."[10]

The process described, it will be noted, promotes simultaneously the growth of both individual *as such* and community. All the power of a biological inheritance may now become unreservedly our ally. Knowledge of this process, therefore, is the highest point that man has reached in the expansion of his own self-discovery, and only his growing propensity to make it the central devotion of his living will denote a still higher stage of self-discovery. Already in the knowledge of this process, however, man finally comprehends in manageable abstract form those events that men heretofore have

been unprepared to perceive. These abstractions, therefore, are themselves a creation of the process which it is their task to distinguish in experience. And the test of their capacity to fulfil this task in a world of process must not be viewed as an ability to serve endlessly, unwaveringly, unchangingly. The power and the truth of these abstractions, on the contrary, may be tested by their capacity to link man with the process that has raised him from bestiality into civilization. This means that the power and truth of the rational structure we have elaborated as the solution to the problem of civilization will be displayed by the extent to which this rational structure carries within itself the clues to its own self-correction. Men following the guide of this conception will find themselves in relation to the process controlling their maximum development. Their community with others will be progressively deepened, their felt qualities of experience heightened and vivified, the scope of their knowledge and power of control expanded, and the whole world of past and present brought into sharper and richer focus within each individual. With these transformations, men will respond differently to the stimuli about them; they will organize differently their perceptual field, developing new modes of symbolizing what they feel and discern. New aspects of the process described above, aspects as yet unperceived, will undoubtedly displace some of the facets presently of great vividness and importance. It is the concrete process of growth that is of supreme importance for the continuance and enriching of civilization, not the abstract rational structures in which we strive to comprehend that reality.

## IV

The process just described not only solves the generic problem of civilization; it provides for the fullest possible satisfaction of two of man's deepest needs: (1) the need to expand one's own powers, to seek "increments of value in experience," and (2) the need for relations of mutual support with other people. Since it is impossible for man to satisfy the former in utter disregard of the latter, these two needs are implicated together in concrete experience to offer powerful dual support for the solution elaborated above.

Man has a need to grow. He has a need to expand the range of what is felt, known, and controlled. His growth has an inner dynamism of its own. This simple fact is supported today by an avalanche of evidence emerging from the research of competent scholars in relatively isolated fields of inquiry. It would burden our essay intolerably to mention more than a few of these findings. People need relationships with other people and with the rest of nature that free new lines of meaningful response and stir life into richer forms. Without knowing what it is they need, people require a total cultural matrix which, instead of "leaving them cold" as so much social interchange does today, starts new lines of growth stirring in their souls. Everyone must have such a social manifold in which to live, and people who do not find it are diverted into compensatory, compulsive, and essentially neurotic satisfactions that seal the person over with a protective shell of self-destruction.

People differ greatly in this respect, of course, but every human being tends to move outward against obstacles in search of what Hadley Cantril calls "an increment of value in experience."

The ultimate, the most generalized goal of man is what can be called *the enhancement of the value attributes of experience.* This can be regarded as the top standard of human experience, a standard in its own right. It is the capacity man has to sense added value in his experience that accounts for his ceaseless striving,

his search for a direction to his activities, for his characteristic unwillingness to have things remain as they are. . . . What is meant by a desired increment in the value attribute of experience can be seen best by observing one's own life and the life of others. The skilled worker who gets the job he wants will soon become relatively dissatisfied if it offers no "future"—if there is no chance for increased responsibility, for increased creative effort, or for greater usefulness in his social group. A young woman may have her whole heart set on marriage. But after marriage she will use this new situation as the springboard for obtaining new, emergent qualities of experience through her children, her new social intercourse, her new community responsibilities. . . . A young man who has acquired the ambition to go to college will rapidly acquire other ambitions as soon as he enters college. He will want to make a certain team or club, or he may strive for a certain academic record. Once he gets into a club or makes a team, the chances are that he will strive within his social groups to raise his status, to become an important member. And once he makes the grades he desires, he will probably raise his sights.[11]

Passing from psychology to psychiatry, we find Cantril's point corroborated and heavily documented in clinical studies conducted with people from a variety of social levels. Karen Horney has written her latest book within this framework, giving it the title *Neurosis and Human Growth.*

Through his mental capacities man has the faculty to reach beyond himself. In contrast to other animals, he can imagine and plan. In many ways he can gradually enlarge his faculties and, as history shows, has actually done so. The same is also true for the life of a single individual. There are no rigidly fixed limits to what he can make out of his life, to what qualities or faculties he can develop, to what he can create. . . . The basic difference between healthy strivings and neurotic drives for glory lies in the forces prompting them. Healthy strivings stem from a propensity, inherent in human beings, to develop given potentialities. . . . The live forces of the real self urge one toward self-realization.[12]

Erich Fromm states explicitly that "life has an inner dynamism of its own; it tends to grow, to be expressed, to be lived,"[13] and that, among all the psychological and biophysical drives and tendencies of the human being, "the most important seems to be the tendency to grow, to develop and realize potentialities which man has developed in the course of history—as, for instance, the faculty of creative and critical thinking and of having differentiated emotional and sensuous experience."[14] Harry Stack Sullivan is another noted American psychiatrist who spent a lifetime documenting this inner dynamism of the self and the destructiveness resulting from its frustration. The Chicago clinical psychologist, Carl R. Rogers, finds this need to grow evidenced in discoveries he has made along an independent, nonpsychoanalytic line of attack. "The organism," Rogers declares, "has one basic tendency and striving—to actualize, maintain, and enhance the experiencing organism. Rather than many needs and motives, it seems entirely possible that all organic and psychological needs may be described as partial aspects of this one fundamental need."[15]

The evidence we are submitting here should be viewed against the physiological research of W. R. Cannon, whose book, *The Wisdom of the Body*, is a rich documentation of the delicate self-adjustments and reorganizations of which the human body is capable without any conscious direction whatever. The neurologist, C. Judson Herrick, extends the scope of Cannon's work beyond self-adjustment into self-expansion.

The human capacity for inventing new things and original conceptions is the outgrowth of those creative powers that are inherent in all living substance, and the successive steps in the acquisition of this capacity are open to inspection. This vital creativity, in its turn, has its roots in that directive quality that is apparent in every causal situation, organic and inorganic. Making novelties seems to be nature's chief industry.[16]

Here then are psychiatrist, social psychologist, clinical psychologist, physiologist, neurologist, each speaking out of competent careers of high rank, and out of studies conducted in widely different frames of reference, each testifying to the tendency in man for self-fulfilment, for growth, for seeking increments of value in experience. A few brief remarks may suggest the even wider extent of this corroboration. Thurnwald finds the need for growth operative in primitive societies. "Work is never limited to the unavoidable minimum, but exceeds the absolutely necessary amount owing to a natural or acquired functional urge to activity."[17] A student of the modern labor process concludes that "the most potent reason why we work at physical jobs will be found to . . . be some form of the urge in man to realize and express himself as a person."[18]

The nature of this root need of man can be more clearly specified. Most important, the native need to grow cannot find satisfaction amid frameworks of thought and action that are borrowed from another person, social group, or historical epoch. It must be the result of the individual's own integratings of experience, something emerging along the trail of his own needs, sensitivities, capacities, and qualitative meanings. One reason why the process submitted in the preceding section is urgently needed as a contemporary guide is that people have today lost almost completely the ability to distinguish an act of conformity from an original striving of the self. Pressures toward conformity, supported by the fears that stalk throughout the world, inhibiting freedom of thought, speech, press, and assembly, are such as to slaughter in most of us, while we are yet in our prime, the ability to announce, to recognize, and to pursue what is distinctively our own. Considering the nature of civilization, this condition may well herald at least a temporary relapse into barbarism. It is unlikely that this deadening of the threshold of native strivings can be overcome unless the process promoting creative living delivers men from this conformity.

Another imposing mass of evidence might be assembled to show that every man needs relations of mutual support with other people. Unless we find someone, underneath all individual differences, who feels as we feel, thinks as we think, and values what we value, we are lost in our own solitude. This is the solitude of unshared response, the deep isolation of one person from all the rest. People who lack sympathetic response reveal how largely they are driven by the need for mutuality by grasping at even the most superficial and superimposed types of mutuality rather than endure the hollowness of solitude. They collect agates, match covers, dogs, antiques, and everything else under the sun, not because they are pack rats, but because they need to share their experience with others, even if they must invent the means that bring them together. They read magazines dealing with the article in which they are mutually interested; they belong to clubs that bring them together for conventions; they confer credentials upon outstanding collections. People take up hobbies of various sorts to fill the vacuum left by the circumstances of their lives whenever they lack a basis for internal union with others in the ordinary affairs of the day. All these avocations amplify the revealing statement about an outstanding collector of match covers: "Rosen started collecting match covers because he didn't know anyone in Cincinnati."[19]

So great is the need for mutual interchange with other people that people who have been prevented from developing

deeper levels of mutuality will live in the framework of other people's sensitivities and responses, and they will acquiesce to secondhand perspectives and evaluations, if only a relationship with others can be insured. A mere mechanical conformity may become its own justification when our social existence offers nothing more deeply satisfying. It can be taken as an axiom, indeed, that people will accept any avenue for the mutuality of shared experience, no matter how shallow and secondhand it may be, whenever the circumstances under which they live have severed the more genuine and deeper avenues of organic fellow-feeling. What is involved here is not essentially different from the case of the world traveler who, after experiencing increasingly the loss of mutuality as he passes for months among foreigners, is overjoyed to meet a man in Tokyo who had once driven through the traveler's home town. This small shred offered rich mutuality in contrast to months of solitude.

People who lack sympathetic response cannot satisfy their need to grow, since mutual interchange is presupposed for human growth. We have learned from Karen Horney more forcibly than ever how broadly applicable is the explanation of neuroses as a defensive reaction against frustrated processes of personal becoming. Most, if not all, forms of insanity are the result of psychological isolation. And in the Menninger Clinic in Topeka, Kansas, case histories abound which indicate that a cure for such neuroses requires the re-establishment of mutual lines of shared responses, genuinely unfeigned internal person-to-person connection.

## SUMMARY

We have conceived civilization to be the progressive diversification and interweaving of relationships joining individual human beings with one another and with the rest of nature. This conception implies that civilization is any form of social interaction which expands the sensitivities of the individual, exercises his capabilities in new directions, promotes self-awareness, renders him increasingly a source of social change, interweaves his responses and sensitivities with other people, increases interdependence, and progressively assimilates nonhuman nature into the manifold of relationships binding men together. These occurrences are to be found wherever civilization, as the term is commonly but obscurely used, exists. This concept reduces phenomena of great complexity to their simplest essential terms.

The generic problem of civilization, we have stated, is to promote the growth of individual human beings in mutually compatible, rather than mutually destructive, directions, and we have described how Rome passed into decline because of failure to meet this problem. The so-called "decline" of a civilization is always the saturation point with regard to disparate lines of growth. We have argued that this problem becomes progressively more serious and difficult as civilization develops.

Some of the measures have been indicated whereby earlier societies sought to restore the equilibrium brought on by increasing differentiation. None of these attempts can meet the problem at its present level of complexity and amid the greatly accelerated rate of change.

The unitary process described will solve this problem because it promotes man's maximum unfolding and does this in mutually compatible directions, protecting the civilizing process against mutual annihilation and decline. While this process facilitates human growth, it does so without incurring the colossal wreckage that has overtaken flourishing social

entities of the past. This process is constituted by seven types of occurrences, emerging need, awakening biophysical sensitivity, emerging qualitative meaning, newly empowered talent, sharing of the new amid respect and mutual responsibility, integration of what survives the test of sharing into the total psychosomatic organism to transform the responses structured there, and, finally, integration of a new meaning-illumined talent into the total social manifold that reproduces itself in the young. This is the process that has facilitated man's emergence from lower animal forms into civilization when it had never been done before. It solves the generic problem of civilization. It is the criterion for the advancement of civilization.

Finally, the solution suggested not only is recommended by the nature of our problem and by the state of our increased knowledge with regard to man and society; the solution is also urged upon us by two of man's deepest needs, the need for the individual to grow along his own trails of sensitivity and meaning and the need for sympathetic understanding and mutual response with other human beings. The process described provides powerfully for the satisfaction of these root needs. Much is revealed by this solution that has until now remained hidden. Man was made for civilization; civilization was made for man. In the process facilitating the maximum growth of both self and civilization, man has won his most revolutionary self-discovery.

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## NOTES

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