An eminent British historian had a most effective rhetorical device for shaming his audience into easy acceptance of propositions some might otherwise have found original or even dubious. He would preface such statements with the phrase “every schoolboy knows” and those, often long out of school, who read him would blush and acquiesce, no matter what the initial ignorance or doubt. This is not the case here, for every schoolboy does know that in the period between the crash of the stock market and the surrender that marked the end of the Second World War the American people suffered two extraordinary experiences: a prolonged and deep economic depression and the burdens of involvement in a protracted global war. He is also aware, albeit often more vaguely, that these experiences had a profound and often shattering impact on the lives of millions of Americans, with significant consequences for our history.

Yet in spite of what every schoolboy knows, there is little interest here in those experiences. And since they are so central to most accounts of the period under study, some explanation is in order for what I do not do as well as for what it proposes. The current trends have tended to emphasize and perhaps overemphasize the art of historical reconstruction to enable us to reexperience the experience of the past: what was it like, how did it feel? In its most popular forms, such history becomes a kind of nostalgia; objects from the past allow us to relive our youth, or allow those who did not live it then to experience it now.

The cultural historian does not seek to know past experience, that is, to reexperience it in any sense. Rather he seeks to discover the forms in which people have experienced the world—the patterns of life, the symbols by which they cope with the world. For no individual comes to an experience like some kind of Lockean tabula rasa; he comes conditioned to receive experience in certain ways, using certain patterns of response, certain established forms. Frequently in the course of such confrontation with experience, new forms are created or older patterns altered. The cultural historian keeps his eye on the changing shapes of these forms; he does not plunge into the experience itself bringing with him only his own culture, his own patterns, symbols, forms.

But the problem is a complicated one for the historian, for in order to do his job he must, as a matter of fact, also create forms so that he can best understand the forms that make up the culture he is studying. “Every work of history,” the great cultural historian Johan Huizinga tells us, “constructs contexts and designs forms in which past reality can be comprehended. History creates comprehensibility primarily by arranging facts meaningfully and only in a very limited sense by establishing strict causal connections.” Two interesting ideas follow. First, the historian deals with the culture he is studying very much like the culture itself deals with the experience with which it is confronted; in the effort to cope and make meaningful, people create culture, a set of forms, patterns, symbols with which to deal with experience. So, too, does the historian deal with his “experience,” the culture under analysis. And second, the historian’s contexts and forms are of course summoned out of his ongoing culture and his history is therefore part of that culture—part of its context and forms.

My focus here is on the forms, patterns, and symbols that a largely middle-class America used to deal with the experiences of depression and war, and not on these experiences themselves. But just as I as historian find myself trying to make this cultural history “comprehensible” by designing forms and constructing contexts, so too I discover that in this period the people under study are trying to make their own world comprehensible by their self-conscious awareness of the importance of the idea of culture and the idea of commitment, their self-conscious search for a culture that will enable them to deal with the world of experience, and a commitment to forms, patterns, symbols that will make their life meaningful.
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In 1926 the great historian of the classic world M. I. Rostovtzeff asked a series of haunting questions at the end of his most extraordinary work:

But the ultimate problem remains like a ghost, ever present and unaided: 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?

And while these characteristic questions of the late 1920s and 1930s remain in mind, there are others raised that specifically haunt my work. What happens to a culture that suddenly discovers it is a 'culture'? What are the consequences for culture of a self-conscious awareness not only of culture but of the idea of culture and the idea of commitment? What happens to a culture so rationalized that it seeks with full awareness for its own culture, its own commitments?

II

It was precisely the question of the relationship between experience and culture that fascinated a whole young generation of cultural critics from the years immediately preceding the First World War. Lewis Mumford's three path-breaking studies in American civilization and culture—Sticks and Stones (1924), The Golden Day (1926), The Brown Decades (1931)—might be viewed as a culmination of the concerns of a whole generation of intellectuals. By the end of the 1920s there was general agreement: America had indeed brought forth upon this continent a new civilization. In 1927 the distinguished French social scientist André Siegfried published a widely read and widely discussed analysis of that civilization, as hope and promise, as problem and menace. By 1929 his book America Comes of Age had gone through 14 printings and its message found acceptance and general reinforcement in other developments; it was no longer simply the concern of a small group of intellectuals. It had become part of the general national consciousness. "Today," Siegfried announced, "as a result of the revolutionary changes brought about by modern method of production, [America] has again become a new world. . . . The American people are now creating on a vast scale an entirely original social structure which bears only a superficial resemblance to the European. It may even be a new age. . . ."

Looking backward from their vantage point in 1936, Sheldon and Martha Cheney could declare that in 1927 "there was a spread-

ing machine age consciousness." Other students since have pointed to some of the technological achievements of that year alone that heightened such consciousness: the establishment of radio-telephone service between New York and London, San Francisco, and Manila; the development of the first national radio networks; the opening of the Holland Tunnel, the first underwater vehicular tunnel in the world; the introduction of talking films; the production of Henry Ford's fifteen-millionth automobile. The list of such developments seems almost endless for that year, as Professor Robert A. M. Stern demonstrated in his important essay on 1927 as a turning point in the development of civilization.

As if the full consequence of living in a machine age—an age of an industrial civilization in which a new technology brought about changes in the material base of society that were altering patterns of social organization and structure—was not enough, there was also a growing awareness of subtle changes in the value structure as well, changes in part precipitated by the operations and needs of that very industrial civilization. Again writing from the perspective of the early 1930s, Malcolm Cowley shrewdly noted that the new ethical code, first promulgated by the Bohemians of Greenwich Village in revolt against the "business-Christian ethic then represented by The Saturday Evening Post," had become necessary to the new industrial order by the end of the 1920s. In his Exile's Return—(1930)—a classic work of the 1930s although a study of the 1920s—he points out that the prevailing ethic was, in fact, substantially a production ethic: "The great virtues it taught were industry, foresight, thrift, and personal initiative." But after World War I, the mature capitalism of the new industrial civilization demanded a new ethic, an ethic that encouraged people to buy, a consumption ethic. Without attempting to exaggerate the role of the Bohemians and certainly not trying to point to Greenwich Village as the source of the revolution in morality, Cowley stated:

It happened that many of the Greenwich Village ideas proved useful in the altered situation. Thus, self-expression and paganism encouraged a demand for all sorts of products, modern furniture, beach pajamas, cosmetics, colored bathrooms with toilet paper to match. Living for the moment meant buying an automobile, radio or house, using it now and paying for it tomorrow. Female equality was capable of doubling the consumption of products formerly used by men alone. Even changing place would help stimulate business in the country from which the artist was being expatriated: involuntarily they increased the foreign demand for fountain pens, silk stockings, grapefruit and portable typewriters. They drew after them an invading army of tourists, thus swelling the profits of steamship lines and travel agencies. Everything fitted into the business picture.
Americans were conscious of living in the machine age, a new era vastly different from the vision of an agrarian world in which America had been founded and in which its fundamental institutions and social structure had been molded. Charles and Mary Beard in their greatest popular success, *The Rise of American Civilization* (1927)—a book widely distributed among middle-class readers by the new Book-of-the-Month Club, and which was to have significant impact on American thinking about its history for two decades—had called the first volume *The Agricultural Era* and the second volume *The Industrial Era.* But such awareness was further complicated by a sense of movement and conflict between an era of production and an era of consumption. Americans began to think and behave as consumers in a new way. No better symbol might be found for this shift than that offered by Henry Ford himself. In that same year, 1927, Ford ceased production of the old standard (and black) Model T and brought out the consumer-oriented (and available in many colors) high-styled Model A.

Thus a machine-age civilization could be seen in the physical world around Americans and could be sensed in a wide variety of social changes and patterns of living. Civilization, as Lewis Mumford had said, was "a material fact." But what of culture, which Mumford also defined in *The Golden Day* (1926) as "the spiritual form"? "Civilization and culture...are not," he assured his readers, "exclusive terms; for one is never found without at least a vestige of the other." The point was clear: what kind of culture would—and even more important what kind of culture could—emerge on the basis of such a new machine-age civilization? Initially a question that plagued intellectuals, more and more the whole idea of culture and most especially an American culture began to take hold in middle-class America. What did these obvious changes that had occurred in the material base mean for life? More and more concern grew over "ways of life," life-style, and as the debate moved on into the 1930s for what was to be called repeatedly "the American Way of Life." That concept was a product of the debate as well as a leading cliché in the debate during the post-Depression era: a search for forms in which to organize and express the experiences of a machine age in such a way that would lead (again in the 1926 words of Lewis Mumford) "to the nurture of the good life; [to permit] the fullest use, or sublimation, of man's natural functions and activities." The search for culture was the search for meaningful forms, for patterns of living. That search began in the 1920s and culminated in the 1930s.

By 1927 the words "modern" and "streamlined" were being used not only in reference to design of particular objects but also to a quality of living, a life-style. They are words of the new machine order looking for a culture. In 1934 The Museum of Modern Art (founded in 1929 and in a sense a product of the questions raised of culture in an industrial era) held an important show it called "Machine Art." Common household and industrial objects—stoves, toasters, kitchenware, chairs, vacuum cleaners, cash registers, laboratory equipment—were displayed as works of art. One of the themes of that exhibition had been provided by L. P. Jacks, the British social critic. "Industrial civilization must either find a means of ending the divorce between its industry and its 'culture' or perish." Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the director of the Museum, elaborated:

It is in part through the aesthetic appreciation of natural forms that man has carried on his spiritual conquest of nature's hostile chaos. Today man is lost in the far more treacherous wilderness of industrial and commercial civilization. On every hand machines literally multiply our difficulties and point our doom. If...we are to "end the divorce" between our industry and our culture we must assimilate the machine aesthetically as well as economically. Not only must we bind Frankenstein—but we must make him beautiful.

In April 1935, an Industrial Arts Exposition opened fittingly enough in the new Rockefeller Center, which was planned in the late 1920s and built in the early 1930s and designed as a new form to meet the new needs of the city in the machine age. The exposition proposed to exhibit "industry's present solution of the practical, artistic, and social needs of the average man." The exhibit demonstrated through a series of model rooms new ideas for the ordinary house in which low cost and efficiency, labor-saving devices, and new ways of decoration were stressed. There were new ways of heating, air-conditioning for the home, new models of efficiency in bathrooms and kitchens—even a model of Frank Lloyd Wright's "Broadacre City," the planned city of the future. Moreover, Roy L. Gray, of Fort Madison, Iowa, who had several years before been chosen as the Average American, was selected to head a committee of one hundred Average Americans to judge the show and present an award to the winning exhibitor.

Yet all Americans did not respond in quite the same way to this search for a life-style in the machine age. In the same year, for example, in 1935, a volume of some two hundred pages was published that hardly sounds like a book of the 1930s at all. It was called *A Brief and True Report for the Traveller Concerning Williamsburg in Virginia* and was issued in connection with the opening to the public of a project that had also begun in the late 1920s: the restoration of Williamsburg, the old colonial capital, as it had existed in the eigh-
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In the eighteenth century. It, too, was a Rockefeller enterprise. The nonprofit corporation that made this unique effort not only to restore the old town physically but also to "re-create a living community" by showing living examples of craftsmen at their trade and hostesses wearing traditional garb of the era took as its motto "That the Future May Learn from the Past." It attempted to "tell the story of men of the 'middling sort' who conducted respectable, though small, businesses, and who provided support for the new nation in the making."

The restorers wanted not only to delight Americans with the charm of the place—considerably cleaned up socially (no real signs of slavery, for example) and physically (in order to get people to live and work there modern machine-age comforts such as electricity, indoor plumbing, camouflaged garages, screened porches, and the like had to be provided); they also wished to impress upon them a deeper significance by an "underlying appreciation of the moral and spiritual values of life" Williamsburg represented. Here, too, the stress was on the average man, defined as the small freeholder, although the restoration makes clear it was chiefly a planters' capital. The values that the restorers sought to stress with the enormous and expensive work they undertook they clearly stated: the concept of the integrity of the individual; the concept of responsible leadership; the belief in self-government; the concepts of individual liberty and of opportunity. Not only were these eighteenth-century virtues, they were of "lasting importance to all men everywhere."

And yet it seemed to many, in the late 1920s and early 1930s while the project was underway, that many of these very values had been threatened if not outmoded by the very advance of the United States into the machine age. André Siegfried had insisted, for example, that the "magnificent material achievement" that was American industrial civilization had been possible only by "sacrificing certain rights of the individual." And one might ponder what meaning as culture or way of life such a Williamsburg could possibly have for a machine age. That did not stop the steady and increasing flow of visitors, nor did it eliminate the spell that led to an increased demand by American consumers of Williamsburg-type houses and furnishings. Williamsburg houses, that is, with all the "modern conveniences." There were those critics who found the Williamsburg restoration of Perry, Shaw, and Hepburn as reactionary an influence on architecture and culture as Louis Sullivan and others had found the Renaissance boom fostered by the designs at the Chicago Fair of 1893.

By 1930 the debate over the nature of culture was being held in magazines, journals, books, and even newspapers. The poet Alan Tate, whose 1927 "Ode to the Confederate Dead" called upon an older tradition as witness against the changes brought about by the newer order, joined eleven other distinguished Southern intellectuals at the end of the decade to issue a manifesto, I'll Take My Stand, questioning whether any culture could be created on the basis of industrialism and urging a reexamination of a culture based on a Christian-agrarian set of forms and patterns of living they presumably found buried in the South destroyed by the Civil War, that harbinger of industrialism. At about the same time, the so-called New Humanists—primarily Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More—offered the sanctity of the great classical civilizations as a cultural defense against the inroads of industrial barbarism. In 1931 Stuart Chase provided further ammunition in his Mexico: A Study of Two Americas. In this book, he compares two economic systems, handicraft and machine, and the resultant ways of life. He takes Tepoztlán, a village of 4,000 people that had been carefully studied by the anthropologist Robert Redfield, and shows how this community of machineless men carried on, and how it compares with the Middletown studied by the Lynds. While by no means rejecting all of the achievements of the machine age, he does most effectively rejoice in the basic qualities of life and values projected in that world without machines. Not all could be said to have found the answer to their culture search in the world of the "modern" and the "streamlined."

Thus the American people entered an era of depression and war somehow aware of a culture in crisis, already at the outset in search of a satisfactory American Way of Life, fascinated by the idea of culture itself, with a sense of some need for a kind of commitment in a world somehow between eras. In 1927 the German writer Hermann Hesse reported a supposed remembered conversation with his hero Harry Haller in the introduction to his novel Steppenwolf:

Every age, every culture, every custom and tradition has its own character, its own weakness and its own strength, its beauties and cruelties; it accepts certain sufferings as a matter of course, puts up patiently with certain evils. Human life is reduced to real suffering, to hell, only when two ages, two cultures and religions overlap.

As early as the 1920s there were those who were beginning to see that in a sense they were between two eras; they were in a machine age and yet somehow not completely of it; they were caught between an older order and older values and a new order with its new demands. As early as the middle of the decade, a citizen of the Lynds' Middletown could look at his fellow townsmen and sense: "These
people are afraid of something; what is it?" That vague fear—in part at least of the consciousness of some suspension between two eras—was to be enormously elaborated under the threats imposed by the awesome experience of depression and war. But somehow, even before, there was already an ongoing sense that things were not quite right, in the natural order, in the moral order, in the technological order, and most especially in the relationships among them.

III

And the Depression did bring in its wake—in Harry Haller’s words—"real suffering" to that group of Americans who most felt themselves suspended between two eras and who least expected their “progress” to yield such results: the enormous American middle class. For the story of American culture remains largely the story of this middle class. There is a tendency, when treating this period, for historians suddenly to switch their focus and concentrate on the newly discovered poor, the marginal men and women, migrant workers, hobo’s, various ethnic minorities deprived of a place in the American sun. There is equally a tendency to see the period in terms of the most radical responses to its problems, to see a Red Decade in which cultural as well as political life is somehow dominated by the Left. Yet the fact remains—and it is a vital one if we are to understand the period and the nature of American culture—that the period, while acknowledging in ways more significantly than ever before the existence of groups outside the dominant ones and even recognizing the radical response as important, is one in which American culture continues to be largely middle-class culture.

This is important because it is precisely the middle-class American for whom the experience of the Depression provided a special kind of shock and as a result a special kind of response. For those who were "marginal" in our society, the Depression was more of the same; suffering was not new to them since they had been denied a share in much of the progress and prosperity touted as characteristic of the achievement of American industrialism. If we keep our focus on the middle class, we may also be better able to understand why some shifts to the Left proved so temporary or even why the period proved in the end so fundamentally conservative as it concentrated on finding and glorifying an American Way of Life.

As early as 1944, the playwright Tennessee Williams could have his narrator in The Glass Menagerie define the period thus:

The time, that quaint period when the huge middle class of America was matriculating from a school for the blind. Their eyes had failed them, or they had failed their eyes, and so they were having their fingers pressed forcibly down on the fiery Braille alphabet of a dissolving economy. In Spain there was revolution. Here there was only shouting and confusion and labor disturbances, sometimes violent, in otherwise peaceful cities, as Cleveland—Chicago—Detroit...

But what is of crucial importance here is the characteristic response to the experience rather than the experience itself, for this determined the forms—that is to say, the culture. The initial response, as Franklin Roosevelt brilliantly saw, was fear. It was a kind of fear brought about by insecurity. To the already great confusions produced by the growing consciousness of living in a new machine age, the Depression (and to a lesser extent World War II) added new insecurities. “One thing everybody in Middletown has in common: insecurity in the face of a complicated world. . . . So great is the individual human being’s need for security that it may be that most people are incapable of tolerating change and uncertainty in all sectors of life at once.” So the Lynds’ report on their return to Middletown in the 1930s.

It would of course be a mistake to attribute such insecurity and such fear to the Depression alone. For example, the mobility provided to an increasing number of Americans by the machine age helped heighten the lack of security. Such mobility, long characteristic of civilization in the United States, became even more part of the way of life in the 1930s. Two Russian visitors to the United States in this period, the writers Ilya Ilf and Evgeny Petrov, were overwhelmed with the image, not of cities and skyscrapers, not of monuments or hills or factories, “but the crossing of two roads and a petrol station against the background of telegraph wires and advertising billboards.” For them, “America is located on a large automobile highway,” they wrote in Little Golden America (1937). Of all the new words and phrases of the period, none perhaps better symbolizes the problem that faced many Americans than the ironic idea contained in the concept of “mobile homes” and the growth of the trailer industry during the Depression years.

Such insecurity of course had its enormous consequences in the political and legislative history of the period. These have been profusely studied and documented. Less attention has been paid to the cultural consequences: middle-class Americans sought not merely political action and symbols; they readily attempted to translate these into more personally and easily identifiable cultural symbols as well. Witness, for example, the transformation of this sort in
reference to President Roosevelt's political-economic objectives in the case of the famous Four Freedoms. When these were originally announced by the President in 1941, Freedom from Fear meant most specifically an effort to end by international agreement the frightening arms race, and Freedom from Want was related to a search for trade agreements that would mean easier access of all nations to the raw materials and products of others. By 1943, when the popular painter Norman Rockwell executed his famous four paintings of the Four Freedoms for that middle-class magazine The Saturday Evening Post, Freedom from Want had become a healthy and ample American family seated around a well-stocked table, being served an enormous, succulent stuffed turkey by an equally well-fed American mother; Freedom from Fear had become a sentimental visit to a children's bedroom with sleeping youngsters safely tucked in their comfortable bed, carefully watched over by kindly and loving parents. No other paintings ever so caught the American imagination or were so widely distributed in reproduction to eager American families.

Finding a sense of insecurity and a search for a pattern of culture and commitment to relieve such fears certainly provides no surprising discovery. But another overwhelming psychological reaction, even more important in analyzing the cultural developments of the period, may appear more unusual. A careful study of the evidence reveals an overwhelming sense of shame that seems to have engulfs so many of those middle-class Americans affected by the impact of the Depression—a shame felt by those who by no means starved but now found their accustomed way of life altered. So pervasive in fact was this sense that when Studs Terkel came some 40 years after the event to interview the survivors of that era, this feeling of shame, embarrassment, or even humiliation remained a vivid part of the remembering.

A well-to-do girl whose family could no longer pay her bills at a private boarding school: "I was mortified past belief." A girl who had lost her hair as a result of typhoid and could not afford a wig: "This was the shame of it." A middle-class suburbanite near Chicago: "Lotta people committed suicide, pushed themselves out of buildings and killed themselves, 'cause they couldn't face the disgrace. Finally, the same thing with me." Pauline Kael, the movie critic, remembering Berkeley in 1936: "There was embarrassment at college where a lot of kids were well-heeled." A distinguished theater producer and director: "I wonder if they remember the suffering and the agony and the shame they went through." A businessman: "Shame? You tellin' me? I would go stand on that relief line, I would look this way and that and see if there's nobody around that knows me: I would bend my head low so nobody would recognize me. The only scar that is left on me is my pride, my pride."

Such a brief sampling from Terkel's Hard Times can be duplicated many times over from this work alone as well as from our sources from the period. In an entirely different context, the Lynds may have provided us with an explanation of this particular kind of reaction, when they argue that when an individual "is caught in a chaos of conflicting patterns, none of them wholly condemned, but no one of them clearly approved and free from confusion; or where group sanctions are clear in demanding a certain role of man or woman, the individual encounters cultural requirements with no immediate means of meeting them." Perhaps in such a situation—and they see one existing in Middletown in the 1930s—the result is a sense of shame.

Terkel asks a distinguished psychiatrist in Hard Times, "Did any of the symptoms have to with status in society, say losing a job and thus losing face . . .? The psychiatrist answers:

No, it was internal distress. Remember the practice was entirely middle-class. I did a little field work among the unemployed. . . . They hung around street corners and in groups. They gave each other solace. They were loath to go home because they were indicted, as if it were their fault for being unemployed. A jobless man was a lazy good-for-nothing. The women punished the men . . . by withholding themselves sexually. By belittling and emasculating the men, undermining their paternal authority, turning to the eldest son. These men suffered from depression. They felt despised, they were ashamed of themselves. . . . Thirty, forty years ago, people felt burdened by an excess of conscience. An excess of guilt and wrongdoing.

And still another psychiatrist—by the middle of the 1930s as we shall see, psychiatry was to become an important part of the established culture, an aspect of the American Way of middle-class life—reported:

In those days everybody accepted his role, responsibility for his own fate. Everybody, more or less, blamed himself for his delinquency or lack of talent or bad luck. There was an acceptance that it was your own fault, your own indolence, your own lack of ability. You took it and you kept quiet. A kind of shame about your own personal failure. I was wondering what the hell it was all about. I wasn't suffering.

Against such a psychological background—fear and shame—we can begin better to understand the cultural responses of the
period. We can begin, for example, to sense the importance of a certain type of comedy that played such a vital role whether in the writing of a Thurber, the leading radio comedy shows (perhaps like "Fibber McGee and Molly"), or the classic film comedies of Frank Capra. All, in some degree, depend initially on a kind of ritual humiliation of the hero, a humiliation that is often painful and even cruel but from which the hero ultimately emerges with some kind of triumph, even though it be a minor one. The theme, of course, is not new to comedy in this era; but this was to be a golden age of comedy in all media, and rather than simple escape it provided a special kind of identification for those whose self-image had become less than favorable. This was especially to be the case for the enormously swollen radio and movie middle-class audiences.

Walt Disney, one of the true geniuses of the age who often created its most important symbols (and used the science and technology of the machine age to do it), seemed to know precisely how to take American fears and humiliations and transform them in acceptable ways so Americans could live with them. From The Three Little Pigs in 1933 to "Night on Bald Mountain" (the terrors of the natural order) and "The Sorcerer’s Apprentice" (the terrors of the technological order), both episodes of Fantasia (1940), Disney provided a way to transform our most grotesque nightmares into fairy tales and pleasant dreams.

It is perhaps no wonder, then, that when Preston Sturges made his own remarkable film about film makers, Sullivan’s Travels (1941), he told the story of a pretentious director of film comedy who decides, in response to the deplorable conditions in the world, to make a film of genuine social significance, Brother, Where Art Thou? To do so he proposes to prepare himself by setting out as a vagrant to see “how the other half lives”—carefully attended at a distance by a huge staff following him in a trailer. Through a series of accidents near the end of the film, however, he does find himself in a real-life situation, falsely imprisoned in one of the most evil of prisons. There he undergoes a singular experience. A black people’s church provides an occasion to share their poor happiness with the “less fortunate” prisoners: it invites them to attend a “picture show.” The film is a typical Mickey Mouse cartoon. The director finds himself among the many laughing faces of the prisoners and the poor blacks, laughing with them. Thus he realizes at the end the enormous social importance of comedy. And perhaps we can also learn the cultural significance of the great comedies of the era if we realize the kind of social role they were to play for a middle-class America frightened and humiliated, sensing a lack of any order they understood in the world around them, and tending so often to internalize the blame for their fears, tending to feel shame at their inability to cope rather than overt hostility to a technological and economic order they did not always understand.

IV

Thus while political historians generally see the period as the age of Franklin D. Roosevelt, cultural historians are more likely to call it the age of Mickey Mouse, a culture-hero of international significance. The world of Walt Disney appears, initially, an absurd and even terrifying place; the inanimate become living things, men become artificial and nature human, accepted scientific laws thought to govern the world seem somehow no longer to apply, families are separated and children rarely have their real mothers. The Disney world is a world out of order: all traditional forms seem not to function. And yet the result is not a nightmare world of pity and terror, a tragic world, but a world of fun and fantasy with ultimate wish-fulfillment, ultimate reinforcement of traditional ways and traditional values. In Fantasia, for example, the terrors of the machine gone wild (“The Sorcerer’s Apprentice”) are followed by the sweet vision of nature in “Pastorale” and the terrors of nature gone mad in “Night on Bald Mountain” are exercised in the almost cloying religious sentimentalism of the “Ave Maria.” No matter how disordered the world appears, Disney and his Mickey Mouse—any of his heroes or heroines—can find their way back to happy achievement by following the announced rules of the game.

Indeed, the leading games of the period stress this very fact: “Contract” Bridge, especially as developed into a fine art by Eli Culbertson, defied mere luck and chance in terms of the creation of an elaborate “system” of bidding and play; “Monopoly,” Parker Brothers’ widely played board game of the period based on speculation in real estate, stressed at one and the same time the extremes of luck and chance (a roll of the dice) and the importance of a complex set of stern rules and even drastic moral obligations (one might be forced, by a roll of the dice, to “Go Directly to Jail,” for example); the pinball machine was the ideal toy of the machine age, with its spinning balls passing through a series of obstacle pins that meant points for the player if they met, although at the same time the solemn injunction “Do Not Tilt” severely limited the player’s opportunity to interfere with the chance movements of the balls.

Here, then, was the middle-class American—already made uneasy by the new set of roles he was assuming in the machine age and the conflict he was increasingly aware of because of the different
roles he was required to play, suddenly faced with a set of circumstances in the society that often made him unable to fulfill many if not all of the roles his culture demanded of him, he found himself fearful and ashamed. His world in all its aspects seemed out of order; luck, chance, irrationality greeted him everywhere at a time when he was himself generally a convert to, or a true believer in, the vision of greater order and increased rationality in the world and especially his own social and economic system. And yet in spite of this he knew there were stern moral injunctions he had long been taught he could violate only at his own peril.

Such an American, witnessing what we might call an “alienation of all familiar forms,” strove first of all to find a commitment or a system of commitments that would enable him to continue, that would provide him with a mechanism to overcome his fears and his profound sense of shame. A product of the machine age, the American did not surrender his faith in science and technology. Rather, he often attributed his difficulties to the failure to apply himself more rigorously to the creation of a culture worthy of such achievements in science and technology. Science in the nation’s service became increasingly the challenge and the scientist even more the hero. In the Academy Award-winning The Story of Louis Pasteur (1936), one of the many screen biographies of the period (not a few of which dealt with men and women of science), Paul Muni’s portrayal of the eminent scientist first displays his genius with a cure for anthrax, a disease destroying the sheep and therefore vital economic resources of France. His achievement is hailed (not, it is true, without a struggle) because of the service it clearly renders the entire nation. But his later work has a rougher time in winning recognition because not only does it go counter to professional opinion and organization but also it is less easy to justify as a contribution to national power; it deals rather with the improved health and life of individuals.

The idea of scientific service to society is reflected in a series of activities often undertaken with government support. During World War II, for example, the distinguished social psychologist Kurt Lewin, supported by other social scientists such as the anthropologist Margaret Mead, set out on a government-sponsored campaign to change American dietary habits according to the latest scientific knowledge. Thus throughout the period science and social science joined together to find a way to improve the way of life. Such a commitment to science (which was to create deep and significant moral problems for the brilliant team of scientists whose work on atomic energy was to result in the building and detonating of an

atomic bomb, the symbolic end of the period) was one characteristic response.

So, too, was the dedication not only to continued technological development and utilization, but also to an even more important voice for planning, organization, and designing of the future. From Technocrats such as Howard Scott at the beginning of the 1930s, through the neo-Weberians like Rexford Tugwell in the New Deal administration itself, to the new industrial designers and the older but even more vigorous city, regional, and even national planners, the whole of the period stressed the need to design and reorder the world according to a more rational scheme of things. The great World’s Fair of 1933 was a brilliant symbolic cultural act demonstrating this commitment. By the 1930s the trained, professional, expert human designer had in a sense replaced the eighteenth-century vision of God as a god of design. In a world increasingly out of order, increasingly on the verge or in the midst of apocalyptic disruptions, man as designer was called upon to find some new order in the world.

There were other kinds of commitments as well: to a tradition within the American experience like that of the Southern Agrarians or to a classical one propounded by the New Humanists; to the Left as an intense political, cultural, and even psychological experience wherein people might find themselves, and might establish some kind of identity by working closely with others for the creation of a better world, sentimentally, perhaps; to the myth of the “people” as expressed in Carl Sandburg’s long poem—part of a larger search for mythic and symbolic sources of identity; to the New Deal itself because as a political movement (and through the keen sense Roosevelt and his administration had of the need of creating not only economic solutions to problems but of meeting psychological needs as well), it tried to establish a sense of personal identification by involvement of vast numbers of citizens, many of whom had never been involved before. Saul Alinsky, the professional social activist, recalls the lesson of the 1930s in Terkel’s oral history:

In the Thirties, I learned . . . the big idea: providing people with a sense of power. Not just the poor. There is nothing especially noble about the poor. Everybody. That time may have been our most creative period. It was a decade of involvement. It’s a cold world now. It was a hot world then.

Such a search for involvement and commitment had still further cultural consequences. It led on the one hand to a determined struggle for the attainment of the identity of an American Way of
Life, a definition of culture in America and for Americans with an increased emphasis on strengthening basic cultural institutions seriously threatened by newer cultural forms (especially those associated with the machine age), and the profound experiences of depression and war. At the same time, it sponsored a redefinition of the role of the individual, particularly in reference to such primary institutions, in ways that stressed the idea of adjustment. If the cultural historian can be permitted the use of metaphor, it might be helpful to think of the period as the age of Alfred Adler. This is not to suggest that the writings of that distinguished psychologist were a vital influence (although his Understanding Human Nature [1927] and Social Interest [an English translation of his The Meaning of Life, original 1933 and translation 1938] appear in this period). But the temper and direction of Adler’s thought seem strikingly to fit the mood and response of the period in American culture generally. The problem is not the more traditional Freudian one of strengthening the ego. Rather, the effort appears to be—both in popular psychology and in the rising schools of professional analysis—to find some way for individual adjustment, for overcoming shame and fear—perhaps Adler’s “inferiority complex”—by adopting a life-style that enables one to “fit in,” to belong, to identify. Since man always finds himself in positions of inferiority, it is up to him to discover ways to overcome this. By finding and playing satisfactory roles in society, man can find his identity and lose his sense of inferiority.

The definition of success that that best seller of 1936, Dale Carnegie’s How to Win Friends and Influence People—certainly a key work in any attempt to understand the culture of the period—proposes involves a view of individual personal achievement no longer simply measured by accumulation of wealth or even status or power. Success is measured by how well one fits in, how well one is liked by others, how well others respond to the roles one is playing. It is a strange kind of individualism for individualistic America. And what it often means is a stress on roles demanded by traditional and primary relationships. As the Adlerians would have it, “above all, it is the spontaneous acceptance to live in conformity to the natural and legitimate demands of the human community.”

If we do think of this as an Adlerian age, we can find a context in which we can begin to understand much of the search for a way of life and the reassertion of the role of popular religion, the family, the school, and the community of the kind that occurs in the period. Even—by admittedly an extraordinary and literary stretching of the more precise scientific definition of Adler—the political leader of the era, Franklin Roosevelt, becomes an Adlerian hero: a man with an “organ inferiority” who “compensates” for that inferiority.

In 1927, André Siegfried found the American family already under the threat of destruction, “its field of action greatly restricted; for in the eyes of the apostles of efficiency, the family is regarded as a barrier impeding the current.” Yet by the early 1930s all the devices of the media, the energies of psychology and social science, were enlisted in a major effort to revitalize and reassert the primary importance of the family. Scientific marriage counseling was born as a profession. The importance of child-rearing in a strong family setting was reemphasized; the role of women was again to be found in the home primarily and not outside it.

Counseling by scientific experts became a characteristic part of the American Way: to save the individual, the family, the worker as worker, even the community. Professional counseling was even now to be extended to the consumer to teach him how to be an effective consumer. In almost every area we can see the emergence of the professional counselor to help Americans play those roles they are having such great difficulty playing, adjusting to those situations and circumstances to enable them to overcome their own sense of fear and shame, their sense of their own ability to perform satisfactorily. By the time of World War II, the word “morale” had become commonly used and the problem of how to maintain such morale the concern of a growing number of experts. Thus social science and design joined hands with an Adlerian vision to reshape man and his culture in America as Americans themselves sought help in finding their culture and playing their required roles in it. Education joined the struggle. In the state of Montana, as one of many examples, a Rockefeller grant supported a study to provide “a workable play of education for enriching the life of small communities.”

In 1942, Florence C. Bingham edited for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers a volume of essays prepared by leading social scientists and educators, Community Life in a Democracy. In it the Depression and the war were seen as rich opportunities to help create a true collective democracy in the United States. “Perhaps,” wrote the Chicago sociologist Louis Worth, “the war, like other crises in the collective life, may bring to light further sources of community solidarity, mutual aid, and strength, which in the postwar period may be used for the building of a more genuine democratic order than we have known since the days of the American frontier.” The entire volume stresses the role of community, family, school, church—the whole culture—in providing for a stable order for the future with clear, well-defined roles for all to play, in which children can be trained and in which such basic institutions
can be reevaluated and reshaped by experts to produce the kind of children who will indeed know their roles and know how to play them. "When we think of the American way of life," an expert on child welfare reported, "we think of a pattern of community functions, each of which contributes in some fashion to the well-being of all who reside within the community. Thus, good schools, good clinical facilities, good social services tend to develop together."

From the agonized beginnings in dreadful fear and embarrassing shame there could emerge a new American. This was the ultimate myth of the combining of machine-age expertise and the characteristic vision of man in an Adlerian age. It is no better expressed than by the president of the National Congress of Parents and Teachers in Community Life in a Democracy:

America has awakened to a new conception of community life. From coast to coast and from border to border there has sprung up a sense of unity and solidarity that binds citizens together in their communities and our communities together in the larger life of the nation to an extent, that, with all our national reputation for neighborliness, we have never experienced before. Today we are keenly aware of each other as human beings and each other's children as potential leaders and saviors of humanity. There is a breakdown of the old rigid conception of "mine" and "thine," especially where children and youth are concerned. The extension of the parent's affection and the parent's concern beyond the limits of the family to children on the outside, wherever they and their needs are to be found and regardless of race, creed, or social status, is unmistakable, and it is an epic development.

Yet at the very time this work appeared Gunnar Myrdal and his colleagues were preparing *An American Dilemma* (published in 1944), one of many studies of basic social problems, in this case race relations, that by no means had been "solved" in the great era of adjustment. But Americans had begun to believe they had found the American Way of Life and had created a culture and that it was good. Believing so had become part of the culture itself, a response in finding roles to play, and learning—often through the help of "counselors"—how to play them, which reemphasized basic institutions and values and reinforced them in a wide variety of forms in the culture.

V

It was, then, an Adlerian age of adjustment, and consciously so, an age when men and women sought to find a place and play a role and turned increasingly to a set of newly institutionalized agencies designed explicitly to provide such adjustment, when new professions arose to meet these needs and older ones increasingly assumed these functions. Science—and most especially the social sciences and various schools of psychiatry—joined with popular religion and popular self-help movements. Strong efforts were made to strengthen basic institutions. Counselors like Dr. Paul Popeneo could point with great pride to their success in keeping families together; social scientists like Professor Elton Mayo could stress the role of proper "personnel management" in making industrial operations function more happily with less sense of worker alienation; and Dr. Karen Horney could show the way through meaningful adjustment to overcome the "neurotic personality of our time."

The popular arts, meanwhile, developed an extraordinary skill in providing a kind of comedy that stressed for its audiences a vicarious recovery from humiliation, shame, and fear, while the great political movement of the period, the New Deal, brilliantly used the new media (especially the radio, with the President's Fireside Addresses) and a set of significant symbols to give more Americans a sense of belonging and role. It was an era in which participation, or at least a sense of participation, became crucial, whether that participation was in sports, in block parties in urban communities, or in politics itself.

Even the Communist Party by 1935 was ready to play its role in an era of adjustment. The Popular Front was no doubt dictated by international as well as national political developments. But in the United States the enthusiastic effort to link Communism and "Americanism" created a firmer sense of belonging and involvement. The Party linked its movement to historic American tradition; it rewrote our history to find a place for itself so that the socialist movement would no longer be alienated from American life, meanwhile providing for its members a sense of participation in important work and roles that could be meaningfully played. It put ideological conditions to one side and stressed its relationship to the American Way of Life.

Yet the very culture produced in some measure by the Popular Front, and by other forces struggling to provide a sense of belonging and belief in an era of shame and fear, led finally beyond the Adlerian age of adjustment to a search for metaphysical certainty, a search for a sense of transcendent being, a collective identity deeply responding to deeply felt needs and aspirations. Especially for the period after the mid-1930s up to and through the war years, it is perhaps permissible to use another psychological metaphor and think of the age as Jungian as well. Once again, few perhaps were consciously reading or following the work of Carl Jung himself.
not in their heroic disguises and regarded as ordinary citizens found themselves either humiliated or treated with some contempt by their fellows. Only in their hidden identities did they find praise and admiration.

Often such heroic figures merged into a special kind of myth becoming increasingly important, for example, in the films of the era: the new westerns of John Ford and a whole new range of urban westerns, the gangster films whose emergence as a significant genre can be traced to Von Sternberg’s brilliant Underworld (1927). A new epic vision of the American past and present was being forged, its mythic sense of involvement and fulfillment created by the unfolding of the tale itself, in which the very form of the presentation—a kind of ritualized performance in which all expectations are satisfied in due and proper course—provided a sense of order and continuity.

A fascination with the folk and its culture, past and present, aided many to find a kind of collective identification with all of America and its people. There were, at the same time, efforts made to collect and preserve folk material from the past and an interest in the songs being created by singers in the present out of their own real experiences—not songs from Tin Pan Alley, but songs that came from the farms and mines, from the men on the road and the workers on strike. These songs, the expression of special experiences of special people, became widely adopted by many middle-class Americans as part of their own culture in spite of the fact that the experiences they spoke of were often alien to the middle-class citizens who now enjoyed singing and listening to them. Such vicarious experiencing often became a political as well as a cultural act. By 1939, in the heyday of Popular Front culture in America, two Left-leaning writers, John La Touche (lyricist) and Earl Robinson (composer), produced a special kind of pseudofolk ballad for a WPA revue. That work, later popularized in a recording by Paul Robeson and in a Hollywood film shot starring Frank Sinatra, became enormously popular—a “hit” as song and record that was even performed at the Republican National Convention in 1940. “Ballad for Americans” represents the kind of new “folk” material being created in the Jungian age. It was about America and its history and those who made it. It was about the role of belief, about the “nobody who was anybody” and the “anybody who was everybody,” about ultimate identification: “You know who I am: the people!” The ballad was a testament—as sentimental as Norman Rockwell’s Saturday Evening Post covers—to the unity in a way of life that involved all ethnic groups, creeds, colors.

This search for some transcendent identification with a mythic
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America led Americans in a few short years from the deep concern for the Okies of the Dust Bowl as a profound social and human problem to the joyous “Oh! What a Beautiful Morning” with the “corn as high as an elephant's eye” of Rodgers and Hammerstein's Oklahoma! (1943), a hugely successful, if sentimental, effort to recapture the innocent vitality of the historic American folk. Sometimes, however, the efforts were of more interest and greater significance.

In 1935 George Gershwin tried to make the daring fusion of pop and art, Broadway musical and grand opera, jazz, folk, and popular music, folk and mythic materials, and modern theater. Working from material supplied by the black author DuBose Hayward that itself relies on material from the folk, Gershwin's opera, Porgy and Bess, is set in a slum in what once had been a colonial palace. His theme, according to Wilfrid Mellers, is "the impact of the world of commerce on those who had once led, and would like to have led, may still lead, the 'good life,'" based on a close relationship between man and nature. Basic human relationships—mother and child, the rituals of a tight-knit community (like the picnic and prayer meetings), love—are contrasted with a world out of order, the violence and lure of gambling, and the vices of the big city, the alienation of "that lonesome road," the brutality of the fighting, the deformities of nature (Porgy's legs, the devastation of the hurricane).

The drama pits the longing for a return to an Eden before history or man, before consciousness ("I ain't got no shame"). And while there is a longing for the "reestablishment of the tribal innocence" and a return to Eden, the opera ends with Porgy's symbolic gesture: toward New York and his Bess, the recognition, again as Mellers suggests, that "the Promised Land is New York, where the new life can grow only when he and Bess can meet, accepting the city as a home." Thus in Gershwin's hands the folk material is used not to justify a refusal to accept the new order of things but to help us to understand what we must ultimately come to grips with, while his use of collective dreams and hopes, basic instincts, and illusions provides a sense of identity for those who find themselves aliens in an alien world.

The great American dancer Martha Graham was also drawn to a vision of theater as ritual in an almost classic sense. She early turned to a private world of myth as the basis of her best work, as in her highly personal Primitive Mysteries (1931), where she was the poetic Virgin, the woman inviolate of the Christian myth. By 1934 she was ready to explore America and her own Protestant background. As Leroy Leachman suggests in Martha Graham: Portrait of the Lady as an Artist:

CULTURE AND COMMITMENT

In Letter to the World (1940) ... she confronted those dark inhuman forces. But the end was bleak. Then, in 1944, she was able to do Appalachen Spring. The doomeful Ancestress of Letter to the World, a distillation of Cotton Mather and an archetypal figure of the past that drags one down to death, had undergone a marvellous transformation: In Appalachen Spring she is the Pioneer Woman, dominant, strong but loving and dedicated to the future. The Bride is joyous and will not be put down by a hell-fire-and-brimstone sermon.

Danced to a score by the American composer Aaron Copland, it was to prove one of her most popular and enduring works. In no sense is the work or even the music of the score "folk," nor does it pretend to be. But it does present itself as a special kind of American rite or series of rites—the sermon, the courtship, the marriage, the house-raising—which celebrates the American past and the American character (especially the American woman) with humor, joy, and tenderness. Copland's score, while it uses only one folk tune, makes an effort to relate to a body of characteristically American music, again uniquely in the composer's own gifted way. It was part of a body of music during the time demanded by the new media (radio and the movies) as well as by the development of the lyrical theatrical arts in America. Much of his music and much of Martha Graham's work of the period indicate a shift in mood, a desire to find a special collective relationship in which all Americans might share—not only in terms of a past but also in terms of a future. Composers, Copland himself tells us, felt "needed as never before"; this was combined with a "wave of sympathy for and identification with the plight of the common man." But at its very best the new lyric theater (and it was here that so many of the major cultural achievements of the period are, interestingly enough, to be found) strove to provide a new sense of common belief, common ritual observance, common emotional sharing that the psychological conditions of the era seemed to demand. Heroes, symbols, myths, and rituals: a Jungian age in America.

VI

All ages demand, in Ezra Pound's words, a symbol: none more self-consciously than the age we speak of here. We began with one symbol, the reconstruction of historic Williamsburg as a hedge against the new rising industrial order. We end with another,
thought of at the time of its construction as the fitting monument to
the new era itself: "The most interesting and efficiently designed
mass office building... The biggest in the world." It was rein-
forced concrete, and its designers and builders (who immediately
formed a Society of the Pentagon to perpetuate themselves and
their achievement) prophesied it would be as "lasting as the Repub-
lic." It was a "modern miracle of construction" built in a remarkably
short time (in 14 months; in traditional and not war time it would
have taken seven years) and provided a "stimulus to the wartime
imagination." A complete world unto itself, it contained some 16
miles of corridors, 600,000 square feet of office space, room initially
for 32,000 workers. It was to be the gigantic brain cell of the army
and one critic called it a "World's Fair gone to war." Within those
enormous corridors—painted in various shades of pastel to help
one find his way—there were food services, medical facilities, even
a private printing press. Its roads were patrolled by military police;
and one author, visiting it while the approaches were being land-
saped, commented on the picture presented: "The work [of land-
scaping] is being done almost entirely by squads of Negro women
who all wear straw hats, cotton blouses, and blue trousers, giving
the countryside something of a plantation aspect."

Yet a little different from the plantations of Colonial Virginia,
one might suppose. The Pentagon, a final symbol of the great new
world of industrial order and power, was made necessary by the
venture into war. Perhaps, its defenders suggested, it would be un-
necessary for the army after the war. In that case, it could easily be
converted into an archive storage building. But such exigencies did
not come to pass and the Pentagon is still with us. What its symbolic
value is today, however, is far different from that it presented when
erected in 1942. Or perhaps there were some even then who might
have seen in its design another image, that of the Castle that the
Czech author Franz Kafka had written about so chillingly back in
1927.

For the fact remains that by the early 1940s the culture often
so self-consciously cultivated in response to the fear and shame that
dominated so much of the early part of the period, and that gave
way to a final celebration of the American Way of Life and strong
sense of commitment to it, was under restudy and even attack. Many
had begun to doubt that a rational or scientific order was enough;
some had in fact allowed their commitments to wander to the idea
of commitment itself—a whole new interest in the existential mode,
in neo-orthodoxy in religion, in Neo-Thomism in philosophy, chal-
lenging not only the dominant American pragmatism in schools of
philosophy but also the philosophy of education itself (as at the
University of Chicago under Robert M. Hutchins). Sidney Hook set
off a lively debate in 1943 when he attacked this attack on pragma-
tism and science, on rationality and social engineering, as a new
"failure of nerve." But already Philip Wylie had issued his best-
selling blast at American myths, heroes, and values. The vision of a
new order emerging out of a war was challenged by Carl Becker in
1942 in How New Will the Better World Be? and in 1943 Ayn Rand
produced a blockbuster of a novel, The Fountainhead, that was to
gain a wide readership especially on college campuses. It preached
a new individualism—exalting, in fact, selfishness as a virtue—in
the face of the collectivism, often happy, that provided "identity."
The following year F. A. Hayek's Road to Serfdom reinforced Rand's
individualism from the point of view of economic and social theory.
The technological triumphs, even ultimate victory in war and the
establishment of a total governmental structure after the war to put
the finishing touches to the engineered welfare state, did not hold;
the critics found neither meaningful culture nor a civilization per-
haps worth keeping: "Civilization—Take It Away," a postwar song
would have it.

An age of shame and fear had passed into history; it was some-
how to be followed by an age that frankly thought of itself as an age
of anxiety. An age of Adler and Jung, one might propose, gave way
to an age of Wilhelm Reich:

Now there are times when a whole generation is caught... between two
ages, between two modes of life and thus loses the feeling for itself, for the
self-evident, for all morals, for being safe and innocent.

So Hesse's Harry Haller continues in a passage after the one quoted
previously. And somehow this fits almost too perfectly the age that
followed the technological achievements that built the Pentagon and
the A-bomb. The age of culture and commitment, the age of adjust-
ment, provided respite: fear and shame drove it back into a series
of conservative postures, provided the use and strength of cultural
forms that worked as temporary responses to the problems the ex-
periences of the period demanded. But by 1945 these appeared
exhausted and perhaps even detested forms that could and would
no longer serve.

Thus it is that the Pentagon can be viewed as a two-faced
symbol: for the age that it climaxed it was indeed the triumph of
order, science, reason; the achievement of unity, purpose, morale;
the establishment of identity and role. And yet, for the age being born it was the home (spiritual, at least, in the most ironic sense) of the atom bomb and a frightening bureaucratic structure, the beginning of a brave new world of anxiety.

In 1935 the American critic Kenneth Burke addressed the first of three American Writers' Congresses on the theme Revolutionary Symbolism in America. His intention was to convince the largely pro-Communist audience of the importance of myths as social tools for welding effective interrelationships and for forging the organization to achieve common ends. The particular myth for which he pleaded, the positive symbol for which he called, was that of "the people."

In suggesting that "the people," rather than "the worker," rate highest in our hierarchy of symbols . . . I am suggesting fundamentally that one cannot extend the doctrine of revolutionary thought among the lower middle class without using middle-class values . . . The symbol of "the people" . . . also has the tactical advantage of pointing more definitely in the direction of unity. . . . It contains the ideal, the ultimate classless feature which the revolution would bring about—and for this reason seems richer as a symbol of allegiance. It can borrow the advantages of nationalistic conditioning and at the same time be used to combat the forces that hide their class prerogatives behind a communal ideology.

"We convince a man by reason of the values we and he hold in common," said Burke, and in fact the idea of the people was basic to American folkways.