

Lecture II: The Economic Process and Vocation
(George McBurney)

POETRY
INTRO

Back in the days of old when knights were bold, and public school pedagogues still maintained a modicum of discipline, I had a high school English teacher in my second semester senior year, who required all of us to memorize each day thirty lines of poetry. If you multiply thirty lines times however many number of days exist in a semester, you ~~wat~~ will get a rough idea of what our assignment was. The final examination in that course consisted of the teacher appearing on the day of the final exam and writing down on the board the names of five poems. As soon as we had completed the writing of thirty lines from each of those, she would be waiting at the door and we would hand in our papers. That was the final exam. To be best I know there were still two guys sitting there, trying to remember the thirty lines. One of the poems I am about to read was one of those which at one point I had memorized. I'll let you guess which one it was.

POETRY

The first one goes like this: To JS 67 N 378
This marble monument is erected by
the State. (etc.)

(Miniver Cheevy)

REVIEW

We are going to pick up this morning where we left off last night. Just to review briefly, you'll remember that ~~we~~ ~~wafuakafuabonrhf~~ the lecture talked about the various ~~ka~~ aspects of life which all of us encounter, and discussed in some detail the various ways in the twentieth century that these seem to have gotten out of whack. The yin-yang symbol, which on the male side the circle becomes vastly enlarged, and the male becomes either a bully or a milktoast, and on the female ~~wk~~ side of it, this hungry eye becomes vastly enlarged, and the female becomes either a bitch or a pussycat. When we were talking about the life phases, we used the young adult, the established adult and the elder, the lecture point out how these phases were out of focus because people either were unable to, or refused to, live in their proper phases. You've heard about the TV showing of the opening of the Olympic Games in Japan. My wife and I were watching that the other evening, and ~~my~~ she pointed out that within one generation the Japanese have switched from ancestor worship to youth worship, and I wonder if they are not out of phase because they are completely ignoring in both of those the young adult and the established adult. Finally, we talked about the triangles, the social process, and mentioned that the economic was the tyrant, and that is what we want to talk about some more today.

THE
ECONOMIC
UNIVERSE

THE
BASIC
ELEMENTS

In the economic triangle you have these dynamics operating--these facets of the economic triangle. Σ In this corner is resources, in this corner production, and in this corner distribution. This is the economic. In the ideal world these triangles are all a complete balance. Occasionally that kind of dynamic is found, where each of these creates, limits, and sustains the others the ones next to it. In front of you now, I spent the early days of my youth on a farm in northern Missouri. In that tight little society, which was then our family, these three triangles were probably as much in balance as they have been at any time in history. Not only did we have these triangles in balance, we also had a dynamic relation with the cultural, which does not now exist, and we had one within the political, which does not now exist. The farm on which I lived was sufficiently primitive that the life style had probably not radically changed since my great-great-grandfather had first started farming. We had no electricity, no running water, none of the conveniences ~~was~~ most of us today expect as a matter of right. The entire family, my grandfather, his children and his grandchildren all lived within a radius of about 50 miles from his farm. The resources were there, the production was there, and the distribution was there. The production consisted in a large part of doing things with what you had available. My mother made soap, for example, out of bacon fat and lye. We made our own clothes. Virtually everything that was necessary was manufactured out of the resources that were available and the production tools that consisted essentially of the family and an occasional hired man. The distribution ~~was~~ was on the basis of who needed it and what was needed. That farm in Newtown probably represented in that tight society the most equitable arrangement of these three triangles that history has seen.

THE
PRESENT
DISTORTIONS

Somewhere however out in the real world one of these triangles was clear out of focus because in about 1929 as some of you will remember, everything came crashing down economically. That was, in my judgement, because one of these triangles was out of focus. It has been suggested that the one which is out of focus is the production triangle. It is the tyrant. If this is the economic tyrant, the tyrant within that triangle is the production tyrant. That is what happened in part in 1929, because at the same time that we people were starving in the United States, the corn that was being produced on this farm that I mentioned earlier was selling for 15¢ a bushel, and a lot of it rotting in the crib. The last thirty years since then the name of the economic game has been more, faster, better, and cheaper, and that has been on account of the production tyrant, in which, if this is the tyrant, then its ally is the resources. What finally just falls out of the sack is distribution. We have more production than we can deal with, and we have unlimited resources, but somehow in the course of economic history, distribution has fallen apart. During that same period we have had technological development which defies the imagination, commencing with what was about as primitive a method of data gathering as exists, namely the punch card, we have developed ~~the~~ computers today which ~~are~~ contain more data than anyone can absorb in ten life times. Starting with the Wright brothers' airplane flight--the total distance of ~~x~~ which was something less than the length of a 747--starting with that primitive device, we now have rocket trips to the moon. This farm which I spoke of earlier has become part of a large corporate landholding, and I suspect that the equipment which is used to farm that land today is worth more than the entire farm itself was worth in 1935. We have literally moved from an economy of

poverty to an economy of affluence. We have had unlimited production, unlimited resources, and a perverted distribution. ~~taxation~~ ^{new}

THE
CURRENT
TRENDS

As we look around today, what are the trends that seem to be taking place? One of the most obvious and which about which there has perhaps been more noise than any place else, is the recent concern for ecology. We have ~~shattered~~ ^{suddenly} discovered that perhaps our resources are not unlimited, that if the water becomes completely polluted, or if the air becomes completely polluted, we may all die as a result. I was at lunch yesterday with another lawyer who at ^{one} time owned a farm in Iowa. He described in considerable detail how ^{with} the addition of artificial fertilizers that the land is just being gradually worn out. because we do not replace within it what we take out. There is great concern among many members of the managerial ~~establishment~~ establishment, not only for ecology, but for more equitable ~~six~~ distribution. This concern for more equitable distribution may ~~be~~ in many cases be selfishly motivated, but the result is the same. When fertilizers are being shipped to India, hybrid corn grown in Spain, and TV antennae are sticking up out of those shanties in Hong Kong, for whatever reason, that suggests that the pole ~~and~~ of distribution is coming more into balance. There appears to be no end to our technological potential. ~~At the~~ In all the plethora of material that has been written on Howard Hughes recently, I read a commentary ~~that~~ on that flying boat that he built, that cost 18 million dollars and flew 67 feet and is still sitting out in the harbor in San Francisco. The commentary indicated that that plane ~~xx~~ ^{was} which was almost as big as a 747 and made out of plywood, was the forerunner of the whole of modern jet aircraft, for the reason that that was the first one in which manual controls were not used. It got so big that it had to have hydraulic controls and electrical controls ~~xxx~~ very similar to power steering. So that shows what we have done in the last 30 years as an example of that field.

THE
VOCATIONAL
DESPAIR

THE
SERIES
JUNIOR

Now, let's go back to the thirties and the crash, and the farm. Out of that crash and that economic disaster that occurred then came the development of the great middle class myth, the myth that all you have to do to get to the promised land was to go to college, get a good job, have a nice home, and raise a fine family. Then you'd be on the way to the promised land. That myth was one which my dearly beloved father believed to his deathbed. He was 72 years and 16 days old when he died, and he had been gainfully employed until the last three months of his life. He literally went from his job to his deathbed. One of his favorite sayings in life as ~~a~~ he grew older and looked back, was that we have come a long way from Newtown. We He did, he went a long way from Newtown. and he sent me a long way from it. But in the midst of that journey, that myth, in the midst of economic affluence, you and I have encountered a kind of vocational despair that brings that myth into a serious question. We have become in the last generation the kind of cogs in a wheel in which we merely participate in vast mass production, whether we are producing widgets or legal opinions, we have become a cog in the wheel. I am reminded a television documentary which some of you may have seen ~~a~~ last spring, which described working conditions of ~~a~~ men who were working in a factory which made gold rings of this kind (holds up hand). This wedding band. These people day after day ~~worked~~ worked in this factory. The thing I remembered most out of the documentary later was ker-plunkety, ker-plunkety, ker-plunkety, ker-plunkety, which was the sound of the automatic machines turning out the rings. Another thing that sticks in my mind from

was that program was that every day when these men left the factory, they had to go in and change clothes and ~~was~~ leave their work clothes there, and take a shower. The drain-pipe of this shower ran into a tub in the basement, or something, and from that water the company collected the gold dust that had collected on the men's bodies during the course of the day. Doesn't that make you feel like a cog in the wheel just to even contemplate a job like that? In my office a few months ago one of my partners went down in an airplane crash ~~axfomxxxx~~ in Springfield, a fatal crash, and since that time the work that he was doing has been divided, other people are doing it--the firm goes on. ~~Max~~

Not only do we feel like cogs in a wheel, but the wheel seems to be driving a treadmill. If you think that you and I are the only ones who feel that way, I'm here to suggest that that feeling is world-wide. When we were on our trip a year and a half ago we attended what for Bangkok was a very ~~abxaxx~~ fashionable cocktail party, one of the old-fashioned American type. Those men that I talked to there had that same feeling of frustration and despair that we do. ~~Amxxxxxhxhxhx~~ Two or three months ago I was ~~a~~ in San Francisco. ~~was~~ I have been working for about a year on a law suit in which there are three very able opponents. We have been taking pre-trial discovery from coast to coast, from New York to San Francisco. Despite ~~that~~, the fact that during the day our whole objective ~~xxxxx~~ in life is to tear each other apart, we have developed a kind of collegiality that can only arise in ~~k~~ limited situations within that profession. We ~~wxxxx~~ regularly fight each other during the day and then go out and have dinner. One evening the three of us were sitting in a hotel room in San Francisco, telling each other lies about our past history, and how great we were, and one of these men, it turned out, was born in Germany. He is 41 years old, he born about 1930 in Germany, he's a Jew. ~~ix~~ need not say more about that except that he and his family emigrated to this country along about 1935, ~~by~~ By some means or other they got over to New York. Another one is the son of a sea captain who was out on the Boston harbor ~~&~~ during all of his working life. All of us had been imbued with the great middle class myth, and we sat there in \$200 suits drinking eight-year old burbon sitting in the best hotel in San Francisco just waiting until it was time to go out to dinner. Finally in the midst of this regaling each other with our great triumphs and our great experiences, this German fellow looked around and said, "What does it all mean?"

Fortunate perhaps is the man who doesn't realize that he is a cog in the wheel, turning the tread mill. Fortunate is the man who can sustain his life in the middle class myth ~~of~~ success: more money, more power, more ~~xxxxx~~ status. But you and I know there is no such thing as success. I presently am making about twenty times as much as my wife did when she was putting me through law school, and I still find that at the end of ~~the~~ each month I have to kite a few checks to cover the bills. The great myth that we will be able to leave the world a better place than which we found it suddenly ~~bxhxg~~ begins to look a little flakey too.

The support systems which have been maintaining this myth have collapsed along with the myth. When we moved to Wilmette ten years ~~w~~ ago, ~~w~~ we named our house which was the first home we had ever ~~xxxxxxxx~~ acquired in equity in, "Sunny Harbor." I tell you, it was great. We had a lady who worked with

THE
COLLAPSED
SUPPORT

us an occasional day a week, and she thought Snug Harbor was a great appellation for that home, and she called it a love nest. I could come home at the end of the day and ~~hang up my coat and take off my coat~~ take off the outside world and hang it up just like I could take off my coat, and there was the beautiful, charming, affectionate wife, the beautiful golden-haired daughter, the martini before dinner, the pork chops and mashed potatoes and lima beans which happens to be three of my favorite menu items, and ~~and~~ a pleasant evening at home and just shut off the outside world. Well, as a neighbor of mine who is a doctor commented to me two or three years ago, ~~the~~ the suburban husband today is just a weekend janitor with sex privileges. I don't know how his janitorial services are, but I think he is taking advantage of the privileges because at last count he had ten children.

once all of

The paternal firm that ~~has~~ supported us has become just another slave-master of the economic tyrant. ~~Now~~ Paternalism is rife in my firm, but as I mentioned earlier, three months after my partner was killed, the firm has gone on, and his work has gone on. And you know that every one of those congenial peers with whom you deal every day is out to do you in at the very first opportunity. Finally, the same society which created the middle class myth has either ceased to believe it, or is too busy trying to live it to ~~give a damn~~ ^{care} about what happens to you. ~~It's all~~

THE
DOOMED
FUTURE

If all this weren't enough to make a man a cynic, all he would have to do is to look at his family. Not only have we turned the society into a matriarchial society, they are trying to turn the world into one. I took my little nine year old daughter over to the beauty parlour two or three weeks ago and had to ~~wait~~ wait around, and I've never been comfortable in a beauty parlour in my life, and very rarely get in there. While I was sitting waiting, two or three guys came in with hair down below their shoulders. I thought they were there to pick up their mothers, or something, they were quite young--16, 17 years old. But what they were there for was an appointment with a beautician! Why I wouldn't have been caught dead in a place like that when I was 16 years old! Women have made unisex the thing to be. These TV shows--Father Knows Best. Loosely translated that is Father is An Idiot. That is exactly what his children think of him, thanks in part to the kind of unisex thinking and ding-bat TV directors that we have who are running the media today.

Not only are all our sex roles out of tension as was pointed out last night, but the life phases are out of whack, just as the economic system is, because the youth is afraid to grow old, and the old is afraid to let go, and the adults are afraid to assume their rightful responsibility. I have a client who is 70 years old. He created a family company which is of considerable economic stature. He would not permit anyone to assume ~~the~~ an office in the company except his sons. At the same time he has not been able to let them run it, so one by one his sons have just left. And he is now past 70, and spending his time in Arizona, most of it on the long-distance phone back to Chicago, and the other half here. One of the remarks he made ~~is~~ ^{is} ~~is~~

to me lately that I think ~~more-than-about~~ says more about his problem than anything else is that he is going to know every single detail about that company until the day he dies. He has not been able to become an elder, and he has not permitted his established adult sons--they are both past 40 and he still calls them the boys--the boys are not being permitted to take over their proper responsibility.

THE
VOCATIONAL
CRISIS

THE
LMPM
SUCCESS

I'd like to read you, again to suggest that what I'm saying is not a voice in the wilderness, in fact sometimes I wonder if we are far enough ahead of where the reality is. Here is a brief ~~excerpt~~ excerpt from a review of a stage play some place ehre in Chicago last December called ~~the~~ "The Independent Female." This is part of the review.

Many sketches are more serious in tone. In one chilling sequence, the actor speaks in a dull monotone to the audience, from behind a pallid, expressionless mask, his cigarette dangling casually from plastic, unmoving lips. While explaining that he really is a happy person, he confesses having trouble feeling ~~things~~ things. "Why, I haven't been able to cry in years," he says, grinding out his cigarette butt on the back of his bare hand.

← The collapse of the job, the collapse of the family, and the collapse of his role in life have led many of us to a feeling of frustration, insecurity, impotence, and defeat. One of the ways in which that has been dealt with is also reported in the press. It is interesting that both of these articles are dated December 28, 1971. One of them is in the Chicago American, and one of them is in the Daily News.

Psychotherapists are encountering more and more successful middle class middle-aged adults who want to emulate the young and drop out. They want to give up their jobs, professions, burdens, obligations, even their family life, and ~~escape~~ escape to a carefree existence far removed from the daily grind. A Chicago practitioner of gestalt, a form of therapy, said that in recent weeks a top executive of a national company has expressed to him the desire to join a commune, wear leather sandals and beads, and live without responsibility. "I had a doctor, one of the better known names in the city, say to me that he would like to become a physician in a commune," declared George Rostner of the Gestalt Institute. ~~A~~ A millionaire realtor wants to give up friends, even his wife, and if necessary, and retreat somewhere. ~~-He-has-been-to Spain, -the-Orient, -Safari, -the~~ whole bit, and he still feels hungry. There's an emptiness, an unfulfilledness. These men--and they are not alone, are up against

THE
SELF
QUEST

a basic life decision that faces all of us sooner or later, not a decision about a job or about their wives, or about their families, or about society. But for the first time a decision about what they will do with their lives.

Like all real decisions in life, this one has to be made alone. Like all hard decisions, none of us wants to make it. I have discovered in 18 years of practicing law that I can earn more money faster by just making a decision for somebody than I can by any other technique that I learned in law school. None of us likes to make decisions and that applies to me as well as to any of the other of us.

These men, having become aware perhaps for the first time in their lives that their own lives are their own to do with as they decide. These men, these middle class drop-outs, decided that their course was going to be to retreat somewhere. Another man's course is to stand inert, overwhelmed by the shock of the lonely decision demanded. Another man's course is to decide to live, for the first time to really live where he lives, whether that is in the world of ker-plunkety, ker-plunkety, or in the world of court rooms and legal briefs. In the face of the economic tyrant, to smile, knowing that finally your life is your own, and that ~~finally~~ only you can live it. ~~Maximax~~
~~him~~

THE
NEW
STYLE

He has found a new kind of freedom that can result in a new style. I see that here and there, if it is focussed on, just cropping up everywhere. Several years ago I was going to my office one ~~xxxx~~ Saturday morning, and going down Madison Street I can rarely walk from the train to my office without either going or coming without encountering some kind of panhandler. I wonder ~~why~~ what there is about me that causes them to pick me out of a crowd because I can be walking with six guys, and this panhandler ~~xxxx~~ will zero in on me. Well, on this particular occasion I was walking down Madison Street about ten o'clock, that's early for me, and I was all alone on the sidewalk, except coming toward me was a black man. He was moderately well-dressed for a panhandlers, and I was trying to decide whether he was going to hit me or not. Just as he was coming toward me he ~~it~~ said, "Pardon me, sir, do you speak English?" I was so startled--he sounded as though he might have been a Jamaican because he had a clipped accent--I was so startled that I said, "Why, yes." And he said, "Will you give me 50¢ for a shot and beer?" And I thought that performance was worth the 50¢! But I would suggest to you that that man had style. He was not letting the economic tyrant drag him down. & Every-morning--

Most mornings on the way to work I stand in a stand up bar in the train station--coffee bar. I must emphasize--and get coffee and a doughnut or something. And the same girl that has been there for the last 4 or 5 years, when she sees me come in the door, gets out the coffee and puts the doughnut and by the time I'm there, it's all there. She is living where she is to be able to do that kind of thing. She has got a crummy little job in the train station, but she just has a great time being the person she is in the job she finds herself in.

THE
VOCATIONAL
POSSIBILITIES

THE
ECONOMIC
VISION

The world doesn't change for the man who decides to live. He is the one who changes. Monday morning when he goes back to work he is going to have the same crummy job in the same crummy office with the same crummy people. They don't change, but he can. Twenty or so years ago I happened to attend a lunch meeting in which the advertizing director for the people who manufactured Toni Shampoo was the speaker. I guess most of you are old enough to remember the Toni Shampoo economic success. "Which twin has the Toni?" He was describing all the efforts that went into that advertizing campaign, and tried to describe how it happened to be so successful. In describing that he ~~ga~~ told the story about a cook that had been in their family--he was originally from the deep south, and they had a ~~black~~ black negress as a cook. She had a favorite recipe for angelfood cake. All the women in the family had taken this recipe and tried to duplicate the product that she created from the recipe, and none of them had been successful. Something always went askew somewhere. Finally, one of them asked her, "Why is it that I can take the same recipe that you have and cannot turn out the kind of cake that you can turn out?" The woman's reply was, "Well, in addition to the stuff that it calls for in the recipe, I when I make a cake, I put myself into it." That's what the man of style can do. That's what we're

~~to be~~

He's talking about. He can learn to be a man. He can learn to be an adventurer again. He can live his life phase--20, 40, 60, and 80. And he can be a man in the male-female relationship, and he can be a man in his job. Without changing anything except his own attitude, if you please, his own life style. He can throw his whole energy into it. If he is working at that ker-plunkety ker-plunkety factory he can through-throw his whole energy into making the roundest gold rings ~~that~~ in the world.

THE
NEW
VOCATION

But he knows that since his life is his own, his job is only a part of it. In our great age of economic and technological affluence, he also knows that there is a possibility that he can have successive vocations. He is not tied to ker-plunkety ker-plunkety for the rest of his life. Perhaps he can have, in the future, one vocation for each of the four great lives which he will live, @ the youth, the young adult, the established adult, and the elder. In this age of the four-day week which is already upon us, he can plan his life in terms of one four-day week and one three-day week ~~and still~~ in seven days. In the four-day week he can deal with the economic, and in the three-day week he ~~can~~ begin to deal again with the political and the cultural. He-can-become-the-adventurer

THE
ADVENTURER
ROLE

He can become the adventurer, who not only seeks, but also finds, authenticity. It seems to me that one of the major things that I find myself and my colleagues seeking these days is authenticity. Sometimes it is called integrity. But you and I know what is meant by either one of those terms. We are trying to find some kind of meaning in life that goes beyond the 9 to 5. There is no reason why life should just be one series of 9 to 5, 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year, vacation in Wisconsin, 9 to 5, 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year, 35 years of service, gold watch, retirement, vegetation, senility, death, tombstone. There is no reason why life has to be that way to a man who adopts a new style, makes a new decision about what he is going to do with his life. He can, as I said, become the adventurer who not only seeks, but finds, authenticity, economically, politically, culturally. He can again become, as he probably was in college, radically engaged in the problems of the globe, but this time around he will have a rational plan for correcting the social imbalance. He will not be just firing from the hip as the college man of our day was prone to do, he will not be patching it, patch-working what is an already dead system. He will have a rational plan for correcting the problems of our day, and a comprehensive plan.

This adventurer is perhaps described in part by this quotation:

I have undertaken a labor, a labor out of love for the world and ~~let~~ to comfort noble hearts, those that I hold dear in the world to which my heart goes out. Not the common world do I mean are those who as I have heard cannot bear grief and desire to bathe in bliss. May God then let them dwell in bliss. Their world the manner of my tale does not regard. Its life and mine lie apart. Another world do I hold in mind, which bears together in one heart its bitter-sweet, its dear grief, its heart's delight, and its pain for longing. Dear life and ~~was~~ sorrowful death, its dear death and sorrowful life. In this world let me have my world, to be damned with it or be saved.

THE
TOTAL
RISK

This adventurer will not in the future just be dribbling out time for his job, his family, his community. He will be throwing down his life in the course of living it. And while he is doing that, what are you and I going to be doing?